

# THE FOUR LEVELS OF ABSTRACTION OF MARX'S CONCEPT OF "CAPITAL"\*

by

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## 1. Introduction

Marx began to work out his own theory of capital in the fifties and particularly in the *Manuscripts of 1857/58* (generally known as *Grundrisse*). Philological results have shown that, before, his analysis was still linked to Ricardo's – in the *Misery of Philosophy* although already with important exceptions<sup>1</sup> – or only faced problems at the “surface” – he studied e.g. different monetarist schools at the beginning of the fifties<sup>2</sup> – but without coming to an independent organic outline of the matter. The process of research continued in the *Manuscripts of 1857/58* as well, but there, it went together with the beginning of the exposition, or presentation.<sup>3</sup>

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\* All the subjects presented in this paper are more deeply analyzed in FINESCHI [2001].

<sup>1</sup> TUCHSCHEERER [1968], pp. 222-245, VYGODSKIJ [1965], pp. 10-35 and [1975a], JAHN/NIETZOLD [1978], pp. 149-152; see also JAHN/NOSKE [1979], pp. 21-22.

<sup>2</sup> The literature on this subject is mainly in German. See above all in *Arbeitsblätter zur Mar-Engels-Forschung* n. 8 and 9, Halle (Saale), 1979 the contributions of B. ARHOLD, «Marx' Auseinandersetzung mit Currency Principle und Bankingtheorie in den Londoner Exeptheften 1850-1853», H. CHRIST, «Marx' Smith-Rezeption in den Londoner Exeptheften (1850-1853) und den Manuskripten “Reflection” und “Bullion. Das vollendete Geldsystem”»; R. HELIBORN «Die Marxsche Auffassung über Entstehen und Absterben der Warenproduktion in der Periode 1850-1863 und ihre aktuelle Bedeutung»; W. JAHN, «Der heuristische Wert der Londoner Exepte 1850-1853 von Karl Marx»; K. STUDE, «Zur Entwicklung der Marxschen Lohntheorie in den “Londoner Exeptheften” (1850-1853) und den “Ökonomischen Manuskripten 1857/58”»; M. ZIMMERMANN, «Marx' Ricardo-Rezeption im Heft VIII der Londoner Exeptheften (1850-1853)»; see also JAHN/NOSKE [1979] e [1983].

<sup>3</sup> The point “what does Presentation mean?” should be seriously discussed. In fact, “darstellen” does not simply regard the rhetoric of the presentation of given results, but the way the theory itself develops through its different levels and categories toward totality. It is in fact explicit that Marx refers to Hegel's Darstellung when he uses this word. For example, in the value form it is the commodity that exposes itself in another, commodity is the subject of this action; this is *its* exposition of itself, not writer's of something else already given. The process of exposition posits results, produces theory and its logical consistence.

While writing this manuscript, Marx defined progressively the structure of the whole “capital”, setting out a process that, however, did not finish with the *Grundrisse*. Relevant parts of the theory were changed or improved in *Manuscripts of 1861/63*, above all as regards the central concepts of market values and production prices,<sup>4</sup> and in *Manuscripts of 1863/65*, where we have the only extensive exposition of credit and bank system. Moreover we could consider as well, that a proper terminological and conceptual distinction among value, use value, and value form as part of the framework representing the real starting point of his theory – the commodity – is reached only in the second German edition of *Capital* Book I (1872), even if this had been latently present since the *Manuscripts of 1857/58*.<sup>5</sup>

Otherwise, it is broadly accepted that Marx’s concept of “capital” is linked to Hegel’s concept of “concept”, or with that of “spirit”; important studies on this subject tried to demonstrate this legacy, focussing mainly on a couple of points that successively delimited the research field: 1. the concept of value in the simple circulation (for a long time misinterpreted as simple commodity production)<sup>6</sup> and its relation with that of capital; 2. the concept of “capital in general” and its relation with competition.

Rosdolky’s famous inquiry was generally accepted as last word on this stuff. In his view, capital in general was only a sort of methodological ladder that was useful while setting up the conceptual framework of the whole to show the central role of industrial capital; which however could be dropped when the real exposition developed to the more concrete levels of competition and credit; these were included within the theory to avoid a double exposition of an essential part and its repetition in the inessential one. Capital in general would be this way abandoned to its destiny and the new structure would not include it.

This position was approached in the German debate in two important studies by Müller and Schwarz, even if their conclusions were different in relevant points. Their criticism was that capital in general was not abandoned at all, but was simply redefined because its relation with competition and the other more concrete parts of the theory changed; even though a few concrete categories were included within the framework of generality, this did not mean that the concept of generality as such was abandoned. We have only to show why a few parts got included and how this was justified. I can’t go

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<sup>4</sup> VYGODSKIJ [1965], p. 91, JAHN/NIETZOLD [1978], p. 158, SKAMBRAKS [1978], pp. 32-33 and M. MÜLLER [1983], pp. 9-13.

<sup>5</sup> On the development of Marx’s theory in the various editions of book I see: HECKER/JUNGNICKEL/VOLLGRAF 1989, HECKER 1987, JUNGNICKEL 1989, LIETZ 1987a and 1987b; SCHKEDOW 1989; SCHWARZ 1987; HENSCHEL/KRAUSE/MILITZ 1989; FINESCHI 2001, appendix C and 2003.

<sup>6</sup> For a summary see HECKER [1995] and [1997]. Decisive antecedents in REICHELT [1969] and BACKHAUS [1974, 1975, 1978].

here into their analysis, but my paper is an attempt to answer those questions in a different way; my starting point is Schwarz's conclusion: capital in general still works after *Manuscripts of 1861/63*, although it is almost never explicitly mentioned, and we have to explain why and how above all accumulation was included within the framework of generality.<sup>7</sup>

In this debate the focus was mainly on the point: what kind of relation does exist between capital in general and competition? This setting too can be challenged, because we actually don't have only two levels of abstraction; according to the most elaborated plans Marx drew in the fifties, the concept of capital is divided into *four* levels of abstraction: a sort of level 0, the simple circulation; a first level, called "generality"; a second one, called "particularity"; and a final one, called "singularity". Presenting this sketch, Marx was clearly referring to the division of the Hegelian "doctrine of concept".<sup>8</sup>

In order to discuss the issue of the global consistence of this division and the particular problems linked to "capital in general", we have to reconstruct how these

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<sup>7</sup> On the subject see ROSDOLSKY [1968], pp. 34 ff., 76 ff., VYGODSKIJ [1965], pp. 133 ff., REICHEL [1970], p. 90, JAHN/NIETZOLD [1978], pp. 166 ff.; JAHN/MARXHAUSEN [1978], pp. 51 ff., and above all M. MÜLLER [1978], pp. 62 ff., SCHWARZ, 1974: 246 ff. and 1978: 102 ff., 157, 175 ff., 241 ff., 273 ff.

<sup>8</sup> "Der *Begriff* als solcher enthält die Momente der *Allgemeinheit*, als freier Gleichheit mit sich selbst in ihrer Bestimmtheit, - der *Besonderheit*, der Bestimmtheit, in welcher das Allgemeine ungetrübt sich selbst gleich bleibt, und der *Einzelheit*, als der Reflexion-in-sich der Bestimmtheiten der *Allgemeinheit* und *Besonderheit*, welche negative Einheit mit sich das *an und für sich Bestimmte* und zugleich mit sich Identische oder Allgemeine ist" [E § 163].

Evidently, this is not the proper place to go into the problems that arise from translating Hegel into English, but a few remarks are probably necessary. First of all, both in Wallace's translation of the *Shorter Logic* § 163 ff. – *Hegel's Logic*, translated by William Wallace, with Foreword by J N Findlay, Clarendon Press 1975. First published 1873 – and in Miller's of *Science of Logic* §§ 1323 ff. – *Hegel's Science of Logic*, translated by A. V. Miller, George Allen & Unwin, 1969 – "Begriff" is rendered into "Notion"; this sounds like formal logic and, if it could be accepted in 1873, is today pretty misleading. Moreover, as regards the triad *Allgemeinheit*/*Besonderheit*/*Einzelheit* further comments are required. First: "Allgemeinheit" is translated into "Universality"; I'd like to point out that, however, this is the same word Marx uses talking about "capital in general". So: in German we have the same word, and the same category, while in English (in Italian as well) sometimes we read Universality, sometimes Generality, or Capital in general, which is actually the Universality of capital. Further and more relevant problems emerge with "Einzelheit". Both Wallace and Miller translate it into "Individuality" – as Croce did in Italian, probably following Wallace. In more recent translations, in the Italian one for example, scholars prefer rendering "Einzelheit" into "Singularity" to avoid misinterpretations. In fact in Hegel's theory there is a proper concept called "Individualität" that regards specifically the Philosophy of Nature, section II: Physic. As second moment, this "Individualität" corresponds – so explicitly Hegel – to the moment of Particularity [E § 252]. In the *Science of Logic*, the concept is connected to those of "life" and "living individual" [WdL: Band II, 473 ff.]. This distinction disappears in the mentioned English translations; this can cause a misinterpretation of the concept of singularity that is universality reflected into itself: universality exists as universal in the particular, while the individual is not properly universal, it is only latently universal, not in itself and for itself.

categories were defined at the beginning and how their framework changed while the theory was worked out by Marx through its various drafts.<sup>9</sup>

The most organic plan we find in the *Manuscript of 1857/58* [C], after two ones pretty more confused [A] and abstract [B], is divided into three main parts – generality, particularity and singularity.<sup>10</sup> The first one, generality, begins with the origin of capital from money and concludes with the relationship among capital, profit and interest, going through circulation of capital. Particularity begins with accumulation, proceeds to competition and ends with concentration of capitals. Singularity is characterized by credit, share-capital and money market.

As you know, the book on capital should be only the first of a plan of six Marx meant to realize. In a letter to Lassalle [D], where he exposed this six books plan, he wrote that book I on *Capital* had some “Vor chapters”, preliminary chapters. In another letter to Lassalle [E], he made explicit that these Vor chapters were value and money, presuppositions to capital in general, that is still determined as we saw in the preceding sketch. So, before the exposition of capital, there should be a sort of preliminary, the simple circulation.<sup>11</sup> In a letter to Engels [F], Marx wrote about the further division of the book on capital, and, although he did not use the words particularity and singularity, he mentioned exactly the subjects that should be treated in these sections: respectively competition, and credit and share-capital.

Let's start by capital in general and its presumed disappearance.

## 2. Generality and Particularity of capital

Capital in general should be the first part of the first book.<sup>12</sup> With the development of the theory the plan underwent however not radical but significant changes. “Capital in general” should have been the title of the continuation of *A contribution...*; but, while writing this part – i.e. *Manuscripts of 1861-63*, really entitled like that – this category progressively disappeared and from this moment on was almost no

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<sup>9</sup> I won't go here into the “level 0” stuff because that would require a proper paper.

<sup>10</sup> See all relevant Marx's plans in appendix.

<sup>11</sup> Only in *Manuscripts of 1863/65*, Marx will finally decide to consider this section as a part of *Capital* as such; see BOLDYREW 1989: 157 ff.. I'll set aside this problem here to approach the question of generality/particularity/singularity.

<sup>12</sup> The book on Capital, considering the original plan of six books he presented in D and in the Preface to *A contribution...*

more mentioned. This is evidently a decisive point to reconstruct the general structure of the theory as a whole.

When he exposed for the first time the general concept of capital, Marx characterised it as what every capital has in common, the quintessence of it [G: 352]. We don't have capitals yet, not even one capital, we have the concept of that, which is so far not determined as plurality or unity. The question of capitals, of plurality arise when the self-development of the theory posits the passage to particularity. The other point strictly connected with "many" capitals is competition. But it is precisely this passage, this relation between generality (or universality) and particularity (one/many capitals relation and their competition) that undergoes the most important changes. But firstly let us see how this point is outlined in the *Grundrisse*.

- In the most developed plan of the *Grundrisse* [C], the exposition of "competition", the particularity of capital, is placed in the same context of that of accumulation. On the contrary, in *Capital* competition as such is exposed in another context, different from that of accumulation.

- In the outline of 1857/58, thus accumulation comes not only after the circulation of capital, but even after the transformation of capital into capital and profit.

In *Capital* it comes before both the circulation and the transformation of capital into capital and profit.

- In the outline of 1857/58, both competition and accumulation comes not only after the transformation of capital into capital and profit, but even after the transformation of capital into capital and interest.

In *Capital* competition is between capital and profit and capital and interest.

These changes must be explained.

Trying to follow Hegel's division of concept, the exposition begins with the most *general* categories, the quintessence of capital that, going on, implies however its multiplication into many *particular* capitals, in each of which the generality is incarnated. Once capital is posited it distinguishes itself from itself and gets so multiplied into many capitals. Interest is the link to proceed. Marx claims it quite explicitly:

The third form of money, as independent value in a negative relation *vis-à-vis* circulation, is capital which does not step out of the production process into exchange again to become money. Rather, it is capital which becomes a commodity and enters into circulation in the form of value that refers to itself. (*Capital and interest*). This form presupposes capital in the earlier forms and at the same time forms the transition from *capital* to the *particular capitals*, the real

capitals; since now, in this last form, capital already in its very concept divides into two capitals with independent existence. Along with the duality, plurality in general is then given [G: 449 (trans. corr. RF); MEGA<sup>2</sup> II/1.2: 358 f.].

So far, accumulation is not required for capital to be posited, it comes later. According to this plan, also reproduction will come later; on the contrary interest can be already presented. Moreover, interest represents the link to proceed from capital to capitals, and many capitals and competition seem to be the same. Summarizing: so far generality coincides with single capital before the plurality is posited, plurality seems to coincide with competition. Accumulation is not required to step to posited capital.

The question is: can such a framework be consistent, that is can capital be posited without or before the exposition of accumulation? And can we have interest before competition?<sup>13</sup> Accumulation seems to be the decisive link to reach posited capital, so it is the change of its position in the unfolding of the theory that determines the redefinition of the relationship of generality and particularity.

Let's try to understand how accumulation becomes a part of generality.

Already in the index of '61 [H], in chapter IV of Capital in general, we find the title "Original accumulation" with some underchapters. The idea of dedicating a chapter to accumulation before capital gets posited is here clearly expressed, even though still in a hybrid form where it is not enough distinguished between the original accumulation and the properly capitalistic one.

A first, not planned exposition of accumulation is however already in the *Grundrisse* and is placed just after relative surplusvalue: Marx happens to inquiry into the effects of reinvestment of the surplusvalue produced by the precedent process of production [G: 386 ff.; MEGA<sup>2</sup> II/1.1: 294 ff.]. A second unplanned occurrence comes up during the exposition of circulation where he distinguished between original accumulation and the proper capitalistic one [G: 459 f.; MEGA<sup>2</sup> II/1.2: 367 ff.] and between pluscapital I and pluscapital II [G: 456 f.; MEGA<sup>2</sup> II/1.2: 365 f.]. This treatment was preceded by a first draft of the law of population [G: 398 f.; MEGA<sup>2</sup> II/1.1: 306 f.]; we are evidently facing categories that will be linked to accumulation in *Capital*. According to the plan he was following, these should have been considered later, but evidently it was the *exposition of the thing itself* that brought them to their proper place.

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<sup>13</sup> What does "to be posited" mean? In order to be posited capital has to produce as its own results what at the beginning (logically) was presupposed to it, by it not posited. To be a "process" capital must reproduce what was given as result of its own process. We should establish if such position of presuppositions can be logically consistent without accumulation.

The new placement of accumulation anticipated in the *Grundrisse* is taken up again in the final part of *Manuscript of 1861/63* [MEGA<sup>2</sup> II/3.6: 2243 ff.], where at the same time the questions of accumulation, general reproduction, one-many capitals and their levels of abstraction arise clearly.

In *Capital*, this process reaches its culmination: accumulation is in book I, general reproduction as a form of extended social accumulation is in book II (circulation of capital is between them) and the whole is before capital/profit relation, that is inside generality.

Why accumulation is required to have posited capital is quite simple and Marx explains it in *Capital* book I: if capital should be a process, a self-developing one, it needs to produce its presuppositions as a result. In order to do it living labour is incorporated; so capital gets surplus value and tendentially more material wealth; it exists inasmuch as it repeats again and again this process and in order to do that it re-implies, materially or not, what it has produced in the same actual process. So reproduction, which takes place in form of accumulation in the capitalistic mode of production, is substantial to capital, which can't be capital without it. The single process of production is for essence a link in a chain that presupposes – and at the same time is presupposition – of the re-production of itself and of others.<sup>14</sup>

Saying “of itself and of others”, we introduce the question of plurality inside accumulation, but it is the exposition itself that brings us to it. In *Capital*, in fact, we find this plurality of capitals placed before profit and before circulation. So, not only accumulation, but also the “many” capitals appear before the capital is posited. Let's try to understand why this is logically required.

1. Essentially because commodity is the “economic cell” of the capitalistic way of production, the form assumed by product in it. Commodities production presupposes independent and individual producers (a plurality of actors is thus already present from the very beginning, the level 0). Even if we assume that they are not capitalists, they will become because (i) money is adequately posited only if it gets transformed into capital, (ii) capital tends to grow and to expand to all branches of production (exactly because of its higher productivity). If commodities production is general, then everything is produced as commodity, also means of production and labour-power; the production

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<sup>14</sup> See *Capital I*: 711 ff.; MEGA<sup>2</sup> II/10: 506 ff.; already in *Manuscript of 1861/63*, MEGA<sup>2</sup> II/3.6: 2243 ff.

process will be possible thus (logically I mean) only in capitalistic conditions. Those, who intends to do, will be able to do only accepting the capitalistic rules.

This trend of generalization is suggested by Marx himself in *Manuscripts of 1861/63* [MEGA<sup>2</sup> II/3.6: 2223]. Moreover, the necessity of many capitals before profit comes explicitly out when Marx consider capital's circulation as a whole:

What we were dealing with in both Part One and Part Two, however, was always no more than an individual capital, the movement of an autonomous part of the social capital. However, the circuits of individual capitals are interlinked, they presuppose one another, and it is precisely by being interlinked in this way that they constitute the movement of the social capital. Just as, in the case of simple commodity appeared as but one term in the series of metamorphosis of the commodity world as a whole, now the metamorphosis of the individual capital arrears as one term in the series of metamorphoses of the social capital" [*Capital II*: 429 f.; MEW 24: 353].

2. The fact that the whole production takes place in capitalistic conditions does not mean that it is realized by a single capital, on the contrary that is exactly what is impossible. Thanks to point A we know only that each producer will be tendentially a capitalist, not that there will be only *a* capitalist, because the production is still commodities production (we still have commodities-money relation, exchange, etc.).

The impossibility of a universal capital is clearly stated by Marx in the *Grundrisse*:

Since value form the foundation of capital, and since it therefore necessarily exists only through exchange for *counter-value*, it thus necessarily repels itself from itself. A *universal capital*, one without alien capitals confronting it, with which it exchanges – and from the present standpoint ... is therefore a non-thing. The reciprocal repulsion within capitals is already contained in capital as realized exchange value" [G: 421; MEGA<sup>2</sup> II/1.1: 334].

Finally we find out that capitals, plural, were present from the very beginning, because a plurality of agents was a presupposition implicit in the notion of commodity. Thanks to capital we have instead a inner trend that makes each single producer into a capitalist.

So, in order to have posited capital, that is the transformation of capital into capital and profit, accumulation is needed, but to have accumulation in a proper way it is also needed to include a first analysis of the relationship among capitals (plural) and their accumulation (so going through circulation as well). The whole process of the accumulation of the many capitals (social general reproduction) must be included in its

general concept before particularity and competition.<sup>15</sup> The social general reproduction is the last link before particularity.

Marx became aware of the preliminary character of the social general reproduction – that is accumulation through many capitals – in *Manuscripts of 1861/63*. There he wrote

Furthermore it is necessary to expose the circulation or reproduction process *before* dealing with the posited capital – *capital and profit* – since we have to explain, not only how capital produces, but also how capital is produced. But the actual movement comes out from the available capital – i.e. on the basis of the developed capitalistic production, starting from itself and presupposing itself? [*Theories II*: 543 (trans. corr. RF); MEGA<sup>2</sup> II/3.3: 1134].

Note, as regards competition, that it does not explain the origin of the many capitals, but only how they work once they are a plurality, that is the way the generality realizes its laws through them. It does not create this trend, it only puts it into effect.<sup>16</sup>

It came out that many capitals are already inside generality but this does not imply a contradiction. We can call Accumulation I the process of a single capital reproducing itself; in order to do it, it turns out that from the beginning it must set up a relationship with “others” (that in the end can be only capitals). Each one is a link in a chain and to posit properly the accumulation of a single one we have to consider the condition of the accumulation of each of them in their reciprocal relation. What are the abstract conditions that allow the society as a whole through the single capitals to survive? The answer to this question is the general social reproduction that we can call Accumulation II.

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<sup>15</sup> This is btw a clear example of how we have to consider Hegel’s legacy in Marx. At the beginning Marx follows schematically Hegel’s pattern and try to derive the plurality of capitals from the generality evoking explicitly its logic. This is a very undialectical attitude, the negation of Hegel’s method. While working out its own model, Marx understands finally that his theory can be consistent only if he follows and presents its own dialectical logic, not an external one applied to it. This seems to me to be the main mistake, a methodological one, that many scholars have been repeating for a long time: trying to apply Hegel’s logic to Marx’s theory of capital, instead of respecting Hegel’s method itself, that is, to follow the dialectic of the thing itself, “capital” in our case. This (repeating schematically Hegel’s patterns and not following the dialectic of the thing itself “capital”) is quite Lassalle’s mistake, sharply criticized by Marx himself in a letter to Engels [Letter to Engels, February 1, 1858].

<sup>16</sup> “Competition executes the inner laws of capitals; makes them into compulsory laws towards the individual capital, but it does not invent them. It realizes them” [G: 752; MEGA<sup>2</sup> II/1.2: 625]. The point is taken up again in *Manuscripts of 1861/63* [MEGA<sup>2</sup> II/3.5: 1603].

The main difference from the first plan is that, although we have many capitals, we don't have particularity or competition, yet. In fact we don't inquire yet into the trend of each capital acting, trying to oust other capitals; instead, Marx searches for an answer to the following question: what are the material conditions, in value form, that might allow the society to survive? And to grow? We are from the point of view of the totality of capital, not yet from that of the single one.

So, if we can preliminarily take into account the accumulation of a capital to show its general laws, we can't properly reach profit, yet, because to accumulate as a single the accumulation of the society as a whole is needed.

The core of the distinction in the *Grundrisse* between generality and particularity, that is the passage from capital as a whole to particular capitals, is turned out to be not acceptable. Capitals are already necessary in the generality, although it does not mean competition. On the contrary, in the *Grundrisse* many capitals and competition went together.

What's then the main difference between generality and particularity after this change? The general attitude to the whole, and more functionally the coincidence of production and consume, which we have in the first and not in the second. This implies a decisive redefinition of the concept of "value", where consume becomes determinant to fix its magnitude.

What characterized generality at the beginning was, as I said, the absence of a distinction among capitals. The other crucial presupposition was the coincidence of what is produced and what is consumed, of supply and demand. It should be clear that at this level this is not a result, something demonstrated, but simply a consequence of the presupposition of generality that will be dropped later (dealing with competition more exactly). Marx wants to study how categories works in pure conditions that is setting aside the troubling effects of competition and realization problems. These are not marginal of course, but their decisive role will be considered later.

This condition is still valid in *Capital* in book I and II. Marx, exposing accumulation, claims that there are at that level two clauses of abstraction:

1. all produced commodities get sold and all means of production can be purchased without problems, that is circulation and realization difficulties are for the moment left out of consideration;

2. it is presupposed that surplusvalue doesn't get divided into specific and more concrete forms such as profit or interest, which belong to a more determined and advanced level.<sup>17</sup>

Note that this clause of abstraction was still valid in the simple circulation<sup>18</sup> and will be valid in the circulation of capital in *Capital*, as well. Circulation of capital has always been considered part of generality since the very beginning. This is also valid for social reproduction at the end of book two, where Marx explicitly states that, even if we have capitals and their material replacement and reproduction, this does not imply their action as particular. On the contrary, they are taken into account insofar as they act as molecular part of the whole. The attitude is to the whole not to the particular one, that is those are not free yet to re-act according to the proper law of self-valorisation.<sup>19</sup>

Just these clauses make possible the exposition of the first *part* of the process of accumulation before circulation (accumulation I), of the second part of it after circulation and, above all, of the whole before competition. In a real process, of course, we can't have accumulation without going through the market to sell and to buy means of production and consume, that is through competition, but if we're presupposing everything proceeds without obstacles.

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<sup>17</sup> “On the one hand, then, we assume here that the capitalist sells the commodities he has produced at their value, and we shall not concern ourselves with their later return to the market, or the new forms that capital assumes while in the sphere of circulation, or the concrete conditions of reproduction hidden within those forms. On the other hand, we treat the capitalist producer as the owner of the entire surplus-value, or, perhaps better, as the representative of all those who will share the booty with him” [*Capital I*: 710; MEGA<sup>2</sup> II/10: 505 f.].

<sup>18</sup> “Let us suppose ... that every piece of linen on the market contains nothing but socially necessary labour-time. In spite of this, all these pieces taken as a whole may contain superfluously expended labour-time. It the market cannot stomach the whole quantity at the normal price of 2 shillings a yard, this proves that too great a portion of the total social labour-time has been expended in the form of weaving ... The division of labour converts the product of labour into a commodity, and thereby makes necessary its conversion into money. At the same time, it makes a matter of chance whether this transubstantiation succeeds or not. Here, however, we have to look at the phenomenon in its pure shape, and *must therefore assume it has proceeded normally*” [emphasis RF] [G: 202 f.; MEGA<sup>2</sup> II/10: 101 f.].

<sup>19</sup> Coincidence of demand and supply is general precondition of book II: “In order to grasp these forms in their pure state, we must first of all abstract from all aspects that have nothing to do with the change and constitution of the forms as such. We shall therefore assume here, both that commodities are sold at their values, and that the circumstances in which this takes place do not change. We shall also ignore any changes of value that may occur in the course of the cyclical process” [*Capital II*: 109; MEW 24: 32]. Besides, this coincidence is presupposition of the general social reproduction with capitals and material replacement of production conditions, but without competition: “Moreover, we assume not only that products are exchanged at their values, but also that no revolution in values takes place in the components of the productive capital” [*Capital II*: 469; MEW 24: 392].

A scheme to summarize the changes:

|               | Generality/Universality                           | Particularity                    |
|---------------|---------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Original plan | What is produced is consumed ex machina           | Competition                      |
|               | Capital as a whole undivided                      | One/many capitals                |
|               |                                                   | Accumulation                     |
| Final plan    | What is produced is consumed ex machina           | Competition                      |
|               | Capital as a whole divided into one/many capitals | One/many capitals in competition |
|               | Accumulation                                      |                                  |

### 3. Particularity

Thanks to the process of accumulation, we achieve:

1. what was presupposed (the relation capital/labour, the material preconditions of production, etc.) has now been posited by capital itself, so that it can be a process;
2. being posited as capital, the exposition of categories is now its own in proper way, these are *aufgehoben*, that is negated in their presumed particular autonomy and saved as part of the self-developing whole. We saw also that this second level of totality (the first one was that of simple circulation we couldn't go into) is outlined as an ideal average, the relationship capital/profit of the whole society, not as particularity; in fact the real dynamics of capitals is still out of consideration. However, although the attitude is to the whole, this whole already consists of many capitals; therefore Marx has now to put together these two dimensions of his theory: the whole should include the dynamics of the particular capitals aiming at valorisation. Therefore, capital can no more be considered as ideal average and must become a result of their real dynamics in order to be properly posited and proceed to another more concrete level of abstraction. As average it will be shown to be a mere particular case.

The produced surplusvalue is result of the whole process of capitalistic production (production + circulation) and this process is self-developing. The fruit of its

work, surplusvalue, appears the result of the whole and so seems to have to be measured referring to the whole of anticipated capital, not only to variable capital. When Capital refers to itself as a whole, surplusvalue seems to be achievement of this whole. We have so profit and rate of profit. In the original plan this was the final step of generality that then, thanks to the further one made by Interest-bearing capital, proceeded to particularity. Now it has changed a lot. Before interest, the theory must include the average profit and competition. This will be completely explained in paragraph 4.

Now we can consider each capital acting particularly as such, that is, aiming at profit. Each one realizes its general laws (yielding profit) as particular agent, among various other particular ones. So far, we already looked at these already existent various capitals as necessary, but they were regarded as subordinated moments of capital's dynamics as a whole, now we go further and consider their particular action as real actualizers of generality.

This implies the drop of the clause of abstraction according to which we could presume that production and consume met perfectly. In the particularity Marx inquiries how capitals works when they are free to move in conformity not with an average established from outside as hypothesis, but with their real movement, that is competition.

Only in this context and taking into account the gap – that is discontinuity and the continuity among various levels of abstraction – the transformation problem can be properly set and solved. However, I evidently can't go here into this question, I'll simply introduce the achievements of particularity in order to proceed to singularity.

Marx speaks about the trend of two kinds of competition: the first is inside a sphere and produces a market value for all products realized (and sold) in that; this is already a social value that does not correspond to individual ones (only the commodities produced by the average capitals have a value magnitude corresponding to the social one). The second one is among different spheres and produces the price of production. This is the average of the average, that is a particular market price, whose profit is at the same time socially average.

Marx achieved this result for the first time in *Manuscript of 1861/63* [*Theories II*: 208; MEGA<sup>2</sup> II/3.3: 854]. The argument is taken up again in the *Manuscript of 1863/65* while exposing the rules of competition that give production prices as a result and, finally, thanks to Engels in *Capital* book III. See, for example, *Capital* III: 281 [MEGA<sup>2</sup> II/4.2: 255]:

What competition brings about, first of all in one sphere, is the establishment of a uniform market value and market price out of the various individual values of commodities. But it is

only the competition of capitals in *different* spheres that brings forth the production prices that equalizes the rates of profit between those spheres.

See also *Capital III*: 310 [MEGA<sup>2</sup> II/4.2: 278 f.]:

It has been said that competition equalizes profit rates between the different spheres of production to produce an average rate of profit, and that this is precisely the way in which the values of products from these various spheres are transformed into prices of production ... This uninterrupted emigration and immigration of capitals that takes place between various spheres of production produces rising and falling movements in the profit rate which more or less balance one another out and thus tend to reduce the profit rate everywhere to the same common and general level.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, this average level of profit – average referred to the whole of capital – is not a presupposition we set as clause of abstraction; on the contrary it is the result of the real dynamics of particular capitals. We have that a particular case incarnates the general average. This social average is obviously not unchangeable once fixed; it changes following exactly the two trends of competition toward new “standards”.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> I evidently can't go here into the transformation problem, but if we consider that the value theory of chapter one is part of generality and that the market values (and then the production prices) are part of particularity, that is that in the second case to determine value magnitudes what and how much is produced is as essential like what and how much is consumed, we can present not only a different solution, but also a different setting of the matter. Trying to compare prices and values as two different criteria of measurement will eternally bring to contradictions. But they are not like that, they are two different levels of abstraction of the same thing (commodities-money relation). Note en passant that also in the simple circulation what and how much is produced/consumed would be decisive to determine value magnitudes if *we* did not *assume* that what is produced is realized. But this is only an assumption to study how the model works even if there is no obstacle, not because consume is inessential.

<sup>21</sup> Value magnitudes are thus posited, at this level, by the achieved (by competition) standards of production. So, in a way it is also possible to measure value magnitudes through labour time once the standards are given (and for a certain period they are given). This implies that value magnitudes are never given ex ante (and this is a sharp criticism of the traditional – so called – labour-theory of value) because it is consume that essentially co-determines them (we can't know before the exchanges which and how many already produced commodities will be consumed), but it implies at the same time that these can be measured by labour time as far as the standards last. In the long run value magnitudes are determined by embodied labour, but the run is caused by the mutual relation of production and consume that are both essential to fix the resulting standards.

Marx reference to these standards, stated in the manuscript of book III, disappears in the printed version [*Capital III*: 295 f.; MEGA<sup>2</sup> II/4.2: 268]: “If one seller produces more cheaply and can more easily undercut the others, carving out a bigger share of the market by selling below the current market price or market value, then he does so, and the action once begun, it gradually forces the others to introduce the cheaper form of production and thereby reduces the socially necessary labour to a new and lower level”. Even the translation from Engels's edition could have been more precise, in fact the text is: “auf ein neues geringeres Maß reduziert”, so “measure”, not “level”. Anyway, Marx's original was: “auf einen neuen standard reducirt”, “to a new standard”.

The crucial achievement we were interested in is however that the presupposed social average is now a result of the real process of competing capitals; that abstract magnitudes referred to the whole is now a concrete profit got by a particular branch of production. An average that will change obviously but that will be replaced by another average. Particular and general are actual in a single moment.

This result is the link that allows the development of the theory to proceed toward singularity. We'll see that Interest-bearing capital is very important to do it, but interest is another category whose position does not stay the same from the *Manuscript of 1857/58* to those of 1863/65.

#### 4. Toward singularity

In *Manuscripts of 1861/63*, after analyzing the tendential fall of profit rate, Marx faces for the first time a few questions linked to the further development of the theory, previously only sporadically touched. We have to understand if these correspond to the concept of singularity sketched in 1857/58.

In the cited letter to Engels, he spoke about the division of Capital book into four points. In the draft in the *Grundrisse*, particularity (competition) was followed by singularity divided in turn into three points: credit, share-capital and money market.

The reconstruction of the inner logic of this part and its connection with the preceding one are made more difficult by the increasing reduction of the dialectical terminology. So, if in the *Grundrisse* terminology itself helps follow the dialectical development, later we have to reconstruct it only on the basis of its inner logic.

This logic shows that Interest-bearing capital is required to proceed to singularity. In the *Manuscript of 1857/58* it was the step between generality, which ended with capital/profit relation, and particularity. We saw above how Marx defined it [G: 449; MEGA<sup>2</sup> II/1.2: 358 f.]. End of generality was capital/profit relation,  $M - M'$ , that is an increased money quantity confronted with anticipated capital. The dynamics that produced it disappears in the result: we have more money as a sort of fact. It seems this way that the “thing” money could generate money, as if this should be a quality of it. This is the foundation of Interest-bearing capital and of fetishism of capital (not to be confounded with fetishism of commodities). Successively, this definition is partly conserved, partly changed.

In *Manuscripts of 1863/65* the same concept is taken up again with these words:

With Interest-bearing capital the situation is different, and this is precisely what constitutes its specific character. The owner of money who wants to valorize this as Interest-bearing capital parts with it someone else, puts it into circulation, makes it into a commodity *as capital*; as capital not only for himself but also for others. It is not simply capital for the person who alienates it, but it is made over to the other person as capital right from the start, as value that possesses the use-value of creating surplus-value or profit [*Capital III*: 464; MEGA<sup>2</sup> II/4.2: 416].

The two expositions could seem similar but the difference is essential exactly because of the change in the general framework we analyzed before.

As we saw, generality consisted in an ideal average that had to proceed to a real posited average. This occurs thanks to the action of the “many” capitals in competition that leads to average profit and production prices. In order to achieve Interest-bearing capital as posited moment of the real process, the mere generality is then not enough; to have capital perceived as a thing, it is necessary that the actors of the process at the surface of the society become aware in a way of this “average”; the existence of an average fruit of capital must be socially perceived as a fact, “naturally” generated by capital, disregarding the real process that put it in inexistence. This is possible however only after competition posited the ideal average as a real fact as average social profit, something given to the social actor at the surface. This seems a fact because it appears as “given”.<sup>22</sup>

With Interest-bearing capital, profit yielding appear as a quality of the thing capital/money: being money implies generating it. This allows capital to be lent as a commodity, whose use value is profit generation, as though we should set aside the real process of valorisation. What with capital/profit relation was a general achievement becomes now an empiric economic category really operating at the surface also in the mind of the actors. The consequences are relevant:

The characteristic movement of capital in general, the return of money to the capitalist, the return of capital to its point of departure, receives in the case of Interest-bearing capital a completely superficial form, separated from the real movement whose form it is...

Here therefore the return does not appear as a consequence and result of a definite series of economic processes, but rather as a consequence of a special legal contract between buyer and seller. The period of the reflux depends on the course of the reproduction process; in the case of Interest-bearing capital, its return as capital *seems* to depend simply on the contract between lender and borrower. And so the reflux of the capital, in connection with this transaction, no

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<sup>22</sup> Marx becomes familiar with this passage for the first time in *Manuscripts of 1861/63* dealing with “Revenues and their sources”. This manuscript is decisive even on this point.

longer appears as a result determined by the production process, but rather as if the capital lent out had never lost the form of money. Of course, these transactions are actually determined by the real reflexes. But this is not apparent in the transaction itself [*Capital III*: 469 f.; MEGA<sup>2</sup> II/4.2: 421]

Two points seem decisive:

1. this self-relation with itself of capital as mere quantity of money, considering its quantitatively increase as property of the object “capital”, brings the generality of valorisation to be concretely individualized in Interest-bearing capital; so Interest-bearing capital distinguishes itself from all concrete processes of capitalistic production, representing concretely in front of them their ideal dimension. This way it faces – empirically existing – the other operating capitals as their essence, in front of which these appear as one particular mode of its realization. General capital appears phenomenally in front of particular capitals, as their dematerialized form of movement, as pure  $M - M'$ . In *Manuscript of 1861-63* Marx claims:

This is the quite tangible form of self-valorising value or of money-making money, and at the same time the quite irrational form, the incomprehensible, mystified form. In the discussion of capital we started from  $M - C - M'$ , of which  $M - M'$  was only a result. We now find  $M - M'$  as the subject ... The incomprehensible form we encounter at the surface and which has therefore constituted the starting-point of our analysis, is found again as the result of the process in which the figure of capital is gradually more and more estranged and unrelated to its inner essence.

We started with money as the converted form of the commodity. What we arrive at is *money as the converted form of capital*, just as we have known that the commodity is the pre-condition and the result of the production process of capital [*Theories III*: 466 f. (trans. corr RF); MEGA<sup>2</sup> II/3.4: 1464]

Valorisation as intrinsic property of the thing “money”, contradictory riddle starting point of the inquiry, is now a result of the process of capital as a whole;

2. this is the fundament of fetishism of capital. In the simple circulation the thing “money” seemed to be value in itself, now it is “capital” that seems to be a thing that generate interest in itself.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Marx's words are explicit: “In Interest-bearing capital, the capital relationship reaches its most superficial and fetishized form ... but for all that it exposes itself as the product of a social *relation*, not the product of a mere *thing*” [*Capital III*: 515 (trans. corr.. RF); MEGA<sup>2</sup> II/4.2: 461]. “The *thing* money (money, commodity, value) is now already capital simply as a thing; the result of the overall reproduction process appears as a property devolving on a thing in itself; it is up to to the possessor of money, i.e. of commodities in their ever-exchangeable form, whether he wants to spend this money as money or hire it out as capital. In Interest-bearing capital, therefore this automatic fetish is elaborated into its pure form, self-valorizing value, money breeding money, and its pure form, it no longer bears any marks of its origin. The social relation is consummated ion the relationship of a thing, money, to itself. Instead of the actual transformation of money into capital, we have here only the form of this devoid of content” [*Capital III*: 516; MEGA<sup>2</sup> II/4.2: 461 f.].

So, we achieved the particular existence of capital in general. This was outlined already in *Manuscript of 1861/63*

On the other hand, *Interest-bearing capital* is the consummated fetish. It is capital in its finished form – as such representing the unity of production process and circulation process – and therefore yields a definite profit in a definite period of time. In the form of Interest-bearing capital only this determination remains, without the mediation of either production process or circulation process. Memories of the past still remain in capital and profit, although because of the divergence of profit from surplus-value and the uniform profit yielding by all capitals – that is, the general rate of profit – capital becomes very much obscured, something dark and mysterious.

In Interest-bearing capital, this *automatic fetish* is consummated, the self-valorising value, the money-making money, and in this form it no longer bears any trace of its origin. This social relation is consummated as a relation of things (money, commodities) to themselves...

It is clear that capital, as the mysterious and automatically generating source of interest, that is, source of its [own] increase, finds its consummation in capital and interest. It is therefore especially in this form that capital exists for the representation [*Vorstellung*]. It is capital *par excellence* [*Theories III*: 454 f. (trans. corr. RF); MEGA<sup>2</sup> II/3.4: 1454].

Interest-bearing capital appears so as capital *par excellence*, existing capital as such that stays in front of the real processes of production as if it generated profit by itself, without going through them. Interest would be what re-pays its natural lucrativeness, while profit would be the result of the real material application of that abstract universality in a particular branch.

Several times in this manuscript, Marx's attention focuses on the division of capital into Interest-bearing capital as "Kapital an sich" and its particular existing forms as operating, working capitals:

*Interest* is definitely posited as the offspring of capital, separate, independent and outside the capitalist process itself. It is due to *capital as capital*. It enters into the production process and therefore proceeds from it. Capital is impregnated with interest. It does not derive interest from the production process, but brings it into it. The surplus of profit over interest, the amount of surplus-value which capital derives solely from the production process, i.e., the surplus value it produces as operating capital, acquires a particular figure as *industrial profit* (employer's profit, industrial or commercial, depending on whether the stress is laid on the production process or the circulation process), in contrast to interest as value creation due to *capital in itself, capital for itself, capital as capital* [*Theories III*: 490 (trans. corr. RF); MEGA<sup>2</sup> II/4.2: 490].

Interest is fruit of capital in itself, profit of capital in process. The abstract separation of real and value dimension in the realization of capital, two dimensions that

are immanent to each capital, is now become an actual one. This implies a doubling of figures of capitalists: on one hand the juridical owner of capitals, on the other the real operating capitalists.

There are not two different kinds of capital – Interest-bearing and profit yielding – but the *selfsame* capital which operates in the process of production as capital, produces a profit which is divided between two different capitalists – one standing outside the process, and, as owner, representing capital *as such* (but it is an essential condition of this capital that it is represented by a *private owner*; without this it does not become capital as opposed to wage-labour), and the other representing operating capital, capital which takes part in the production process [*Theories III*: 473; MEGA<sup>2</sup> II/3.4: 1471].

At the end of particularity we had average profit produced by a particular branch. This was a necessary step to go further. Now, that average valorisation of capital exists as universal/general form in a particular capital – but representing capital as such – in front of all other particular capitals. The universality of capital, present in each of them, is now concretely incarnated in a particular existing capital next to them. Universal exists as particular and therefore is singular.

## 5. Singularity

Now we have an “existing” capital in general. It remains to be seen how the whole of capital works when we reach this final level of abstraction.

This part was developed by Marx almost exclusively in *Manuscripts of 1863/65*. Until a few years ago we could read only Engels’s edition of Marx’ manuscript of Book III. Thanks to the new critical edition of Marx-Engels works (Marx-Engels-Gesamtausgabe),<sup>24</sup> the original manuscript appeared in 1992. This was the occasion for a broad debate mainly on the transformation problem. That text however is very useful as regards the question of the abstraction levels as well, in particular as to the most concrete of those indicated at the beginning: singularity.

In fact, if we look at Marx’s and Engels’s indexes, we see immediately how changed the second one is. Above all, what Marx indicated as the final chapter – Kredit und fiktives Capital – became *one* chapter *among* several others, a single argument next to various ones, not the title of the whole. On the contrary, Marx quite clearly intended to work out a whole divided into three chapters that are coherently signed as I, II and III.

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<sup>24</sup> On the MEGA and its history see MAZZONE [2002].

Engels's intervention dealt also with creating several chapters, giving them also a title. Some of those came out from what Marx had meaningfully entitled "Kofusion". This part was a collage of citations that as such, evidently, did not belong to the exposition (it had even a proper pagination); Engels transformed these passages into "text" putting together the citations and adding of his own a few pages, before, after and in the middle of Marx's quotes.

So: the real subject of the section became one chapter among several, all placed on the same level; moreover, some of those were even created by Engels himself. Evidently, going back to Marx's original is in this case more important than ever.

If we keep to what in Marx's manuscript seems to be closer to a coherent exposition, it emerges a general framework entitled "Credit und fiktives Capital" divided into three steps:

- 1) a part dedicated to outline the features of the proper capitalistic credit: commercial and bank credit [MEGA<sup>2</sup> II/4.2:468-475] that in Engels's edition becomes chapter 25, however with a few modifications: he put many notes directly into the text;
- 2) a second part, where Marx sketched the functions of credit in the capitalistic mode of production. Here he included for the first time share-capital [MEGA<sup>2</sup> II/4.2: 502 ff.]. In the printed book this will be chapter 27;
- 3) the exposition, divided into three points, of this level of abstraction as a whole [MEGA<sup>2</sup> II/4.2: 506-561, 584-597]. In Engels's edition these will be chapters 28-32.

If we compare this structure with the hypothesis of the four levels of abstraction we find out interesting confirmations.

Firstly, we have chapter n. 5 where Interest-bearing capital represents the link to proceed toward the exposition of credit and fictitious capital as a whole. Credit as totality constitutes then the last step of the exposition of capital as such; after that ground-rent follows. Moreover: Interest-bearing capital represents clearly the link to it.<sup>25</sup>

Secondly, the central categories of credit and share-capital are outlined as the most concrete forms of existence of capital (it could be shown that fictitious capital corresponds to the most developed exposition of share-capital).

This structure of singularity corresponds to that presented by Marx in the *Grundrisse* and in the mentioned letter to Engels.

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<sup>25</sup> Marx reasserts in several passages that credit constitutes the consummation of Interest-bearing capital and of capital concept as a whole: "Interest-bearing capital receives the form peculiar and corresponding to capitalistic production in *credit*. It is a form created by capitalist production itself" [*Theories III*: 518 (trans. corr. RF); MEGA<sup>2</sup> II/3.4: 1514]. See also *Theories III*: 468 f; MEGA<sup>2</sup> II/3.4: 1466.

I can't go here into a detailed analysis of this level of abstraction. I'll limit myself to summarising the exposition.

1. In the first part of singularity, Marx shows how the (logically) developed capitalistic mode of production reshapes an inherited pre-existing categories, that is credit from the simple circulation (derived from money as means of payment), positing it in a form adequate to the new level of abstraction [MEGA<sup>2</sup> II/4.2: 469 f.; *Capital III*: 525 f.]; this becomes the new basis of capitalistic credit system [MEGA<sup>2</sup> II/4.2: 535; *Capital III*: 610]. The first new category is that of bank credit: the capitalistic division of labour implies that the functions linked to the management of money as such are monopolized by an individual capitalist: the banker [MEGA<sup>2</sup> II/4.2: 387; *Capital III*: 431]. If we consider that the “thing” money has already been posited as capital – fetishism of capital – managing money, the bank controls at the same time interest-bearing capital. So, the bank is the phenomenal, empirically existing representative of capital as such. Capital in general, which at the beginning was a mere abstraction, exists empirically as category in the interest-bearing capital and operates thanks to the universal capitalist, the bank [MEGA<sup>2</sup> II/4.2: 463; *Capital III*: 517].<sup>26</sup>

Money market is the further development of bank credit [MEGA<sup>2</sup> II/4.2: 440 f.; *Capital III*: 490 f.].

2. The second step consists in showing (i) the genesis of share-capital, (ii) its fictitious nature and then (iii) the general achievement of this level of abstraction that actually can be clear only in the light of the following point [firstly in MEGA<sup>2</sup> II/4.2: 502 ff.].

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<sup>26</sup> Here we find the consummation of an idea that Marx sketched already in *Manuscripts of 1857/58*: “Before we go any further, just one remark. *Capital in general*, as distinct from the particular capitals, does indeed appear (1) *only as an abstraction*; not an arbitrary abstraction, but an abstraction which grasps the specific characteristics which distinguish capital from all other forms of wealth – or modes in which (social) production develops. These are the determinations common to every capital as such, or which makes every determined sum of value into capital. And the distinctions within this abstraction are likewise abstract particularities which characterize every kind of capital, in that it is their position or negation (e.g. fixed capital or circulating capital); (2) however, capital in general, as *distinct* from the particular real capitals, is itself a *real* existence... For example, capital in this *general form*, although belonging to single capitalists, in its *elemental form* as capital, forms the capital which accumulates in the banks of is distributed through them and... distributes itself in accordance with the needs of production... While the general is therefore on the one hand only a mental mark of distinction [*gedachte differentia specifica*], it is at the same time a *particular* real form alongside the form of the particular and singular” [G: 449 f.; MEGA<sup>2</sup> II/1.2: 359].

3. The third step deals with the explanation of how capital, achieved its most concrete level – credit and share-capital – works as a whole. The exposition is divided into three further steps. The general problem is to show the interconnected movement of fictitious and real capital.

Firstly, to fix the general nature of monetary flow, Marx shows that capital and circulation are not independent concepts. Disputing Tooke and Fullerton, he leads back the problem to the different functions of money that can exist both in revenue form and as capital [MEGA<sup>2</sup> II/4.2: 506 f.; *Capital III*: 575 f.].

Secondly, he shows the conceptual origin of share-capital and its connatural trend to become fictitious. So, money market gets extended to speculation [MEGA<sup>2</sup> II/4.2: 536 ff.; *Capital III*: 610 ff.]. Each capital has a double nature, material and monetary. The two of them do not exist separately, but interest-bearing capital allows that separation to appear possible and so these get split and act – each one on its own – respectively in the financial market and in the material production. The first is of course dependent on the second one, but only at the end values magnitudes are required to correspond; insofar as the first lives its fictitious experiences, its value can apparently change according to demand and supply. This causes real money transfers, but not changes in the social value as a whole: someone get richer, someone poorer, but social wealth stays the same.

Thirdly, he tries to point out the outline of the relationship between fictional accumulation, which seems to become autonomous, and real one. He starts (i) with the analysis of commercial credit setting aside the bank credit, then of commercial and bank credit together, considering the consequence on interest rate [MEGA<sup>2</sup> II/4.2: 536 ff.; *Capital III*: 610 ff.]; then (ii) proceeds taking into account the relation between boosted shares and real accumulation of capital [MEGA<sup>2</sup> II/4.2: 542; *Capital III*: 619 f.]; finally (iii) the consummated unity of value (got independent thanks to action and fictitious capital) and use-value (the real material process of reproduction), of abstract and concrete form of wealth in capitalistic production: the crisis [MEGA<sup>2</sup> II/4.2: 540, 543, 594 f.; *Capital III*: 609, 620, 638 f.].

## 6. Conclusion

In *Manuscript of 1857/58*, Marx's sketched plan of capital book was divided into three main sections that, following Hegel's articulation of concept, were called Generality, Particularity and Singularity. While writing his theory according to that

scheme, a few changes occurred. Some features that should have been part of particularity were included into generality (i.e. one-many capitals relationship). Some features that should have been the link between generality and particularity became the link between particularity and singularity (i.e. interest.-bearing capital). However the triad kept on constituting the core of the dialectical exposition of capital.

If, at the beginning, Marx tried to apply Hegel's scheme to a given matter to put it order, going on he understood that the very theory of capital could be worked out only following its own inner logic. That's why changes occurred and that's why the final structure is *more* dialectic and consistent than the original one.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Above all in the German debate, scholars such as Reichelt and Backhaus claimed that a real dialectical exposition of capital could be found only in the *Grundrisse* and in the *Urtext* (the preparatory text to *A contribution...*). Actually, what I said and the philological results about the development of the theory in the various editions of *Capital* edited by Marx show that only at the end a more adequate dialectical structure was achieved, although it was unfinished.

## Marx's plans

### A. Introduction to *Manuscripts of 1857/58* [MEGA<sup>2</sup> II/1.1: 43]

1. Die allgemein abstrakten Bestimmungen, die ... mehr oder minder allen Gesellschaftsformen zukommen ... 2) Die Kategorien, die die innre Gliederung der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft ausmachen und vorauf die fundamentalen Klassen beruhen. Kapital, Lohnarbeit, Grundeigentum. Ihre Beziehung zueinander. Staat und Land. Die drei grossen gesellschaftlichen Klassen. Austausch zwischen denselbem. Zirkulation. Creditwesen (Private). 3) Zusammenfassung der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft in der Form des Staats. In Beziehung zu sich selbst betrachtet. Die "unproduktiven" Klassen. Steuern. Staatsschuld. Öffentlicher Kredit. Die Bevölkerung. Die Kolonien. Auswanderung. 4) Internationale Verhältnis der Produktion. Internationale Teilung der Arbeit. Internationaler Austausch. Aus- und Einfuhr. Wechselkurs. 5) Der Weltmarkt und die Krise.

### B. *Manuscripts of 1857/58* [MEGA<sup>2</sup> II/1.1: 187]

I. 1 Allgemeiner Begriff des Kapitals  
2 Besonderheit des Kapitals: capital circulant, capital fixe (Kapital als Rohstoff, als Arbeitsinstrument)  
  
3 Das Kapital als Geld  
II. 1 Quantität des Kapitals. Akkumulation  
2 Das an sich selbst gemeßne Kapital. Profit. Zins. Wert des Kapitals: D.h das Kapital im Unterschied von sich als Zins und Profit.  
3 Die Zirkulation der Kapitalien  
a Austausch des Kapitals mit Kapital als Austausch des Kapitals mit Revenue Kapital und Preise  
b Konkurrenz der Kapitalien  
c Konzentration der Kapitalien  
III. Das Kapital als kredit  
IV. Das Kapital als Aktienkapital  
V. Das Kapital als Geldmarkt

### C. *Manuscripts of 1857/58*, p. 186 [MEGA<sup>2</sup> II/1.1: 199]

Kapital

I. Allgemeinheit  
1 a Werden des Kapitals aus dem Geld  
b Kapital und Arbeit (sich vermittelnd durch fremde Arbeit)  
c Die Elemente des Kapitals (Produkt. Rohmaterial. Instrument)  
2 Besonderung des Kapitals  
capital circulant, capital fixe

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Umlauf des Kapitals</p> <p>3 Die Einzelheit des Kapitals</p> <p>Kapital und Profit</p> <p>Kapital und Zins</p> <p>Kapital als Wert, unterschieden von sich als Zins und Profit</p> <p>II. Besonderheit</p> <p>1 Akkumulation der Kapitalien</p> <p>2 Konkurrenz der Kapitalien</p> <p>3 Konzentration der Kapitalien</p> <p>(Quantitativer Unterschied des Kapitals als Austausch des Kapitals mit Revenue Große und Wirkung)</p> <p>III. Einzelheit</p> <p>1 Das Kapital als Kredit</p> <p>2 Das Kapital als Aktienkapital</p> <p>3 Das Kapital als Geldmarkt</p> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

**D. Letter to Lassalle, February 22, 1858 [MEW 29: 550 f.]**

1. Vom Kapital (enthält einige Vorapters)
- 2) Vom Grundeigentum
- 3) Von der Lohnarbeit
- 4) Vom Staat
- 5) Internationaler Handel
- 6) Weltmarkt

**E. Letter to Lassalle, March 11, 1858 [MEW 29: 553 f.]**

- 1) Wert
- 2) Geld
- 3) das Kapital im allgemeinen (Produktionsprozeß des Kapitals, Zirkulationsprozeß, Einheit von beiden oder Kapital und Profit, Zins)

**F. Letter to Engels, April, 2 1858 [MEW 29: 312 ff.]**

- I. Kapitale zerfällt in 4 Anschnitte
- a) Kapital en general
  - b) Die *Konkurrenz* oder die Aktion der vielen Kapitalien aufeinander
  - c) *Kredit*, wo das Kapital den einzelnen Kapitalien gegenüber als allgemeines Element erscheint.
  - d) Das *Aktienkapital* als die vollendetste Form ... zugleich mit allen seinen Widersprüchen

**G. Index of the 7 notebooks 1857/58 [MEGA<sup>2</sup> II/2: 3 ff.]**

- I) Wert
- II) Geld
- III) Das Kapital im allgemeinen

Übergang des Geldes in das Kapital

1) Der Produktionsprozeß des Kapitals

a) Austausch des Kapitals mit dem Arbeitsvermögen

b) Der absolute Mehrwert

c) Der relative Mehrwert

d) Die ursprüngliche Akkumulation

(Voraussetzung des Verhältnisses von Kapital und Lohnarbeit)

e) Umschlag des Gesetzes der Appropriation

2) Der Zirkulationprozeß des Kapitals

(Abgebrochen)

## H. Plan of 1859 (or 1861) [MEGA<sup>2</sup> II/2: 256 ff.]

I

Der Produktionprozeß des Kapitals

1) Verwandlung von Geld in Kapital

a) Übergang

b) Austausch zwischen Kapital und Arbeitsvermögen

c) Der Arbeitsprozeß

d) Der Verwertungsprozeß

Allgemeine Begriff des Mehrwerts

Vermehrung der Produktivkraft

Gleichzeitige Arbeitstage, Population

Kapitalwachstum für Erhalt der Arbeitszahl bei vermehrter Produktivkraft

2) Der absolute Mehrwert

absolute und notwendige Arbeitszeit

Surplusarbeit. Surpluspopulation

Surplusarbeit und notwendige

Senior

3) Der relative Mehrwert

a) Kooperation von Massen

b) Teilung der Arbeit

c) Maschinerie

4) Die ursprüngliche Akkumulation

Surplusprodukt. Surpluskapital

Kapital produziert Lohnarbeit

Die ursprüngliche Akkumulation

Konzentration von Arbeitsvermögen

Mehrwert in verschiedenen Formen und durch verschiedene Mittel

Vervielfältigung der Produktionszweige

Population

5) Lohnarbeit und Kapital

Kapital collective force, civilisation

Reproduktion des Arbeiters durch das Salär  
 Sich aufhebende Schranken der kapitalistischen Produktion  
 Disposable time. Wirkliche Ökonomie  
 Erscheinung des Gesetzes der Appropriation in der einfachen Warenzirkulation  
 Umschlag dieses Gesetzes.

**I. Letter to Kugelmann, October, 13, 1866 [MEW 31: 534]**

Buch I Der Produktionsprozeß des Kapitals  
 Buch II Zirkulationsprozeß des Kapitals  
 Buch III Gestaltung des Gesamtprozesses  
 Buch IV Zur Geschichte der Theorie

**Marx's index of Manuscript of 1864/65 of Book III of *Capital*  
 and Engels's of Book III (1894)**

| MANUSCRIPT OF 1864/65                                                                                                                 | CAPITAL III 1894                                                                                  |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Fifth Chapter. Division of profit into Interest and Profit of Enterprise (Industrial and Commercial Profit). Interest-Bearing Capital | Part five The Division of Profit into Interest and Profit of Enterprise. Interest-Bearing Capital |
| 1. Interest-Bearing Capital                                                                                                           | 21. Interest-Bearing Capital                                                                      |
| 2. Division of Profit. Rate of Interest. Natural rate of Interest                                                                     | 22. Division of Profit. Rate of Interest. "Natural" rate of Interest                              |
| 3. Interest and Profit of Enterprise                                                                                                  | 23. Interest and Profit of Enterprise                                                             |
| 4. Exteriorisation of Surplus Value and Capital relation as such in Form of Interest-Bearing Capital                                  | 24. Exteriorisation of Capital relation in Form of Interest-Bearing Capital                       |
| 5. Credit and Fictitious Capital                                                                                                      | 25. Credit and Fictitious Capital                                                                 |
|                                                                                                                                       | 26. Accumulation of Money Capital, and its Influence on the Rate of Interest                      |
| I.                                                                                                                                    | 27. The Role of Credit in Capitalist Production                                                   |
| II.                                                                                                                                   | 28. Means of Circulation and Capital. The views of Tooke and Fullarton                            |
| III.                                                                                                                                  | 29. Banking Capital's Component Parts                                                             |
|                                                                                                                                       | 30. Money Capital and Real Capital (I)                                                            |
|                                                                                                                                       | 31. Money Capital and Real Capital (II) (continuation)                                            |
|                                                                                                                                       | 32. Money Capital and Real Capital (III) (conclusion)                                             |
| Confusion                                                                                                                             | 33. The Means of Circulation under the Credit System                                              |
|                                                                                                                                       | 34. The <i>currency principle</i> and the English Bank Legislation of 1844                        |
|                                                                                                                                       | 35. Precious Metal and Rate of Exchange                                                           |
| 6. Pre-bourgeois [MEGA <sup>2</sup> II/4.2, pp. 6*-7*]                                                                                | 36. Pre-Capitalistic Relations [ <i>Capital III</i> : 7]                                          |

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