

The Commodity

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The wealth of societies in which a capitalistic mode of production prevails, appears as a 'gigantic collection of commodities' and the singular commodity appears as the *elementary form* of wealth. Our investigation begins accordingly with the analysis of the commodity.

The commodity is first an external object, a thing which satisfies through its qualities human needs of one kind or another. The nature of these needs is irrelevant, e.g., whether their origin is in the stomach or in the fancy. We are also not concerned here with the manner in which the entity satisfies human need; whether in an immediate way as food – that is, as object of enjoyment – or by a detour as means of production.

Each useful thing (iron, paper, etc.) is to be considered from a double point of view, in accordance with *quality* and *quantity*. Each such thing is a totality of many properties and is therefore able to be useful in different respects. The discovery of these different respects and hence of the manifold modes of utility of things is an historical act. Of such a kind is the invention of social *measurement* for the *quantity* of useful things. The diversity of the commodity-measurements arises partly from the diverse nature of the objects to be measured, and partly from convention.

It is the utility of a thing for human life that turns it into a *use-value*. By way of abbreviation let us term the useful thing itself (or *commodity-body*, as iron, wheat, diamond, etc.) *use-value*, good, article. In the consideration of use-values, quantitative determination is always presupposed (as a *dozen* watches, *yard* of linen, *ton* of iron, etc.). The *use-values* of commodities provide the material for a study of their own, the *science of commodities*. Use-value realizes itself only in use or in consumption; use-values form the *substantial content of wealth*, whatever its *social form* may be. In the form of society which we are going to examine, they form the substantial bearers at the very same time of *exchange-value*.

Exchange-value appears first of all as *quantitative relationship*, the proportion in which use-values of one kind are exchanged for use-values of another kind, a relationship which constantly changes in accordance with time and place. That is the reason why exchange-value appears to be something accidental and a purely *relative thing*, and therefore the reason why the formula of an exchange-value internal and immanent to the commodity (*valeur intrinsique*) appears to be a *contradictio in adjecto* (contradiction in terms). Let us examine the matter more closely.

A single commodity (e.g., a quarter of wheat) is exchanged with other articles in the *most varied proportions*. Nevertheless its exchange-value remains *unchanged* regardless of whether it is expressed in x bootblacking, y soap, z gold, etc. It must therefore be distinguishable from these, its various *manners of expression*.

Now let us consider two commodities: e.g., wheat and iron. Whatever their exchange relationship may be, it is always representable in an equation in which a given quantum of wheat is equated with some particular quantum of iron; e.g., one quarter of wheat = a cwt of iron. What does this equation say? That *the same value* exists in two different things, in one quarter of wheat and likewise in a cwt of iron. Both are equal, therefore, to a *third entity*, which in and for itself is neither the one nor the other. Each of the two, insofar as it is an exchange-value, must therefore be reducible to this third entity, independent of the other.

Consider a simple geometrical example. In order to determine and compare the areas of all rectilinear figures, one reduces them to triangles. One reduces the triangle itself to an expression which is entirely different from its visible figure – half the product of its base by its altitude. Likewise, the exchange-values of commodities can be reduced to a *common-entity*, of which they represent a greater or lesser amount.

The fact that the substance of the exchange-value is something utterly different from and independent of the physical-sensual existence of the commodity or its reality as a *use-value* is revealed immediately by its exchange relationship. For this is characterized precisely by the *abstraction* from the *use-value*. As far as the exchange-value is concerned, one commodity is, after all, quite as good as every other, provided it is present in the correct proportion.

Hence, commodities are first of all simply to be considered as *values*, independent of their exchange-relationship or from the *form*, in which they *appear as exchange-values*.

Commodities as objects of use or goods are corporeally different things. Their reality as *values* forms, on the other hand, their *unity*. This unity does not arise out of nature but out of society. The common social substance which merely manifests itself differently in different use-values, is – *labour*.

Commodities as values are nothing but *crystallized labour*. The unit of measurement of labour itself is the *simple average-labour*, the character of which varies admittedly in different lands and cultural epochs, but is given for a particular society. More complex labour counts merely as simple labour *to an exponent* or rather *to a multiple*, so that a smaller quantum of complex labour is equal to a larger quantum of simple labour, for example. Precisely *how* this reduction is to be controlled is not relevant here. *That* this reduction is constantly occurring is revealed by experience. A commodity may be the product of the most complex labour. Its *value* equates it to the product of simple labour and therefore represents on its own merely a definite quantum of simple labour.

A use-value or good only has a *value* because *labour* is *objectified* or *materialized* in it. But now how are we to measure the *quantity* of its value? By the *quantum* of the 'value-forming substance' (i.e., labour) which is contained in it. The quantity of labour itself is measured by its *temporal duration* and the *labour-time* in turn possesses a measuring rod for particular segments of time, like hour, day, etc.

It might seem that, if the value of a commodity is determined by the quantum of labour expended during its production, the more lazy- and incompetent a man the more valuable his commodity is, because he needs all the more labour-time for its completion. But only the *socially* necessary labour-time is labour-time required for the constitution of some particular use-value, with the available socially-normal conditions of production and the social average-level of competence and intensity of labour. After the introduction of the steam-driven loom in England, for example, perhaps half as much labour as before was sufficient to change a given quantum of yarn into cloth. The English hand-weaver needed in order to accomplish this change the same labour-time as before, to be sure, but the product of his individual labour-hour now represented only one *half* a social labour-hour, and sank accordingly to half its earlier value.

So it is only the *quantum of socially necessary labour*, or that *labour-time which is socially necessary for the constitution of a use-value* which determines the *quantity* of the value. The single commodity counts here in general as average sample of its own kind. Commodities in which equally large labour-quanta are contained, or which can be produced *within the same labour-time* for that reason have *the same quantity of value*. The value of a commodity is related to the value of every other commodity, as the labour-time necessary for the production of the one is related to the labour-time necessary for the production of the other. All commodities, as values, are only particular masses of coagulated labour-time.

The quantity of value of a commodity accordingly would remain constant if the labour-time required for its production were constant. The latter, however, changes with each change in the productive *power of labour*. The productive power of labour is determined by manifold conditions, among others by the average grade of competence of the workers,

the level of development of science and its technological applicability, the social combination of the process of production, the scope and the efficacy of the means of production, and by *natural relationships*. The same quantum of labour manifests itself after propitious weather in 8 bushels of wheat, but after impropitious weather, in only 4, for example. The very same quantum of labour provides more metals in richly laden mines than in poor ones, etc. Diamonds are rare on the surface of the earth, and their discovery therefore costs *on the average* much labour-time. Consequently, they represent much labour in a small volume of space. Jacob doubts that gold has ever paid its complete value. This holds true even more for diamonds. According to Eschwege, by 1823 the complete yield of the eight-year old Brazilian diamond-diggings had not yet amounted to the value of the 1½ year average product of the Brazilian sugar or coffee plantations. Given more richly laden diggings the same quantum of labour would be represented by more diamonds and their value would sink. If one succeeds in converting coal into diamonds with little labour, then the value of diamonds would sink beneath that of paving stones. In general: the greater the productive power of labour the smaller is the amount of labour-time required for the production of an article, and the smaller the mass of labour crystallized in it, the smaller is its value. And on the contrary, the smaller the productive power of labour, the greater is the labour-time necessary for the-production of an article, and the greater its value is. The quantity of value of a commodity varies *directly as the quantum*, and *inversely as the productive power* of the labour embodying itself in the commodity.

Now we know the *substance* of value. It is *labour*. We know its unit of measurement. It is *labour-time*. We have yet to analyse its *form*, which precisely stamps the value as an *exchange-value*. Before we do that we must develop the determinations which have already been discovered in somewhat greater detail.

A thing can be a *use-value* without being an *exchange-value*. This is the case wherever the human relevance of the thing is not mediated by labour. So air, virgin land, brush in a wild. state, wood growing in wild conditions, etc. A thing can be useful and be the product of human labour without being a *commodity*. A man who satisfies his own need through his product creates use-value, to be sure, but not a commodity. In order to produce a commodity, he must produce not merely use-value, *but use-value for others – social use-value*. Finally, no entity can be a *value* without being an object of use. If it is useless, then the labour contained in it is also useless, does not count as labour and, hence, does not form a value.

Originally, the *commodity* appeared to us as a two-sided entity, use-value and exchange-value. As we consider the matter more closely it will appear that the *labour which is contained* in the commodity is two-sided, also. This aspect, which I am the first

to have developed in a critical way, is the starting point upon which comprehension of political economy depends.

Let us consider two commodities, a coat and 10 yards of linen, perhaps. Let the first have twice the value of the second, so that if 10 yards of linen = w , the coat = $2w$.

The coat is a use-value which satisfies a particular need. In order to produce it, a particular kind of purposeful productive activity is required. This is determined in accordance with purpose, manner of operation, object, means and result. The labour whose usefulness is represented in the use-value of its product or in the product in such wise that *its* product is a use-value, let such labour here be called for simplicity's sake simply *useful labour*. From this viewpoint it is constantly under consideration with respect to the utility, production of which is the intent of the labour.

Just as coat and linen are *qualitatively different use-values*, so the deployments of labour which mediate their realities are *qualitatively different – tailoring and weaving*. If those things were not qualitatively different use-values and hence products of qualitatively different useful deployments of labour, then they would never be able to confront each other as *commodities* at all. A coat is not exchanged for a coat. One use-value is not exchanged for the very same use-value.

In the totality of various use-values or commodity-incarnations, there appears a totality of varying deployments of useful labour – just as manifold and differing in genus, species, family, subspecies, variety: a *social division of labour*. This is the precondition for the existence of commodity production, and it is not the case that commodity production is the precondition for the existence of the social division of labour. In the community of ancient India, labour is socially divided without the *products* becoming *commodities*. Or a more immediate example, in every factory labour is systematically divided, but this division is not thereby mediated by the fact that the workers exchange *their individual products*. Only products of those deployments of private labour which are self-sufficient and independent of one another confront one another *as commodities*. So we have observed the following – that a particular purposefully productive activity or useful labour lurks in the use-value of every commodity. Use-values cannot confront one another as *commodities* unless deployments of qualitatively different useful labour lurk in them. In a society whose products *generally* assume the form of *commodity* (*i.e.*, in a society of commodity producers) this qualitative difference in the deployments of useful labour which are carried on independently of one another as the private businesses of self-sufficient producers develops into a multi-faceted system – to a social division of labour.

It is a matter of indifference, in any case, to the coat whether it is worn by the tailor or one of his customers. In both cases it acts as a use-value. Just as little, is the relationship between the coat and the labour which produced it changed in and for itself by virtue of

the fact that tailoring is a profession in itself – an independent member of the social division of labour. Where a need for clothing compelled him, man plied the activity of tailor for whole millenia before he became a tailor instead of a man. But the reality of coat, linen, and every element of material *wealth* which is not given by nature in all cases had to be mediated by a special, purposely productive activity which assimilates particular natural entities to human needs. As the former of use-values, as *useful labour*, labour is thereby the precondition of existence for man – independent of all social forms – and an eternal necessity of nature for the sake of mediating the material interchange between man and nature (i.e., human life).

The use-values coat, linen, etc. – in brief, the commodity-bodies – are connections of two elements, natural matter and labour. If one subtracts the total sum of all different instances of useful labour which lurk inside the coat, linen, etc., there always remains a material substrate left over which is present naturally without the interference of man. Man can only proceed in his producing like nature does herself; i.e., only *change the forms of material*. And what is more, in this labour of formation itself he is constantly supported by natural forces. *Labour* is not, therefore, the *only source* of those use-values which are produced by it – material wealth. Labour is its father, as William Petty says, and the earth is its mother.

Now let us pass from the consideration of the commodity insofar as it is a use-object to that of commodity-value (i.e., exchange-value).

According to our assumption the coat has double the value of linen. This, however, is only a *quantitative* difference, which is not yet of immediate interest to us. We recall, therefore, that if the value of a coat is twice as great as that of 10 yards of linen, then 20 yards of linen have the *same amount of value as a coat*. As values, a coat and linen are things of *equal substance*, objective expressions of *similar labour*. But *tailoring* and *weaving* are qualitatively different kinds of labour. Conditions of society, however, are found, wherein the *very same person* alternately tailors and weaves; and both these modes of labouring are therefore merely *modifications of the labour of one and the same individual*, and are not yet specific definite functions of different individuals: just as the coat which our tailor makes today, and the trousers which he is to make tomorrow only presuppose variations of the same individual labour. Appearance itself teaches, moreover, that in our capitalistic society *a given portion of human labour* is adduced alternately in the form of tailoring or in the form of weaving on each occasion in accordance with the shifting direction of the demand for labour. This changing of form which labour endures may occur not without friction – but it must occur. If one disregards the determinacy of productive activity and therefore disregards the useful character of labour, it remains true about it that it is an *expenditure of human labour power*. The labour of a tailor and weaving, although they are qualitatively different productive

activities, are both productive expenditure of *human* brain, muscle, nerve, hand, etc., and are both in this sense *human labour*. They are merely two different forms of expending human labour power.

Admittedly, human labour itself has to be more or less developed in order to be expended in this or that form. The value of the commodities, however, represents human labour in the simplest form, the expenditure of *human labour* power in general. Now just as a general or a banker plays a big role in bourgeois society but the simple *human being*, on the other hand, plays a very shabby role, that is the way things stand here also in the case of *human labour*. It is the expenditure of *simple* labour power, which every normal human being possesses in his bodily organism, quite apart from any special elaboration.

[Take the labour-power of a farm labourer, for example, for simple labour-power, and take the expenditure of that labour-power consequently for *simple labour* or *human labour* without further adornment; but take the labour of tailoring, on the other hand, for the expenditure of more highly-developed labour-power. While the working-day of the farm labourer is represented consequently by the value expression $\frac{1}{2}w$ (say), the working-day of the tailor is represented by the value expression w . This difference, however, is merely *quantitative*. If the coat is the product of one working-day of the tailor, it has the same value as the product of two working-days of the farm labourer. In this way, however, the tailor's work counts only on each occasion as *multiplied* farm-labourer's work.]

The various proportions wherein differing species of labour are reduced to simple labour as their unit of measurement are established by a social process behind the back of the producers, and appear to them consequently as given by tradition. For purposes of simplification, every species of labour-power counts for us in the following immediately as *simple* labour-power, whereby we are only sparing ourselves the effort involved in the reduction to it.

Therefore, just as one is abstracting, in the case of the *values* of coat and linen, from the difference between their *use-values*, just so, in the case of the labour which these *values* represent, is one abstracting from the difference between the *useful forms*, wherein labour is on the one hand *tailoring-labour* and on the other hand *weaving*. Just as the *use-values* coat and linen are connections of purposeful productive activities with cloth and yarn, whereas the *values*, coat and linen, on the other hand, are mere labour-precipitates of a similar species, just so does also the labour contained in these *values* count *not* on account of its productive relationship to cloth and yarn *but* only as *expenditure of human labour-power*. Tailoring and weaving are formative elements of the *use-values* coat and linen precisely by virtue of their *different* qualities; but they are only the *substance* of coat-value and linen-value insofar as there is an *abstracting* from their specific quality and both possess the *same quality*, the *quality of human labour*. Coat and linen, however, are not only *values in general*, but are values of definite

magnitude and in accordance with our assumption the coat is worth twice as much as 10 yards of linen. What is the origin of this difference in their *magnitudes of value*? It is the fact that linen contains only half as much labour as the coat, so that labour power has to be expended for a period of twice the *time* taken for the production of the latter as for the production of the former.

If, therefore, with respect to the *use-value*, the labour contained in the commodity counts only qualitatively, with respect to the *magnitude of exchange-value* it counts only *quantitatively*, after being already reduced to human labour without further quality. In the former case, what is at issue is the *how* and *what* of labour; and in the latter case, what matters is its *how much*, its temporal duration. Since the quantity of exchange-value of a commodity measures only the quantum of the labour contained in it, hence commodities within a certain proportion to one another must always be equally large exchange-values.

If the productive power of (say) all the useful deployments of labour required for the production of a coat remains unchanged, then the magnitude of value of the coats rises along with their own quantity. If one coat represents x days of labour, then two coats represent $2x$ days of labour, etc. But now assume that the labour-time necessary for the production of a coat rises to twice as much, or falls to half as much. In the first instance, a coat has as much value as two coats had previously; and in the latter case, two coats have only just so much value as previously one had, although in both cases a coat performs the same tasks as before and the useful labour contained in it remains of the same beneficence as before. But the labour-quantum expended in its production has changed.

A larger quantum of use-value in and for itself forms larger *material wealth*, two coats being more than one. With two coats two human beings can be clad, and with one coat only one human being, etc. Nevertheless, a fall in the *magnitude of value* of material wealth may correspond contemporaneously to a rise in its mass. This contrary motion is produced by the *two-sided specification* of labour. Productive power is naturally always productive power of useful, concrete labour. Actually, it only expresses the level of efficacy of purposeful activity in a given extension of time. Useful labour becomes, therefore, a richer or poorer source of products in *direct relationship* to the rising or falling of its productive power. A change in the productive power, on the other hand, has in and for itself no effect whatsoever upon the labour represented in the *value*. Since the productive power belongs to the concrete, useful form of labour, it can naturally no longer influence labour, as soon as there is an abstracting from its concrete useful form. The very same labour, therefore, when it is represented in the *same extensions of time*, is also on all occasions represented in the *same magnitude of value* – however much the productive power may change. But it yields *differing quanta of use values*, within the *same extension of time*: more whenever the productive power rises; less, whenever it sinks. In the first case, it can happen that two coats contain less labour than one did previously. The

very same change in productive power, which increases the fruitfulness of labour and hence the mass of use-values yielded by it, can therefore diminish the *magnitude of value* even of the *increased* total mass – namely whenever it shortens the *labour-time* necessary for its production. And vice versa.

It follows from the preceding not that there are two differing kinds of labour lurking in the commodity, but rather that the *same* labour is specified in differing and even contradictory manner – in accordance with whether it is related to the use-value of the commodity as labour's *product* or related to the *commodity-value* as its merely *objective* expression. Just as the commodity must be above all else an object of use in order to be a value, just so does labour have to be before all else useful labour – purposeful, productive activity – in order to count as *expenditure of human labour-power* and hence as simple *human labour*.

Since up to now it has only been the substance of value and the magnitude of value which have been specified, let us now direct our attention to the analysis of the *form of value*.

First let us turn back to the first *form of appearance* of the *value* of the commodity.

We take two quanta of commodities which cost the *same amount* of *labour-time* for their production (and hence are *equal magnitudes of value*), and we have: 40 yards of linen are *worth* two coats. We observe that the *value* of the linen is expressed in a specific quantum of *coats*.

The *value* of a commodity is called its *relative value*, if it is represented in the *use-value* of another commodity in this fashion.

The relative value of a commodity can change, although its value remains constant. And, going the other way, its relative value can remain constant, although its value changes. The equation: 40 yards of linen = 2 coats presupposes after all that both commodities cost equally much labour. With every change in the productive power of the deployments of labour which produce them there is a change in the labour-time necessary for their production. Let us consider the influence of such changes upon relative value.

I. Let the value of the linen change, while the coat-*value* remains constant. If the labour-time expended in the production of linen doubles (perhaps as a consequence of increasing sterility of the soil employed in growing flax), then its value doubles. In place of: 40 yards of linen = 2 coats, we would have: 40 yards of linen = 4 coats, since 2 coats now contain only half as much labour-time as 40 yards of linen. If the labour-time necessary for the production of linen decreases by half, on the other hand (perhaps as a consequence of improved looms), in that case the linen-*value* sinks by half. In consideration of this we now have: 40 yards of linen = 1 coat. The *relative value* of commodity A (i.e. its value

expressed in commodity B) rises and falls in direct ratio to the value of commodity A, while the value of commodity B remains equal.

II. Let the value of linen remain constant, while the coat-*value* changes. If the labour-time necessary for the production of the coat doubles under these conditions (perhaps as a consequence of a disappointing shearing of sheep), then we have instead of: 40 yards of linen = 2 coats, now: *40 yards of linen = 1 coat*. If the value of the coat falls by half, on the other hand, then: 40 yards of linen = 4 coats. Given a constant value for commodity A, its relative value (expressed in commodity B) falls or rises *in inverse ratio to the change in value of B*.

If one compares the different cases sub I and II, what emerges is that *one and the same change of relative value can be initiated from completely opposite causes*. The equation: 40 yards of linen = 2 coats becomes 1) the equation: 40 yards of linen = 4 coats, either because the value of linen doubles or the value of the coat falls by half, and 2) the equation: 40 yards of linen = 1 coat, either because the value of linen sinks by half or the value of the coat rises to twice as much.

III. Let the labour-quantum necessary for the production of linen and coat vary contemporaneously, in the same direction and same proportion. In this case, 40 yards of linen = 2 coats, the same as before, however their values may have changed. Their change of value becomes apparent as soon as one compares them with a third commodity, whose value remains constant. If the values of *all* commodities rose or fell contemporaneously and in the same proportion, then their *relative values* would remain unchanged. One would only detect their real change of value in the fact that in the same labour-time it would hold universally that a greater or smaller quantum of commodities was yielded than before.

IV. Let labour-times necessary for the production of linen and coat, respectively (and consequently their values) be assumed to change contemporaneously in the same direction, but to an unequal degree, or in opposite directions, etc. The influence of all such possible combinations upon the relative value of a commodity may be deduced simply by application of the cases I, II and III.

What we have investigated is how far change in the *relative magnitude of value* of a commodity (linen) reflects a change in its *own magnitude of value* and we have in general investigated *relative value* only in accordance with its *quantitative* side. We now turn to its *form*. If relative value is the form *wherein value manifests itself*, then the expression for the equivalence of *two* commodities (e.g., x of commodity A = y of commodity B, or 20 yards of linen = one coat) is the *simple form of relative value*.

I. *First or simple form of relative value: 20 yards of linen = 1 coat (x of commodity A = y of commodity B).* This form is rather difficult to analyse, because it is *simple*. The different specifications which are contained in it are veiled, undeveloped, abstract, and consequently only able to be distinguished and focused upon through the rather intense application of our power of abstraction. But at least this much becomes clear at a glance, that the *form* remains the same, whether 20 yards of linen = 1 coat, or 20 yards of linen = x coats.

Linen makes its earthly appearance in the shape of a *use-value* or useful thing. Its stiff-as-linen corporeality or *natural form* is consequently not its *form of value*, but its direct opposite. It reveals its own *reality as value* immediately by *relating* itself to *another* commodity (the coat) as *equal to itself*. If it were not itself value, then it could not relate itself to coat (as value) as *its own sort of thing*. It posits itself as *qualitatively* equal to the coat, by relating itself to it as *objectification of human labour of the same species, i.e., of its own value-substance*; and it posits itself as equal to only one coat instead of x coats, because it is not just value in general, but value of a *specific magnitude* – and a coat, however, contains precisely just so *much* labour as 20 yards of linen. By this relationship to the coat, linen swats different flies with one stroke. By *equating* the *other* commodity to *itself as value*, it *relates itself to itself as value*. By relating itself to itself as *value*, it *distinguishes* itself from *itself as use-value*, at the same time. By *expressing* its *magnitude of value in the coat* (and magnitude of value is both things: value in general, and quantitatively measured value), it endows its *reality as value* with a *form of value* which differs from its immediate existence. By revealing itself in this manner as a thing which is differentiated within itself, it reveals itself for the first *time* really as a *commodity* – a useful thing which is at the same time value. Insofar as linen is use-value, it is an *independent thing*. Its *value appears*, on the other hand only *in relationship* to *another commodity* (e.g., the coat), which a coat is, is qualitatively *equated* to it (the linen), and consequently in *some specific quantity* counts as equivalent to it, replaces it and is exchangeable for it. Hence, *value* only acquires an individual *form which is different* from use-value only through its manifestation as *exchange-value*.

The expression of the *value* of linen in the coat impresses a new form upon the coat itself. After all, what is the meaning of the *value-form* of linen? Evidently that the coat is exchangeable for it. Whatever else may happen to it, in its mundane reality it possesses in *its natural form* (coat) now the form of *immediate exchangeability with another commodity*, the form of an exchangeable use-value, or *Equivalent*. The specification of the Equivalent contains not only the fact that a commodity *is value* at all, but the fact that it in its *corporeal* shape (its use-value) *counts as value for another commodity* and consequently is immediately at hand as *exchange-value* for the other commodity.

As *value*, linen is composed *exclusively* of labour, and forms a transparently crystallized precipitate of labour. In reality this crystal is very murky, however. In so far as labour is detectable in it (and not every embodiment of commodity reveals the trace of labour), it is not some undifferentiated human labour, but rather: weaving, spinning, etc. – which, in addition, are by no means the only components of its substance but of course are leavened with matter derived from nature. In order to retain linen as a merely corporeal expression of human labour one has to abstract from all that which makes it to be really a thing. Any objectivity of human labour which is itself abstract (i.e., without any additional quality and content) is necessarily an abstract objectivity – a *thing of thought*. In that fashion, a web of flax turns into a chimera. But *commodities are objects*. They have to be what they are in an object-like way or else reveal it in their own object-like relationships. In the production of linen, a particular quantum of human labour *exists* in having been expended. The linen's value is the merely *objective reflection* of the labour so expended, but it is not reflected in the body of the linen. It *reveals* itself (i.e., acquires a sensual expression) by its *value-relationship* to the coat. By the linen's *equating* the coat to itself *as value* – while at the same time *distinguishing* itself from the coat as *object of use* – what happens is that the coat becomes the *form of appearance* of *linen-value* as opposed to linen-body: its *value-form* as distinguished from its *natural form*.

In the expression of relative value: 20 yards of linen = 1 coat (or, x linen is *worth* y of coat), one must admit that the coat counts only *as value* or coagulation of labour, but it is precisely through that fact that the coagulation of labour counts *as coat*, and coat as the form into which human labour flows in order to congeal. The use-value coat only becomes the form of appearance of linen-value because linen relates itself to the *material of the coat as to an immediate materialization of abstract human labour*, and thus to labour which is of the same kind as that which is objectified within the linen itself. The object, coat, counts for it as a sensually palpable objectification of human labour of the same kind, and consequently as value in natural form. Since it is, as value, of the same essence as the coat, the natural form coat thereby becomes the form of appearance of its own value. But the labour represented in the *use-value*, coat, is not simply human labour, but is rather a particular useful labour: *tailoring*. Simple human labour (expenditure of human labour-power) is capable of receiving each and every determination, it is true, but is undetermined just in and for itself. It can only realize and objectify itself as soon as human labour-power is expended in a *determined form*, as *determined and specified* labour; because it is only *determined and specified* labour which can be confronted by some natural entity – an external material in which labour objectifies itself. It is only the 'concept' in Hegel's sense that manages to objectify itself without external material.^[1]

Time cannot be related to the coat as value or *incarnated human labour*, without being related to *tailoring-labour as the immediate manifestation-form of human labour*. The aspect of the use value, coat, however, which is of interest to the linen is neither its

woollen comfort, nor its buttoned-up essence nor any other useful quality which marks it out as a use-value. The coat is of service to the linen only in order to represent the linen's value-objectivity as distinguished from its starchy use-objectivity. It could have attained the same purpose if it had expressed its value in *assa foetida* or cosmetics, or shoe polish. The *tailoring labour*, too, has value for the linen, consequently, not insofar as it is purposeful productive labour, but only insofar as it exists as *determinate* labour, form of realization, manner of objectification of human labour in general. If linen expressed its value in shoe polish rather than in the coat, then polish-making would count for it as *the* immediate form of realization of abstract human labour instead of tailoring. So a use-value or commodity-body only becomes a form of appearance of value or an Equivalent by another commodity's relating itself to the concrete, useful species of labour contained in it, as the immediate form of realization of abstract human labour.

We stand here at the jumping-off point of all difficulties which hinder the understanding of *value-form*. It is relatively easy to distinguish the value of the commodity from its use-value, or the labour which forms the use-value from that same labour insofar as it is merely reckoned as the expenditure of human labour power in the commodity-value. If one considers commodity or labour in the one form, then one fails to consider it in the other, and vice versa. These abstract opposites fall apart on their own, and hence are easy to keep separate. It is different with the *value-form* which exists only in the relationship of commodity to commodity. The use-value or commodity-body is here playing a new role. It is turning into the form of appearance of the commodity-value, thus of its own opposite. Similarly, the *concrete*, useful labour contained in the use-value turns into its own opposite, to the mere form of realization of *abstract* human labour. Instead of falling apart, the opposing determinations of the commodity are reflected against one another. However incomprehensible this seems at first sight, it reveals itself upon further consideration to be necessary. The commodity is right from the start a *dual* thing, use-value *and* value, product of useful labour *and* abstract coagulate of labour. In order to manifest itself as what it is, it must therefore *double* its form. It possesses right from nature the form of a use-value. That is its natural form. It only earns a value form for itself for the first time in circulation with other commodities. But its value-form has then to be itself an *objective* form. The only objective forms of commodities are their use forms, their natural forms.

Now since the natural form of a commodity (e.g., linen) is the exact opposite of its value-form, it has to turn *another* natural form – the *natural form of another commodity* – into its *commodity form*. A thing that it cannot do immediately for itself it can do immediately for another commodity, and therefore by a detour for itself. It cannot express its value in its own body or in its own use-value, but it can relate itself to another use-value or commodity-body as an immediately existent value. It can relate itself not to the concrete labour contained in itself, but doubtless to that contained in another species

of commodity as a mere form of realization of abstract human labour. For that, it only needs to equate the other commodity to itself as an *Equivalent*. The use-value of a commodity only exists at all for another commodity insofar as it serves in this fashion for the form of appearance of its value. If one considers only the *quantitative* relationship in the simple, relative value-expression: x commodity A = y commodity B, then one finds also only the laws developed above concerning the motion of relative value, which all rest upon the fact that the amount of value of commodities is determined by the labour-time required for their production. But if one considers the value relation of both commodities in their *qualitative* aspect, then one discovers in that simple expression of value the mystery of value form, and hence, *in nuce*^[2] of money.^[3]

Our analysis has revealed that the *relative value-expression of a commodity includes two different value forms*. The linen expresses its value and its *determinate amount of value* in the coat. It manifests its value in the *value-relation* to another commodity, and hence as *exchange-value*. On the other hand, the other commodity, the coat *in which* it expresses its value in a relative way, obtains precisely in that way the form of a use-value as an *equivalent* which is immediately exchangeable with it. Both forms, the *relative value-form* of the one commodity, *equivalent* form of the other, are forms of exchange-value. Both are actually only *vectors* – determinations conditioned reciprocally by each other – *of the same relative value-expression*, but divided like poles between the two commodity-extremes which have been set equal.

Quantitative determinacy is not included in the *equivalent-form* of a commodity. The determinate relationship (e.g., in which coat is the equivalent of linen) does not flow from its equivalent-form, *the form of its immediate exchangeability* with linen, but from the determination of the amount of value by labour-time. The linen is only able to represent its own value in coats, by relating itself to a determinate coat-quantum as a *given quantum* of crystallized human labour. If the *coat-value* changes, then this relationship also changes. But in order that relative value of linen may change, it has to be present, and it can only be formed upon given coat-value. Now, whether the linen represents its own value in 1, 2 or x coats depends (under this presupposition) completely upon the amount of value of a yard of linen and the number of yards whose value is supposed to be manifested in the form of coats. *The amount of value of a commodity* can only *express* it in the use-value of another commodity as *relative value*. A commodity only obtains the form of an immediately exchangeable use-value (which is what is meant by ‘equivalent’) on the other hand, only as the *material in which* the value of another commodity is expressed.

This distinction is obscured by a characteristic peculiarity of the relative value-expression in its simple or first form. The equation: 20 yards of linen = 1 coat (or 20 yards of linen are worth a coat) includes, after all, precisely the identical equation: 1 coat = 20

yards of linen (or one coat is worth 20 yards of linen). The relative value-expression of the linen, in which the coat figures as Equivalent, thus contains *from the reverse* the relative value-expression of the coat, in which the linen figures as Equivalent.

Although both determinations of the *value form* or both modes of manifestation of the commodity-value as *exchange-value* are only *relative*, they do not both *appear* relative to the same degree. In the *relative value* of the linen (20 yards of linen = 1 coat), the *exchange-value* of linen is expressly manifested as *its relationship to another commodity*. As far as the coat is concerned, it is admittedly an *Equivalent* insofar as linen *is related to* the coat as form of appearance of its own value, and hence as something immediately exchangeable with itself (the linen). Only *within* this relationship is the coat an Equivalent. But it conducts itself passively. It seizes no kind of initiative. It finds itself in relationship because things relate themselves to it. The character which is constituted for it out of its *relationship* with the linen thus does not appear as the result of *its own relating*, but as present without any additional activity of its own. In addition, the *specific mode and manner* in which the linen relates to the coat is exactly appropriate to the end of doing it to the coat, however modest it be and however far from being the product of a 'tailor run mad with pride'. The linen, after all, relates itself to the coat as the sensually existing materialization of human labour *in abstracto* and hence as *present value-body*. It is this only because and insofar as the linen *relates* itself to the coat in this specific manner. Its status as an *Equivalent* is (so to speak) only a *reflection-determination*^[4] of linen. But the situation *seems* just the reverse. On the one hand, the coat does not take the trouble to relate itself to anything. On the other hand, the linen relates itself to the coat, not in order to make it into something, but because it is something quite apart from anything the linen might do. The resultant product of the linen's relating to the coat (its Equivalent-form, its determinacy as an immediately exchangeable use-value) appears to belong to the coat in a *corporeal way* even *outside* the relating to the linen, in just the same way as its property of being able to keep people warm (for example). In the first or simple form of relative value (20 yards of linen – one coat), this false seeming is *not yet established*, because this form expresses in an immediate way also the opposite, that the coat is an Equivalent of the linen, and that each of the two commodities only possesses this determination because and insofar as the other makes it into its own relative value-expression.^[5]

In the simple form of relative value or the expression of the equivalence of *two* commodities, the development of the *form* of value is *correspondent* for both commodities, although in each case in the *opposite* direction. The *relative value-expression* is in addition *identical* with reference to each of both commodities, for the linen manifests its value in only *one* commodity (the coat) and vice versa, but this value expression is *double* for *both* commodities, different for each of the same. Finally, each of

both commodities is only an Equivalent for the single other species of commodity, and thus only a *single Equivalent*.

Such an equation as '20 yards of linen = 1 coat' (or twenty yards of linen *are worth* one coat) evidently expresses the value of the commodity in only a very limited and one-sided way. If I compare the linen, for example, with other commodities instead of coats, then I also obtain *other relative value-expressions*, other *equations* (like 20 yards of linen = u coffee; 20 yards of linen = v tea, etc.). The linen has *just as many different relative value-expressions* as there exist commodities different from it, and the number of its relative value-expressions constantly increases with the number of kinds of commodities which newly enter into existence.

The first form (20 yards of linen = 1 coat) yielded *two relative expressions* for the value of *two* commodities. This second form yields the most variegated mosaic of relative expressions for *the value of the same commodity*. In addition, there seems to be nothing gained *either* for the expression of the *amount* of value (for the *amount of value* of linen – which obviously remains the same in every expression – is just as exhaustively expressed in '20 yards of linen = 1 coat' as in '20 yards of linen = u coffee, etc.'), the coffee and the etcetera are only *single Equivalents*, just as the coat was.

Nevertheless, this second form contains within itself an essential development of form. For latent in it is, after all, not only the fact that linen happens to express its value at one time in coats, and at another in coffee, etc., but the fact that it expresses its value *as much* in coats *as* in coffee, etc.: *either* in *this* commodity or that or the *third*, etc. The continuing determination is revealed as soon as this second or *developed form of the relative value-expression* is manifested in its connection. We obtain then:

II. Second or developed form of relative value: 20 yards of linen = one coat *or* = u coffee *or* = v tea *or* = x iron *or* = y wheat *or* etc., etc. z commodity A = u commodity B *or* = v commodity C *or* = w commodity D = x commodity E *or* = y commodity F *or* = etc.

The first thing is obviously that the first form constitutes the *basic element* of the second, for the latter consists of many simple relative value-expressions, as '20 yards of linen = one coat', '20 yards of linen u coffee', etc.

In the first form (20 yards of linen = 1 coat) it may appear like an accidental fact that these two commodities are exchangeable in this *specific quantitative relationship*. In the second form, however, a background which is essentially different from and determinant of the accidental appearance immediately shines through. The value of the linen remains equally large, whether expressed in coat, or coffee, or iron, etc., in innumerable different commodities belonging to the most different possessors. The accidental relationship of two individual possessors of commodities falls away. It becomes clear that it is not the

exchange which regulates the amount of value of the commodity, but in the opposite way the amount of value of the commodity which regulates its relationships of exchange.

In the expression '20 yards of linen = 1 coat', the coat counted as the form of appearance of the work objectified *in the linen*. In that way the labour contained in the linen was equated to the labour contained in the coat, and was thereby determined as comparable *human* labour. This determination did not, however, reveal itself *expressly*. At the level of immediacy, the first form equates the labour contained in the linen only to the labour of tailoring. Otherwise with the second form. In the indefinite, constantly extendable series of its relative value-expressions, the linen relates itself to all possible commodity-bodies as mere form of appearance of the labour which is contained in itself. Consequently it is at this point that the linen value is for the first time really manifested as *value, i.e., or crystal of human labour in general*. The second form consists of a *sum* of the familiar equations of the first form. Each of these equations (like '20 yards of linen = 1 coat',) contains also the reciprocal '1 coat – 20 yards of linen', in which case the coat manifests its value in the linen and precisely thereby manifests the linen as an Equivalent. Now, since this holds of each of the innumerable relative value-expressions of linen, we obtain:

III. Third, reversed or reciprocal second form of relative value:

1 coat	=	20 yards of linen
u coffee	=	"
v tea	=	"
x iron	=	"
y wheat etc.	=	"

The *relative value-expression* returns at this point to its original form: 1 coat = 20 yards of linen. Now, however, this simple equation is further developed. Originally it only contained the fact that the *value* of the coat obtains through its expression in *another* commodity a *form which is different from and independent of the exchange-value* coat or even the *body of the coat*. Now the very same form manifests the coat with *respect to all other commodities whatsoever* as *value*. Not only the coat, but also coffee, iron, wheat, in a word, all other commodities express their value in the *material, linen*. In this way, all manifest themselves to one another as the *same materialization of human labour*. They are henceforward only *quantitatively* different, which is the reason why one coat, u coffee, x iron, etc. – i.e., *different quanta* of these different things – equal 20 yards of linen (equal to the *same quantum* of objectified human labour). It is through their *common* value-expression in the material, linen, therefore, that all commodities *differ* as *exchange-values* from their own *use-values* and relate at the same time to one another as *amounts of value*, *equate* themselves *qualitatively* to one another, and *compare* themselves *quantitatively*. Only in this *unified* relative value-expression do they all *appear* for the first time as *values* for one another, and their value consequently obtains

for the first time its corresponding form of *appearance as exchange-value*. As opposed to the *developed* form of relative value (form II) which manifests the value of a commodity in the environment of *all other* commodities, we call this *unified* value-expression the *universal relative form of value*.

In form II (20 yards of linen = 1 coat or = *u* coffee, or *v* tea or *x* iron, etc.), the form in which the linen develops its *relative value-expression*, it relates itself to each individual commodity (coat, coffee, etc.) as a *specific Equivalent*, and to all of them together as to the *environment of its specific forms of the Equivalent*. No individual species of commodity counts any longer with respect to the linen as simple Equivalent, as in the *particular* Equivalent, but only as *specific* Equivalent whereby the one Equivalent excludes the other. In form III (which is the reciprocal second form, and is therefore contained in it), the linen appears on the other hand as the *general form* of the Equivalent for all other commodities. It is as if alongside and external to lions, tigers, rabbits, and all other actual animals, which form when grouped together the various kinds, species, subspecies, families etc. of the animal kingdom, there existed also in addition *the animal*, the individual incarnation of the entire animal kingdom. Such a particular which contains within itself all really present species of the same entity is a *universal* (like *animal*, *god*, etc.). Just as linen consequently became an *individual Equivalent* by the fact that *one* other commodity related itself to it as form of appearance of value, that is the way linen becomes – as the form of appearance of value common to all commodities – the *universal Equivalent universal value-body, universal materialization of abstract human labour*. The *specific* labour materialized in it now thereby counts as *universal form of realization* of human labour, as *universal labour*.

During the process in which the value of commodity A is displayed in commodity B (whereby commodity B becomes a single Equivalent), it was indifferent of what specific type commodity B happened to be. The corporeality of commodity B only had to be of a *different* species than that of commodity A, and therefore had also to be a product of *other useful labour*. By the coat's displaying its value in linen, it related itself to linen as *the realized human labour*, and precisely thereby related itself to *linen-weaving as the realization-form of human labour*, but the *specific* determinacy which *distinguishes* linen-weaving from other kinds of labour was completely indifferent. It only had to be of another kind than tailoring and in any case had to be a *specific* kind of labour. It is otherwise as soon as linen becomes a *universal Equivalent*. This use-value – in its *special* determinacy through which it is *linen* as opposed to all other kinds of commodities (coffee, iron, etc.) – now becomes the universal form of value of all other commodities and hence a *universal Equivalent*. The *particular* useful kind of labour manifested in it therefore now counts as *universal form of realization of human labour*, as *universal labour* precisely insofar as it is labour of *particular* determinacy: *linen weaving as* opposed, not only to tailoring, but to coffee growing, mining, and *all other kinds* of labour.

On the other hand, all other kinds of labour count (in the *relative value-expression* of linen – the universal Equivalent: form II), henceforth only as *particular forms of realization* of human labour.

As *values* the commodities are expressions of the *same unity*, of abstract human labour. In the form of *exchange value* they appear to one another as *values* and relate themselves to one another as *values*. They thereby relate themselves at the same time to abstract human labour as their *common social substance*. Their *social* relationship consists exclusively in counting with respect to one another as expressions of this social substance of theirs which differs only quantitatively, but which is qualitatively equal and hence replaceable and interchangeable with one another. As a useful thing, a commodity possesses social determinacy insofar as it is use-value for people other than its possessor, and hence satisfies social needs. But it is indifferent just whose needs the commodity's useful properties relate it to. The commodity nevertheless can only become through these properties in all cases only an object related to human needs, but not a commodity for other *commodities*. It is only the kind of thing that can turn mere objects of use into *commodities* and hence set into *social rapport*. But this is just what *value* is. The *form* in which the commodities *count to* one another as values – as coagulations of human labour – is consequently their *social form*. *Social form* of the commodity and *value-form* or form of *exchangeability* are thus one and the same thing. If the natural form of a commodity is at the same time its value-form, then the commodity possesses the form of *immediate exchangeability* with other commodities and consequently an *immediately social form*.

The *simple relative value form (form I)* 'One coat = 20 yards of linen', differs from the *universal relative value-form*, 'One coat = 20 yards linen' only by the fact that this equation now forms a member in the series:

1 coat	=	20 yards of linen
u coffee	=	
v tea	=	
etc	=	

In actuality, it differs thus only in the fact that the linen has continued its development from a *singular* to a *universal Equivalent*. Thus if in the simple relative expression of value it is not that commodity which expresses its *amount of value*, but rather that commodity in which the *amount of value* is expressed which is the one that obtains the *form of immediate exchangeability* (equivalent form: hence, immediately social form), the same thing holds true for the universal relative value expression. But in the simple relative form of value this distinction is merely formal and evanescent. If the coat expresses its value in a relative way (that is, in linen) in the equation 'One coat = 20 yards of linen', and the linen acquires thereby the form of Equivalent, then the very same

equation includes immediately the reciprocity '20 yards of linen – one coat', in which it is the coat that acquires the form of Equivalent and the value of the linen is expressed in a relative way. This constant and correlative development of the value-form of both commodities as relative value and as Equivalent no longer takes place. If the universal relative value-form, 'One coat = 20 yards of linen', (where the linen is *universal Equivalent*) is turned around into '20 yards of linen = one coat', the coat does not thereby become universal Equivalent for all other commodities, but only a particular Equivalent of the linen. The relative value-form of the coat is only *universal* because it is the relative value-form of all other commodities at the same time. What holds true of the coat, holds true of coffee, etc. It follows, therefore, that the universal relative value-form of commodities *excludes* these very commodities from the universal form of Equivalent. On the other hand, a commodity like linen is excluded from the universal relative value-form as soon as it possesses the universal form of Equivalent. The universal relative value form of linen, unified with the other commodities, would be '20 yards of linen = 20 yards of linen'. But this is a tautology which does not express the *amount of value* of this commodity, which is situated in a universal form of Equivalent – and thereby in perpetually exchangeable form. Rather, it is the *developed relative* value-form (20 yards of linen = one coat *or* u coffee *or* = v tea *or* = etc.) that now becomes the *specific* relative value-expression of the universal Equivalent.

Every commodity (coat, coffee, tea, etc.) possesses in the universal relative value-expression of commodities a *value-form* which is different from its natural form – namely, the form: linen. And it is precisely in this form that they relate themselves to one another as exchangeables and exchangeables in relationships which are quantitatively determined, since, if one coat = 20 yards of linen, u coffee = 20 yards of linen, etc., then it is also true that one coat = u coffee, etc. All commodities by mirroring themselves in one and the same commodity as quantities of value, reflect themselves reciprocally as quantities of value. But the natural forms which they possess as objects of use count for them reciprocally as forms of appearance of value only over this detour, and consequently not in an immediate way. They are not for *that* reason immediately exchangeable just because of the way they immediately *are*. Thus they do not possess the *form of immediate exchangeability* for one another; i.e., their *socially valid form* is a *mediated* one. It is the other way around. It is through the fact that all other commodities relate themselves to linen as form of appearance of value, that the natural form of linen becomes the *form of its immediate exchangeability* with all commodities – and consequently its *universal social form* in an immediate way.

A commodity only acquires the *universal Equivalent-form* because and insofar as it serves all other commodities in the manifesting of their *universal relative* (and hence *not immediate*) value-form. Commodities, however, have to endow themselves with relative value-form in general, because their natural-forms are only their forms of use-value, and

they have to endow themselves with unified (and hence universal) relative value-forms in order for all of them to relate to one another as values, as homogeneous coagulations of human labour. A *single* commodity, therefore, only finds itself in the form of immediate exchangeability with all other commodities, and therefore in immediately social form, because and insofar as *all other commodities do not* find themselves therein, or because the commodity by its very nature does *not* in general find itself in an immediately exchangeable or social form, by virtue of the fact that its immediate form is the form of its use-value, not of its value.

One does not by any means actually detect in the form of *universal immediate exchangeability* that it is a *contradictory* form of commodity: just as inseparable from the form of *not immediate* exchangeability as the positivity of one pole of a magnet is from the negativity of the other. Consequently, one can imagine that one could impress the mark of immediate exchangeability on all commodities at the same time, just as one can also imagine that one could make all workers into *capitalists*. Actually, however, *universal relative value-form* and *universal Equivalent-form* are the contradictory, reciprocally-presupposing and reciprocally repelling poles of the *very same* social form of commodities.

As *immediate social materialization of labour*, linen is (as the universal Equivalent) *materialization of immediately social labour*, while other bodies of commodities, which represent their value in linen, are materializations of *not-immediately social labours*.

Actually, all use-values are only commodities because they are *products of private labours which are independent of one another* private labours which, however, depend materially upon one another as particular members (even though rendered self-sufficient) of the primordial system of *division of labour*. In this fashion, they hang together socially precisely through their *differentiation*, their *particular usefulness*. That is exactly the reason why they produce qualitatively differing use-values.

If they did not, then these use-values would not become commodities for one another. On the other hand, this differing useful quality does not yet make products into commodities. If a peasant family produces coat, linen and wheat for its own consumption, then these things confront the family as differing products of their family labour, but do not confront one another reciprocally as commodities. If the commodity were *immediately social* (i.e., common) labour, then the products would acquire the immediately social character of a common product for its producers, but not the character of commodities for one another. Nevertheless, we do not have far to seek, in this case, for that in which the *social form* of the *private labours* consists, which are contained in the commodities and are independent of one another. It already yielded itself out of the analysis of the commodity. The commodities' social form is their relationship to one another as *equal labour*; hence – since the *equality of toto coelo* [utterly] *different*

labours can only consist in an *abstraction from their inequality* their relationship to one another as *human labour* in general: *expenditures of human labour-power*, which is what all human labours – whatever their content and their mode of operation – actually *are*. In each social form of labour, the labours of different individuals are related to one another as human labours too, but in this case this *relating itself* counts as the *specifically social form* of the labours. Now none of these private labours in its natural form possesses this specifically social form of abstract human labour, just as little as the commodity in its natural form possesses the social form of mere coagulation of labour, or value. However, through the fact that the natural form of a commodity (linen, in this case) becomes a universal Equivalent-form because all other commodities relate themselves to this natural form as the appearance-form of their own value, hence linen-weaving also turns into a universal form of realization of abstract human labour or into labour of immediately social form. The standard of ‘socialness’ must be borrowed from the nature of those relationships which are proper to each mode of production, and not from conceptions which are foreign to it. Just as we demonstrated earlier that the commodity naturally excludes the immediate form of universal exchange-ability and that the universal Equivalent-form consequently can only develop in a *contradictory way*, so the same thing holds for the private labours lurking in the commodities. Since they are *not-immediately social* labour, in the first place the *social form* is a form which differs from the natural forms of the real, useful labours and is foreign to them and abstract; and in the second place, all kinds of private labour obtain their *social* character only in a contradictory way, by all being *equated* to one exclusive kind of private labour (linen-weaving, in this case). This latter thereby becomes the immediate and universal form of appearance of abstract human labour and *thereby* labour in immediately social form. It manifests itself consequently also in a product which is socially valid and universally exchangeable.

The illusion as if the equivalent-form of a commodity resulted from its own corporeal nature instead of being a mere reflex of the relationships of other commodities: this illusion strengthens itself with the continuing development of the *singular* Equivalent to the *universal*, because the contradictory vectors of the value-form no longer develop *equally* for the commodities which are related to one another, because the universal Equivalent-form separates a commodity off as something totally secluded from all other commodities, and finally because this (the commodity’s form) is actually no longer the product of the relationship of any *singular* commodity.

From our present standpoint the universal Equivalent has not yet by any means ossified, however. What was the way in which linen was metamorphosed into the universal Equivalent, actually? By the fact that it displayed its value, first in one single commodity (form I), then in all other commodities in order in a *relative* way (form II), and thereby all other commodities reflexively displayed their values in it in a relative way (form III). The

simple relative value-expression was the seed out of which the universal Equivalent-form of linen developed. It changes its role within this development. It begins by displaying its amount of value in *one* other commodity and ends by serving as material for the value-expression of *all* other commodities. What holds for linen holds for every commodity. In its developed relative value-expression (form II) – which only consists of its *many, simple* value-expressions – the linen does not yet figure as universal Equivalent. Rather, every other commodity-body forms in this case *linen's Equivalent*, is thereby immediately exchangeable with it and is therefore able to change places with it.

So we obtain finally:

Form IV:

20 yards of linen	= one coat wheat or etc.	or = u coffee or v tea or = x iron or = y
One coat	= 20 yards of linen = y wheat or etc.	or = u coffee or = v tea or = x iron or = etc.
u coffee	= 20 yards of linen wheat or v tea or = etc.	or = one coat or v tea or x iron or y
v tea	= etc.	

But each of these equations *reflexively* yields coat, coffee, tea, etc. as universal Equivalent and consequently yields value-expression in coat, coffee, tea, etc. as universal relative value-form of all other commodities. It is only in its opposition to other commodities that a commodity turns into the universal Equivalent-form; but every commodity turns into the universal Equivalent-form in its opposition to all other commodities. If every commodity confronts all other commodities with its own natural form as universal Equivalent-form, the result is that all commodities exclude themselves from the socially valid displaying of their amounts of value.

Obviously, the analysis of the commodity yields all *essential* determinations of the *value-form* and the value-form itself in its contradictory vectors, yields the *universal relative value-form*, the universal Equivalent-form, and finally the never-ending *sequence of simple relative value-expressions* – which sequence forms at first a transitional phase in the development of the value-form, in order finally to suddenly shift into the *specifically relative value-form* of the *universal Equivalent*. But the analysis of the commodity yielded these forms as *commodity-forms* in general (which thus also apply to each and every commodity) in a *contradictory* manner, so that if commodity A finds itself to be in one of the contradictory form-determinations, then commodities B, C, etc. adopt the other in opposition to it. What was decisively important, however, was to discover the inner, necessary connection between value-form, value-substance, and value-amount; i.e., expressed *conceptually*, to prove that the value form arises out of the value-concept.

A commodity seems at first glance to be a self-evident, trivial thing. The analysis of it yields the insight that it is a very vexatious thing, full of metaphysical subtlety and theological perversities. As mere *use-value*, it is a sensual thing in which there is nothing portentous, whether I happen to consider it from the viewpoint that its attributes satisfy human needs or that it obtains these attributes only as *product* of human labour. There is absolutely nothing of a riddle in the fact that man changes by his activity the forms of natural matter in a way which is useful to him. The form of wood, for example, is changed if one makes a table out of it. Nevertheless, the table remains wood, an ordinary, sensual thing. But as soon as it steps out *as commodity*, it metamorphoses itself into a sensually supersensual thing. It does not only stand with its feet on the ground, but it confronts all other commodities on its head, and develops out of its wooden head caprices which are much more wondrous than if it all of a sudden began to dance.

The mystical character of the commodity thus does not arise in its use-value. It arises just as little out of the value-determinations, considered in themselves. For in the first place, however different the useful labours or productive activities may be, it is a *physiological* truth that they are functions of a specifically *human* organism as distinguished from *other* organisms, and that every such function, whatever its content and its form, is essentially *expenditure* of *human* brain, nerve, muscle, organ of perception, etc. In the second place, if we consider that which lies at the basis of the determination of the amount of value (the *duration of time* of that expenditure, or the quantity of labour), it is clear that the *quantity* is distinguishable from the quality of labour in a way which is even perceptible with the naked eye. In all conditions, it was the *time* of labour which the production of necessities costs that had to be of concern to man, although not to the same degree at different levels of development. Finally, as soon as men work for one another in any manner, their labour acquires in addition a social form.

Let us take Robinson Crusoe on his island. Modest as he naturally is, nevertheless he has various needs to satisfy and must therefore perform *useful labours of various sorts*, make tools, build furniture, tame llamas, fish, hunt etc. We do not refer at this time to praying and other such activities, since our Robinson derives enjoyment from them and regards such activity as recreation. Despite the variety of his productive functions, he knows that they are only various forms of activity of one and the same Robinson, and thus are only different modes of *human* labour. Necessity itself compels him to divide his *time* exactly between his various functions. Whether the one takes more space and the other takes less in the totality of his activity depends upon the greater or lesser difficulty which must be overcome for the attainment of the intended useful effect. Experience teaches him that much, and our Robinson who saved watch, diary, ink and pen from the shipwreck begins to keep a set of books about himself like a good Englishman. His inventory contains a list of the objects of use which he possesses, of the *various* operations which are required for their production, and finally of the *labour-time* which particular quanta of these

various products cost him on the average. All relationships between Robinson and the things which form his self-made wealth are here so simple and transparent that even Mr. Wirth[6] can understand them without particular mental exertion. And nevertheless all essential determinations of *value* are contained therein.

If we now put an organization of free men in Robinson's place, who work with common means of production and expend their many individual labour-powers consciously as *one* social labour-power, all the determinations of Robinson's labour are repeated: but in a *social* rather than an *individual way*. Nevertheless, an essential difference emerges. All Robinson's products were his exclusively personal product, and were thereby immediately objects of use *for* him. The total product of the organization is a *social* product. One part of this product serves again as means of production. It remains social. But another part is used up by the members of the organization as necessities. This part must be *divided* up among them. The *manner* of this division will change with the particular manner of the social production-organism itself and the comparable historical level of development of the producers. Only for the sake of the parallel with commodity-production do we presuppose that each producer's share of necessities of life is determined by his *labour-time*. In such a case, the labour-time would play a dual role. Its socially planned distribution controls the correct proportion of the various labour-functions to the various needs. On the other hand, the labour-time serves at the same time as the measure of the individual share of the producer in the common labour, and thereby also in the part of the common product which can be used up by individuals. The social relationships of men to their labour and their products of labour remained transparently simple in this case, in production as well as in distribution.

Whence comes the puzzling character of the labour-product as soon as it assumes the *form of commodity*?

If men relate their products to one another *as values* insofar as these objects count as merely *objectified husks* of homogeneous human labour, there lies at the same time in that relationship the reverse, that their various labours only count as homogeneous human labour when under *objectified husk*. They relate their various labours to one another as human labour by relating *their products to one another as values*. The personal relationship is concealed by the *objectified* form. So just *what a value* is does not stand written on its forehead. In order to relate their products to one another as commodities, men are compelled to equate their various labours to abstract human labour. They do not know it, but they do it, by reducing the material thing to the abstraction, *value*. This is a primordial and hence unconsciously instinctive operation of their brain, which necessarily grows out of the particular manner of their material production and the relationships into which this production sets them. First their relationship exists in a practical mode. Second, however, *their relationship exists as*

relationship for them. The way in which it exists for them or is reflected in their brain arises from the very nature of the relationship. Later, they attempt to get behind the mystery of their own social product by the aid of science, for the determination of a thing *as value* is *their* product, just as much as speech. Now as far as concerns the *amount* of *value*, we note that the private labours which are plied independently of one another (but because they are members of the *primordial division of labour* are dependent upon one another) on all sides are constantly reduced to their socially proportional measure by the fact that in the accidental and perpetually shifting *exchange relationships of their products* the *labour-time* which is socially necessary for their production forcibly obtrudes itself as a regulating *natural-law*, just as the law of gravity does, for example, when the house falls down on one's head. The determination of the amount of value by the labour-time is consequently the mystery lurking under the apparent motions of the relative commodity-values. The producers' own social movement possesses for them the form of a motion of objects under the control of which the producers lie instead of controlling the motion. As far as concerns the *value-form* finally, we note that it is just exactly this form which *objectively veils* the social relationships of private workers and consequently the social determinations of private labours, instead of laying them bare. If I say that coat, boots, etc. relate themselves to linen as universal materialization of abstract human labour, the insanity in such a way of putting things leaps into view. But if the producers of coat, boots, etc. relate these commodities to linen as universal *Equivalent*, then the social relatedness of their private labours appears to them in exactly this insane *form*.

Such forms as these constitute precisely the *categories* of bourgeois economy. They are the socially valid – thus objective – forms of thought, for relationships of production of *this particular historically determined* social mode of production.

The private producers only enter into social contact for the first time through their private products: objects. The *social relationships* of their labours *are* and *appear* consequently not as immediately social relationships of persons in their labours, but as *objectified relationships* of persons, or *social relationships of objects*. The first and most universal manifestation of the object as a *social thing*, however, is the metamorphosis of the *product of labour* into a commodity. The mysticism of the commodity arises, therefore, from the fact that the *social determinations* of the *private* labours of the private producers appear to them as *social natural determinations of products of labour*; from the fact, that is, that the *social relationships of production of persons* appear as *social relationships of objects* to one another and to the persons involved. The relationships of the private workers to the totality of social labour objectify themselves over against them and exist, consequently, for them in the *forms* of *objects*. To a society of commodity producers whose universally social relationship of production consists in their behaving toward their products as *commodities* (hence as *values*) and their relating their private labours to one another in this *objective* form as *equal human labour*, it is *Christianity*

that is the most appropriate *form of religion*, with its cult of the abstract man – especially in its bourgeois development, Protestantism, Deism, etc. In the ancient Asian, antique, etc. modes of production, the metamorphosis of the product into a commodity and accordingly the existence of man as commodity-producer plays a subordinate role, which, however, becomes greater the more the communities enter upon the stage of their decline. Genuine commercial people only exist in the interstices of the ancient world, like the gods of Epicurus or like the Jews in the pores of Polish society. Those ancient social organisms of production are extraordinarily much more simple and transparent than the bourgeois organism, but they are based either on the immaturity of the individual man who has not yet torn himself free of the umbilicus of the natural species-connection with other men or are based upon immediate master and slave relationships. They are conditioned by a low level of development of the productive powers of labour by correspondingly restricted relationships of men within their material process of the constitution of life, and consequently to one another and to nature. This actual restrictedness reflects itself in an idealist mode in the ancient natural and popular religions. The *religious reflection* of the real world can only disappear as soon as the relationships of practical work-a-day life represent for men daily transparently reasonable relationships to one another and to nature. But relationships can only represent themselves as what they are. The form of the social process of life (i.e., of the material process of production) will only cast off its mystic veil of fog once it stands as a product of freely socialized men under their conscious, planned control. For that to happen, however, a material basis of society is demanded or a row of material conditions of existence which are themselves again the primordial product of a long and painful history of development.

Political economy has by now, to be sure, analysed value and amount of value, even if incompletely. It has never even so much as posed the question: Why does labour manifest itself in *value* and the measure of labour by its temporal duration manifest itself in *amount of value*? Forms upon whose foreheads it is written that they belong to a social formation wherein the process of production masters men but not yet does man master the process of production – such forms count for their bourgeois consciousness as just such a self-evident natural necessity as productive labour itself. Pre-bourgeois forms of the social productive organism are accordingly treated by Political Economy roughly like pre-Christian religions are treated by the Fathers of the Church.

Just how drastically a section of the economists is deceived by the fetishism which sticks to the world of commodities (or by the *objective* illusion of the *social* determinations of labour) is proved among other things by the tediously pointless contention about the *role of nature* in the formation of exchange-value. Since exchange-value is a determinate social style of expressing the labour which has been applied to a thing, it can no more contain natural matter than the *rate of exchange*, for example.

The *commodity form* was still relatively easy to see through as the most universal and most undeveloped form of bourgeois production, which for that reason appears even in earlier periods of production, although not in the same prevailing (and hence characteristic) way. But as for more concrete forms like Capital, for example? The fetishism of classical economics here becomes palpable.

In order not to anticipate, however, let another example concerning the commodity-form itself suffice. It has been observed that in the relationship of commodity to commodity (e.g., of shoe to shoe-shine boy) the use-value of the shoe-shine boy (i.e., the utility of his real, *material* properties) is completely irrelevant to the shoe. The shoeshine boy is of interest to the *commodity*, shoe, only as form of appearance of its own value. So if commodities could speak, they would say: 'Our use-value may be of interest to a man. But it does not inhere in us insofar as we are things. It is our exchange-value that inheres in us as *things*. Our own circulation as commodity-things proves that. It is only as exchange-values that we relate ourselves to one another.' Now just listen to how the economists speak forth from the very soul of the commodity: '*Value* (exchange-value) is a *property of things*, riches (use-value) of man. Value, in this sense, necessarily implies exchanges, riches do not.' (Anonymous, 1821) 'Riches (use-value) are the attribute of *man*; value is the *attribute of commodities*. A man or a community is rich; a pearl or a diamond is *valuable* . . . A pearl or a diamond is *valuable as a pearl or diamond* .' (S. Bailey) Up to now, no chemist has discovered exchange-value in pearl or diamond. Our authors, who lay claim to special critical depth find, nevertheless, that use-value inheres in objects independently of their material properties, but their exchange-value on the other hand inheres in them as objects. The remarkable circumstance that the use-value of things realizes itself for men *without exchange* (thus, in the immediate relationship between thing and man), but their value on the other hand realizes itself only *in exchange* (that is, in a *social process*) is what strengthens them in their belief. Who is not reminded here of that excellent Dogberry who teaches the night-watchman Seacoal, 'To be a well-favoured man is the gift of Fortune, but to write and read comes by Nature.' (*Much Ado About Nothing*, Act III, Scene 3.)

The commodity is *immediate unity of use-value and exchange-value*, thus of two opposed entities. Thus it is an immediate *contradiction*. This contradiction must enter upon a development just as soon as it is no longer considered as hitherto in an analytic manner (at one time from the viewpoint of use-value and at another from the viewpoint of exchange-value) but is really related to other commodities as a totality. The *real* relating of commodities to one another, however, is their *process of exchange*.

1. 'The concept, which is only subjective at first, marches ahead in accordance with its own proper activity to objectify itself, without needing any external material or stuff for the purpose.' Hegel, *Logik*, p. 367, *Encyclopaedia I*.

2. 'In a nut-shell'; that is, potentially. – A.D.

3. It is scarcely surprising that economists have overlooked the form-content of the relative value-expression (subjected as they are to the influence of material interests), if professional logicians before Hegel even overlooked the content of form in the paradigms of judgments and conclusions.

4. Hegelian term, including Identity, Difference, Contradiction. – A.D.

5. There is something special about such reflection-determinations. This man here is (e.g.) only King, because other men behave towards him like subjects. They believe, however, that they are subjects because he is King.

6. Hack economist of Marx's day.

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