

## **The Permanence of Primitive Accumulation: Commodity Fetishism and Social Constitution**

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### **Introduction**

Over the last decade there has been an increase in the trafficking of women and children, prostitution of slavery. New markets have emerged in human organs and babies. The proprietors of labour power are confronted not only with new forms of exploitation (see Caffentzis, 1999). They are also transformed into a saleable resource to be operated on and sold, with babies being produced for export (Federici, 1997). Some commentators have suggested that we witness the re-emergence of conditions of primitive accumulation (see, amongst others, Dalla Costa, 1995a, 1995b). These works show clearly that Marx's insight according to which 'a great deal of capital, which appears today in the United States without certificate of birth, was yesterday, in England, the capitalist blood of children' (Marx, 1983, p. 707), remains a powerful judgement of contemporary conditions.

This essay argues that primitive accumulation describes not just the period of transition that led to the emergence of capitalism. Primitive accumulation is, in fact, the foundation of the capitalist social relations and thus the social constitution through which the exploitation of labour subsists. In other words, contemporary developments of primitive accumulation are not 'chance' developments. The argument, then, is that primitive accumulation is a permanently reproduced accumulation. It is the condition and presupposition of capital's existence. In short, primitive accumulation is a constantly reproduced accumulation, be it in terms of the renewed separation of new populations from the means of production and subsistence, or in terms of the reproduction of the wage relation in the 'established' relations of capital. The former seeks to bring new workers under the command of capital and the latter to contain them as an exploitable human resource - the so-called human factor of production. Capitalist social relations rest on the divorce of the mass of the population from the means of production. This divorce was the result of primitive accumulation and it is the presupposition on which the capitalist exploitation of labour rests. Primitive accumulation, then, is a necessary element of

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<sup>1</sup> I wish to acknowledge Massimo De Angelis' very useful comments on an earlier draft of this essay

capitalism. - better: it is the presupposition of capital and the result of its reproduction. In short, primitive accumulation is the social constitution of capitalist social relations.

### **Primitive Accumulation and Capital**

Within the Marxist tradition, primitive accumulation is usually seen as the pre-history of capitalism. Capitalism developed out of primitive accumulation and once capitalism had been established, the history of primitive accumulation - a history of blood and fire where sheep replaced humans during the clearing of estates - is seen to be just that: history. Primitive accumulation, then, is seen as a period of historical transition from pre-capitalist to capitalist social relations. The time specific systematic character of primitive accumulation refers to the 'clearing of the estates', that is the separation of labour from the means of production and the natural conditions of labour.

Marxist writing on imperialism, especially Luxemburg (1963), implicitly acknowledged that 'capitalism proper' in the imperialist centres depends for its own expanded reproduction on the subjugation of new populations to the capitalist exchange relations. Luxemburg, while not denying the conventional view that primitive accumulation is a distinct period at the dawn of capitalism, accepted nevertheless the coincidence of constituted capitalist relations with primitive accumulation. Importantly, however, primitive accumulation was not seen as an 'original accumulation' but, rather, it was a consequence of the contradictory logic of capitalism concerning the realisation of value extracted from the worker in the form of profit: the accumulation of capital necessitated the opening of new markets in order to realise extracted surplus value in exchange. In this view, then, primitive accumulation derives from the contradictory logic of capitalist accumulation and its crisis. This made it possible for Luxemburg to accept the view that primitive accumulation marks the period of transition to capitalism and to argue, at least by implication, that primitive accumulation is a feature of the crisis-ridden character of capitalist accumulation. Amin, writing in the 1970s, focuses this issue well: the mechanisms of primitive accumulation 'do not belong only to the prehistory of capitalism; they are contemporary as well. It is these forms of primitive accumulation, modified but persistent, to the advantage of the centre, that form the domain of the theory of accumulation on a world scale' (Amin, 1974, p. 3).<sup>2</sup> The understanding of primitive accumulation as a mere period of transition fails to see that the divorce of labour from her

means of production is not just the historical premise of capitalist social relations but, importantly, the condition and presupposition of the capitalist exploitation of labour. As Marx (1973, p. 515) put it, 'the exchange of labour for labour - seemingly the condition of the workers' property - rests on the foundation of the workers' propertylessness'. Capitalist social relations are founded on the separation of labour from the means of production and this entails that capitalist accumulation rests on the continuously reproduced divorce of labour from her means. In sum, the separation of human purposive productive power from her means is constitutive of the fetishism of the commodity form. The following section focuses on this issue.

### **Primitive Accumulation and Social Constitution**

Marx's critique of political economy made clear that 'capital' is not a 'thing' and he argues that the standpoint of capital and wage labour is the same.<sup>3</sup> Capital is not a thing because it is a definite social relationship and the standpoint of capital and wage labour is the same because both are perverted forms of social reproduction.<sup>4</sup> For Marx, each 'form', even the most simple form like, for example, the commodity, 'is already an inversion and causes relations between people to appear as attributes of things' (Marx, 1972, p. 508) or, more emphatically, each form is a 'perverted form' (Marx, 1962, p. 90).<sup>5</sup> The most developed perversion, the constituted fetish of capitalist society, is the relationship of capital to itself, of a thing to itself (see Marx, 1972, p. 515). The extreme expression of this perversion is interest bearing capital: the 'most externalised and most fetish-like form' of capital (Marx, 1966, p. 391). And the 'wage' - the defining characteristic of wage labour? Labour - wages, or price of labour' is an expression that 'is just as irrational as a yellow logarithm' (ibid., p. 818). What, then, needs to be explained is not the relation between capital and wage labour in its direct and immediate sense but rather the social constitution upon which this relationship is founded and through which it subsists. In other words, what needs to be explained is why human social productive practice takes the form of capital. Hence, Marx's question, 'why does this content

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<sup>2</sup> This section draws on De Angelis (1999). De Angelis' insightful conceptualisation of primitive accumulation as a constantly renewed accumulation is taken up in this essay. See also Bonefeld (1988; 2001).

<sup>3</sup> See Marx (1966, Ch. 48).

<sup>4</sup> See Marx (1966, p. 880; 1972, p. 491).

<sup>5</sup> In the English translation the German verrückt Form, is translated as 'absurd form' (Marx, 1983, p. 80). The translation is 'absurd'. In German, 'verrückt' has two meanings: verrückt (mad) and ver-rückt (displaced). Thus, the notion of 'perverted forms' means that these forms are both mad and displaced. In the following 'perversion' or 'perverted' will be used in this double sense.

[human social productive practice] assume that form [the form of capital]' (Marx, 1962, p. 95). This question raises the issue of the social constitution of value.<sup>6</sup> The critical dimension of this insight is this: 'it is not the unity of living and active humanity with the natural, inorganic conditions of their metabolic exchange with nature, and hence their appropriation of nature, which requires explanation or is the result of historic process, but rather the separation between these inorganic conditions of human existence and this active existence, a separation which is completely posited only in the relation of wage labour and capital' (Marx, 1973, p. 489). The class antagonism between capital and labour rests on and subsists through the separation of human social practice from its means. There can be no capitalist accumulation without the continued reproduction of labour's divorce from her conditions.

Commodity exchange and 'money' pre-date capitalist production. For money, however, to be 'transformed into capital, the prerequisites for capitalist production must exist' (Marx, 1972, p. 272). The first historical presupposition is the separation of labour from her conditions and 'therefore the existence of the means of labour as capital' (ibid.). For Marx, this separation comprises a world's history. 'Commodity and money are transformed into capital because the worker ... is compelled to sell his labour itself (to sell directly his labour power) as a commodity to the owner of the objective conditions of labour. This separation is the prerequisite for the relationship of capital and wage labour in the same way as it is the prerequisite for the transformation of money (or of the commodity by which it is represented) into capital' (ibid., p. 89). The constitution of human purposful activity as relations between the things themselves is based on this separation and, once established, obtains as the constitutive presupposition of capitalist social relations (see Krahl, 1971, p. 223). In sum, the separation of labour from her conditions is the precondition of their existence as capital and 'is the foundation of [capitalist] production...[and] is given in capitalist production' (Marx, 1972, p. 272).

Separation means that the conditions of work confront labour 'as alien capital' (Marx, 1972, p. 422) because the conditions of 'production are lost to [the labourer] and have assumed the shape of alien property' (ibid.). The divorce, then, of human purposful practice from her conditions and their transformation into an independent force, i.e. capital, transforms the product of labour into a commodity and makes the commodity appear as 'a product of capital' (Marx, 1966, p. 880). This entails 'the materialisation of the social features of production and the personification of the material foundations of production' (ibid.). Thus, the capitalist and wage-labourer 'are as such merely embodiments, personifications of capital and wage-labour;

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<sup>6</sup> I am quoting from the German edition of Capital since the English edition omits this all important sentence.

definite social characteristics stamped upon individuals by the process of social production' (ibid.). In this way, primitive accumulation appears suspended (aufgehoben) in the commodity form. Yet, however suspended, it is the constitutive condition of capitalist social relations as relations between things. The presuppositions of capital, 'which originally appeared as conditions of its becoming - and hence could not spring from its action as capital - now appear as results of its own realization, reality, as posited by it - not as conditions of its arising, but as results of its presence' (Marx, 1973, p. 460). In short, primitive accumulation is not just an historical epoch which pre-dates capitalist social relations and from which capital emerged. It entails, fundamentally, the constitutive presupposition through which the class antagonism between capital and labour subsists - primitive accumulation is the 'foundation of capitalist reproduction' (Marx, 1983, p. 585) and therefore the foundation of wage labour.

Primitive accumulation is the centrifugal point around which resolves the specific capitalist mode of existence of labour power, the determination of human purposeful activity in the form of a labouring commodity.<sup>7</sup> While the capitalist production and exchange relations subsist through the commodity form, primitive accumulation is the secrete history of the determination of human purposeful practice in the form of a wage-labouring commodity. The commodity form subsists through this determination, presupposes it and, through its form, denies it in the name of abstract equality and freedom. This insight is focused in Marx's critique of fetishism: 'The sum total of the labour of all these private individuals and private groups makes up the aggregate of social labour. Since the producers do not come into social contact with each other until they exchange their products, the specific social character of each producer's labour does not show itself except in the act of exchange. In other words, the labour of the individual asserts itself as a part of the labour of society, only by means of the relations which the act of exchange establishes directly between the products, and indirectly, through them, between producers. To the latter, therefore, the relations connecting the labour of one individual with that of the rest appear, not as direct social relations between individuals at work, but as what they really are, material relations between persons and social relations between things' (Marx, 1983, pp. 77-8). The social individual, then, subsists as such an individual not in an 'immediate' sense but in a 'mediated' sense: it is mediated through the commodity form. The commodity form poses the totality of bourgeois social relations and as such a totality posits the basis of the productive practice of all individuals as alienated individuals. The commodity form includes not only the activity of each individual it is, also, independent of this connection from the individual. The divorce, then, of labour from its

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<sup>7</sup> On this see: Negt and Kluge (1981).

conditions entails not only the complete independence of the individuals from one another but, also, their complete dependence on the seemingly impersonal relations established by the commodity form. Thus, the independence of the individual is an 'illusion, and so more accurately called indifference' (Marx, 1973, p. 162). Their independence is that of atomised market individuals that are 'free to collide with one another and to engage in exchange within this freedom' (ibid., pp. 163-64). The separation of human activity from its conditions is thus not only the real generation process of capital but, also, once constituted, the 'real' process of the commodity form. In other words, primitive accumulation is suspended in the commodity form as its 'subterranean' condition, constitutive presupposition, and historical basis.

The 'logic of separation' (cf. Negri, 1984) entails that the individual capitalist has constantly to expand 'his capital, in order to preserve it, but extend it he cannot, except by means of progressive accumulation' (Marx, 1983, p. 555). The risk is bankruptcy. Thus, mediated through competition, personified capital is spurred into action. 'Fanatically bent on making value expand itself, [the personified capitalist] ruthlessly forces the human race to produce for production's sake', increasing 'the mass of human beings exploited by him' (ibid.). The positing of the results of human labour as a force over and above the social individual, including both the capitalist and the wage labourer, and the 'fanatic' bent to make workers work for the sake of work, is founded on the separation of labour from its means. 'The means of production become capital only in so far as they have become separated from labourer and confront labour as an independent power' (Marx, 1963, p. 408). In short, the freedom of labour from her conditions and their transformation into private property entails the capitalist property right to preserve abstract wealth through the 'sacrifice of "human machines" on the pyramids of accumulation' (Gambino, 1996, p. 55). The law of private property entails that 'labour capacity has appropriated for itself only the subjective conditions of necessary labour - the means of subsistence for actively producing labour capacity, i.e. for its reproduction as mere labour capacity separated from the conditions of its realization - and it has posited these conditions themselves as things, values, which confront it in an alien, commanding personification' (Marx, 1973, pp. 452-53). The logic of separation is the 'real process of capital' (Marx, 1972, p. 422). Indeed, as Marx argues, capital is 'the separation of the conditions of production from the labourer' (ibid.).

In sum, Marx does not conceive of capital as a thing in-itself which, endowed with its own objective logic, exchanges itself with itself and that, by doing so, generates profit. Rather, it is conceived as a social relationship between labour and the conditions of labour which are 'rendered independent in relation' to labour (ibid. 422). 'The loss of the conditions of labour by

the workers is expressed in the fact that these conditions of labour become independent as capital or as things at the disposal of the capitalist' (ibid. p. 271). Primitive accumulation, then, is not just a 'period' from which capitalist social relations emerged. Rather, it is the historical 'act' that constitutes the capitalist social relations as a whole. As Marx put it, this separation 'forms [bildet] the conception [Begriff] of capital' (Marx, 1966, p. 246). The separation of labour from its conditions and the concentration of these in the hands of 'non-workers' (Marx, 1978, p. 116) posits capital as a perverted form of human social practice where the 'process of production has mastery over man, instead of being controlled by him' (Marx, 1983, p. 85). The class struggle, then, that freed master from serf and serf from master is constitutive of the relation between capital and labour.<sup>8</sup> Primitive accumulation, then, persists, within the capital relation, as its constitutive pre-positing action.<sup>9</sup> This 'action' lies at the heart of capital's reproduction: the pre-positing action of the separation of labour from her means is not the historical result of capital but its presupposition, a presupposition which renders capital a social production relation in and through the divorce of labour's social productive force from her conditions. In short, class struggle is the 'logical and historical presupposition for the existence of individual capitalists and workers' and 'the basis on which exploitation' rests (Clarke, 1982, p. 80).<sup>10</sup>

The systematic character of primitive accumulation subsists, then, in suspended form through the constituted relations of capital. The separation is not the result of capital but its genesis and it is now posited as the presupposition of capital. It no longer 'figures' as the condition of its historical emergence but, rather, as the constitutive presupposition of its fanatic bent on reproducing human relations as relations between commodity owners and that is as social categories of capitalist reproduction. In short, the separation 'begins with primitive accumulation, appears as a permanent process in the accumulation and concentration of capital, and expresses itself finally as centralisation of existing capitals in a few hands and a deprivation of many of their capital (to which expropriation is now changed)' (Marx, 1966, p. 246).

The terror of separation, of capitalism's original beginning, weights like a nightmare on the social practice of human purposeful activity. The commodification of human productive power as wage labour means that human social practice confronts its conditions as alien conditions, as conditions of exploitation, and as conditions which appear, and so exist contradictorily, as relations between things. 'Man is confronted by things, labour is confronted

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<sup>8</sup> On this see Holloway (1995).

<sup>9</sup> On this see Psychopedis (1992).

<sup>10</sup> On this also Holloway (1995) and Bonefeld (1995).

by its own materialised conditions as alien, independent, self-contained subjects, personifications, in short, as someone else's property and, in this form, as "employers" and "commanders" of labour itself, which they appropriate instead of being appropriated by it. The fact that value - whether it exists as money or as commodities - and in the further development the conditions of labour confront the worker as the property of other people, as independent properties, means simply that they confront him as the property of the non-worker or, at any rate, that, as a capitalist, he confronts them [the conditions of labour] not as a worker but as the owner of value, etc., as the subject in which these things possess their own will, belong to themselves and are personified as independent forces' (Marx, 1972, pp. 475-76). Capital presupposes labour as wage labour and wage labour presupposes capital as capital. Each is the precondition of the other. 'Every pre-condition of the social reproduction process is at the same time its result, and every one of its results appears simultaneously as its pre-condition. All the production relations within which the process moves are therefore just as much its products as they are its conditions. The more one examines its nature as it really is, [the more one sees] that in the last form it becomes increasingly consolidated, so that independently of the process these conditions appear to determine it, and their own relations appear to those competing in the process as objective conditions, objective forces, aspects of things, the more so as in the capitalist process, every element, even the simplest, the commodity for example, is already an inversion and causes relations between people to appear as attributes of things and as relations of people to the social attributes of things' (Marx, 1972, pp. 507-8). The perverted form of value presents, in other words, the mode of existence of human purposeful activity the form of impersonal relations, conferring on the human being the indignity of an existence [Dasein] as a personification of things. Thus, concerning the capital-labour relation, 'the workers produces himself as labour capacity, as well as the capital confronting him'. At the same time, 'the capitalist reproduces himself as capital as well as the living labour capacity confronting him' (Marx, 1973, p. 458). 'Each reproduces itself, by reproducing the other, its negation. The capitalist produces labour as alien; labour produces the product as alien' (ibid.).

Once the logic of separation is taken for granted, i.e. once its constitutive presupposition is merely assumed as a historical past, the logic of separation can be understood merely in terms of the constituted fetish of capital as the subject that structures the actions of human agents. Orthodox accounts feed on this separation between (capitalist) structure and (human) agency.<sup>11</sup> As Horkheimer (1985, p. 246) put it, the separation of 'genesis' from 'existence' constitutes the blind spots of dogmatic thought. This does, however, not mean that

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<sup>11</sup> For a critique, see Bonefeld (1993).

orthodox approaches can not provide an analysis of value. But they can do so only in terms of labour as a human agency, and in terms of value as embodied labour. This theory of value merely shows that 'the development of social labour produces either a process of accumulation of value or a complex norm of distribution' (Negri, 1992, p. 70). In this view, the perverted existence of human relations as relations between things is assumed to be true in practice and the driving force of capitalist development becomes to be seen as capital itself.<sup>12</sup> Such analytical offerings merely confirm that 'myth' is not a condition merely of former times but, rather, that it continues to exercise its domination over thought itself. Hence Marx's insistence on demystification: Neither 'nations' nor 'history' nor capital have made war. 'History does nothing, does not "possess vast wealth", does not "fight battles"! It is Man, rather, the real, living Man who does all that, who does possess and fight, it is not "history" that uses Man as a means to pursue its ends, as if it were a person apart. History is nothing but the activity of Man pursuing its ends' (Marx/Engels, 1980, p. 98). Marx's critique of fetishism is fundamentally a critique of unreflected presuppositions: it shows the necessity of capitalist forms in the light of their social constitution. In short, and as Marcuse reports, 'the constitution of the world occurs behind the backs of the individuals, yet it is their work' (1988, p. 151).

Without an understanding of the social constitution of the perverted world of capital, there could be no critique of capital without, at the same time, espousing it as performing a useful economic function. This, then, would lead to the view of capital as 'the subject' that embodies the logic of an abstract market structure whose empirical reality is mediated by class struggle and other social forces (Jessop, 1991). Against this theoretical rationalisation of capital as an extra-human force, it is only on the basis of an understanding of 'separation' that a critique of capital can be supplied: this critique breaks into the understanding of capitalist exploitation and accumulation as a constituted form and 'unhinges this constitution and marks the singularity and the dynamics of the antagonism which the law of labour comprehends' (Negri, 1992, p. 70). The capital relation is the historical product of labour's alienation from itself: Capital is 'the form assumed by the conditions of labour' (Marx, 1972, p. 492) and capital's existence rests not just on the exploitation of labour but, rather, on the continuous accumulation of capital through the progressive exploitation of labour (see Marx, 1983, p. 555). Labour's 'natural power' to maintain value and to create new value (cf. *ibid.*, p. 568) is commanded by capital in the production process which is, at the same time, the consumption process of living labour. It is the labourer who 'constantly produces material, objective wealth, but in the form of capital, of an alien power that dominates and exploits [the labourer]: and the

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<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Brenner (1998) where capitalist competition is emphasised as the constituting force of capitalist

capitalist as constantly produces labour-power, but in the form of a subjective source of wealth, separated from the objects in and by which it can alone be realised; in short he process the labourer, but as a wage-labourer. This incessant reproduction, this perpetuation of the labourer, is the sine qua non of capitalist production' (ibid., pp. 535-36). Thus, the contention that capitalist accumulation is not just based on the results of primitive accumulation but, instead, that primitive accumulation is the constitutive presupposition of the class antagonism between capital and labour. As Marx put it, capitalist 'accumulation merely presents as a continuous process what in primitive accumulation, appears as a distinct historical process, as the process of the emergence of capital' (Marx, 1972 p. 272; see also Marx, 1983, p. 688). There would be no capitalist accumulation without the reproduction of labour as 'object-less free labour' (Marx, 1973, p. 507). The social constitution of capitalist property rights is the divorce of labour from her means, object-less labour 'under the command of capital' (ibid., p. 508).

The presupposition of capitalist social reproduction is the freedom of labour from her condition; this presupposition informs and in-forms the real movement of capitalist social relations. Capital, 'fanatically bent on making value expand itself' (ibid., p. 555) can do no other than to intensify the division of labour so as to increase its productive power. There is no doubt that 'the subdivision of labour is the assassination of a people' (Urquhart, quoted in Marx, 1983, p. 343); yet it merely consolidates the 'original' separation of labour from its conditions through further and further fragmentations of the social labour process, dismembering Man [Mensch] (cf. Marx, 1977, p. 155). Still, however much social labour is fragmented, divided and subdivided, human cooperation remains 'the fundamental form of the capitalist mode of production' (Marx, 1983, p. 317). This cooperation exists against itself in the commodity-form that integrates the 'assassination of a people' with the respectful forms of equal and free exchange relations.

Labour 'is and remains the presupposition' of capital (Marx, 1973, p. 399). Capital cannot liberate itself from labour; it depends on the imposition of necessary labour, the constituent side of surplus labour, upon the world's working classes. It has to posit necessary labour at the same time as which it has to reduce necessary labour to the utmost in order to increase surplus value. This reduction develops labour's productive power and, at the same time, the real possibility of the realm of freedom.<sup>13</sup> The circumstance that less and less socially

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development. For critique see, Bonefeld (1999) and Lebowitz (1999).

<sup>13</sup> 'In fact, the realm of freedom actually begins only where labour which is determined by necessity and mundane considerations ceases; thus in the very nature of things it lies beyond the sphere of actual material production...Freedom in this field can only consist in socialised Man [Mensch], the associated producers, rationally regulating their interchange with Nature, bringing it under their common control, instead of being ruled by the blind forces of Nature...But it nonetheless still remains a realm of necessity. Beyond it begins that development of human energy which

necessary labour time is required to produce, for want of a better expression, the necessities of life, limits the realm of necessity and so allows the blossoming of what Marx characterised as the realm of freedom. Within capitalist society, this contradiction can be contained only through force (Gewalt), including not only the destruction of productive capacities, unemployment, worsening conditions, and widespread poverty, but also the destruction of human life through war, ecological disaster, famine, the burning of land, poisoning of water, devastation of communities, the production of babies for profit, the usage of the human body as a commodity to be exchanged or operated on, the industrialisation of human production through cloning etc. The existence of Man as a degraded, exploited, debased, forsaken and enslaved being, indicates that capitalist production is not production for humans - it is production through humans. In other words, the value form represents not just an abstraction from the real social individual. It is an abstraction that is 'true in practice' (cf. Marx, 1973, p. 105). The universal reduction of all specific human social practice to the one, some abstract form of labour, from the battlefield to the cloning laboratory, indicates that the separation which began with primitive accumulation appears now in the biotechnical determination to expropriate human beings. Capitalism has gone a long way since it, 'indifferent to life, was satisfied with nothing more than appropriating an excessive number of working hours'. It is now engaged in the production of human-workers. (Dalla Costa, 1995a, p. 21).

## Conclusion

The essay has argued that primitive accumulation is a constantly reproduced accumulation, be it in terms of the renewed separation of new populations from the means of production and subsistence, or in terms of the reproduction of the wage relation in the 'established' relations of capital. The former seeks to bring new workers under the command of capital (Dalla Costa, 1995a,b; Caffentzis, 1995) and the latter to contain them there as social categories 'freed' from their conditions.

'The society of the free and equal' (cf. Agnoli, 2000) or the 'mode of production of associated producers' (cf. Godelier, 2000), can not be achieved through a politics on behalf of the working class. As Marx (1983, p. 447) put it, 'to be a productive labourer is...not a piece of

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is an end in itself, the true realm of freedom, which, however, can blossom forth only with this realm of necessity as its basis' (Marx, 1966, p. 820). See the exchange between Wildcat and Holloway for a useful exchange on this issue (Wildcat, 1999).

luck, but a misfortune'. Theory on behalf of the working class leads to the acceptance of programs and tickets whose common basis is the everyday religion of bourgeois society: commodity fetishism. The emancipation of the working class can only be achieved by the working class itself; and this means the transcendence of the working class as a class and with it all classes. Marx called this transcendence of the working class as a social class by one name: communism. Emancipation means human emancipation. Communism entails the end of class, a classless society. The emancipation of the working class then means that Man 'recognises and organises his "forces propres" as social forces and thus no longer separates social forces from himself in the form of political forces' and material forces (Marx, 1964, p. 370).

Marx saw this new form of society anticipated in the 'community of revolutionary proletarians, who extend their own control over the conditions of their own existence and those of all members of society. It is as individuals that the individuals participate in it. It is exactly this combination of individuals (assuming the advanced stage of modern productive forces, of course) which puts the conditions of the free development and movement of individuals under their control - conditions which were previously abandoned to chance and had won an independent existence over and against the separate individuals precisely because of their separation as individuals' (Marx and Engels, 1962, p. 74). Paraphrasing Adorno (1975, p. 44), full-employment makes sense in a society where labour is no longer the measure of all things. In other words, then, and as this essay has argued, the labour theory of value presupposes the separation of human social practice from its conditions. It is this presupposition that constitutes the capitalist exploitation of labour and it is this presupposition that the struggle for human emancipation is about. Human cooperation has to be liberated from its antagonistic relations of capital; better: it has to emancipate itself from its capitalist form in order to assert itself as human cooperation who, no longer ruled by their own produced abstractions, control their own social conditions and existence. In short, for humans to enter into relationship with one another, not as separated individuals whose social existence is made manifest behind their backs through the commodity form, but as social individuals, as human dignities who are in control of their social conditions, the economic 'mastery of capital over man' has to be abolished so that man's social reproduction is 'controlled by him' (cf. Marx, 1983, p. 85).

Within capitalism, cooperation is a contradictory productive force. 'Not only have we here an increase in the productive power of the individual, by means of cooperation, but the creation of a new power, namely, the collective power of the masses' (Marx, 1983, p. 309). It is of course the case that the critique of political economy can be made manifest in practice only

when it has seized the masses; when, in other words, the masses are seized by the understanding that it is their own labour, their social practice, that produces a world that oppresses them (cf. Marx, 1975, p. 182). This world is a world of separation, of 'object-less' labour. What needs to be overcome, then, is the alienation of human social practice from her conditions. It is this alienation that constitutes the relationship between wage labour and capital. In sum, the struggle for human autonomy and that is, self-determination entails the transformation of the means of production into means of emancipation.

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