

Use-Value as a Capitalist Category
and "Dead expenses of capitalist production"

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The crucial concept of use-value in the Marxian analysis is of course, the use-value of labor power which produces the surplus value. It is that which dominates all of capitalist production, and the minute you move away and try to apply other categories to explain its motive power you are lost.

The second focal point of the analysis of use-value is the manner in which the natural form of a product, and hence, surplus product, can be used in reproduction, without benefit of the market; that is how the entire volume 2 which was to deal with the circulation of capital, became subordinated to the reproduction of social capital as merely something instrumental in effecting that ~~reproduction~~ reproduction. Just as in order to understand surplus-value, we had to understand the use-value of labor power, so in order to understand expanded reproduction, we must understand the use-value of means of production. It is that which permits their reentry into further production; it is therefore not value but the material form, or rather the comparison of one and the other, which presents the difficulties of Vol. II and for which purpose the distinction of social production into two major departments was made; the emphasis is on the fact that all of the commodities of Dept. I, regardless of their value constituents, are for productive consumption; and all of II for personal consumption.

If we get it firmly into our mind that all that is not for personal consumption is, in a value society, capitalist production, we will now further understand the following necessities of capitalist production, which can be put under "dead expenses of production":

- (1) expenses of circulation
- (2) production of gold
- (3) militarism

The stage of militarism follows the stage of production, from the discovery of gunpowder to the rocket bomb; the production of gold historically likewise developed along with capitalist production. The expenses of circulation, from the primitive Indian bookkeeper, to the highly centralized banking system expenses, offers a perfect example of the Marxian analysis of capitalist production and creation of surplus value and for that reason I will now append the various quotations both on that and on use-value before I proceed to analyze the new-fangled "means of destruction" as if it were opposed to or sounded the death-knell of capitalism.

Vol. II, p.159: "The general law is that all expenses of circulation which arise only from changes of form, do not add any value to the commodities. They are merely expenses required for the realization of value, or for its conversion from one form into another. The capital invested in those expenses (including the labor employed by it) belongs to the DEAD EXPENSES of capitalist production/" (my em.)

Vol. II, p.154: "These commodities performing the function of of money do not enter EITHER into productive or individual consumption. They represent social labor fixed in a form in which it may serve as a MERE MACHINE in circulation."

Apart from the fact that a part of the social wealth is tied up in this unproductive form, the wearing out of the money constantly requires its reproduction, or the conversion of more social labor in the form of products, into more gold & silver. These expenses of reproduction are considerable in capitalistically developed nations, because there is a large part of the wealth tied up in the form of money. Gold and silver as money-commodities represent SOCIAL expenses of circulation due to the SOCIAL form of production. They are DEAD EXPENSES of commodity production in general, and they increase with the development of this production, especially when capitalized. They represent a part of the social wealth, which must be sacrificed in the process of circulation. " (my emphasis)

II, p.499: "The difficulty, then, does not consist in the analysis of the social product in values. It arises in the comparison of the component parts of the value of the social product with its material elements."

Theories of S.V., II, 2, p.170: "The question therefore, can a part of the s.v. be directly transformed into c.c. is reduced first of all to the question, can part of surplus product in which the s.v. is expressed, enter directly its own sphere of production as means of production without preliminary alienation...part of the surplus product is not sold but directly (or by means of exchange with capitalists of other specialization in the same sphere of production who accumulate in the same manner) again be included in the reproduction as means of production; thus accumulation and expanded reproduction here directly coincide. They must everywhere coincide but not in such a direct method... (p.171) We see from this how important is the determination of use value in the determination of economic forms. "

Archives, Notes on Wagner, V, p.395: "with me use-value plays entirely different and important role than it did in previous political economy but--and it is necessary to take note of this, it enters in the analysis only then when an analysis flows from the analysis of the given economic forms (Gealtungen) and not from philosophizing regarding concepts and words, 'use-value' and 'value'."

Finally, back to Vol. II, for one note re commodity, Marx emphasizes, p.132, that (1) that commodity is not the characteristic mark of capitalism since it existed under other forms of production; (2) certain results of production are not commodities; as for ex., a railroad, and (3) the various forms of it do not tell its utility. p.59: "The term industrial applies to every branch of industry run on a capitalist basis.

"Money-capital, commodity-capital, productive capital are not, therefore terms indicating independent classes of capital, nor are their functions processes of independent and separate branches of industry. They are here used only to indicate special functions of industrial capital, assumed by it seriatim."

p.63. "Now transportation as an industry sells this change of location. This utility is inseparably connected with the process of transportation, which is the productive process of transportation...The utility of transportation can be consumed only in this process of production. It does not exist as a use-value apart from this process; it does not, like other commodities, serve as a commodity which circulates after its process of production. The ex-v of this utility is determined, like that of any other commodity, by the value of the elements of production"

Now let us get back to "means of destruction". What is its value content? Materialized labor. What is its "use-value"? None, you answer triumphantly. Or, on second thought, you might answer, to destroy, and then ~~the~~ point out how the main point of Marx's Theories was to prove that means of production are so valuable because they go into further production, forgetting very conveniently that you were the very one who, when he first looked at the transformation of m.p. into c.c. denied it could happen without a market; forgetting, further, that you were the very one who said it must be a "commodity" or it isn't capitalism; and forgetting, finally, that ~~everyday~~ ^{the} material form or the division of the social product into dep'ts. ^{we} ~~is~~ decisive in a "profit" economy where everything was produced only for profit.

~~are~~ are definitely not for personal consumption. Insofar as means of destruction, will you permit me to put them into Dep't. I? You're afraid not? Now that you suddenly see the light of "productive" consumption, you cannot see how they are productively consumed. Answer me, then, how was gold productively consumed? Yet Marx refused to make a separate division in the social product for it. Why? Because Marx considered that, despite the tremendous importance of productive consumption in an explanation of the expansion of production, the prime mover of capitalist production was the production of surplus value, and if to get that prime mover into motion, capitalists needed to waste part of the social working day to do so, it simply would have to be done and the weight of it be seen in the exploitation of the worker for it still remained a fact that a day had only 24 hours, that part of the day had to go into production of the means of consumption which could reproduce the laborer, and the surplus value produced in the remaining portion would be all there was of s.v.; you could not "steal" any more from l.p. and hence from dep't. 2, and consequently it must be placed under Dept. I TO EMPHASIZE THAT THE END AIM OF CAPITALIST PRODUCTION IS NOT CONSUMPTION, ^{or Use-Values.}

The wisdom of the division of social production into two major departments was not to go into the many sub-divisions of these, from luxury goods to awful militarism, but so as to be rid of all these confusing subordinate phenomena and stick to production in a class society "in its fundamental simplicity". The natural form of c plus s plus v permits you to see how social reproduction is effected, not why. For the why you must return to surplus value, that is to unpaid labor, that is, to the division of the social working day into necessary and surplus or unnecessary labor time, irrespective of the particular degree of that unnecessaryness.

Now it is the degree of that unnecessaryness which bothers you when you speak with such emotion of "means of destruction". Who measures that degree in a capitalist society? Surely not the worker. And the capitalist measures it once again by means of values. Hence the constant destruction of values long before "means of destruction" became so abhorrent to us. If too much is produced to make a "profit", coffee is dumped in the oceans that that which is "sold" may cede a "profit". If technological revolutions have made the means of production obsolete, the destruction of these values proceeds regardless of the "use value" of these means of production in producing "use values". If capital will not cede that surplus value, it will not be invested, but will lie fallow. That too is destruction of values although these values had not yet been born. If all this is abhorrent to you, there is only one road beside that of the revolution, that is to fall back into the illusion that capitalism is a society

whose aim to produce "use values"

and from that it's only natural to say that fascism can "plan" for capitalism since it will in advance know the narrow confines of consumption and planning will avoid crises even as Stalin has avoided them. What fools! Is the present holocaust a crises of capitalism, including Russian, or is it not? Or, you can say with Luxemburg and the retrogressionists, that capitalism will "revert back to its private or individual form". If you reject the aggregate capitalist as capitalist, or rather the aggregate capital as value pregnant with value, you must fall back to "use-values".

These "means of destruction", after they will have served their purpose of destruction. what prevents the inventions from returning to their pure form of productive forces and be used for construction? It is not that they are means of destruction an end-in-itself --but again because it will be a question of he division of the social working day into paid and unpaid labor, with a satisfactory or unsatisfactory numerator about the 24 hour denominator.

The independence of value will assert itself over all these revolutions an and destruction of value --or it will not and then it will not be because of the "means of destruction" but because of the only value-creating element, living labor power. There is the nub.

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Take labor power. The last year or two have seen such an increase in productivity that practically no new laborers were hired, tho production was increased. As for pre-war levels of productivity, the comparison simply dwarfs the need for labor power to keep the machine in motion. Labor power within the process of production becomes a cheaper commodity the more it produces. Labor power also suffers all the vicissitudes of the other commodities also on the "market" --competition (women and children added to men; Negroes and Jews added to Anglo-Saxon; peasants and white collars added to regular labor army). Why can't they produce for peace as they have for war? Because they don't have the "customer"? --but the real "customer" wasn't ~~in~~ Uncle Sam but the workers, those who died on the battlefield and those who live to pay the "debt". That's right, says Beveridge, therefore, keep them working, even if it only means to pick up leaves off the ground and put them near the trees; after all, there was no more "use" to the bombs either and it was destructive beside. What they fail to see is just the only thing that moves capitalists surplus value --which ~~destroyed~~ values for the right of producing them for the whole world and, unfortunately, the "means of destruction" have not destroyed the competitors because they have not destroyed the world market and unless the market becomes synonymous with production, the system is done. To the extent that it will find these synonymous, capitalism can continue to expand. Its economic end, however, is the failure to reproduce labor power; ~~that~~ power ~~can~~ destroy them; it will not negate itself.