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SOCIALISATION AND PERSONIFICATION AS FORMS OF DOMINATION IN MARX

by Pablo Pulgar Moya*

Abstract. *The problem of domination [Herrschaft], as an abstract mode of violence which can be deduced from late Marx's work, presents us with crucial elements that have fueled contemporary debates regarding the method in authors as diverse as Echeverría, Haslbauer, Elbe, Fineschi, Heinrich, Kurz, or Postone. The present text is situated within the specific context of these debates; the hypothesis that runs throughout this work is that the abstract mode of effective domination illustrates capital under the figure of the real subsumption of labour by transforming the human being's functions of 'formation' and 'individualisation' (Balibar) into functions of effective capital 'formation' and 'personalisation'. In this respect, domination of capital is primarily expressed as an abstract exercise of the bourgeois society's formation.*

Keywords. *Personification; Socialisation; Abstract Domination; Power/ Violence; Marx*

1. Prelude

The question concerning Marx's exposition of the 'social formation' remains a very relevant debate today and, according to our point of view, comprises a crucial element for questions concerning the dominant character of *bourgeois society's* modern composition as a conceptual matrix involving the production of logical consistency. This is structured through the valorisation process, a mode of abstract violence which Marx will alternatively refer to as a power of disposition [*Verfügungsgewalt*] or power of command [*Kommandogewalt*] through the form of effective domination. Unlike the general German concept '*Macht*', this 'power' [*Gewalt*] emphasises its purely coercive character¹.

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¹ It is necessary here to emphasise the double meaning found in German of the word '*Gewalt*'; this concept is greatly important in Marx's vocabulary, but

First, we shall point out that it is possible to conceive that there is an internal connection between the general notions of society [*Gesellschaft*] and of human being [*Mensch*] in Marx by means of a form of domination (by capital). Marx establishes a criterion of differentiation between the diverse reconstitutions of the concept of human being, in relation to the imperative social formation, in *Capital*. Society, as a ‘dominance’ over individuals, also establishes its own mode of command. In order to explain this, let us concentrate on the concept of society and, more specifically, on ‘the social’ in Marx’s late works in which he wrote about interrelated conceptions of economic and political totality in the strict context of the development of human connections². In this context, our hypothesis is inscribed in the contemporary debate regarding the so-called *Gesellschaftstheorie*, the theory of society, in which authors such as Kurz, Bellofiore, Fineschi, Finelli, Elbe, and Heinrich bring life to a debate that dates back some 30 years³. The

expresses a double meaning of ‘violence’ and ‘power’. In fact, we must emphasise that Marx repeatedly uses the term *Gewalt* in a sense that highlights the dominant character of ‘violence’ as an exercise of command; that is, of ‘power’. We also must emphasise that the term *Gewalt* refers to a power that is constantly conceived as a *coercive power* over another agent, unlike the Latin concept *potentia*, which bequeaths its meaning to the English language. We will opt for a composite denotation for this term (power/violence) for precisely this reason.

² For an analysis of the relevance of the *Grundrisse*, as a canonical work and companion to *Capital* in the robust corpus of his late thought, revolving around the process of social formation, see: I. Stützle, *Marx’ innerer Monolog. Vor 150 Jahren schrieb Karl Marx die Grundrisse*, «Zeitschrift Marxistische Erneuerung», LXXIII, 2008, pp. 113-122.; M. Musto (ed.), *Karl Marx’s Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy 150 Years Later*, London-New York, Routledge, 2008, and R. Bellofiore, G. Starosta and P. Thomas (eds.), *In Marx’s laboratory. Critical interpretations of the Grundrisse*, Leiden, Brill, 2013.

³ B. Echeverría, *Violencia y modernidad*, in A. Sánchez Vásquez (ed.), *El mundo de la violencia*, México D.F., UNAM-FCE, 1987; I. Elbe, *Paradigmen anonymer Herrschaft. Politische Philosophie von Hobbes bis Arendt*, Würzburg, Königshausen u. Neumann, 2015; R. Fineschi, *Ripartire da Marx. Processo storico ed economia politica nella teoria del Capitale*, Reggio Calabria, Città del Sole, 2006; M. Heinrich, *Individuum, Personifikation und unpersönliche Herrschaft in Marx’ Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*, in I. Elbe, S. Ellmers and J. Eufinger (eds.), *Anonyme Herrschaft. Zur Struktur moderner Machtverhältnisse*, Münster, Westfälisches Dampfboot, 2012, pp. 15-34; R. Kurz, *Subjektlose Herrschaft*, in Id. (ed.), *Blutige Vernunft. Essays zur*

concept of society would, thus, both encapsulate and summarise the continuous research into the ‘essence’ of capital, in such a way that this concept shackles and structures a concatenated constellation of the political economy’s particular dispositions. The objective, nevertheless, is to clarify that the conception of society reproduces a determined domination over individuals in the form of an abstract violence and, as a consequence, produces an asymmetrical relation between individuals on the basis of the social organism that, in turn, has its origin in the process of commodity exchange itself.

2. *Socialisation as impersonal domination*

It is no secret that one of the contemporary problems that positions the debate, concerning the composition of ‘society’ *as such* [als solcher], finds its centre in the asymmetry between the figures capital itself presents in terms of organic/organising concretisation during the moments that are immanent thereto in Marx. In this sense, and following Adorno’s hypothesis, the process of «social formation» or «socialisation» paints a portrait of society as a concrete totality in action⁴. However, we must underscore the view that such a characterisation may become counterproductive if it is not coupled with the arduous realisation that, the bourgeois society, as a heterogeneous pole of concrete asymmetries of domination relations, simultaneously generates a similar abstract violence that has its origin in the unfolding itself of the self-valorisation of value in a complex manner for Marx. The bourgeois, modern, concrete society manifests itself through this

emanzipatorischen Kritik der kapitalistischen Moderne und ihrer westlichen Werte, Bad Honnef, Horlemann, 2004.

⁴ Adorno rightly pointed out that «the abstractivity [*Abstraktheit*] of exchange value is a priori allied with the domination of the universal over the particular, of society over its compulsory members through the reduction of persons to agents and bearers of commodity exchange [= as persons]. Through this, the domination of human beings over human beings is realized» (Th. Adorno, *Einleitung*, in Th. Adorno, R. Dahrendorf, H. Pilot, H. Albert, J. Habermas and K. Popper (eds.), *Der Positivismusstreit in der deutschen Soziologie*, Luchterhand, April, 1972, p. 21).

power/violence [*Gewalt*] in concrete relations of domination. Only the exposition of the social will denotes the reproductive character of germinal domination on its own initiation figures, much as it will be with the value-form, given that it reproduces the different stages of the subsumption under the form of a relation of impersonal domination [*unpersönliches Herrschaftsverhältnis*] in a real mode. This methodological position is critically analysed by Marx in his late works that position the concept of society as a corollary of production more generally. That is, as a *status quo* that encompasses the preceding and determined human connections and establishes an immanent asymmetry of capital, as dominant form, one devoid of its character as a subject⁵. In a letter to Kugelmann in 1868, Marx described the idea that the problem of the abstraction of the concept of society entailed the fact «that no conscious social regulation of production takes place a priori»⁶. Society is, thus, understood *prima facie* as the result of an organic and systemic development of the forms of capital, which shape the conditions of the modern mode of production. However, this conditioning simultaneously presupposes the idea of an operative society as *complex* and as having resulted from the continuous process of capital, thereby reinforcing the idea that the social's progressive development can only be understood as a mode of *concretisation* of the exposition. This exposition lacks any sort of descriptive intention, though, and instead stands alone as a corrective element (critical,

⁵ Capital, as an expression of impersonal domination, and therefore of abstract violence, expresses the lack of a subjective relation proper to being human. The human relation is abstractly dominated by capital; it appears as *the* subject and, as such, functions as an impersonal, 'automatic' subject. Keeping one's distance from some 'spiritualisation' (under the homeology of 1807 Hegel's *Geist*) proposed by Postone, it is worth noting that his hypothesis of capital when it functions as the subject of the process of socialisation itself, in that sense works «[a]s the Subject, capital is a remarkable 'subject'» (M. Postone, *Time, labor, and social domination*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 77, upper and lower case in the original). It is precisely in this context of capital's 'impersonalisation' that capital becomes the 'subject' of the very process of social formation as independent of the relations of individual will.

⁶ K. Marx, *Brief von Marx an Ludwig Kugelmann. 11. Juli 1868*, in *Marx-Engels-Werke* [= MEW], 32, Berlin, Dietz/Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus, 2009, p. 552.

negative, dialectical, etc.) of this society's own concretisation and, therefore, of the conceptual concretisation of the abstract character of the power/violence expressed at the beginning of the exposition.

After rejecting a normative notion of society in the so-called *Kreuznach Notebooks*, Marx moves on to understand society as a binding political-economic concept from that point forward. The integration of the concept of society within the methodological instrumentation of the critique of political economy denotes an organic aspect, one integrated within the exposition, in an immanent way that is related to the simplest abstract moments from the very outset. The early Hegelian conceptions, which had been discussed in the *Paris Notebooks*,⁷ and which presented the civil society as an economic category, are now integrated into a necessary re-engineering of the modern/civil society in an operative fashion. In this sense, Heinrich is correct to point out that the only coherent way of understanding the method found in late Marx's work is by examining those instances when it is expressed in an operative mode, not as a corollary of epistemological self-affirmation, although – at the same time – the author overlooks the dialectics' immanent necessity as an expositive deployment that instantiates this same operativity⁸. This is due to a certain apprehension not to fall into a meta-discursive Hegelian aftertaste. Society's self-production, something emphasised by classic authors such as Alfred Smith, Horkheimer or Adorno, is sustained on the basis of the premise of a method that is both 'operating' and 'functional', but that does not have an epistemological externality that commences it as a pre-condition to itself. This premise was already described by Engels in the consideration of society as something that is defined autonomously, as long as its economic pre-conditions have already been deployed in a conceptual mode (provided that the

⁷ Cf. K. Marx, *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte* (Erste Wiedergabe), in *Marx-Engels-Gesamtausgabe* [= MEGA²], I/2: Werke. März 1843 bis August 1844, Berlin, Akademie, 2009, pp. 176 f.

⁸ M. Heinrich, *Die Wissenschaft vom Wert. Die Marxsche Kritik der politischen Ökonomie zwischen wissenschaftlicher Revolution und klassischer Tradition*, Münster, Westfälisches Dampfboot, 2006⁴, p. 96.

human relations of capital that precede this macro-concept of ‘society’ have already been deployed in their particularity). In this sense, we are able to re-formulate this as a mode of social self-production in which the ‘bourgeois society’ acts as the concrete universal. On this matter, Engels writes the following in a letter to Borgius in which he emphasises the role played by technology in social formations:

[U]nder the economic relations, which we see as the determining basis of the history of society, we understand the way in which *men in a given society* produce their livelihood and exchange products with each other (insofar as there is a division of labour)⁹.

The narrow connection between relations of production and modes of production as a constituent term of civil society allows for a reflection on the concept of society as such in light of the passages found in Marx’s later works in which society appears as a binding sum of a totality of human connections; this conjecture is examined in the sections that follow. Society’s binding character can only take shape in a critical form; that is, in a sceptical mode prior to the affirmation of the determinations that compose it and by unveiling the effective domination that is exerted over the particular forms, which we call *critical expository transitivity* and *transitive critical exposition*. In this way, every moment of capital’s presentation stands as an immanent determination by the civil/bourgeois society itself and this, in turn, enables a critical reinstatement of precedent moments. However, these moments now denote the operativity of capital’s domination over these determinations. In this context, we may state that value, at this point and when initially presented, generally appears as the real starting point of capital’s entire development and expresses in itself (and reproduces) the same social formation’s dominant character. The analysis of commodities must be understood in Marx’s late works as abstract research into civil society and, on this basis, commodities, and the

⁹ F. Engels, *Brief an Borgius*, Braslau, 25. Januar 1984, MEW 39, p. 205 (my emphasis).

value of commodities more precisely, appear as an 'elemental form' of all the 'wealth of societies'¹⁰.

3. *Personalisation of property as power of disposition* [Verfügungsgewalt]

The development of a critical examination regarding the terms of property and person, as primordial genetic elements of the process of socialisation described previously, is now necessary. This emergence appears as both terms are elevated, as the initial stages of abstract manifestation of capital's domination over human beings, inasmuch as its initial manifestation appears to be a new stage of abstraction/concretisation in the framework of *Capital's* second chapter. Nevertheless, the 'person' is manifested not by reference to the notion of human nature, something which had already appeared in the *Paris Manuscripts*, but rather becomes concentrated here in terms of the specific difference between the concept of person in relation to the process of capital's formation. Both the 'person' and 'personal relations' were described as epistemic concretisation in Marx since the time of writing his early works and in which the author constantly criticised the intrinsic connection between the notions of person and property; this is something that can be glimpsed in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*. Conversely, we may identify some common points between both philosophers in their understanding of the person as a character [*Charaktermaske*] represented by property.

The interpretation of this concept may lead to some confusion, as (a) the concept as such is ambiguously understood by both thinkers: on the one hand we find phenomenological, juridical-philosophical, and logical principles revolving around the concepts of human being and person in Hegel; on the other hand, though, Marx establishes a difference between the understanding of human being as an essence or species and as a character, considering the development of the concept of person throughout his writings in terms of the latter primarily. An additional source of confusion can be found in the fact that, (b), one can find some dialogues

¹⁰ *Ibidem*.

concerning Marx's position regarding Hegel's concept of person in which different implementations and kinds of critiques of Hegel, during different eras of the evolution of Marx's thinking, which become greatly important. It is worth pointing out that the expositions on the concept of person are not reducible to a mere 'appropriation' of the phenomenological principle in Hegel or of an «immanent critique of the Hegelian theory of modern eticity», however¹¹. The concept of person in the second chapter of *Capital* describes an abstraction of human as the mask of a character that requires property and contracts as necessary moments in the composition thereof.

The priority in the conceptualisation of person in *Capital* accounts for the mapping of an abstract, embryonic, and subjective relation. The role played by the person in the economic-political network of conceptual concretisation constitutes some sort of second nature for the human being on the basis of property. The concept of person *developed socially* and, thus, reflects the disposition of the object. The understanding of property as a relation of will is, inasmuch as it is the result of a subject that is related to objects, is a controversial topic regarding the question of method. The determination of the concept of person that is given in the second chapter of *Capital* is limited to a character of property that is abstracted from any human quality. Here, the proprietary appears as the first agent involved in personalising commodities and represents a specific *disposition* [Verfügung] and relation to objects. The abstract human being is characterised by a certain quality; that is, in terms of the ability to particularise itself in civil society and to appropriate it. In this way, (civil) society, as the totality of human relations, is reflected in property as its particularised representation. Property represents and reproduces a 'dehumanised' subjectivity within the framework of civil society. This dehumanisation does not mean a 'not-being-a-subject', as Haslbauer¹² suggests, but concerns a deficient subject that experiences a

¹¹ V. Çidam, *Die Phänomenologie des Wiedergeistes*, Baden-Baden, Nomos, 2012, p. 106.

¹² H. Haslbauer, *Eigentum und Person. Begriff, Notwendigkeit und Folge bürgerlicher Subjektivierung*, Münster, Mosenstein und Vannerdat, 2010, p. 58.

simplified and atomised subjectivation. In this sense, the person appears as a social expression without a further human determination, one permeated by its exchange relation. This whole relation is substantiated in a necessarily coercive manner, as we discover in the present work.

As a starting point, we must determine whether or not the concept of person in Marx constitutes the first (timeless) level of the social formation that finds any sort of confrontation with the subjective interaction¹³. The 'person', thus conceptualised as proprietary, instead realises themselves as the subject that synthesises the intersubjectivity of modern society itself. Put otherwise, the mode of personification is the thing that introduces to action [*Handlung*] as a mode of understanding the subject. Capital's 'personal' character provides the basis for the continuous private disposal of the means of production; that is, as an acknowledgement of *private* property. The subjective relation of bourgeois property exists between people that account for their 'essence' through (bourgeois, productive) labour¹⁴. In this sense, (private) property is a human relation that is essentially related to (productive) labour. Property, therefore, «is not an object [*Gegenstand*]]»¹⁵ itself, but a specific human relation, a domination relation, and an abstract form of violence/power of disposal in nature. This relation consists of power of command over things (labour products), something which is acknowledged by other subjects within a subjectivity framework. The subject is presented, in light of this analysis, as the basis for human relations (= social bourgeois) that reproduces the Laboral dynamics' *personal dependencies*. In this sense, the abstract relation of an asymmetrical and dominant social model is the relation of the *personal subject* to property. Civil-bourgeois

¹³ This confrontation has been analysed in terms of its formal character by such authors as Backhaus or Heinrich, as well as in terms of its framework by Çidam's action theory.

¹⁴ K. Marx, *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte*, in MEGA² I/2, p. 257: «The subjective essence of private property, private property as an activity that is itself, as a subject, as a person, is labour».

¹⁵ Haslbauer (*Eigentum und Person*, pp. 15 f.) emphasises this aspect of property in his book. Property is not an object, but is instead a relation.

society is, in turn, the general expression of these personal relations between subjects. Marx will be emphatic when clarifying that these people illustrate a certain personification of the economic capitalist relations. The juridical relation of 'property' may, nevertheless, consist of different kinds of appropriation and, as far as it is private, property stands as *res particularis*. The presentation of the second chapter reduces the proprietary to the appropriation of a commodity, and does not provide further determinations of capital, which still remains veiled in the exposition, but is instead simply limited to the *pure* presentation of the commodity until that point. According to its presentation, Marx suggests an initial determination of property by means of the simple possession of commodities.

The concept of the person as proprietary both describes and criticises a specific concretisation of *bourgeois subjectivity*; this is a subjectivity that is crystalised during exchange and takes place on the basis of mutual acknowledgement. This dialectics of the acknowledgement, as a mediation between proprietaries, can be found in Marx in terms of a subjectivation process that is specifically capitalist and *in which* property appears as a motive of personalisation and which involves the further individualisation of human relations. At this level of presentation, property is the expression of a precise relation of will, the relation of the subject as such (person) on the basis of an object (commodity)¹⁶. Thus, at this point of the abstraction, a different determination of the commodity is revealed. This is, as a determination of the subject of action, the person, the proprietary of this same commodity. In this sense, a conflict is reproduced (sometimes ironically) both with the interpretation itself of the right in relation to the concept of person, as with the religious nomenclature coming from Christianity. A second interpretation of the text may, at least, reveal linguistic coincidences with Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, who Marx had profoundly criticised already on his early writings. Nevertheless, the 'flirtation' of *weak* paraphrases must not be necessarily understood as a homologic concordance with the Hegelian concept, but the concept of person rather appears «to Marx [as] a hypostatisation of

¹⁶ Ivi, p. 32.

private property»¹⁷ with which emphasise an effective social reality. In the concept of property, the person appears in their identity essentially as a subject of free will. However, the proprietary only exists in the sense of a representation of commodities, isolated from the particular *self*-determination of the human beings. *Property* establishes the form of *what is proper* in the exchange relation. The property of the property [*Eigenschaft des Eigentums*] consists in becoming possessor of commodity as long as the possessor of commodities, at this level of abstraction, produces the object-commodity in their peculiar [*eigentümlich*] existence. The proprietary becomes proprietary through the exchange and appropriation [*Aneignen*]. The peculiarity [*Eigentümlichkeit*] of the property is presented in detail in the second chapter of *Capital* as a particular relation, this is, as a personal relation in the exchange of commodities¹⁸.

The coincidence of both terms, property and person, not only takes place in linguistics. While for Hegel in *Philosophy of Right* the person appears as a proprietary, in free will, as (self-)relation of subjective spirit in a pure self-acknowledgement, in Marx, instead, the determination of the person is present as a reference to the production relation, according to which the human being is not a proprietary, «because he is a person per se and, in terms of his genuine spirituality, but he is this *abstract construct person* because he is a proprietary through his social act»¹⁹.

The concept of person in Marx must be understood as a social ‘construct’ according to *Capital*. The emergence of the person shows the need for subjective relations to reconstruct civil society. This reconstruction presents the proprietary as a characterisation

¹⁷ Çidam, *Die Phänomenologie des Wiedergeistes*, p. 109.

¹⁸ However, this relation is not understood as an expression of the spirit as it appears in Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*: «The *universality* of this free will to itself is the formal, self-conscious, otherwise contentless, relation, *simple* to itself in its individuality – to this extent, the subject is a *person*. [...] The spirit considers itself as abstract and free self as its object [*Gegenstand*] and purpose [*Zweck*] and, thus, is a *person*» (G.W.F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1970, p. 35).

¹⁹ Haslbauer, *Eigentum und Person*, p. 203 (my emphasis).

of economic conditions. Human relations are, basically, bourgeois *forms* of capital here. Free subjectivity is unable to be a *pure* presentation in and by itself, given that this presentation begins with a valorisation of value where the person is presupposed (before human being itself). We have in Marx, unlike in Hegel, the view that the person is the result of a social deficit. The sphere of individual subjects is examined in this context. At this point, we assert that the *being-me* only has the intention of being a (private) proprietary in terms of an acknowledgement relation between the holders of commodities; that is, as a proxy of an object relation.

Things A and B are not commodities before the exchange, but they only become one through exchange. The first way in which an object of use has the possibility of exchange value is its existence [*Dasein*] as a non-use-value, as a quantum of use-value that exceeds the immediate needs of its possessor. Things are in and for themselves external to the human being, and therefore alienated [*veräußerlich*].

For this alienation-exteriorization [*Veräußerung*] to be reciprocal, human beings *need only to confront each other tacitly as private proprietaries of those alienable things* [*veräußerlichen Dinge*] *and, for that reason precisely, as independent persons*²⁰.

The product, when taken as commodity, ultimately expresses a *social* relation. The fact that this relation is *social* not only shows the character it has as a totality of the social, but also that this character, determined by its asymmetric mode of relation, *abstractly* expresses the abstract mode of the *concrete* domination as power of command and as an abstract violence over objects. At the same time, such relations show a *human* character [*menschlich*]; that is, these are relations between subjects and, therefore, this abstract relation personifies property and is also expressed as abstract violence over other subjects. Social and human relations appear as relations that are inherently related as objectual relations. *Abstract human labour* is defined as a *social relation*. Not every human labour is social; on the contrary, every abstract human labour is, *per*

²⁰ K. Marx. *Das Kapital. Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*, I, MEW 23, p. 103.

definitionem, social. Accordingly, the individuals only appear as abstractions that are representative of social forms.

We formulate that it is necessary to understand individuals in the capitalist form of society as subjects of a dependency of a personal nature under these conditions; that is, they sprout, localised in society, in a spatial-temporal domination mode. In addition, they are also bound to the social conditions that appear to them as equally unshakable. According to Marx, there exists in reality a «necessary subordination of the individuals towards them»²¹. The effect of both dependency relations is the same. In capitalism, people also ultimately depend upon domination [*Herrschaft*]. Nevertheless, this relation of dependency upon capitalism consists of (inter)subjective relations and, thus, it appears as both fetishised and rational at the same time.

The second chapter of *Capital's* critical task concerns the presentation of the 'personality' of the human being; that is, the development of its personal compulsive character in relation to the reconstruction of the commodities that start from given social conditions.

The development of the critical presentation of property in Marx must be seen, fundamentally, as a defetishisation of the socialising action of the person, inasmuch as it is proprietary. We must emphasise here that this presentation of the person, as a proprietary and of property as domination, contributes to an analysis of the totality of the civil/bourgeois society. To that end, we may agree with Haslbauer that:

A somewhat different representation of property as domination attempts to make a summary assessment of the totality of bourgeois society, and takes its elementary moment of human freedom and property provocatively, taken by all members of society, as the epitome of precisely its opposite: domination over human beings²².

This power relation (domination) is precisely the topic of the subsequent segment.

²¹ Marx, *Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie*, in MEGA² I/2, pp. 95 f.

²² Haslbauer, *Eigentum und Person*, p. 28.

4. *Socialisation is domination*

The contemporary debate revolving around the *Gesellschaftstheorie*, from the Italian school to Latin American trends, takes the notion of domination as one of its core concepts, even though there is a long tradition of supremacy coming from the social theory of action. In our formulation, we must not forget the circumstances under which the ‘concept of domination’ is outlined in the exposition of Marx in his late works and that are useful for us to understand the methodological character of such a problematisation. The terms, in contrast to a juvenile and post-Hegelian explanation, of the master-slave relation in the early writings is far from a mere juridical concept, even though it does not appear as either a specific or robust category in the exposition itself thereafter, despite the emphatic efforts on the third volume of *Capital*²³. We must discuss the self-determination of capital’s domination in order to examine the content of all of the economic relations as socially necessary. For this, we have identified the following characteristics of capital’s domination:

- (i) The domination relation culminates in the organic social capitalist formation;
- (ii) Domination expresses an asymmetrical relation, in an abstract manner, as an opposition between two economical subjects: *in nuce*, between possessor²⁴ and worker: domination is the unilateral result of this opposition;
- (iii) Domination as a disposal of the work of others is basically not another thing than its own negative reproduction. It is an abstract moment of the objective reflection on value;
- (iv) This opposition employed is not simply an interaction between two subjects as individuals, but is also expressed in a systematic opposition of complete exchange relations.

The complete determination of the forms of capital’s manifestation corresponds to the determination of the concept of

²³ Cf. K. Marx, *Das Kapital. Kritik der politischen Ökonomie, III*, MEW 25, pp. 798 f.

²⁴ Of course, private proprietaries of social, not individual, means of production.

production. This thesis is consistently defended throughout Marx's late work. One of his theory's strongest arguments concerning labour is that all economic relations can potentially be subsumed in a relation of production. The term 'production' is undoubtedly related to the concept of labour; that is, labour concerns those determinations of production and are nothing other than the determination of social labour as a whole. Production is the synthetic expression of the concept of labour in its valuational sphere insofar as it represents a specific social activity (abstract labour); that is, labour concerns the transformation of an object in general into a product. The production expressed in commodities is functional labour [*zweckmäßige Arbeit*] in its creation of (exchange) value. In the analysis of capital formation, labour must be simultaneously understood as a productive process, that is, the productive is essentially an activity (a dynamic) of object transformation, hence it is understood as the «source of all wealth»²⁵. The specific difference between labour in general and production in general lies in the fact that general labour is understood as the essence of all forms of activity and is the «basic condition of all human life»²⁶. Production in general expresses the transformation process of nature into an overall form that is expressed in value. This connection between the concepts of production and labour illuminates their connection with the transformation of nature through human beings (labour). It is the case that through the factual appropriation of the means of labour, the product of the *transformer of nature* appears under an effective social domination. In the process of socialisation, domination is realised abstractly in the form-property; this is a form that gives rise to the understanding of subjects as *persons*. Therefore, if the labour that produces the object of appropriation is understood as being productive, then domination must be simultaneously understood as a 'domination of capital' or as a domination over production.

²⁵ A far-reaching – and also long-standing – debate that still drags on among contemporary thinkers concerns the discussion on the 'source' (*Quelle*) of all value, which critically addresses Marx's assertion. The purpose of this paper is not to concentrate on this topic, however, since it takes us away from the focus of the discussion.

²⁶ F. Engels, *Dialektik der Natur*, MEW 20, p. 444.

The totality or organism²⁷ of the production relations contains the plurality of economic relations. Therefore, the production organism must be conceptually equated with the economic organism. That is why the production relations encompass the bourgeois-economic relations as an infinity in acting in their determinations and interactions, insofar as it concentrically operationalises the method as a mode of interrelation. We discover that the determination of political-economic domination is composed of the result of active labour-value in the context of the dialectical social organism in the third book of *Capital*. According to Marx, no explanation of the economic process can become plausible without a corresponding organic development of the productive, in which the determination of property or labour, etc., coincides systematically. The determination of domination (of capital over labour) thereby expresses a determination of production in general. However, this determination is not only one of the most developed in the formation of value, but it also plays a decisive role in the whole presentation of the capitalist economy²⁸. The relation of domination and culminates in the presentation of the entire capitalist organic social formation. Due to his productive capacity (that is, due to his productive forces) man can *dominate* nature and other human beings on the one hand and can *be dominated* by nature and by other human beings on the other. The domination described here is an asymmetrical relation and opposition between two economic subjects: *in nuce*, the proprietary and the worker: domination is the unilateral result of this opposition.

²⁷ The concept of organism (of production) is a concept Marx often uses to denote the social whole of production.

²⁸ In his late work, Marx understood society as a reflexive complexity that cannot be explained by itself and, therefore, cannot be used as a starting point for the analysis of the forms of production, but only as an overview for all of the determinations considered above. Society is understood, on the one hand, as the *simplest* dynamic and developing situation of all abstract connections between people, and as a universal determination of the processes of material life on the other, in the sense that it synthesises the most *complex* discussion of all concrete forms of human life in general. Society is then determined, *in concreto*, in the sense that this concreteness must consist of a sum of human relations.

All of domination's characteristics are presented as an essential definition in the last passages of *Capital*²⁹ and are understood as a transitional concept in the process of general production. The constitution of domination is transformed into a general determination of production as a continuous creation of value, inasmuch as it unfolds systematically in more complex moments. Productive domination reproduces the conceptual (not empirical) evolutionary process of capital *in a lordly manner*, which appears as not only determined, but also as determinant. It is *determined* by the fact that the abstract (self-)valorisation of the value of commodities (= process of increasing capitalisation) is the source of all capitalist wealth³⁰ and because the wealth created by capital or through the process of accumulation must be understood *simpliciter* as the result of this domination over the work of others. It is *determinant* because domination presupposes wealth as «mere command over the work of others»³¹; that is, it is the multiplicity of needs by virtue of the creation of value by the productive worker that prevails in the valorisation process, with an increasing tendency to surplus value, under a form of power/violence. Wealth, then, coincides with productivity. Domination (capitalist-productive) is the abstract form of the unity of wealth or the property relation and is the social's particular essence. The fact that the social characterises the whole organism allows us to interpret the formation of value in the analysis of domination as a social relation.

²⁹ This is especially true in the seventh and last section of the third volume of *Capital*, in chapter 48: *Die trinitarische Formel* (K. Marx, *Das Kapital*, I, pp. 822-839).

³⁰ The concept of *wealth* examined here does not simply contain its 'thing-oriented' form (use value). Wealth is clearly not a simple «collection of commodities [*Warensammlung*]», but instead denotes its social form from the beginning of the exposition (Cf. *ivi*, p. 49). However: labour, as the source of wealth, is by no means the only source. Thus in his *Critique of the Gotha program*: «Labour is *not* the source of all wealth. *Nature* is both the source of use values (and this is certainly what constitutes material wealth!) and labour, which itself is only the expression of a natural force, human labour-power. That phrase can be found in all children's primers and is correct insofar as labour is *assumed to* proceed with the associated objects and means» (Id., *Kritik des Gothaer Programms*, MEW 19, p. 15).

³¹ Id., *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*, Wien, Europa Verlag, 1941, p. 387.

For Marx, the whole task of analysing the forms of capital requires not only a development or description of the economical, but also includes a transitive critical presentation of capital; the domination of capital is, like the whole capitalist mode of production, also involves an overcoming of political-economic categories. We can state that the conceptual-transitional unfolding of the relations of domination in Marx's *Capital* also includes a doctrine of freedom, to which, among others, Andreas Arndt is empathetic: the liberation of being under the yoke of an abstract violence, among other forms of violence, is necessarily expressed in the *critical* exposition³². The theory of value's persistence integrates freedom and dependence and appear as dialectical cores of the relation of domination and servitude. Value substantialises the products of labour as commodities, and commodities, through their social character, conceal the dialectical social relations of human beings in the division of labour and the disposal over the labour of others. The development of value reproduces dependence relations not only between human beings and things, but also mutually and between human beings. The critical interpretation of the 'alienating' domination of capital over labour requires its abolition in another form of society:

Personal relations of dependence (initially quite natural) are the first *pre-capitalist* forms of society in which human productivity develops only to a small extent and at isolated points. Personal independence based on objective dependence is the second main form, *capitalism*, in which a system of general social metabolism, universal relations, general needs and universal wealth is formed. Free individuality, based on the universal development of individuals and the subordination of their collective social productivity, as their social property, is the third stage, *communism*. The second one creates the conditions for the third³³.

³² Cf. A. Arndt, *Freiheit*, Köln, PapyRossa, 2019.

³³ Ivi, p. 75

Production is, on the one hand, a process of transformation of the object into a product and, on the other, of the subject into a worker. This double-sided transformation not only contains a «change in the form of the natural»³⁴, but also contains a certain dialectical form of domination. The disposition of the labour of others is the essence of the capitalist relation of domination. Therefore, we can state that the process of value creation, insofar as it forms the reproduction of capital, is simultaneously the transitive reproduction of domination. Basically, domination is nothing more than its own dialectical reproduction; that is, it is an abstract moment of objective reflection on value. The reproduction of the rate of profit, as an increase in value, coincides with the reproduction of an intentional domination, not simply for the purpose of satisfying needs, but also for the sake of capital's self-valorisation. In this context, it is remarkable that the explanation of the concept of domination leads to both the formulation of a concept of freedom or liberation and the explanation of the concept of property as well as the one of abstract violence as personal interdependence. Such a concept of freedom must be understood as a critical, sceptical confirmation of the labour theory of the fetishised being-value³⁵ and this takes the form of a critique of the productive servitude of capital; that is, it concerns the overcoming of capital, its labour forms, and commodity production or the systematic overcoming of production of *interpersonal* domination in capitalism. As a consequence, Marx wants to uncover the whole social structure of capital as a reproductive asymmetry through his concept of domination drawn from the theory of value:

The specific economic form in which unpaid surplus labour is extracted from the immediate producer determines the relation between domination and servitude, as it arises immediately from production itself and, in turn, has a

³⁴ Marx, *Das Kapital*, I, p. 193.

³⁵ The term 'being-value' belongs to Marx's own theory of value terminology. «The German [term] 'being-value' ['*Wertsein*'] expresses e.g., less conclusively than the Romance verb *valere*, *valer*, *valor*, that the equation of commodity B with commodity A is the very expression of the value of commodity A» (ivi, p. 64 f).

determining effect upon it. Above this, however, is the whole figuration of the economic, that arises from the production relations themselves, and with it, their specific political form. Each time, it is the immediate relation of the owners of the conditions of production with the immediate producers, a relation whose form always naturally corresponds to a certain development stage of the mode of labour and, thus, to its social productive power [*Kraft*], in which we find the inner secret, the hidden basis of the whole social construction and, therefore, also the political form of the relation between domination and dependence. In short, the specific form of the State in each case³⁶.

Domination as a relation or bond is not simply related in a lordly way to nature, but is also linked to an *interpersonal* subject insofar as productive power [*Kraft*] commands an abstract form of power/violence [*Gewalt*] in the process of commodity exchange. Someone becomes lord only by ruling a second individual through their disposition over labour by objectifying them³⁷. This describes a relationship that is the expression of a solidified asymmetry between specific power relations. Dependency relations appear in the capitalist context as conditions of labour, division of labour and, moreover, as property relations. A notable feature of this dialectical domination concerns the alienation of the other through a *de facto* struggle. The peculiarity of the proprietary [*eigentümlich*] logic of this struggle for the acknowledgement of consciousness reproduces a certain relation of domination with respect to the activity; it concerns an asymmetrical domination over the social means of production. Proprietary and worker, both opposing determinations in the domination of capital, are both related to the satisfaction of the object of desire (the other) and this leads to a parallel asymmetry of material life as realised freedom. This opposition, resulting from the formation of value, is not simply an interaction between two subjects as individuals, according to which

³⁶ Id., *Das Kapital*, III, p. 799 f.

³⁷ Cf. F. Engels, *Fortschritte der Sozialreform auf dem Kontinent*, MEW 1, p. 487 and Id., *Umriss zu einer Kritik der Nationalökonomie*, MEW 1, p. 510 and 586 f.

they relate to each other in a model of exchange relations. In the context of the problem of domination, such as it has been thematised here, a duplication of relations is glimpsed not only in the form of production, but also in the relations of social property; more precisely, it can be found in the social or historical-conceptual appropriation of material life's productive development. The private proprietary, as the master in the struggle for consciousness, has a social role to play in the private interest. Capitalist relations of domination produce social separation in modern class society due to the accumulation of all social wealth. Modern classes are the social result of modern modes of production, insofar as they are understood as production of wealth and, therefore, these modern classes are concrete forms of that violence that appeared as abstract in embryonic property relations. The timeless presentation³⁸ of the position of means of production solidifies the hegemony of some over others.

5. *Conclusion*

Capitalist socialisation leads to a complexification of the anatomy of these historical interpersonal relations in capitalism; this does not take place chronologically, but as the exhibition of capital's self-movement. In this sense, Adorno and Horkheimer's³⁹ understanding of the relations of production, as a totalising organism, becomes relevant. Individuals perform certain functions or roles in light of this organic functioning that are determined by the process of civil/bourgeois socialisation as persons. The person is conceived of as the appearance of commodities in the form of an objectualised representation of the subject and, inasmuch as they are the representation of commodities, they play the *dramatised* role of the bearer of value. This character assumes a double role here. This takes place on the one hand by personalising commodities, thereby making objectified products out of them, and on the other,

³⁸ Marx, *Grundrisse*, p. 28.

³⁹ Cf. Th. Adorno and M. Horkheimer, *Soziologische Exkurse*, Frankfurt am Main, EVA – Institut für Sozialforschung, 1974, p. 22 f.

the individual is objectified and reduced to a representation. The commodity seems to become its objectivity, its use value, and appears in the exchange relation as a personalised suprasensible form: Its personification is its objectification. This *theatrical* concept of person points out both the physical character of the interpersonal relation and the subjective character of commodity exchange, an exchange that is permeated by a relation of domination.

During the *theatricalisation* of the human being as a person, the human being loses its character as a subject and assumes the social character of a person through property. The human being is a person only to the extent that another person recognises them. Thus, the recognition of the person is basically the acknowledgement of their control, command, and dominion over commodities. The proprietary becomes proprietary on the basis of the acknowledgement of another proprietary, and both are acknowledged as bearers of commodities. This subjectivised basis endows them with power/violence of command over objects and with the effective reproduction of dominion over other subjects. This way, the universality of the domination of property relations rises as a principle of hostility over particularity⁴⁰. This domination over commodity is the atomised, germinal form of the abstract violence of capital over the human being and is the most vacuous expression of social reproduction as abstract violence. This configures the essence of society as a whole and the generation of the complex and developed form of domination: the form of wealth.

⁴⁰ Cf. A. Miranda Mora, *Positividad de la ley, violencia de la legalidad*, in J. Balladares, Y. Elguera, F. Huesca and Z. Olvera (eds.), *Hegel. Ontología, estética y política*, México D.F., Fides, 2017, p. 302: «This principle of authority (law) that is exercised as domination implies hostility towards the particular, since the latter cannot accept anything that contradicts its designs».