

“Missing the Marx? :

A retrospective into states of nature, an exploration of exploitation and questions for our future”

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“Left to myself I take up my pen to write. I bite my nails and rub my forehead. Nothing doing. Good night. The god is absent; I had persuaded myself I was a genius, and at the end of the first line I can read that I'm a fool, a fool, a fool. But how can anybody feel, raise his mind to higher things, think and describe vividly if he keeps company with the sort of people one must see in order to live..”

- Denis Diderot, *Rameau's Nephew*

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“Whether the forms and maxims of Governments which are still in practice, were adapted to the condition of the world at the period they were established, is not in this case the question. The older they are, the less correspondence can they have with the present state of things. Time, and change of circumstances and opinions, have the same progressive effect in rendering modes of Government obsolete as they have upon customs and manners.”

- Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man*

INTRO: HOBBS, LOCKE, ROUSSEAU

Much of the world owes the current abundance of representative government to an epoch called the enlightenment, a period in history in which information, education, becomes popularized. The increasingly informed populace of the time challenged traditional social structures, like the (often) monarchical state and the church, in attempts to create a society that benefits the vast majority, as opposed to the wealthy or powerful few. Representative governments, as precipitating from the philosophies and revolutions prefacing (the Reformation) during and post-enlightenment (American & French revolutions), are subsequently created off of the premise that humans are naturally and universally equal; as equals, every voice deserves equal bearing and equal representation. Representation of this kind does not exist neither in feudal nor in market monarchies, as power is ultimately unilaterally held, and for the former, the majority are coerced to labour for the sustainment of the entire feudal state.

Three pivotal texts that served as catalysts to said social developments were Hobbes' *Leviathan*, Locke's *Second Treatise*, and Rousseau's *Discourse on the Source of Inequality*. The concerns of our authors lie principally in human equality; it is through this lens that investigations into the state of nature and theorized conceptions of a social contract are embarked. These authors attempt to abstract the nature of human, the 'human' they explore is an entity which is particular and universal, it is individual human and humanity, and also, by construction, seemingly genderless, raceless, and nearly formless. Human as an abstracted entity, stripped of all its accidents except for those that qualify it as a secondary substance, animality, and rationality, is substantively the same. As such, all deserve the same, equal treatment if not

organically, then in the word of the law as a safeguard, i.e. through some form of government that represents and protects the collective will of its citizens. While equality is implicit truth amongst humans, we may be all equally inclined to constructive or destructive behaviors, for a reason unbeknownst to us, inexplicable except by citing our human nature. These 'behaviours' may be natural, inherent and then produced by sociality, or inherent and exacerbated by sociality.

SCOPE

Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau offer theories that present us with the foundations for a continued drive for equality - as catalytic philosophies for an egalitarian civil consciousness - in its variant senses, and while they rely on a scientific foundation and display a wealth of clear, logical thought, they can not access Marx's vantage point. Marx's specific economic analysis allows for a different social perspective, it becomes a necessary tool for clarifying the State of Nature/Social Contract theories that have theoretically formed, if not shaped our society and in turn the global culture. "Labour," as "a necessary condition, independent of all forms of society, for the existence of the human race...is an eternal nature-imposed necessity, without which there can be no material exchanges between human and Nature, and therefore no life." (1.2) To live is to labor and for centuries humans have labored for survival, more recently, for a wage. "In all states of society, the labour time that it costs to produce the means of subsistence, must necessarily be an object of interest to mankind" since, "from the moment that men in any way work for one another, their labour assumes a social form." (1.4) It becomes especially important to consider that which has helped cement our humans as social, or rather how society, the medium in which we civilly and socially exist, comes about.

Hobbes believes that in a state of nature

“the desires, and other passions of man, are in themselves no sin. No more are the actions that proceed from those passions, till they know a law that forbids them: Which till laws be made they cannot know: nor can any law be made, till they have agreed upon the person that shall make it.” (187)

Without said ‘law’, right and wrong do not seem to be in consideration for the natural human.

There is no morality without man-made law; humans are so disparate in their natural passions yet so similar in their claim to all things, that it becomes irrelevant to measure ‘right’ and ‘wrong;’

“Before the names of just and unjust can have place, there must be some coercive power, to compell men equally.” (202) All humans are equal in desire and license, thus they must allow the sovereign the license to forcibly demand their consent. Hobbes’ human is loosely moral, if not at all, but to no degree are they ethical unless corralled.

Locke assumes his natural human to be disposed to want to extend their license because of a state of equality where "power and jurisdiction is reciprocal." (8/4) Yet he elevates his natural human, noting a “Maxim of Rational Justice,” ethical knowledge that is supported by reason. (8;5) This allows for a mutually appointed government that rules simply to have “an authority to appeal to,” rather than to explicitly suppress the desires of its body. “The end of civil society, being to avoid, and remedy those inconveniences of the state of nature, which necessarily follow from every man’s being judge in his own case,” is much more passive than a ‘coercive power.’ (48;90, *ibid.*)

Rousseau immediately distinguishes himself in concluding that if humans are in a state of nature, they must be both solitary and void of the capacity of language. Language presupposes communication, which presupposes communal, rather than solitary actions. He makes his natural human distinct and self-reliant, an individual animal, dependent, by the most pressing necessity,

upon themselves due to solitude. Rousseau claims that natural human acts in accordance with a “Maxim of Natural Goodness,” as one who seeks to “do good to [oneself] with as little possible harm to others. (101)

Rousseau’s claim is that “men in a state of nature, having no kind of moral relationships between them...could have neither vice nor virtues,” unless one were to consider a savage human’s virtue as their capacity to keep himself alive. (98) Rousseau’s human has a claim to innocence; their amorality is rooted in their incapacity to speak. Hobbes’ human, in their sociality, has a stronger conception of what ‘other’ is, and thus is closer to morality, yet does not achieve any curtailment of their will and desire. Locke’s human is ethically gifted and thus can exist in nature, but they choose not too, since property is never assured in such state. Rousseau’s human is simply an animal, he reduces ‘human’ to a biological entity that, as naturally existing, is without society. Rousseau would assert that the very things that drive Hobbes’ human, ‘glory,’ ‘pride,’ ‘diffidence,’ are all social products, productions of interaction with others, feelings that have no place in nature. Through the recontextualization of nature, as that which predates sociality, Rousseau manifest sociality as the impetus to all warring and trickery – he notes that “original man [has] vanished by degrees, society offers to us only an assembly of artificial men and factitious passions, which are the work of all these new relations, and without any real foundation in nature.” (135)

Labor is that which turns the wheels of progress in society, in the societies that Marx explores, labor becomes steadily transformed by what comes to be known as Capital. Capitalism depends on this ‘work for one another;’ the seller needs a buyer, and every buyer at some point must, themselves, become the seller, to replenish or aggrandize their purchasing-power. In this exploration, it is my focus to understand and clarify Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau through a marxian lens. If well established, my desire is to tie our social contracts to capital, or rather, demonstrate how the principle concerns of our authors, with reference to humans, were only such because of the existence of a capitalistic mode of production.

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MARX INTRO

Marx’s *Capital* attempts to explain the insatiable need for growth that is a feature of industry and production for private profit as well as the use of said profit for the valorization of profit. Marx tracks and attempts to account for the evolution of human labor, productivity, economic growth and surplus products in society through focusing on material production, commodities or products that have recognizable “social use-values”-

“The life-process of society, which is based on the process of material production, does not strip off its mystical veil until it is treated as production by freely associated men, and is consciously regulated by them in accordance with a settled plan. This, however, demands for society a certain material ground-work or set of conditions of existence which in their turn are the spontaneous product of a long and painful process of development.” (1.1, 1.4)

Marx notes that Pre Capitalist states simply appropriate social surplus, as a feudal lord might simply take portions of the harvest as he pleases. In this example, there is no process of exchange in terms of buying or selling since all possessions are the lord’s; if a market exists in such state, the mercantilist exchange products that are not ultimately theirs. The feudal state does not turn

capitalist until it fully turns to commodity production, introduces money, additionally expropriates the tools, the means of production, from direct producers and assembles them in our now familiar factory setting, so that:

“these newly freed men became sellers of themselves only after they had been robbed of all their own means of production, and all the guarantees of existence afforded by the old feudal arrangements. And this history, the history of their expropriation, is written in the annals of mankind in letters of blood and fire.” (875)

Innovation drives industry, which drives capital into the pockets of those who own industry and the means to innovate, driving the desire for more capital, more profit; this leads to exploitation while it could be used for general empowerment. The specialization of labor, simultaneous advances in technology and machinery, led by the advances in arts and science, industrial innovation and material wealth has all provided the general world population with the means to rid themselves of a meaningless, factory life, or generally meaningless labor. The nature, the purpose of systemic exploitation is that it builds upon itself. Time, or the continuity in which capitalism has partaken, has only served to cement a great deal of the labour-force, and their offspring, as producers.

In order to get on with our comparative analysis we must first manifest the real concerns of our authors. Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau concern themselves with creating/describing states of nature and positing social contracts, yet, through their constructions and descriptions, they make known dispositions in their respective humans that inextricably coexist with sociality. Identifying the qualities of humans that exist as foundational to all social interaction, especially as proposed by these pivotal texts, becomes a necessary recourse in clarifying social interactions as they exist in a capitalist market economy.

FOCI: DESIRE, PROPERTY, EXPROPRIATION

Hobbes' humans are constructed as incessant in desire and variant in how much 'fulfilment' will truly 'fulfill' them. Hobbes defines "power" as a human's "present means...to obtain some future good." (150) Desire, or rather the object of desire is a 'future good,' which, if only attained through an abstract amount of power, means that all humans primarily and incessantly desire for power as the precursor to satisfying any other particular desire. Hobbes notes that power arises in two distinct forms: naturally and through acquisition. The existence of these facets of power have bearing on the development of Hobbesian political philosophy, because it notes the social nature of power. Power is a production of relation amongst humans, and as a relation, all humans only have great amounts or small amounts of power relative to others. In fact, humans even have relative value, which is "so much as would be given for the use of his power...a thing dependant on the need and judgment of another." (152) Hobbes believes that the only way in which humans will be ensured mutual equality is by subjugating an entire constituency of men to the rule of one commonly appointed absolute monarch equipped with "power able to over-awe them all." (185) Fear is a necessary force in corralling what is otherwise an anarchical state of nature. The notions of monarchs, of sovereigns, are relatively antiquated; Hobbes' text betrays its age in its construction of an absolute sovereign as a solution for social, if not political unrest. Hobbes' redemption lies in what seems archaic, as the overbearing sovereign is, in a lot of ways, what is necessary for a human that is so disposed to warring. The sovereign in no way sought to deny humans a just life, it, in fact, sought to acknowledge humans as incessantly willing and desiring biological machines.

Locke's government is constructed in order to "restrain the partiality and violence of men" insofar as restraint applies only to those who transgress upon another's life, liberty or property. "The reason why men enter into society, is the preservation of their property; and the end why they chuse and authorize a legislative, is, that there may be laws made, and rules set, as guards and fences to the properties of all the members of the society, to limit the power, and moderate the dominion, of every part and member of the society." (12;13, 111;222) Locke essentially constructs government to eradicate an exercise of individual faculties. When "all private judgment of every particular member [being] excluded, the community comes to be the umpire." (46;87) This exercise of private judgment is the driving force of Locke's exposition, secondary only to equality; Locke manifest this judgement in both unanimity, i.e. 'all private judgement,' and appropriation, the notion that the human "by his labour does, as it were, inclose it from the common," i.e., adds to their stock as they accumulate possessions and turn communal into private through laboring. (Sect. 32) Locke holds private property, the accumulated possessions, to be an extension of the human body essential to civil, social life. "At least till they have such standing laws, to which they have by themselves or their representatives given their free consent, and also till they are allowed their due property, which is so to be proprietors of what they have, that nobody can take away any part of it without their own consent, without which, men under any government are not in the state of freemen, but are direct slaves under the force of war." (245)

Rousseau creates his natural human as self-reliant, benignly inspired; he represents a life of ignorant bliss with marginal external conflict. Due to the inevitability of 'self-improvement,' Rousseau's state of nature flows into a nascent society where language and social relations are

established and nurtured, war follows nascent society as a consequence of social relations, and finally, war is perceived as unfavorable and humans enter a social contract. The war Rousseau alludes to is ultimately a rebellion, a revolution, in which citizens of nascent society attempt to redistribute the wealth and property of and in their social setting, for they had “become poor without having lost anything.” (120) One can only be wealthy if laws and a correlative to your wealth exists; both anarchy and wealth redistribution fundamentally disrupt the possession of wealth and thus of power. It is evident how lawful redistribution essentially accomplishes this disruption; anarchy, as Locke fears, is a state in which possessions are never truly possessed, for they are offered no ultimate protection, thus wealth perhaps becomes at least redefined. “The rich, in particular, must have felt how much they suffered by a constant state of war, of which they bore all the expense; and in which, though all risked their lives, they alone risked their property.” Rousseau’s social contractors aim to prevent civilian revolutions or anarchy from occurring, in order to continue to live comfortably wealthy, for “the former prize what they enjoy only in so far as others are destitute of it.”

Why would Rousseau so scathingly attribute the inequity in social relations to the economic history and landscape in his society, unless economic production bears heavily on the social dynamic of a governed body? The general economic system in question is, in fact, the market system, which, from my privileged position in time, I can thoroughly appreciate as being the dominant dictation of economic production in the world for the last several centuries. I must investigate said system in order to understand how the theories in question are productions of or responses to the market system. If these theories are cornerstone political-philosophies for, at least, our life in the U.S., how do we then view the constitution, the entire establishment of this

nation, but through the lens of an economic mode of production? On the level of analogy, capitalism is a social contract; the mode of production guides a lot of our social relation. In a very literal sense, every time we get a job, we sign a social contract of sorts. We agree to sell our labour for a wage that is more often than not rigidly set by forces unseen, and pre-conditionally exploitative, since the capitalist won't invest variable capital unless profit is assumed. We have the choice to refuse or attempt renegotiation, but time is limited, time is money, and money is the only way to keep alive, it is the sovereign that 'impels through feare of death' to seek it out.

The equality of human then comes into question once more, specifically, what is the origin of equality? Is equality as intuitive as it feels? Or is it another contrivance? Where Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau notes a commonality of personhood, Marx sees a market that must account for values of products as abstracted things, which can't be themselves abstracted without abstracting that which produces them; hence the market attempts to equalize value for labour-power, that which the labourer sells to the employer. Is the notion of 'equality' that arises with these philosophers simply an internalized conflation of appearance and essence? Equality appears, and has appeared essential to our humanity, but only because the market necessitates a movement from land-based wealth, hierarchy, and feudalism to a privatized model of economic production, which in turn needs equity in labour-value? As ridiculous as this sounds, the fact of the matter truly lies in the woeful ridiculousness of - and hypocrisy in - drafting a constitution claiming that all 'men' are created equal yet building your economic and international dominance off of the back of a hundred years of slave labor; laboring done on land acquired as a result of genocide.

THE MARKET & DESIRE

We live in a society that has competition as a central tenant, a society of buyers and sellers constantly interacting, as exchange in the market is the means to attaining products of sustenance and comfort. A capitalistic society is predicated on diversity of interest; theoretically, anyone can be the capitalist, we are not necessarily trapped in a state of subservience, at least, only to the market. What Marx notes as a specific effect of a market, i.e., its coerced competition, Hobbes views as a quality that is fundamental to the human. For Hobbes, to desire power is to desire more power than others, incessantly, and conversely, to lack power is to be hindered by the excess of power commanded by another human. If all powers hinder one another, each individual incessantly desires some power and yet only commands their own, then it is necessary to forcibly hinder the power of others in order to increase one's own. Hobbes describes a society that is comprised of members continually competing for power, where power is simply excess power. Where the "greatest of humane powers, is that which is compounded of the powers of most men;" this, of course, refers directly to a theoretical and absolute sovereign, but additionally, applies as a motive force for the members of the polity. (150) Power is transferable, one can appropriate it but it is not forcefully acquired, as in war. "As in other things, so in humans, not the seller, but the buyer determines the price." There are rules to the process, actual appropriation of power must be unanimously arrived at, as seen with a Hobbesian social contract, or it must be legally attained when in a civil polity, e.g. through purchase of labor.

While the value of a commodity is quantified by the amount of labour socially necessary for its production; this socially necessary labour is not communally decided, "the use that can be

made of the total annual product, depends entirely upon its own composition, but in no way upon circulation.” Commodities, as privately produced, have no recognizable social value without an objective mediator, the market, which strives to abstract from the particularities of commodities produced to equalize value.

“In the particular form of production with which we are dealing, viz., the production of commodities, the specific social character of private labour carried on independently, consists in the equality of every kind of that labour, by virtue of its being human labour, which character, therefore, assumes in the product the form of value...In order that these objects may enter into relation with each other as commodities, their guardians must place themselves in relation to one another, as persons whose will resides in those objects...They must therefore, mutually recognise in each other the rights of private proprietors.”

The law of value, the determination by the market, of a commodity’s relation to capital, unfolds due to increases in production for exchange. The law of value acts in a threefold manner: one, it dictates exchange between commodities (products, as well as labour and even money), two, it determines the socially necessary labour for production, and three, it rewards thriving enterprise. The market is the material manifestation of the law of value.: “Today the product satisfies a social need. Tomorrow it may be perhaps be expelled partly or completely from its place.” (201) Value is both independently and socially derived; it accounts for the mean amount of labour-power for production of commodities as well as the labor-power itself as a commodity.

“Consequently it was the analysis of the prices of commodities that alone led to the determination of the magnitude of value, and it was the common expression of all commodities in money that alone led to the establishment of their characters as values. It is, however, just this ultimate money form of the world of commodities that actually conceals, instead of disclosing, the social character of private labour, and the social relations between the individual producers... the money-form of an object... is simply the form under which certain social relations manifest themselves. In this sense every commodity is a symbol, since, in so far as it is value, it is only the material envelope of the human labour spent upon it.” (1.4, 2.1)

Labor is both subject to quantification by a third party, the market, and is the ‘possession,’ the property of the worker. Money is the material manifestation of value, it is the medium *with* which a worker, or rather any buyer may purchase commodities, yet it is a commodity in itself as well. Money is a necessary means and also an end, as it is the medium *through* which one can

supplement their social powers. In a society of buyers and sellers, to have money means to have potential influence in the market as a consumer, to receive money means to have actual influence on the market as a producer of some sorts.

When viewed through a marxian lens, Hobbes can be appreciated as loosely predicting the rise of capitalism, as he models his society market economies. First and foremost, Hobbes assumes that “a man's labour is a commodity exchangeable for benefit”. A human's value, their power quantified, is additionally only a product of market-like relations, where “their true value is no more than esteemed by others.” (298, 152) Secondly, Taxation, as described by Hobbes, is a model which, in theory, is not only promoting early capitalist production of laboring and commodities but endorsing industry; taxation becomes relative to the individual consumption of goods under the state instead of proportional to income or labour commanded. Taxing isn't proportional to wealth, or labour commanded, but instead is equal amongst all, for all are ‘equally’ benefitted by the sovereign's protection. (386) If labor can be purchased, then a purchaser is not only indebted to the state for their life, but also for the life of their labor, who he is able to use (lawfully) because the existence of the state. Third, Within Hobbes' political society, commutative justice is made manifest in exchange, and so is distributive justice. Commutative justice in most cases is applied to ensure equality of products, but Hobbes' considers that simply the act of exchange of products is predicated on their equality of value. Distributive justice is "equal benefit to men of equal merit," yet if value lies in exchange, and merit is simply one's valuation, then value, for the Hobbesian human, is determined by one's power. Power, as one's ability to attain a future good, is determined by the market, our friend who becomes the medium through which our ‘powers’ are hindered or enlarged. (208) One's

merit becomes the product of a circular process; what you receive is what you deserve.

“As if it were injustice to sell dearer than we buy; or to give more to a man than he merits. the measure of all things contracted for, is measured by the appetite of the contractors: and thus the just value is that which they are contented to give.” (208)

Hobbes is constructing a large hamster wheel, in which we can go and exhaust all our desire for passions without necessarily having to leave the cage. The equality that Hobbes promotes is consistent with, and describes (if not partially deriving from) those rights erected with the market and made manifest in the market through its blind operation. The market promotes an objective order with no calls to mysticism, it is the “buyer that determines the price,” only through equal status could labor be used or offered, only through equality can all labor be then evaluated abstractedly by the market. Like the sovereign, the market lies outside the influence of the governed though it is a product of their existence. The market, as described by Hobbes, is the sovereign of the citizen's desires, while the absolute sovereign is the arbiter of their will.

But, then again, we live in a society with competition as a central tenant. Every capitalist understands that the more owners of means of production mean that the net-capital is available to all capitalist is reduced, thus it is in the interest of the owner of means of production to impose as many obstacles on the potential-capitalist in order to maintain their relative place as commander of total means of production.

“...capitalist and labourer confront each other in the market as buyer and seller. It is the process itself that incessantly hurls back the labourer on to the market as a vendor of his labour-power, and that incessantly converts his own product into a means by which another man can purchase him. In reality, the labourer belongs to capital before he has sold himself to capital. His economic bondage is both brought about and concealed by the periodic sale himself, by his change of masters, and by the oscillations in the market-price of labour-power” (23.1)

Capital accumulates through surplus, surplus-value is created due to the impetus force of

competition; competition drives individual perusal of capital accumulation as well as drives innovation in industry as a product of desires to accumulate capital. Workers are continually exploited in greater degrees in proportion to the greater degrees of accumulation of capital and greater degrees of competition. Yet,

“It is not our intention to consider, here, the way in which the laws, immanent in capitalist production, manifest themselves in the movements of individual masses of capital, where they assert themselves as coercive laws of competition, and are brought home to the mind and consciousness of the individual capitalist as the directing motives of his operations. But this much is clear; a scientific analysis of competition is not possible, before we have a conception of the inner nature of capital, just as the apparent motions of the heavenly bodies are not intelligible to any but him, who is acquainted with their real motions.” (12.1)

My aim isn't to show how competition hinders exploitative acts, but in fact to show how exploitation is written into the capitalist manual; the competition that takes place in the market takes for granted its exploitation. Labor, as the most essential commodity, is never truly quantified. “Let us consider... the capitalist. He wishes to receive as much labor as possible for as little money as possible...if such a thing as the value of labor really existed, and he really paid this value, no capital would exist, their money would not be turned into capital. (19.1) Capital presupposes profit, which presupposes inequity in the relation between buyer and seller; the seller, as dependent on the charity or interest of the buyer, is in a disadvantaged state. The least amount of money a capitalist should pay his commodity is, in theory, that amount which is equal to its value.

ALIENATION & APPROPRIATION

The modern proletariat, as born in the state of wage-labour, is initially alienated from the means of production; industry and machinery compound the problem. The modern worker is specialized, yet “the specialized worker produces no commodities. It is only the common product of all the specialized workers that becomes a commodity.” (475) The capitalist must subject their laborers to their desire for capital, the relations between worker and capitalist take on a hierarchical quality. Labor, human labor, in most industry, becomes subordinate not only to the will of the capitalist but to machinery; as subject to their pace of production. The laborer slowly becomes estranged from the means of production, as one, they do not own the machinery or factory nor the raw materials. Neither are the workers the direct producers of commodities, as it is the machine, with human help, that produces the commodity. They are alienated in the process of producing itself; specialization and division of labor mean that the laborer has a smaller hand in the entire production of a single commodity. Finally and most fundamentally, labor is only socially-useful, stripping the human of it automaticity as far as ends in production, and its oftentimes so, so very boring. Assembly lines? Retail? Restaurant Jobs? Call centers? All so inconsequential. I would be similarly bored plowing a field, but at least I’d know I was doing it only for myself.

Machines have the additional quality of creating a reserve army of laborers or rather facilitating its creation. With the desire to accumulate capital comes a need to produce surplus-value, which is made easier if ‘scab-labour’ can be utilized. In the case that the current labour force decided it was not getting paid enough and quit with the pretense of using it as a

negotiation tactic, the capitalist can find replacements who would rather earn the exploitative wage than no wage at all. “Taking them as a whole, the general movements of wages are exclusively regulated by the expansion and contraction of the industrial reserve army, and these again correspond to the periodic changes of the industrial cycle...” (790)

The extraction of surplus value from the worker is an underhanded process that is as necessary as it is compelling for the accumulation of capital. Yet in most industry, the laborers are not the only concern that the capitalist may have. General upkeep of machinery must account for a part of their investment, and since machinery itself does not produce surplus-value, the general upkeep of machinery is a precondition to purchasing labour. Surplus-value is not only created for profit and circulation, but also for maintenance of those tools of industry that are owned by the capitalist.

“The means of production are at once changed into means for the absorption of the labour of others. It is now no longer the labourer that employs the means of production, but the means of production that employ the labourer. Instead of being consumed by him as material elements of his productive activity, they consume him as the ferment necessary to their own life-process, and the life-process of capital consists only in its movement as value constantly expanding, constantly multiplying itself.” (11.1)

Nonetheless, the labourer, in the U.S., in Europe and in India, all have to sell their labour-power, thus converting their labour into a commodity itself. In order for the capitalist to be the best capitalist they can be, they must strive to maximize their profits. The worker alienates himself from their labour-power, the capitalist must also alienate the worker from sentience and humanity. Workers are labour, labour is a cost element and the capitalist is simply the cost-reducer, a rational miser. (254)

It is in this former characterization of workers as objects, as ‘cost-elements,’ that we find Locke in Marx’s analysis. To labor is to turn ‘communal into private’. The individual's propriety

of themselves is not exclusive to a market economy, but is a large facet of it, as commodity exchange requires a certain objective equality in workers and product, respectively - value is determined by the market, the source for this objective valuation. Locke believes that ‘the reason why [men] enter into society, is the preservation of their property.’ The most valuable of all possessions is one’s life, yet one’s life, according to Locke, is in many ways defined by one’s possessions. The abstracted possessions I allude to - i.e., cars, clothing, watches - are not literally unified with the human, as existing inside or on them; thus, while possessions can enlarge a sphere of influence, they also create cause for concern, because they must be constantly accounted for. Property, in a society of buyers and sellers, becomes that which one purchases, and rightfully so. The exchange of money for a commodity guarantees the purchaser ownership and licence over what they purchase. In a capitalist market economy, it seems as if this relationship of owner to property is manifest in the dynamic between capital and labor. Labour-power is what the proletariat sells to the capitalist, it is the power which the worker possesses to work.

“By the purchase of labour power, the capitalist incorporates labour, as a living ferment, with the lifeless constituents of the product. From his point of view, the labour-process is nothing more than the consumption of the commodity purchased, i. e., of labour-power.” (292)

The capitalist market uses this ‘living ferment’ in order to create profit for the capitalist, the market mediates quantity of profit or loss. Profit is largely synonymous with surplus-value; this surplus-value lies at the heart of oppositions between labour and capital. Labour becomes gradually exploited (“the less is the labour time required for the production of an article, the less is the amount of labour crystallised in that article, and the less is its value”) as surplus value is created. (131) Capitalism seeks to make capital appropriate value by producing surplus value;

capitalism at once produces value, surplus value, and capital. Yet it is antagonistically forged by the forces of labour and capital; while the proletariat sells their labour, the capitalist seeks more capital and is compelled to do what is necessary in order to create surplus-value. Labour's use value *derives* from it having an exchange value given to it by the market; its actual use-value *comes* from labour's ability to transfer the value of machines and raw materials into finished products, as well as its ability to create a surplus-value. "The capitalist production presupposes increase in wealth," every contract is drafted with this in mind, that in order to maintain and thrive as a capitalist, they must increasing their ability to purchase, which comes from creation of surplus-value. Capital requires capital, which requires surplus-value, which is re-invested in the cycle.

"Hence it is self-evident that the labourer is nothing else, his whole life through, than labour-power, that therefore all his disposable time is by nature and law labour-time, to be devoted to the self-expansion of capital. Time for education, for intellectual development, for the fulfilling of social functions and for social intercourse, for the free-play of his bodily and mental activity, even the rest time of Sunday... – moonshine!" (375)

The capitalist has constant capital and variable capital:

the former is that capital "which is represented by the means of production, by the raw material, auxiliary material and the instruments of labour," which "does not, in the process of production, undergo any quantitative alteration of value." The latter, "that part of capital, represented by labour-power," which "does, in the process of production, undergo an alteration of value. It both reproduces the equivalent of its own value, and also produces an excess, a surplus-value, which may itself vary..." (8.1).

Surplus-value precipitates from labour-power, and does so in two manners, absolutely and relatively:

"The surplus-value produced by prolongation of the working day, I call absolute surplus-value. On the other hand, the surplus-value arising from the curtailment of the necessary labour-time, and from the corresponding alteration in the respective lengths of the two components of the working day, I call relative surplus-value." (12.1)

Relative surplus-value is created by increasing productivity and efficiency, seen through the enlightenment, the industrial revolution and now the information age.

“The shortening of the working day is, therefore, by no means what is aimed at, in capitalist production, when labour is economised by increasing its productiveness. It is only the shortening of the labour-time, necessary for the production of a definite quantity of commodities, that is aimed at. The fact that the workman, when the productiveness of his labour has been increased, produces, say 10 times as many commodities as before, and thus spends one-tenth as much labour-time on each, by no means prevents him from continuing to work 12 hours as before, nor from producing in those 12 hours 1,200 articles instead of 120.” (438)

The objectification of labour-power leads to human exploitation. To a certain extent, the human, and in turn their labour-power, purchased by an employer is theirs. One would hardly think that one's property, one's possessions, are something to abuse; if anything, possessions are valued and utilized. Why, then, are humans adversely affected by this relationship? The main reason for exploitation lies in that the capitalist doesn't purchase a human itself, simply its labour-power. Alienating the laborer from its actual existence laboring is essentially what labour-power assumes; the laborer equates time laboring at a certain intensity. As such, the capitalist, the employer, the buyer of labour-power is moved to consider themselves as dealing with quantified labor and products, not actual labor itself, i.e. the conditions of the human laborer. The buyer of labour-power, as 'utilizing' their property through creation of surplus-value, is in fact acting rightly in a market. If humans are simply seen as labour-power, labour-power potentially purchased and valorized, it is simply a quality of an industrious buyer or seller to profit off of their possessions and thus the labour-power they command. Commanding labour-power in a capitalist market becomes the pivot upon which one can accumulate power, i.e. capital. Surplus value is produced by suppressing labour value and rendering a production process more efficient; the latter increases labour-power. The relationship promoted is between property and owner, where the owner simply acts in line with the industrial and competitive nature of the market.

EXPROPRIATION

“Capitalist production presupposes the preexistence of considerable masses of capital and of labour power in the hands of producers of commodities supposing a primitive accumulation preceding capitalistic accumulation; an accumulation not the result of the capitalistic mode of production, but its starting point,”

Labor is essential appropriated by those that purchase or come to own the means of production through expropriation. Without expropriation, there is no coercion to work for the capitalist and thus no specialization, no efficiency, no large-scale profits. Privatization follows expropriation and allows for private ownership of means of production, of the commodities produced, of surplus-value created, all owing to a desire to privately accumulate capital. Capital makes manifest a social organization of private owners of labour, with discrete intentions and interest, all competing against themselves and others for the more command of the market. Thus, as that which dictates more social relation than it doesn't, i.e, capitalism, has its decisions made by independent interests, who have been shown to concern themselves primarily with capital and its accumulation.

"The economic structure of capitalist society has grown out of the economic structure of feudal society. The dissolution of the latter set free the elements of the former...The starting point of the development that gave rise to the wage labourer as well as to the capitalist, was the servitude of the labourer. The advance consisted in a change of form of this servitude, in the transformation of feudal exploitation into capitalist exploitation." (875)

Social relations, as stemming naturally from observation and self-reflection, come to fruition in society as ‘artificial’ inequalities of “wealth, rank...power, and personal merit,” and “wealth...can be readily used to buy all the rest.” (end of part 1) For Rousseau, there is little hope that continued existence in societies will relieve the bonds created by sociality, i.e. these new social roles. The mutual exclusivity of nature and society, as that separated by communication, becomes alarming, as self-improvement is deemed inevitable, and thus sociality always

culminates in some war, some conflict. What is previously used by Hobbes and Locke as the mitigating force for times of war or anarchy, i.e. a social contract, is repainted by Rousseau as fundamentally detrimental to human equality and happiness. Rousseau presents the social contract as contrived, it is “the most cunning project that ever entered the human mind,” impressed upon the poor by the rich by “pressure of necessity.” The social contract is displayed as the cure for the oppression caused by potential and actual injustice in anarchy, but actually operates by protecting, through the law, those with the most to lose. (121) "By setting up a system of positive law," that accompanies a social contract (in many ways, a constitution), "they are transforming existing possessions into permanent legal property." (Cranston, *Noble Savages*, 303) Not only does the social contract impose fetters on the poor, and perpetuates their alienation from wealth, but, according to Rousseau, is made in order to help the wealthy become wealthier.

...

Hobbes manifest human qualities rooted in competition, which are also common critiques of individuals in a capitalist society, i.e. incessant desire, for power, for money, as which that facilitates acquisition. Locke notes an obsession with privatization, or rather propriety, that is essential to a capitalist market. Rousseau is literally writing his discourse citing wealth inequity as the root and benefactor of all social inequity. Contemporaneously, this very issue Rousseau displays, i.e, social inequity as a product of wealth inequity, has been largely attributed to a capitalist economic system.

Hobbes, as the father of the social contract, has set the tone for the investigations into the state of natural and social human. Whether his concern for equality was completely benevolent, a product of introspection and external scientific stimuli or simply a necessary solution for imminent changes in modes of production and thus in the social strata, is up for determination. Hobbes constructs his contracted society as one that needs the market due to inherent dispositions. Both Locke and Hobbes, although fundamentally describing different 'humans,' both draw from a similar source in characterizing society and its members. Thus, could it be that human is as Hobbes describes because of the market; that market economies breed the type of humans that Hobbes identifies? And furthermore, although man has changed, as evidenced by how differently humans are constructed in our three states of nature, are all authors not subjected to similar social structures, i.e., similar economic structures? If one's insatiable need is ultimately momentarily quelled only through advancement or sustainment of one's relative social standing, is Hobbes' for power any different than the desire to maintain wealth ascribed to the devious contractors Rousseau identifies?

ANTINOMY OF RIGHTS, WAGES

The desire for capital that is central to capitalism creates a very glaring oppositional relationship: capitalists seek to lengthen the working day/increase workload without increasing wages, devalue labour and reap the benefits of production. The laborers wish to reduce the working day without reduction of wages and cut workloads in order to increase their *real* wages. Yet “as capitalist, he is only capital personified. Their soul is the soul of capital. But capital has one single life impulse, the tendency to create value and surplus-value, to make its constant factor, the means of production, absorb the greatest possible amount of surplus labour.” (342) The antinomy that Marx notes is between this propulsive capitalist drive and the complaints of the labourer who explains that “what you [the capitalist] gain in labour, I lose in substance of labour...I demand a normal working day because, like every other seller, I demand the value of my commodity.” (343) It is the buyer against the seller, and “between equal rights, force decides.” (344)

Capitalist wealth is not simply commodities accumulated, capitalist wealth lives in value production and appropriation of surplus-value, its ability to valorize, or create surplus value relative, or in proportion to itself. Machines, industry, progress is not to blame, it is simply that Marx understands the potential for exploitation; in a social landscape where those with the most means seek to retain those means as well as add to them, machines become a powerful tool in subordinating labour for the pursuit of increased capital.

“If then, on the one hand, the capitalist mode of production presents itself to us historically, as a necessary condition to the transformation of the labour-process into a social process, so, on the other hand, this social form of the labour-process presents itself, as a method employed by capital for the more profitable exploitation of labour, by increasing that labour’s productiveness.” (453)

Capitalism is supposedly an act of exchange; labor is sold for a wage. In actuality, there are certain social fetters that facilitate the perpetuating of the negative aspects of the labor/capital relationship. Labor is not necessarily coerced, but instead is made socially necessary; the worker must subject himself to the will of the market and the capitalist.

"But if a surplus labouring population is a necessary product of accumulation or of the development of wealth on a capitalist basis, this surplus population becomes, conversely, the lever of capitalistic accumulation, nay, a condition of existence of the capitalist mode of production. It forms a disposable industrial reserve army, that belongs to capital quite as absolutely as if the latter had bred it at its own cost. Independently of the limits of the actual increase of population, it creates, for the changing needs of the self-expansion of capital, a mass of human material always ready for exploitation..." (784)

Social conditions where either food or wealth are abundant and dispersed amongst the populace work contrary to capitalism. Implementation of the capitalist mode of production does not necessarily jive well with the notion that a worker could redefine the conditions of work.

Labour-power, as noted previously, is a commodity that is evaluated by the market, the wages that the capitalist exchanges with their worker is essentially the price of, the price for, this commodity. But wait, "The wage form thus extinguishes every trace of the division of the working day into necessary labour and surplus labour, into paid and unpaid labour. All labour appears as paid labour." Changes in absolute or relative surplus-value production are known only to the owner of the means of production; although the laborer sells their labor-power, the laborer sells their *time* at a given rate of intensity, and this time is extended or, more often used relatively more efficiently without renegotiation of wages. Valorization of labour is in complete opposition to the acquisition and appropriation of surplus-value, for it diminishes the gap between appropriated value and variable capital needed for labour.

As we've noted, the capitalist always have their constant capital, so even in the cases that labour is in demand, the capitalist will subordinate labour to their desire to accumulate.

Production will slow, and as a result, labour-power is re-evaluated to fit the desires of the owner of means of production, or the reserve labour will be tapped into, turning former labour into reserve-labour, as what was previously reserve-labour is called upon. "Relative surplus population is, therefore, the pivot upon which the law of demand and supply of labour works. It confines the field of action of this law within the limits absolutely convenient to the activity of exploitation and to the domination of capital." (792) Labour-power is continuously sought as the recipient of devaluation, the capitalist exploits to accumulate. Historically, the working class has been moved in a direction that is to their collective detriment. They, we, I, receive a smaller portion of the value produced without even knowing. As the process perpetuates, we are exposed to the ills yet slowly cement our places in this economic system.

CONCLUSION

Our social contracts theories are foundational to a current relative abundance of representatively operating polities. As such, modern political institutions, although created through the lens of equality, are subject to faults in execution, because we, the components of the state, are ourselves faulty. Our faults are found in Hobbes with our 'desire,' with Locke our obsession with property, and with Rousseau, our economic inequity. In joining the three human conditions, one's we take for granted, as incessantly desiring (for power), appropriating, and existing in a state of wealth disparity, we have a formula that is remarkably similar to the actions and conditions of humans as demonstrated in Marx's analysis of Capital: incessant concern for private production of commodities and money, expropriation of land and property, and alienation of means of production as well as alienating the worker from command of their own value. If human dispositions could be responsible for difficulties in socially reinforcing equality, and laboring is a condition of the human existence that pervades as our desire and appropriation pervades, it isn't far-fetched to assume that that which dictates labour may also have large social bearing, and thus a further bearing on implementing our theories of equality.

Desire, property and wealth inequity drove the enlightenment to revolutions in society and then politics, and as a result of political changes, social changes were cemented. Our current age is a new enlightenment, are we ourselves headed for a drastic change? With such unprecedented access to information and to each other, will this age of mass-education force a move from capitalism into another mode of production? Now that the means to educate and to organize are in the hands of the workers, the minority holders of wealth, those with the least

property, with the least power available for attainment, is revolution imminent? Or must a new mode of production arise before we are moved to change out social relations?

Does capitalism itself provide humans with our faults? Does it exacerbate our harmful dispositions? Does Capitalism itself undermine equality? Or is it simply an integral element maintaining inequity? Or neither? Is capitalism simply providing an individual that is prone to self-victimization an avenue through which to feel oppressed? Is it simply a relation between employer and employee in which the employer seeks to benignly capitalize on their worker? Is it a product of hard work and frugality on the part of those who come to own means of production? Or is it a product of subsistence on inter-generational wealth, and the possession of accidental advantages that allow one human to access the means of production rather than another...inter-generational wealth that has been maintained due to the conscious and subconscious alienation of the working class from manipulation of production?

I'm honestly as lost as you are, all I know, all I feel is that the 'human' is changing, actually and symbolically. We are adapting to information, and creating language to manifest parts of our being that were before sources of shame (LGBTQ+, non-gendered language) or socially reinforced and normalized states of being (privilege). Our social contractors were speaking to a majority of men, who did not value the lives of POC, Women, the LGBTQ+ community, the disabled nor really anyone that wasn't white and male. THIS IS A GIVEN. Yet, it has not invalidated what has been stated, we are all equal; it's just been a long road to where we have gotten, and the road lies ahead, surely riddled with resistance. The destination is amorphous, it grows as equality accommodates for changes in the human. Progress is expected, but as Marx has demonstrated, it must be scrutinized.

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