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On the Need for a New English Translation of Marx's Capital

Wolfgang Fritz Haug

Erkenntnistheorie muss vor allem Sprachkritik sein.

(Epistemology must be above all language critique.)

-- Bertolt Brecht

Je signale à ceux qui le peuvent, qu'ils ont le plus grand intérêt à se reporter constamment au texte allemand.

(I mention to those who can do so, that it is in their greatest interest to refer continuously to the German text.)

-- Louis Althusser

1. The Problem

The following critical considerations about certain aspects of David Harvey's all in all tremendously commendable *Companion to Marx's Capital* (hereafter, CE) are based on a critique of the English translations of Marx's major work. They are intended to create an awareness of a task that poses itself in the face of the emergence of English as the global *lingua franca* and in the interest of the international theoretical culture affiliated with Marx. This situation puts a heavy responsibility on the shoulders of Anglophone Marxist scholars, since their versions of Marxian texts have acquired a referential priority for most students from all over the world. Given the attributions to Marx of translated passages that actually diverge from his text, it is indispensable for them to recognize and as much as possible neutralize the shifts of meaning that have arisen from the English translations.

One might be afraid that the task of the present article, to argue for a new English translation and critical edition of *Das Kapital*, overburdens the readers. Marx, in his time, "feared that the French public, always impatient to come to a conclusion, eager to know the connection between general principles and the immediate questions that //61// have aroused their passions," might be "disheartened."¹ What would he say if confronted with our contemporary public? To say that today we are all French would be an understatement. If

1 *Preface to the French Edition*, C I, 104.

Marx had to be concerned with giving the impression of splitting hairs (*Spitzfindigkeiten*) in his analysis of the value-form, how much more so must we be concerned in our attempt to focus on linguistic ‘alienations’ of Marx’s thought in the English translations of *Capital*. We cannot but rely on a widespread awareness that, amidst so many lost certitudes, Marx’s *Capital* plays more than ever a key analytical role for those who are interested in critically understanding capitalism in all the ambivalence of its destructive productivity. The Marxists among them will all the more realize that their indispensable theoretical fundament needs a maximum of textual accuracy. As such, it deserves philological diligence.

In this article only a few examples of misleading translations and their theoretical consequences can be addressed. To tackle the task a collective effort will be needed. An academic reading of Aristotle without at least some knowledge of ancient Greek wouldn’t earn much respect. Until now, academic readings of Marx get away with English only. This should change. It might well be that Marx, for the generations to come, will play a role similar to that of Aristotle, as both laid the groundwork for a new civilizational paradigm.

Our philological analysis will have to move between various levels. *First*, there is of course the German original with its layers of “Marx’s learning process”² documented by the *MEGA*, with its often difficult and in any case much-debated methodological questions. *Second*, appearing three years after Marx’s death and overlaying the foundational text is its first translation into English by Edward Aveling with help from Friedrich Engels whose authority lent the translation a validity that is not always philologically justified. *Third* is Ben Fowkes’s translation (1976) that is largely based on this second source. If you want still more complexity, there is a *fourth* level, to wit Marx’s own, most advanced and linguistically tempered French translation of *Capital* vol. 1. It is within this set of sources that a critical edition will have to move. Finally Harvey’s *Companion to Capital* enters the scene. It serves us as the paradigmatic reference for our attempt to indicate the consequences of certain mistranslations. Harvey’s reading is based on the Fowkes translation and //62/ ‘bathed’ in the context-specific discussions of his reading groups in New York.³

2. Meeting David Harvey and the Problem of Translation

2 Cf. W.F. Haug 2006.

3 In Germany we have to deal with a fifth complication, being confronted with the German translation of Harvey’s *Companion* that maintains the Fowkesian foundation of Harvey’s analysis while rendering it invisible by replacing without comment the materials cited from the third level with the wording of the first, original level. By the back-and-forth translation with its blinding consequences for the understanding of *Capital*, a third text is thus generated that borders on linguistic money-laundering.

David Harvey, born in 1935, began to give courses on Marx's *Capital* in the same year – 1971 – as did the author of this article (who is only a few months younger than Harvey). The task of developing a theoretical and also politically useful reading of *Capital* has not let go of either commentator. But the parallels between Harvey's *Companion* and Haug's *Vorlesungen zur Einführung ins "Kapital"*⁴ do not end there. Both authors have organized introductory courses not only for students but also for unionized workers. Both want to supplement, not replace, the reading of *Capital*. Both have discovered that the virtue of thoroughness is attained only by reading slowly and carefully the first few chapters (especially the first) and "paying careful attention to Marx's language – what he says, how he says it and what, also, he takes for granted" (CE 4). Both emphasize the Marxian conception of dialectics, which requires grasping "every developed form in the fluid state of its motion."⁵ Both object to the popular phrase that Marx "simply inverted" (CE 11) the Hegelian dialectic. And not least, both are responding (each according to his strengths) to the demand, making itself heard again in the current crisis, for "a strong theoretical base to better grasp how everything relates to everything else, so as to situate and contextualize their own particular interests and practical political work" (CE vii).

A first difference between the two, however, lies simply in the fact that the one moves in the linguistic universe of the Marxian original, whereas the other moves in the world of English translations and has //63/ difficulties with Marx's (German) theoretical language. Harvey does not read German; and he is not to be blamed for the fact that in even the hitherto best version – Ben Fowkes's English translation of the first volume of *Das Kapital* (which first appeared in 1976 with an Introduction by Ernest Mandel) – quite a few of the theoretical nuances are lost. Nor is he responsible for the fact that faulty interpretations regularly influence the translator's choice of concepts to be used in the translation. But one might nevertheless ask how he will fulfill his claim to carefully attend to "how Marx says it."

Harvey's diligence is *volens nolens* directed not at Marx's own text, but at that handed down by Fowkes. Here, to take a first seemingly negligible example, Marx's expression *dinglich* (approximately "thing-like") is given as "material" (*materiell*). Reasoning by way of opposition, Harvey then concludes that "unreified" (*unverdinglichte*) social relations are for Marx "immaterial." In view of the global dissemination (also as a video on the internet) of

4 Revised edition of lectures given in 1971 and first published in 1974, with a second, thoroughly revised edition appearing in 1976, re-written 2005, followed by *Neue Vorlesungen zur Einführung ins "Kapital"* (2006) and, finally, *Das Kapital lesen – Aber wie?* (2013).

5 This is how we provisionally try to render Marx's formula for his dialectical method, namely to grasp "jede gewordne Form im Flusse ihrer Bewegung" (K I, 28). Fowkes puts: "it regards every historically developed form as being in a fluid state, in motion" (C I, 103). Marx emphasizes the approach; Fowkes, the objective being.

Harvey's interpretation of *Capital* in an historical moment of renewed interest in Marx's analysis of capitalism, such shifts of meaning erect an epistemological barrier for the international left which thus gets a Marx bereft of his materialism, and an historical materialism without historical materiality.

As Frigga Haug recently called for resistance to the expropriation of the history of the German and West-European women's movement by means of terms and narrations imported from the US (2011, 345), here too must the expropriation of theory be resisted – except that in this case, it amounts to a self-dis-appropriation of English-speaking Marxism and those who are influenced by it.

3. Is it Marx's Fault?

As if he sensed the problem, Harvey claims that “the mainly German critical philosophical tradition weighed heavily on Marx because that was his original training” (CE 5).⁶ Could it be that it is the proper weight and depth of Marx's thinking itself that was supposedly such a burden to Marx and which clearly gives Harvey grey hairs? Seen from the other side, the problem shows a different face. Everyone who has ever attempted to render dialectical thinking in the pragmatic Anglo-American language has a tale to tell about it. It //64/ is described in the Foreword to *Marxism and Form* by Fredric Jameson – another Anglophone Marxist, but one who has studied Marx and *tutti quanti* in the original language: “Nowhere is the hostility of the Anglo-American tradition toward the dialectical more apparent,” he notes, “than in the widespread notion that the style of these works is obscure and cumbersome, indigestible, abstract – or, to sum it all up in a convenient catchword, *Germanic*” (1971, xiii). In German, Jameson continues, the dialectic speaks “somehow in its own name” (xii). And with a glance at Adorno's style, he adds: “I cannot imagine anyone with the slightest feeling for the dialectical nature of reality remaining insensible to the purely formal pleasure of such sentences, in which the shifting of the world's gears and the unexpected contact between apparently unrelated and distant categories and objects find sudden and dramatic formulation” (xiii). Albeit in a rather different manner, this comment is just as valid for Marx's dialectic. What Marx calls “my dialectical method” (K I, 27) forms indeed – to borrow an expression from Lenin – the “living soul” of his critique of political economy. Without that “living soul” we are left with the formulas and schematics of a power-

⁶ Other imprecisions in Harvey's text cannot be attributed to Fowkes – e.g., when Harvey says that Spinoza belongs to a “mainly German philosophical tradition,” or that Marx's dissertation was on Epicurus rather than on the “difference between the philosophy of nature in Democritus and Epicurus” (CE 5).

point presentation. We would see only the ready-made thing, not its becoming; the result, not its resulting. We would see, in other words, the product, but neither the way nor the mode in which it is produced. We would not see Marx's capacity to grasp the transformation in real time, which gives his dialectic its life-force in constantly changing situations and endows his analysis with the potential to follow its object, capitalism, in its ceaseless metamorphoses.

Let us turn to a second example, seemingly still more negligible than the first one: In the belief that it is exactly what Marx says and how he says it, Harvey works with Marx's supposed intention to discover "the origin" of the money-form (C I, 139). Here Fowkes renders Marx's phrase, "*Genesis dieser Geldform*" (K I, 62), as "origin" – which in German would be *Ursprung*. Engels, in the first English edition of 1887, rendered this as "the genesis of the money form" (C 1887, 40). As Marx himself says about his analysis of the value-form: "To the uneducated, its analysis seems to be lost in splitting hairs. And it is indeed, a matter of splitting hairs, but analogous to those analyzed in microbiological anatomy" (K I, 12, my transl.). Our second example requires such a 'micro-logical' attention. What is at stake in this case is nothing less than Marx's conception of dialectic.

'Origin', in German *Ursprung*, is an absolute beginning, which for Marx is a metaphysical category. This is why he puts a "so-called" before the bourgeois term *Ursprüngliche Akkumulation* ("Primitive //65/accumulation"). One of the most enjoyable paragraphs of *Capital* is the beginning of this very chapter in Engels' English, which can be read as his explanation of why Marx says "genesis":

[Capitalism's] origin is supposed to be explained when it is told as an anecdote of the past. In times long gone by there were two sorts of people; one, the diligent, intelligent, and, above all, frugal elite; the other, lazy rascals, spending their substance, and more, in riotous living. The legend of theological original sin tells us certainly how man came to be condemned to eat his bread in the sweat of his brow; but the history of economic original sin reveals to us that there are people to whom this is by no means essential. Never mind! Thus it came to pass that the former sort accumulated wealth, and the latter sort had at last nothing to sell except their own skins. And from this original sin dates the poverty of the great majority that, despite all its labour, has up to now nothing to sell but itself, and the wealth of the few that increases constantly although they have long ceased to work. (MEGA II.9, 619-620)

Marx doesn't deal with the one origin, but with a sequence of 'originated origins'.⁷ In his chapter on "The Genesis of the Capitalist Farmer" he explains: "...we can, so to say, put our hand on it, because it is a slow process evolving through many centuries."⁸ For Marx, the dialectical way to put it leads through a sequence of transitions. *Genesis*, in the context of value-forms, means a *genetic sequence* that develops from an "elementary" or "seed-form."

7 "Der dialektische Materialismus ... kennt ... eine fortlaufende Reihe von Startpunkten, Produktionsherden", "Dialectical materialism ... knows ... an ongoing series of starting points, sources of production" (Bloch, AiC, 316).

8 See also ch. XXXI, "The Genesis of the Industrial Capitalist" (650-659).

The latter is not the *origin* of the fruit, but is rather itself an ‘originated’ entity, one transient phase of the fruit’s becoming. The task Marx set himself and which had “never even [been] attempted by bourgeois economists” (C 139, tr. cor.) can be understood as the genetic reconstruction of a social given, namely money, which “everyone knows, if nothing else.” A sequence of forms mediates between the simple exchange (or barter) of commodity against commodity and its complementary antithetical division in purchase and selling, mediated by money. In this sequence the money-form has no direct *origin*, but rather emerges out of the general value-form as the latter in turn emerged from the expanded value-form, and so on.

Harvey unintentionally wrapped himself in the appearance of an idiosyncratic interpretation differing from Marx. For although Harvey in these passages did not want to deviate, he nevertheless interpreted aberrations, which he could not recognize as such, as though they were in Marx’s original text. Now, so as not to drive the //66/ desire to read from those for whom reading *Capital* is a burning question, I will not only limit myself to a few examples, but I will also select these from two specific areas, namely: 1) the relation between the historical and the logical in Marx that was originally raised by Engels and that has recently once more come into discussion with the “logical” reading of *Capital*; and 2) how Harvey’s reading relates to the current economic crisis.

Even if the discussion of Harvey’s interpretation is mainly illustrative, aimed at showing the need for a more accurate textual basis, it must nonetheless address his arguments. All the more as, of course, there is no such thing as an innocent encounter of an interpreting subject with a text. The way in which the text ‘speaks’ is influenced by other interpretations. In Harvey we sense the echo of Althusser’s verdict about the beginning of *Capital*, its first three chapters and especially the first one with its centerpiece, Marx’s introductory analysis of the value-form.

4. The Problem of Understanding the Initial Difficulty

Harvey’s explanation of the much-discussed initial difficulty at the entry to the text of *Capital* is that, rather than beginning “with the surface appearance,” Marx began instead “by presenting the foundational concepts” (CE 8) in “an *a priori* and somewhat cryptic, take-it-or-leave-it fashion” (15). “Half the time you have no idea what he is talking about,” and not until the end of the book do “we fully understand how these concepts work” (8). – But doesn’t Marx begin with the common knowledge of the “immense collection of commodities”? He refers to it as the form in which wealth initially “appears” in capitalism. And in the course of his analysis he will render it transparent as the surface appearance of basic social wealth

which consists of human and material forces of production. And doesn't Marx explain that his "investigation therefore begins with the analysis of the commodity" because the "individual commodity" is the "elementary form" of that wealth which appears on the surface (C I, 49)?⁹

Harvey seems to have passed over this initial explanation, for he insists that Marx made "no attempt to explain that choice [of beginning with the analysis of the commodity], nor does he bother to argue for its legitimacy" (CE 9). Actually, Marx already in his preface gives the reason for //67/this beginning, explaining that "for bourgeois society, the commodity-form of the product of labour, or the value-form of the commodity, is the economic cell-form" (C I, 90). As it seems, the power of the Althusserian paradigm made Harvey skip these explanations which are, however, fundamental for students of *Capital* to find the entry. We are inclined to forget this seemingly tiny difference in which an echo of Althusser's opinion can be heard.¹⁰ As in the investigation of natural processes, however, when the initial condition of a system is only approximately known, an initially tiny inexactitude escalates with increasing distance into chaos; and the consequences that result from this seemingly tiny inattentiveness inflate into veritable errors. When Marx inquires after the third element that renders two qualitatively different commodities quantitatively comparable as exchange-values, and when he comes upon the character, common to both, of being products of labor, Harvey sees "another of those *a priori* leaps by way of assertion" (CE 17). And in the reduction scenario – parallel to Descartes's famous reduction of thinking to the mere act of thought as such in abstraction from its contents – in which Marx carries out the thought-experiment of disregarding "the use-value of the commodity's body,"¹¹ Harvey seems not to have grasped the fact that this was a *thought-experimental* effacement of the "sensuous characteristics" of the commodity until nothing was left but the empty notion of a thing without any concrete essence, nothing but a fleeting thing of thought or, in Marx's metaphor, a "phantom-like objectivity" [*gespenstige Gegenständlichkeit*] or, in plain words, the representation of "congealed quantities of homogeneous human labour" or "human labour in the abstract" (C I, 128).

Harvey calls this beginning "cryptic." But what is unclear and difficult to decipher is in his view, not in the text. One can see, especially in the passage where Marx speaks of

9 In *Toward a Critique of Political Economy* (1859), instead of "elementary form," the passage reads: "the individual commodity as its elementary existence (*Dasein*)" (MEW Vol. 13, 15).

10 Althusser (1978) emphasizes again and again "the contingent character of the beginning that Marx makes" (1978/1983, 145), that is, that at the beginning of Marx's presentation we "come up against the *contingency* that brought Marx to begin the theoretical field of his ordering of the presentation with the concept of value" (144).

11 Marx: "Gebrauchswert der Warenkörper" (K I, 52); Fowkes leaves out the "body" of the commodity, which is the exclusive carrier of the use-value, whereas the commodity as a whole represents also exchange-value which does "not contain an atom of use-value" (C I, 128).

“exchange-value as the necessary mode of expression or form of appearance of value,” how Harvey trips over the interpretive schema that he brings to and imposes on *Capital*. Preferring the traditional philosophical category of “form of //68/appearance,”¹² Harvey bestows no attention on Marx’s ‘translation’ of this term as the “necessary form of expression” that re-appears in the concept of “expression of value” (C I, 62). It seems that the “German philosophical tradition” weighs more on Harvey’s interpretation than on Marx’s presentation. The magnetism of the essence-appearance pair draws his attention away from value-expression as the universally known speech act of an exchange offering or a counteroffer. He says instead: “the secret that makes all commodities exchangeable is now understood as a world of appearances of this ‘spectral objectivity’ called value.”

In his remarks on the difficulties of beginners, one senses Harvey’s exertion in attempting to ease those difficulties. The fact, however, that his particular viewpoint increases the difficulty to the level of confusion transforms his assistance into an obstacle – and this is doubled where that assistant seeks all too quickly to reach a result. The analysis of the value-form – that is, after the analysis of the dual character of commodity-producing labor, the actual entry into the *critique* of political economy – contains in his view “a lot of boring material”; and the “woods-for-the-trees problem,” which often arises in Marx’s writing, is at its worst here” (CE 30). Looked at more closely it is the dialectical spirit of Marx’s presentation which in Harvey’s view gives way to a “dull accountancy style” (38). In reality it is the interpreter who seeks the guiding thread where it isn’t, and doesn’t see it where it is. He believes that Marx, with his analysis of the value-expression, sought to show nothing other than that the actual *exchanges* always manifest a dual character – “the poles of the relative and equivalent forms” (31). What escapes him here is that the expression of value, that is, the elementary prerequisite and initiation of the concrete act of exchange, is a one-sided act with these two poles. Only when this act is met by its complementary opposite can the intended exchange be realized. Thus, the obvious fact that Marx here picks apart both the grammar of the daily practice of value-expression and its effects on consciousness also escapes him.

Bifurcated in the complementary poles of value-form and equivalent-form, the value-expression is first of all interesting as the value-expression of an individual commodity in relation to another one. Again, Marx invites the reader to a thought-experiment: although one might //69/ “twist and turn” the commodity as one will, one will never be able to find its value in the commodity itself, but only in relation to a second commodity qualitatively different

12 In his last writing, the so called “*Notes on Adolph Wagner*,” Marx ‘translates’ *Erscheinungsform*, saying that “exchange-value is merely a ‘form of appearance,’ an independent way of presenting the *value* contained in the commodity” (cf. MEW 19/369), and therewith leaves the metaphysical model definitively behind.

from the first (C I, 138). This second commodity serves as the material of the value-expression of the first and will, at the end of a sequence of transformations, be comprehensible as the form that is the genetic source of money. If one were only to comprehend the value-form as the praxis-form of an exchange-proposal (instead of as the cryptic form of appearance of some invisible thing), its dialectical unfolding all the way to the money-form can be traced in the “witty esprit of contradictoriness” (*Witz der Widersprüchlichkeit*, Brecht) without the obscurity and boredom that Harvey mentioned (and presumably also experienced) time and again.

What prevents Harvey from grasping this is one of the shifts of meaning that slips into Fowkes’s translation of *Capital*. Marx states: “The internal opposition between use-value and value that is embedded¹³ in the commodity is thus represented [Fowkes inserts: “on the surface”] by an external opposition, i.e. through the relation of two commodities” (K I, 75; C I, 153-54). Engels translates this thusly: “made evident externally by two commodities” (C 1887, 53). Replacing “embedded” by “hidden” and inserting before “external opposition” the words “on the surface,” Fowkes transforms reality into the mere surface of itself, hiding its essence. In the track of this shift of meaning and in the strong yet misleading pull of the pre-Marxian tradition of unreflected metaphysical oppositions, Harvey overlooks the praxeological path that Marx laid down, because the real drama which impresses its stamp onto and seemingly into the product as commodity, is something ‘external’, i.e. in our social world. The transitions from one value-expression to a more complex one happen in this ‘external’ world. And the sequence of such transitions doesn’t end with the money-form, but will go on with the transition to capital-form and a whole set of specific capitalist value-forms. If one sticks, as suggested by Fowkes’s modifications of the Marxian text, to the metaphysical opposition of an inner essence hidden under the surface, the path of the Marxian dialectic – of thinking the conceptual development together with the development of the object (which in our case is social praxis) – disappears. The topography of the quotidian metaphysics of surface and depth swallows the genesis of the money-form.

//70/5. Analysis of the Value-Form and the Question of the “Logical” or the “Historical”

Where Marx puts *stofflich* (“stuff-like”), Fowkes puts “material”, thus suggesting that everything which is not “stuff-like” is immaterial in Marx’ view. Now, value is obviously not “stuff-like”. But is it therefore immaterial as Harvey claims? How can value then be

13 Marx: *eingehüllt* (K I, 75); Fowkes: “hidden” (C I, 153).

“objective” as Harvey says? It could be so if we conceive value – after all the gravitation center of capitalism – a mere object of thought, a ‘logical’ construct, in one word: an *idea*. Indeed Harvey’s *Companion* raises a question that under the name of the “New *Capital* Reading” has been so deafeningly celebrated that the dialectical questioning its categories has disappeared: “is Marx making a historical argument or a logical argument?” (CE 31). The use of the word “logical,” which Marx uses at best ironically¹⁴ but never claimed for his method, seems to render superfluous the question of what “logical” means. In everyday speech, the brief answer “it’s logical” serves as matter-of-fact confirmation. But when it is a matter of the theoretical vocabulary of Marx’s method, the word “logical” comes to resemble an unfunded check: if this magical word is taken to mean more than formal linkages, then it cannot be cashed with Marx’s conceptual apparatus. At the opposite pole Harvey overlooks what for Marx is a capital difference between historical and genetic, for Marx did not claim to reconstruct the *history* of the money form, but rather its *genesis*. If the historical process is a multi-layered process, resulting from the interplay of heterogeneous forces, the genetic reconstruction leaves its cognitive object insulated from all heterogeneous forces as in a laboratory. This is what Marx has in mind when he says in his preface that “in the analysis of economic forms neither microscopes nor chemical reagents are of assistance. The power of abstraction must replace both” (C I, 90). There is more in it. Genetic reconstruction of social relations is not primarily about ‘what has happened’, but rather about how certain activities driven by practical needs in certain social relations lead to structural transitions of the praxis-forms and the social relations. The epistemological set of concepts and approaches, characteristic for Marx, is not analytical-reductive but dialectical-reproductive. We may say that it operates ‘in the direction of the process’. On this specificity of his dialectical method in contrast to the classical bourgeois //71/ economists Marx states only, in one of his methodological footnotes: “Political economy has indeed analyzed value and its magnitude, however incompletely, and has uncovered the content concealed within these forms. But it has never asked the question why this content has assumed that particular form, that is to say, why labour is expressed in value” etc. (C I, 173-74).¹⁵ Rather than accepting the reductive conclusion that labor lies at the basis of value, the task is in fact the opposite: to reconstruct how it gets into this form.

14 See for instance C I, p. 291, n. 10: “By a wonderful feat of logical acumen, Colonel Torrens has discovered, in this stone of the savage, the origin of capital.” Marx calls his own procedure in the analysis of the value-form “micrological analysis” (Fowkes: “microscopic,” 90).

15 Cf. Marx’s famous methodological footnotes (n. 4, of ch. 15: “Machinery and Large-Scale Industry,” C I, 493-94): “It is, in reality, much easier to find by analysis the earthly kernel of the misty creations of religion than the opposite, i.e. to develop from the actual, given relations of life the forms in which these have been apotheosized. The latter method is the only materialist, and therefore the only scientific one.”

If Harvey sticks programmatically to the “logical” interpretation of *Capital*, the historian in him doesn’t let go. His historical side helps him to develop an explanation of the genesis of money that points toward the social world of praxis. Against certain works in the interpretive literature disputing that money originated in the manner outlined in Marx’s reconstruction, Harvey notes: “Under capitalism, the money-form has to be disciplined to and brought into line with the logical position that Marx describes.... The precursors of the money-form ... have to conform to this logic to the degree that they get absorbed within capitalism” and “the market could not have evolved without that disciplining taking place. Though the historical argument is weak, the logical argument is powerful.” (CE 32) Clearly, what Harvey means by “logical” is precisely the practical-genetic. Moreover, he reconstructs it up from practical needs [*Bedürfnissen der Praxis*]. Marx does nothing different when, in regard to the “opposition of use-value and value slumbering in the nature of the commodity,” he says: “The need to give an external expression to this opposition for the purposes of commercial intercourse produces the drive towards an independent form of value, which finds neither rest nor peace until an independent form has been achieved by the differentiation of commodities into commodities and money” (C I, 181; Fowkes here follows Engels’ English, putting the *plural* [commodities] while Marx, still under Hegel’s influence at this point, sticks to the singular, when he speaks of “the doubling of the commodity into commodity and money” cf. K I, 102). And in the following sentence, where Marx resumes the “metamorphosis of commodity into money,” Fowkes again follows Engels (cf. MEGA II.9, 75-76) putting “the conversion of one special commodity into money.” Engels here deepens a decisive //72/clarification which Marx made in his French translation, putting “la transformation d’une marchandise en argent.” Although I think that Fowkes is right in following Engels in this regard, a future translation must make these learning steps visible instead of correcting Marx on the quiet. Our example shows that the driving energy is not that of the system; it does not originate at the macro-economic level, but rather on the level of people who, driven by their demand for goods produced by others and with a surplus of certain of their own goods, thrust themselves into new forms of exchange. The conceptual elaboration of this becoming is the only viable path that does not repudiate historical-materialist principles.

Thus, what Harvey concretely does in seeking proximity to practical-historical reality (and therewith to Marx’s theory) collides with the epistemological models with which he declares to himself and to the world what he is doing. Whereas Marx practically-genetically reconstructed the elementary forms of value from the value-expression of a single commodity through the medium of a second commodity, Harvey’s self-constructed preconceived schema

demands the banishing of the genesis of money out of the practical-sensuous world and into the invisible inner sphere of a secretive 'logic'. A praxeological thought-experiment as a tentative exploration is neither visible nor invisible. Its 'logic' is 'praxeo-logic'. Harvey reinterprets the above-cited sentence, where Marx speaks about the "need to give an external expression" to the opposition of use-value and exchange-value inside the commodity "for the purposes of commercial intercourse," into the insistence on an "internal and coevolving relation between the rise of money- and value-forms" (CE 33). The money-form seems always already to be there in a spectral innerness before its outer existence appears.¹⁶ Harvey, with his sense of actual history, points out that there have been several money-forms. Having done so, he reinterprets the abstract concept of the money-form (in the general sense in which there can only be one money-form) into the signifier of concrete-sensuous currencies. Although there is only one money-form in general, there is however a whole row of forms of value both below and beyond it, "the commodity-form together with its further developments, the money-form, the capital-form, etc." (C I, 174, n. 34), each of which includes a multiplicity of various sub-forms. Harvey, on the other hand, treats the simple value-form and also the other pre-monetary value-forms not in their own right, but already as the money-form. He sees it "come closer – step by step – given the logical argument – to expressing value" (CE 33). Caught in the "essence-appearance" trap, value is the essence that is not expressed until the end of the process. *While for Marx the value-expression is the starting point that by way of transitional steps flows into the money form, the money-form is here mistaken for the starting point that step-by-step culminates in the value-expression.* The price demanded by this interpretive schema is high: by way of this approach, access to the uniqueness, the meaning and the epistemological justifiability of Marx's dialectical method is blocked: Harvey's attempt to impose a 'logical' rather than praxeological sequence on the value-forms in the first chapter casts a spell, transforming its relational architectonic into a static always-already, thereby obstructing the path to understanding the progression of the first two chapters.

His question of what is new in the second chapter on the "Exchange-Process" already contains the answer: What indeed is newly treated here is precisely that which the title announces: the *exchange-process* as the two-sided putting into praxis of the one-sided forms of value-expression. Harvey overlooks this obvious point. And he cannot see it because he thought he had this analytical object already before him in Chapter One. Thus, in the second chapter, he finds "nothing here that we have not already seen in earlier sections" (CE 49). But in the earlier sections, it was the analysis of the commodity that was at issue, and this included

16 Harvey's German translator, Frings, confuses the passage even more by translating the plural "value-forms" (which in this context fits the content) as the singular "Wertform" (CD 46).

specifically: the analysis of its double-character and of the corresponding double-character of commodity-producing labor; and also the analysis of value and the expression of value as well. As a result of this development, the fetishized “desocialization” [*Entgesellschaftlichung*] of the producers had to be shown, in which the contradiction between the private character of their production-relations and the social character of the division of labor transformed the world of their products into an independent “society of things” (KV II, 45) imposed on them ‘from behind’. The exchange-process is, however, something else. Its treatment here calls individuals and their social relations to the stage for the first time.

What might contribute to the confusion of the epistemological objects of the first two chapters is “Marx’s writing of the ‘is worth’” (C I, 139) with the same equals sign (=) that also signifies “exchanges itself against.” But the value-expression is carried out “one-sidedly” – that is, only one of the two sides of the value-expression is “active” – “and is dependent on the mirror-image approach of another //74/ corresponding value-expression in order to effect an exchange” (Haug 2006, 45). In connection with the analysis of this form of praxis (which is still one-sided and exists only fleetingly as the initiation of a possible exchange), Marx treats the praxis *in this form*, and the ‘dynamic’ impulse that has been released by this praxis, and also the relations that are brought forth through this praxis. Here – where the driving interests, and the market relations among the commodity possessors that arise in pursuit of those interests, together with the beginning transformation of all social relations through production based on the private division of labor is settling in – it turns out that the philological relations between the German and the Anglo-American versions of *Capital* favor the latter. Where Marx comes to speak about the dynamic of exchange that leaves nothing in peace until “the action of society [turns] a particular commodity into the universal equivalent” (C I, 180), and compresses this with a generic singular into the operative form of a “doubling of the commodity into commodity and money,” here Fowkes – just like the English prototype (C 1887, 75) – renders the commodity in the only form that is appropriate in this passage, that is, the plural form: “differentiation of commodities into commodities and money” (C I, 181). While the late Marx, annoyed by Adolph Wagner’s bourgeois reading of *Capital*, comes down in the middle with the comment that “*Exchange-value* without at least 2 of them does not exist” (MEW 19, 358), here the singular, “the commodity,” still suggests a metaphysical concept of ‘essence’: as though a single object could carry the essence of the commodity in itself without a relation to other things produced by the private division of labor and, via these things, to their producers. The imputed activity of self-doubling, in which a becoming-double of a specific commodity (e.g. gold) into commodity and money, and which is effected through all other commodities, strengthens even more the metaphysical suggestion to which the

‘logical’ reading of *Capital* all too gladly succumbs.

In other places in *Capital I*, Marx shows himself on guard against such backsliding into speculative idealism. Twenty years ago I retraced the history of a lost letter of the alphabet¹⁷ that had been written with black humor by the Marxist-Leninist “central administration of eternal truths,” as Havemann used to mock – the history of an “n” that turns the singular “commodity” [*Ware*] into the context-appropriate plural “commodities” [*Waren*]. In the second German edition – that is, the //75/ last edition attended to by Marx himself – the “n” is still there; and it also finds its corresponding plural form in the French edition on which Marx also worked. However, in the third edition of 1883, which Engels quickly brought to publication after Marx’s death and during the economic boom that momentarily brought increased public attention, the plural is lost – although, as noted above, the passage in the English edition for which Engels was responsible correctly maintains the double plural.

Are we being too picky? In order to decide, it is necessary to formulate the question more pointedly. And here it is a matter of Marx’s double learning process: the *theoretical* learning process and the *linguistic* learning process that was propelled by his international communication and even more so by his work on the French translation of *Capital* (cf. Haug 2006). Following the fool’s rule that “what cannot be should not be” (Christian Morgenstern), the typographical error that was corrected in the popular edition of *Kapital* remained still in the 33rd edition (1989) of *Das Kapital* in the *Marx-Engels Werke*, although Marx based his argumentation in the *Marginal Comments on Wagner* on precisely this plural. A missing letter, which at first glance seems so laughable, brings the commodities back into a singular metaphysical essence and creates one of those imprecisions that, as noted above, are initially hardly noticeable, but which cause chaos in the end. And let us not fool ourselves. What was once effected by an authoritarian would-be loyalty to Engels, transforming the muffled daily routine into a renunciation of thinking for oneself, can also be perpetuated in anti-dogmatic robes.

6. The Trap of Matter

An inexhaustible source of confusion is the multiplicity embedded in the concept of “the material.” Fowkes renders as “material” not only Marx’s expression *materiell*, but also the adjectives *sachlich* (which Marx uses as the antonym of “personal”), *dinglich* (which

¹⁷ Online in German at www.wolfgangfritzhaug.inkrit.de/documents/DerverloreneBuchstabe.pdf.

Marx opposes to the relational and processual), and *stofflich* (for Marx, the antonym of the socio-historical form-determination). Fowkes is not the first, nor will he be the last, who in translating Marx's theory into English has to struggle with a lack of differentiation that is fatal for materialist thought. Even Engels, in decisive passages of the first English edition of *Capital I*, let Marx's unambiguous concept of *Stoff* (cf. Engl. stuff) disappear behind an ambiguously plurivalent concept of "matter." But if "stuff" is matter, matter is not eo ipso stuff. When Marx uses the adjective *stofflich* in relation to a commodity he refers to its "physical palpable existence" with which "use-value ... coincides" (*Critique of Political Economy*, 1859). Fowkes managed, through a different choice of words, to avoid a displacement of meaning in several of these passages. Where Marx elaborated use-value as the "*Verbindungen von zwei Elementen, Naturstoff and Arbeit*" (K I, 57), Engels replaces it with "combinations of two elements – matter and labour" (C 1887, 36). Fowkes on the other hand correctly translates the passage as "combinations of two elements, the material provided by nature, and labour" (C I, 133). Where Marx points out that "human beings in their production can only proceed like nature itself, i.e. can only change the forms of the *Stoffe*" (I, 57), and therefore calls the material composition of commodities their "*Naturalform*" (62), Engels again renders *Stoffe* as "matter" (C 1887, 36). Fowkes on the other hand offers "materials" (C I, 133). Here Fowkes is correct, Engels wrong. For, just as in modern physics the concept of "matter" is not exhausted by the concept of "materials," so too in dialectical historical-materialism: the relations of the social division of labor belong to the historical materiality of the social; and, as is negatively highlighted in times of crisis, the materiality of the private relations of production is made efficacious through the market.

Although Fowkes attempts in some passages to preserve Marx's crucial differentiation between *stofflich*, *dinglich*, *sachlich*, and *materiell*, he usually throws them all into the single pot of the catch-all term "material." This situation in the English text of *Capital* thus abets Harvey's impression that for Marx, because social relations are not of a material nature, they are to be understood indeed as objective, but nevertheless as immaterial and, further, that this is synonymous with saying that one cannot sensuously apprehend them: "you cannot actually see, touch or feel social relations directly" (CE 33). Social relations, however, can be empirically and, why not, sensuously observed. If a photo cannot render them, as Brecht noted, a movie can. The fact that there can be no immediate viewing of realities stretching across space and time together and as a whole is no less true for natural relations taken as a whole.

Harvey becomes hopelessly enmeshed in the one-dimensional notion of the "material"

that Fowkes perpetrated by lumping together the four German terms. An entire chain of misinterpretations follows from the first misstep of taking “*das Stoffliche*” to mean (correctly) “material” and “*das Nichtstoffliche*” to mean (incorrectly because in a false universality) “immaterial.” Marx compares the process of abstracting (and homogenizing) qualitatively heterogeneous commodities by *value* with abstracting and homogenizing them by *weight*. The iron weight (the standard of measurement) and sugar (the commodity //77//to be weighed) are both “heavy” and, when observed solely as weights or mass, undifferentiated. But whereas gravity is a natural attribute of a body, value is “something purely social” – which Marx ironically calls *übernatürlich* (K I, 71), “supra-natural” (C I, 149). Harvey latches onto this passage. Because gravity can as little be found in a piece of iron as value in a single commodity, both, for him, “have to be conceptualized as immaterial but objective” (CE 43). This however leads in the direction of what for the Marxian dialectic is an absurd contradiction, namely: to impute immaterial attributes to matter.¹⁸ In regard to relations, Harvey says of his immateriality thesis that it is “an absolutely vital point that cannot be overemphasized” (CE 33). But what underlies his point is the confusion of matter (*Materie*) with materials (*Stoff*). This leads to the inconsistency of conceptualizing value, which is an attribute of a product insofar as “abstract human labor is materialized” in it, as a materialized immaterial, and social relations as immaterial.¹⁹ And the “matter trap” also springs shut in the analysis of the value-expression. Marx formulates it as follows: “The value of linen as congealed human labor can only be expressed as an “objectivity” [*Gegenständlichkeit*] that is itself physically [*dinglich*] different from the linen, but that is also common to it and to all other commodities” (K I, 65f). Here, it must be emphasized, Marx is speaking of the elementary, pre-monetary form of the expression of a given commodity’s value in terms of a certain quantity of another commodity. Fowkes translates “*Gegenständlichkeit*” as “objectivity,” to which he refers in apposition as “a *thing* which is materially different from linen” [translator’s italics]. Proceeding from this shift of meaning, Harvey performs a *salto mortale* that Marx’s meaning does not survive: “The problem is: how does value, this ‘thing which is materially different from linen’ get represented?” (CE 34). But Marx does not speak about value, but rather about this second commodity, when he says that it is “physically different” from the commodity that expresses its value. And, of course, value is not a thing, but a relationship; and it does not differentiate itself through different materials [*stofflich*]

18 The same is equally true of both the value of commodities and the gravity of bodies: “If it is immaterial, you cannot measure it directly.” (CE 37). Aside from everything else, the notion of direct measurement makes no sense. Measuring is always relational. Without a measure, it cannot take place.

19 Harvey, again with his eyes on Fowkes’s version, thinks that he is very close to Marx when he speaks of a “material relation between the money and the lettuce” (CE 39). But is there a material relation between the material (here: the salad) and the immaterial (money)?

from linen. Moreover, it is //78/ but value itself that must be represented, not an objectivity different from the linen.

Here a less “burdensome” critical-philosophical tradition would be helpful; in this regard, one should forget neither Lenin’s attempt “to emancipate the materialist concept of matter from its widespread identification with the concept of the physical material [*des Stoffes*]” (Wittich 2004, 817), nor the discussion provoked by that attempt. Lenin maintained that the “*only* ‘attribute’ of matter to which philosophical materialism is bound is the attribute of ... existing outside our consciousness” (LW 14, 260).

As we saw above, where Marx says of commodities that “not one atom of physical matter [*Naturstoff*] enters into their objectivity as values,” and when he insists that “their objective character as values is therefore purely social” (C I, 138), Engels had already replaced physical matter [*Naturstoff*] with the concept of “matter” – a concept that for modern, and even for dialectical, materialists is more comprehensive: he had already rebaptized the sensuous objectivity of the bodies of commodities [*sinnliche Gegenständlichkeit der Warenkörper*] as the “materiality of their substance.” And where Marx proceeds to say that the value-objectivity [*Wertgegenständlichkeit*] of commodities contains not one atom of physical matter [*Naturstoff*], Engels replaces that with “not an atom of matter” (C 1887, 40). Fowkes follows Engels in replacing physical matter [*Naturstoff*] with matter, but otherwise remains closer to the original: “Not an atom of matter enters into the objectivity of commodities as values” so that “their objective character as values is therefore purely social” (C I, 138). With this text material in front of him, Harvey now insists that “Marx proposes the following idea; value, being immaterial, cannot exist without a means of representation” (CE 33). Harvey’s German translator makes this claim even stronger: Marx proposes the “following thesis: as something immaterial, values cannot exist without a medium of representation” (CD 45). The expenditure of words begging for meaning is inversely proportional to simple clarity: In reality, the point is that *something that is relational can only be observed as a relation and not as a thing*. The money-form, Harvey continues, offers “a means of tangible expression.” But the asking price cannot be touched. Marx does not speak of the immateriality of values; rather he speaks humorously of “a super-natural attribute ..., something purely social,” that is to say: not a “natural attribute” (K I, 71).

Because Harvey considers the social relations of production articulated as “value” to be something immaterial, the current bourgeois talk of the “dematerialization of the whole financial system in the early //79/1970s” (CE 35) poses for him no problem. But if “dematerialization” means that gold was in the 1970s relieved of its institutionalized role, of

its function of backing up money, in order to unchain the capacity for finance-political activity, that does not mean that exchange relations were transformed from material into immaterial relations. Otherwise, it would immediately have come to a “flight from the mere sign of value to money as a ‘self-value’ [*Selbstwert*] (Marx)” (Haug 2012, HTK II, 121). There can be no money for itself alone. The value of money is anchored in the commodities over which its buying power reigns and which allocate to money its value. Like gold, all other commodities are self-values, even if they are not, like gold, anchored as the absolute value-object by their physical composition and a millennia-old tradition in popular imagination.

Paper money without gold backing seems to make money into a mere sign – a formulation that Marx repudiated though not without appreciating the “suspicion” that appeared in this error “that the money-form of the thing [gold] is ... simply the form of appearance of human relations hidden behind it” (C I, 185). Marx justified his rejection of the sign-theory of money by explaining that if this were the case, then “every commodity would be [Fowkes: “is”] a symbol, since, as value, it is only the material shell of the human labor expended on it”; and he continues: “But if one declares the social characters assumed by things [*Sachen*; Fowkes: “material objects”], or the thing-like [*sachliche*; Fowkes: material] characters assumed by social determinations of labor on the basis of a specific mode of production, as mere symbols, then one necessarily takes them also as an arbitrary product of human reflection” (retransl. from K I, 105f; cf. C I, 185-186).

Engels and, following him, Fowkes, renders Marx’s subjunctive mood (“would be”) in the indicative (“is”). Harvey skips even Marx’s distancing himself from this sign-theory of money. As though he wanted to make Marx congenial to the postmodern way of thinking, he inadvertently turns him into a witness against himself who confirms that which he had repudiated as false: “given that ‘every commodity is [!] a symbol,’ Marx, Harvey claims, is here clarifying for himself “the symbolic aspects of how capitalism works” (CE 50).

7. The Problem of Fetishism

Fowkes further increases the confusion by once using “material [*dinglich*]” (C I, 166), where Marx says “*sachlich*.” In this context Marx is concerned with deriving the “fetish character of the world of commodities” from the fact that //80/“the private labors²⁰ are only

20 *Privatarbeiten*; Fowkes puts the singular: “the labour of the private individual,” C I, 165.

actuated as elements of the total social labor²¹ through the relations which the exchange establishes between the products and, through their mediation, between the producers. To the latter, therefore, the social relations of their private labors appear as that which they are, i.e. not as immediate social relations of the persons in their labors themselves, but rather as objective [*sachlich*] relations between persons and social relations between objects [*Sachen*]" (retransl. from K I, 87; cf. C I, 165-166).

Let us abide awhile with the concept of the fetish character of the commodity, introduced by Marx here. In contrast to Althusser, Harvey rightly holds tightly onto the concept of fetishism as a fundamental concept of the critique of political economy.²² But he elaborates it in such a way as to confirm Althusser's reservation that "many of Marx's texts present *fetishism as an 'appearance'*, as an 'illusion' arising purely in 'consciousness'" (RC, 258). Here too, Fowkes effects a shift in meaning: where Marx designates commodities as "sensuous-supra-sensuous or social things" [*sinnlich übersinnliche oder gesellschaftliche Dinge*] (K I, 86), Fowkes puts "sensuous things which are at the same time supra-sensible or social" (C I, 165). In short: where Marx's formulation "sensuous-suprasensuous" retains and encompasses the contradiction, Fowkes splits the two moments apart. This separation in turn clears the way for Harvey's interpretation that for Marx the social is something supra-sensible and consequently something immaterial, yet still something objective. Engels on the other hand correctly translates the passage as "social things whose qualities are at the same time perceptible and imperceptible by the senses" (C 1887, 63); and in this way he avoids the separation that relegates the "supra-sensible" to the side of the social.

Striving to make clear to his readers his twisted version of the concept of commodity fetishism, Harvey makes it into an absence of an immediate producers-consumers relation that is effected by the market exchange of things, an absence of the "relation between you, the consumer, and the direct producers" (CE 39).²³ But no! It is not a //81/ relation of consumption that is the nucleus, but a relation among producers, a relation of production. Yet the "material shells" [*sachliche Hüllen*] (K I, 88) of the production relation are for Harvey, by

21 ...*der gesellschaftlichen Gesamtarbeit*; Fowkes: "of the total labour of society," which erroneously would include individual labors that are not producing commodities.

22 "Fetishism" is however not a fundamental concept of "political economy," as Harvey puts it, passing over the radical epistemological break that opposes Marx's theory to political economy as its *critique* (CE 38).

23 Gerhard Hanloser and Karl Reitter argue similarly: "commodity fetishism consists in the fact that the mediations have become invisible" (2008, 30). With this formulation they fall back behind the level of their own critique of "circulation Marxism" in so far as they overlook the fact that when Marx speaks of the fetish character of commodities, he means that under the conditions of private commodity-production, the products have become autonomous vis-à-vis their producers, and the material power of the products remains unchanged even if the producers become conscious of this development.

way of Fowkes, transformed into “material integuments” (CE 41). Here, the “power [*die Macht*] of the works over the workers” (KV I, 161f), that is, a power which “indeed feeds itself on their actions but which establishes itself as independent from them” (cf. KV II, 180), is rendered as the “subjective ignorance” of the consumers “about that labor or the laborers” (CE 39f). Harvey reads past that which Marx specifically emphasizes: “The belated scientific discovery that the products of labor, in so far as they are values, are merely the material [*stoffliche*] expressions of the human labor expended to produce them... by no means banishes the object-like semblance [*gegenständlichen Schein*; Fowkes: “semblance of objectivity”] of the social characters of labor.” (C I, 167; K I, 88).

After Harvey established lack of knowledge about the relation between consumers and producers as the nucleus of the fetish character of commodities, he insists on a causal relation between globalization and fetishism: “fetishism is inevitable in the world market” (CE 40). However, the fetishism that clings to the world of commodities, of money and of capital, has nothing to do with the difference between the national market and the world market. Harvey does open his students’ eyes as to where the components of their breakfast come from – “the bread, the coffee, the sugar, the milk; the cups, knives and forks, toasters and plastic plates, to say nothing of the machinery and equipment to produce all these things” (40) – origins about which they could have learned from the successors of classical political economy. But what disappears from his picture is the autonomization [*Verselbständigung*] of the products as commodities, including their periodic revolt against their producers. This obscures the real fetish character of products as soon as they assume the value-form – and therewith that which makes Marx’s theory into a *critique* of political economy, and not just a new form of political economy. It is not that the problem first arises with globalization, nor is the lack of knowledge its basis. Rather, fetishism means for Marx the real, practical powerlessness of the producers vis-à-vis the life of their own products that those products themselves unfold on the market through the //82/competition-driven *drama of the average* (see below). Not only does this life of their own periodically coalesce in the exceptional situation of a crisis, but it also puts its stamp on normality: “Just as man is, in religion, ruled by the products of his own brain, so too, in capitalist production, is he ruled by the products of his own hand” (K I, 649). The “veiling” of the context, in which “the socially necessary labor time required for the production forcibly establishes itself as a regulatory law of nature despite the contingent and constantly fluctuating exchange-relations of their products” (89) – of which Harvey says that this is what Marx “calls ‘fetishism’” (CE 41) – *is a consequence, not a cause*. The knowledge of this situation “destroys the semblance of the merely accidental determination of the magnitudes of value of the products of labor, but it by no means abolishes its material

[*sachliche*] Form” (C I, 168; K I, 89).

The characteristic of the exchange value of commodities is indeed nothing but “the form in which a social relation of production makes itself efficacious, in which a product of labor is exchanged for another product of labor, measured by the portion of socially necessary total labor that inheres in each product” (KV I, 36). This is the form which the “social metabolism” [*Stoffwechsel*²⁴] assumes, given the private character of labor combined with social division of labor. The fact that every producer of commodities produces for the society in spite of being only “concerned with the economy of one’s own private pocket,” while the social context establishes itself after the fact and behind the backs of the actors, that is, unconsciously” (KV I, 159) – this I have summarized with the contradictory phrase, “the planless plan of all private social relations of production” (HTK II, 63).

For Harvey socially necessary labor “cannot operate as a regulator of what is happening directly, because it is a social relation” (CE 36). But the situation is rather the reverse: necessary labor cannot be introduced as a means of regulation, not *because* it represents a social relation, but rather *although* it is one under the domination of its opposite. In contrast, Marx brings relations that would be *in and for themselves social* into the picture of an “association of free people²⁵ working with the means of production held in common and expending their many individual //83/labor-powers²⁶ self-consciously as one single social labor-power”²⁷ (K I, 92; C I, 171). Within such a model of immediately social production, labor-time would, on a social or communitarian scale, acquire the conscious regulatory role which under private production it plays on the level of the shop floor: “Its planned social distribution regulates the proper proportion between the different functions of labor and the different needs” (K I, 93).²⁸ The pivot on which things in capitalism turn, on the other hand, is that relations are, so to speak, only *in themselves social*, but not however *for themselves*, not *for and through the society itself* that creates for itself the forms through which it regulates its conditions. Harvey pushes this specifically capitalist structure, which one could understand as the expropriation of society with regard to its disposition over its “time,” imperceptibly into the spatio-temporal extension of social relations as such: “The immaterial relational value of

24 “In so far as the exchange process transfers commodities from the hand in which they are not use-values to the hand in which they are use-values, it is social metabolism [*gesellschaftlicher StoffwecheseI*]” (K I, 119).

25 Fowkes: “men.”

26 Fowkes: “many different forms of labour-power.”

27 Fowkes: “labour-force.”

28 Fowkes: “Its apportionment in accordance with a definite social plan maintains the correct proportion between the different functions of labour and the various needs of the associations” (C I, 192).

socially necessary labor times²⁹ comes into being with the evolving space-time of capitalist global development.” (CE 37). One can understand what he wants to say, but he has difficulties with Marx’s conceptual apparatus that he can only encounter through the veil of translation. The determination of the value of commodities is indeed realized in the form that I call the “drama of the average” that “all too often makes a wreck of the rationality of individual commodity producers” (KV I, 97). The constraining force through which the “processing” value relations strike back with the impact of a natural process on the individual commodity producers mocks the notion that these are ‘immaterial’. Because this result is mediated through the market and because the exchange process reduces the individual quantities to the socially necessary average, Harvey even opines that “values arise out of exchange processes” (CE 41). This formulation confuses price and value, mistakes the realization of the value for its production, and makes labor disappear.

Value-forms can be comprehended as the forms in which under capitalism “the members of society practice their social metabolism” (KV I, 153). As such, these forms, as Marx states, constitute “the categories of bourgeois economics. They are socially valid, that is, //84/objective forms of thought for the relations of production of this historically determined mode of social production, i.e., commodity production.” (C I, 169; transl. changed following K I, 90). Here Harvey inserts a “merely,” stating that for Marx the categories of political economy are “merely ‘forms of thought’ ...” (CE 44). But the diminution, ‘merely’ not only has no place in the comprehension of value forms as forms of praxis, but diverts attention from the real problem which is not primarily rooted in ignorance or false notions. The categories of political economy are “merely ‘forms of thought,’” says Harvey. But no, they are *factually correct (practicable) notions of ‘inverted’ relations*, to be understood as *real forms of praxis*. Classical political economy extracted them “without further criticism” from “everyday life,” as Marx put it (C I, 678-679; K I, 559). Their contradictoriness springs from reality, not from consciousness. They correspond to social reality in capitalism as far as this inverts the relation of the producers to their relations of production and therewith to one another into a relation among ‘social things’ (commodities, money, capital). Ignorance of this inversion functions as the cement of such relations, and in this regard Harvey is correct in illuminating and attacking it. That ignorance, however, is not the cause, but the consequence.

8. From Past to Present and from Theory to Praxis

²⁹ Here the plural is out of place for the market does indeed reduce precisely the individual periods of labor to proportions of the one socially necessary labor-time which emerges from the market processes as an average.

The nearer the development of Marxist theory comes to the problems and conflicts that are the burning questions of the present, the more Harvey is in his element. One of Harvey's great strengths lies in his historical-conceptual excursions, veritable excursions from Marx's time into the present – for example, his digression into the freeing up of land for food production through the replacement of the previous usage of biomass by the successive opening-up of coal, then oil, and also the present reversal of this process with the prompt rise in food prices and the ensuing hunger revolts (CE 202f). Far from the merely immanent textual analyses and esotericism of academia, he seeks to explain the contemporary social world, e.g. its gender relations or its relations to nature, by analyzing them starting from the concepts of Marx's *Capital*. Occasionally agitational slips creep in that seem to echo the moods of his audience, as for example when he presents China as the land in which “a large proportion of the labor force ... have been denied their wages, prompting widespread protests” (CE 104). The number of internal Chinese migrant laborers alone was estimated in 2010 as 270 million (Li 2012, 139). How many of them are the “large proportion” to whom wages are not paid “today”? It is not that this would exhaust the topic of China in Harvey's *Companion*. //85/For the diagnosis of the accumulation problems of capitalism – a diagnosis which Harvey developed through a Marx corrected by Rosa Luxemburg's theory of accumulation – China played historically and still plays currently an important role, even if Harvey takes no notice of the “master-servant dialectic in the relations between the USA and China” (HTK, ch. 10) that has led to the increasing power of the “servant.”

Harvey's interlacing of Marxist analysis of the present with his lesson on *Capital* is an event of great import – and one that is enhanced by the response he has received. He lacks however the decisive step in mediating between Anglo-American Marxism and the native language of Marx's and Luxemburg's works. But what else could be expected in view of the textual situation? As the language of transnational high-tech capitalism, Anglo-American is for the foreseeable future the *lingua franca* of international Marxism, it has acquired a key function in mediating among the languages. For this reason, the lack of a new English translation of *Das Kapital* satisfying the criteria of a critical edition is a fatal flaw. Without the mediation of a critical English edition – a labor that needs to be undertaken, but by whom? – the re-importation of the previously exported Marx, now linguistically alienated in his own native language, is already contributing to theoretical muddiness. A great responsibility is thus placed before the native speakers of that language which is for all intents and purposes the global language. But they will only be able to live up to that responsibility if they are capable of going beyond the borders of their national language – as essentially mediators of the mediation. Ben Fowkes, in some of the examples we have looked at, trespasses the border

where the translator ends and the agitator if not the ghostwriter begins. In some of these presumably popularizing parts there is more Engels in the text than Marx. In some cases these parts might seem even better than the original. I don't argue against the (historically situated!) quality of Engels' rephrasing Marx. But this rephrasing will take ever new shapes in changing historical conjunctures and will be the task of the intellectuals of the respective social movements. The translation, in contrast, has the duty to render an internationally common and reliable scholarly source, so that Marx's text from the 19th century may "come together in a flash with the now to form a constellation" (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, N2a,3), and Praxis, always anew, in unforeseeable situations, will meet theory.

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