

KARL MARX

# Capital

A Critique of  
Political Economy

Volume One

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achieved by the more acute capitalist by means of throwing his money again and again into circulation.<sup>11</sup>

The independent form, i.e. the monetary form, which the value of commodities assumes in simple circulation, does nothing but mediate the exchange of commodities, and it vanishes in the final result of the movement. On the other hand, in the circulation M-C-M both the money and the commodity function only as different modes of existence of value itself, the money as its general mode of existence, the commodity as its particular or, so to speak, disguised mode.<sup>12</sup> It is constantly changing from one form into the other, without becoming lost in this movement; it thus becomes transformed into an automatic subject. If we pin down the specific forms of appearance assumed in turn by self-valorizing value in the course of its life, we reach the following elucidation: capital is money, capital is commodities.<sup>13</sup> In truth, however, value is here the subject\* of a process in which, while constantly assuming the form in turn of money and commodities, it changes its own magnitude, throws off surplus-value from itself considered as original value, and thus valorizes itself independently. For the movement in the course of which it adds surplus-value is its own movement, its valorization is therefore self-valorization [*Selbstverwertung*]. By virtue of being value, it has acquired the occult ability to add value to itself. It brings forth living offspring, or at least lays golden eggs.

As the dominant subject [*übergreifendes Subjekt*] of this process, in which it alternately assumes and loses the form of money and the form of commodities, but preserves and expands itself through all these changes, value requires above all an independent form by means of which its identity with itself may be asserted. Only in the shape of money does it possess this form. Money therefore forms the starting-point and the conclusion of every valorization process.

11. 'Things possess an infinite quality when moving in a circle which they lack when advancing in a straight line' (Galiani, op. cit., p. 156).

12. 'It is not the material which forms capital, but the value of that material' (J. B. Say, *Traité d'économie politique*, 3rd edn, Paris, 1817, Vol. 2, p. 429).

13. 'Currency (!) employed in producing articles . . . is capital' (Macleod, *The Theory and Practice of Banking*, London, 1855, Vol. 1, Ch. 1, p. 55). 'Capital is commodities' (James Mill, *Elements of Political Economy*, London, 1821, p. 74).

\*i.e. the independently acting agent.

It was £100, and now it is £110, etc. But the money itself is only one of the two forms of value. Unless it takes the form of some commodity, it does not become capital. There is here no antagonism, as in the case of hoarding, between the money and commodities. The capitalist knows that all commodities, however tattered they may look, or however badly they may smell, are in faith and in truth money, are by nature circumcised Jews, and, what is more, a wonderful means for making still more money out of money.

In simple circulation, the value of commodities attained at the most a form independent of their use-values, i.e. the form of money. But now, in the circulation M–C–M, value suddenly presents itself as a self-moving substance which passes through a process of its own, and for which commodities and money are both mere forms. But there is more to come: instead of simply representing the relations of commodities, it now enters into a private relationship with itself, as it were. It differentiates itself as original value from itself as surplus-value, just as God the Father differentiates himself from himself as God the Son, although both are of the same age and form, in fact one single person; for only by the surplus-value of £10 does the £100 originally advanced become capital, and as soon as this has happened, as soon as the son has been created and, through the son, the father, their difference vanishes again, and both become one, £110.

Value therefore now becomes value in process, money in process, and, as such, capital. It comes out of circulation, enters into it again, preserves and multiplies itself within circulation, emerges from it with an increased size, and starts the same cycle again and again.<sup>14</sup> M–M, 'money which begets money', such is the description of capital given by its first interpreters, the Mercantilists.

Buying in order to sell, or, more accurately, buying in order to sell dearer, M–C–M, seems admittedly to be a form peculiar to one kind of capital alone, merchants' capital. But industrial capital too is money which has been changed into commodities, and reconverted into more money by the sale of these commodities. Events which take place outside the sphere of circulation, in the interval between buying and selling, do not affect the form of this movement. Lastly, in the case of interest-bearing capital, the cir-

14. 'Capital . . . permanent self-multiplying value' (Sismondi, *Nouveaux Principes d'économie politique*, Vol. 1, p. 89) [cited in German in the original, and slightly altered].