

Marx, *Grundrisse* (1) Value [881-82]

This section to be brought forward.

The first category in which bourgeois wealth presents itself is that of the *commodity*. The commodity itself appears as unity of two aspects. It is *use value*, i.e. object of the satisfaction of any system whatever of human needs. This is its material side, which the most disparate epochs of production may have in common, and whose examination therefore lies beyond political economy. Use value falls within the realm of political economy as soon as it becomes modified by the modern relations of production, or as it, in turn, intervenes to modify them. What it is customary to say about it in general terms, for the sake of good form, is confined to commonplaces which had a historic value in the first beginnings of the science, when the social forms of bourgeois production had still laboriously to be peeled out of the material, and, at great effort, to be established as independent objects of study. In fact, however, the use value of the commodity is a given presupposition -- the material basis in which a specific economic relation presents itself. It is only this specific relation which stamps the use value as a commodity. Wheat, e.g., possesses the same use value, whether cultivated by slaves, serfs or free labourers. It would not lose its use value if it fell from the sky like snow. Now how does use value become transformed into commodity? Vehicle of *exchange value*. Although directly united in the commodity, use value and exchange value just as directly split apart. Not only does the exchange value not appear as determined by the use value, but rather, furthermore, the commodity only becomes a commodity, only realizes itself as exchange value, in so far as its owner does not relate to it as use value. He appropriates use values only through their sale [*Entäußerung*], their exchange for other commodities. Appropriation through sale is the fundamental form of the social system of production, of which exchange value appears as the simplest, most abstract expression. The use value of the commodity is presupposed, not for its owner, but rather for the society generally. (Just as a Manchester family of factory workers, where the children stand in the exchange relation towards their parents and pay them room and board, does not represent the traditional economic organization of the family, so is the system of modern private exchange not the spontaneous economy of societies. Exchange begins not between the individuals within a community, but rather at the point where the communities end -- at their boundary, at the point of contact between different communities. Communal property has recently been rediscovered as a special Slavonic curiosity. But, in fact, India offers us a sample chart of the most diverse forms of such economic communities, more or less dissolved, but still completely recognizable; and a more thorough research into history uncovers it as the point of departure of all cultured peoples. The system of production founded on private exchange is, to begin with, the historic dissolution of this naturally arisen communism. However, a whole series of economic systems lies in turn between the modern world, where exchange value dominates production to its whole depth and extent, and the social formations whose foundation is already formed by the dissolution of communal property, without

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