

# Socialism – Association of Free Individuals: For a De–alienated Society | Paresh Chattopadhyay

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## **Introduction**

First, a word on terminology. To start with, there is a widespread idea that socialism and communism are two different, successive, societies, that socialism is the transition to communism, and precedes communism. However, for Marx (and Engels) socialism is neither the lower phase of nor the transition to communism. Socialism IS communism. In fact Marx calls capitalism itself the 'simple transitional point ' or 'transitional phase' (to the higher form of society). [1] For Marx socialism and communism are simply equivalent and alternative terms for the same society that he envisages for the post-capitalist epoch which he calls, in different texts, equivalently: communism, socialism, Republic of Labour, society of free and associated producers or simply Association, Cooperative Society, (re)union of free individuals. Hence what Marx says in one of his famous texts — *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (hereafter *Gothacritique*) — about the two stages of communism could as well identically apply to socialism undergoing the same two stages.

To drive home our point that socialism and communism in Marx mean the same social formation, and thereby to refute the uncritically accepted idea — a sequel to the Bolshevik tradition — of socialism being only the transition to communism, we can mention at least four of Marx's texts where, referring to the future society after capital, Marx speaks exclusively of 'socialism' and does not mention 'communism.'

"Generally a revolution — overthrow of the existing power and the dissolution of the old relations — is a political act. Without revolution socialism cannot be viable.

It needs this political act to the extent that it needs destruction and dissolution. However, where its organizing activity begins, where its aim and soul stand out, socialism throws away its political cover". [2]

The second and the third texts are almost identical, appearing respectively in his 1861–63 notebooks (second notebook of the 23 notebooks) and in the so-called 'main manuscript' for *Capital III*. Here is the 1861–63 text, in Marx's own English:

Capitalist production...is a greater spendthrift than any other mode of production of man, of living labour, spendthrift not only of flesh and blood and muscles, but of brains and nerves. It is, in fact, at [the cost of] the greatest waste of individual development that the development of general men [general development of human beings]is secured in those epochs of history which prelude to [which presage]a socialist constitution of mankind. (our bracketed insertions).

This text is repeated almost word for word in the 'main manuscript' for the third volume of *Capital*.7 [3] Finally, in the course of correcting and improving the text of a book by a worker (Johann Most), meant for popularizing *Capital*, Marx inserted: "The capitalist mode of production is really a transitional form which by its own organism must lead to a higher, to a co-operative mode of production, to socialism".

Though the representation of communism as an ideal society is at least as old as Plato, it was Marx and Engels who made communism famous as the projection of a society that could arise logically after capitalism from the internal contradictions of capitalism itself as the outcome of a self-emancipatory proletarian revolution. They of course drew on the writings of their great predecessors, mainly Saint Simon, Charles Fourier and Robert Owen, the 'utopians', who, however, propagated their ideas of the post-capitalist society during a period of the undeveloped state of the working-class movement and of the material conditions of the emancipation of the working class.

'Communism' appears in two different senses in the works of Marx and Engels. First, as a theoretical expression.. As Engels succinctly underlines: "to the extent that it(communism) is theoretical, it is the theoretical expression of the place of the proletariat in the class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, the résumé of the conditions of the emancipation of the proletariat" (1972: 322). Shortly thereafter the *Communist Manifesto* echoes this: "the theoretical principles of the communists...are only the general expressions of the real relations of the

existing class struggle, of a historical movement that is going on before our eyes” (Marx & Engels 1966: 70). In the second sense, communism refers to the society which is envisaged as arising after the demise of capital. “The real movement which abolishes the present state of things”, inaugurates a communist society which is also designated – by Marx – alternatively and equivalently, as ‘Socialism’, ‘(Re)union of Free Individuals’, ‘Republic of Labour’, ‘Cooperative Society’, ‘Society of Free and Associated Producers’ or simply (more frequently) ‘Association’ based on the “Associated Mode of Production” (AMP) as opposed to the “capitalist mode of production” (CMP). What follows is a portrait of this society after capital. The paper is divided into six sections. The first section touches on the conditions for the rise of the new society, the four succeeding sections deal respectively with the new mode of production, its ownership relation, exchange relations and the allocation/distributions. It concludes with a discussion of the place of the individual in the new society.

### **Conditions for Communism**

The conditions for the rise of socialism are not given by nature. Socialism is a product of history. Hence it is very important to emphasize the singularity of these conditions, which is very often neglected. In an early article, Marx wrote, “Individuals build a new world from the historical acquisitions of their foundering world. They must themselves in course of their development first produce the *material conditions* of a new society, and no effort of spirit or will can free them from this destiny” (Marx 1972b: 339; emphasis in original). Even with the strongest will and the greatest subjective effort, if the material conditions of production and the corresponding relations of circulation for a classless society do not exist in a latent form, “all attempts to explode the society would be quixotism” (Marx 1953: 77) As we read in an early text, “if the material elements of a total revolution, the existing forces of production and the formation of a revolutionary mass which revolts not only against certain conditions of the past society but against the old ‘production of life’ itself and its foundation, the ‘total activity’, if these elements are absent, it does not matter at all for the practical development that the *idea* of this revolution has already been formulated one hundred times.” (Marx and Engels 1973: 38–39; emphasis in original). The future society arises from the contradictions of the present society itself. This process is best understood by recalling the two methodological principles ,

derived respectively from Spinoza and Hegel, which inform Marx's 'Critique of Political Economy'. In his first manuscript for *Capital II* Marx completed Spinoza's famous saying "all determination is negation" by adding "and all negation is determination" (1988:216). Years earlier, in his 1844 Parisian manuscripts, while critically commenting on Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* Marx had observed that the latter's "greatness" lay in the "dialectic of negativity as the moving and creating principle"(1973a:575). Marx shows how capital creates the material and subjective conditions of its own negation and, simultaneously, the elements of the new society destined to supersede it. The material conditions are a great increase of the productive forces and a high degree of their development. This is also a "necessary practical presupposition", because without this high level of development "only *shortage* will be generalized and there will be a return of struggle around necessities., and, with it, a return to the old misery"(Marx and Engels 1973:34–35). It is precisely capital's negative side which contributes to this positive outcome. "The material and the spiritual conditions of the negation of wage labor and capital — themselves the negation of the earlier forms of unfree social production — are in turn the result of its [capital's](own) process of production" (Marx 1953: 635) It is only capital that by separating the producers from the conditions of production—their own creation—and pursuing the path of production for production's sake—the logic of accumulation—creates, independently of the will of the individual capitalists, an abundance of material wealth and socialization of labour and production—the fundamental conditions for building the new society (Marx 1962:419). In his 1847 discourse to the workers Marx told them of the big industries, free competition and world market as the "positive side of capital" and added that "without these relations of production neither the means of production, the material means for the liberation of the proletariat and for founding a new society, could be created, nor could the proletariat take the road to union or undertake the (necessary) development enabling it to revolutionize society and itself"(1973 b:555). In an early 1860s manuscript, referring to 10,000 miners killed in English coal mines in ten years, Marx observed (in his own English) "Capitalist production is ...most economical of *realized labour*, labour realized in commodities. It is a greater spendthrift than any other mode of production of man, of living labour, spendthrift not only of flesh and blood and muscles, but also of brains and nerves. It is in fact only at

the greatest waste of individual development that the development of general men is secured in those epochs of history which prelude to a socialist constitution of mankind” (1976:327; emphasis in original). This same passage, almost word for word, appears in a later manuscript, that of *Capital* volume 3 (see Marx 1992:124–25). Marx argues that at a certain stage of capitalism’s development its social relations of production turn into fetters for the further development of the forces of production—including the “greatest productive force”, the working class (Marx1965a:135), forces which have been engendered by capital itself and have progressed under it hitherto. This indicates that the old(capitalist) society has reached the limits of its development and that it is time for it to yield place to a new, higher social order—which thus signals the beginning of the “epoch of social revolution”(1980:100–101). “The increasing unsuitability of the hitherto existing production relations of society for its productive development”, writes Marx, “ is expressed in sharp contradictions, crises, convulsions. The violent destruction of capital, not through the relations external to it, but as the condition of its self-preservation, is the most striking form in which the advice is given to it to be gone and give room to a higher state of social production (1953:635; the last part of the passage beginning with ‘the advice.’ is in English in the manuscript). In a famous, often misunderstood, text Marx underlined, “No social formation ever perishes before all the productive forces, which it is large enough to contain, have developed, and new, higher relations of production, never appear before the material conditions have been hatched within the womb of the old society itself. That is why humanity always sets itself only the task which it can solve, and the task itself only appears where the material conditions of its solution already exist or at least are in the process of formation” (1980:100–01).

More concretely, two and a half decades later, in his polemic with Bakunin, Marx wrote: "A radical social revolution is bound up with certain historical conditions of economic development. The latter are its preconditions. It is therefore only possible where, with capitalist development, the industrial proletariat occupies at least a significant position” (Marx 1973c: 633). Besides the material conditions, as regards the subjective — ‘spiritual’ — condition, it is, again, provided by capital itself by begetting its own “grave-diggers” — the proletariat. It must be stressed that capitalist relations are not revolutionised within capitalism automatically even with all the requisite material conditions prepared by capital itself. It is the

proletariat's "*categorical imperative to overthrow all the relations in which the individual is a degraded, enslaved, abandoned, despised being*"(Marx 1966a:24; emphasis in original). It is the working class —the "greatest productive force"—which is the active agent for eliminating capital and building the communist society. Marx underlines that it is the "proletariat" whose "historical mission is to revolutionise the capitalist mode of production and to abolish classes"(1987:703). As justification of this special role of the proletariat, Marx and Engels had already written more than four decades earlier: "The conditions of existence of the proletariat resume all the conditions of the present society which have reached the paroxysm of inhumanity. In the proletariat the human individual has lost her(him) self, but has, at the same time, gained the theoretical consciousness of this loss. The proletariat feels itself constrained to revolt directly against this inhumanity. It is for these reasons that the proletariat can and must liberate itself. But it cannot liberate itself without abolishing its own conditions of existence. It cannot abolish its own conditions of existence without abolishing all the inhuman conditions of the present society which are resumed in its own situation." (1972: 38). The proletariat is the "bad side" of the present society, and "history moves by the bad side", as Marx reminded Proudhon (1965a:89). About a year earlier Marx and Engels had underlined that the "consciousness of the necessity of a profound revolution, the communist revolution, arises from this class itself"(1973:69). Indeed, "the proletariat is either revolutionary or it is nothing," as Marx wrote to a friend many years later. (13 February, 1865). The proletarian revolution is an act of *self-emancipation*: "The emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves" (Marx 1964a: 288). At the same time, the proletariat being the lowest class of the capitalist society, as we just saw, Marx and Engels stress that the emancipation of the proletariat signifies at the same time the emancipation of the humanity itself. [4] It is important to note the specificity of the proletarian revolution. As Marx and Engels underline, unlike the bourgeoisie who started to undermine the pre-capitalist relations of production long *before* attaining the (political) domination, the proletariat must first have its own political power in order to *start* the transformation process (1966:68). From this point onwards begins the process of revolutionizing the bourgeois mode of production and it continues till the whole existing mode of production is transformed. This is the profound meaning of what Marx called the "revolutionary

transformation period” between capitalism and communism, dominated by the working class rule, which begins with the destruction of the existing bourgeois state machinery and the installation of the proletarian rule—the “rule of the immense majority in the interest of the immense majority”, the “conquest of democracy”, which, far from signifying the *victory* of the revolution, constitutes only the “first step” in the revolution (Marx 1964b:24; Marx and Engels 1966:76). It is during this prolonged “transition period” that the whole CMP and therewith the whole bourgeois social order are superseded. Until capital totally disappears the workers do not cease to be proletarians, and hence “the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat”, as Marx calls it, continues throughout the “transition period”, the period of preparation for the workers’ self-emancipation. Marx characterizes this period as the “prolonged birth pangs” within the womb of the capitalist society (1964b:17,24). [5] At the end of the process, with the end of CMP, wage labour also naturally disappears. The proletariat together with its political rule ceases to exist, leaving individuals as simple producers. Classes come to an end along with private property and state, the embodiments of class domination and oppression. Arrived at this point, all political power will cease to exist since political power is the official résumé of the antagonism in the civil society (Marx 1965a:136). We read in the programmatic part of the *Communist Manifesto* that while all the instruments of production are “centralized in the hands of the state...in the beginning”, it is only “in the course of development (that) class distinctions disappear, all production is concentrated in the hands of the associated individuals, (and) public power loses its political character...The proletariat abolishes the old relations of production and thereby its own rule as a class”(Marx and Engels 1966:77). As Engels succinctly put it later, “In place of the rule over persons, there will be administration of things and the direction of the processes of production. The state will not be ‘abolished’, it will pass away” (1962:262).

### **Associated Mode of Production**

The outcome of the workers’ self-emancipatory revolution is the communist society based on the AMP and the corresponding relations of production. This is “a (re)union” or an “association” of “free individuals”. The expression “free individuals” here signifies that individuals here are neither under personal dependence as in slavery or serfdom nor subject to material dependence as in

commodity—including capitalist —production (Marx 1953:75). The term “(re)union” or “association” has a profound meaning here. It has a double sense; as opposed to capitalism’s reciprocal separation of producers themselves as well as producers’ separation from the conditions of production—their own creation—it is now a voluntary, unmediated union or association of individuals as producers (after having ceased to be proletarians) as well as an union or association of the producers and their conditions of production. This union or association thus constitutes a double negation of the individual’s alienation: from the other individuals in society as well as from oneself (through the alienation from one’s own product).

This ‘union’, the exact opposite of capitalism’s *separation*, is, however, not the restitution of the earlier union in either of its versions—either constrained as in slavery/serfdom or voluntary as in ‘natural communism’ or in small family enterprise, inasmuch as under neither of them could there be a universal development of the productive powers of labour —engendering an abundance of material wealth — nor could labour and production be socialized at a universal level—the two basic conditions for building the new society, as mentioned earlier. Thus the new union is built “on the basis of the acquisitions of the capitalist era” (Marx 1987:683). After the labourers cease to be proletarians, labour loses its earlier meaning. It is no longer commanded and enforced by an alien power on the labourer. Labour now is transformed into free and conscious *self-activity* exercised by the individual producer—as a part of the free Association— towards the development of the individual’s human essence. Thus in the new society we have the complete *de-alienation* —as opposed to capitalism’s *alienation*— of the individuals both in regard to their own kind and to their own material creations. As opposed to hitherto existing “false community” which as an autonomous power confronted and subjected the singular individual, there is now a “true community” whose members are universally developed social individuals subjecting their social relations under their own control. (Marx 1932:536;1953:593–4;1987:109).

### **Ownership Relation**

Ownership relations are simply the juridical expression of the production relations (Marx 1980:100;1964b:14). With the change in the relations of production, the ownership relations also change. Ownership here refers to the ownership of the means of production/means of labour. In all class societies, including capitalist



society, this ownership has belonged to a small minority, the great majority has been deprived of this ownership. While in pre-capitalist societies the labouring people (mostly slaves and serfs and their likes) were considered an integral part of the means of production, under capital the wage and salary earners are separated from these means altogether. In his sixth note book (1861–63) Marx calls this class monopoly of ownership—never recognized by jurisprudence—“ownership of a definite class” or “private ownership of a part of society”(1956:9, 21). [6] This is independent of the question of ownership by *individual* capitalists in their private capacity. Within the broad class ownership there could be different forms of private ownership. In modern jurisprudence private ownership refers to the ownership (of means of production) by an individual/household or by a business enterprise. Quite understandably the substitution of *this* capitalist private ownership by ‘public’ (state) ownership is considered as abolition of private ownership in the means of production. However, this view is mistaken. Here is a confusion between ownership *form* and ownership *relation* itself which is simply the juridical representation of the production relation of a society. The capitalist(class) ownership relation is given as soon as the capitalist production relation is given. This specific ownership relation is defined by the producers’ *separation* from the means of production, This ownership relation could have different *forms*, such as ownership of the individual capitalist or of “associated capitalists” (joint-stock company)) or even of the state (Marx 1987:572; 2008:636 ). [7]

Thus the state ownership of the means of production does not at all mean the end of ‘private ownership of a part of society’—class ownership— of the means of production, as long as the great majority, separated from the means of production, remains wage/salary earners. It simply signifies the end of the juridically recognized *individual* (including corporate) private ownership of the means of production. Indeed, the *Communist Manifesto* underlines the need for the juridical elimination of *individual* private ownership of the means of production and bringing it under the ownership of the proletarian political power only as a *beginning* measure of the revolution (Marx and Engels 1966:76). Since the installation of workers’ political power does in no way mean the immediate disappearance of capital (as a relation of production) the proletarian state ownership does not at all mean the end of capitalist ‘class private ownership’ in the means of production. Hence, whereas the juridical elimination of individual

capitalist private ownership is perfectly possible within capitalism, the 'invisible' class private ownership cannot be abolished juridically, as that would be tantamount to abolishing bourgeois production relation itself – whose juridical expression is this ownership– by mere legal enactment. As Marx stresses, a society cannot simply “jump over” or “enact away” its natural phases of development (1987:67). This class private ownership disappears only with the disappearance of capitalist relation itself (along with the proletarian state). Capitalist private ownership of means of production —both in its individual and class sense—yields place to their ownership by society as a whole—social appropriation. As Marx and Engels stress, “with the appropriation by the associated individuals of the totality of the productive forces, private ownership disappears”(1973:68). This appropriation, contrary to its earlier forms, which had a limited character, has now a total, universal character. This is because non-ownership of the means of production by the great majority, that is, the latter's deprivation within the last antagonistic social formation is total, and, secondly, given the universal character of the development of the productive forces attained under capital, the appropriation of the productive forces has also to be universal, appropriation by the collective body of the emancipated producers. Thereby the social individual becomes a total, integral individual. In this sense the former private ownership is transformed into “individual ownership” (Marx 1965b:1240) Almost paraphrasing the language of *Capital*, Marx observes in his discourse on the Paris Commune that “it aimed at the expropriation of the expropriators. It wanted to make individual property a truth by transforming the means of production... into mere instruments of free and associated labour...This is communism” (1971:75).

### **Exchange Relations**

Like the ownership relation, exchange relations also change following the transformation of social relations of production. As in earlier societies the two types of exchange carried on by the humans, namely, material exchange with nature and social exchange among themselves continue to operate in communism. As to the material exchanges of individuals with nature, while the CMP — compared with earlier modes of production—renders humans less dependent on the powers of nature by progressively subjecting these powers to human intelligence through an unprecedented increase in the material forces of

production, its technology, at the same time, seriously damages the natural environment by undermining the natural powers of the earth along with those of the human producer, the twin fountains of all wealth (Marx 1953:597;1987:477;1992:753;1976:327). Under the AMP the social individuals not only free themselves from the subjugation by nature's blind force through a rational regulation of their material exchanges with nature but also carry on these exchanges in conditions "most worthy of and in fullest conformity with their human nature" (1992:838).

Coming to the exchange relations among individuals, it should be noted that in any society the labour of the individual producers creating useful objects for one another, by this very fact, has a social character. However, in a society with generalized commodity production, where products from private labours are executed in reciprocal independence, the social character of this process is not established directly. Their social character has to be mediated by exchanging products as *commodities*. The social relations of individuals take the form of social relations of their products. Products dominate the producers confronting them as an independent power. Marx considers the whole process as a process of mystification and famously names it "commodity fetishism" in *Capital*.

In the Association, with the collective(social) appropriation of the conditions of production, individual labour is directly social from the beginning. In place of exchange of products taking value-form, there is now "free exchange of activities" among social individuals "determined by collective social needs and aims" (Marx 1953:88). Under capital the social character of production is posited only *post festum*, only after the products are promoted to the rank of exchange value. Under communism, on the contrary, the labour of the individual is posited as social labour from the start, the social character of production is presupposed, precluding the need for any transaction based on exchange value. (Marx 1980: 113). Not that, strictly speaking, no mediation is necessary for production and distribution in the new situation. As Marx stresses in his 1857-58 manuscripts, whereas in the commodity (including capitalist) society the social character of production is posited *post festum*, in the new society the social character of production is posited right at the beginning of the production process, even before production starts. "Here community is posited before production".and "the individual's participation in the world of collective products is not mediated by

independent labours or products of labour. It is mediated by the social conditions of production within which the individual's activity is inserted" (1953: 89). About two decades later Marx writes, "In the co-operative society based on common ownership of the means of production producers do not exchange their products, just as little the labour employed in products appear here *as value* of these products (1964b:15; emphasis in original" (1964b:15;) [8]. A few years earlier Engels in his turn had observed that "as soon as society takes possession of the means of production and employs them towards directly socialized production, the labour of everybody- however different its useful character- is from the beginning directly social labour. How much quantity of social labour is contained in a product could be known directly without going through a detour (of exchange value)" (1962:288).

### **Distribution/Allocation**

Distribution in any society can be viewed both as the distribution of the conditions of production and of products where the first determines the second. The distribution of the conditions of production, again, includes the distribution of the material means of production and of the labouring individuals of society among different branches of production. The distribution of the conditions of production is in fact the distribution of the total social labour time-dead as well as living-across the economy. Thus viewed, the distribution of the conditions of production is a "moment of production" itself or an aspect of the mode of production itself (1953:20 ;1964b:18;1992:900). First we discuss the distribution of the conditions of production, and then take up that of products.

Social labour time refers to society's time available for production. The regulation of production by a proper distribution of society's available labour time among different productive spheres is common to all societies. Another issue, equally general, concerns the absolute magnitude of society's labour time itself. There is an absolute need for economizing society's global time for production not only indicating greater productive efficiency but also in order to release more time for allowing society's individuals personal enjoyment and development. Thus "all economy is finally reduced to the economy of time". However, though the economy of time and its distribution in society are effected in different ways in different societies, in a society based on conscious, collective production they

assume such a different character that they constitute the “first economic law” in such a society (Marx 1953:89).

The interbranch allocation of society’s labour time is a question of the latter’s alternative uses in suitable proportions. More time is bestowed on certain branches of production, less time remains for the rest. This allocation problem, common to all societies, is solved differently in different societies. Thus whereas under capital the distribution of society’s labour time is mediated by the *value form* of the products of labour, the new society solves the problem in a “conscious, controlled way” without the need for social relations to appear as relations between things, as Marx explains in his 1868 letters to friends ( in Marx and Engels1972c:159. 185–86).

Within the broad context of society’s allocation of its available labour time, there are, again, two particular situations that all economies face. The first concerns the replacement of the means of production that perish or wear out over a period. Given the fluctuations in the volume of durable parts of the means of production as a function of changing consumption needs—both personal and productive—and the need for maintaining a corresponding level of the volume of raw materials and semi-finished products, the problem is how to effect the reproduction of the means of production in their totality. Whereas capitalism ‘solves’ this problem anarchically, the real solution lies in “continuous relative overproduction” of the means of production, possible only when society consciously controls and plans the process of its own reproduction, as in communism(Marx 2008:770).

The second problem relates to the temporal lag between the employment of resources and obtaining the use-values therefrom. The lag is of course long in some lines of production and relatively short in others. This again is a situation, independent of any specific mode of production. The problem of allocating resources to production lines with a longer time lag, compared with others with a shorter time lag is ‘solved’ in CMP *post festum* and at the cost of abiding disturbances, while in AMP society will consciously calculate and plan in advance the necessary scale of operation and allocate the resources, that is, the total labour time, accordingly. Marx observes that from a purely objective point of view the necessity of such calculation increases with the growing social character of production, for example, in capitalism compared with simple commodity production. Given that communism is at a still higher scale of socialization and

that it is a consciously planned economy, the necessity of such calculation — social bookkeeping— is naturally even greater in AMP compared to any earlier mode of production (Marx 2008: 59,304).

Not only is the allocation of labour time as between different lines of production effected in a different way under AMP compared with CMP, the saving of society's global labour-time itself, devoted to material production, takes on an altogether different character in the new society. The creation of disposable time by minimizing the global labour time signifies, for all class societies, non-labour time for the non producing few. However, unlike the pre-capitalist modes of production, the CMP continuously strives to increase, beyond the necessary labour-time of the producers, their *surplus labour time*, the appropriation of which as surplus value is considered society's wealth, given exchange value and not use value as its objective. Surplus labour is the labour of the worker beyond her/his own needs. This in fact is labour for society which under the CMP the capitalist appropriates in the name of society. The surplus-labour is the basis of society's free time, and, simultaneously, the material basis of society's many-sided development.

However, since capitalism, on the one hand, creates disposable time while on the other hand it converts this disposable time into surplus time leading ultimately to the crisis of overproduction and non-valorization of surplus-labour, the process is contradictory. The contradiction is overcome in AMP. First of all, in the conditions of social appropriation of the conditions of production, the earlier distinction between necessary and surplus labour time loses its meaning. From now on necessary labour time will be measured in terms of needs of the "social individual", not in terms of the needs of valorization. Similarly, the increase in disposable time will no longer signify non-labour time for the few. It is disposable or free time for all "social individuals". It is now society's free time and no longer labour time that becomes the measure of society's wealth. And this in a double sense. First, its increase indicates that labour time produces more and more wealth due to the immense increase in the productive forces, unconstrained by earlier contradictions— the wealth for the enrichment of all individuals. Secondly, free time itself signifies wealth in an unusual sense because it means the enjoyment of different kinds of creation and because it means free activity which unlike labour time is not determined by any external finality that has to be

satisfied either as a natural necessity or as a social obligation. On the other hand, labour time itself, the basis of free time, has now a new significance. Labour in the new society is directly social, unmediated hierarchically or by the value-form of the products of labour and bereft of its earlier antagonistic form.

There is another important aspect of distribution under communism which concerns the division of the total social product between society's production and consumption needs as well as the distribution of the means of consumption among the "social individuals". As to the first problem, one part of the social product serves as common funds that includes replacement and extension of society's productive apparatus as well as society's insurance and reserve funds against uncertainty. The rest serves as means of collective consumption —mainly society's health and educational needs, and provision for those who are unable to work—and personal consumption(Marx 1987:109; 1964b:15–16).

As regards the mode of distribution of the means of consumption among individual producers, this follows from the way in which the conditions of production are distributed. As producers are (re)united with the conditions of production under communism, they are, to start with, no longer sellers of their labour-power, and the wage form of return to their labour ceases right from the beginning of the new society. Here the producers receive from their own Association not wage but some kind of token indicating the labour time that each individual has contributed to the total social labour time—after necessary deduction for the common funds. These tokens allow the producers to draw from the social stock of means of consumption the amount costing the same amount of labour. Naturally, in the absence of commodity production these tokens are not money, they do not circulate(1987:122;2008:347;1964b;16).

At the initial phase of the communist society, which has just come out of the bourgeois society after a "prolonged birth pang", afflicted with the birthmarks of the old society, the latter's principle of equal exchange, that is, equivalent exchange of labour against labour of the same amount, cannot be avoided. Hence this equal right is still "bourgeois right". But there is a big difference between the two situations. In the old society there is a contradiction between principle and practice; the principle of exchange of equivalents exists and can exist *only as an average*, it cannot exist for each individual case which is unascertainable. The opposite is the case with collective, social appropriation. Here with directly social

labour in production the share of each producer in total social labour time is palpable. Hence there is no contradiction between principle and practice. The unavoidable persistence of this “bourgeois right” at the initial stage of the Association is wholly overcome only at a higher stage of the Association when all-round development of the “social individual” along with the development of the productive forces takes place and when all the springs of “co-operative wealth” flow more fully. Only then will prevail the principle, “from each according to one’s ability to each according to one’s needs”(1953:88;1964b:16–17).

### **Labouring Individual under Communism**

We end our paper by touching on a theme which forms the very core of the human emancipatory project of the future society in the works of Marx and Engels, namely, the situation of the human individual in communism. Not much attention has been paid to this theme by the readers of their works. [9]

Quite early Marx set the tone: “*all* emancipation is the *reduction* of the human world, of the relations, to the *human individual her (him) self*.”(1966b:53; emphasis in original). Later in a justly famous statement Marx and Engels affirmed that in the Association the “free development of each “ would be the “condition for the free development of all” (1966: 77). Engels later held: “it is self evident that society cannot liberate itself without liberating each individual” (1962:273). Marx particularly focuses on the situation of the producing individual in the Association. In this perspective there is a remarkable passage in one of Marx’s manuscripts which sums up the whole human social evolution focused uniquely on the (labouring) individual:

“The relations of personal dependence...are the first social forms in the midst of which the human productivity develops (but) only in reduced proportions and in isolated places. Personal independence based on material dependence is the second great form only within which is constituted a system of general social metabolism made of universal relations, faculties and needs. Free individuality based on the universal development of the individuals and their domination of their common, social productivity as their (own)social power is the third stage.” (1953:75). Three stages here of course refer respectively to pre-capitalism, capitalism and communism.

The starting point here is a very important distinction that Marx makes between individual’s labour as such and individual’s labour as *self-activity*, a distinction



which most of the Marx readers generally leave aside. The neglect of this point by readers leads them to a wrong understanding of Marx's explicit emphasis in some texts on the *abolition* of division of labour and of labour itself in the coming society. This position of Marx (and Engels) appears most explicitly in the *German Ideology*. At first sight this position looks strange. Even many Marxists by and large are embarrassed in the face of this seemingly 'utopian' idea. Let us see the matter more closely. Basically Marx stresses that labour as it has been practiced by the human individuals in society so far across the ages, has been principally *involuntary*, at the service of others, commanded by others. This was palpably the case with individuals under "personal dependence", as seen in slavery and serfdom (in their different forms). Under "material dependence", with wage labour, this is less palpable but here also an individual's labour is imposed on the labourer by forces external to the labourer. Labour under capital, as we saw earlier, remains alienated from the labourer. In Marx's 1844 manuscripts we learn that the alienation of labour's object is summed up in the alienation in the activity of labourer itself. "The labourer finds himself in the same relation to his product as to an alienated object...In his labour the labourer does not affirm but negates himself. The labourer has the feeling of being himself only outside of labour and outside of himself in labour. His labour is not voluntarily given, it is imposed. It is *forced labour*" (Marx 1973a:514; emphasis in original). One year later, in his critique of F. List Marx remarks that the labourer's activity is not a "free manifestation of his human life, it is rather an alienation of his powers to capital." Marx calls such activity 'labour' and writes that "labour by nature is unfree, inhuman activity" and calls for the "abolition of *labour*" (1972a:435-36; emphasis in manuscript). Indeed Marx cites Adam Smith's view that labour in history so far, including labour under capital, has been repulsive, appearing as sacrifice, as externally enforced labour and that non-labour is freedom and luck (Marx 1953:505). As regards the existing division of labour, Marx underlines that the activity of the individual here is not voluntary. His own act stands in opposition to him as an alien power which instead of being mastered by him enslaves him. As soon as the labour begins to be divided, each labouring individual has a definite, exclusive circle of activity imposed on him and from which s/he cannot come out (Marx and Engels 1973:33). In his manuscripts of late 1850s and early 1860s Marx wrote—echoing his earlier Parisian manuscripts— "(Under capital) the product

of living labour, the objectified labour with its own soul stands opposed to it as an alien power. The realization process of labour is at the same time the de-realization process of labour.”(1953:358;1982:2239).. Referring to the process of simple reproduction of capital, Marx underlines in his masterwork that inasmuch as before entering the labour process the labour of the labourer is already appropriated by the capitalist and incorporated by capital, this labour is objectified during the process constantly into alien product (1965b:1072;1987:527). Referring to the division of labour in capitalism Marx says that this process seizes not only the economic sphere but also other special spheres, introducing everywhere the process of “parcellization. of the (labouring) individual” . Marx also calls such individuals “detail”, that is, “fragmented individuals”. Very pertinently Marx cited what he called the “outcry” of Adam Smith’s teacher A.Ferguson, “We make a nation of helots ( serfs in ancient Sparta), we have no free citizens” (1965b:896, 992; 1987:349, 463,466). In other words, going back to an earlier text, we have here what Marx calls “abstract individuals”(Marx and Engels1973:67). Hence it is a question of abolishing *this* ‘labour’ and *this* ‘division of labour’ as the task of the “communist revolution”(Marx and Engels1973:69).It is in this spirit that Marx wrote in one of his 1861–63 manuscripts: “As if division of labour was not just as well possible if its conditions appertained to the associated labourers, and the labourers related themselves to these conditions as their own products and the objective elements of their own activity which by their nature they are”(1962:271).This is the sense we get in Marx’s *Critique of the Gotha Programme*. Discussing the lower and the higher phases of the communist society, Marx observes that the lower phase of the new society which has just come out of the capitalist society with all its birth marks cannot completely get rid of the legacy of the mode of labour of the old society including the division of labour, particularly that between mental and physical labour. Only the higher phase of the new society will completely transcend the narrow bourgeois horizon when labour will not simply be a means of life but it will become life’s first need, and not all division of labour will be abolished but only the division of labour which “puts the individual under its enslaving subordination”, along with the opposition between mental and physical labour (1964b:17).

Earlier we discussed in a general way the relation between necessary and surplus labour time in the perspective of AMP as opposed to CMP. Now we focus on this distinction specifically from the perspective of the labouring individual. In all modes of production, necessary labour is what is required for preserving and reproducing the labour-power, while surplus labour is labour beyond necessary labour whose product takes the form of surplus-value in capitalism. Once the capitalist form of production disappears, a part of total human activity still remains necessary in the earlier sense of preserving and reproducing the labour-power of the individual labourer through the provisions for collective and individual consumption —including food, housing, health and education. However, in contrast with capitalism the domain of necessary labour is much further extended in conformity with the requirements of the total development of the individual, subject only to the limit set by society's productive powers. The labour beyond this necessary labour—the surplus labour— which under capitalism used to serve mainly capital accumulation, disappears.

On the other hand, a part of what is considered under capitalism as surplus labour, the part which today serves as reserve and accumulation funds would, in the absence of capital, be counted as necessary labour for insurance and reserve funds and continuing enlarged reproduction of means of production keeping pace, not with the requirements of (non existing) *capital accumulation* but with the requirements of growing social needs of the associated individuals including provisions for those who are not in a position to work. All this falls in the domain of material production. So the whole labour devoted to material production is counted as necessary labour under communism. The time beyond this necessary labour time required for material production is really the free time, disposable time which is wealth itself, on the one hand for enjoying the products and, on the other hand, for the free activity, activity which is not determined by the constraint of an external finality which has to be satisfied, a satisfaction which is a natural necessity or a social duty. In a justly famous passage Marx observes:

“The kingdom of freedom begins where the labour determined by necessity and external expediency ceases. It lies therefore by nature of things beyond the sphere of material production really speaking. Just as the savage has to wrestle with nature in order to satisfy his needs, to preserve his life and to reproduce, the civilized person also must do the same in all social forms and under all possible

modes of production. With his development increases this kingdom of natural necessity because his needs increase, but at the same time the productive powers increase to satisfy them...(Only) beyond this begins the development of human powers as an end in itself, the true freedom, which, however, can bloom only on the basis of the other kingdom, that of necessity".(1992: 838). [10]

It is important to note that Engels treating the relation between freedom and necessity with regard to communism as opposed to the earlier class societies, comes to a conclusion somewhat different from Marx's. For him, communism constitutes "humanity's leap from the kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of freedom" (1962: 264).

Even the non-disposable, or necessary labour time in communism has a qualitatively different character compared to the necessary labour time in a class society inasmuch as this time is not imposed by an alien power but is willingly undertaken by the associated producers as self-activity, as self-affirmation. "The time of labour of an individual who is at the same time an individual of disposable time must possess a quality much superior to that of a beast of labour"(Marx 1962:255-56). [11] It seems that when Marx was speaking of labour not only as means of life, but as life's first need in the *Gothacritique*, (as referred to above), and, earlier in his inaugural address to the First International (1864) of the distinction between the previous kind of labour and "associated labour plying its toil with a willing hand, a ready mind and a joyous heart", he was precisely referring to the 'necessary labour' in communism in the sphere of material production. As regards the necessary labour-time bestowed on material production itself in communism the continuous development of productive forces at a high rate, helped by advancing science and technology, would allow continuous decrease of necessary labour time and corresponding increase of disposable, that is, free time for every individual. "The true wealth is the developed productive power of all individuals. It is then no more the labour time but the disposable time which is the measure of wealth. The labour time as the measure of wealth posits wealth as founded on poverty...This is to posit the whole time of an individual as labour time and thus to degrade the individual to the position of simple labourer, subsumed under labour" (Marx 1953:596). Marx refers to the idea of the ancients that the aim of production is the human individual, and considers this as "sublime" compared to the modern world where

the aim of the humans is production and the aim of production is wealth (and not the human individual, that is). Then Marx adds,

“Once the limited bourgeois form disappears, wealth appears as nothing but the universality of needs, of capacities, of enjoyments, productive powers of the individuals, the absolute elaboration of the individual’s creative aptitudes with no other presupposition but the previous historical development which makes an end in itself the totality of development of all human powers as such, not measured by a standard, previously set, where the individual is not reproduced according to a particular determinity, but create her (his) totality. In the bourgeois economy and the corresponding epoch of production, this complete elaboration of the human interiority appears as complete emptiness.” (1953:387).

In consonance with the three-stage —analysis of the situation of the individual given above, Marx discusses (in English) the changing relation through time of what he calls the “Man of Labour” and the “Means of Labour” in his 1865 discourse to the workers of the International: the “original union”, then its “decomposition”, and finally “the restoration of the original union in a new historical form”(1988:412) [12]. Here the last form refers to communism where through the appropriation of the “means of labour” by the collective body of the freely associated individuals the “reunion” takes place. Once this re-union is established the human individual ceases to be personally or materially dependent, and no more exists as an alienated, parcellized, fragmented individual, and becomes a “totally developed”, “integral” individual. This “free individuality” signifies the “real appropriation of the human essence by the human for the human, a conscious return to the human essence conserving all the wealth of previous development” (Marx 1973a:536). With this begins humanity’s real history, leaving, in Marx’s celebrated phrase, “the pre-history of the human society” behind (1980:101). Communism is indeed the beginning, and not the end, of human history.

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[1] Marx 1953, p. 438 ;1993, p.540 ;1962a ; pp.425-26.

[2] Marx 1975, p.420.

[3] Marx 1984, p.88.

[4] race” (1965c:1538).

[5] associated labour can only be the progressive work of time...in a long process of development of new conditions...through long struggles, through a series of historic processes”(1971:76,156–57).

[6] When the Communist Manifesto declares that the communists can sum up their theory in a single expression “abolition of private ownership”, the latter is expressly used in the sense of “disappearance of class property” (Marx and Engels1966:71,73). In his ‘Address’ on the

Commune (1871) Marx said," the Commune intends to abolish that class–property, which makes the labour of the many the wealth of the few(1971:75).

[7] As the last limit of centralization of capital, Marx even envisages in Capital's French version, the existence, over the whole economy, of a single capital under a single ownership (1965b:1139). It is important to stress that Marx conceives the individual capitalist not necessarily as a private owner of capital, but as a "functionary of capital", "the real agent of capitalist production" earning "wages of management" for exploiting labourer (1962:475; 1992:452, 460).

[8] About two decades earlier Marx had written:"Nothing is more false or more absurd than to suppose the control of the associated individuals over their production on the basis of exchange value"(1953:76).

[9] Marx announced his(and Engels's) 'new materialism' (1845) thus: "The standpoint of the old materialism is civil society, the standpoint of the new materialism is the human society or social humanity"(1998:21; emphasis added).

[10] In his Parisian manuscripts Marx observed that "communism" as "perfect humanism" is the "true solution of the struggle between existence and essence, objectification and self-affirmation, freedom and necessity, it is the solved enigma of history" (1973: 536).

[11] In his 1865 lecture (in English) to the workers of the International Marx declared: "Time is the room of human development. A man who has to dispose of no free time, whose whole lifetime, apart from the mere physical interruptions by sleep, meals and so forth, is absorbed by his labour for the capitalist, is less than a beast of burden. He is a mere machine for producing Foreign Wealth, broken in body and brutalized in mind."(1988:424).

[12] "The original unity between the labourer and the conditions of production,' writes Marx, 'has two main forms (leaving aside slavery where the labourer himself is a part of the objective conditions of production): the Asiatic community (natural communism) and the small family agriculture (bound with household industry) in one or the other forms. Both are infantile forms and equally little suited to develop labour as social labour and productive power of social labour, whence the necessity of separation, of rupture, of the opposition between labour and ownership (in the conditions of production). The extreme form of this rupture within which at the same time the productive forces of social labour are most powerfully developed is the form of capital. On the material basis which it creates and by the means of the revolutions which the working class and the whole society undergoes in the process of creating it can the original unity be restored" (1962:419; emphasis in manuscript)