I

The Commodity

Chapter One, Volume One
of the first edition of
Capital
I. Introduction

*Das Kapital* is the central philosophical text of scientific socialism. That should be a resounding platitude, but appears to have been the least obvious quality of what is Marx’s life work even to what counts as the ‘orthodox’ tradition. In 1887, Kautsky called it ‘an essentially historical work,’ one which is a ‘new historical and economic system’. This is in a work called (ominously) *Marx’s Economic Teachings*. Two years earlier he had greeted the publication of Volume II of *Capital* with the patronizing qualification that it would be of more interest to the capitalists than to the workers. It is not surprising then that one finds Kautsky twenty years later trying to ‘complete’ these ‘economic teachings’ with a philosophy — that of Mach. Such was the philosophical terrain from which Bernstein’s Neo-Kantianism was opposed.

In sum, revisionists have never proceeded from an immanent critique of Chapter I, as if they knew that they would only lose their fingers in any attempt to tinker with this — the dynamo of Marxist methodology. But any effort to ‘complete’ Marxism (with whatever: Kant, Mach, Dewey, Set-theory) poses it as something other than and hence much less than a philosophical method of knowing the truth, and ineluctably ends up in the empirical embrace of the latest ‘new world reality’. Never was Lenin’s demand that Marxism be developed more important than today, but everything depends on making sure that advances are real, and not merely a flight forwards into the infinite spaces of academic philosophemes.

This text has not in itself been translated before, although its first few pages are almost identical to those of the second edition — the one otherwise available, translated to some extent under Engels’ supervi-
sion. The first edition has been neglected until recently, perhaps because Engels' supervision seems to have accredited the second, and because Marx wrote in the German 'Afterword' to the second edition:

The derivation of value by analysis of the equations in which each exchange-value is expressed is achieved in a more strictly scientific way; and the connexion between value-substance and the determination of value-amount by socially necessary labour-time which was only glanced at in the first edition is expressly emphasised. Chapter I.3 (Value-form) is completely re-worked: a task which was indicated as appropriate by the double presentation in the first edition.

Marx refers here to his treatment of value in an appendix to the first edition (suppressed thereafter) which he added because his friend Kugelmann convinced him that 'for most readers an additional more didactic discussion of value-forms was necessary'.

Quite apart from the importance that this text has come to have in research, a translation which keeps closer to the philosophical muscles and tendons of the argument will prove useful. To illustrate, we pick the famous passage on fetishism (which Marx added to the second edition):

A commodity is therefore a mysterious thing simply because in it the social character of men's labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour; because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour. This is the reason why the products of labour become commodities, social things whose qualities are at the same time perceptible and imperceptible by the senses.

Compare a literal translation:

The mysteriousness of the commodity-form simply consists in the fact that it mirrors the social characteristics of men's own labour (as social characteristics of the products of labour themselves) back to men as social natural-properties of these things; and consequently also mirrors the social relationship of the producers to the labour-totality as a social relationship of objects, existing outside of the producers. Through this quid pro quo the products of labour become commodities — sensually supersensual or social things.

We make no apology for declining to liquidate the granular, craggy, dialectical diction of Marx, especially since our translation is only
intended to serve a more rigorous understanding of the second edition, rather than in any sense to replace it. For that reason, we have omitted a translation of all the footnotes which Marx retains in the second edition (which contain only illustrative material), and this may call attention to the remaining notes, which Marx eliminated in order to remove as many Hegelian stumbling-blocks as possible.

Engels, in an article of 1885 on 'How not to translate Marx', observes that all linguistic resources must be tapped, since Marx's newly created German expressions require newly created English ones. (Compare 'labour-totality' in our sample: the validity of this concept is a very important philosophical question.*) He goes on to say that a technical term must always be rendered with one and the same word (e.g., 'labour-time').

We have felt justified in using hyphens in a way which may annoy the reader at first, as may our retention of the extraordinary amount of emphasis, which Marx reduced for the second edition.

We capitalize Equivalent in order to emphasize that it is a noun and technical term (for a commodity that expresses the value of another commodity), and have generally chosen to err on the side of pedantic exactitude, especially since the English-speaking world has had such difficulty in adjusting itself to the fact that the first chapter of Das Kapital is the most decisive philosophical achievement since Hegel.

This chapter from the first edition is also significant as a contribution to the dialectical understanding of labour in that it explicitates the crucial difference between concrete and abstract labour as the second edition does not. 'From what has been said it follows that a commodity does not possess two different forms of labour but one and the same labour is defined in different and even opposed ways depending on whether it is related to the use value of commodities as to its product, or to commodity value as to its material expression.' In the second edition he allows himself to write that 'all labour is, speaking physiologically, an expenditure of human labour-power', a passage which replaces the earlier, and which does not prevent one from understanding the relation between labour and value to be a causal one (rather than that value is the fetishistic expression of the structure of labour in capitalism). That Marx does not mean that abstract labour is physiological is evident from his remarks later (p.73): 'The equaliza-

* It is a question which is concealed by the unproblematically empirical category designated by the other translation 'sum total of their labour'. — A.D.
tion of the most different kinds of labour can be the result only of an abstraction from their inequalities, or of reducing them to their common denominator, viz., expenditure of human labour-power or human labour in the abstract.' But it is interesting to note (following I. Rubin) that in the French translation (1875) Marx adds: 'and only exchange brings about this reduction, opposing the products of different forms of labour with each other on the basis of equality.'
The Commodity

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The quantity of value of a commodity accordingly would remain constant if the labour-time required for its production were constant. The latter, however, changes with each change in the productive power of labour. The productive power of labour is determined by manifold conditions, among others by the average grade of competence of the workers, the level of development of science and its technological applicability, the social combination of the process of production, the scope and the efficacy of the means of production, and by natural relationships. The same quantum of labour manifests itself after propitious weather in 8 bushels of wheat, but after impropitious weather, in only 4, for example. The very same quantum of labour provides more metals in richly laden mines than in poor ones, etc. Diamonds are rare on the surface of the earth, and their discovery therefore costs on the average much labour-time. Consequently, they represent much labour in a small volume of space. Jacob doubts that gold has ever paid its complete value. This holds true even more for diamonds. According to Eschwege, by 1823 the complete yield of the eight-year old Brazilian diamond-diggings had not yet amounted to the value of the 1 1/2 year average product of the Brazilian sugar or coffee plantations. Given more richly laden diggings the same quantum of labour would be represented by more diamonds and their value would sink. If one succeeds in converting coal into diamonds with little labour, then the value of diamonds would sink beneath that of paving stones. In general: the greater the productive power of labour the smaller is the amount of labour-time required for the production of an article, and the smaller the mass of labour crystallized in it, the smaller is its value. And on the contrary, the smaller the productive power of labour, the
greater is the labour-time necessary for the production of an article, and the greater its value is. The quantity of value of a commodity varies directly as the quantum, and inversely as the productive power of the labour embodying itself in the commodity.

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

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

Originally, the commodity appeared to us as a two-sided entity, use-value and exchange-value. As we consider the matter more closely it will appear that the labour which is contained in the commodity is two-sided, also. This aspect, which I am the first to have developed in a critical way, is the starting point upon which comprehension of political economy depends.

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

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

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

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

It is a matter of indifference, in any case, to the coat whether it is worn by the tailor or one of his customers. In both cases it acts as a use-value. Just as little, is the relationship between the coat and the labour which produced it changed in and for itself by virtue of the fact that tailoring is a profession in itself — an independent member of the social division of labour. Where a need for clothing compelled him, man plied the activity of tailor for whole millenia before he became a tailor instead of a man. But the reality of coat, linen, and every element of material wealth which is not given by nature in all cases had to be mediated by a special, purposely productive activity which assimilates particular natural entities to human needs. As the former of use-values, as useful labour, labour is thereby the precondition of existence for man — independent of all social forms — and an eternal
necessity of nature for the sake of mediating the material interchange between man and nature (i.e., human life).

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

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

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

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

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

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

Therefore, just as one is abstracting, in the case of the values of coat and linen, from the difference between their use-values, just so, in the case of the labour which these values represent, is one abstracting from the difference between the useful forms, wherein labour is on the one hand tailoring-labour and on the other hand weaving. Just as the use-values coat and linen are connections of purposeful productive activities with cloth and yarn, whereas the values, coat and linen, on the other hand, are mere labour-precipitates of a similar species, just so does also the labour contained in these values count not on account of its productive relationship to cloth and yarn but only as expenditure
of human labour-power. Tailoring and weaving are formative elements of the use-values of coat and linen precisely by virtue of their different qualities; but they are only the substance of coat-value and linen-value insofar as there is an abstracting from their specific quality and both possess the same quality, the quality of human labour. Coat and linen, however, are not only values in general, but are values of definite magnitude and in accordance with our assumption the coat is worth twice as much as 10 yards of linen. What is the origin of this difference in their magnitudes of value? It is the fact that linen contains only half as much labour as the coat, so that labour power has to be expended for a period of twice the time taken for the production of the latter as for the production of the former.

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

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

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

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

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

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

We take two quanta of commodities which cost the same amount of labour-time for their production (and hence are equal magnitudes of value), and we have: 40 yards of linen are worth two coats. We observe that the value of the linen is expressed in a specific quantum of coats.
The value of a commodity is called its relative value, if it is represented in the use-value of another commodity in this fashion.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Time cannot be related to the coat as value or incarnated human labour, without being related to tailoring-labour as the immediate manifestation-form of human labour. The aspect of the use value, coat,

1 ‘The concept, which is only subjective at first, marches ahead in accordance with its own proper activity to objectify itself, without needing any external material or stuff for the purpose.’ Hegel, Logik, p. 367, Encyclopaedia I.
however, which is of interest to the linen is neither its woollen comfort, nor its buttoned-up essence nor any other useful quality which marks it out as a use-value. The coat is of service to the linen only in order to represent the linen’s value-objectivity as distinguished from its starchy use-objectivity. It could have attained the same purpose if it had expressed its value in assa foetida or cosmetics, or shoe polish. The tailoring labour, too, has value for the linen, consequently, not insofar as it is purposeful productive labour, but only insofar as it exists as determinate labour, form of realisation, manner of objectification of human labour in general. If linen expressed its value in shoe polish rather than in the coat, then polish-making would count for it as the immediate form of realization of abstract human labour instead of tailoring. So a use-value or commodity-body only becomes a form of appearance of value or an Equivalent by another commodity’s relating itself to the concrete, useful species of labour contained in it, as the immediate form of realization of abstract human labour.

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

Now since the natural form of a commodity (e.g., linen) is the exact opposite of its value-form, it has to turn another natural form — the *natural form of another commodity* — into its *commodity form*. A thing that it cannot do immediately for itself it can do immediately for another commodity, and therefore by a detour for itself. It cannot express its value in its own body or in its own use-value, but it can relate itself to another use-value or commodity-body as an immediately existent value. It can relate itself not to the concrete labour contained in itself, but doubtless to that contained in another species of commodity as a mere form of realization of abstract human labour. For that, it only needs to equate the other commodity to itself as an *Equivalent*. The use-value of a commodity only exists at all for another commodity insofar as it serves in this fashion for the form of appearance of its value. If one considers only the *quantitative relationship* in the simple, relative value-expression: $x$ commodity A = $y$ commodity B, then one finds also only the laws developed above concerning the motion of relative value, which all rest upon the fact that the amount of value of commodities is determined by the labour-time required for their production. But if one considers the value relation of both commodities in their *qualitative* aspect, then one discovers in that simple expression of value the mystery of value form, and hence, *in nuce* of money.²

Our analysis has revealed that the *relative value-expression of a commodity includes two different value forms*. The linen expresses its value and its *determinate amount of value* in the coat. It manifests its value in the *value-relation* to another commodity, and hence as *exchange-value*. On the other hand, the other commodity, the coat in which it expresses its value in a relative way, obtains precisely in that way the form of a use-value as an *equivalent* which is immediately exchangeable with it. Both forms, the *relative value-form* of the one commodity, *equivalent* form of the other, are forms of *exchange-value*. Both are actually only vectors — determinations conditioned reciproc-

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* 'In a nutshell'; that is potentially. — A.D.

² It is scarcely surprising that economists have overlooked the form-content of the relative value-expression (subjected as they are to the influence of material interests), if professional logicians before Hegel even overlooked the content of form in the paradigms of judgments and conclusions.
ally by each other — of the same relative value-expression, but divided like poles between the two commodity-extremes which have been set equal.

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

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

Although both determinations of the value-form or both modes of manifestation of the commodity-value as exchange-value are only relative, they do not both appear relative to the same degree. In the relative value of the linen (20 yards of linen = 1 coat), the exchange-value of linen is expressly manifested as its relationship to another commodity. As far as the coat is concerned, it is admittedly an Equivalent insofar as linen is related to the coat as form of appearance of its own value, and hence as something immediately exchangeable with itself (the linen). Only within this relationship is the coat an Equivalent. But it conducts itself passively. It seizes no kind of initiative. It finds itself in relationship because things relate themselves to it. The character
which is constituted for it out of its relationship with the linen thus does not appear as the result of its own relating, but as present without any additional activity of its own. In addition, the specific mode and manner in which the linen relates to the coat is exactly appropriate to the end of doing it to the coat, however modest it be and however far from being the product of a 'tailor run mad with pride'. The linen, after all, relates itself to the coat as the sensually existing materialization of human labour in abstracto and hence as present value-body. It is this only because and insofar as the linen relates itself to the coat in this specific manner. Its status as an Equivalent is (so to speak) only a reflection-determination* of linen. But the situation seems just the reverse. On the one hand, the coat does not take the trouble to relate itself to anything. On the other hand, the linen relates itself to the coat, not in order to make it into something, but because it is something quite apart from anything the linen might do. The resultant product of the linen's relating to the coat (its Equivalent-form, its determinancy as an immediately exchangeable use-value) appears to belong to the coat in a corporeal way even outside the relating to the linen, in just the same way as its property of being able to keep people warm (for example). In the first or simple form of relative value (20 yards of linen = one coat), this false seeming is not yet established, because this form expresses in an immediate way also the opposite, that the coat is an Equivalent of the linen, and that each of the two commodities only possesses this determination because and insofar as the other makes it into its own relative value-expression.³

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

Such an equation as '20 yards of linen = 1 coat' (or twenty yards of linen are worth one coat) evidently expresses the value of the commod-

* Hegelian term, including Identity, Difference, Contradiction. — A.D.

³ There is something special about such reflection-determinations. This man here is (e.g.) only King, because other men behave towards him like subjects. They believe, however, that they are subjects because he is King.
ity in only a very limited and one-sided way. If I compare the linen, for example, with other commodities instead of coats, then I also obtain other relative value-expressions, other equations (like 20 yards of linen = u coffee; 20 yards of linen = v tea, etc.). The linen has just as many different relative value-expressions as there exist commodities different from it, and the number of its relative value-expressions constantly increases with the number of kinds of commodities which newly enter into existence.

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

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

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

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

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

In the expression ‘20 yards of linen = 1 coat’, the coat counted as the form of appearance of the work objectified in the linen. In that way the labour contained in the linen was equated to the labour contained in the coat, and was thereby determined as comparable human labour. This determination did not, however, reveal itself expressly. At the level of immediacy, the first form equates the labour contained in the linen only to the labour of tailoring. Otherwise with the second form. In the indefinite, constantly extendable series of its relative value-expressions, the linen relates itself to all possible commodity-bodies as mere form of appearance of the labour which is contained in itself. Consequently it is at this point that the linen-value is for the first time really manifested as value, i.e., or crystal of human labour in general.

The second form consists of a sum of the familiar equations of the first form. Each of these equations (like ‘20 yards of linen = 1 coat’, ) contains also the reciprocal ‘1 coat = 20 yards of linen’, in which case the coat manifests its value in the linen and precisely thereby manifests the linen as an Equivalent. Now, since this holds of each of the innumerable relative value-expressions of linen, we obtain:

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

\[
\begin{align*}
1 \text{ coat} & = 20 \text{ yards of linen} \\
1 \text{ coffee} & = \text{ " } \text{ " } \text{ " } \text{ " } \\
1 \text{ tea} & = \text{ " } \text{ " } \text{ " } \text{ " } \\
1 \text{ iron} & = \text{ " } \text{ " } \text{ " } \text{ " } \\
1 \text{ wheat} & = \text{ " } \text{ " } \text{ " } \text{ " } \\
\text{etc.} & = \text{ " } \text{ " } \text{ " } \text{ " } \\
\end{align*}
\]

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

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

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

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

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

\[
\begin{align*}
1 \text{ coat} & = 20 \text{ yards of linen} \\
\text{u coffee} & = "" "" "" "" \\
\text{v tea} & = "" "" "" "" \\
\text{etc}
\end{align*}
\]

In actuality, it differs thus only in the fact that the linen has continued its development from a singular to a universal Equivalent. Thus if in the simple relative expression of value it is not that commodity which expresses its amount of value, but rather that commodity in which the amount of value is expressed which is the one that obtains the form of immediate exchangeability (equivalent form: hence, immediately social form), the same thing holds true for the universal relative value expression. But in the simple relative form of value this distinction is merely formal and evanescent. If the coat expresses its value in a relative way (that is, in linen) in the equation 'One coat = 20 yards of linen', and the linen acquires thereby the form of Equivalent, then the very same equation includes immediately the reciprocity '20 yards of linen = one coat', in which it is the coat that acquires the form of Equivalent and the value of the linen is expressed in a relative way. This constant and correlative development of the value-form of both commodities as relative value and as Equivalent no longer takes place. If the universal relative value-form, 'One coat = 20 yards of linen', (where the linen is universal Equivalent) is turned around into '20 yards of linen = one coat', the coat does not thereby become universal Equivalent for all other commodities, but only a particular Equivalent of the linen. The relative value-form of the coat is only universal because it is the relative value-form of all other commodities at the same time. What holds true of the coat, holds true of coffee, etc. It follows, therefore, that the universal relative value-form of commodities excludes these very commodities from the universal form of Equivalent. On the other hand, a commodity like linen is excluded from the universal relative value-form as soon as it possesses the
universal form of Equivalent. The universal relative value form of linen, unified with the other commodities, would be ‘20 yards of linen = 20 yards of linen’. But this is a tautology which does not express the amount of value of this commodity, which is situated in a universal form of Equivalent — and thereby in perpetually exchangeable form. Rather, it is the developed relative value-form (20 yards of linen = one coat or u coffee or = v tea or = etc.) that now becomes the specific relative value-expression of the universal Equivalent.

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

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

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

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

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

If they did not, then these use-values would not become commodities for one another. On the other hand, this differing useful quality does not yet make products into commodities. If a peasant family produces coat, linen and wheat for its own consumption, then these things confront the family as differing products of their family labour, but do not confront one another reciprocally as commodities. If the commodity were immediately social (i.e., common) labour, then the products would acquire the immediately social character of a common product for its producers, but not the character of commodities for one another. Nevertheless, we do not have far to seek, in this case, for that in which the social form of the private labours consists, which are contained in the commodities and are independent of one another. It already yielded itself out of the analysis of the commodity. The commodities’ social form is their relationship to one
another as equal labour; hence — since the equality of toto coelo [utterly] different labours can only consist in an abstraction from their inequality — their relationship to one another as human labour in general: expenditures of human labour-power, which is what all human labours — whatever their content and their mode of operation — actually are. In each social form of labour, the labours of different individuals are related to one another as human labours too, but in this case this relating itself counts as the specifically social form of the labours. Now none of these private labours in its natural form possesses this specifically social form of abstract human labour, just as little as the commodity in its natural form possesses the social form of mere coagulation of labour, or value. However, through the fact that the natural form of a commodity (linen, in this case) becomes a universal Equivalent-form because all other commodities relate themselves to this natural form as the appearance-form of their own value, hence linen-weaving also turns into a universal form of realization of abstract human labour or into labour of immediately social form. The standard of 'socialness' must be borrowed from the nature of those relationships which are proper to each mode of production, and not from conceptions which are foreign to it. Just as we demonstrated earlier that the commodity naturally excludes the immediate form of universal exchange-ability and that the universal Equivalent-form consequently can only develop in a contradictory way, so the same thing holds for the private labours lurking in the commodities. Since they are not-immediately social labour, in the first place the social form is a form which differs from the natural forms of the real, useful labours and is foreign to them and abstract; and in the second place, all kinds of private labour obtain their social character only in a contradictory way, by all being equated to one exclusive kind of private labour (linen-weaving, in this case). This latter thereby becomes the immediate and universal form of appearance of abstract human labour and thereby labour in immediately social form. It manifests itself consequently also in a product which is socially valid and universally exchangeable.

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

From our present standpoint the universal Equivalent has not yet by any means ossified, however. What was the way in which linen was metamorphosed into the universal Equivalent, actually? By the fact that it displayed its value, first in one single commodity (form I), then in all other commodities in order in a relative way (form II), and thereby all other commodities reflexively displayed their values in it in a relative way (form III). The simple relative value-expression was the seed out of which the universal Equivalent-form of linen developed. It changes its role within this development. It begins by displaying its amount of value in one other commodity and ends by serving as material for the value-expression of all other commodities. What holds for linen holds for every commodity. In its developed relative value-expression (form II) — which only consists of its many, simple value-expressions — the linen does not yet figure as universal Equivalent. Rather, every other commodity-body forms in this case linen's Equivalent, is thereby immediately exchangeable with it and is therefore able to change places with it.

So we obtain finally:
Form IV: 20 yards of linen = one coat or = u coffee or = v tea or = x iron or = y wheat or = etc.
One coat = 20 yards of linen or = u coffee or = v tea or = x iron or = y wheat or = etc.
u coffee = 20 yards of linen or = one coat or v tea or x iron or y wheat or v tea or = etc.
v tea = etc.

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

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

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

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

Let us take Robinson Crusoe on his island. Modest as he naturally is, nevertheless he has various needs to satisfy and must therefore perform useful labours of various sorts, make tools, build furniture, tame llamas, fish, hunt etc. We do not refer at this time to praying and other such activities, since our Robinson derives enjoyment from them and regards such activity as recreation. Despite the variety of his productive functions, he knows that they are only various forms of activity of one and the same Robinson, and thus are only different modes of human labour. Necessity itself compels him to divide his time exactly between his various functions. Whether the one takes more space and the other takes less in the totality of his activity depends upon the greater or lesser difficulty which must be overcome for the attainment of the intended useful effect. Experience teaches him that much, and our Robinson who saved watch, diary, ink and pen from the shipwreck begins to keep a set of books about himself like a good Englishman. His inventory contains a list of the objects of use which he possesses, of the various operations which are required for their production, and finally of the labour-time which particular quanta of these various products cost him on the average. All relationships between Robinson and the things which form his self-made wealth are here so simple and transparent that even Mr. Wirth* can understand them without particular mental exertion. And nevertheless all essential determinations of value are contained therein.

If we now put an organization of free men in Robinson's place, who work with common means of production and expend their many individual labour-powers consciously as one social labour-power, all the determinations of Robinson's labour are repeated: but in a social rather than an individual way. Nevertheless, an essential difference emerges. All Robinson's products were his exclusively personal product, and were thereby immediately objects of use for him. The total product of the organization is a social product. One part of this

* Hack economist of Marx's day.
product serves again as means of production. It remains social. But another part is used up by the members of the organization as necessities. This part must be divided up among them. The manner of this division will change with the particular manner of the social production-organism itself and the comparable historical level of development of the producers. Only for the sake of the parallel with commodity-production do we presuppose that each producer's share of necessities of life is determined by his labour-time. In such a case, the labour-time would play a dual role. Its socially planned distribution controls the correct proportion of the various labour-functions to the various needs. On the other hand, the labour-time serves at the same time as the measure of the individual share of the producer in the common labour, and thereby also in the part of the common product which can be used up by individuals. The social relationships of men to their labour and their products of labour remained transparently simple in this case, in production as well as in distribution.

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

If men relate their products to one another as values insofar as these objects count as merely objectified husks of homogeneous human labour, there lies at the same time in that relationship the reverse, that their various labours only count as homogeneous human labour when under objectified husk. They relate their various labours to one another as human labour by relating their products to one another as values. The personal relationship is concealed by the objectified form. So just what a value is does not stand written on its forehead. In order to relate their products to one another as commodities, men are compelled to equate their various labours to abstract human labour. They do not know it, but they do it, by reducing the material thing to the abstraction, value. This is a primordial and hence unconsciously instinctive operation of their brain, which necessarily grows out of the particular manner of their material production and the relationships into which this production sets them. First their relationship exists in a practical mode. Second, however, their relationship exists as relationship for them. The way in which it exists for them or is reflected in their brain arises from the very nature of the relationship. Later, they attempt to get behind the mystery of their own social product by the aid of science, for the determination of a thing as value is their product, just as much as speech. Now as far as concerns the amount of value, we note that the private labours which are plied independently of one another (but
because they are members of the primordial division of labour are dependent upon one another) on all sides are constantly reduced to their socially proportional measure by the fact that in the accidental and perpetually shifting exchange relationships of their products the labour-time which is socially necessary for their production forcibly obtrudes itself as a regulating natural-law, just as the law of gravity does, for example, when the house falls down on one's head. The determination of the amount of value by the labour-time is consequently the mystery lurking under the apparent motions of the relative commodity-values. The producers' own social movement possesses for them the form of a motion of objects under the control of which the producers lie instead of controlling the motion. As far as concerns the value-form finally, we note that it is just exactly this form which objectively veils the social relationships of private workers and consequently the social determinations of private labours, instead of laying them bare. If I say that coat, boots, etc. relate themselves to linen as universal materialization of abstract human labour, the insanity in such a way of putting things leaps into view. But if the producers of coat, boots, etc. relate these commodities to linen as universal Equivalent, then the social relatedness of their private labours appears to them in exactly this insane form.

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

The private producers only enter into social contact for the first time through their private products: objects. The social relationships of their labours are and appear consequently not as immediately social relationships of persons in their labours, but as objectified relationships of persons, or social relationships of objects. The first and most universal manifestation of the object as a social thing, however, is the metamorphosis of the product of labour into a commodity. The mysticism of the commodity arises, therefore, from the fact that the social determinations of the private labours of the private producers appear to them as social natural determinations of products of labour; from the fact, that is, that the social relationships of production of persons appear as social relationships of objects to one another and to the persons involved. The relationships of the private workers to the totality of social labour objectify themselves over against them and exist, consequently, for them in the forms of objects. To a society of commodity
producers whose universally social relationship of production consists in their behaving toward their products as commodities (hence as values) and their relating their private labours to one another in this objective form as equal human labour, it is Christianity that is the most appropriate form of religion, with its cult of the abstract man — especially in its bourgeois development, Protestantism, Deism, etc. In the ancient Asian, antique, etc. modes of production, the metamorphosis of the product into a commodity and accordingly the existence of man as commodity-producer plays a subordinate role, which, however, becomes greater the more the communities enter upon the stage of their decline. Genuine commercial people only exist in the interstices of the ancient world, like the gods of Epicurus or like the Jews in the pores of Polish society. Those ancient social organisms of production are extraordinarily much more simple and transparent than the bourgeois organism, but they are based either on the immaturity of the individual man who has not yet torn himself free of the umbilicus of the natural species-connection with other men or are based upon immediate master and slave relationships. They are conditioned by a low level of development of the productive powers of labour by correspondingly restricted relationships of men within their material process of the constitution of life, and consequently to one another and to nature. This actual restrictedness reflects itself in an idealist mode in the ancient natural and popular religions. The religious reflection of the real world can only disappear as soon as the relationships of practical work-a-day life represent for men daily transparently reasonable relationships to one another and to nature. But relationships can only represent themselves as what they are. The form of the social process of life (i.e., of the material process of production) will only cast off its mystic veil of fog once it stands as a product of freely socialized men under their conscious, planned control. For that to happen, however, a material basis of society is demanded or a row of material conditions of existence which are themselves again the primordial product of a long and painful history of development.

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

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

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

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

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