

I-The Aim and the Method

In writing CAPITAL Marx set himself the ultimate aim of laying bare "the economic law of motion of modern society" (p. 14). This aim is as far removed from the subject matter of classical political economy as the espousal of revolution is from the defense of the status quo. Marxism is wrongly considered to be a new "political economy". It is true that, loosely speaking, even Marxists refer to Marx's analysis of capitalist production as "Marxian political economy". But "Marxian political economy" is not a new political economy, but a critique of the very foundations of political economy, which is the bourgeois mode of thought of the bourgeois mode of production.

Marx subtitled CAPITAL, "A Critique of Political Economy". The laws of development of the bourgeois mode of production could be analyzed fully, not through an "extension" of political economy which deals with economic categories, such as, commodities, wages, money, profits as if they were things instead of expressions of social relations. It is true that, Marx's cardinal tie in this society being exchange, these relations are attached to things and appear as things, but these things veil, instead of manifest, the essence. To separate the essence--the social or class relations--from the appearance--the exchange of commodities--required not merely a new political economy but a new science. That new science, Marxism, meant the application of dialectics to the developmental laws of the bourgeois economic system. Before dialectics, which Engels defined as "the science of the general laws of motion both of the external world and of human thought" (L.E.-p. 84), could be so applied, it had to be stripped of its mystical shell. The rational kernel in Hegelian dialectics could have been found only with the aid of historical materialism.

In its rational form, Marx wrote, (p. 26) dialectics was "the comprehension or the affirmative recognition of the existing state of things, at the same time also, the recognition of the negation of that state, of its inevitable breaking up". To discern the inevitable breakdown of capitalism one need view this specific mode of production for what it is--a historic stage in the development of social production.

Historical materialism traces a progressive development in the course of human ascendancy from lower to higher stages, which has asserted itself through all seeming accidents and temporary setbacks. The driving forces of history have not been great men, but great masses of people, who were set in motion by the incongruity between productive forces and production relations, i.e. by the antagonism between the development of the material means of production, and the relation of people in production. The masses liberated the new productive forces fettered by the outlived mode of production and the existing production relations, created the conditions for a new method of production and thus laid the basis for a new social order. So man slavery been displaced by serfdom, serfdom by capitalism, and so will capitalism by socialism.

The multitude of productive forces available to men determine the nature of their society. Man is essentially a tool-making animal and the process of the production of his material life, the process of labor, means the process of the growth of the productive forces and his command over nature. "Industry", explained Marx, (Private Property and Communism), "is the real historic relation of nature, and consequently of the science of nature, to man." The industrial revolution, the progress of natural science and the general technological advances have so revolutionized the mode of production that there is finally the basis of true freedom--freedom from want and from exploitation--. However, "in the first instance"--so compactly has Marx telescoped the entire history of capitalism--this has taken the contradictory form of labor's enslavement to capital.

It is this capital-labor relationship which Marx sets out to analyze with the theoretical tool first discovered by classical political economy--the labor theory of value. If labor is the source of value, it is also the source of surplus-value. This logical conclusion from its own theory classical political economy could not deduce because, said Marx, it could not get out of its "bourgeois skin". It viewed the capital-labor relation as a law of nature instead of as a law or a historic mode of production. LABORER, writes Marx, "as the capitalist regime is looked upon as the absolutely final form of social production, instead of as a passing historical phase of its evolution, Political Economy can remain a science only so long as the class-struggle is latent or manifests itself only in isolated and sporadic phenomena." That period began in 1776, the year of publication of Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations and ended with the definitive edition of Ricardo's Political Economy in 1821. Political Economy as an independent could go no further and went no further.

With the full conquest of political power by the bourgeoisie in the revolutions of 1830 "The class struggle practically as well as theoretically took on more and more outspoken and threatening forms. It sounded the death-knell of scientific bourgeois economy. It was thenceforth no longer a question whether this theorem or that was true, but whether it was useful to capital or harmful. In place of disinterested enquirers there were hired prize-fighters." (p. 19) The period 1820-30 marks the close of the classical period and is characterized by Marx as the disintegration of the Ricardian School. In the seeds of that disintegration--Malthus, Senior, Say--are the germs of the present vulgarization of bourgeois economics as exemplified by the Marginal Utility and Effective Demand theories.

The scientific discovery of political economy--the labor theory of value--could be traced and developed to its logical conclusion only by a representative of that class that had nothing to lose from discerning the law of motion of capitalist economy. That was the proletariat who instinctively strive for a new social order. Marxism is the scientific expression of this instinctive striving by the proletariat for socialism; it is the conscious expression of the unconscious historical process.

All science, wrote Marx, would be unnecessary if "phenomena and essence were wholly identical". In constructing his scientific analysis of capitalist production, Marx uses the abstract dialectic method. His abstractions, however, are firmly based on the concrete historical development of society. Thus for example, the elementary value-form of a commodity--cattle--is the primitive form under which a product of labor appeared historically as an exchange value. Parts I and II of CAPITAL deal with phenomena--the buying and selling of commodities, including the commodity labor-power. Marx then leaves the sphere of exchange or the market and for the next 389 pages--Parts III, IV and V--analyzes the essence of capitalist society--the production of surplus value. When we next return to the phenomenon of wages--Part VI--we already know the hidden relation within this irrational form of payment of labor which "conceals" the unrequired labor of the wage-laborer". (p. 391)

The economic laws of capitalist production reach their theoretical fruition in Part VII. Accumulation of Capital deals with the direct results of the capitalist process of production, and the logical development of these direct results into the General Law of Capitalist Accumulation. This theoretic development not only does not contradict, but is fully realized in the concrete expression of "the absolute general law of capitalist production", or the reserve army of labor. The incapacity of capitalism to reproduce its own value-creating substance, labor-power in the form of the living laborer, signals the doom of capitalism. Marx doines this doom in the final part--Part VIII where he deals with the genesis and the law of collapse of capitalism.

"The capitalist mode of appropriation", writes Marx, (p. 667) "the result of the capitalist mode of production, produces capitalist private property, as founded on the labor of the proprietor. But capitalist production begets, with the inexorability of a law of nature, its own negation. It is the negation of the negation."

We will see that the strange words, "negation of the negation", is only the philosophic expression for the very familiar class struggle through which the proletariat abolishes the capitalist mode of production and creates the conditions for a higher social order.

Within the framework of Marx's own description of the aim of his work, the dialectic method by which he hopes to accomplish his aim, and the structure into which he molds his analysis of "the capitalist mode of production, and the conditions of production and exchange corresponding to that mode", it should be easy to review the content of CAPITAL.

III--The Phenomena of Capitalism--Buying and Selling, or the Market

Capitalist wealth, writes Marx, appears to be "an immense accumulation of commodities, its unit being a single commodity". His analysis of capitalist wealth begins with an examination of a commodity.

It is evident that what makes all sorts of commodities, from steel to apples, commensurable are not their various use-values, but the something that is common to them all--the homogeneous human labor embodied in them. Marx traces the two-fold character of a commodity--its use-value and value--to the two-fold nature of the labor embodied in it, concrete labor creative of use-values and abstract labor creative of value. It is this dual character of labor that Marx tells us is "the pivot on which a clear comprehension of political economy turns". (p. 48) All understanding, and Marx underlines all, depends upon the comprehension of this dual character of labor. The contradiction between the concrete and abstract labor is reflected in the contradiction between material wealth and capitalist wealth; "An increase in the quantity of use-values is an increase in material wealth. With two coats two men can be clothed, with one coat only one man. Nevertheless, an increased quantity of material wealth may correspond to a simultaneous fall in the magnitude of its value. This antagonistic movement has its origin in the two-fold character of labor". (p. 55)

To stamp an object of utility as a value, continues Marx, it is as much a social product as is language. Whence, indeed, arises the enigmatical character of products of labor so soon as they assume the form of commodities? "Clearly," answers Marx, "from this form itself." It is this form which makes "a definite social relation between men" assume "the fantastic form of a relation between things." (p. 60) It is this which is the fetishism of commodities. "Value does not stalk about with a label describing what it is. It is value, rather, that converts every product into a social hieroglyphic." (p. 65) The categories of bourgeois economy consist of such like forms. They are forms of thought expressing with social validity the conditions and relations of a definite, historically determined mode of production, viz., the production of commodities. The whole mystery of commodities, all the magic and necromancy that surrounds the products of labor as long as they take the form of commodities, vanish therefore, so soon as we come to other forms of production." (p. 67)

In other forms of production the relationship of the worker to his own product of labor clearly revealed the relationship between men. For example, the serf knew not only what days he gave to the lord, but what his relation to the lord was; the social relations, whatever we may think of them, were not disguised "under the shape of social relations between products of labor". Under capitalism, however, that disguise is so complete, that the laborers own capacity to labor

appears in the shape of a commodity as if outside the living laborer and indeed forms the basis of the illusions of liberty of not only the capitalist but the laborer himself. That is so because in the market the owner of labor-power meets the owner of money "and deal with each other on the basis of equal rights, with this difference alone, that one is buyer, the other a seller". Equality exists in the market. The sum of values in circulation cannot be augmented by any change in their distribution, yet we know that Mr. Moneybags must, out of money make more money before he can become a full-fledged capitalist. How does he do it? The only distinction between the various commodities was their use-values, hence the use-value of one of this multitude of commodities must be the source of wealth. But there is no law to compel one to use the commodity bought in full view of all men. The food you bought in the market you consume at home. The use-value of labor-power, too, is consumed not in the market, but there where it can first be put to use--in the factory. Hence, before we can force the secret of profit making, we must leave what Marx called, "the noisy sphere of exchange".

"On leaving this sphere of simple circulation or of exchange of commodities which furnishes the 'Pars-trader Vulgaris' with his views and ideas and with the standards by which he judges a society based on capital and wages", writes Marx, "we think we can perceive a change in the physiognomy of our dramatic personae. He, who before was a money owner strides in front as capitalist; the possessor of labor-power follows as his laborer. The one with an air of importance, smirking, intent on business; the other, timid, and holding back, like one who is bringing his own hide to market and has nothing to expect but---a hiding." (p. 126)

III--The Essence of Capitalist Production; the Capitalist Labor Process, or the Production of Surplus Value--Parts III, IV, V.

The capitalist labor process where the worker gets the hiding he expects, exhibits two characteristic phenomena which distinguish it from the labor process in general:

"First, the laborer works under the control of the capitalist to whom his labor belongs....

"Secondly, the product is the property of the capitalist and not that of the laborer, its immediate producer...The labor process is ~~not~~ a process between things that the capitalist has purchased, things that have become his property."

Thus not only the means of production but also labor-power are the property of the capitalist and since labor-power in use is actual labor, the capitalist labor process is an alien labor process--not only is the product the laborer creates alienated from him, but so is his very capacity to labor. That is what really induced the capitalist to buy the specific commodity, labor-power, which, now that we are in the factory, we can see is the only source of value. It not only produces its own means of subsistence, it produces a surplus for the capitalist; it not only produces a surplus for the capitalist, it preserves the value of his machines by transferring their value to the ready made product. The tailor, out of cloth made a dress, thus preserving the value of the raw material, cotton, the utilization of the sewing machine or means of production, and finally the new labor by which a greater value was created than the constituent elements of the dress. But this new labor, belonging to the concrete laborer, the tailor, how did it become abstract labor? There is no such thing as an abstract laborer---you are either a tailor, a miner, a steel worker, etc., ---how then does there happen to be abstract labor which is the only thing which creates value? What has happened in the labor process which erased the specificity of the individual worker's labor?

In the labor process in general the laborer uses the means of production in order to fashion an article of utility. In the labor process of capital it is not the worker who uses the means of production, but the means of production the worker. Under capital's domination the labor process has become a mere means for the creation of values. However, even as living labor can function only according to its specific skill, so accumulated labor can realize itself as value big with value by means of its inherent use-value. That is to say, just as yarn cannot become cotton, wood a chair, steel a tractor without uniting with living labor, and just as dead labor or machines can preserve itself and become a greater value only by absorbing living labor, so accumulated labor can function only according to its use-value. The use-value of constant capital is the manner in which the means of production absorb living labor as "the ferment necessary to their own life process, and the life process of capital consists only," concludes Marx, "in its movement as value constantly expanding, constantly multiplying itself". (p. 329)

Marx's abstract definition of value is rooted deep in the concrete history of developing capitalism. Marx traces in detail the concept of the working day and the history of its limitations; how at the beginning capitalism could extract surplus value from the worker only through the lengthening of the working day, and the state intervened in behalf of the budding capitalist. That was the production of absolute surplus value. The establishment of a normal working day, says Marx, is the result of centuries of struggle between capitalist and laborer. Then Marx describes in detail the development of cooperation, manufacture and finally mechanization when through technological revolutions the capitalist could extract a greater amount of surplus within the same working day. Though he now works eight hours instead of eleven hours, only two of these eight are necessary to produce the means of subsistence of the laborer, so that the capitalist gets fully six hours of unpaid labor, where as formerly in an eleven hour day, he could extract only, say, five unpaid hours of labor. The extraction of relative surplus value Marx calls the specifically capitalist method of extracting surplus value whereby the inversion of dead to living labor "acquires technically and palpable reality. By means of its conversion into an automaton, the instrument confronts its laborer during the labor process, in the shape of capital, or dead labor that dominates, pumps dry living labor".

Only in capitalist society does accumulated labor dominate living labor. There was dead labor, or machines, or at least tools in pre-capitalist society, but they did not dominate living labor. The savage was complete master of his bow and arrow. The serf was without a tractor and had to use a wooden hoe, but that crude instrument did not have a value that asserts its independence in the process of production as a "live monster that is fruitful and multiplies", (p. 217), so that the energy of the living laborer is a mere means for its expansion. Today, however, when an all steel automobile body, despite the heavy costs for steel and new equipment, can be turned out at a cost of 30 dollars less per unit, the auto worker must bend his energies to the tune of this expansion of value, and face unemployment besides.

More and more machines need less and less labor, and more and more perfect machines need less and less skill in the general mass of human labor. That is to say why the capitalist, the agent of value, cares naught about the specificity of the individual laborer's labor. Whether he is a shoe-maker, shipyard worker or assembly worker the capitalist sees that he uses up only as much time as is socially necessary in the production of commodities. The incessantly changing quantitative determination of exchange values---8 hours were socially necessary for the production of a commodity; only 6 hours are necessary today, and only 4 hours will be necessary tomorrow---is the law which compels the capitalist to use one factor of production, accumulated labor, against another factor of production, living labor. By means of his factory clock he bludgeons the worker, whether he be a miner, a tailor, and not an "abstract" laborer to produce as many pieces of goods within a given time as the next person or an altogether different skill. The socially necessary labor time is the solvent which re-

duces the aggregate of concrete labor into a general mass of abstract labor. Marx calls this the real subordination of labor to capital.

Capital has not invented surplus labor; in all class societies surplus labor was extracted from the worker for the master class. What, however, distinguishes one economy from another is the manner in which this surplus labor is in each case extracted. We have seen precisely how it is done under capitalism. The designation of accumulated labor as the "live member that is fruitful and multiplies" is not a mere rhetoric phrase, but is rooted deep in value production and is an exact description of how value, from being a subordinate element, which, in embryo, existed in other societies becomes the predominant characteristic of capitalist society. "The same element of capital which, from point of view of the labor process, present themselves respectively as the objective and subjective factors, as means of production and labor power, present themselves from the point of view of the process of creating surplus value, as constant and variable capital." (p. 232)

Constant and variable capital are not simply an outer covering for an old relationship; it is the innermost essence of the capitalist mode of production revealing that society in what Marx called its "particular distinctness", the inversion of dead to living labor. The basic antagonism between use value and value reside in the commodity labor power, which, in the process of production, and not in the market, creates a greater value than it itself is. "It is every bit as important," writes Marx, "for a correct understanding of surplus value, to conceive it as a mere congelation of surplus labor time, a proper comprehension of value, to conceive it as a congelation of so many hours of labor, as nothing but materialized labor". (p. 241)

The law of surplus value seems to contradict, says Marx, all phenomena based on experience, for every one knows that the baker who uses more living laborers relative to means of production does not get more profit than the steel manufacturer who uses relatively less variable as compared to constant capital. Nevertheless, the law not only is true, but competition which seems to be a matter of will, is in reality only one of the laws of capitalist production. "The rate of profit", writes Marx, "is no mystery, so soon as we know the laws of surplus value. If we reverse the process, we cannot comprehend either the one or the other." (p. 239 rfn) That is so because the general contradiction of capitalism can be overcome only by the abolition of the capitalist mode of labor and not through some manipulations outside of the capitalist process of production.

Surplus value is a given magnitude, the sum total of unpaid hours of labor. "The breaking-up of surplus value into fragments", writes Marx, "neither alters its nature nor the conditions under which it becomes an element of accumulation." That is, it does not matter whether the industrial capitalist must part with some of the surplus value by paying the landlord rent, or the middle man a commission. The rate of accumulation does not depend upon either his consumption or his conscious will; rather it is the one that determines both the market and the ideas the capitalist has about it. Accumulation, depending as it does on the magnitude of surplus value, the degree of exploitation, and the productivity of labor, is fundamentally, a simple process. But this process of production and reproduction is obscured by the circulation process. That is why, from the very beginning, in his prefaces, Marx stated that he was not interested in subjective motivations but only in objective conditions: "Individuals are dealt with only insofar as they are the personifications of economic categories, embodiments of particular class-relations and classes. My stand-point, from which the ~~social~~ ~~economic~~ evolution of the economic formation of society is viewed as a process of natural history, can less than any other make the individual responsible for relations whose creators he socially remains." (p. 15) Marx therefore analyses the capitalist mode of production from point of view of the laws of production "working with iron necessity towards inevitable results." (p. 13)

The inevitable results are dealt with in the theoretical climax to Marx's work, Accumulation of Capital, which we shall consider under the heading of:

IV- THE LAW OF MOTION OF CAPITALIST SOCIETY--Parts VII and VIII
1. The Results of the Process of Production

In approaching a review of Part VII, let us bear in mind that Marx considered the changes he introduced into this part in the French edition "possesses a scientific value independent of the original and should be consulted even by readers of the German" (D.S. 842). The two most important of these changes are (1) pp. 500-4 where he expands the thesis of the transposition of the laws of property into the laws of capitalist appropriation, and (2) pp. 687-9 which explains how the law of centralization work till the extreme limit is reached in any given society when "the entire social capital would be united either in the hands of one single capitalist, or in those of one single corporation." (p. 688). Neither of these changes, however, in any altered the "absolute general law" of capitalist accumulation--the reserve army of labor which remains the doom of capitalism. Marx is as specifically historic in his analysis of the development of the economic laws of capitalist production into this absolute general law, as he was previously with the development of a commodity, and the capitalist labor process.

From the very first page of CAPITAL we learned of the interdependence of use-value and value. Value, wrote Marx, may be indifferent to the use-value by which it is borne, but it must be borne by some use-value. This assumes added significance in the question of accumulation or expanded production for, writes Marx, "surplus value is convertible into capital solely because the surplus product whose value it is, already comprises the material elements of new capital." (p. 606) In one word, in order to start production on an expanded scale we must have the means of production, and that is just the material form of the surplus product. The natural element of the other factor of production is labor power. In fact, the sine qua non of capitalist production is the perpetuation of the wage-laborer. So emphatic is Marx on the point that the wage-laborer is a factor of production that he says it is not the laborer that buys the means of ~~production~~ consumption but means of consumption the laborer. "The fact, writes Marx, "that the laborer consumes his means of subsistence for his own purposes and not to please the capitalist has no bearing on the matter. The consumption of food by a beast or burden is none the less a necessary factor in the process of production, because the beast enjoys what it eats." (p. 627)

The crucial point here is that the existence of the wage-laboring class is the result, not merely the historic beginning, of capitalist production. In other words, even if we assume as Marx does, that the original money with which the capitalist started out to buy the factors of production and to produce goods was self earned, that sum, depending upon its magnitude, would soon be consumed in the mere continuity of production and the act of living. If its existence is nevertheless eternalized, not a single atom of its being owes its existence to any other source but the unpaid hours of labor. Hence Marx concludes, if we assume that even the rights of property were based on man's own labor, it is not the property rights but the production relations which produce capitalist wealth: "Capitalist production, therefore, under its aspect of a continuous connected process, of a process of reproduction, produces and reproduces the capitalist relation; on the one side the capitalist, on the other the wage-laborer." (p. 635) "The ever repeated purchase and sale of labor-power is now the mere form; what really takes place is this--the capitalist again and again appropriates without equivalent, a portion of the materialized labor of others, and exchanges it for a greater quantity of living labor." Capitalist property thus "turns out to be the right on the part of the capitalist to appropriate the unpaid labor of others or its product and to be the impossibility, on the part of the laborer; of appropriating his own product. The separation of property from labor has become the necessary consequence of law that apparently originated in their identity." (pp. 639-40)

Keeping this content in mind, we can first grasp the significance of the addition by Marx which stresses that, though equality reigned in every act of exchange, nevertheless the results of capitalist production are (1) that the product belongs to the capitalist, not the workers, (2) that the value of this product comprises a value above the constituents of value of the advanced capital, and (3) that the laborer has reproduced his labor power and can sell it once again if he can find a buyer. "So long," concludes Marx, "as the laws of exchange are observed in every act of exchange, individually considered, the mode of appropriation may be completely revolutionized

without in the least affecting the property right bestowed by the production of commodities." (p. 645)

Moreover, it does not alter matters any if simple reproduction is replaced by reproduction on an enlarged scale. No greater error, says Marx, can be committed than to think that the conditions of expanded reproduction are changed simply because "the popular mind is impressed by the sight, on the one hand, of the mass of goods that are stored up for the gradual consumption by the rich, and on the other hand, by the formation of reserve stocks" (p. 645). Classical political economy realized that accumulation resulted not from expansion of consumption, but from expansion of production. Nevertheless, so unaware were these economists of the role of constant capital in production that they, "by a fundamentally perverted analysis, arrived at the absurd conclusion that, even though each individual capital is divided into constant and variable, the capital of society resolves itself into only variable capital. i.e., is laid out exclusively in payment of wages." (p. 647) The exposure of this error forms the center of Marx's theory of expanded reproduction in Volume II of CAPITAL. For those who are impatient to get to Volume II, let me assure you that the essence lies in the volume we are reviewing--Volume I. That is why Marx was so insistent upon the fact so soon as we know the laws of surplus value, which are analyzed in Volume I neither the rate of profit, nor the question of "realization" or sale of commodities produced, offers any difficulty. Follow carefully the analysis of the general law of capitalist accumulation, wherein constant capital is shown not only to dissolve into wages, but to be the very instrumentality by which the capitalist asserts his mastery over the living laborer, and you will know the answer.

What is the general law of capitalist accumulation? Of decisive significance is that the lot of the working class is an integral part of this law as is the organic composition of capital. This is not "mere" agitation, but can be expressed in the most precise technical terms. The organic composition of capital is its interrelationship between its value composition, or the proportion between constant and variable capital, and its technical composition, or the division between means of production and living labor power. The absolute law of production being the production of surplus value, the price of labor would rise only insofar as its rise does not interfere with the progress of accumulation, for if it did interfere with accumulation, the stimulus of gain would be blunted and the rate of accumulation would slacken until the price of labor would fall to the level corresponding to the needs of the self-expansion of capital; "to put it mathematically," writes Marx, "the rate of accumulation is the independent, not the dependent variable; the rate of wages, the dependent, not the independent variable." (p. 679)

Accumulation of capital, it is true, means expansion of production and hence demand for laborers and thus the growth of the working population. However, the demand comes not from capital as a whole, but only from its variable component, which is relatively smaller compared to its constant and thus to total capital. Moreover, the value composition does not fully reflect the change in the composition of its material constituents. In order to hire more workers, there is needed not only a greater wage-fund but greater investment in factories, in means of production and raw materials. "Whereas formerly an increase of capital by 20% would have sufficed to raise the demand for labor by 20%, now this latter rise requires a tripling of the original capital" (p. 682)

The demand for living labor is further lessened because the growth of accumulation means its concentration and increasing concentration of the means of production means increasing command over labor. This is still further aggravated by the fact that the concentration of capital is accompanied by the law of the centralization of capital: "Centralization may take place by a mere quantitative arrangement of the components of social capital. Capital may in that case accumulate in one hand in large masses by withdrawing it from many individual hands. Centralization in a certain line of industry would have reached its extreme limit if all individual capitals invested in it would have been amalgamated into one single capital." This is trustification. "This limit would not be reached in any particular society until the entire social capital would be united, either in the hands of one single capitalist, or in those of one single corporation." (pp. 687-8) This has since become more familiar under the phrase of "trustification of production."

The results of this act, continues Marx in this crucial addition to the French text of Capital, (has since been included in all editions), has the same results whether accompanied by "the vilest means of annexation", or "the smoother road of forming stock companies". The result is of a qualitative character; that is, it revolutionizes the technical composition of capital that it increases its constant at the expense of its variable constituent: "The specifically capitalist mode of production, the development of the productive power of labor corresponding to it, and the change then resulting in the organic composition of capital, do not merely keep pace with the advance of accumulation, or with the growth of social wealth. They develop to a much quicker rate....If it was originally say 1:1, it is now becomes successively 2:1, 3:1, 4:1, 5:1, 7:1, etc....The laboring population therefore produces along with the accumulation of capital produced by it, the means by which it itself is made relatively superfluous, is turned into a relative surplus population...This is a law of population peculiar to the capitalist mode of production." (pp. 590, 592) "The greater the social wealth, the functioning of capital, the extent and energy of its growth, and therefore the absolute mass of the proletariat and productiveness of labor, the greater is the industrial reserve army. The same causes which develop the expansive power of capital, develop also the labor-power at its disposal.... But the greater this reserve army in relation to the active labor army, the greater is the mass of a consolidated surplus population, ..and the greater is official pauperism. This is the absolute law of capitalist accumulation."

This absolute general law dominates over production, thus, even when it has reached its ultimate development through stratification. This absolute general law of capitalist accumulation means not only the polarization of wealth, the alienation of the products of labor from the laborer, but as we saw at the very beginning of the description of this alien labor process, an alienation of his very capacity to labor wherein "all means for the development of production transform themselves into means of domination over and exploitation of the producers, the mutilate the laborer into a fragment of a man, degrade him to the level of an appendage of a machine, destroy every remnant of charm in his work and turn it into a hated toil; they estrange from him the intellectual potentialities of the labor process in the same proportion, as science is incorporated in it as an independent power; they distort the conditions under which he works, subject him during the labor process to a despotism the more hateful for its meanness; they transform his life-time into working time, and drag his wife and child beneath the same wheels of the Juggernaut of capital. But all methods for the production of surplus value are at the same time methods of accumulation; and every extension of accumulation becomes again a means for the development of those methods. It follows therefore that in proportion as capital accumulates, the lot of the laborer, be his payment high or low, must grow worse. The law, finally, that always equilibrates the relative surplus population, or industrial reserve army, to the extent and energy of accumulation, this law rivets the laborer to capital more firmly than the wedges of Vulcan did Prometheus to the rock. It establishes an accumulation of misery, corresponding with an accumulation of capital. Accumulation of wealth at one pole, is therefore, at the same time accumulation of misery, agony, toil, slavery, ignorance, brutality, mental degradation, at the opposite pole, on the side of the class that produces its own product in the form of capital." (p. 708-9)

This polarization of wealth at one and accumulation of misery at the other come about, even though we assume that the capitalist starting to produce with self-earned money. In a historical sketch of the real genesis of capitalist production, Marx now shows us that in actuality the basis of capitalist production was the expropriation of the peasant from the land; "The starting point of the development that gave rise to the wage-laborer as well as the capitalist was the servitude of the laborer." (p. 787) that "the idyllic proceedings of the chief moments of primitive accumulation" were "the discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation and enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black-skins", that further, all these methods depended "on brute force, e.g. the concentrated and organized force of society to hasten, in hothouse fashion, the transformation of the feudal mode of production into the capitalist mode, and to shorten the transition.

Force is the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one. It is itself an economic power." (823-4)

The significance of relegating such highly-charged agitational material of the beginnings of capitalism to the end, as merely illustrative of the historic beginning, not the theoretic law of its development cannot be overestimated. It serves to highlight the fact that the most important scientific concept in the concept of law, the law of development and dialectic transformation into the opposite. Marx sums this historic tendency up thus:

"Along with the constantly diminishing number of magnates of capital who usurp and monopolise all advantages of this process of transformation, grows the mass of misery, oppression, slavery, degradation, exploitation; but with this too grows the revolt of the working class, a class always increasing in numbers, and disciplined, united, organized by the very mechanism of the process of capitalist production itself. The monopoly of capital becomes a fetter upon the mode of production, which has sprung up and flourished along with it and under it. Centralization of the means of production and socialization of labor at last reach a point where they become incompatible with their capitalist integument. This integument is burst asunder. The knell of capitalist private property sounds. The expropriators are expropriated." (p. 826-7)

Thus we see that the basic concept of Marx's most abstract theories was the class struggle itself, that an integral part of his theory of accumulation is the mobilization of the proletariat to revolt against the production relations which hamper the full development of the productive forces into a "higher form of society, a society", wrote Marx, (p. 649) "in which the full and free development of every individual forms the ruling principle." It is because, basing himself on the inevitability of socialism that he could discern the law of motion of capitalism, the inevitability of its collapse. It was this that gave the force, direction and profundity to his analysis of CAPITAL.