

## 8 Exploitation

In this chapter the concepts developed earlier will be used to elucidate the phenomenon of exploitation of labour. Though Marx often compared and contrasted capitalist exploitation with other forms, he was, as ever, reluctant to theorise about the general features that they shared. He analysed capitalist exploitation in detail, and asserted that some of its basic mechanisms were the same as those underlying the Asiatic state, slavery ancient and modern, and various forms of feudalism.<sup>1</sup> But when he did so he was apt to slip into figurative language, speaking for example of 'the specific economic form, in which unpaid surplus-labour is pumped out of direct producers.'<sup>2</sup> Despite its importance in his thought, the concept of exploitation was not given a clear sociological definition. Partly for this reason, it has been vulnerable to attacks on Marx's theory of surplus-value by economists, as well as to more philosophical allegations of bias. So sociology has largely absorbed Marx's theory of classes, but not, on the whole, the theory of exploitation of labour on which it was based, which has contributed not a little to the confusion besetting class theory in sociology.<sup>3</sup>

### I THE MEANING OF EXPLOITATION

Marx did not use 'exploitation' evaluatively.<sup>4</sup> True, it signified a self-interested utilisation of resources. But in his more scientific works Marx did not imply that such selfishness was morally reprehensible, whatever his abhorrence of the societies whose practices he analysed with the aid of the concept. Nor did he write of *people* being exploited, in the vague, humanistic sense that has become commonplace since, meaning any kind of manipulative oppression. Consider the following passage from Marx's discussion of the role of money-capital in the reproduction of the aggregate social capital. (He is arguing that the scale of production is not limited by the amount of capital functioning as money in the process, but this is immaterial for our purposes.)

Incorporated in capital are elements of production whose expansion wit. in certain limits is independent of the magnitude of the advanced money-capital. Though payment of labour-power be the same, it can be exploited more or less extensively or intensively . . .

The productively exploited nature-given materials – the soil, the seas, ores, forests, etc. – which do not constitute elements of capital-value, are more intensively or extensively exploited with a greater exertion of the same amount of labour-power, without an increased advance of money-capital.<sup>5</sup>

From the second paragraph one may infer that to exploit something is to turn to advantage, and to one's own account, its inherent properties. To exploit natural resources 'productively' is to utilise their natural properties to create objects of human use. Labour, the exertion or expenditure of labour-power, is the means of such productive exploitation.

What, then, is the meaning of 'exploiting labour-power' in the first paragraph? Again, it is a matter of turning something's inherent properties to advantage. The natural property of labour-power, we may say, is to exploit natural resources through production, for human advantage. But human labour always has a specific social form. It is an expenditure of human working time by individuals who are necessarily associated or dissociated in some way or another. For 'it is always a certain social body, a social subject, which is active in a greater or sparser totality of branches of production.'<sup>6</sup> Thus, whereas the properties of natural resources are 'nature-given', the natural property of human labour is 'society-given', in the sense that it appears as the natural property of a totality of social labour. As such, it is the property of creating *value*, a cosmos of economic relativities, whether in the form of directly compared and qualitatively diverse use-values (as, in general, in pre-capitalist modes of production) or as use-values indirectly ranked in a quantitative scale governed by the pursuit of absolute exchange-value (as under capitalism.) It is this property of labour-power that is the object of exploitation in the first paragraph quoted above, as throughout Marx's work. The sense of 'exploitation' is the same, however, whether it is 'nature-given materials' or society-given capacities whose properties are being turned to account.

This social object of exploitation still needs further delimitation. By the exploitation of labour we must always understand Marx to mean the exploitation of *others'* labour-power (*fremde Arbeitskraft*). Exploitation is not just practised *on* a social object, but is also a social relationship *between* distinct persons or classes of persons. In their capacity as exploiters, the subjects of this relationship stand necessarily outside the totality of social labour whose bearers, in their capacity of exploited labour-power, are its objects. In principle, the same concrete individuals could figure in both capacities; Marx, however, limited his analyses of exploitation to the more usual cases where these roles are concretely distributed to separate individuals. Exploitation therefore is a relationship between a set of agents defined as the bearers of social labour-power, or living labour, who are its objects; and another set, its subjects, defined by the negation of the first, as non-workers. These sets are logical classes that are presumed, for purposes

of analysis, to exist as social entities - that is, as 'classes' in the sense which gives us models of 'class society' and 'classless society'.

In these contexts, consequently, '*fremde*' must be understood in a strong sense. When writing rapidly in polyglot, Marx rendered this in English not by 'other people's' but by 'foreign', as in the following passage from 'Revenue and its Sources'. (The argument, irrelevant for present purposes, is that J. S. Mill was mistaken in treating part of profit as the entrepreneur's wages.)

It is incomprehensible how economists like J. S. Mill . . . suddenly convert industrial profit into the individual [*eigne*] labour of the capitalist instead of into the surplus labour of the worker, unless the function of exploitation of other people's [*foreign*] labour is called labour by them; the result of this is indeed that the wages of this labour are exactly equal to the amount of other people's [*foreign*] labour appropriated, in other words, they depend directly on the degree of exploitation . . .<sup>7</sup>

It would seem that the sense of *fremd* that Marx wanted to convey here was a term of art - or of dialectic - which included the idea of *alien* otherness. These were others who were no more than others, because no salient similitude or collective personality, no bonds of solidarity or mutual obligation, were shared with them. Rather the contrary, in fact, for the out-group whose labour is exploited is not just casually 'other', but the opposite and mutually exclusive category from that of the exploiters. Thus a condition of estrangement is also a socially given property of the object of exploitation - its socially given *social* property, as distinct from its socially given natural property. This allows living labour - that is, something by nature human and active - to be treated as passive and non-human, and hence to be exploited like a natural resource.

But what is the connection between exploitation and possession? First, since to exploit others' labour-power is to turn to one's own account its capacity to produce value, and since values are realisable only through appropriation in use or exchange, exploitation logically implies the appropriation of some part of the product of social labour by non-workers. Beyond this, three factual connections enter in. First, since estrangement prevails between exploiting and exploited classes, this appropriation will take the form of expropriation. Secondly, if exploitation is to be continuous, there is an upper limit to the share of social labour that can be expropriated by non-workers, since it is the only means whereby living labour can reproduce itself as an object of exploitation. Thus we may follow Marx, and regard exploitation as involving expropriation of the *surplus* product, the line between necessary and surplus labour being drawn historically, within the various modes of production. Thirdly, successful exploitation would seem to require possession of the means of production by the exploiters. For although some things which cannot be

possessed – such as a situation, or good weather, or a trusting disposition – may be exploited by anyone who has the requisite opportunity, skill, ruthlessness, etc., things which can be owned, such as the elements of social production, surely need to be owned by those who count on exploiting the labour process that consumes them. Taking all these considerations together, a general definition of the concept of exploitation in historical materialism may be offered, as follows: *the expropriation of the surplus labour of a class of workers by an antagonistic class of non-working owners of means of production*. Since ‘surplus labour’ cannot be identified apart from the way in which the distinction between necessary and surplus labour can be drawn for some particular mode of production,<sup>8</sup> this definition can only be applied in the context of antagonistic modes of production; but it describes their characteristic process.

Recent studies have suggested that it is mistaken to seek a general theory of modes of production, although the arguments against doing so are perhaps not yet conclusive.<sup>9</sup> The present discussion does not have that ambition, although if successful it must certainly contribute to defining the general features shared by antagonistic modes of production. The following pages attempt to determine the conditions which a mode of production must satisfy if it is to be a vehicle of class exploitation; to enumerate some of the transmissive practices through which these conditions have been realised in the main historical antagonistic modes; and finally, to isolate the distinctive features of exploitation itself, as a complex transmissive practice operating on a large scale.

## 2 FIVE CONDITIONS OF EXPLOITATION

The conditions that a mode of production must satisfy if it is to be a vehicle of class exploitation can be lumped under five headings. The first two of these refer to *preconditions*: a state of affairs that must hold outside the production process if what goes on within it is to result in exploitation. Here, Marx emphasised that exploitation can occur only when the worker – the ‘direct producer’ – is separated from the conditions of production, which confront him as the property of another, alien centre of social agency. We have seen that his concept of the primitive community was constructed as the antithesis to the ‘negative model’ of the worker’s possessory relation to the conditions of production, which was the formula for capital. In the latter,

living labour relates to the raw material as well as to the instrument and to the means of subsistence required during labour, as negatives, as not-property . . .<sup>10</sup>

Capitalist society provides these exploitative preconditions in their

purity – the result of all conditions of production having become human products and hence monopolisable – but earlier forms of exploitation approximated to them more or less closely and in different ways. We may generalise that the potentiality for exploitation is present wherever proprietors of means of production also own, or can control access to, means of subsistence needed by others who lack both but are able to work. This is a double precondition, relating both to the mode of proprietorship in means of production, and the mode of exclusion from means of subsistence; and both sides may be satisfied in variety of ways.

But for this potentiality of exploitation to be realised as a regular aspect and outcome of a continuous process of social production, three further conditions must also be satisfied. From the standpoint of a particular production cycle, these correspond to successive stages or ‘functional forms’. They are generalised from the three stages that Marx discerned in the circular movement of capital.<sup>11</sup> In the first of these, ‘The capitalist appears as a buyer on the commodity- and the labour-market.’ As a consequence, he assembles raw materials and labour-power alongside his means of production, and living labour receives a conditional promise of means of subsistence. The second stage is ‘Productive consumption of the purchased commodities by the capitalist. He acts as a capitalist producer of commodities . . . The result is a commodity of more value than that of the elements entering into its production.’ He appropriates a surplus produced through a process accomplished under his control but without his direct participation. The third stage is where ‘The capitalist returns to the market as a seller; his commodities are turned into money’ and in consequence the surplus distributed between accumulation and the revenues of the exploiting agencies. The upshot is the reproduction, outside the production process, of the separation from which it set out. By combining the two preconditions (or results) with the three processual conditions, we obtain five conditions of exploitation, as follows:

1. *Monopoly of means of production and subsistence by a socially cohesive class of proprietors.* The situation in which living labour confronts the conditions of production as not-property must be general, not exceptional or local in incidence. Or, if it is exceptional or local, living labour must be under exceptional or localised constraints which prevent it ‘escaping’. If the need for subsistence is to provide an enduring motive for continuously renewed submission, a class of proprietors must effectively monopolise access to society’s available means of production and subsistence. Otherwise non-proprietors will migrate to virgin land, obtain credit to produce on their own account, or extort subsistence by political coercion or by appealing to ideological agencies. The cohesiveness of the propertied class, in terms of cultural similitudes, interaction, and extra-economic soli-

parity would appear to be at least a correlative, if not a condition, of effective monopoly.

2. *Plentiful supply of living labour excluded from property in means of production and subsistence, with low social cohesion.* The corollary of the above, but the propertylessness of labour is not a mere obverse of the proprietors' monopoly: it involves a distinct, underprivileged status for the labourer. The ratio of workers to non-workers varies with the productivity of labour, but to the extent that the former are in a large majority their low social cohesion is a condition of successful exploitation by the minority. The status of the excluded individuals is usually conducive to such fragmentation of the working class.
3. *Modes of providing means of production with labour-power, and living labour with subsistence.* Social mechanisms must exist, or be brought into being, by which labour-power is made available for combination with means of production in the production process; and by which subsistence is made conditionally available to living labour.
4. *Control of production and appropriation of surplus product.* The production process must be such, and proprietors must be able to control it in such a way, that it yields not only subsistence for the workers and the surplus requisite for collective purposes, but also a surplus sufficient to maintain the proprietors and their dependent unproductive consumers, without their having to participate in the process except as required for this control. Also, the appropriation of this surplus by the proprietors must occur as a regular unchallenged transaction.
5. *Distribution and consumption of surplus product.* Exploitation is not complete unless the appropriated surplus can be distributed to its final beneficiaries, without reducing the dependence of living labour on proprietors of means of production, and consumed by them in a form that reproduces their social existence as a class of non-workers.

The ways in which these five conditions are fulfilled in the main historic forms of exploitation will now be examined, with special attention to the part played by both static and dynamic possessory relations, as analysed in Chapters 6 and 7. The main historic forms of exploitation are taken to be the combination of *corvée* labour and fiscal rent due to a patrimonial sovereign; servile labour and rent due to a feudal lord; slave labour performed for a slave-owner; and wage-labour for a capitalist.

This selection needs a few words of justification. First, it is not intended to be exhaustive. Other forms of exploitation have existed, such as helotry or peonage, that fall outside these categories.<sup>12</sup> Secondly, these forms of the labour relation can exist in more or less non-exploitative ways outside the particular exploitative property relations specified. Thus *corvée* may exist as a communal obligation; patriarchal slavery may be scarcely at all exploitative, and privileged slaves in exploitative slave-systems may not be

exploited;<sup>13</sup> personal dependency approximating to serfdom may be combined with an exchange of services which falls short of exploitation; and wages may be paid for personal labour services, or in an artisan's workshop, or a socialist economy, under more or less non-exploitative circumstances. Thirdly, I shall follow Marx's theoretical assumption that these four forms of exploitation were dominant in the four modes of production to which Marxist tradition has given the names 'Asiatic', 'Ancient', 'feudal' and 'capitalist'. I am well aware of the many weighty objections to doing so, but since the present aim is not to analyse or criticise modes of production, but only the phenomenon of exploitation which appears in antagonistic modes of production, I retain the traditional classifications for simplicity. Fourthly, it is altogether possible and even probable that exploitative forms approximating to these four will be present as subordinate elements within (or alongside) modes of production in which they are not the dominant form. Thus *corvée* labour and serfdom have often coexisted, as have serfdom and wage labour; all three other forms coexisted with slavery in the ancient world, as slavery and *corvée* coexisted with bourgeois capitalism. These qualifications alone give our inquiry a highly abstract and conceptual character, and the use of factual material is inevitably mainly illustrative.

### 3. CLASS MONOPOLY OF MEANS OF PRODUCTION AND SUBSISTENCE

It might be objected that the first of the four conditions listed above is too strong. Is not a situation where living labour confronts the conditions of production as the monopoly of another class already a situation of class exploitation? And if so, the 'condition' is a mere tautology.

The stipulation is not equivalent to saying that class exploitation exists, however, so long as it refers to the situation existing outside, and in abstraction from, production itself. As such, it merely isolates the moment in which individuals 'stand' over against one another, defined by their respective possessory relations to separate elements of the production process – labour-power on one side, conditions of production on the other. And since this situation is being considered as a condition, not as a result, the combination of these separate elements into a single active process must be conceived as lying in the future. Indeed, the very terms on which this combination will be effected may yet have to be specified. The agents simply 'face' one another, with their possessions, needs and interests, in mutual estrangement. A variety of social situations fits this abstract description, but all are situations external to production, and even to that phase of circulation in which factors of production are assembled. Amongst this variety, a broad distinction can be drawn between two sorts of situation.

The first sort might be envisaged as occurring in a fully developed class

society, before the start of a production cycle or else as an antagonistic interruption of one. Under capitalism, examples might be the mutual orientations of employers seeking to hire labour and of workers looking for jobs – say, in a new town; or of representatives of management and labour before a round of collective bargaining; or of managers and workers in a wildcat strike or a factory occupation. Under feudalism, examples might be the relationship of a peasant seeking to ‘commend’ himself to a lord; or of serfs meeting with their lord’s bailiff to negotiate their tenure and services; or even of insurrectionary peasants confronting their masters. Since these are all relationships of estrangement, emphasis is on the bargaining power and the potential for exploitation or resistance inherent in the situation. These potentialities are present in the form of property: primarily, as shared assumptions about the exclusive distribution of things and capacities to persons; secondarily, as the chances of successful exclusion by legal action, political enforcement or political insurgency.

Obviously, in situations of this sort the fact that living labour confronts the conditions of production as the monopoly of a propertied class is itself the result of past exploitation. Thus, once a particular exploitative mode of production is established, exploitation itself becomes the cause of the preconditions for further exploitation being fulfilled. Exploitation, once institutionalised as a dominant mode of production, reproduces both its own material preconditions – living labour-power and means of production – as well as their social distribution and the relationship of estrangement and mutual exclusion between their bearers. When a major form of exploitation is established, therefore, the fulfilment of the last three conditions ensures the fulfilment of the first. This conceptual circularity, which is not logically vicious, simply reflects the cyclical temporal structure of instituted processes of social production.

The second sort of situation to which the first condition could apply is one that is *historically* prior to the development and full elaboration of the exploitative mode of production which is, in fact, to grow out of it. In this sense, living labour confronts the conditions of production as others’ property at the *threshold* of feudalism or capitalism. In the first case, peasants deprived of all security of livelihood confront warlords who alone can command access to the land and guarantee subsistence; in the second, ‘free’ workers – propertyless and communityless men ejected from the dissolving structures of feudalism – confront ‘free’ capital – money and means of production available for employment outside the restrictions of guilds and the traditional routines of handicrafts, in the hands of ‘new men’, innovating entrepreneurs. Here, the first condition applies to the period of genesis of a mode of production. The mechanisms that will bring the elements together for production, allowing exploitation to occur, are still uninstitutionalised, in an ‘experimental’ stage, unstable and bearing marks of the past.

Marx elucidated the sense in which means of production in the hands of



others constitute a precondition for exploitation, in the case of capitalism, in the draft entitled 'Revenue and its Sources', from which parts of the third volume of *Capital* were worked up:

What is capital regarded not as the result of, but as the prerequisite for, the process of production? What makes it capital before it enters the process so that the latter merely develops its immanent character? The social framework in which it exists. The fact that living labour is confronted by past labour, activity is confronted by the product, man is confronted by things, labour is confronted by its own materialised conditions as alien, independent, self-contained subjects, personifications, in short, as *someone else's property* and, in this form, as 'employers' and 'commanders' of labour itself . . . Capital, as the prerequisite of production, capital, not in the form in which it emerges from the production process, but as it is before it enters it, is the contradiction in which it is confronted by labour as the labour of other people and in which capital itself, as the property of other people, confronts labour. It is the contradictory social framework which is expressed in it, and which, separated from the production process itself, expresses itself in *capitalist property as such*.<sup>14</sup>

And a little later, he distinguished the two senses in which this property could be a 'prerequisite' of exploitation – within, and anterior to, the developed mode of production:

Labour as wage-labour and the conditions of labour as capital (that is, consequently, as the property of the capitalist . . .) are expressions of the same relationship, only seen from opposite poles. This condition of capitalist production is its invariable result. It is its *antecedent* posited by itself. Capitalist production is antecedent to itself and is therefore posited with its conditions as soon as it has evolved and functions in conditions appropriate to it. However, the *capitalist production process* is not just a production process pure and simple. The contradictory, socially determined feature of its elements evolves, becomes reality only in the process itself, and this feature is the predominant characteristic of the process, which it turns precisely into that socially determined mode of production, the *capitalist production process*.

The *formation process* of capital – when capital, i.e. not any particular capital, but capital in general, first evolves – is the *dissolution process*, the *parting product* of the social mode of production preceding it. It is thus a *historical process*, a process which belongs to a definite historical period. This is the period of its *historical genesis*. . . . The process of capital becoming capital or its development *before* the capitalist production process exists, and its realization in the capitalist process of production itself belong to two historically different periods. In the second, capital is

*taken for granted*, and its existence and automatic functioning is presupposed. In the first period, capital is the sediment resulting from the dissolution of a different social formation.<sup>15</sup>

In these two different sorts of situation the first condition is fulfilled in different ways. In a fully developed mode of production it is fulfilled to the extent that the class difference between non-workers and workers, created by exploitation, has achieved general recognition as an unassailable set of habitual assumptions about static possessory relations. It must have become a fixed, unquestioned part of everyday social consciousness that plantations do not belong to slaves, manors to serfs, or factories to wage-labourers. These like all other assumptions about the fixed, permanent aspects of the distribution of possessions in society must, furthermore, have become codified in custom or law which can, if necessary, be enforced by coercive sanctions. As a mode of production enters its phase of dissolution and crisis this taken-for-granted character of its framework breaks down. As basic assumptions are brought into the arena of class struggle, the consensual fulfilment of the first condition cannot be maintained and it has to be upheld more and more by force.

In the genesis of a new mode of production the qualification added to the first condition becomes relevant – i.e. if the situation is exceptional or local, living labour must somehow be restrictively contained within it for exploitation to occur. In precapitalist forms this is already inherent in slavery, and in the patrimonial or feudal forms of personal dependence, through which exploitation develops. In the origins of capitalism, poverty has itself been an important agent of containment. So have apprenticeship, indenture, and restrictions on unemployment and mobility such as measures to prohibit vagrancy or travelling, or forcible transplantation of populations to new areas of colonisation or industrial growth. For similar reasons, Marx emphasised the crucial intervention of political compulsion in the establishment of every new mode of production. A new mode of production can only grow in the interstices of a social formation based on other modes, and the pre-existing property relations will themselves have a containing effect. Thus the persistence of feudal landed property alongside nascent capital prevented resettlement of the land by free landless labourers and thus circumscribed their capacity to escape confrontation with the new conditions of production. Conversely, where a bourgeois political revolution allows peasants to appropriate feudal estates as smallholdings this may have a retarding effect on the development of capitalism.<sup>16</sup> Wherever land is plentiful and freely available – in nineteenth-century America or Australia, for example – capitalism can only develop if special restrictions are laid on labour, slavery in the American south being an extreme case.<sup>17</sup> Otherwise, its conditions are only likely to be satisfied in fully settled areas, and if a continuous inflow of poor immigrants can be maintained.

Thus living labour may, at first, confront the conditions of production as property of *various* kinds, held by various classes. These may not always be exploiting classes: a free peasantry and artisan labour may be no less effective an obstacle to propertyless men establishing themselves as independent producers than landlordism. Furthermore, the development of both slavery and capitalism into dominant modes of exploitation requires a certain volume of commodity production and circulation to have appeared. Hence the situations in which slave-labour and wage-labour emerge must include possessory bonds established through commodity circulation – ‘property by exchange’ – as well as forms of landed property, etc. derived from pre-existing modes of production. Indeed, the form in which the conditions of production confront living labour as the property of others may not be a *class* form at all. Thus Marx described how non-exploitative *corvée* obligations of a communal kind were transformed into a system of feudal exploitation in Wallachia.<sup>18</sup> Here it was sufficient that part of the conditions of production confronted the peasants as common land, from which they were excluded from making merely individual use, for expropriation by others to be possible. In Asiatic states, exploitative *corvée* labour must have developed against a similar background. Slavery in antiquity developed in the context of initially non-exploitative relations of public and private property established by the Ancient mode of production. In this case the first condition was fulfilled through exclusion from civic status – either because living labour was conquered or captured in the shape of aliens, or because civic rights had been forfeited through debt or other causes.

For pre-existing forms of property to be consolidated as a monopoly over against living labour, whether of a community or of classes, established modes of transmission from one generation to the next are also a prerequisite. Otherwise, propertyless men could appropriate dead men’s possessions and become independent. Hence the first condition includes the requirement that modes of devolution appropriate to the pre-existing forms of property should be generally practised and upheld. Likewise, as a new mode of production and form of exploitation become established, it requires modes of devolution to develop that allow the class monopoly of the new means of production to be preserved and transmitted. For if exploitation and circulation are the transmissive processes through which the continually reproduced stock of social matter is distributed to persons in a fixed pattern of class relationships, devolution is the means whereby successive generations of individuals are distributed to the existing pattern of distribution of social matter. And as has already been remarked, devolution of access to property through certain lines, whether of descent or organisational succession, is simultaneously the taken-for-granted denial of access to those who succeed to positions outside these lines.

Modes of devolution are closely connected with the extra-economic sources of solidarity of the propertied class. Where family succession

prevails, this tends to emphasise the cohesion of the propertied class or classes by virtue of their being consanguine groups bound by resulting ties of intermarriage and kinship intercourse. Also, for example, rules governing female inheritance of various sorts of assets may encourage either class endogamy (e.g. to preserve landed property) or class exogamy (e.g. to merge landed and industrial wealth). Where organisational succession to collective or corporate property prevails, the dominant class will emphasise its ideological bonding as a status elite of privileged and loyal servants of gods, kings, corporations or 'the people'. The privileged castes of India and elsewhere exemplify a combination of family and organisational succession, the solidarity of common caste membership being founded mainly on this combination and its ideological reflection.

The question of class cohesion has to be examined under the same two aspects as proprietorship of means of production: as preceding a new mode of production, and as accompanying it once established. Extra-economic factors will be important in both cases, but in different ways. At the outset, the solidarity of a class of potential exploiters must be compatible with, and adequate for, the process of imposing itself upon living labour, whether this process be political or economic in character. In most precapitalist forms conquest has been a frequent cause of exploitative social formations arising, and one that Marx's theoretical models recognised. Here the bonds of culture, descent, political interest and military hazard which divided victors and victims fostered both internal cohesion and an instrumental attitude to the latter. These were reinforced by the negative solidarity engendered by conflict and defeat. In the case of capitalism, the class solidarities of nobility, gentry and bourgeoisie were established social facts that the nascent proletariat confronted along with the latter's monopoly of capital. We have seen also how Marx saw the corporate cohesion of the bourgeoisie in mediaeval towns as facilitating the relegation of immigrant serfs and peasants to an exploitable status.<sup>19</sup>

But as an exploitative mode of production becomes established, the solidarity of the propertied class undergoes a change. At first, it will have been a resultant of the historical development of a social formation based on a previous mode of production. The new mode however will initiate a quite different historical development and new type of social formation. Just as exploitation creates the conditions for further exploitation, so that the class monopoly of means of production becomes a self-reproducing condition, so it also creates the hegemony of a new class as the agents who realise that condition. The new mode of production thus comes increasingly to determine the extra-economic solidarity of the dominant class. Marx alluded to this in relation to exploitation originating through conquest:

If human beings themselves are conquered along with the land and soil as its organic accessories, then they are equally conquered as one of the

conditions of production, and in this way arises slavery and serfdom, which soon corrupts and modifies the original forms of all communities, and then itself becomes their basis. The simple construction is thereby negatively determined.<sup>20</sup>

At first, 'Antiquity unanimously esteemed agriculture as the proper occupation of the free man, the soldier's school.'<sup>21</sup> But with the growth of slavery, all manual work was stigmatised. Furthermore,

The citizens hold power over their labouring slaves only in their community, and on this account alone, therefore, they are bound to the form of communal ownership. It is the communal private property which compels the active citizens to remain in this spontaneously derived form of association over against their slaves. For this reason the whole structure of society based on this communal ownership, and with it the power of the people, decays in the same measure as, in particular, immovable private property evolves.<sup>22</sup>

Under feudalism, too, there occurred 'the development of landed proprietorship out of purely military relations of subordination.'<sup>23</sup> Similar ideas appeared in Marx's discussions of how the rising bourgeoisie absorbed aristocratic and gentry strata, and the 'ideological classes' that had previously been dependent on their patronage.

A principal factor in this transformation and assimilation would seem to be the rising class's identity as a consumer class, or 'leisure class'. It shares this with its predecessors, and can therefore affiliate itself with a tradition of status-validating culture. The more that the new form of exploitation defines what is to count as 'productive labour', the more does the common experience of the exploiting class as an unproductive stratum devoting its revenues to the pursuit of status provide the situations and similitudes on which its solidarity is based. The direct experience of power arising from the actual practice of exploitation, being occupationally specific and much less widespread, remains enveloped within the more general identity defined by such terms as 'twice-born' or 'gentleman'.<sup>24</sup>

The satisfaction of the first condition, because it is only a necessary starting-point for the process that realises exploitative opportunities, can mostly be specified in static terms. Excluding and excluded classes confront each other as proprietors and non-proprietors, in static possessory relations. Dynamic relations such as commodity circulation or devolution, in so far as they have also been treated as prerequisites, have concerned us only in their static results: the existence of property by exchange or by succession as parts of a stable order. To go beyond this state-description and show how the two sides move towards each other involves further dynamic relations, the transmissive practices that will be described as part of the fulfilment of the third condition. First, however, the other side of the

first condition must be examined: the status of living labour as a class excluded from the conditions of production.

#### 4. CLASS EXCLUSION FROM SUBSISTENCE AND MEANS OF PRODUCTION

The way in which living labour relates to subsistence and means of production as not-property depends in part on the terms in which the bearers of labour-power are confined to their role and excluded from proprietorship. Marx formalised these with the abstractions current in nineteenth-century social science. Vinogradoff, introducing his study of English villeinage, contrasted these broad abstractions with the multifariousness of historical fact; nevertheless, he allowed the validity of the general concepts for comparative study:

There is no doubt that great landmarks in the course of social development are set by the three modes hitherto employed of organizing human labour: using the working man (1) as a chattel at will, (2) as a subordinate whose duties are fixed by custom, (3) as a free agent bound by contract. These landmarks probably indicate molecular changes in the structure of society . . . And still we must not forget, in drawing such definitions, that we reach them only by looking at things from such a height that all lesser inequalities and accidental features of the soil are no longer sensible to the eyesight.<sup>25</sup>

My present point of vantage, of necessity as well as by theoretical aim, remains at this altitude.

We may say, then, that there are three ways in which labourers may be excluded from the conditions of production. First, they may be treated as capable of proprietorship, but be unable to acquire any means over which to exercise it. Secondly, they may be treated as incapable of exercising any proprietorship even if by chance they were able to get hold of means for their own use. Or thirdly, they may be regarded as not incapable of proprietorship in general, but as disqualified from exercising it over the particular means they are compelled to confront – and also be unable to acquire other means over which to exercise it. The first of these is the situation of the free, propertyless proletarian; the second, of the slave; and the third corresponds to the position of the personal dependent of a feudal lord, or the personal subject of a patrimonial sovereign, who is disqualified from owning the means of livelihood to which he is tied and confined by his dependency or subjection.

These different states of propertylessness result from interpreting the worker's exclusion from means of production in the light of his own relation to his body and its labour-power – or in other words as an extension of the

status by which he is defined and treated as a bearer of living labour. For the worker's primary relation to the social production process, within a given mode of production, is to its labour component, just as the non-working proprietor's primary relation is to its non-human components. Hence the class relation in which non-owning worker and non-working owner confront each other directly, outside the production process, is conditioned by the primary relation of each to the process itself. The free proletarian's capacity for proprietorship in general is the result of the fact that his relation to the capitalist production process is mediated through his proprietorship of his body. It is inalienable, though he may and indeed must alienate its labour-power. The slave's general *incapacity* for proprietorship is likewise the result of his relation to the slave production process being mediated through his non-proprietorship of his body. It may belong to anybody who is not himself a slave and may be freely alienated, together with its labour-power, by its owner. (Thus it may even be alienated, by manumission, to the non-slave that the manumitted slave will be.) The subject of the patrimonial sovereign differs from the slave in that his body and labour-power can belong only to the ruler. It is inalienable and irredeemable; the subject is not necessarily incapable of all forms of proprietorship, but the question of a possible independent status is unlikely ever to arise. The dependent of a feudal lord is in a similar position, except that his body may be alienated to another lord, along with the land to which it is bound, and can also under certain conditions be reclaimed by himself. He may be capable of owning some means of production—animals and other instruments of production, for example—but usually under political constraints and disabilities. In both these cases of personal subjection or dependency, the worker's disqualification from owning the means of livelihood to which he is tied results from his relation to the production process being mediated through the ownership of his body by a landlord whose political jurisdiction confines it to his own territory.<sup>26</sup>

The status of labour also has to be regarded from two points of view: as an original and as a subsequent, reproduced precondition of the operation of a particular mode of production. In both cases it is the static result of dynamic processes and practices, but of different kinds. In the second context, it is the continually reproduced result of the transmissive practices through which the means of production are furnished with labour-power, and living labour with subsistence, and through which the product is appropriated, distributed and consumed. In other words, it is the result of the ways in which the third, fourth and fifth conditions of exploitation are fulfilled, just as it is also their prerequisite. As such, it also conditions the ways in which new entrants are recruited into the labouring class, the potential labour-force. In the first context, however, the latter is the main cause of the new status of labour being what it is. It results from the ways in which the new type of labour-force is initially recruited from a population

still practising a former mode of production – and thus from the ways in which the breakdown of that mode of production has made living labour available for new forms of subjection to the property of others. Since the ways in which the third, fourth and fifth conditions of exploitation are satisfied will concern us anon, here I shall only review some of the practices through which labour is recruited, both initially and in the ongoing process of a mode of production.

(a) *Capitalism*

The original creation of a capitalistic labour-force need not be dwelt on. The story has been told by historians before and after Marx; the very words in which Marx made the essential points have become familiar, but bear repetition for the sake of their theoretical condensity.

The economic structure of capitalistic society has grown out of the economic structure of feudal society. The dissolution of the latter set free the elements of the former.

The immediate producer, the labourer, could only dispose of his own person after he had ceased to be the slave, serf, or bondman of another. To become a free seller of labour-power, who carries his commodity wherever he finds a market, he must further have escaped from the regime of the guilds, their rules for apprentices and journeymen, and the impediments of their labour regulations. Hence, the historical movement which changes the producers into wage-workers, appears, on the one hand, as their emancipation from serfdom and from the fetters of the guilds, and this side alone exists for our bourgeois historians. But, on the other hand, these new freedmen became sellers of themselves only after they had been robbed of all their own means of production, and of all the guarantees of existence afforded by the old feudal arrangements. And the history of this, their expropriation, is written in the annals of mankind in letters of blood and fire.<sup>27</sup>

Given an early decline of serfdom in certain countries, from causes partly inherent in the structure of feudalism, living labour lost its status of personal dependency carrying access to subsistence. The creation of a proletariat of free but destitute individuals was one possible direct outcome of this, and since wage-labour had existed as a subordinate adjunct to feudal exploitation, this expanded and cheapened the pre-existing labour market to the point where it became a major institution. But two other possible direct outcomes were the conversion of serfs and guildsmen into free commodity producers, owning their means of production;<sup>28</sup> or the emancipation of the village commune as a co-operative enterprise, at least to the extent of common pasture. Marx's chapters on 'the so-called primitive accumulation' recount how these outcomes, to the degree that they occurred in England, were cut off or circumvented by various modes of seizure and usurpation practised by landed and moneyed capitalists.



Scarcely less well known are Marx's words on 'simple reproduction', describing how capital, once instituted, produces and reproduces the proletarian form of living labour that its structure requires:

But that which at first was but a starting-point, becomes, by the mere continuity of the process, by simple reproduction, the peculiar result, constantly renewed and perpetuated, of capitalist production. On the one hand, the process of production incessantly converts material wealth into capital, into means of creating more wealth and means of enjoyment for the capitalist. On the other hand, the labourer, on quitting the process, is what he was on entering it, a source of wealth, but devoid of all means of making that wealth his own. Since, before entering on the process, his own labour has already been alienated from himself by the sale of his labour-power, has been appropriated by the capitalist and incorporated with capital, it must, during the process, be realized in a product that does not belong to him. . . . The labourer therefore constantly produces material, objective wealth, but in the form of capital, of an alien power that dominates and exploits him; and the capitalist as constantly produces labour-power, but in the form of a subjective source of wealth, separated from the objects in and by which it can alone be realized; in short, he produces the labourer, but as a wage-labourer. This incessant reproduction, this perpetuation of the labourer, is the *sine qua non* of capitalist production.<sup>29</sup>

This simple reproduction accounts for the fact that, capitalism once established, there is no need of any special status of slavery or dependence to maintain a permanent supply of living labour dependent on capital for employment and subsistence. 'The Roman slave was held by fetters: the wage-labourer is bound to his owner by invisible threads. The appearance of independence is kept up by means of a constant change of employers, and by the *factio juris* of a contract.'<sup>30</sup> It does not by itself explain the self-recruitment of the working-class, although it requires only a small extension to do so. So long as average wages equal the average cost of a working-class family's subsistence, divided by the average number of wage-earners per family, the incomes of the entire class can, on this model, be held at a level which precludes saving.<sup>31</sup> In the heyday of capitalism, with high unemployment and bourgeois control of the state, simple family succession to proprietorship and non-proprietorship of means of production therefore sufficed to perpetuate the working class. With the emergence of democracy, trade unions, full employment and free education, an increasing role in this perpetuation is played by these very agencies – the 'ideological state apparatuses' of Althusser.<sup>32</sup> Each new right which the working-class political struggle succeeds in attaching to the proletarian's basic status of citizenship is perverted into a means of control by the bourgeoisie in its ceaseless efforts to maintain its social superiority.

But there is no need here to retail what has become a major theme of sociological researches goaded by social democracy's apparent inability to alter the structure of capitalism by mollifying its effects.<sup>33</sup>

(b) *Slavery*

Enslavement is the most openly expropriative way of recruiting labour. Universally, the slave – if he is not born or bought as a slave – is a captive, one who is *taken*, whether raided from his homeland, a prisoner of war, or the subjugated inhabitant of a conquered land. In a world based on the assumptions of tribalism, an individual plucked from his native soil and community has even fewer human rights and attributes than a displaced or stateless person in a world of nations – for at least the latter can often find a job, thanks to the transnational character of capitalism. (On the other hand, when capitalist nations, expanding into unpoliced territories, needed slave labour, they did not hesitate to find tribal victims against whom they could turn tribal assumptions.) Because the essential human attributes of the slave are treated as the adventitious qualities of an object of ownership, there are seldom any qualitative restrictions on the uses to which they may be put. Slaves may be set to work, or prostituted, or made into concubines or eunuchs, gladiators or soldiers; for the same reason, they may occasionally become important officials or wealthy merchants without losing their slave status.

Marx said that the 'slave economy . . . passes through a metamorphosis from the patriarchal system, mainly for home uses, to the plantation system for the world market.'<sup>34</sup> This transition should be seen as analogous to that from simple commodity production to capitalist production. For patriarchal slavery, like simple commodity production, never exists as a distinct and independent mode of production, but only as a subordinate adjunct to another mode. Yet it is a precondition for the historical emergence of plantation slavery – the real 'slave economy' – much as simple commodity production necessarily preceded capitalism. For it seems unlikely that a tribal people would impose general slavery on conquered subjects unless the slave status already existed in the one society or the other. Even colonial slavery in north and south America developed against a background that included the Graeco-Roman model, indigenous West African patriarchal slavery, and the Arab slave trade.<sup>35</sup>

In patriarchal slavery the slave was usually a captive or other alien who had lost his tribal status and become incorporated into the family and tribe of his owner, but at the lowest level and without effective rights. Such slaves did not necessarily transmit their stigma to their descendants, who might become full members of the community. Their labour was not exploited, because no distinct mode of production defined a surplus product of which they were dispossessed. Their yoke was often light, but their hold on life precarious. For example, Maori slaves were liable to be killed at a moment's notice to provide a feast for distinguished guests, though in

general they were well treated. Indeed, this brings into relief another aspect of primitive slavery – for a Maori chief's wife might suffer the same fate too. Both cases are probably to be seen as conspicuous consumption. Possessions of the greatest value were recklessly sacrificed, rather than have the chief and his tribe shamed by meagre hospitality. The mildness of patriarchal slavery as well as this liability to instant sacrifice both expressed the same fact: that under primitive conditions a slave could be a very valuable means of production. Because of this, he could count on free subsistence and was even privileged in certain ways. Thus a degree of *quid pro quo* was involved, which tended to become contractual over time. Under primitive conditions, it is true, slaves could only be afforded by chiefs; at the same time their productiveness depended very much on whether they could be trusted, which affected the way they were treated.<sup>36</sup> Only when slavery developed into a large-scale institution geared to the market, with regular sources of supply, did individual slaves become relatively expendable. Then the fact that they were worked to death or killed for sport was indeed a reflection of their economic powerlessness, and of the fact that as commodities they had a definite and discountable value. Even in Rome, America, and other plantation slave societies, however, there were usually some legal restraints on their use and abuse.

Just as much of the ideology of capitalism, especially in Marx's time, invoked an imaginary past of simple commodity production unsullied by the exploitation of man by man, so the ideology of slave economies recalled their patriarchal origins. The Greeks emphasised the natural inferiority of alien barbarians, as preordaining them to enslavement and the service of their superiors. The Romans derived slavery 'from a supposed agreement between the victor and the vanquished, in which the first stipulated for the perpetual services of his foe, and the other gained in consideration the life which he had legitimately forfeited.'<sup>37</sup> These ideas bore little relation to the reality of recruitment of slave labour in the developed slave economies of antiquity, where slaves were as likely to have been sold by parents or creditors as captured, and were not necessarily aliens. It is true, of course, that breeding is a slow and expensive way of reproducing a slave labour-force, and slave economies always rely partly on external seizure. As Marx pointed out,

The slave market maintains its supply of the commodity labour-power by war, piracy, etc., and this regime is not promoted by the process of circulation, but by the actual appropriation of the labour-power of others by direct physical compulsion. Even in the United States after the conversion of the buffer territory between the wage-labour states of the North and the slavery states in the South into a slave breeding region for the South . . . this did not suffice for a long time, so that the African slave trade was continued as long as possible to satisfy the market.<sup>38</sup>

But despite this, the status of the slave in a developed slave economy owed nothing to the method of recruitment, let alone its historical origins. It was the continually reproduced result of the mode of production itself. Thus it was true of Rome as of America that

. . . the slave-holder considers a Negro, whom he has purchased, as his property, not because the institution of slavery as such entitles him to that Negro, but because he has acquired him like any other commodity, through sale and purchase. But the title itself is simply transferred, and not created by the sale. The title must exist before it can be sold, and a series of sales can no more create this title through continuous repetition than a single sale can. What created it in the first place were the production relations.<sup>39</sup>

(c) *Patrimonialism*

Earlier chapters have already suggested that Marx's model of the primitive community enables us to treat several developmental outcomes as intelligible consequences of its structural assumptions and socio-emotional matrix – that is, given sufficient causation to bring them into being. Thus externally, mutual estrangement between tribal peoples and the possibility of appropriating the inhabitants of conquered regions as spoils of war or accessories to the land allow slavery and serfdom to be understood as effects of the invasion of settled areas by mobile communities in search of new land. Internally, long settlement and expansion by colonisation may cause segmentation as the community is enlarged, especially if there is 'a combination of manufactures and agriculture within the small commune, which thus becomes altogether self-sustaining.'<sup>40</sup> The concomitant enlargement of the authority and tributary catchment of chiefs will probably increase the wealth, power and prestige of their lineages; enhanced military and ideological functions may stimulate the development of privileged castes. Stratification may therefore accompany segmentation, each reinforcing the other and provoking vertical and horizontal estrangement.

Processes of this nature are presupposed by the status of labour in Marx's 'Asiatic mode of production'. Rather than discuss all the difficulties which have vexed that concept, however, I shall simply assume that there is – or in principle could be – a form of exploitation corresponding to the relation of a patrimonial ruler to his subjects. The concept of patrimonialism is borrowed from Max Weber, but not in the abstractly political form that Weber gave it. For it seems both legitimate and necessary to retain Marx's assumption that 'Sovereignty here consists in the ownership of land concentrated on a national scale.' Such sovereignty is typically wielded by a sacred king, but this sort of theocratic domination did not have to be Asiatic to show the tendencies that, in parts of Asia, culminated in various forms of 'oriental despotism'. Marx noted them also in Etruria and pre-

colombian America, and they are now recognised as widely diffused. Sacred kingship has been as common in Africa, and even formerly in pagan Europe, as in Asia.<sup>41</sup> 'By virtue of that divine sovereignty,' writes an ethnographer, of Ruanda, 'the king could require tribute. Because everything and everybody was his, he could confiscate any cattle or agricultural produce, and take the labour or even the life of everybody.'<sup>42</sup> Whether this 'could' was more than hypothetical depended, of course, on the effective threats which the king could use. Thus wherever tribal kingship has developed into patrimonial exploitation it has been accompanied by the consolidation of an executive staff as a ruling class, more or less dependent on the ruler whose personal servants they are, and supported by fiscal exactions and forced labour on the basis of centralised proprietorship of land and labour-power.

Marx expressed the status of labour in this instance as follows: 'Since in this form the individual never becomes a proprietor but only a possessor, he is at bottom himself the property, the slave of him in whom the unity of the commune exists.'<sup>43</sup> It has already been argued, in Chapter 6, that patrimonial domination results from a contradiction within the status of the individual as member and yet also as a subordinate part of the primitive community – 'whose property the individual himself is, up to a point.'<sup>44</sup> We can now trace the formal steps through which the contradiction develops, but first it is necessary to elucidate the distinction between 'proprietor' and 'possessor' on which the dependent status of the subject turns.

This is the same distinction as we have already met, between communal ownership (or proprietorship) and individual possession, in the primitive community, where 'possession' was provisionally defined as the effect of individuals appropriating the *use* of what is jointly owned. Marx borrowed the distinction from legal terminology, and this sense of 'possession' is found quite frequently in his works, contrasted with the 'property', 'mere ownership' or 'title' held by a collectivity or another individual who does not have the use of the thing but retains some reversionary claim upon it.<sup>45</sup> I shall not follow this use of 'possession' and this contrast between 'property' (or 'ownership') and 'possession', because I have already defined and used 'possession' as a generic and comprehensive term for all possessory relations, and 'ownership' and 'property' for their institutionalised inclusive and exclusive aspects. But the distinction that Marx made in this way is an important one, and I shall mark it by the pair 'title' and 'tenure', the subjects of these relations being the 'title-holder' and the 'holder' respectively. This overcomes a second difficulty in Marx's use of 'possession', which arises from the way in which he sometimes contrasted the pre-capitalist land-holder, who paid a labour rent for the use of another's land as means of production, and the capitalist land-holder, who paid a money rent for the use of another's land as a means of exploiting labour. In doing so, he called the former a 'possessor' and the

latter a 'tenant'.<sup>46</sup> But the present discussion is being conducted at a level of generality and abstraction that requires a single term to cover both these relationships of a thing – in this case, land – to a landlord who holds the title to it, and to a holder in whose tenure it is for purposes of use. 'Title', 'tenure' and 'holder' already have a sufficiently wide range of applicability in ordinary usage for this to be a natural extension of it – for example, they refer equally to feudal and capitalistic land tenure. They also readily suggest what seems to be the underlying symbolism of this relationship: one party has not quite let go of something which another has taken and holds in his hand. In practice, since the recipient must be free to use the thing, the donor can only keep hold of it figuratively, by keeping back a piece of it, or a simulacrum, which – like 'strings attached' to it – has the power of restoring it, or some of its fruits, to his own possession.

What then *is* the double relationship of the thing which I have designated in this way? It is simply the static relation, or possessory bond, corresponding to the dynamic relation, or transmissive practice, of alienating and appropriating the *use* of a thing, rather than the thing itself. Title and tenure stand in the same relation to this practice as 'property by alienation' or 'property by exchange' or 'property by devolution' stand to the practices that create them. Title and tenure are in fact a particular sort of property by alienation, only whereas simple alienation necessitates two similar but successive relations, altering the thing's point of social ligature but not the nature of the ligament, alienation of use converts a single relation into two different but simultaneous relations, dividing the original bond into two unequal strands. One of these must include the recipient's use of the thing, while the other defines the original owner's claim upon it.

These practices of alienating and appropriating the use of something were not explicitly noticed in the table of transmissive practices in Chapter 7, where it was assumed that the object of alienation was a 'thing' that simply passed over from one subject to another. But alienation and appropriation of use are no less important in social life. Furthermore, since sharing things is simply having their use in common, then – if sharing is a more primitive practice than giving – alienation of use is probably no less ancient a component of human culture than alienation of the thing itself. In fact, of course, the two are not sharply distinct. For if alienating a thing is to alienate the whole use of it, to alienate the use is to alienate the thing, while reserving for oneself a reversionary claim which in practice may become attenuated or merely nominal.

A vast range of social practices comes into view at this point, the exploration of which would prolong this digression indefinitely. I shall do no more than note some main dimensions within which alienation of use may vary, and some formal characteristics of the practice which help us to understand its typical applications in economic life. First, the qualitative limits of use may be defined restrictively or unrestrictively – e.g. land may be granted or leased for agricultural or residential use only, or for any sort

of occupation. Secondly, the quantitative – that is, temporal – limits of use may be unspecified and indefinite, or else specified impersonally or personally. The return of something hired or lent may fall due on a predetermined date, or on the occurrence of some event specified in advance; or it may be left to the convenience of either party, or to be arranged by agreement, etc. Thirdly, the object whose use is alienated may be returnable, or, if its use necessitates consumption or alienation by the user, the original owner's claim may be only to the return of an equivalent, as with money and subsistence goods.

All these stipulations deal, of course, with what in a commercial loan would be the principal, i.e. the thing itself whose use is alienated. They are the conditions which allow the transaction to be mere alienation of use, rather than of the thing itself. Since alienations of use have a time-limit, they have the *form* of reciprocal giving. Indeed, they can be construed as an adaptation of this form for a different purpose. A particular mode of conditional bilateral giving, where the transaction is completed when the original thing or its equivalent is given 'back', is being used as a vehicle for unilateral alienation of the use of the thing. A gives B the use by giving the thing, on condition B gives it back to A after using it.<sup>47</sup> This may, of course, be more of a taking than a giving, as with the exercise of *jus primae noctis*. Or it may have the form of simultaneous give-and-take, when things change hands temporarily, by double reciprocal giving, as a way of exchanging their uses – e.g. in a temporary exchange of homes. However, for exchange to be applied to the alienation of use, it is obviously not necessary that it should be an exchange of *uses*. Use may be exchanged for a thing directly. To the form of conditional bilateral giving (of the principal) is added the form of a conditional periodic unilateral gift (of the interest) in order that the use foregone by the lender may be compensated, as well as the object returned. Interest, rent and wages all represent particular applications of this general form under capitalism, depending on whether money, land or the labour-power of the worker's body are the objects whose uses are alienated. In these cases the practice of commodity exchange, already instituted in the market place, is extended to provide a framework in which these quite different kinds of exchanges can be made through special markets. Wherever commodity production and circulation develop, whatever the mode of production, subsidiary markets in the use of money, land and labour-power are likely to make an appearance; under capitalism, however, these are central and indispensable functional components of the mode of production itself. Further discussion of these and other types of alienation of use can be deferred until they arise again in the context of the third condition of exploitation.

Let us return to the question of how patrimonial exploitation may be conceived as originating through changes that develop the contradictory status of the individual in the primitive community. It is now clear that segmentation and growth of estrangement between cellular units are to be

explained through the appropriation of the use of means of production and of labour-power once jointly owned and used. Appropriation of land-use by villages or families is likely to accompany the evolution of a sedentary agriculture, by which the unit transforms its territory into an instrument of production that is, as such, largely its own artefact and no longer just a part of 'the original unity between a particular form of community and the corresponding property in nature'.<sup>48</sup> The units become holders, probably hereditary holders, of the land, while the superior collectivity retains the title to it. Consequently, 'the relation of the individual to the natural conditions of labour and of reproduction as belonging to him . . . appears mediated for him through a cession by the total unity . . . to the individual, through the mediation of the particular commune.'<sup>49</sup> This title, or eminent domain, may be effectuated in various ways: by common rights of use for certain purposes, rights to reclaim in full for the collectivity, by periodic reallocations, or penal expropriation, or by contributions of produce for common funds, etc. Secondly, this appropriation of land-use implies also appropriation of use of the inhabitants' own bodies, as the labour-power needed to work it, by the units. The superior collectivity again retains the title, as representing the original unity to which the individuals 'belonged' as members and subordinate parts. In practice, this title means that the collectivity can make claims on the surplus labour of the individuals, for military or administrative services, for labour on public lands or installations, for participation in ceremonies, or, again, for contributions from their own produce to common funds or stores.

The second element in the emergence of patrimonial rule is that the collective title to the community's land and labour may now itself become an object of appropriation.<sup>50</sup> This may, of course, happen through conquest by a neighbouring ruler or the leader of a warrior horde, but it is unlikely that such an alien authority could be imposed without some form of enslavement or enserfment of the population, unless the subjects were already accustomed to the personal appropriation of the collective title – or unless there is a very great disparity in material culture, e.g. as between tribal peoples and capitalist imperial powers. The 'normal' emergence of patrimonial rule is probably through the growth of internal stratification. Whether it occurs through the unchallenged ascent of a single chief's lineage, or a struggle between rival lineages, or through the seizure of temporal power by a priesthood, or of peacetime power by a war-leader, or by the federation of tribal kings under a 'great king' or suzerain, the effect is that the collective title becomes the personal attribute and property of an individual – and of his dynasty or caste – who thereby establishes himself as the representative of the community and as its sovereign.

Patrimonial sovereignty is unlimited: this is both presupposition and consequence of centralised political authority operating directly as a form



of exploitation. Of course, the sovereignty of tribal kings may be unlimited yet not enable them to exploit their subjects. For this, the further conditions for exploitation, which have yet to be discussed, must also be fulfilled. But it is relevant here to point out that this sovereignty must actually give the ruler power to exclude any particular productive and fiscal unit from its lands by massacre, destruction or banishment; otherwise the subjects no longer confront the land as their not-property, which they occupy only by the sovereign's grace and favour. This implies command of sufficient loyal and organised force to crush the opposition that such action would arouse. Only then is the status of living labour under patrimonial rule that of a subject whose body is ultimately the property of a sovereign to whose territorial ascendancy he is bound by ineluctable ties of communal membership, land tenure and material dependence. Its reproduction is a matter of the reproduction of a very simple type of economic cellular unit, which contains very little potential for change, and of family succession, for this is a form of society in which all functions tend to become hereditary.<sup>51</sup>

(d) *Feudalism*

These last two points apply equally to feudalism. Indeed, regarded simply from the standpoint of the relation of living labour to the exploiter, and of the reproduction of that status, feudalism resembles a decentralised, multiple and miniature patrimonialism. The land and its inhabitants are the property of a class of mounted warriors or lords, amongst whom it is parcelled out in the form of manorial estates, which are also units of political jurisdiction.<sup>52</sup> The major differences, from this standpoint, lie in the character of the political superstructure and in the typical processes by which this becomes the framework of a form of exploitation. Scholars from Marx to Bloch have emphasised personal dependence as the characteristic feature of feudalism. But whereas the dependence of a vassal on his lord is the basic relationship from which the superstructure of the feudal state was constructed, both Marx and Bloch would agree with Vinogradoff in seeing the serf's dependence on his lord as mediated by a second characteristic feature: 'We may say, that the unfree peasant of English feudalism was legally a personal dependent, but that his personal dependence was enforced through territorial lordship.'<sup>53</sup> In tracing the antecedent processes through which the status of serfdom appeared, therefore, we need to distinguish the transactions through which serf and lord both came to share in a single hierarchy of personal dependence, and those through which an exploitative class dichotomy between landlords and serfs was established.

Patrimonial exploitation and slavery were merely developments of tribal assumptions. The first could result from expansion of the primitive community to the point where solidarity gave way to internal estrangement, and the second merely elaborated consequences of the external estrangement of opposed communities. Feudal dependence, however, by

which in principle every man was 'the man of another man', was an innovation. It involved the adaptation of tribal assumptions to create a new social bond, elastic enough to contain both the solidarity of a ruling class and the estrangement between exploiter and exploited. The stimulus to innovation was the breakdown of social and political order, especially prolonged deficiencies of solidarity which eroded customary expectations of trust and security. The typical seedbeds of feudal tendencies have been long periods of disturbance, usually combined with the dissolution of an ancient agrarian mode of production: production retreats to a primitive self-sufficiency and the protection of person and property becomes an imperative need.<sup>54</sup> Marc Bloch eloquently described such a situation in Merovingian Gaul:

Neither the state nor the family any longer provided adequate protection. The village community was barely strong enough to maintain order within its own boundaries; the urban community scarcely existed. Everywhere, the weak man felt the need to be sheltered by someone more powerful. The powerful man, in his turn, could not maintain his prestige or his fortune or even ensure his own safety except by securing for himself, by persuasion or coercion, the support of subordinates bound to his service. On the one hand, there was an urgent quest for a protector; on the other, there were usurpations of authority, often by violent means. And as notions of weakness and strength are always relative, in many cases the same man occupied a dual role – as a dependent of a more powerful man and a protector of humbler ones. Thus there began to be built up a vast system of personal relationships whose intersecting threads ran from one level of the social structure to another.

In yielding thus to the necessities of the moment these generations of men had no conscious desire to create new social forms, nor were they aware of doing so. Instinctively, each strove to turn to account the resources provided by the existing social structure and if, unconsciously, something new was eventually created, it was in the process of trying to adapt the old.<sup>55</sup>

Unlike patrimonial dependence, feudal dependence originated in relationships deliberately created *ex nihilo* by individuals in varying degrees of mutual estrangement. Because it was improvised and spontaneous, its origins show little uniformity of practice or of language. Models were provided by reminiscences of Roman clientage, as well as of Celtic or Germanic companionship. But the general result, arising in different ways, was that by acts of imposition or submission individuals unequal in power became linked by virtually indissoluble, diffuse bonds, as inferiors and superiors. The effect was an exchange of services for protection, but the solidarity needed to bring this about contractually, by

exchange of promises, was generally lacking. Hence a more drastic transaction was required: a giving or taking of the whole person of the inferior into the superior's possession. This secured for the inferior the protection that the superior would extend to all his belongings, and for the superior the use of the dependent person's services. But the superior did not merely want a slave, to own as 'a living labouring machine',<sup>56</sup> for times were not settled enough for running a slave economy. What he needed was support, political loyalty – even from men who could serve him only as common foot-soldiers. He appropriated the inferior not as an object, but as a subject: it was the socio-emotional orientation and political initiative of his dependents that he wanted to call his own, so an oath of fealty was an essential element in the transaction, whether freely given or forcibly demanded.<sup>57</sup>

This is the point that Marx made when he wrote, of the 'relation of personal servitude' as part of the status of the labourer under feudalism, that

... it forms, at bottom, only a mode of existence of the landowner himself, who no longer works, but whose property includes, among the other conditions of production, the workers themselves as bondsmen, etc. Here the *master-servant relation (Herrschaftsverhältnis)* as essential element of appropriation. Basically the appropriation of animals, land, etc. cannot take place in a master-servant relation, although the animal provides service. The presupposition of the master-servant relation is the appropriation of an alien *will*. Whatever has no will, e.g. the animal, may well provide a service, but does not thereby make its owner into a *lord and master*.

And Marx noted that the same relation held between consumers, as well as between consumer and producers, as in

client-relations in the various forms in which *not-proprietors* appear in the retinue of their lord as co-consumers of the surplus product and wear the livery of their master as an equivalent, participate in his feuds, perform personal services, imaginary or real, etc.<sup>58</sup>

Feudal dependence has a distinctive structural logic. If a man may have many dependents but only one lord, as the rule was, there is pressure towards hierarchy.<sup>59</sup> The general quest for protection and support is likely to create strategic centres where lines of dependence converge. Each centre will be surrounded by concentric rings of dependents, each ring more populous than that which it encloses. Since dependency also creates vertical social distance, these rings represent the superimposed sections of hierarchical social cones. Ultimately such centres might become grouped in a single societal system of dependence, extending from the cottage to the

palace. Furthermore, those who were masters of none were likely to be more numerous than those who were themselves masters, even though also dependent on higher lords. Thus feudal dependency tended to generate not only hierarchy, but a dichotomised hierarchy whose structure could easily accommodate the solidarity of a class of lords, bound by ties of vassalage, and the subjection of a class of serfs forming its broad base.

Whether this dichotomy appeared as a class cleavage depended on whether an exploitative mode of production was established within the framework of personal dependence. And this in turn was more likely where the growth of feudal tendencies coincided with the conquest of one people by another. Ethnic and cultural closure by the victors and the estrangement between them and the vanquished would reinforce the dualistic tendency of the feudal structure. Ties of dependence would be imposed on the peasantry from above in the form of serfdom, and maintained amongst the conquerors in the form of vassalage by voluntary acts of homage. In Marx's view, the military organisation required for conquest contributed largely to the form taken by vassalage:

The feudal system was by no means brought complete from Germany, but had its origin, as far as the conquerors were concerned, in the martial organization of the army during the actual conquest, and this only evolved after the conquest into the feudal system proper through the action of the productive forces found in the conquered countries.

Repeated conquests, causing the transplantation of feudalism from one country to another, would tend to perfect the system even more:

. . . when a form of intercourse which has evolved on another soil is brought over complete to the conquered country: whereas in its home it was still encumbered with interests and relationships left over from earlier periods, here it can and must be established completely and without hindrance, if only to assure the conquerors' lasting power. (England and Naples after the Norman conquest, when they received the most perfect form of feudal organization.)<sup>60</sup>

Once established in this way, 'The hierarchical structure of landownership and the armed bodies of retainers associated with it, gave the nobility power over the serfs.' For 'This feudal organization was, just as much as the ancient communal ownership, an association against a subjected producing class.'<sup>61</sup>

In the case of conquest, feudal dependence was established by threats, a direct expropriation of the conquered by political coercion. But there did not have to be conquest for feudalism to arise in coercive ways. Offers of protection are often indistinguishable from threats, as in the 'protection racket': the expropriator offers to 'protect' the victim from violence that he

will otherwise inflict, by withholding it. Protection also affords opportunities for economic coercion, in the sense defined earlier. B, the victim of A's threats, turns to C for protection; C can then take advantage of B's need to extort a high price for his help. This was very probably a common response to the depredations of Saracens and Vikings in Europe, and whenever 'commendation' was widespread. More important than either plain political coercion or plain economic coercion, possibly, was a blend of the two. For in a situation where loosely connected groups of a marauding people gradually overrun a country, each of the native communities may try to cut its losses by seeking the protection of one of the invaders against the rest. If this goes ahead on all sides, a country may become feudalised through a series of separate acts of economic coercion, which nevertheless add up to the expropriation, by political coercion, of one whole people by another.

It is worth briefly comparing the origins of European feudalism with the feudal tendencies found in the East African states of the Interlacustrine Bantu, especially Ankole and Ruanda.<sup>62</sup> For here also a sedentary agricultural population was raided, infiltrated and finally conquered, over a long period, by pastoral immigrant tribes with military organisation. The result was semi-feudal hierarchies of clientage which, as in Europe, incorporated a major cleavage between two ethnically and culturally distinct strata. Amongst the Ruanda, the equivalent of feudal homage was *buhake*, a relationship which the inferior entered by a ceremonial gift which seems to have symbolised the giving of himself and his services, for it was accompanied by the words 'Be my father: I shall be your child'. The *buhake* bond could be formally broken, but only on conditions disadvantageous to the client, and it was usually regarded as hereditary. As with feudal dependence, *buhake* patronage operated both within and between the two major groupings of the society.

The role of hereditary personal dependence in feudal systems is analogous to that of commodity exchange and contractual relations in capitalist society. Both provide a universal form which facilitates, contains and conceals an exploitative process of social production. Both act as vehicles through which the factors of this process are assembled and its products distributed: both at the same time obscure the basic class dichotomy by appearing as the ostensible bond linking all the parts of society into a unified system, whether of personal inequality and dependence or of personal equality and freedom, each implying its own mode of hierarchical or contractual solidarity. The significance of both changes in the same way as between the period in which the new mode of production originates, and that in which it is fully established. At first, the adaptation of the market method to recruiting labour in a large and permanent way was an important innovation, opening up a new autonomy for the individual and creating both a new type of labour-force and a new type of property. Similarly, at first, the adaptation of military

companionage and other traditional relationships to the organisation of labour represented a greater freedom for the individual than slavery, and provided for real security and some solidarity in times when both were lacking. But as capitalism and feudalism developed, both labour contract and servile homage became little more than a *factio juris*, part of the ideology of class societies held together and reproduced by exploitation. Thus it can be said of feudal dependence as Marx said of the exchange of labour-power for wages, that when regarded in isolation 'as it appears on the surface, as in *independent* system, then it is a mere *illusion*, but a *necessary illusion*.'<sup>63</sup> Much the same can be said of the status of living labour under slavery and patrimonial rule. The notion of the alien whose life becomes forfeit and therefore can belong to an owner who feeds and keeps him became, as we have seen, increasingly inapposite to a developed slave economy. The equal dependence of subjects on a patrimonial ruler who is 'father of his people' becomes merely the means and mask by which a class or caste of benefited officials exploits the cultivators.

But what sort of means? Or, more generally, if the specific status of living labour *vis-à-vis* property in the means of production becomes an illusion, in what sense is it still 'necessary'? Marx's answer is that it is a necessary condition for the 'formal subjection' of labour-power to the means of production as property.<sup>64</sup> Precisely because they designate units of *property*, the social meanings corresponding to categories such as 'capital', 'the slave estate', 'the patrimonial kingdom' or 'the manor' do not function in reality in these general and abstract forms. To occupy *any* status over against the means of production as property, living labour must be susceptible of being employed by some particular named capital, or enslaved to the named owner of a particular villa or plantation or must be the subject of the ruler of a particular realm (and part of a particular fiscal unit) or the serf of the lord of a particular manor. And this enrolment of labour under some determinate portion of the ruling class's total means of exploitation necessitates transactions in which the labourer's status, more or less crystallised in custom and law, whether as owner of his person or as object of ownership or as personal dependent, is an indispensable part of the definition of the situation.

This formal subjection of labour to the means of production is in turn a necessary condition for the 'real subjection' or 'material subjection' through the labour-process itself. This will be discussed in connection with the fourth and fifth conditions for exploitation. More relevant to the present stage of the argument, it is also a necessary condition for the enforcement, if necessary, of living labour's exclusion from means of production and subsistence. It is as a free citizen and legal subject that the wage-labourer is subject to the law of private property and its penalties, that exclude him from all resources to which he has no contractual right. It is as private property that a refractory slave can be punished by his owner, or returned to him if found escaping; and a serf is subject to the

same liabilities by his personal dependence on the lord of the manor to which he is attached. Similarly, it is as his subjects that defaulting taxpayers can be, if necessary, killed, expelled or sold into slavery by a patrimonial ruler.

The question of enforcement shows up a difference in the status of living labour as between capitalism and slavery, on the one hand, and patrimonialism and feudalism on the other. The statuses in which capitalist and wage-labourer, or slave-owner and slave, confront each other are economic, while those in which rulers and lords confront their subjects or serfs are also political. Capitalist and wage-labourer meet only as commodity proprietors, slave-owner and slave only as owner and object of ownership; but ruler and subject, lord and serf are related not only as owner and owned but also by ties of sovereignty or feudal jurisdiction. Consequently the ways of enforcing the propertylessness of labour differ. In the case of capitalism, it is only indirectly enforceable by the state acting on behalf of the class whose collective position is protected by laws. The same is true of slavery, except that the slave-owner can enforce it directly by virtue of legal rights granted and underwritten by the state. In the cases of patrimonialism and feudalism, however, it is directly enforceable by the ruler or lord, upon his own authority, or by the state acting on his personal behalf. Thus also in the first cases we find a separation between state and economy, public and private statuses, which is absent in the second. Here, both are fused in single systems of personal dependency. Hence, the survival of the status of labour as a 'necessary illusion' in the developed exploitative mode of production occurs at different superstructural levels. Under capitalism and slavery it takes the form of a *legal* status, specifically relating to private law, and stimulates a corresponding ideology. Under patrimonialism and feudalism it survives as a religio-political or political status (as exclusion from a privileged caste or estate, etc.) and stimulates ideologies of religious or political paternalism. We shall see in the next section how Marx explained these differences.

We are now at last in a position to complete the discussion of the extra-economic solidarity of the ruling class which was left unfinished in the last section. Extra-economic class solidarity can only arise from three sources. First, from similitudes pertaining to the various spheres of unproductive consumption, outside the processes of production, distribution and exchange that make up an 'economy'. (These spheres of unproductive consumption include the superstructures of political and ideological institutions and activities.) Or, secondly, from similitudes pertaining to sex, kinship and the organisation of human reproduction. And thirdly, from similitudes arising out of the spatial (or for that matter, temporal) localisation of any of these activities. Because of the exclusively economic status of living labour *vis-à-vis* capital, as a marketed commodity, the extra-economic solidarity of the bourgeoisie is bifurcated, or bifocal. On one hand are solidarities arising from intercourse on the basis of kinship, family

life, and the formal or informal occupational, associational and localised pursuit of the values of bourgeois ideology. On the other hand are solidarities arising out of political association and action, whether forming part of the exercise of public authority or merely oriented to it. From the standpoint of the political superstructure this bifurcation corresponds to the duality of private and public spheres.<sup>65</sup>

Patrimonial and feudal systems lacked this bifocal solidarity of the ruling class, although feudal systems especially have tended towards institutional separation of political and religious superstructures. Ignoring this last complication, we may say that ruling class solidarity arose in both cases from similitudes in which kinship, locality and political organisation were fused. But what characteristics distinguish the political superstructure of patrimonialism, with its corresponding class solidarity, from that of feudalism?

The main points have already emerged. Under patrimonialism, the title to all land and to the persons of the ruling class itself was vested in the sovereign *ab initio*; and despite the tendency for benefices to be appropriated and become hereditary, they remained linked to offices in a centralised and more or less bureaucratic fiscal administration. The efficiency of fiscal administration remained the *sine qua non* of exploitation. Furthermore, there was no sense in which the privileged beneficiary was a 'free man' compared with the cultivators whom he exploited, however superior his status. Under feudalism, however, decentralisation was basic. Central monarchies developed through confederation of separate hierarchies of personal dependence, each having its own legitimacy. It was true, as Marx said, that

The grouping of larger territories into feudal kingdoms was a necessity for the landed nobility as for the towns. The organization of the ruling class, the nobility, had, therefore, everywhere a monarch at its head.<sup>66</sup>

But landowners would surrender their territorial rights to a more powerful superior only on the understanding that they would be returned as a virtually permanent and heritable grant, reinforced with stronger jurisdiction, and subject only to duties of political allegiance and military assistance. Though vassals, they remained free men over against their serfs. In this accretion of feudal territories a large part was played by marital alliances, inheritances and dowries. Likewise by conquests by armies of freely allied knights, hungry for land and glory, whose *dux* might declare himself a *rex*, but could seldom rule as more than *primus inter pares* among the barons who were his tenants-in-chief.

The decentralised character of feudalism rested on the localised combination of landed property and political jurisdiction in the manor—the constitutive cell of English mediaeval society, in



Vinogradoff's words.<sup>67</sup> Although it would be an exaggeration to regard the manor as a sovereign unit, a large fief containing many manors and dependent knights could function as an independent political bloc. This gave feudal territorial sovereignty a fundamentally pluralistic character. Personal dependence and vassalage was therefore a necessary bond for the political superstructure, even if it became only a necessary illusion for the economic base. For while 'the possession of a manor carries the possession of cultivators with it',<sup>68</sup> the lord of the manor and his own overlord were both free to give or take fealty elsewhere at the death or disloyalty of the other party. Hence the unity of feudal states tended to be the hard-won and precarious outcome of unifying struggles. By contrast, the unity of patrimonial states was not in dispute, however precarious and fluctuating their frontiers and extent.

It has generally been held that the character of the manor, as the cellular unit of this system, was determined by three factors. First, it constituted a unit of land adequate to the agricultural production of a village community in an agrarian system based on the heavy plough and simple crop rotation, in which the land itself was therefore the principal means of production. Secondly, it constituted a 'knight's fee' whose surplus product could keep a mounted and armoured knight available for war and furnish his escort of men-at-arms. Thirdly, the lord's territorial authority enabled him to extract the surplus product by giving him virtually absolute power over the cultivators who depended exclusively on him for protection.<sup>69</sup> So wherever we find feudal tendencies which remain undeveloped within tribal kingdoms, as in Africa or Celtic Ireland, it seems to be because, on the one hand, more pastoral economies, without dietary dependence on staple crops and hence with more shifting or subsidiary cultivation, gave less predominance to land as the major means of production; and on the other, because the armoured knight, requiring a larger surplus product for his maintenance, had not become the principal means of warfare. Under these circumstances the manor failed to develop. Patrons would grant cattle, not land, to their dependents, for by monopolising cattle a dominant group could extract some surplus product from herdsman-cultivators through systems approximating to *métayage*. But it could not reduce them to serfs bound to an estate over which the patron had political jurisdiction. And so long as the organisation of military force remained subject to the ruler through some more or less professionalised form of tribal levy, with infantry as the major means of warfare, the protection that the patron could offer his clients was limited to support in lawsuits or against fiscal extortion. In these instances, therefore, although feudal dependence provided a framework for the solidarity of a ruling group and also, combined with a monopoly of certain means of production, for the exploitation of a dependent group, it failed to absorb the main military, political and administrative functions of the state. And this was because the mode of production did not require the combination of personal

dependence with a class monopoly of *land*. This would have dissolved the territorial sovereignty of the patrimonial or tribal ruler into manorial pluralism, divided the population into free and unfree according to their relation to the land, and made possible advances in military technology that would, literally, have put the lord of the manor into the saddle and hence reinforced the decentralisation of state functions.<sup>70</sup>

This section cannot be concluded without reference to the condition for effective exploitation, that the cohesion of the exploited class be relatively weak. All the modes of formally subjecting labour to the means of production as property of others have the added effect of dividing labour against itself. Capitalism has not only created the proletariat and the conditions for its unification and class-consciousness: it has also created formidable obstacles to that process. Individual competition for jobs, divergent interests of employed and unemployed, distinct and often opposed interests of employees of different firms, or in different occupations or industries, or at different skill levels, and so forth – all these are so many potential causes of estrangement. Working-class poverty also prolongs, at least to the age of the mass media, the narrow localism that has been the principal divisive factor in earlier forms of exploitation based on attachment to the land. When to this localism is added direct dependence on the will and power of a superior, whether owner or lord or sovereign, the obstacles that precapitalist forms of exploitation placed in the way of solidarisation by the exploited class are seen to be overwhelming. Hence the precapitalist world was enveloped by ideologies of resignation which banished the hope of release from suffering to another, imaginary life.

##### 5 SUPPLY OF LABOUR-POWER TO MEANS OF PRODUCTION AND OF SUBSISTENCE TO LIVING LABOUR

The first two conditions for exploitation specified how living labour must confront the conditions of production as the property of estranged others, outside the production process and therefore at its outset. This established a unique set of static preconditions for each form of exploitation. For exploitation to begin, the elements of this initial situation must be set in motion. Labour-power has to be made available for use in combination with means of production, and means of subsistence for consumption by living labour. For each mode of production, specific transmissive practices bring these elements into dynamic relationship. These practices are largely implicit in the static preconditions already discussed, just as the preconditions are themselves, once a given mode of production is established, largely the result of the dynamic relations.

There is no need for detailed description of these transactions in the case of capitalism. The sale of labour-power to a capitalist, the assembling of a labour-force as variable capital, the periodic subsequent payment of

wages, and their expenditure on subsistence goods produced by other capitalists – all this is familiar enough. The appropriation of labour-power and the alienation of means of subsistence by capital takes the particular form of an exchange because living labour confronts it in a wholly independent form, outside the sphere of ownership of the proprietor of means of production. Its exclusion from means of livelihood is a result of destitution, not of political coercion by an owner, ruler or lord who holds a monopoly of force. It therefore takes the form of need for subsistence, a situation which invites economic coercion by proprietors of means of production in need of labour-power. And economic coercion, as we have seen, customarily takes the form of exchange if the institutional framework for it exists – in this case, if commodity markets are sufficiently developed. This economic coercion – the deliberate depressing of wages to their lowest – is clearly one element in capitalist exploitation, but by no means the only condition for realising surplus-value.

Presupposing the independence of the worker, capitalism therefore also reproduces this status on an ever-expanding scale. Marx described its double aspect of self-proprietorship and destitution in the following paragraphs:

But in order that our owner of money may be able to find labour-power offered for sale as a commodity, various conditions must first be fulfilled. The exchange of commodities of itself implies no other relations of dependence than those which result from its own nature. On this assumption, labour-power can appear upon the market as a commodity, only if, and so far as, its possessor, the individual whose labour-power it is, offers it for sale, or sells it, as a commodity. In order that he may be able to do this, he must have it at his disposal, must be the untrammelled owner of his capacity for labour, i.e. of his person. He and the owner of money meet in the market, and deal with each other as on the basis of equal rights . . . The continuance of this relation demands that the owner of the labour-power should sell it only for a definite period, for if he were to sell it rump and stump, once for all, he would be selling himself, converting himself from a free man into a slave, from an owner of a commodity into a commodity. He must constantly look upon his labour-power as his own property, his own commodity, and this he can only do by placing it at the disposal of the buyer temporarily, for a definite period of time. By this means alone can he avoid renouncing his rights of ownership over it.

The second essential condition to the owner of money finding labour-power in the market as a commodity is this – that the labourer instead of being in a position to sell commodities in which his labour-power is incorporated, must be obliged to offer for sale as a commodity that very labour-power, which exists only as his living self.<sup>71</sup>

Although the purchaser of labour-power advances money, in the sense that he must pay wages when due, this is of course in the expectation that their value will be replaced by the labour bought.

The purchase of labour-power for a fixed period is the prelude to the process of production; and this prelude is constantly repeated when the stipulated term comes to an end, when a definite period of production, such as a week or a month, has elapsed. But the labourer is not paid until after he has expended his labour-power and . . . produced, before it flows back to him in the shape of wages, the fund out of which he himself is paid, the variable capital; and his employment lasts only so long as he continues to reproduce this fund . . . The illusion begotten by the intervention of money vanishes immediately, if, instead of taking a single capitalist and a single labourer, we take the class of capitalists and the class of labourers as a whole. The capitalist class is constantly giving to the labouring class order-notes, in the form of money, on a portion of the commodities produced by the latter and appropriated by the former. The labourers give these order-notes back just as constantly to the capitalist class, and in this way get their share of their own product. The transaction is veiled by the commodity-form of the product and the money-form of the commodity.

Variable capital is therefore only a particular historical form of appearance of the fund for providing the necessaries of life, or the labour-fund which the labourer requires for the maintenance of himself and his family, and which, whatever be the system of social production, he must himself produce and reproduce.<sup>72</sup>

By following up this path of analysis, Marx shows both how the wage-earner's labour's relation to his subsistence resembles that of the slave's, and also how they differ:

The capital given in exchange for labour-power is converted into necessaries, by the consumption of which the muscles, nerves, bones and brains of existing labourers are reproduced, and new labourers are begotten. Within the limits of what is strictly necessary, the individual consumption of the working class is therefore the reconversion of the means of subsistence given by capital in exchange for labour-power, into fresh labour-power at the disposal of capital for exploitation . . . The fact that the labourer 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 of burden is none the less a necessary factor in the process of production, because the beast enjoys what it eats. The maintenance and reproduction of the working class is, and must ever be, a necessary condition to the reproduction of capital. But the

capitalist may safely leave its fulfilment to the labourer's instincts of self-preservation and of propagation.<sup>73</sup>

The form taken by these transactions under slavery needs even less comment than the capitalist version. The precondition here is that means of production and living labour already belong to the one owner, by whatever means. Supplying labour-power to the means of production is therefore a matter of the discipline of the slave establishment. It involves coercive authority of the same type as the capitalist exercises in the factory, only here it must regiment the whole life of the worker. Similarly, supplying subsistence is like feeding, sheltering and breeding draught-animals, in that only a rudimentary transmissive practice is involved – for domestic animals, too, can acquire some personality in human society and can, in a minimal way, possess things. Supply of subsistence is therefore included in the total productive activity and costs of the single enterprise, instead of being left to individual appropriation on a class basis, outside the enterprise. The slave-owner must therefore himself obtain means of subsistence, either by producing or purchasing them, which limits the flexibility of a slave economy.

Under patrimonialism and feudalism these transactions assume more complex forms. The result is to make exploitation less complete than under slavery or capitalism, but also more naked than under capitalism, since the veils of the commodity and money forms do not intervene, yet less stark than slavery because the religious or political integument is more opaque than the chattel status of the slave. The precondition in both patrimonialism and feudalism is that means of production (above all, land) and living labour belong to one proprietor, who is also the direct political superior of the labourer. Unlike slavery, however, where this proprietorship is undivided, here it functions partly as a title, tenure of both land and labour-power being conditionally vested, in part, in the workers. Hence, though no specific transactions beyond this conditional alienation are needed to supply living labour with means of subsistence, they are needed to supply labour-power to means of production retained as property by the sovereign or lord, and likewise to supply subsistence to any living labour that is retained as property. After this general introduction, it is probably more convenient to set out the differences in the transactions, as between the two modes of production, in a schematic form.

#### (a) *Patrimonialism*

##### I MEANS OF PRODUCTION

- 1.1. Use of most of the land is conditionally distributed to families or villages of subjects, which occupy it as hereditary corporate holders, individuals being more or less tied, politically, to their locality.
- 1.2. The sovereign realises his hereditary title to the land by periodic forced

contributions from the holders of a fiscal rent in kind or money.

- 1.3. The sovereign retains full ownership of some means of production, comprising the royal partimony, including (a) royal estates; (b) estates whose use can be distributed as (usually, non-heritable) benefices to personal retainers who constitute his executive staff, and who live off them, and off rents accruing from them; (c) technological, military or ideological installations such as irrigation works, granaries, communications, fortifications, temples, tombs, etc. that are real or imagined conditions of the continued occupation, use and productiveness of the land for the subjects.

## 2 LABOUR-POWER

- 2.1. Labour-power is distributed to its bearers, the subjects, who have tenure of their bodies for the purposes of (a) producing their own subsistence and the surplus necessary for family and village contingencies, support of unproductive consumers, etc. and (b) producing the surplus that constitutes the sovereign's fiscal revenue.
- 2.2. The sovereign realises his hereditary title to his subjects' bodies by periodic forced contributions of labour-power for the construction and maintenance of installations both 'public' and 'private'. Subsistence for *corvée* labour-forces is provided out of the fiscal rents.
- 2.3. The sovereign retains full ownership of some labour-power, comprising his 'household', which is used for personal, military or administrative services. This labour-power may be more or less distributed, and more or less hereditarily so, amongst its bearers in so far as they are retainers holding executive offices which they may, in practice, largely appropriate together with their benefices. Some of the sovereign's entitlement to the labour of his subjects may be distributed amongst his retainers also. Although this model has been constructed in terms of a political or 'royal' sovereign, it is applicable *mutatis mutandis* to religious castes and orders exercising monopolistic domination over land and men, whether as a political theocracy or as a church whose temporal power is recognised or incorporated by lay authorities.

### (b) *Feudalism*

A model dealing with this aspect of feudalism is a decentralised version of the above. But the factor of decentralisation is basic, for it enters at the level of the assumed precondition. This is that means of production (and more particularly land) and labour-power are the property of a class of mounted war-lords, amongst whom the land and its inhabitants are divided up into manorial estates, which are also units of political jurisdiction. The provision of subsistence and appropriation of labour-power occur at the level of the manor, not of society as a whole. The model therefore relates to

that level, and resembles a miniature patrimonial sovereignty except that each lord's proprietorship and jurisdiction is conditioned by his place in a hierarchy of vassalage that constitutes the politico-military organisation of the feudal class as a state.

#### I MEANS OF PRODUCTION

- 1.1. The use of part of the manorial land is distributed to individual families of serfs, generally forming one or more village communities, which occupy it as more or less hereditary holders under conditions corporately determined by manorial and village custom.
- 1.2. The lord realises his hereditary title to the land by periodic forced contributions from the holders in the form of rent and other incidents of tenure, usually in money.
- 1.3. The lord retains full ownership of some means of production, comprising the demesne, including (a) land that is worked directly for him; (b) technological and military installations such as mills, weirs, studs, bridges, castles, etc. which are to some degree preconditions for the continued occupation and use of the land by its inhabitants.

#### 2 LABOUR-POWER

- 2.1. Labour-power is distributed to its bearers, the serfs, who have tenure of their bodies for the purposes of (a) producing their own subsistence and the surplus necessary for the support of unproductive consumers in their families, and (b) producing the surplus that constitutes the lord's rent revenue.
- 2.2. The lord realises his hereditary title to his serfs' bodies by periodic forced contributions of labour-power (a) to work his demesne land, and (b) as needed, to discharge his obligation as a vassal to field a stipulated military force.
- 2.3. The lord retains full ownership of some labour-power, comprising his 'household' of personal retainers and servants.

These models are not 'ideal types'. Rather, they are intended to specify the set of logically possible transactions for combining labour-power with means of production, and subsistence with living labour, on the basis of the assumed preconditions, given simple agrarian technology and the appropriation of the surplus product by the proprietor of the means of production. In particular, the proprietor's double monopoly, of both a bounded territory and the living labour attached to it, had as its consequence the characteristic dual organisation of both patrimonial and feudal economies. For, on the one hand, the use of land can be distributed to raise a rent from the title; and on the other, direct labour can be employed co-operatively to produce for the proprietor. But the first possibility requires some of the labour-power to be distributed to complement the distributed land-use, while the second can only be realised

if some land is retained to be worked by forced labour. The dual organisation of patrimonial and subject territory, or of demesne and open fields, resolved these dilemmas while simultaneously making available subsistence for the proprietor's compulsory labour-force. Hence the double emphasis in Marx's discussions of Asia, on both self-supporting village communes and centralised public works built and maintained by *corvée* labour, which has bedevilled later arguments about the 'Asiatic mode of production'. And hence also, as Professor Postan has noted, the 'bilateral composition of the manor and of its revenues was the true hallmark of the typical manor.'<sup>74</sup> Yet, as Postan also stresses, medieval manors showed great variation in the extent to which their structure emphasised one side or the other of this duality, and consequently in the ways in which their elements were combined. Doubtless even greater variety is to be found amongst the very numerous and culturally diverse instances of patrimonial rule.

The transactions described in this section only begin the process of exploitation. They ensure the maintenance of the workers during production, and the reproduction of the workforce. They fence off the place of work under the name of the owner, and cause workers to be driven into it by one compulsion or another. But for exploitation to be effective, the lion's share of the product must be carried out through another door and into the keeping of the owner. To see how this is possible we must pass in with the workers to see what goes on in the arena of production itself. Or, as Marx put it in the case of capitalism, playing Virgil to the reader's Dante:

The consumption of labour-power is completed, as in the case of every other commodity, outside the limits of the market or of the sphere of circulation. Accompanied by Mr Moneybags and by the possessor of labour-power, we therefore take leave for a time of this noisy sphere, where everything takes place on the surface and in view of all men, and follow them both into the hidden abode of production, on whose threshold there stares us in the face "No admittance except on business." Here we shall see, not only how capital produces, but how capital is produced. We shall at last force the secret of profit-making.<sup>75</sup>

## 6 CONTROL OF PRODUCTION AND APPROPRIATION OF SURPLUS PRODUCT

Marx defined the degree of exploitation by the ratio of surplus-labour to necessary labour expended in the process of social production. Necessary labour was that needed to reproduce the 'labour-fund' – the subsistence of the labour-force while working – and to reproduce the labour-force itself (or to produce the value in wages of these costs of production). Surplus-



labour was the remaining labour performed, over and above necessary labour plus that needed to reproduce the means of production used up in the process, or to transmit their value to the product. Marx made it clear that this was not a definition applicable only to capitalism, although the capitalist mode of production was uniquely aimed at absorbing surplus-labour, in the form of surplus-value, on an ever-expanding scale.

Capital has not invented surplus-labour. Wherever a part of society possesses the monopoly of the means of production, the labourer, free or not free, must add to the working-time necessary for his own maintenance an extra working-time in order to produce the means of subsistence for the owners of the means of production, whether this proprietor be an Athenian devotee of the Good and the Beautiful, an Etruscan theocrat, a Roman citizen, a Norman baron, an American slave-owner, a Wallachian boyar, a modern landlord or a capitalist. It is, however, clear that in any given economic formation of society, where not the exchange-value but the use-value of the product predominates, surplus-labour will be limited by a given set of wants which may be greater or less, and that here no boundless thirst for surplus-labour arises from the nature of the production itself.<sup>76</sup>

Marx followed this passage with a comparison between the different ways in which production cycles are divisible into separate periods in British capitalist industry and in Rumanian feudal agriculture. In the first case the division is only visible under analysis: it 'is not evident on the surface. Surplus-labour and necessary labour glide into one another.' But 'It is otherwise with the *corvée*. The necessary labour which the Wallachian peasant does for his own maintenance is distinctly marked off from his surplus-labour on behalf of the boyar. The one he does on his own field, the other on the seignorial estate.' Despite this difference, exploitation appears in both cases in the fact that industrialist and boyar increase, by any and every available means, the ratio of surplus to necessary labour. In Wallachia, 'The legal day's work for some kinds of agricultural labour is interpretable in such a way that the day begins in May and ends in October.'<sup>77</sup> Marx's chapters on 'absolute' and 'relative' surplus-value analyse the greater variety of methods by which the same result can be achieved in capitalist industry.

The ratio of surplus-labour to necessary labour provides merely an operational definition of the degree of exploitation. Calling it 'exploitation' implies more than the mere existence or variance of such a ratio. For

Surplus-labour in general, as labour performed over and above the given requirements, must always remain. In the capitalist as well as in the slave system, etc., it merely assumes an antagonistic form and is supplemented by complete idleness of a stratum of society. A definite

quantity of surplus-labour is required as insurance against accidents, and by the necessary and progressive expansion of the process of reproduction in keeping with the development of the needs and the growth of population, which is called accumulation from the viewpoint of the capitalist.<sup>78</sup>

Thus there is exploitation when the performance of surplus-labour takes an antagonistic form – i.e. when it is performed by non-owning workers under the coercion of non-working owners – and to the degree that the ratio of surplus-labour to necessary labour is enlarged through the unilateral action of the owner. This definition is neutral as between different motives for, or consequences of, extracting surplus-labour: whether private spending or accumulation, or social benefit, be the intended or unintended result is immaterial. All that is requisite is (1) that the owner should, as a result of appropriating surplus-labour, be in a position where he need not work for his subsistence beyond what is required by this task of appropriation itself, and (2) that the workers should not participate in decisions that enlarge the ratio of surplus to necessary labour, except to combat them. Furthermore, this definition implies no condemnation of the instrumentalism it presupposes. For its owner, labour-power in his possession has only one use: to produce a surplus for him to appropriate over and above what is needed to keep it in existence. He therefore ‘exploits’ this useful capacity just as he would any other advantage offered by something at his disposal. Though Marx abominated social systems that allowed human beings to be exploited like chattels, he did not attach his censure to the meaning of ‘exploitation’, any more than to the other words he used to analyse them.

What does the task of appropriating surplus-labour involve? Different things, obviously, in different modes of production, but always more than the ‘complete idleness’ in the passage just cited. To be sure, an exploiting class may be able to live in idleness, but only by delegating to others the work of exploitation itself. For exploitation involves antagonism: hence appropriation of the product has to be an active and continual *taking*, not just a passive reciprocity. But does this taking have a general form, invariant as between the different antagonistic modes of production?

The preparatory or ancillary transactions that have been examined up to now all involved unilateral expropriation between individuals having unequal power in a stratified situation or system. Political or economic coercion was used to force or induce those lacking secure means of subsistence to surrender some or all of their labour-power to owners of means of production. We may add that this was always a many-to-one movement, hence ‘forced contribution’. For, depending on the historic level of productivity, it has always taken the surplus-labour of a number of workers to provide the entire subsistence of a non-working family, over and above their own necessary labour. But once labour-power has been

surrendered, does the extraction of surplus labour from its expenditure, and the appropriation of that surplus, involve yet more coercion?

In part, the answer is obviously affirmative. Capitalist management continually uses threats and inducements to make workers work harder, just as slavedrivers whipped on their slaves and patrimonial rulers or feudal lords used their superior power to make extortionate demands from their dependents. But we should not expect major forms of exploitation, such as have provided a basis for the continuous reproduction of entire social systems with their accompanying civilisations, to depend simply and wholly on this coercion. Marx recognised perfectly the importance of institutionalisation:

. . . the constant reproduction of the basis of the existing order and its fundamental relations assumes a regulated and orderly form in the course of time. And such regulation and order are themselves indispensable elements of any mode of production, if it is to assume social stability and independence from mere chance and arbitrariness.<sup>79</sup>

For similar reasons, it has already been pointed out that taking, in societal contexts, tends to be disguised. And we have seen that the preparatory transactions already investigated tended to disguise the taking of labour-power. The proletarian's surrender of his labour-power was disguised by the market as a free exchange; the slave's captivity was disguised, thinly enough, as preordained by heredity or natural justice; subjection to a patrimonial ruler was disguised as a free or obligatory offering of oneself to the ideological representative of a sacred polity; dependence on a feudal lord was disguised as originating in an act of fealty given in return for protection. The second stage of exploitation, the taking of surplus labour, was equally disguised, though in a different way.

When detailing the types of expropriation between contemporaries, in Chapter Seven, logical room was found for a third method, beside coercion and deception. This was where one person has pre-empted another's capacity for free alienation, and hence for appropriation, and can subsequently exercise it to the disadvantage of the original possessor. This, it was asserted, was the usual method of taking where exploitation was concerned. This assertion must now be made good by showing that this is, in fact, how surplus-labour is expropriated in the major forms that are being considered. If so, then two conditions must hold. First, as a result of appropriating labour-power, the owner of means of production must also have pre-empted the workers' capacity to appropriate the product of their labour, so that some or all of it falls within his sphere of ownership. And secondly, the owner must be able to control the labour-process in such a way that he can unilaterally determine the surplus which thus accrues to himself. Marx examined the first of these, with regard to capitalism, under the heading of 'the law of appropriation', and we shall do the same.

(a) *The Law of Appropriation*

The phrase and the idea were taken from an early nineteenth-century Swiss economist, A. E. Cherbuliez. It referred to the natural law principle, proclaimed by the jurists and economists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries 'as the fundamental presupposition of civil society', that 'the worker has an exclusive right to the value resulting from his labour.'

A disciple of Sismondi, Cherbuliez was critical of capitalism but feared democracy, because capitalism would degrade the masses whom democracy brings to power. Typical spokesman of a traditional petty-bourgeois economy, disoriented by the spectacle of the revolutions of his time, he veered from a socialistic utilitarian radicalism to extreme conservatism. He himself derived the law of appropriation from a psychological basis in human nature, somewhat in the manner of Hume, and was ambivalent towards it. In his book *Riche ou Pauvre?*, which marks the climax of his radicalism, he argued that when a worker's labour was sold to a capitalist, the latter therewith acquired the worker's right to the whole resulting value, and thus to any return above its cost price. Thus the property of the capitalist in the product of the labour of others was 'a strict consequence of the law of appropriation whose basic principle was, on the contrary, the exclusive title of every worker to the product of his own labour.'

The importance of this seeming paradox is that it might explain the fact that, under capitalism, the existence of surplus-value, and the capitalist's right to it, are never spontaneously challenged by the workers. They resist only its continuous expansion at the expense of the share of new value returning to labour. Capitalism has grown up, historically, on a terrain of small commodity production, where peasants and artisans owned the products they made and sold. Such an economy might possibly breed the assumption that the product belongs to the producer, because it embodies his labour. If, instead of working himself, the owner of means of production bought the labour of others, he would therewith be assumed to have bought the right to the product of that labour. Thus, by acquiring their labour-power, the capitalist would pre-empt the workers' capacity to appropriate its products. If he also controlled their capacity to produce, he could tap this like a force of nature to yield a stream of products, all falling within his sphere of ownership. So long as the cost of labour-power – i.e. the value of the workers' subsistence – was always below the new value added by the use he made of their combined labour-powers, he could appropriate and accumulate a surplus, to which his claim would never be questioned. The workers will struggle only to maintain customary conditions of work and living standards.

This view is consistent with the way in which European law adjusted to capitalism. It is consistent also with the fact that when socialist intellectuals first challenged capital, they appealed to the traditional natural law principle. The workers collectively were urged to reclaim the whole value

of their product. Cherbuliez's own writings were a part of this movement. But the fact that the challenge could be raised in this form also betrayed the ambiguity of the alleged principle. If the labour bought by the capitalist did not coincide with that expended by the workers, then it could be claimed that the capitalist was cheating them by appropriating a surplus. But this ambiguity had been present from the outset, so that the principle could always have been applied to justify either side. Therefore it seems unlikely that it reflected a basic assumption which actually *did* allow capitalists to pre-empt the workers' capacity for appropriation.

This was certainly Marx's view, for his socialism did not depend on any kind of ethical premiss that the worker was entitled to the product of his labour. The so-called 'law of appropriation', he considered, was itself merely part of the ideology of capitalism. It was not characteristic of small commodity production, where the individual producer's right to his product was based on some form of socially or communally mediated individual ownership of means of production, i.e. land or craft tools; and, as property, on the logical prerequisites of the exchange relationship itself. The idea that labour alone might raise a title to ownership of the product could not have emerged, historically, before labour, abstracted and isolated from all other contexts of meaning, had become an object in society in its own right, i.e. as a commodity.

This fundamental law is pure fiction. It arises out of an apparent feature of the circulation of commodities. Commodities exchange in relation to their value, that is to say, the labour they contain. Individuals confront each other solely as owners of commodities and can therefore only take possession of the commodities of others through the alienation of their own. Hence it *appears* as though they have only their own labour to give in exchange, since the exchange of commodities which contain *alien* labour (unless they have themselves been obtained in exchange for commodities of one's own) presupposes other relationships between men than those of commodity owners or buyers and sellers. In capitalist production, this appearance – which is that of the surface of capitalist production itself – vanishes. What does not vanish, however, is the illusion that originally men confront each other only as commodity owners, and hence that each is only a proprietor in so far as he also labours. This 'originally' is, as I have said, a delusion arising from the superficial appearances of capitalist production, which has never existed historically. Everywhere man appears in the role of proprietor, whether in isolation or collectively, before he appears in that of worker. . . . As soon as his original animal state comes to an end, property in nature is always already mediated through his existence as member of a community, family, tribe, etc., through a relation to other men which conditions his relation to nature. The 'propertyless worker' as 'funda-

mental principle' is, rather, a creature of civilisation and appears at the historical stage of capitalist production.<sup>80</sup>

The 'law of appropriation' was therefore a reflection, in the theorizing language of juridical ideology, of the commonsense illusion of bourgeois society that Marx christened 'commodity fetishism'. To all those outside the role of dependent producer, capitalism appeared under the guise of market society, where the production and circulation of commodities, not capital, prevailed. The higher the development of capitalism, the more completely commercialised become all social spheres and the more perfect the illusion. The 'individual' of natural law, claiming to own that with which he 'mixes his labour', was a 'product on one side of the dissolution of feudal forms of society, on the other side of the new forces of production developed since the sixteenth century.' To ideologists, he appeared 'as an ideal' whose existence they project into the past. Not as a historic result but as history's point of departure.<sup>81</sup> Professor Macpherson has well shown how this abstraction was necessitated by the desire to justify capitalist accumulation within a traditional framework of ethical ideas. In Cherbuliez, as with the utopian socialists, it has no better credentials.

In what was originally intended as part of the second chapter of *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, to be entitled 'The Appearance of the Law of Appropriation in Simple Circulation', Marx had already tried to show how labour's right to property in its product, together with the *bourgeois* versions of liberty, equality and utility, arose as abstractions from the experienced structure of market relationships. But whereas the contract of employment – in one sense, as we have seen, a *factio juris* pertaining to the same bounded social horizon of the sphere of circulation – was nevertheless real in its social consequences, enabling labour to be formally subsumed under capital, the 'law of appropriation' was, on the whole, merely an ideologists' elaboration of the same set of ideas. The only valid assumption that could be made about the genesis of the property presupposed in the model of market society was that it lay outside the terms of the model:

In circulation itself, the exchange-process as it stands out on the surface of bourgeois society, everyone gives only in so far as he takes, and takes only in so far as he gives. In order to do either the one or the other, he must *have*. The procedure by which he has reached the position of having does not form one of the analytic elements [*Momente*] of circulation itself. Only as private proprietors of exchange-value, whether in the form of commodities or money, are the agents subjects of circulation.

A world-view that misdefined social reality in the categories and perspectives of commodity circulation had to forge its own missing links, and did so in ways that created a coherent cosmos in which both reason and

capital could feel at home. So if society, conceived as a market, could establish no priority between the labour-power and the products that appeared within it as property, and as givens, ideology's recourse was to declare one to be the natural progenitor of the other.

The ambiguity which had vitiated the so-called principle, as traditionally stated, disappeared once Marx had distinguished between the purchase of labour-power and the consumption of labour, and between exchange-value and use-value. But with it went any prospect of justifying socialism by the workers' right to the product, or attacking capitalism on the grounds that property is theft. As Marx explained:

The value of the new product further includes: the equivalent of the value of the labour-power together with a surplus-value. This is so because the value of the labour-power – sold for a definite length of time, say a day, a week, etc. – is less than the value created by its use during that time. But the worker has received payment for the exchange-value of his labour-power and by doing so has alienated its use-value – this being the case in every sale and purchase.

The fact that this particular commodity, labour-power, possesses the peculiar use-value of supplying labour, and therefore of creating value, cannot affect the general law of commodity production. If, therefore, the magnitude of value advanced in wages is not merely found again in the product, but is found there augmented by a surplus-value, this is not because the seller has been defrauded, for he has really received the value of his commodity. It is due solely to the fact that this commodity has been used up by the buyer.

The law of exchange requires equality only between the exchange-values of the commodities given in exchange for one another. From the very outset it presupposes a difference between their use-values, and it has nothing whatever to do with their consumption, which only begins after the deal is closed and executed.

Thus the original conversion of money into capital is achieved in the most exact accordance with the economic laws of commodity production and with the right of property derived from them. Nevertheless, its result is:

- (1) that the product belongs to the capitalist and not to the worker;
- (2) that the value of this product includes, beside the value of the capital advanced, a surplus-value which costs the worker labour but the capitalist nothing, and which none the less becomes the legitimate property of the capitalist;
- (3) that the worker has retained his labour-power and can sell it anew if he can find a buyer.<sup>82</sup>

Clearly, this 'result' is not also a logical consequence, but merely a paradoxical factual outcome. Marx referred to it as the 'inversion' and

'dialectical reversal' of the law of appropriation as analysis proceeds from the sphere of circulation to that of production. For since scientific analysis is simultaneously a rational critique of the irrationalities in a society's own self-interpretation, so it can expose contradictions between ideology and practice.

The general conclusion to which this points is that the methods by which labour-power is surrendered to owners of means of production cannot necessarily be taken to involve any pre-empting of the workers' capacity to appropriate the product of labour. But can Marx's argument against Cherbuliez be applied to precapitalist modes of exploitation too? Here too labour-power was taken or given, more or less freely, and it might seem that the workers' capacity to appropriate the product was appropriated or alienated at the same time. The more so, perhaps, since these transactions seemed to establish civil statuses in which property could not be owned, or was effectively reduced to conditional tenure. But closely examined, there do not appear to be any firmer foundations for institutionalised exploitation here than in the sale of labour-power for wages. The slave's status was defined by agreement among the owners; wherever it was possible for slaves to acquire possessions by labour they were keen to do so, and to defend them, despite the fact that all their labour theoretically belonged to another. *Corvée* done for a despot was, theoretically, done for the public good: the workers as his subjects also had a claim to the benefits resulting from their labour. As for serfs, they were so far from having lost their capacity to appropriate the product of their labour that manorial histories, if fully told, would probably reveal a continuous struggle, by subterfuge, wrangling and bullying, over the division of the product: a struggle which tended towards the commutation of labour service into money rents and the transformation of the serf into a free tenant.

Although these indications are not conclusive, they suggest that the civil statuses by which precapitalist workers were denied some of the attributes of men, including all or some of their capacity to appropriate, were more effect than cause of the dehumanised instrumentalism with which they were treated in the processes of production. Though these unfree statuses reinforced the institutionalisation of exploitation, most obviously in the case of slavery, it is not at all certain that they were its foundation. When discussing these statuses above, it was indicated that as states of propertylessness they resulted from interpreting the worker's exclusion from means of production as an extension of his own relation to his body and its labour-power. The same is true if they are treated as interpretations of the worker's exclusion from the product of his labour. But it by no means follows that these were *logical* extensions of the status by which the worker was treated as a bearer of living labour, nor yet again that they were extensions that carried practical moral force, whether logically or not, in the social formations in question. In so far as they were ideologically current in those formations, it may have been only in the same way as the



'law of appropriation' was current in bourgeois society – as a theorists' justification of established practices derived from a mythical primordial condition by the light of a delusive view of social reality.

If so, we seem driven towards the conclusion that owners of means of production, in the major forms of exploitation, were not able to pre-empt workers' capacity to appropriate the product of their labour simply by having appropriated their labour-power. If this means abandoning the attempt to explain the institutionalisation of exploitation, except perhaps by deception, then we should have to accept a Macchiavellian view of all historical inequalities, as effects of coercion and fraud. However, Marx provides the clue to an alternative solution in the very passage quoted above, where he expounded his corrected version of Cherbuliez's paradox. 'The exchange of commodities,' he asserted, 'has nothing whatever to do with their consumption.' If the appropriative capacity of workers is pre-empted as a result of the owner's acquisition of their labour-power, it may be in consequence not of the method of acquisition, but of the method of use. Put differently, it may result not from the procedures by which labour-power is formally subjected to means of production as the property of others, but from its *real* subjection. Let us consider the question under that heading.

(b) *The Real Subjection of Labour to Means of Production*

After describing the labour-process in general, Marx itemised the 'two characteristic phenomena' which it exhibits when 'turned into the process by which the capitalist consumes labour-power': 'First, the labourer works under the control of the capitalist to whom his labour belongs.'

Secondly, the product is the property of the capitalist and not that of the labourer, its immediate producer. Suppose that a capitalist pays for a day's labour-power at its value; then the right to use that power for a day belongs to him, just as much as the right to use any other commodity, such as a horse that he has hired for the day. To the purchaser of a commodity belongs its use, and the seller of labour-power, by giving his labour, does no more, in reality, than part with the use-value he has sold. From the instant he steps into the workshop, the use-value of his labour-power, and therefore also its use, which is labour, belongs to the capitalist. By the purchase of labour-power, the capitalist incorporates labour as a living ferment, with the lifeless constituents of the product . . . The labour-process is a process between things that the capitalist has purchased, this process belongs, therefore, to him, just as much as does the wine which is the product of a process of fermentation completed in his cellar.<sup>83</sup>

From this, two points are clear. First, that the capitalist's right to the product arises from the consumption of labour, not from the exchange of

labour power, and thus from the specifically capitalist character of the production process. Secondly, in parting with his labour-power the worker gives up only the use-value he has sold: he does not also concede any capacity to appropriate the product, even though he could never have sold his labour-power unless the capitalist was counting in advance on owning the product. Since all that the capitalist has appropriated from the worker is the use of his labour, his right to the product can only come from the way in which he uses it. And it arises not just because he 'incorporates' it with his means of production, but specifically because he subordinates it to them. As Marx often put it, living labour is subjected to dead labour. For a rule of appropriation is implied here clearly enough: the product belongs to the capitalist because it is the result of 'a process between *things*' that have become his property.<sup>84</sup>

Now, labour-power and labour itself are not spontaneously treated as things. In themselves, they are capacities and activities of the human being. They are not likely to be treated as things unless and until they are placed amongst things and subjected to the material necessity that governs the relations of thing to thing. Labour does not convey a right to the product because it is sold somewhat as though it *were* a thing; rather, it is purchased, by a convenient fiction, as though it were a thing, because it is to be utilised as one thing amongst others. And only in *this* capacity, which it first acquires in the production process, can its expenditure transmit to the owner a right to the product. For this claim to be apparent, labour has to be referred to as a ferment or yeast, as some non-human agent of transformation.<sup>85</sup> It is, in fact, only because labour *no longer appears as labour*, but as a mere natural force, a source of ductile energies, that the capitalist's right to the product appears to be beyond question.

Thus, beneath the capitalist's exploitation there lies, as well as coercion, which it limits and supplements, a rule of appropriation analogous to that of Cherbuliez, but quite different in substance. It is the simple idea which finds legal expression in the *jus fructu*, that what a thing naturally produces belongs to its owner: fruit to the owner of the fruit-tree; foals to the owner of the mare; oil to the owner of the land above. No hair-splitting analysis is needed to promulgate such a rule. It seems to be rooted in the natural economy, primordial, a part of man's prehistory stretching out its hand over history. Labour can only generate an automatic supply of property for another if it is somehow made over into a mere part and appendage of material means of production owned by the other. Only when the specifically human character of living labour is lost in the objectified substance of dead labour, can its effects appear to be the natural yield of the latter, coming into being within the sphere of its proprietor. Ownership of the product then arises without alienation, as though it were a direct appropriation from nature. Contrasting production from the point of view of creating surplus-value with production from the standpoint of the simple labour-process, Marx wrote:

It is now no longer the labourer that employs the means of production, but the means of production that employ the labourer. Instead of being consumed by him as material elements of his productive activity, they consume him as the ferment necessary to their own life-process, and the life-process of capital consists only in its movement as value constantly expanding, constantly multiplying itself. Furnaces and workshops that stand idle by night, and absorb no living labour, are 'a mere loss' to the capitalist. Hence, furnaces and workshops constitute lawful claims upon the night-labour of the workpeople. The simple transformation of money into the material factors of the process of production, into means of production, transforms the latter into a title and a right to the labour and surplus labour of others.<sup>86</sup>

The solution to the riddle of how exploitation becomes institutionalised is thus a very simple one, stated in these general terms. Furthermore, it explains the prominence given to ownership of material means of production in historical materialism. For this is both the condition on which the worker's capacity to appropriate the product can be preempted, and the means of controlling the production-process to maximise the surplus-product. Thus *both* conditions for expropriation through pre-emption of the capacity to alienate and its subsequent exercise to the victim's detriment are given *simultaneously* wherever a mode of production is established which permits the real subjection of living labour to means of production that can be monopolised by a class of non-workers. For the rule of appropriation found to apply in capitalism is by no means peculiar to it and probably underlay every previous form of exploitation too. At any rate, Marx's interpretation of the major precapitalist forms is both consistent with, and illuminated by, this supposition. It may even be permissible to claim that the whole momentous difference between antagonistic, progressive epochs and stationary, vegetative conditions in human history turns on this simple coincidence. Given a universal assumption that a thing's products 'naturally' belong to the thing's owner, it is necessary only to reduce labour to being a subordinate part of an owned thing for the owner to have both the power and an unchallenged right to live off others' surplus labour.

But as a practical task, the subjection of living labour to dead labour is no simple matter. Its feasibility depends on the character of the productive forces. This does not mean that the historical incidence of exploitation is wholly technologically determined, but that there is a specific dependence of exploitation on the productive forces as providing certain indispensable conditions. What these are seems to depend, in turn, on considerations mentioned in Chapter Six. There it was suggested that persons are more likely to appear as attributes of a thing where it much exceeds the human individual in permanence, size or causal efficacy, so long as the person's actions are inextricably bound up with the thing's existence; and that this

is the more likely where a number of persons are similarly dependent on a single thing, whose character will then largely determine the nature of the social whole that they comprise. It is true that we are now not only concerned with how things are perceived, but also with how they are. Yet, since the real subjection of labour to means of production can only exist socially as a socially validated relationship between persons and things, social perception and social meaning are an indispensable part of the objective conditions that productive forces must fulfil if they, in turn, are to serve as bases for exploitation. Thus exploitation will only be possible where non-workers can both monopolise and control the operation or availability of relatively large-scale productive forces upon which a particular formally subjected labour-force is materially and collectively dependent for carrying on production.

Marx usually distinguished three aspects of a set of productive forces, all of which are present in every production process and which can only analytically be separated. These are, first, material or technical; secondly, social or organisational; and thirdly, intellectual – which, since both technique and organisation involve knowhow, is really a more or a less specialised component of the first two, which may or may not be separated off in special institutions and artefacts of intellectual production. A distinct mode of subjection of workers to the means of production corresponds to each of these aspects of the productive forces active in the process of production.

The crudest examples of the material subjection of workers to the means of labour are to be found with slavery. The slave was attached – often literally, with fetters – to a particular galley, or mine, or plantation, as part of the human engine that made it productive. A specific means of production determined the entire ecological situation and cultural attainment available to its enslaved labour-force. Overseers and their weapons merely prevented escape or respite from this all-embracing material determinism. By the pace of work they co-determined, with the means of labour, the life-span of the worker. But the very crudity of this material subjection – above all, the fact that it could scarcely have been maintained without auxiliary physical means of confining the slave to his place and instruments of labour – also shows how little it was due to technical exigencies of the process itself. Slave production was not associated with any specific technology and has usually been regarded as incompatible with the use of advanced implements.<sup>87</sup>

The subjection of the patrimonial subject and feudal serf was mediated by attachment to the soil. Formal subjection by means of the political superstructure allocated him and his descendants to a particular commune or manor: within this, his lifetime's energies were articulated with the land and other physical plant in an ever-recurrent cycle of seasonal work, and a primitive yet closely inter-locked and often hereditary system of occupational interdependence. The entire bio-cultural being of the dependent

peasant was thus determined by this constricted ambience and the necessity of unremitting labour. But this was only half the story. It has been seen that both patrimonial kingdoms and feudal manors exhibited a dual structure, in which certain means of production were retained in the ruler's or lord's hands to be worked directly by forced labour. But they also retained ownership or effective title to control certain instruments of production essential to the reproduction of the village communities themselves. Exaggerated as Wittfogel's thesis on 'hydraulic civilisations' may be, the emphasis placed by Marx and also Weber on the importance of patrimonial despots' monopolies of irrigation works in arid lands has its place at this point. The subjects are thereby made materially dependent on his ownership of installations which are preconditions for their successful occupation and use of the land. Under some circumstances the provision of military defence – the protection offered by the lord's castle to a village's livestock, for example – may also be a sufficiently basic precondition to function as a means of exploitation. The real foundation of Pharaoh's power to tax away his subjects' surplus was – as the story of Joseph's dream and his subsequent policies vividly depicts – their material dependence, in times of famine, on supplies of food and seed from royal granaries.<sup>88</sup> Feudal lords showed equal ingenuity in monopolising the essential resources of small-scale manorial economies. They could control access to pasture, to ploughs or ploughbeasts, stud animals, water, mills, fisheries, harbours, etc. In all these and other ways patrimonial and feudal exploiters could reduce their dependent labour-forces to organic appendages to the land and the installations needed to make it habitable and fruitful.

Marx divided the rise of capitalism into two periods, in the first of which manufacture predominated, and in the second, machine industry. Each subjected the workers to means of production in its own way. Characteristic of manufacture was detail work where once separate handicraft operations were decomposed into a combined process of specialised and divided labour in a workshop. The worker's physique and skill was sacrificed to the requirements of simplified manipulations, continually repeated. 'It is just because handicraft skill continues, in this way, to be the foundation of the process of production, that each workman becomes exclusively assigned to a partial function, and that for the rest of his life, his labour-power is turned into the organ of this detail function.'<sup>89</sup> Thus manufacture 'converts the labourer into a crippled monstrosity, by forcing his detail dexterity at the expense of a world of productive capabilities and instincts. . . . unfitted to make anything independently, the manufacturing labourer develops productive activity as a mere appendage of the capitalist's workshop.'

Not only do the workshop and its tools determine the bio-cultural being of the detail worker: it also begins the separation of mental from manual labour which reaches its climax in automated industry. Material sub-

jection and intellectual subjection advance hand-in-hand:

It is a result of the division of labour in manufactures, that the labourer is brought face-to-face with the intellectual potencies of the material process of production, as the property of another, and as a ruling power. This separation . . . is completed in modern industry, which makes science a productive force distinct from labour and presses it into the service of capital.<sup>90</sup>

Here, in the factory of the industrial period,

By means of its conversion into an automaton, the instrument of labour confronts the labourer, during the labour-process, in the shape of capital, of dead labour that dominates, and pumps dry, living labour-power . . . The special skill of each individual insignificant factory operative vanishes as an infinitesimal quantity before the science, the gigantic physical forces, and the mass of labour that are embodied in the factory mechanism and, together with that mechanism, constitute the power of the 'master'.<sup>91</sup>

Although economic coercion governs the formal subjection of labour to capital, capitalism minimises the direct intervention of political compulsion and allows 'free' movement of the labourer between employers and localities. On the other hand, it maximises the material dependence of the workers on the instruments of production, through the scale, complexity and power required to produce anything that can compete as a commodity in capitalist society, and by subjecting the workers directly to the risks, rhythms and potencies of machinery. These very factors can then be used to subject them further. For technical knowledge is here being applied to maximise yield under conditions of estrangement, developing the workers' plasticity in the form of specialised malleability, not of polyvalent competence. Whether 'nature' be conceived in terms of traditional, practical empiricism or of scientific theory, labour is here converted into part of a single 'natural' technical process whose product is, precisely, a 'yield' to its owner.

This material subjection is mediated, and also supplemented, by socio-organisational subjection. Corresponding to every set of material means of production is a specific 'mode of co-operation'.<sup>92</sup> This is determined by the technical exigencies of those means, but also by possibilities and constraints issuing from organisational variables—e.g. the scope and limits for specialisation and interdependence; the need for co-ordination by rules or commands; problems arising from communicational patterns, varying with the size, dispersal, etc. of the work-group; time and motion factors; and so forth. Every mode of co-operation generates a distinct 'collective

force' and adds a specific 'social productive power' to that attributable simply to labour with implements and materials. It is 'the special productive power of the combined working day'.<sup>93</sup> The mode of co-operation is a matter of applied organisational technique. In an age of cybernetics and systems theory we are accustomed to the idea of an applied science of organisation in general, which can be used, *mutatis mutandis*, to plan both efficient human interaction and efficient mechanical processes. Such a science has, however, a long and largely unresearched prehistory in mankind's repertoires of practical skills. Marx seems to have realised this, and saw also that the development of machine-systems involved, at first, literal 'dehumanization' of what, in manufacture, was an organisation of human interactions: social combination 'solidifying' into mechanical combination.

The importance of organisation as a means of subjection is that it brings into being a new, intangible productive force, whose effect is felt, if not understood, by the workers; and which seems to originate wholly outside their own alienated labour-power, which it dominates. In fact, of course, it is due to their association, and to the efficiency with which 'the new power that arises from the fusion of many forces into one single force' is harnessed.<sup>94</sup> But since it is capital (or the exploiter in general, the 'lord of labour') who first brings the workers together into active combination, and who directs and co-ordinates their efforts, this mysterious force appears to be a gratuitous attribute of his property and authority. It both inspires and oppresses them, and in either case subjects them further to the material means of labour to which the mode of co-operation is adjusted.

An important prerequisite for organisational subjection is that the employer should not only have means capable of occupying a large workforce, but also the means of subsistence to support them. This, rather than impressive technology, is the basis of the subjection of slaves in systems of large-scale simple cooperation. Likewise, it explains the massive exploitation of *corvée* labour by oriental and other despots, to erect colossal monuments: revenues of grain and other produce were extorted on an equally vast scale to feed the workers. The preponderance of social over material subjection in this case is possibly reflected in the exaggerated ideological powers attributed to such rulers. The workers perhaps took the 'collective power' of their own fused energies for the *mana* of their overlords. This was combined with intellectual subjection in so far as the rulers monopolised calendrical, hydraulic and other technologies on which the real and imagined productivity of labour depended. Feudal exploitation, by contrast, tended towards secularism, and separation between the lords temporal and spiritual. And this may have been related to the small-scale social organisation and unspecialised knowledge on which it rested. For the smaller the scope for organisational subjection, the more exploitation must depend on the merely personal dependence of the worker on his lord, and on his direct subjection to the material means – his

being tied to the land – rather than on his prostration before the ‘sacred’ personification of collective force.

Feudalism involved seasonal cooperation by families for ploughing and harvesting, and village cooperation for clearance, reclamation and other work. But it always coexisted with small-scale production by individual craftsmen and peasant households. When capitalism first appears against this background, ‘capitalistic co-operation does not manifest itself as a particular historical form of co-operation, but co-operation itself appears to be a historical form peculiar to, and specifically distinguishing, the capitalist process of production.’<sup>95</sup> From the first, capitalism was primarily an *organisational* revolution. The technical revolutions, first of manufacturing and then of industrial capitalism, were born from the impact of organisation on existing technologies. Hence, from the first, ‘the social productive power of labour that is developed by co-operation, appears to be the productive power of capital.’<sup>96</sup> This social subjection of the workers to capital wanes as mechanisation absorbs more and more of their interactive roles and isolates them. A similar, though slightly lagged, evolution occurs in the sphere of intellectual labour. Organisation is applied to control and communication in the form of ‘bureaucracy’, which subjects office workers to the hierarchical constraints and detail labour of processing documents, in a manner that parallels the ‘collective worker’ of the manufacturing period in manual labour. Mechanisation and automation advance more slowly here. Eventually, however, automation can presumably eliminate human initiative from control and communication as fully as it eliminates human energies from production. Thus workers are extruded more and more from both the logical and mechanical necessities of production processes. In principle, this should improve the capability of the remaining labour-forces to determine and institute their own organisational patterns. That workers’ self-management has made slow progress is due, in part, it would seem, to monopolisation of the necessary organisational knowledge and skills by privileged managerial strata in both capitalist and state socialist societies.

It was pointed out earlier that material, social and intellectual aspects of the productive forces, and consequently of the real subjection of the workers to means of production, can only be separated analytically, not in reality. The same is true of formal and real subjection. For in practice, the workers’ subjection, both formal and real, occurs as subordination to a composite totality in which the predominant and determining element is something uniquely specific to each mode of production – a capital, a manor, etc. – i.e. its particular production relation, which structures each unit of combined elements whose activity releases a certain quantity of productive force. Fully to elucidate this formulation of the ‘dialectic of the concepts productive force (means of production) and production relation’ would require an exposition of Marx’s theory of reification, which cannot be undertaken here. Nevertheless, the crucial point is that the actual and



active subjection of the workers, in the real process, – a subjection that is simultaneously material, social and intellectual – to the means of production operating *as* capital, manorial land, etc. is what establishes the thing-like, dehumanised character of labour's role. The workers are perceived, and experience themselves, as 'belonging to' the firm or the manor or the kingdom – the totality represented by the capitalist, the lord or the ruler in his capacity as owner of the means of production around which it is structured; and to which their labour and its products therefore belong too. This both pre-empts the workers' capacity to appropriate the product, and allows labour-power to be controlled as an auxiliary 'natural' force to produce a surplus. It also reacts back on the procedures and institutions through which formal subjection occurs, causing the status of living labour to be defined in ways that derogate from the society's standard of full humanity. The bearer of living labour is converted, even outside the labour process, in his general social existence, partially or wholly into a social 'thing', whether owned by another or owning his own person as a thing whose use must be sold to others. If the estrangement prevailing between different ethnic groups or different strata, or between conquerors and conquered, is a historical precondition for the instrumental orientation between persons out of which exploitation arises, the dehumanised instrumentalism implicit in every established form of exploitation soon transforms this precondition into the class antagonism characteristic of every exploitative mode of production, and its specific result.

This section began by asking what is involved in the task of appropriating surplus-product. It has sought to show that it involves a kind of institutionalised taking, by pre-empting the workers' capacity for alienation and exercising it to their detriment. Little has been said about the second aspect, but it has been mentioned that Marx likened the ways in which Rumanian boyars manipulated the actual length of the stipulated 'day's work' due on their estates to the ways in which capitalists constantly revolutionised the technical and social arrangement of factory production to increase their share of surplus-value. With slave-labour, since all labour is surplus labour, all measures designed to increase productivity simultaneously turn against the slave his own incapacity for appropriating the product.

There is no need to multiply details; let us pursue the general cardinal points. Control of the production process by (or for) the owner of means of production is indispensable for exploitation to occur. This means control of the particular *combination* of elements comprising the process. Since these include living labour, the combination has the form of a socio-technical system, in which the material organisation of things is blended in various ways with the social organisation of men and women (or, in Engels' Lancashire, children). Control is therefore both indirect, exercised through mechanical technological routines to which the labourers must

conform their actions, and direct, exercised through the enforcement of discipline and commands. Broadly speaking, the first of these aspects is 'management' and the second 'supervision'. If all the other prior conditions for exploitation are present, this work of management and supervision is simultaneously a process of expropriation.

Marx dealt at some length with this problem; I quote only the most relevant paragraphs, which state the most general position:

The labour of supervision and management is naturally required wherever the direct process of production assumes the form of a combined social process, and not of the isolated labour of independent producers. However, it has a double nature.

On the one hand, all labour in which many individuals co-operate necessarily requires a commanding will to co-ordinate and unify the process, and functions which apply not to partial operations but to the total activity of the workshop, much as that of an orchestra conductor. This is a productive job, which must be performed in every combined mode of production.

On the other hand . . . this supervision work necessarily arises in all modes of production based on the antithesis between the labourer, as the direct producer, and the owner of the means of production. The greater this antagonism, the greater the role played by supervision. Hence it reaches its peak in the slave system. But it is indispensable also in the capitalist mode of production, since the production process in it is simultaneously a process by which the capitalist consumes labour-power. Just as in despotic states, supervision and all-round interference by the government involves both the performance of common activities arising out of the nature of all communities, and the specific functions arising from the antithesis between the government and the mass of the people.<sup>97</sup>

There are really two separate points being made here. The first is that in exploitative modes of production the technically 'necessary' superintendence is inseparably interwoven with superintendence made necessary by antagonistic social relations. For it is only analytically that the 'mode of co-operation' can be isolated, as an area of applied organisational technique, from other social aspects of the work milieu. In reality, both are fused into a single concrete situation, the historical result of a series of similar fusions at every instant in the past. The form taken by the division of labour, or by authority, or by any other 'purely organizational' aspect of the combination of labour is, actually, determined also by the prevailing socio-emotional matrix. And in an exploitative system, this is of course antagonistic. Thus

. . . the labourer looks at the social nature of his labour, at its

combination with the labour of others for a common purpose, as he would at an alien power; the condition for realising this combination is alien property, whose dissipation would be totally indifferent to him if he were not compelled to economise with it. The situation is quite different in factories owned by the labourers themselves, as in Rochdale, for instance.<sup>98</sup>

The second point is that, even apart from the socio-emotional factor, all aspects of control, whether technically necessary or not, are inescapably also levers of expropriation because of the structure of the production relations within which they occur. The real subjection of labour to the means of production as the property of others converts all management and supervision into the activation of *exploitative* control. This facilitates its delegation as a special task:

The labour of supervision and management, arising as it does out of an antithesis, out of the supremacy of capital over labour, and being therefore common to all modes of production based on class contradictions like the capitalist mode, is directly and inseparably connected also, under the capitalist system, with productive functions which all combined labour assigns to individuals as their special tasks. The wages of an *epitropos* [Greek slave overseer], or *régisseur*, as he was called in feudal France, are entirely divorced from profit and assume the form of wages for skilled labour whenever the business is operated on a sufficiently large scale to warrant paying for such a manager . . . The capitalist mode of production has brought matters to a point where the work of supervision, entirely divorced from the ownership of capital, is always readily obtainable. It has therefore come to be useless for the capitalist to perform it himself.<sup>99</sup>

Precisely because it appears to be no more than a productive function, superintendence can become a specialized occupation for employees, whose inherently exploitative consequences are masked by the absence of the owner from the scene of production.

This functional differentiation, under capitalism, was already implicit, Marx argued, in the internal division of profit into the categories of interest and profit of enterprise. For

Interest as such expresses precisely the existence of the conditions of labour as capital, in their social antithesis to labour, and in their transformation into personal power vis-à-vis and over labour. It represents the ownership of capital as a means of appropriating the products of the labour of others. But it represents this characteristic of capital as something which belongs to it outside the production process and by no means as the result of the specifically capitalist attribute of this

production process itself . . . Interest is a relationship between two capitalists, not between capitalist and labourer.

On the other hand, this form of interest lends the other portion of profit the qualitative form of profit of enterprise, and further of wages of superintendence. The specific functions which the capitalist as such has to perform, and which fall to him as distinct from and opposed to the labourer, are presented as mere functions of labour . . . Due to the alienated character of capital, its antithesis to labour, being relegated to a place outside the actual process of exploitation, namely to interest-bearing capital, this process of exploitation itself appears as a simple labour-process in which the functioning capitalist merely performs a different kind of labour than the labourer.<sup>100</sup>

Hence, all the apologetics of industrial harmony between industrialists and workers, and ideological polemics intended to unite them against *rentiers*. But with the socialisation of capital through the credit system comes the 'Transformation of the actually functioning capitalist into a mere manager, administrator of other people's capital' and finally his replacement by professional management. 'Only the functionary remains and the capitalist disappears as superfluous from the production process.'<sup>101</sup> Thus only at a high and late point in the development of a mode of production is surplus labour 'supplemented by complete idleness of a stratum of society'.

This is a dangerous situation for the ruling class, for others may draw the logical conclusion from their superfluity which, put into practice, will relegate their supremacy to history. Marx saw the Co-operative movement doing this in his own lifetime; today, trade unions and the state, in so far as it has been colonised or captured by socialism, have carried the process in some respects further, in others not so far. In an earlier period it was the capitalist tenant, whether farmer or manufacturer, who drew conclusions fatal to feudalism from the plight of absentee landlords fleeced by their bailiffs; or else it was the usurer who gave credit to the would-be capitalist from interest extorted from spendthrift noblemen intent on consuming their inheritances. Or similarly, feudal monarchs usurped patrimonial powers when feudal aristocracies, losing their productive political function to a royal bureaucracy, became courtiers. And conversely, patrimonial retainers had established themselves as feudal lords by absorbing the productive political function of *fainéant* sovereigns, as in Japan, possibly also Tibet and elsewhere.

In conclusion, we may note that the fusion of control with expropriation in exploitative modes of production reflects one of the central historical theses of Marxism: that modes of co-operation do not develop as self-conscious applications, by society, of organisational techniques to its productive problems. Rather, they emerge as practical and self-interested manipulations of social milieus, and social relations, that are themselves

merely given, in the form which Marx called 'production relations', and which are thereby unwittingly reproduced along with their contradictions. In that modes of co-operation have developed, it has been through the pressure of exploitation within antagonistic production relations; but the contradictions of these relations have been developed at the same time. Thus the modern science of organisation was born of capitalists' need to economise on constant capital by more efficient manipulation of the social structure of the combined working day.<sup>102</sup> Modern critiques of organisation theory, based on Marxist and related conflict-theory approaches, likewise contain an ideological reflection of the workers' resistance to this manipulation, and of the desire to turn the same science to the ends of industrial democracy.

## 7 DISTRIBUTION AND CONSUMPTION OF SURPLUS PRODUCT

So we come to the fifth and final condition for effective exploitation: that there must be institutionalised practices for distributing the appropriated surplus product, which do not lessen the workers' dependence on owners of means of production for subsistence; and practices also for its consumption by those who benefit from this distribution.

The first aspect of distribution is the threefold division of the appropriated surplus between reserves and insurance, replacement and accumulation, and revenue for consumption.

Historically, contribution to collective reserves, or means of insurance, has been one of the starting-points for the appropriation of the collective title to the surplus by rulers:

... a certain amount of labour was due for the communal reserves, insurance so to speak, and to meet the expenses of the community as such, i.e. for war, religion, etc.; this is the first occurrence of the lordly *dominium* in the most original sense, e.g. in the Slavonic communes, in the Rumanian, etc. Therein lies the transition to villeinage, etc.<sup>103</sup>

This passage (which is no more than a parenthetical suggestion) assimilates the origins and functions of political and ideological superstructures rather closely to the social need for means of insurance. And though the economic functions performed by these superstructures, in their primitive forms, were somewhat various, it is true that a large part of them can be explained as precautionary. Military protection in case of attack, adjudicative arrangements in case of disputes, police facilities in case of disorder, magical or religious methods of divining, preventing and remedying malice, misfortune or disaster – these are all forms of insurance against harmful contingencies that require some collective provision, no less than the maintaining of granaries or irrigation works or other more directly economic precautions.

We have already seen how proprietorship of essential preconditions for the collective occupation and cultivation of the land entered into patrimonial and feudal exploitation. It is now apparent that in these modes of production, what converts an appropriated title to land and labour into a basis for exploitation is its combination with a monopoly of means of insurance essential to the regular operation of the production process. The nature of these means will naturally vary widely, but apparently must always involve a combination of monopolised political and/or ideological functions with monopolised control over vital economic precautions. Regular contributions of surplus labour must be forthcoming as the condition of continued production – the more extortionately, the more completely cultivation can be rendered dependent on the monopolised preconditions. It was noted, in connection with protection rackets, that what begins as insurance against interruption may become a condition of continued existence. Thus irrigation or grain storage may begin as a precaution against flood or famine but grow into the indispensable infrastructure of an expanded agriculture. Similarly, feudal protection accepted in turbulent times may grow into a system of vassalage and honorific competition that encourages feuding and raiding and thereby perpetuates the peasants' dependence on seigniorial protection. Finally, men may seek magical preservation from sickness, catastrophe and malevolence, but 'If man attributes an independent existence, clothed in a religious form, to his relationship to his own nature, to external nature and to other men so that he is dominated by these notions, then he requires priests and their labour' – and the latter will perpetuate the 'spiritual' needs that religion alone can satisfy.<sup>104</sup>

But though the need for social provision against contingencies could become a basis for exploitation, Marx did not regard this as inevitable. In small and primitive communities, as to some extent in the Asiatic village commune, collective control over contributions and reserves for these purposes did not pass out of the hands of the direct producers, where custom dictated its exercise. Similarly, Marx thought, communist society would need to take account of this category of needs in its democratic division of the collectively appropriated surplus product. The transition from exploitative monopolisation of means of insurance in precapitalist societies to collective provision under communism was to occur via capitalism and socialism. With the rise of a form of exploitation based on manufacture and industry, these formerly exploitative functions were subordinated to it. They were either incorporated into the public sphere and compulsorily supported out of the surplus product, as state functions or established religion; or else left to the sphere of professional services, to be bought as commodities out of revenue, as with insurance, medicine, denominational religion, etc. They thus served the ruling class, either indirectly through state and church, or directly by purchase. Consequently, the emergence of socialism within the antagonistic frame-

work of capitalism proceeded, in part, by establishing a 'welfare state'. Provision for the worst contingencies of proletarian life was installed as a public function, partly at the cost of surplus-value, under the control of a state run by socialist parties in the workers' interests, either intermittently or permanently.

Replacement and accumulation are the functions which, under capitalism, take the forms that Marx called simple and extended reproduction of capital. We have already seen that it is by simple reproduction that the initial confrontation between free labour and potential capital, at the outset of capitalist development, is converted into the situation where propertyless living labour confronts, in the persons and power of capitalists, the representatives of dead, materialised labour, the social capital existing as the composite result of past exploitation. The same process converts the primitive into the developed form of the separation and confrontation between living labour and means of production in precapitalist modes. Under feudalism, for example, the confrontation between alien military commanders, able both to expropriate and to protect the cultivators, and a free but defenceless peasantry, is transformed by years of feudal service into a situation where serfs confront their lords as the representatives of manorial lands whose continued reproduction – whether in an improved or exhausted condition, or altered by clearance and reclamation – embodies past surplus labour by the servile class.

Capitalism differs from all precapitalist modes, of course, in the way that it supersedes simple by extended reproduction, and in the fact that this accumulation is channelled exclusively through reinvestment of expropriated surplus product. In the middle ages, for example, accumulation was mainly 'accumulation of capital in the towns where . . . it was principally due to the exploitation of the countryside'<sup>105</sup> by unequal exchange and by fiscal expropriation from rural commodity producers by urban corporations that monopolised market facilities. In general,

To a certain extent accumulation of wealth takes place in all stages of economic development, that is, partly an expansion of the scale of production and partly, the accumulation of treasure, etc. As long as wages and rents predominate – that is . . . as long as the greater part of the surplus labour and surplus product which does not accrue to the worker himself, goes to the landowner (the state in Asia) and, on the other hand, the worker reproduces his labour fund himself, i.e. he not only produces his own wages himself, but pays them to himself, usually moreover (almost always in that state of society) he is able to appropriate at least a part of his surplus labour and is surplus product – in this state of society, wages and rent are the main sources of accumulation as well . . . Only when the capitalist mode of production has become predominant, when it does not merely exist sporadically, but has subordinated to itself the mode of production of society; when in

fact the capitalist directly appropriates the whole surplus labour and surplus product in the first instance, although he has to hand over portions of it to the landowner, etc. – only then does profit become the principal source of capital, of accumulation, of wealth saved from revenue and used with a view to profit. This at the same time presupposes (as is implicit in the domination of the capitalist mode of production) that “a considerable advance in the power of national industry has actually taken place”.<sup>106</sup>

Through capitalist accumulation,

With the advance in the productivity of social labour, accompanied as it is by the growth of constant capital, a relatively ever increasing part of the annual product of labour will, therefore, fall to the share of capital as such, and thus property in the form of capital (apart from revenue) will be constantly increasing and proportionately that part of value which the individual worker and even the working class creates, will be steadily decreasing, compared with the product of their past labour that confronts them as capital. The alienation and the antagonism between labour-power and the objective conditions of labour which have become independent in the form of capital, thereby grow continuously.<sup>107</sup>

This is, however, only one side of a contradictory development. For the ‘accumulation’ is such only in terms of value, measured in human labour-time.

But to the degree that large industry develops, the creation of real wealth comes to depend less on labour time and on the amount of labour employed than on the power of the agencies set in motion during labour time, whose ‘powerful effectiveness’ is itself in turn out of all proportion to the direct labour time spent on their production, but depends rather on the general state of science and on the progress of technology . . . (What holds for machinery holds likewise for the combination of human activities and the development of human intercourse.) . . . [Capital] calls to life all the powers of science and of nature, as of social combination and social intercourse, in order to make the creation of wealth independent (relatively) of the labour time employed on it. On the other side, it wants to use labour time as the measuring rod for the giant social forces thereby created, and to confine them within the limits required to maintain the already created value as value.<sup>108</sup>

The self-conscious pursuit and utilisation of this *real* accumulation – social accumulation of scientific knowledge of nature and society, and of technical and social skills – was reserved, Marx thought, for the society



that would discard the 'miserable foundation' – 'the theft of alien labour-time, on which the present wealth is based'.<sup>109</sup>

It is in the division between accumulation and consumption that the difference between capitalism and all previous modes of production is most evident. In pre-capitalist modes, production is primarily for use, hence exploitation takes the form, in general, of direct expropriation of use-values from their producers. Its aim is consumption by the ruling class, and accumulation occurs mainly as personal hoarding. Thus, high rates of exploitation mean only excessive consumption by a few, not rapid economic growth – 'production for luxury as it presents itself in antiquity is a necessary result of the slave relation. Not over-production, but over-consumption and insane consumption . . .'<sup>110</sup> Whereas for the capitalist,

so far as he is personified capital, it is not values in use and the enjoyment of them, but exchange-value and its augmentation, that spur him to action. Fanatically bent on making value expand itself, he ruthlessly forces the human race to produce for production's sake . . . Moreover, the development of capitalist production makes it constantly necessary to keep increasing the amount of the capital laid out in a given industrial undertaking, and competition makes the immanent laws of capitalist production to be felt by each individual capitalist, as external coercive laws. It compels him to keep constantly extending his capital, in order to preserve it, but extend it he cannot, except by means of progressive accumulation.

So far, therefore, as his actions are a mere function of capital – endowed as capital is, in his person, with consciousness and a will – his own private consumption is a robbery perpetrated on accumulation . . .<sup>111</sup>

But this dedication to his role, Marx claimed, was characteristic only of the primitive capitalist, the Weberian ascetic entrepreneur:

As capitalist production, accumulation, and wealth become developed, the capitalist ceases to be the mere incarnation of capital. He has a fellow-feeling for his own Adam, and his education gradually enables him to smile at the rage for asceticism, as a mere prejudice of the old-fashioned miser . . .

At the historical dawn of capitalist production – and every capitalist upstart has personally to go through this historical stage – avarice, and desire to get rich, are the ruling passions. But the progress of capitalist production not only creates a world of delights; it lays open, in speculation and the credit system, a thousand sources of sudden enrichment. When a certain stage of development has been reached, a conventional degree of prodigality, which is also an exhibition of wealth and consequently a source of credit, becomes a business necessity to the

'unfortunate' capitalist . . . Although, therefore, the prodigality of the capitalist never possesses the bona fide character of the open-handed feudal lord's prodigality, but, on the contrary, always has lurking behind it the most sordid avarice and the most anxious calculation, yet his expenditure grows with his accumulation, without the one necessarily restricting the other.<sup>112</sup>

Marx used this excursion into the social psychology of the entrepreneur as the basis for a critique of the ideology of 'abstinence' in the economics of his time, which we need not pursue. We may note in passing, however, that modern corporate capitalism has resolved the 'Faustian conflict between the passion for accumulation, and the desire for enjoyment' in the breast of the Victorian capitalist. Undistributed profits provide for both investment and the income – especially the institutional consumption – of the managerial capitalist.

Insurance and reproduction being set aside, there remains the question of how the appropriated surplus is distributed as revenue among the various classes of beneficiary. First, it must take a form in which it is distributable. This may occur in kind, but one of the most primitive functions of money has been to provide a means of payment of tribute, taxes, rent and interest. The need to convert part or all of the surplus product into money likewise requires and stimulates the intervention of commodity markets and commerce. This has been occasional in patrimonial regimes, common under feudalism, usual with slavery, and is indispensable in capitalism.

With regard to the question of *cui bono*, the crux is that the workers should not be able to claw back enough of their alienated surplus labour at a later stage of its distribution to reduce their dependence on the owners of means of production. So long as all the other conditions of exploitation are present, this condition will be satisfied by the following requirement: the direct exploiters should transmit shares of the expropriated surplus only to those having the economic, political or ideological power to extract payment for making available or secure, for the exploiter, certain indispensable preconditions of exploitation. Thus the patrimonial sovereign, whether or not he is himself a sacred figure, will sacrifice part of his fiscal rent to the gods and thereby maintain a priesthood to bolster belief in his fertilising and protective powers. The feudal lord must convert some of his surplus into military labour, and some into money, to contribute to the monarch's personification of his class as a political state; and some again will be tithed by the church which, being itself a feudal landowner, gives ideological support to his supremacy. The capitalist must pay not only taxes, but rent and interest too. In the case of the last two, commodity exchange is not only the means of converting surplus product into a distributable form (i.e. of realising it as surplus-value): it also provides the framework of transmissive practices by which distribution is carried out.

As we have seen, special markets develop in which the use of land or money capital can be purchased. The landowner's or moneylender's title, consisting in a periodical share in the surplus product, is made good in the form of a 'price' paid for the use of his property. The assimilation of this procedure to that of the labour market, in the bourgeois mind, was the source of the specific illusion that Marx christened the 'Trinity formula'. Land, capital and labour are conceived as the three essential factors of production, and rent, interest and wages as the fair returns for the contribution of their uses to the capitalist. In fact, rent and interest represent the institutionalised form of economic coercion exerted by monopolistic social groups, to which the capitalist only submits because it enables him to emerge as the prime beneficiary of jointly exploiting, with them, and by means of the wage-form of subsistence, the bearers of labour-power.

The coercive criterion for distributing the surplus product only preserves the subordinate position of labour if the other conditions of exploitation are already present. Specifically, unless there is a plentiful supply of labour, and the social and political cohesion of the working-class is weak, it cannot be relied on by the exploiter to reproduce the dependence of the workers on his means of production. For if the supply of labour is insufficient or risky, or can be made scarce by combination, its owners can extract a 'price' for its use above the current subsistence norm, which may thus itself become ratcheted higher and higher. While this may force capitalism into familiar crises, it does not *fatally* reduce labour's dependence, however. For as long as labour is content to exert its collective power by pressure on capitalist employers, its capacity to participate in surplus-value remains limited by capital's ability to exploit labour. This situation is less paradoxical than it sounds, since the profitability of any particular capital, and hence its owner's ability to afford high wages, does not depend solely on the rate at which it exploits its own labour-force, but on the relation of that to the average rate. Thus in reality each group of workers is trying to participate in capital's exploitation of others. In an era of international capital, this is a well-known engine of unequal deprivation between the proletariats of developed and undeveloped countries. This augmentation of wages by a 'rent' extorted by workers through collective monopolies of labour-power supply requires the continuation of capitalism, since the basic production relations remain unchanged unless organised labour uses its collective power in the manner advocated by *The Communist Manifesto* – to 'bring the property question to the fore'. But since it also involves a weakening of the conditions for effective exploitation, it undermines the system on which it depends, without replacing it with another.

The completion of this final condition of exploitation is that owners of means of production should be able to consume the expropriated surplus in a way that reproduces their social existence as a class of non-workers, as a

leisure class. For 'every kind of consumption . . . in one way or another produces human beings in some particular aspect.'<sup>113</sup> It is this specifically – the distinctive style of life which exploitation makes possible – that fixes the social distance between the stratum of families which include the exploiters and owners of means of production, and that of the workers. The consumption of the latter, being limited to subsistence, can express little more than its members' roles as embodied labour. In La Bruyère's famous words,

Certain wild animals, male and female, are scattered over the country, dark, livid, and quite tanned by the sun, who are chained, as it were, to the land they are always digging and turning up and down with an unwearied stubbornness; their voice is somewhat articulate, and when they stand erect they discover a human face, and, indeed, are men. At night they retire to their burrows, where they live on black bread, water, and roots; they spare other men the trouble of sowing, tilling the ground, and reaping for their sustenance, and, therefore, deserve not to be in want of that bread they sow themselves.<sup>114</sup>

It is by contrast with this base-line, whether it be low or high in absolute terms, that prestige comes to be attached to the occupations, activities, attributes and symbols that make up the rising tiers of the status hierarchy, and that certain contents of culture acquire their specific halo as 'values', while others are stigmatised. Above all, it is this contrast which maintains estrangement between strata, keeping the dominant class relatively homogeneous and impermeable, and fostering the instrumentalism that is prerequisite and result of exploitation.

Three factors appear to be of importance in connection with consumption of expropriated surplus product. First, the activities involved in controlling the labour process, which, in the earlier phases of a mode of production especially, must be performed by the owner of means of production in person, must be susceptible of some elaboration into a 'noble' life-style, expressing maximum dissociation from the 'base' life of labour. Patrimonial sovereigns have carried this furthest, with the hieratic and ceremonial extremes of sacred and despotic courts. The ruling classes of patrimonial retainers typically converted the trappings of their priestly, bureaucratic or military roles into status-attributes of privileged castes or strata. Feudal lords elevated the knight's calling into the secular culture of chivalry. Unlike these classes, who could easily differentiate the ideological and political functions that secured their exploitative positions from the economic life that maintained them, slave-owners and capitalists have had difficulty in glorifying their role. Hence they have preferred to delegate it where possible, to pursue the arts of secular ideology and civil politics. Marx cited Aristotle: 'Whenever the masters are not compelled to plague themselves with supervision, the manager assumes this honour, while the

masters attend to affairs of state or study philosophy.<sup>115</sup> The bourgeoisie, aware of the dangers of *rentier* status, has hankered after the ideal subtly satirised by Robert Musil in the figure of Arnheim – the intellectual tycoon, equally at home in industry, in high finance, in the corridors of power and the literary salon. The Protestant ethic, whatever its bearing on work and its effects on production and accumulation, was certainly also an attempted transvaluation of the life-style of the middle-class consumer, elevating simple frugality above extravagance and refinement, and converting noble largesse into bourgeois philanthropy. And as though to compensate for the ignoble character of business, capitalism supports within the bourgeoisie a huge intelligentsia of specialised professionals, and constantly promotes education as a criterion of class recruitment and class membership. In consequence, class boundaries are blurred and bourgeois ideology is criticised and discredited: disaffected intellectuals spearhead the socialist challenge.

The second factor is the need for the social organisation of consumption in appropriate units. The family household has always served as such a unit, and is perhaps the basic unit of consumption classes in all modes of production. In ruling classes households have usually been swollen by smaller or larger numbers of unproductive dependents. And household or family consumption has always been supplemented by a variety of forms of institutional consumption – in courts, armies, monasteries, colleges, clubs, corporations and so forth. This social organisation of conspicuous consumption provides the basis for a large part of what sociologists study under the rubric of stratification, and here Veblen's theory of the leisure class is still an important supplementation of Marx's perspective.

The third factor is the demand generated through exploitation for the production of the specific goods which, consumed in the households of the dominant class, will validate its members' status in terms of its cultural values. This raises the whole question of luxury production, its connections with long-distance trade, etc. More importantly, however, it structures the division of labour and location of occupations, in precapitalist modes of production especially. Thus in the patrimonial mode, 'Cities . . . form alongside these villages only at exceptionally good points for external trade; or where the head of the state and his satraps exchange their revenue (surplus product) for labour, spend it as a labour-fund.'<sup>116</sup> Marx was much impressed with Bernier's comparison of the oriental city with an overgrown military encampment, and Richard Jones' account of how all but the simplest types of manufacture developed as occupations dependent on the needs of the households and armies of sovereigns and satraps, clustered around these urbanised camps.<sup>117</sup> Feudalism, based on a class of lords dispersed over the countryside on relatively small agricultural estates, and inheriting – at least in Europe – urban centres of trade and ideological power, evolved a different but equally dualistic system. Instead of the

contrast between village and capital city, here the contrast, and conflict, between town and country was dominant. Handicrafts and commerce had to organise themselves as independent urban communes to resist the violence of the nobility, and could then profitably equip the nobility with the consumption goods their households required, in unequal exchange for agricultural produce. Under capitalism, the importance of consumer durables – above all, the motor car – as symbols of middle-class status has had repercussions of the greatest magnitude upon the persistence of capitalism; likewise the vast expansion of the tertiary sector, much of it providing services in exchange for revenue, has apparently counteracted the concentration of capital in manufacturing industry.<sup>118</sup> These remarks are intended as no more than indications of the important reactions upon a mode of production that may flow from the condition that expropriated surplus product can be consumed as befits a class of non-workers – and, under capitalism, from the fact that a second-class version of the same privilege may even be extended to the workers themselves.

#### 7. CONCLUSION: EXPROPRIATION AND CLASS EXPLOITATION

It has been argued that exploitation operates through four main phases. The first consists of the two preconditions: (1) monopoly of the means of production by a class of owners, from which (2) workers are excluded. The second consists of two sets of transactions – which we may call ‘primary transactions’ – effecting (1) appropriation, by owners of means of production, of ‘alien labour-power’ – the use of the labour of others, with whom they stand in a relationship of estrangement; (2) the provision of guaranteed security of means of subsistence, or of means to obtain them, for the workers by the owners. These transactions may have the appearance of free alienation on both sides, or of exchange, but are likely in fact to be more or less coercively brought about by the owner. Alternatively, the appropriation of labour-power may be openly expropriative. As a result of this phase, a labour-force is assembled and formally subsumed under the name of the owner, within a system of roles which subordinate the workers to the means of production. The third phase consists of (1) the actual subjection of the workers to these means in the process of production itself, by their treatment as insentient adjuncts to the material, social and intellectual productive forces mobilised on behalf of the owner; and thus also of pre-empting, for the owner, of their capacity to appropriate the products of labour; (2) the running and adapting of the productive process in such a way as to provide a surplus, over and above what is needed for the workers’ subsistence, which falls ‘naturally’ to the owner. This may be achieved in a variety of different ways, but is likely to involve further coercion, especially in precapitalist modes of production. The

overall result of the third phase is to leave the owner of means of production with a surplus product, expropriated by pre-empting the workers' capacity for appropriation. The fourth phase consists in the realisation of this surplus through two further sets of procedures, or 'concluding transactions', for (1) dividing it between insurance, reproduction, and various consumption revenues; and (2) conserving or consuming the divided and distributed surplus in ways that maintain and reproduce – perhaps on an extended scale – the original separation between owners and workers. The process thereby returns to its point of renewal. This is the general pattern of the forms of exploitation.

There remains a final apparent difficulty. The taking that becomes institutionalised in forms of exploitation is – it has been argued – the method of expropriation in which a person's capacity for alienation is pre-empted by another, and then exercised to his disadvantage. But expropriation itself was defined earlier as taking something from another in such a way that alienation is a consequence rather than a prerequisite of appropriation. Can we really, therefore, regard as a type of expropriation a transfer that only occurs after the capacity to alienate has itself been lost, and is by definition absent? By the time the transfer occurs, its source has lost the social meaning of an independent human agent who could keep or give or take anything, and has become a simple factor of production whose yield reverts to its owner. The most we seem entitled to say is that the primary transaction which placed the worker in this dependent position might, or might not, have been expropriative – that is, coercive or deceptive – and that any subsequent benefit to his employer deriving from his employment is a consequence of it. This problem is not just an artefact of terminology that I myself have introduced into the discussion. Marx himself frequently has difficulty in explaining just how it is, if the worker exchanges his labour-power at its value, that the capitalist can be said to have taken something further, 'without equivalent' in return.<sup>119</sup> It would be simple enough, of course, to have recourse to an ideological premise of natural justice or human essence, such as Cherbuliez's 'law of appropriation'; but Marx had already barred that path. The subject of the involuntary alienation that occurs within the production process, through expropriation of the surplus, must be identifiable within the model of the mode of production in question, as a possible social construct.

Marx answered this question by altering the perspective. So long as one remains at the standpoint of the individual worker, any expropriation suffered can certainly be attributed only to coercive or deceptive induction into the employer's service. This is the standpoint of the primary transactions, for these all establish separate relationships of individual dependence: only later are the workers collected into social labour-processes. But the result of the primary and productive phases combined, in the ongoing processes of social reproduction, is to divide society into two permanent classes of exploiters and exploited, and thus to convert the

original more or less fortuitous estrangement of unequals into the structured hostility of an antagonistic class system.

It is from this standpoint, so Marx claimed, that the appropriation of surplus-product, through pre-emption of the capacity to alienate and by control of production, can be regarded as the expropriation of one class by another. Having pointed out that labour-powers are bought at their value in the market, Marx continued:

To be sure, the matter looks quite different if we consider capitalist production in the uninterrupted flow of its renewal, and if, in place of the individual capitalist and the individual worker, we view them in their totality, the capitalist class and the working-class confronting each other. But in so doing we should be applying standards entirely foreign to commodity production.<sup>120</sup>

By these standards, or from this perspective,

This exchange of equivalents proceeds; but it is only the surface layer of a production which rests on the appropriation of alien labour *without exchange*, but with the *semblance of exchange*.<sup>121</sup>

In reality, as we have seen,

. . . the result of the process of production and realization is, above all, the reproduction and new production of the *relation of capital and labour itself*, of *capitalist and worker*. This social relation, production relation, appears in fact as an even more important result of the process than its material results.<sup>122</sup>

By reproducing the production relation itself, the mode of exploitation simultaneously reproduced and solidified two unequal social groupings. These classes are not defined by the sum of individual workers and of individual capitalists, as they confront each other in the production relation of wage-labour and capital; nor even by the same individuals organised into antagonistic blocs in the production process. Rather, we have to define them as the categories amongst which the annual social product is divided for purposes of consumption. For this is the standpoint of reproduction, and hence of the *persistence* of classes as a social structure, and as a social fate for the individuals of their successive cohorts. But 'consumption' must be taken in the widest sense, not as contrasted with production or investment. For it must include not just consumption by households, but also of raw materials and of means of production by capital – i.e. the 'productive consumption' of privately owned production units. This is the standpoint from which Marx broached the question of how aggregate social capital is reproduced:



If we study the annual function of social capital . . . and its results, i.e. if we study the commodity-product furnished by society during the year, then it must become apparent how the process of reproduction of the social capital takes place . . . The annual product includes those portions of the social product which replace capital, namely social reproduction, as well as those which go to the consumption-fund, those which are consumed by labourers and capitalists, hence both productive and individual consumption. It comprises also the reproduction (i.e. maintenance) of the capitalist class and the working class, and thus the reproduction of the capitalist character of the entire process of production.<sup>123</sup>

Only if the exploiting class is defined in a way that includes household consumption can it be grasped as a self-renewing section of population, and only if productive consumption is included can the definition capture the class inequality involved where rates of exploitation and replacement or accumulation are high, but capitalist revenues are not much higher than those of skilled workers. In precapitalist societies, where exploitation is aimed more at personal use and enjoyment, this consideration is naturally less important. In all cases, however, what is needed is a composite measure of class membership and class inequality that cuts across the conventional distinction between personal and corporate income in order to show the distribution in society of the power to make decisions to consume the social product – whether productively or unproductively. The finding that decisions about productive consumption were concentrated in the hands of individuals who fell into the upper strata of the population, as measured by the consumption power of households, and that unproductive corporate (i.e. extra-household) consumption favoured the same strata, would be an operational way of identifying a class society. To the extent that these inequalities could not be accounted for by general deliberate consent, nor by unequal economic and political power, and hence by coercion in the labour-market, or in circumstances bearing upon it (i.e. by primary transactions), the hypothesis is advanced that it occurs through working individuals losing some of their capacity to appropriate, and individual non-workers benefiting, in consequence, through control of the labour process.

It may be objected that this solution is beset with familiar problems concerning false consciousness. If expropriation cannot be imputed to a social agent that has lost the capacity to alienate, how can it be imputed to one that has not yet acquired it? For class, in this sense, is an analytical category to which, in reality, only a confused medley of social definitions and self-assignments would be found to correspond. At most, the collective victim of exploitation would seem to be a latent group, unless politically mobilised and propagandised with ideas like Marx's own.

This objection is not a very formidable one, however. All that is

required, for expropriation to have a victim, is that the proposed subject exists as a structural possibility in the model. Classes, as defined, exist in this way: but the individual worker who has sold his labour-power and been subjected to capital does not. His self-definition is given precisely by this role, which excludes alienation of the product; apart from this role, he has no existence at this point in the model. If in practice somebody acquires the consciousness of an exploited individual, at work, this is of no theoretical significance unless it is part of a collective movement, in which case the model has to take account of how capitalism *changes* under the influence of class conflict—a different problem. Otherwise it remains something subjective and incidental. It is either unexpressed in reality, or if expressed, probably causes the individual to be sacked anyway, and hence to vacate the role. :

Basically, the reason why the worker within the exploitative labour-process cannot be the subject and victim of exploitation is because his role in the model is already too determinate, with regard to alienation. Classes may be taken as subjects just because they are so indeterminate, and their social personality so vague and inchoate. The individual worker can therefore only become a conscious subject of exploitation as a member of his class, and as part of an antagonistic movement extending outside production, in the total social milieu. As an individual or as a member of a company's labour-force, or of a particular occupation, he may suffer and resist the coercion incidental to exploitation, and hence develop 'trade-union consciousness'. But to move to the point where he challenges the capitalist's right to appropriate surplus-product *at all*, involves the emergence of a new, totalistic class-consciousness.

The working class therefore cannot come to see itself as exploited unless the separation of household consumption from production (the 'Mallet effect') is overcome. The privatised and apolitical 'secular' voter and the wages-and-job-oriented trade-unionist whose public horizon is limited to the workshop or plant would have to find a new common identity within a politicised class community conscious of a fundamental estrangement in society, and of the need and possibility of fundamental change. In his earliest revolutionary writings, Marx cast the proletariat for the revolutionary role of 'universal class' because it was 'a class in civil society which is not a class of civil society'—fundamentally estranged from the society in which it lived, 'totally opposed to the assumptions of the German political system', a class of outsiders.<sup>124</sup> But as industry developed and European socialism grew up with it and as Marx's political judgment matured, his emphasis shifted. The revolutionary mission of the working class was now based on the tendency of the capitalist oligarchy itself to become a class of outsiders, functionless parasites whose efforts to shore up their privileged command over the economy were visibly anachronistic and damaging to the common interest. The capitalists, not the workers, were now a class estranged from society. Working-class movements could

therefore claim to represent the true heritage of their nations, as well as mankind's hopes for the future, and the workers' perceptible interests in every sphere of life would lead them to demand the vindication of both. As the representatives of the general popular interest, the working class would be backed by the irresistible force of the majority. The resulting upheaval would be no more – and no less – than 'the expropriation of a few usurpers by the mass of the people.'<sup>125</sup>