EDITED BY MICHELE DILLON

CONCISE READER IN SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

THEORISTS, CONCEPTS, AND CURRENT APPLICATIONS

WILEY Blackwell

Concise Reader in Sociological Theory

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Theorists, Concepts, and Current Applications

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INTRODUCTION

Sociological theory offers a rich conceptual tool-kit with which to think about and analyze our contemporary society. As we reflect upon what it means to live and to understand others in today's complex world, the insights of sociological theorists provide us with concepts that greatly illuminate the array of social and institutional processes, group dynamics, and cultural motivations that drive the patterns of persistence and change variously evident across local, national, and global contexts. Sociology is a comparatively young discipline. It owes its origins to the principles and values established by eighteenth-century Enlightenment philosophers, namely the core assumptions that human reason is the source of knowledge, and though of different orders, the source of moral truth and of scientific truth; and that, by virtue of being endowed with human reason, all people are created equal and thus should be free to govern themselves in all matters, including political governance – thus motivating the democratic revolutions of the eighteenth century in America (1776) and in France (1789) and leading to the decline of monarchies and the establishment instead of democratic societies.

It was the French philosopher Auguste Comte (1798–1857) who coined the term sociology in 1839. He was influenced by the Enlightenment emphasis on scientific principles and believed that a science of the social world was necessary to discover and illuminate based on rigorous empirical observation how society works, that is to identify, as he saw it, a "social physics" parallel to the laws of physics and other natural sciences, and to advance social progress as a result of the data yielded from the scientific study of society. In his view, because sociology could and should study all aspects of social life, he argued that sociology would be *the* science of humanity, *the* science of society, and would outline "the most systematic theory of the human order"

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(Comte 1891/1973: 1). Harriet Martineau (1802–76), the English feminist and writer, commonly regarded as the first woman sociologist, translated Comte's writings into English in 1855 (Hoecker-Drysdale 1992). Additionally, in her own influential writing she emphasized both the breadth of topics that sociologists can/should study as well as the importance of studying them with rigor and objectivity. In her well-known book *How to Observe Morals and Manners* (1838), morals and manners referencing the substantive, wide-ranging content of sociology (and its encompassing of social class, religion, health, suicide, pop culture, crime, and the arts, among other topics), Martineau also argued that because social life is human-centered it is different to the natural world. Unlike atoms, for example, humans have emotions. Hence, Martineau pointed to the need for sociologists as scientists to develop the empathy necessary to the observation and understanding of the human condition and to how it manifests in the course of their inquiry. She wrote:

> The observer must have sympathy; and his sympathy must be untrammeled and unreserved. If a traveler be a geological inquirer he may have a heart as hard as the rocks he shivers, and yet succeed in his immediate objects . . . if he be a statistical investigator he may be as abstract as a column of figures, and yet learn what he wants to know: but an observer of morals and manners will be liable to deception at every turn, if he does not find his way to hearts and minds. (Martineau 1838: 52)

As sociology became further established in the mid-to-late nineteenth century it did so amid major societal changes, propelled by industrial capitalism, factory production, the expansion of manufacturing and of railroads, increased urbanization, mass immigration of Irish, Italian, Swedish, German, Polish, and other European individuals and families to the US, the bolstering of democratic institutions and procedures (e.g. voting rights), nation-building, and mass-circulating newspapers. Living in a time swirling with change, sociology's founders were thus well situated to observe and to recognize how large-scale, macro societal forces take hold, interpenetrate, and structure institutional processes, community, and the organization of everyday life, as well as to ponder the relationship of the individual to society.

This *Reader* presents a selection of key excerpts from major writings in sociological theory, the classics from the foundations of the discipline to contemporary approaches. As with all disciplines, the classics are so defined not merely because they originated in a different time, but precisely because they contain the essential points or concepts that have endured through a long swath of time and have proven resilient in their explanatory relevance of the dynamic complexity of society even, or especially, amid its many ongoing patterns of change. Sociology, as a social science, is an empirical discipline; this means that sociologists are interested in and committed to knowing the truth about reality – how things actually are and why they are as they are, rather than how ideally they ought to be. Consequently, sociologists embrace scientific method as a way of studying the social world and accept the objective facticity of (properly gathered) data. Sociologists use both qualitative (e.g. ethnographic description, interview and blog transcripts, historical documents) and quantitative (e.g. surveys, census data)

data-gathering methods, and in using data they tend to lean either toward investigating the relationship between a number of macro-level variables (e.g. education, crime, income inequality, gender) or focusing on how individuals in a particular micro-context and small groups or communities carve meaning into and make sense of their lives. Regardless of the research method(s) chosen (a decision made based on the specific research question motivating the sociologist's empirical study), sociologists do not and cannot let the resulting data stand on their own. Data always need to be interpreted. And this is why sociological theory is so important. Theory provides the ideas or concepts that sensitize sociologists about what to think about – what questions to ask about the social world and how it is structured and with what consequences – and theory is equally fundamental in helping sociologists make sense of what they find in their actual research, both of what they might have (empirically or theoretically) expected to find but also of the unexpected. As such, sociological theory is the vocabulary sociologists use to anchor and interpret empirical data about any aspect of society, and to drive the ongoing, back-and-forth conversation between theory and data. This, necessarily, given the dynamic nature of social life, is always an energetic and dynamic dialogue. Sociological theory does not exist for the sake of theory, but for the sake of sociological understanding and explanation of the multilayered empirical reality in any given sociohistorical context.

This *Reader* is organized into five sections. Each section includes excerpts from a core set of theorists, and I provide a short commentary or introduction prior to each specific theorist or to a cluster of theorists in the given section. The *Reader* begins with a lengthy first section with excerpts from sociology's classical theorists: **Karl Marx** (chapter 1), **Emile Durkheim** (chapter 2), and **Max Weber** (chapter 3). These three dominant theorists largely comprise the foundational canon of sociology; their respective conceptual contributions have well withstood the test of time despite, from the hindsight of our contemporary experience, some notable silences in their writings with respect to, for example, sexuality and a limited discussion of the significance of gender and race.

The classical tradition was largely introduced to English-speaking audiences by the towering American social theorist, Talcott Parsons. The excerpts in section II comprise an amalgam representing Parsons's theorizing, generally referred to as *structural functionalism*, and different theoretical perspectives that it, in turn, gave rise to based on specific critiques of some of Parsons's emphases. I briefly introduce Parsons's ideas (in chapter 4) but because much of his writing is quite dense I do not include an excerpt from him but instead an excerpt from his student and renowned fellow-theorist **Robert K. Merton**, exemplifying the structural functionalist perspective. Parsons was famously concerned with how values consensus translated into the social roles and social institutions functional to maintain social order. Countering this focus, conflict theory, exemplified by **Ralf Dahrendorf**, highlighted the normalcy and functionality of conflict (as opposed to consensus) in society. From a different context, critiquing Parsons's focus on American society as the paradigm of modernization, neo-Marxist dependency theorists including **Fernando Henrique Cardoso** and **Enzo Faletto** highlighted the conflicting power interests between the West and Latin

America, and within Latin American countries dependent on the US (chapter 5). Still other theorists pushed back against Parsons's main focus on macro structures and what they saw as his diminishment of the individual (even though Parsons affirmed the relevance of the individual as a motivated social actor). With a micro focus on individuals and small groups (chapter 6), this line of critique was spearheaded by another student of Parsons, George Homans. Contrary to Parsons, he emphasized the core centrality of the individual and of individual interpersonal interaction or exchange as the foundational basis of all institutional and societal life. Homans's student, **Peter M. Blau**, took a broader, more sociological view than Homans and elaborated on how power and status in particular interpersonal contexts are conveyed through, and result from, social exchange relations. Another theorist, **James S. Coleman**, adopted Parsons's focus on shared societal values to focus on the functionality of trust to the accumulation of human and social capital in interpersonal and small group settings. Decades later, writing with a focus on a different set of questions – sexuality and gender in contemporary American society – **Paula England** elaborates on the relation between personal characteristics (skills/human capital, values) and social identity or social position to show the dynamic interaction between individuals' personal characteristics and social position in accounting for variation in individual decision-making outcomes.

Section III includes what are generally seen as the three most prominent micro-level perspectives in sociological theory: (1) symbolic interactionism which, building on **George H. Mead**'s theorizing on the self and elaborated by **Erving Goffman**, focuses on the micro-dynamics of face-to-face or interpersonal interaction (chapter 7); (2) phenomenology which establishes credibility for the relevance of the individual's subjective experiences of the social world and for the individual's intra-subjective reality, a perspective outlined by Alfred Schutz and elaborated by **Peter L. Berger** and **Thomas Luckmann** in their widely influential book, *The Social Construction of Reality* (chapter 8); and (3) ethnomethodology which focuses on how individuals actually do the work of being members of a society in particular localized settings; its framing is indebted to **Harold Garfinkel** and subsequently further applied to gender issues by **Sarah Fenstermaker** and **Candace West** (chapter 9). It is important to note here, however, that though largely micro in their focus, each of these theories (and especially phenomenology) also variously point to the significance of macro structures, the dynamic interrelation of macro and micro social processes, and to the fact that the self is always necessarily in conversation with society, and is so at once both at a micro- and macro-level.

Section IV returns us to the influence of European theorists on the development of sociology, especially as the discipline both emerged from the influence of Parsons in the late 1970s, and also attempted to take stock of the social changes of the post-World War II era, an era that for all of its progress – increased affluence, the expansion of university education, the growth of the middle classes, and the expansion of mass media – did not eliminate social inequality. This section includes excerpts from theorists associated with the Frankfurt School (chapter 10), most notably **Max Horkheimer** and **Theodor W. Adorno** who wrote extensively and in a withering

manner critiquing the strategic manipulation and manipulating effects of politics and consumer culture by economic interests. The Frankfurt School's second generation, and undoubtedly the most renowned social theorist alive today, **Jürgen Habermas**, outlines a way forward from the contemporary debasement of reason, one that returns attention to the possibility of using reason to discuss societal problems and to craft solutions that serve the common good. This section also includes excerpts from the extensive work of **Pierre Bourdieu** (chapter 11) who has been highly impactful in getting sociologists to think differently and to conduct innovative research (e.g. Lareau 1987) about how social inequality is reproduced, especially through the informal cultures of school and in the ordinary everyday habits and tastes prevalent in family life. **Michel Foucault** is perhaps the most intellectually radical of all social theorists (chapter 12). His originality is especially seen in his construal of biopower and how he frames and analyzes the birth of sexuality and of other body-controlling structures (clinics, prisons). Widely read beyond sociology, his analysis of the fluidity of sexuality and power underpins much of queer theory, elaborated for sociologists by **Steven Seidman** (chapter 12).

The fifth and final section continues the emancipatory spirit of the post-1970s critique. This vibrant body of work includes (in chapter 13) selections from the early feminist theorist **Charlotte Perkins Gilman,** the ground-breaking focus by **Arlie Hochschild** on emotion work and its gendered structure, and leading contemporary feminist theorist **Dorothy E. Smith** articulating the necessity of standpoints that seek to understand from within the experiences of outsiders (e.g. women, members of minority racial and ethnic groups, LGBTQ+). Additionally, **Patricia Hill Collins** gives sustained attention to a Black women's standpoint as well as the complex intersectionality of individuals' identities and experiences, and to what this requires of scholars who seek to study intersectionality. Important here also is the construal and reassessment of hegemonic and nonhegemonic masculinities by **R.W. Connell** and **James W. Messerschmidt**.

In a parallel vein, postcolonial theories (chapter 14) draw attention to the structured dehumanization of racial and ethnic outsiders, and to the enduring legacies of slavery and colonial domination on the delegitimation of postcolonial identities and cultures. The pioneering Black sociologist **W.E. Burghardt Du Bois** was the first to forcefully articulate the bifurcating effect of slavery on the consciousness and identity of enslaved people and its legacy on postslavery generations of Black people. **Edward W. Said** focuses on the West's construal of the (inferior) Otherness of the Orient, while **Frantz Fanon** evocatively conveys the everyday reality and experience of being a Black man in a racist society. **Stuart Hall** underscores the plurality and diversity of postcolonial histories, cultures, and identities and offers an emancipatory vision of cultural identity as an ongoing project that can dynamically integrate past and present into a new authentic synthesis. Contemporary scholars also increasingly point to the colonial and Northern/Western biases in what is regarded as legitimate knowledge, including biases in sociological knowledge, as elaborated by **Raewyn Connell** and colleagues. Others, such as **Alondra Nelson**, draw out the somewhat unexpected progressive social consequences of DNA testing and the use of genetic data by universities engaged in initiatives to make reparations to the descendants of freed slaves.

The final chapter (chapter 15) features excerpts highlighting what is distinctive about global society, our contemporary moment of late modernity, characterized by an array of transnational actors and processes. **Zygmunt Bauman** highlights what he sees as the diminishing role of the nation state and of its protective function toward its citizens and their well-being. **Anthony Giddens** discusses the disembeddedness of time and space and its consequences for individual selves and social processes. **Ulrich Beck** elaborates on the globalization of risk society and highlights its encompassing nature. Additionally, he and **Edgar Grande** highlight the variations in modernity and suggest the need for a cosmopolitanism that would more fully recognize the mutuality of all peoples and societies across the world. Focusing primarily on the post-secular West, and the political and cultural divisions between moderate religious and secular impulses, **Jürgen Habermas** articulates how we might go about crafting more respectful and enriching discourses with those whose beliefs, ideas and experiences are different to ours.

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PART I

CLASSICAL THEORISTS

CHAPTER ONE

KARL MARX

CHAPTER MENU

Karl Marx who was born in Germany in 1818 and died in London, England, in 1883, remains the foremost theorist in explaining the deep structural inequalities within capitalism. Despite the rapid pace of ongoing social change today – just think of the use and impact of the iPhone alone – and the many transformative changes in society since Marx's lifetime, which was the epoch of expanding industrialization, factory production, and urbanization – his understanding of how capitalism works, and why it expands and endures, exposes the economic, political, and cultural logics that enable capitalism to thrive despite the many personal and societal ills it simultaneously causes. In the popular imagination – among those who have not studied Marx – Marx is frequently thought of as someone who is opposed to work and for this reason postulated *The Communist Manifesto* (not included) as a vision of a world in which work would not be necessary. This, however, is a gross mischaracterization and misunderstanding of Marx and his theorizing. Yes, Marx envisioned the revolutionary downfall of capitalism as part of a long historical process and its replacement with a society built

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on a utopian equality in which, with each person working or contributing based on their particular skills and talents, the individual and collective needs of the community would be satisfied. Clearly this vision has not been realized, and in fact capitalism has grown exponentially such that today we live in a truly global capitalist society, with capitalist processes and consequences apparent in every country in the world (including those that are nominally communist, such as Cuba and North Korea). However, the explanatory power of much of Marx's theorizing (notwithstanding its frequent polemical tone and some erroneous assumptions and predictions) is such that it sharply illuminates why and how capitalism has so successfully endured.

It's not that Marx was opposed to work or to labor. Rather, what he critiqued was the empirical fact that across history – from slavery through feudal times and in capitalist society – work and inequality were two sides of the same coin. He emphasizes a materialist conception of history wherein the way in which wealth is produced and distributed is based on a system of unequal social classes (Engels1878/1978: 700–1). Workers – the producers or makers of things or of ideas – do not get to fully own or fully enjoy the fruits of their labor. Rather, their creative work and its products are extracted from them by others for their own advancement. The ancient slave-master, the feudal lord, and the capitalist, though occupying quite distinct positions in historical formation, share in common the fact that their material and social well-being relies on the labor of others. Focusing on capitalism in particular, Marx, along with his frequent coauthor Friedrich Engels (1820–95), drew attention to and analyzed the inherent inequality structured into the relation between capitalists or the bourgeois class and wage-workers or the proletariat, and how such inequality is structured into and is sustained within capitalism. Moreover, in Marx's analysis, the economic logic of capitalism (anchored in the capitalist motive to make profit and accumulate economic capital), extends beyond the purely economic sector and economic relationships to underlie and motivate all social, political, and cultural activity. The excerpts I include here illuminate the lived material processes involved in the production and maintenance of capitalist inequalities, and also convey a far more searing analysis of capitalism – and of how it is talked about and understood – than is typically found in the discourse of economists or indeed in the everyday conversations of ordinary people. Thus Marx compels us to critique the principles, processes, and vocabulary of our everyday existence in what is today a global capitalist society.

For example, wages for Marx (see excerpt *1a Wage Labour and Capital*) are not merely a worker's take-home pay or salary determined by a formula that pays attention to a worker's skills and education, the cost of living, and the scarcity of particular kinds of workers. Rather, as he elaborates, wages are a function of the exploitation of workers by the owners of capital (whether corporations or landowners) and result from the system of commodity production that is distinctive to capitalism and which in essence requires that workers, too, be considered as, and used and exploited, in ways similar to other commodities. As Marx also elaborates, profit, that motivating engine of capital accumulation (and of capitalist greed) cannot be seen simply as the reward to capitalists for their entrepreneurialism and hard work. To the contrary, profit for Marx is only possible because the capital and investments required to maintain the capitalist production system are inherently tied to the work produced by workers on a daily basis and whose wages (whether they are relatively low or impressively high) are always going to be less

than the actual amount of products or value they produce for their employers (whether factory owners or the owners of a sports team franchise or a hospital). The difference between the cost of maintaining a worker (the costs of wages, raw materials, infrastructure, etc.) and the value the worker produces is the surplus the employer receives and takes as profit. And this profit is assured by the structured organization of the production process (which includes the specialized division of labor) and the fact that profit can never be sacrificed for the betterment of workers. Moreover, it is the whole class of workers which is exploited and alienated within capitalism; a worker is free to leave any given employer and go work for another; but is never free to not work – because in capitalism, workers are reliant on the class of employers for the wages (the livelihood) that allows them to live. In capitalist society, if a worker can't earn a wage (a wage that is invariably less than capitalist profit), they can't have much of a life; hence for Marx, the relationship between workers and capitalists/employers is inherently antagonistic and this is necessarily and objectively the case owing to the structural inequality built into the organization and workings of capitalism, no matter how benign the employer and how subjectively happy or fulfilled the worker.

Marx elaborates on the objective alienation or estrangement of the worker (see excerpt *1b Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*) and shows how this alienation inheres in the capitalist production process. Importantly, too, alienation results in private property being appropriated by the capitalists as rightfully theirs (though it is the product of alienated labor) and used by them as an object (such as money) in furthering their own ends. Therefore, while humans have, as Marx notes, a higher consciousness than animals and a great capacity for much creativity (see excerpt *1c The German Ideology*), the capitalist production process diminishes them of their creativity and reduces them (as commodities) to cogs in the profit–production process.

Marx's insights about the labor process – what's entailed in the actual production and commodification of work – extend beyond work/labor to the whole lifeworld of the worker (and of the capitalist). A critical and enduring insight of Marx is that people's being, their everyday material existence, determines what they think about and how they think about or evaluate the things they think about (see excerpt *1c The German Ideology*). For Marx, ideas do not come from nowhere or from a mind abstracted from material existence. Ideas, rather, emerge from individuals' lived everyday experiences. The economic or material activity of individuals and the actual circumstances (of structured inequality and objective alienation) in which they do these activities determine and circumscribe their whole consciousness and, by extension, their personal relationships, social lives, and political ideas. Marx notes that people have a certain freedom to make or to remake their lives but they must necessarily do so in circumstances which are not of their own choosing. As he states: "Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances…transmitted from the past"; *Eighteenth Brumaire*, p. 103; excerpt not included). As Marx conveys, individuals and social and political protest movements must always operate within the actual material circumstances they have inherited, and in a capitalist society, these circumstances are always inherently unequal and determined by the ruling capitalist class. Hence, for Marx, ideology, i.e. the dominating or ruling ideas in society – everyday ideas about the nature of capitalism, hard work, money,

consumerism, the law, politics, relationships, etc. – is derived from and controlled by the dominance of the standpoint of the capitalist class, a standpoint which marginalizes the objective human and social interests of the workers (who are invariably exploited by capitalism) even as the ruling class (capitalists) insists that capitalism advances not only the interest of capital (e.g. profit) but simultaneously the interests of workers.

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1A Karl Marx from *Wage Labour and Capital*

Original publication details: Karl Marx, from *Wage Labour and Capital* (1891/1978). Lawrence & Wishart, 2010, pp. 17–18, 19–21, 27–29, 29–30, 41. Reproduced with permission of Lawrence & Wishart via PLS Clear.

What are wages? How are they determined?

If workers were asked: "What are your wages?" one would reply: "I get a franc[1] a day from my bourgeois"; another, "I get two francs," and so on. According to the different trades to which they belong, they would mention different sums of money which they receive from their respective bourgeios for a particular labour time[2] or for the performance of a particular piece of work, for example, weaving a yard of linen or type-setting a printed sheet. In spite of the variety of their statements, they would all agree on one point: wages are the sum of money paid by the bourgeois[3] for a particular labour time or for a particular output of labour.

The bourgeois,[4] therefore, *buys* their labour with money. They *sell* him their labour for money.[5] For the same sum with which the bourgeois has bought their labour,[6] for example, two francs, he could have bought two pounds of sugar or a definite amount of any other commodity. The two francs, with which he bought two pounds of sugar, are the *price* of the two pounds of sugar. The two francs, with which he bought twelve hours' labour,[7] are the price of twelve hours' labour. Labour,[8] therefore, is a commodity, neither more nor less than sugar. The former is measured by the clock, the latter by the scales.

[…]

Wages are, therefore, not the worker's share in the commodity produced by him. Wages are the part of already existing commodities with which the capitalist buys a definite amount of productive labour as such.[9]

Labour[10] is, therefore, a commodity which its possessor, the wage-worker, sells to capital. Why does he sell it? In order to live.

But,[11] labour is the worker's own life-activity, the manifestation of his own life. And this *life-activity* he sells to another person in order to secure the necessary *means of*

subsistence. Thus his life-activity is for him only a means to enable him to exist. He works in order to live. He does not even reckon labour as part of his life, it is rather a sacrifice of his life. It is a commodity which he has made over to another. Hence, also, the product of his activity is not the object of his activity. What he produces for himself is not the silk that he weaves, not the gold that he draws from the mine, not the palace that he builds. What he produces for himself is *wages*, and silk, gold, palace resolve themselves for him into a definite quantity of the means of subsistence, perhaps into a cotton jacket, some copper coins and a lodging in a cellar. And the worker, who for twelve hours weaves, spins, drills, turns, builds, shovels, breaks stones, carries loads, etc. – does he consider this twelve hours' weaving, spinning, drilling, turning, building, shovelling, stone-breaking as a manifestation of his life, as life? On the contrary, life begins for him where this activity ceases, at table, in the public house, in bed. The twelve hours' labour, on the other hand, has no meaning for him as weaving, spinning, drilling, etc., but as *earnings*, which bring him to the table, to the public house, into bed. If the silkworm were to spin in order to continue its existence as a caterpillar, it would be a complete wage-worker.

Labour[12] was not always a *commodity*. Labour was not always wage labour, that is, *free* labour. The *slave* did not sell his labour[13] to the slave owner, any more than the ox sells its services to the peasant. The slave, together with his labour,[14] is sold once and for all to his owner. He is a commodity which can pass from the hand of one owner to that of another. He *is himself* a commodity, but the labour[15] is not *his* commodity. The *serf* sells only a part of his labour.[16] He does not receive a wage from the owner of the land; rather the owner of the land receives a tribute from him. The serf belongs to the land and turns over to the owner of the land the fruits thereof. The *free labourer*, on the other hand, sells himself and, indeed, sells himself piecemeal. He auctions off eight, ten, twelve, fifteen hours of his life, day after day, to the highest bidder, to the owner of the raw materials, instruments of labour and means of subsistence, that is, to the capitalist. The worker belongs neither to an owner nor to the land, but eight, ten, twelve, fifteen hours of his daily life belong to him who buys them. The worker leaves the capitalist to whom he hires himself whenever he likes, and the capitalist discharges him whenever he thinks fit, as soon as he no longer gets any profit out of him, or not the anticipated profit. But the worker, whose sole source of livelihood is the sale of his labour,[17] cannot leave the *whole class of purchasers, that is, the capitalist class*, without renouncing his existence. *He belongs not to this or that capitalist but to the capitalist class*,[18] and, moreover, it is his business to dispose of himself, that is, to find a purchaser within this bourgeois class.[19]

[…]

II

Now, the same general laws that regulate the price of commodities in general of course also regulate *wages*, the *price of labour*.

Wages will rise and fall according to the relation of demand and supply, according to the turn taken by the competition between the buyers of labour, the capitalists, and the sellers of labour,[20] the workers. The fluctuations in wages correspond in general to

the fluctuations in prices and commodities. *Within the fluctuations, however, the price of labour will be determined by the cost of production, by the labour time necessary to produce this commodity – labour.*[21]

What, then, is the cost of production of labour?[22]

It is the cost required for maintaining the worker as a worker and for developing him into a worker.

The less the period of training, therefore, that any work requires, the smaller is the cost of production of the worker and the lower is the price of his labour, his wages. In those branches of industry in which hardly any period of apprenticeship is required and where the mere bodily existence of the worker suffices, the cost necessary for his production is almost confined to the commodities necessary for keeping him alive.[23] The *price of his labour* will, therefore, be determined by the *price of the necessary means of subsistence*.

Another consideration, however, also comes in.

The manufacturer in calculating his cost of production and, accordingly, the price of the products takes into account the wear and tear of the instruments of labour. If, for example, a machine costs him 1,000 francs and wears out in ten years, he adds 100 francs annually to the price of the commodities so as to be able to replace the worn-out machine by a new one at the end of ten years. In the same way, in calculating the cost of production of simple labour,[24] there must be included the cost of reproduction, whereby the race of workers is enabled to multiply and to replace worn-out workers by new ones. Thus the depreciation of the worker is taken into account in the same way as the depreciation of the machine.

The cost of production of simple labour, therefore, amounts to the *cost of existence and reproduction of the worker*. The price of this cost of existence and reproduction constitutes wages. Wages so determined are called the *wage minimum*. This wage minimum, like the determination of the price of commodities by the cost of production in general, does not hold good for the *single individual* but for the *species*. Individual workers, millions of workers, do not get enough to be able to exist and reproduce themselves; *but the wages of the whole working class* level down, within their fluctuations, to this minimum.

[…]

In production, men enter into relation not only with nature.[25] They produce only by co-operating in a certain way and mutually exchanging their activities. In order to produce, they enter into definite connections and relations with one another and only within these social connections and relations does their relation with nature,[26] does production, take place.

These social relations into which the producers enter with one another, the conditions under which they exchange their activities and participate in the whole act of production, will naturally vary according to the character of the means of production. With the invention of a new instrument of warfare, firearms, the whole internal organization of the army necessarily changed; the relationships within which individuals can constitute an army and act as an army were transformed and the relations of different armies to one another also changed.

Thus the social relations within which individuals produce, *the social relations of production, change, are transformed, with the change and development of the material means of production, the productive forces. The relations of production in their totality constitute*

what are called the social relations, society, and, specifically, a society at a definite stage of historical development, a society with a peculiar, distinctive character. Ancient society, feudal society, bourgeois society are such totalities of production relations, each of which at the same time denotes a special stage of development in the history of mankind.

Capital, also, is a social relation of production. *It is a bourgeois production relation*, a production relation of bourgeois society. Are not the means of subsistence, the instruments of labour, the raw materials of which capital consists, produced and accumulated under given social conditions, in definite social relations? Are they not utilized for new production under given social conditions, in definite social relations? And is it not just this definite social character which turns the products serving for new production into *capital*?

Capital consists not only of means of subsistence, instruments of labour and raw materials, not only of material products; it consists just as much of *exchange values*. All the products of which it consists are *commodities*. Capital is, therefore, not only a sum of material products; it is a sum of commodities, of exchange values, of *social magnitudes*.

[…]

The interests of the capitalist and those of the worker are, therefore, one and the same, assert the bourgeois and their economists. Indeed! The worker perishes if capital does not employ him. Capital perishes if it does not exploit labour,[27] and in order to exploit it, it must buy it. The faster capital intended for production, productive capital, increases, the more, therefore, industry prospers, the more the bourgeoisie enriches itself and the better business is, the more workers does the capitalist need, the more dearly does the worker sell himself.

The indispensable condition for a tolerable situation of the worker is, therefore, the *fastest possible growth of productive capital*.

But what is the growth of productive capital? Growth of the power of accumulated labour over living labour. Growth of the domination of the bourgeoisie over the working class. If wage labour produces the wealth of others that rules over it, the power that is hostile to it, capital, then the means of employment *[Beschäftigungsmittel]*, that is, the means of subsistence, flow back to it from this hostile power, on condition that it makes itself afresh into a part of capital, into the lever which hurls capital anew into an accelerated movement of growth.

To say that the interests of capital and those of labour[28] *are one and the same is only to say that capital and wage labour are two sides of one and the same relation. The one conditions the other, just as usurer and squanderer condition each other*.

As long as the wage-worker is a wage-worker his lot depends upon capital. That is the much-vaunted community of interests between worker and capitalist.

Even the *most favourable situation* for the working class, the *most rapid possible growth of capital*, however much it may improve the material existence of the worker, does not remove the antagonism between his interests and the interests of the bourgeoisie, the interests of the capitalist. *Profit and wages* remain as before in *inverse proportion*.

If capital is growing rapidly, wages may rise; the profit of capital rises incomparably more rapidly. The material position of the worker has improved, but at the cost of his social position. The social gulf that divides him from the capitalist has widened.

Finally:

To say that the most favourable condition for wage labour is the most rapid possible growth of productive capital is only to say that the more rapidly the working class increases and enlarges the power that is hostile to it, the wealth that does not belong to it and that rules over it, the more favourable will be the conditions under which it is allowed to labour anew at increasing bourgeois wealth, at enlarging the power of capital, content with forging for itself the golden chains by which the bourgeoisie drags it in its train.

NOTES

1 1 franc equals 8 Prussian silver groschen. (In the 1891 edition the word "mark" is used everywhere instead of "franc". – *Ed.*

2 The words "for a particular labour time" are omitted in the 1891 edition. – *Ed.*

3 The 1891 edition has "capitalist" here instead of "bourgeois". – *Ed.*

4 The 1891 edition has "capitalist" here and the words "it seems" are added. – *Ed.*

5 In the 1891 edition here follows the passage: "But this is merely the appearance. In reality what they sell to the capitalist for money is their labour *power*. The capitalist buys this labour power for a day, a week, a month, etc. And after he has bought it, he uses it by having the workers work for the stipulated time." – *Ed.*

6 The 1891 edition has "the capitalist has bought their labour power" instead of "the bourgeois has bought their labour power". – *Ed.*

7 The 1891 edition has "use of labour power" instead of "labour". – *Ed.*

8 The 1891 edition has "labour power" instead of "labour". – *Ed.*

9 The 1891 edition has "labour power" instead of "labour". – *Ed.*

10 The 1891 edition has "labour power" instead of "labour". – *Ed.*

11 The 1891 edition has after this: "the exercise of labour power". – *Ed.*

12 The 1891 edition has "labour power" instead of "labour". – *Ed.*

13 The 1891 edition has "labour power" instead of "labour". – *Ed.*

14 The 1891 edition has "labour power" instead of "labour". – *Ed.*

15 The 1891 edition has "labour power" instead of "labour". – *Ed.*

16 The 1891 edition has "labour power" instead of "labour". – *Ed.*

17 The 1891 edition has "labour power" instead of "labour". – *Ed.*

18 The 1891 edition has "*not to this or that capitalist but to the capitalist class*" instead of "*not to this or that bourgeois but to the bourgeois class*". – *Ed.*

19 The 1891 edition has "*capitalist class*" instead of "*bourgeois class*". – *Ed.*

20 The 1891 edition has "the buyers of labour power" and "the sellers of labour power" instead of "the buyers of labour" and "the sellers of labour". – *Ed.*

21 The 1891 edition has "labour power" instead of "labour". – *Ed.*

22 The 1891 edition has "labour power" instead of "labour". – *Ed.*

23 In the 1891 edition the words "and capable of working" are added here. – *Ed.*

24 The 1891 edition has here and in the next paragraph "simple labour power" instead of "simple labour". – *Ed.*

25 The 1891 edition has "not only act on nature but also on one another" instead of "enter into relation not only with nature". – *Ed.*

26 The 1891 edition has "action on nature" instead of "relation with nature". – *Ed.*

27 The 1891 edition has "labour power" instead of "labour". – *Ed.*

28 The 1891 edition has "*workers*" instead of "*labour*". – *Ed.*

1B Karl Marx and Frederick Engels from *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*

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||I, 1| *Wages* are determined through the antagonistic struggle between capitalist and worker. Victory goes necessarily to the capitalist. The capitalist can live longer without the worker than can the worker without the capitalist. Combination among the capitalists is customary and effective; workers' combination is prohibited and painful in its consequences for them. Besides, the landowner and the capitalist can make use of industrial advantages to augment their revenues; the worker has neither rent nor interest on capital to supplement his industrial income. Hence the intensity of the competition among the workers. Thus only for the workers is the separation of capital, landed property, and labour an inevitable, essential and detrimental separation. Capital and landed property need not remain fixed in this abstraction, as must the labour of the workers.

The separation of capital, rent, and labour is thus fatal for the worker.

The lowest and the only necessary wage rate is that providing for the subsistence of the worker for the duration of his work and as much more as is necessary for him to support a family and for the race of labourers not to die out. The ordinary wage, according to Smith, is the lowest compatible with common humanity, that is, with cattle-like existence.

The demand for men necessarily governs the production of men, as of every other commodity. Should supply greatly exceed demand, a section of the workers sinks into beggary or starvation. The worker's existence is thus brought under the same condition as the existence of every other commodity. The worker has become a commodity, and it is a bit of luck for him if he can find a buyer. And the demand on which the life of the worker depends, depends on the whim of the rich and the capitalists. Should supply ex[ceed][1] demand, then one of the consti[tuent] parts of the price – profit, rent or wages – is paid below its *rate*, [a part of these] factors is therefore withdrawn from this application, and thus the market price gravitates [towards the] natural price as the centre-point. But (1) where there is considerable division of labour it is most difficult for the worker to direct his labour into other channels; (2) because of his subordinate relation to the capitalist, he is the first to suffer.

Thus in the gravitation of market price to natural price it is the worker who loses most of all and necessarily. And it is just the capacity of the capitalist to direct his capital into another channel which either renders the worker,[2] who is restricted to some particular branch of labour, destitute, or forces him to submit to every demand of this capitalist.

||II, 1| The accidental and sudden fluctuations in market price hit rent less than they do that part of the price which is resolved into profit and wages; but they hit profit less than they do wages. In most cases, for every wage that rises, one remains *stationary* and one *falls*.

The worker need not necessarily gain when the capitalist does, but he necessarily loses when the latter loses. Thus, the worker does not gain if the capitalist keeps the market price above the natural price by virtue of some manufacturing or trading secret, or by virtue of monopoly or the favourable situation of his land.

Furthermore, *the prices of labour are much more constant than the prices of provisions*. Often they stand in inverse proportion. In a dear year wages fall on account of the decrease in demand, but rise on account of the increase in the prices of provisions – and thus balance. In any case, a number of workers are left without bread. In cheap years wages rise on account of the rise in demand, but decrease on account of the fall in the prices of provisions – and thus balance.

Another respect in which the worker is at a disadvantage:

The labour prices of the various kinds of workers show much wider differences than the profits in the various branches in which capital is applied. In labour all the natural, spiritual, and social variety of individual activity is manifested and is variously rewarded, whilst dead capital always keeps the same pace and is indifferent to *real* individual activity.

In general we should observe that in those cases where worker and capitalist equally suffer, the worker suffers in his very existence, the capitalist in the profit on his dead mammon.

The worker has to struggle not only for his physical means of subsistence; he has to struggle to get work, i. e., the possibility, the means, to perform his activity.

Let us take the three chief conditions in which society can find itself and consider the situation of the worker in them:

(1) If the wealth of society declines the worker suffers most of all, and for the following reason: although the working class cannot gain so much as can the class of property owners in a prosperous state of society, *no one suffers so cruelly from its decline as the working class*.[3]

||III, 1| (2) Let us now take a society in which wealth is increasing. This condition is the only one favourable to the worker. Here competition between the capitalists sets in. The demand for workers exceeds their supply. But:

In the first place, the raising of wages gives rise to *overwork* among the workers. The more they wish to earn, the more must they sacrifice their time and carry out slave-labour, completely losing all their freedom, in the service of greed. Thereby they shorten their lives. This shortening of their life-span is a favourable circumstance for the working class as a whole, for as a result of it an ever-fresh supply of labour becomes necessary. This class has always to sacrifice a part of itself in order not to be wholly destroyed.

Furthermore: When does a society find itself in a condition of advancing wealth? When the capitals and the revenues of a country are growing. But this is only possible:

(α) As the result of the accumulation of much labour, capital being accumulated labour; as the result, therefore, of the fact that more and more of his products are being taken away from the worker, that to an increasing extent his own labour confronts him as another man's property and that the means of his existence and his activity are increasingly concentrated in the hands of the capitalist.

(β) The accumulation of capital increases the division of labour, and the division of labour increases the number of workers. Conversely, the number of workers increases

the division of labour, just as the division of labour increases the accumulation of capital. With this division of labour on the one hand and the accumulation of capital on the other, the worker becomes ever more exclusively dependent on labour, and on a particular, very one-sided, machine-like labour at that. Just as he is thus depressed spiritually and physically to the condition of a machine and from being a man becomes an abstract activity and a belly, so he also becomes ever more dependent on every fluctuation in market price, on the application of capital, and on the whim of the rich. Equally, the increase in the ||IV, 1| class of people wholly dependent on work intensifies competition among the workers, thus lowering their price. In the factory system this situation of the worker reaches its climax.

(γ) In an increasingly prosperous society only the richest of the rich can continue to live on money interest. Everyone else has to carry on a business with his capital, or venture it in trade. As a result, the competition between the capitalists becomes more intense. The concentration of capital increases, the big capitalists ruin the small, and a section of the erstwhile capitalists sinks into the working class, which as a result of this supply again suffers to some extent a depression of wages and passes into a still greater dependence on the few big capitalists. The number of capitalists having been diminished, their competition with respect to the workers scarcely exists any longer; and the number of workers having been increased, their competition among themselves has become all the more intense, unnatural, and violent. Consequently, a section of the working class falls into beggary or starvation just as necessarily as a section of the middle capitalists falls into the working class.

Hence even in the condition of society most favourable to the worker, the inevitable result for the worker is overwork and premature death, decline to a mere machine, a bond servant of capital, which piles up dangerously over and against him, more competition, and starvation or beggary for a section of the workers.

||V, 1| The raising of wages excites in the worker the capitalist's mania to get rich, which he, however, can only satisfy by the sacrifice of his mind and body. The raising of wages presupposes and entails the accumulation of capital, and thus sets the product of labour against the worker as something ever more alien to him. Similarly, the division of labour renders him ever more one-sided and dependent, bringing with it the competition not only of men but also of machines. Since the worker has sunk to the level of a machine, he can be confronted by the machine as a competitor. Finally, as the amassing of capital increases the amount of industry and therefore the number of workers, it causes the same amount of industry to manufacture a *larger amount of products*, which leads to over-production and thus either ends by throwing a large section of workers out of work or by reducing their wages to the most miserable minimum.

[…]

Profit of Capital

Capital

||I, 2|What is the basis of *capital*, that is, of private property in the products of other men's labour?

> "Even if capital itself does not merely amount to theft or fraud, it still requires the co-operation of legislation to sanctify inheritance." (Say, [*Traité d'économie politique*,] t. I, p. 136, note.)[4]

How does one become a proprietor of productive stock? How does one become owner of the products created by means of this stock?

By virtue of *positive law*. (Say, t. II, p. 4.)

What does one acquire with capital, with the inheritance of a large fortune, for instance?

> "The person who [either acquires, or] succeeds to a great fortune, does not necessarily [acquire or] succeed to any political power [.…] The power which that possession immediately and directly conveys to him, is the *power of purchasing*; a certain command over all the labour, or over all the produce of labour, which is then in the market." (*Wealth of Nations*, by Adam Smith, Vol. I, pp. 26–27 [Garnier, t. I, p. 61].)[5]

Capital is thus the *governing power* over labour and its products. The capitalist possesses this power, not on account of his personal or human qualities, but inasmuch as he is an *owner* of capital. His power is the *purchasing* power of his capital, which nothing can withstand.

Later we shall see first how the capitalist, by means of capital, exercises his governing power over labour, then, however, we shall see the governing power of capital over the capitalist himself.

What is capital?

> "A certain quantity of *labour stocked* and stored up to be employed." (Adam Smith, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 295 [Garnier, t. II, p. 312].)

Capital is *stored-up labour*.

(2) *Fonds*, or stock,[6] is any accumulation of products of the soil or of manufacture. Stock is called *capital* only when it yields to its owner a revenue or profit. (Adam Smith, op. cit., p. 243 [Garnier, t. II, p. 191].

The Profit of Capital

> The *profit* or *gain of capital* is altogether different from the *wages of labour*. This difference is manifested in two ways: in the first place, the profits of capital are regulated altogether by the value of the capital employed, although the labour of inspection and direction associated with different capitals may be the same. Moreover in large works the whole of this labour is committed to some principal clerk, whose salary bears no regular proportion to the ||II,2| capital of which he oversees the management. And although the labour of the proprietor is here reduced almost to nothing, he still demands profits in proportion to his capital. (Adam Smith, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 43 [Garnier, t. I, pp. 97–99].)[7]