

PETER HUDIS

## Yes, There Is An Alternative – And It Can Be Found in Marx

Although few questions are more important than whether a viable alternative to capitalism is possible, radical theory has tended to shy away from directly engaging the issue – even when the theoretical and practical cost of the claim that “there is no alternative to capitalism” is acknowledged. This essay argues that the barrier towards envisioning a viable alternative needs to begin by revisiting Marx’s critique of capitalism as well as his many criticisms of the socialist and communist tendencies of his time. Implicit in Marx’s critique of the logic of capital and the failure of radical theoreticians in his time to comprehend it is a specific concept of a post-capitalist society that today’s social movements neglect to their peril. By re-visiting Marx’s body of work in light of what it offers for envisioning life after capitalism, we may be able to grasp how deeply his work speaks to us today.

**Keywords:** Marx. Political Economy. Labor Time. Value Production. Post-Capitalism

## Part I: The Aporias of the Present Political Moment

After enduring years, if not decades, of the claim by pundits on the Left as well as the Right that capitalism is here to stay, increasing numbers of people around the world are expressing a new level of anti-capitalist sentiment and agitation. This is due, in large part, to the realization that “actually existing capitalism” has little to offer humanity except decades of economic austerity, declining living standards, and massive environmental destruction. From the *indignados* of Spain to the mass protests in Greece, and from the Occupy Wall Street Movement in the U.S. to the growing labor unrest in China, new openings have emerged to challenge the ideological and practical dominance of capitalism as a global system.

Yet, as such protests unfold, what is lagging far behind is a clear articulation of the form of society needed to replace it. Simply reiterating the slogan “another world is possible”, as occurs so often today, hardly adds up to a convincing vision of a society that points beyond the limits of both “free market” capitalism and the failed “socialist” regimes that once competed with it for world dominance.

The depth of the problem in articulating an alternative is seen in how it applies even to those who complain about its absence. Slavoj Žižek has argued, “The sad fact that opposition to the system cannot articulate itself in the guise of a realistic alternative, or at least a coherent utopian project, but only takes the form of meaningless outburst, is a grave indictment of our epoch.”<sup>1</sup> Yet, he concludes, “we should not put too much energy into a desperate search for the ‘germs of communism’ in today’s society... to assert the dimension of the Event (of eternal Truth) in our epoch of contingency – is to practice a kind of Communism of *absconditus*.”<sup>2</sup> An alternative to capitalism is thus approached much as the neo-Platonists viewed the godhead – it can only be defined negatively, in terms of what it is not, since any effort to conceptualize its positive content is beyond the reach of mere mortals. This is a rather questionable approach, since all societies, real or imagined, are products of human activity. So why should it be beyond the ability of humanity to spell out more specifically the content of a possible post-capitalist society?

Surely, much of the difficulty of envisioning an alternative stems from the nature of capital itself. Although many social systems appear to be immutable (how many in the Middle Ages anticipated moderni-

---

1 Slavoj Žižek, *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* (London: Verso, 2012), 54.

2 Ibid., 131.

ty?), capitalism has a striking ability to appear as the *ne plus ultra* of human history. This is because it is a system of value production, in which human relations take on the form of relations between things. Products of labor can only enter into a quantitative relation with one another if they share a common *quality*. The substance of their commensurability is abstract or homogenous labor. Abstract labor, the substance of value, makes it possible for products of labor to be universally exchanged. However, as Marx noted, “Value does not have its description branded on its forehead; it rather transforms every product of labor into a social hieroglyphic.”<sup>3</sup> Since value can only show itself in a relation between one material entity and another, it appears that what connects products of labor – and increasingly people – is a quasi-natural property of the things themselves instead of a historically specific social relation of labor. Capitalism *has* to appear natural and immutable, precisely because it is a system of value production.

Yet one might object, didn't earlier generations face little difficulty in envisioning an alternative, as seen in the many socialist and communist movements that attempted to create a post-capitalist society? There is no question that important challenges to capitalism did emerge over the past two centuries. However, it is relatively easy to pose an alternative when it is defined in terms of the abolition of private property and the “free” market by an existing hierarchical state. That does not by itself, however, call into question the core of capitalism – the system of value production. And none of the putatively “socialist” or “communist” regimes, by their own admission<sup>4</sup>, abolished abstract labor, class domination, and the law of value. Indeed, the failure of the many revolutions of the past century to create a truly new society that transcends capitalism has solidified the view that there is no alternative to being subordinated to quasi-natural social “laws” that are outside of our control.

The extent of this problem can be seen by turning again to Žižek, surely one of the most creative and provocative of contemporary social critics. He writes:

3 Karl Marx, *Capital* Volume One, trans. by Ben Fowkes (New York: Vintage, 1977), 167.

4 In 1943 Stalin's theoreticians declared that the law of value – previously considered the cardinal principle of *capitalist* production – was an integral part of “socialist” Russia. See Raya Dunayevskaya, “A New Revision of Marxian Economics,” *American Economic Review*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (September 1944), 531-37; reprinted in *The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State-Capitalism*, ed. and introduced by Peter Hudis (Chicago: News and Letters, 1992), 83-88.

For Marx, the question of freedom should not be located primarily in the political sphere proper [...]. The key to actual freedom rather resides in the network of social relations, from the market to the family, where the kind of change needed if we want genuine improvement is not political reform, but a change in the ‘apolitical’ social relations of production.<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, instead of going on to address the specific changes needed in these “apolitical social relations,” he bemoans the fact that today “what as a rule goes unquestioned [...] is the democratic-liberal framework” of contemporary politics. Indeed, he argues that Alan Badiou “hit the mark” with his comment, “Today, the enemy is not called Empire or Capital. It’s called Democracy.”<sup>6</sup>

This is odd indeed. First, the “democratic-liberal framework” of bourgeois democracy *is* widely questioned today – by Islamic fundamentalists, China’s statist bureaucrats, supporters of authoritarian regimes in Syria, Iran, and Venezuela, etc. Second, if democracy and not capital is the real enemy what is the point to critiquing the “apolitical” social relations of production? Žižek nevertheless continues with his emphasis on need for a “reinvented democracy beyond the multi-party representational system” – which, to him, is “the dictatorship of the proletariat”!<sup>7</sup>

For Marx, however, the “dictatorship of the proletariat” refers *not* to “apolitical social relations of production” but to a *political* form that exists *prior* to the emergence of a socialist or communist society.<sup>8</sup> As Marx put it in the *Critique of the Gotha Program*, “Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. Corresponding to this is also a *political* transition period in which that state can be nothing but *the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat*.”<sup>9</sup> Marx did not mean by the “dictatorship of the proletariat” the rule of a single-party state. *Nor did he refer to it as rule by a state at all in the conventional sense.* For Marx and Engels, the most outstanding exemplar of the dictatorship of the

5 Žižek, *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously*, 86-87.

6 Ibid., 87.

7 Ibid., 88.

8 Marx made no distinction between socialism and communism in any of his writings; for him the terms were completely interchangeable. In the *Critique of the Gotha Program* he refers instead to a lower and higher phase of communism (or socialism). The notion that socialism and communism represent distinct historical stages was completely alien to Marx’s thought and only entered the lexicon of Marxism after his death.

9 *Critique of the Gotha Program*, in *Marx-Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 24 (New York: International Publishers, 1986), 95. My emphases.

proletariat was the Paris Commune of 1871, which “was a Revolution against the State itself, this supernaturalist abortion of society.”<sup>10</sup> The dictatorship of the proletariat was for Marx a thoroughly expansive *democratic* form, which aspired for the “reabsorption of the State power by society.”<sup>11</sup>

In a word, Marx understood the dictatorship of the proletariat as a political *transitional* form between capitalism and post-capitalism. It did not refer to a post-capitalist society. A socialist society would have no proletarian “dictatorship” – since with the abolition of classes the proletariat ceases to exist!

Žižek thus no sooner reaches the threshold of addressing the critical issue – “a change in the ‘apolitical’ social relations of production” – than he retreats back into familiar territory by focusing on the political form of transition to a new society.<sup>12</sup> This gesture is rather typical among contemporary radical thinkers. Volumes have been written about the needed “transition” to socialism – while virtually nothing is said about the content of socialism itself.

The irony is that there is no mystery about the proper transitional form for creating a new society. That question was answered long ago. The struggles of the past hundred years have made it abundantly clear that decentralized, spontaneous forms of non-statist organizations are best suited for making an exit from the old society. This is clear from the spontaneous, decentralized councils, *soviets*, that sprang to life during the 1905 Russian Revolution<sup>13</sup> and re-emerged – just as spontaneously – during the Russian and German revolutions of 1917 and 1918; from the democratic forms of self-organization forged by workers and peasants during the Spanish Revolution of 1936; as well as the worker’s councils that served as the main organizing force of the Hungarian Revolution in 1956 and student-worker committees that helped define the near-revolution in France in 1968. Such decentralized and non-hierarchical forms have become even more predominant in the last several decades, as seen in the feminist movement and participatory forms of mass organization forged by the Arab Spring and Occupy Wall Street movements.

10 “Drafts of *The Civil War in France*,” in *Marx-Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 24, 486.

11 *Ibid.*, 487.

12 Žižek’s understanding of such a political form of transition is another matter that I cannot go into here. It suffices to say that his understanding of it owes far more to Lenin and post-Leninists (such as Badiou) than to Marx himself.

13 So spontaneous – and unexpected – was the emergence this decentralized kind of organization that none of the major Marxists on the scene at the time – whether Plekhanov, Lenin, or even Rosa Luxemburg – anticipated its emergence.

So why do radical thinkers continue to harp on the proper form to get to socialism, when that has been answered long ago – whereas the question that remains unanswered, the content of a viable socialist society, is not even broached?

Žižek is instructive here, as seen in his comment: “[W]hat Marx conceived as Communism remained an idealized image of capitalism, capitalism without capitalism, that is, expanded self-reproduction without profit and exploitation.”<sup>14</sup> If this is true, the last place we should be looking for a genuine alternative to capitalism is in the work of Marx. But perhaps the very notion that Marx is of little or no help when it comes to envisioning the new society – widely held by thinkers and activists from an array of backgrounds – helps explain why it is proving so difficult to envision an alternative to capitalism in the first place.

Many years ago Jean-Paul Sartre remarked,

[I]t is very clear that the periods of philosophical creation are rare. Between the seventeenth and the twentieth [centuries], I see three such periods, which I would designate by the names of the men who dominated them: there is the ‘moment’ of Descartes and Locke, that of Kant and Hegel, finally that of Marx. These three philosophies become, each in its turn, the humus of every particular thought and the horizon of all culture; there is no going beyond them so long as man has not gone beyond the historical moment which they express.<sup>15</sup>

Marx is indeed a thinker who represents a new philosophic moment – one that the realities of our era have not surpassed. Indeed, in many respects our world is first catching up to what Marx delineated as the ultimate logic of capital over 150 years ago. But is it conceivable that Marx could remain the philosopher of the era without being able to teach us anything about what should replace capitalism? Is it really plausible that the foremost critic of capital had nothing to say to the effort to envision its transcendence?

In my new book, *Marx’s Concept of the Alternative to Capitalism*,<sup>16</sup> I argue that Marx had far more to say about a post-capitalist society than has been appreciated by his critics and followers. I will here provide a brief look at just a few of the many insights found in his work on this issue, as part of the process of breaking down the “mind-forged manacles” that inhibit the effort to spell out a liberating alternative.

14 Žižek, *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously*, 134.

15 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Search for a Method* (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), 7.

16 See Peter Hudis, *Marx’s Concept of the Alternative to Capitalism* (London: Brill, 2012).

But is it conceivable that Marx could remain the philosopher of the era without being able to teach us anything about what should replace capitalism?

For as I see, the greatest barrier to envisioning the new society is not intellectual sloth, let alone the claim that masses of people are too “backward” to create one. The greatest *conceptual* barrier to envisioning the alternative to capitalism is the unwarranted claim that Marx, *the* unsurpassed philosopher of *this* era, had little or nothing to say about it.

## Part II: Aspects of Marx’s Concept of a Post-Capitalist Society

I will focus here on just a few ways in which Marx’s critique of political economy illuminates the positive content of a post-capitalist, non-alienated society, especially as seen from his *The Poverty of Philosophy*, the *Grundrisse*, and *Capital*.

The *Poverty of Philosophy* took issue with Pierre-Joseph Proudhon’s effort to apply David Ricardo’s quantitative determination of value to a criticism of the inequities of modern capitalism. Proudhon argued that the determination of value by labor time – the notion that the value of a commodity is determined by the amount of labor time embodied in it – is obscured and distorted by the disorganized process of exchange, in workers are paid far less than the *value* of their labor. Proudhon therefore proposed altering exchange relations by paying workers a “fair” equivalent of the value of their labor in the form of labor tokens or time chits. These tokens could then be exchanged for goods and services of the same value – that are produced in the same amount of *time*.

Marx was highly critical of this on the grounds that it utilizes the central principle of capitalism – the determination of value by labor time – as the defining feature of a non-capitalist society. Whereas Proudhon holds that the inequities of capitalism result from an inadequate or incomplete application of the determination of value by labor time, Marx viewed it is the very *basis* of its inequities.

Nowhere did Marx suggest that Proudhon erred by discussing a future society. He instead took issue with the *content* of his discussion by showing that Proudhon conflated actual labor time with socially necessary labor time. Marx of course held, along with Smith and Ricardo, that labor is the source of all value. However, he denied that value is determined by the *actual number of hours* of labor performed by the worker. If the latter were the case, commodities that take longer to produce would have more value. But if that were the case, capitalists would feel impelled to get workers to work slower rather than faster.

Yet, this is clearly not the case. The reason, Marx held, is that value “is constituted, not by the time needed to produce it all alone, but in relation to the quota of each and every other product which can be created in the same time.”<sup>17</sup> Value is not determined by the actual amount of time that it takes to create a commodity; it is determined by the *average* amount of time *socially necessary* to do so. If a worker in Poland assembles an automobile in 24 hours while one in China assembles a similar model in 16 hours, the extra 8 hours of labor performed by Polish worker creates no value. “What determines value is not the time taken to produce a thing, but the minimum time it could possibly be produced in, and this minimum is ascertained by competition.”<sup>18</sup>

Two radically different kinds of temporality are therefore doing battle with each other in today’s world: one is the reduction of time to a uniform, regularized abstraction that is indifferent to the ebb and flow of the sensuousness of living individuals; the other is the varied, contingent movement of events that expresses the sensuous differentiations of the individuals.<sup>19</sup>

The distinction between these two kinds of temporality is pivotal to Marx’s critique of capitalism – and his understanding of what should replace it.<sup>20</sup> Since the value of the commodity is not determined by the actual amount of time employed in creating the product but by a social average outside their control, workers are forced to produce goods and services according to an external dictate – socially necessary labor time. Time ceases to be “the space for human development,”<sup>21</sup> based on the particular needs of individuals. Instead, time becomes an invariable, abstract standard to which all must submit. In capitalism,

17 Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, in *Marx-Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 6 (New York: International Publishers, 1976), 147.

18 *Ibid.*, 136.

19 One can obtain a sense of this second kind of temporality in the citizen assemblies that became a central part of the Occupy Movement and other recent protest movements. Individuals in these assemblies deliberated – at great length – as to what should be the aims and methods of the struggle, often without regard to limiting their discourse according to a fixed and formal schedule. While this sometimes made it difficult for those working full-time jobs to attend meetings that could drag on long into the night, the deliberations can be seen as expressing a different organization of time than represented by the ticking of the factory clock.

20 Moishe Postone has expressed these two distinct kinds of time in terms of “abstract time” versus “historical time.” See his *Time, Labor, and Social Domination: A Reinterpretation of Marx’s Critical Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 291-98.

21 See Karl Marx, *Economic Manuscript of 1861-63*, in *Marx-Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 33 (New York: International Publishers, 1991), 493.



“Time is everything, man is nothing; he is, at most, time’s carcass. Quality no longer matters. Quantity decides everything; hour for hour, day by day.”<sup>22</sup>

What the socialists not only of Marx’s day, but long after, failed to grasp is that commodity value is determined by labor time only to the extent that “labor” is understood in its specifically *capitalistic* sense – as abstract or homogeneous labor. Marx therefore held that the determination of value by *abstract labor time* cannot serve as the basis of a new society:

[T]he determination of value by labor time – the formula M. Proudhon gives us as the regenerating formula of the future – is merely the scientific expression of the economic relations of present-day society, as was clearly and precisely demonstrated by Ricardo long before Proudhon.<sup>23</sup>

Proudhon’s problem isn’t that he failed to oppose the *exploitation* of labor, since he surely wanted an equitable distribution of the social product. For Marx, however, the problem of capitalism is not that it distributes value in an unequal manner in contradistinction to the principle of equalization involved in its system of production. Rather, the central problem of capitalism, and the reason for its unequal forms of exchange, is the *equalizing* tendencies of value production itself. All labor in capitalism is dominated by an abstraction – *undifferentiated, homogenous labor*<sup>24</sup> – as a result of the “collisions between the worker and the employer who sought at all costs to depreciate the worker’s specialized ability.”<sup>25</sup> The unequal distribution of wealth is a consequence of a *class* relationship in which concrete labor is governed by an equal standard – simple, general, *abstract* labor. Proudhon failed to see that value production is inseparable from the “equalization” or *alienation* of labor, insofar as living labor becomes increasingly dominated by a uniform abstraction.

The distributive principle of equality endorsed by Proudhon is “al-

22 Ibid., 127.

23 Ibid., 138.

24 Marx’s concept of *abstract labor* should not be confused with “labor in general” – that is, the creative exertion of mind and muscle in the act of producing use-values. The latter is a transhistorical factor of human existence, while the former is specific to capitalism. Marx refers to “labor in general” thusly in *Capital*: “Labor is the universal condition for the metabolic interaction between man and nature, the ever-lasting nature-imposed condition of human existence, and [...] is common to all forms of society in which human beings live.” See *Capital* Vol. I, 290.

25 Ibid., 188.

What the socialists not only of Marx’s day, but long after, failed to grasp is that commodity value is determined by labor time only to the extent that “labor” is understood in its specifically *capitalistic* sense – as abstract or homogeneous labor. Marx therefore held that the determination of value by *abstract labor time* cannot serve as the basis of a new society

ready realized in automatic labor” in capitalism insofar as the diverse expressions of concrete labor are subsumed by uniform, homogenous abstract labor. Proudhon unwittingly adopts this “smoothing-plane of ‘equalization’” in the existing society as the principle that needs to be established “universally in ‘time to come!’”<sup>26</sup>

Marx’s comment in his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* that “the equality of wages, as demanded by Proudhon, not only transforms the relationship of the present-day worker to his labor into the relationship of all men to labor. Society, then, conceived as an abstract capitalist,”<sup>27</sup> is a direct anticipation of the more developed critique found in his *Poverty of Philosophy* and *Grundrisse*.

At least part of the reason for Proudhon’s failure to single out the *alienation* of labor has to do with his social base – artisans and self-employed craftsmen. These predominate at an earlier, pre-industrial stage of capitalism when concrete laboring activity is not completely subsumed by abstract labor. The craftsman still has a degree of control over his labor process and does not necessarily feel alienated from his very activity of laboring. Artisans and craftsmen are of course exploited, since they receive less in wages and benefits than the value of their product. Hence, they tend to blame their distress on forces external to the mode of labor, by taking issue with “parasitical” middlemen, bankers, financiers, or other ethnic groups (Proudhon himself was a notorious anti-Semite). They tend not to direct their anger at the form of labor itself since it does yet confront them as a “person apart.”

It would be a mistake, however, to think that Proudhon’s standpoint vanished with the full-blown emergence of modern capitalism and the industrial proletariat. It rather morphed into a new expression – one that, ironically enough, took the name of “Marxism.” Most of established Marxism likewise focused on the discrepancy between the value of the product and the value of labor, arguing that a state plan that “organizes” the “anarchic” exchange relations of capitalism is needed to re-distribute value more equitably. The post-Marx Marxists of the Second and Third Internationals had very little, if anything, to say about alienated or abstract labor. That Marx’s *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, which contains his famous theory of alienation, was unknown at the time hardly helped matters. Yet, even after the *1844 Manuscripts* was pried from the archives, many established Marx-

26 Ibid., 127.

27 *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, in *Marx-Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 3 (New York: International Publishers, 1975), 280.

ists spent considerable energy trying to disparage it as a mere residue of the young Marx's failure to overcome his infatuation with Hegelianism (the work of Louis Althusser is a case in point). The leaders and ideologists of "actually existing socialism" had very real and pressing reasons for denying the importance of the concept of abstract or alienated labor, since it got in the way of their effort to adopt capitalist techniques of labor organization, management, and accounting in the drive to "catch up with the West" in industrial output and military might. "Quality no longer matter[ed]. Quantity decide[d] everything; hour for hour, day by day."<sup>28</sup>

Although many Marxists have used Marx's critique of Proudhon as a battering ram against "anarchists" and "petty-bourgeois socialists," the Soviet-style systems represented a variant of exactly what Marx took issue with Proudhon and similar socialists. The Soviet regimes eliminated private property and the "free market" by bringing the process of distribution and circulation under the control of the state, but they did not eliminate value production. Concrete labor was still subsumed by a monotonous, routinized form of activity, abstract labor, which served as the substance of value. Production relations remained untouched.

In a prophetic critique of Proudhon in the *Grundrisse*, Marx suggests that a planned economy – so long as there is no fundamental change in relations of production – may avoid some of the inconveniences of traditional market capitalism, but the problems become reproduced on another level. Imbalances between production and consumption are bound to show up one way or another, so long as the relations of production are not transformed, precisely because value production is based on a non-equivalence or imbalance between production and consumption. The only way to transform relations of production is for working conditions to be controlled by the laborers themselves, instead of by some autonomous force (such as the market or a hierarchical state plan) that operates irrespective of their will.<sup>29</sup> That is why

28 Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, 127.

29 The control of production relations by the working class itself involves a social *plan*, insofar as the producers decide, on the basis of democratic deliberation, how to distribute the elements of production in a form conducive to their interests. But this is very far from the despotic plan that is integral to statist and non-democratic forms of societies. For more on this distinction, see Raya Dunayevskaya, *Marxism and Freedom, from 1776 Until Today* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Books, 2000), 92-3: "The despotic plan inherent in capitalist production reveals itself in a form all his own – *the hierarchic structure of control over social labor* [...]. The opposition is between the *nature* of the cooperative form of

Marx insisted that only “freely associated people”<sup>30</sup> could put an end to the dominance of capital. Simply replacing the domination of the market by the state is no solution at all. Marx is explicit on this: “The money system in its present form can be completely regulated [...] without the abandonment of the present social basis: indeed, while its contradictions, its antagonisms, the conflict of classes, etc. actually reach a higher degree[...].”<sup>31</sup> This anticipation of *state-capitalism that called itself socialism* could not be clearer.

But does this critique provide us with a clear conception of what constitutes a *genuine* socialist society? In the *Poverty of Philosophy*, Marx wrote, “In general, the form of exchange of products corresponds to the form of production. Change the latter, and the former will change in consequence.”<sup>32</sup> Proudhon and other neo-Ricardian socialists held that a new form of exchange could be created *without* altering relations of production, as seen in their idea of paying workers according to the *value* of their labor in time chits. Marx castigated this approach on the following grounds: “[I]f all the members of society are supposed to be immediate workers, the exchange of equal quantities or hours of labor is possible only on condition that the number of hours to be spent on material production is agreed on beforehand. But such an agreement negates individual exchange.”<sup>33</sup> The only situation in which an exchange of equal *quantities* or hours of labor makes sense, according to Marx, is one in which the conditions that make generalized commodity production possible are abolished. Marx therefore envisioned a society in which a social average that operates behind the worker’s backs – socially necessary labor time – no longer dictates the amount of time that the worker must spend producing a given product. Instead, the amount of time will be “agreed on beforehand” by the associated producers. Material production will be determined by the producer’s conscious decisions instead of by the autonomous force of value production. Such a situation “negates individual exchange” in that products do not exchange based on the amount of (abstract) labor time embodied in them. Marx was unequivocal on this point: “Either you want the correct proportions of past centuries with present-day means

---

labor and the capitalistic *form* of value production.”

30 See *Capital*, Vol. I, by Karl Marx, trans. by Ben Fowkes (New York: Vintage, 1976), 173.

31 Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, in *Marx-Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 28 (New York: International Publishers, 1986), 71.

32 Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, 143.

33 *Ibid.*, 143.

of production, in which case you are both reactionary and utopian. Or you want progress without anarchy: in which case, in order to preserve the productive forces, you must abandon individual exchange.”<sup>34</sup>

Marx left no room for a “transition” to socialism based on the principles of the old society. He conceived of a sharper break between capitalism and socialism than advocated by capitalism’s neo-Ricardian socialist critics.

The manner in which he further developed this argument is one of the central themes of the *Grundrisse*, although I can only point to instances of this here.<sup>35</sup> In the “Chapter on Money,” Marx takes issue with Proudhon’s claim that in a new society one form of labor (the value of an activity) could be directly exchanged for another (the value of the product of the activity) through the use of labor tokens or time chits. Marx argued that so long as value production prevails, labor time in one form could not be *directly* exchanged for labor time in another because labor in such a system is *indirectly* social. This is because the value of the product is not determined by the particular, direct acts of the producers, but indirectly, through a social average. The abstract, undifferentiated, and indirect character of labor in societies governed by value production reaches its full expression in *money*. Money, as the universal equivalent, connects one individual’s labor and product of labor to everyone else’s *indirectly* – through the *abstraction* of a universal equivalent. Individuals are *socially* connected through the *indirect* medium of money because the production relation that exchange is based upon is itself indirect.

In the course of elaborating upon this difference between directly and indirectly social labor, Marx enters into a discussion of the content of a new society:

Now if this assumption is made, the general character of labor would not be given to it only by exchange; its assumed communal character would determine participation in the products. The communal character of production would from the outset make the product into a communal, general one. The exchange initially occurring in production, which would not be an exchange of exchange values but of activities determined by communal needs and communal purposes, would include from the beginning the individual’s participation in the communal world of products [...] labor would be *posited* as general

34 Ibid., 138.

35 For more on this, see chapter two of *Marx’s Concept of the Alternative to Capitalism*.

labor prior to exchange, i.e., the exchange of products would not in any way be the *medium* mediating the participation of the individual in general production. Mediation of course has to take place.<sup>36</sup>

In this remarkable passage Marx contends that labor in a new society would be radically different than in capitalism, where discrete acts of individual labor are connected to one another (or are made general) through the act of commodity exchange. In a new society, labor becomes general (or social) *prior* to the exchange of products, on the basis of the “the communal character of production” itself. The community distributes the elements of production according to the individual’s needs instead of being governed by social forms that operate independently of their deliberation. Marx was not referring to the existence of small, isolated communities that operate in a world dominated by value production. He never adhered to the notion that socialism was possible in one country, let alone one locale. He was pointing instead to a communal network of associations in which value production has been superseded on a systemic level. Moreover, while exchange *of some sort* would exist in a new society, it would be radically different than what prevails in capitalism, which is governed by the exchange of *commodities*. Instead of being based on exchange values, prices, or markets, distribution would be governed by an exchange of *activities* that are “determined by communal needs and communal purposes.” People are no longer controlled by the economic mechanism; the economic mechanism is instead controlled by the people.

Marx’s distinction between indirectly and directly social labor is central to his evolving concept of a post-capitalist society – not only in the *Grundrisse* but also in much of his later work. The crux is that whereas in capitalism the “social character of production is *established* only *post festum* by the elevation of the products into exchange values and the exchange of these exchange values,” in socialism, “The *social character of labor is presupposed*, and participation in the world of products, in consumption, is not mediated by exchange between mutually independent laborers of products of labor. It is mediated by social production within which the individual carries on his activity.”<sup>37</sup> Marx is envisioning a totally new kind of social mediation, one that is *direct* instead of *indirect*, *sensuous* instead of *abstract*.

He went deeper into what he means by directly “communal pro-

36 Marx, *Grundrisse*, 108.

37 Ibid., 108-09.

Marx’s distinction between indirectly and directly social labor is central to his evolving concept of a post-capitalist society

duction” by addressing the role of *time* in a new society. He wrote, “Ultimately, all economy is a matter of economy of time.”<sup>38</sup> No society is more successful at this than capitalism, whose production relations *force* individual units of labor to conform to the average amount of time necessary to produce a commodity. Since this compulsion issues from within the production process instead of from a political authority that lords over it from outside, capitalism is far more efficient at generating efficiencies of time than pre-capitalist modes of production. But how does the economization of time relate to a new society governed by “communal production”? Marx says that it is just as important as in capitalism, although it exists in a different form and purpose:

If we presuppose communal production, the time factor naturally remains essential. The less time society requires to produce corn, livestock, etc., the more time it wins for other production, material or spiritual [...]. Economy of time, as well as the planned distribution of labor time over the various branches of production, therefore, remains the first economic law if communal production is taken as the basis. *It becomes a law even to a much higher degree.* However, this is essentially different from the measurement of exchange values (of labors or products of labor) by labor time.<sup>39</sup>

Although Marx did not detail exactly *how* the economization of time operates in a society governed by communal production, he appears to tie the motivation for the economization of time to what he called in his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* achieving a “totality of manifestations of life.”<sup>40</sup> When society is freed from the narrow drive to augment value as an end in itself, it can turn its attention to supplying the multiplicity of needs and wants that are integral to the social individual. Instead of being consumed by *having* and possessing, individuals can now focus upon what is given short shrift in societies governed by value production – their *being*, their manifold sensuous and intellectual needs, whether “material or spiritual.” The more people get in touch with their *universality of needs*, the greater the incentive to economize time, to reduce the amount of hours engaged in material production, so that their multiple needs (such as cultural, social, or intellectual enjoyment) can be pursued and satisfied. Whereas in capitalism the incentive to economize time is provided by an abstract stand-

38 Ibid., 109.

39 Ibid., 109. My emphases.

40 Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, 299.

ard, exchange value, in socialism it is provided by the concrete sensuous needs of the individuals. The drive to economize time no longer comes from *outside* the human subject, from value's need to grow big with value, but from *within*, from the quest to manifest the totality of the individuals' intellectual, sensuous, and spiritual capabilities.

This concept of a post-capitalist society, found in Marx's work of the 1840s and 1850s, is further developed in Volume One of *Capital*. It may seem surprising that *Capital* would directly discuss a post-capitalist society, since by his own admission it consisted of an analysis of *capitalist* production and capitalist production alone. Indeed, few commentators on Marx's work have paid much attention to the suggestions contained within it concerning a post-capitalist society.

The most explicit discussion of a new society is contained in the very section that Georg Lukács held "contains within itself the whole of historical materialism and the whole self-knowledge of the proletariat seen as the knowledge of capitalist society" – the famous section on "The Fetishism of Commodities and its Secret."<sup>41</sup>

Marx argued that the fetishism of commodities is an *adequate* form of consciousness corresponding to the actual conditions of capitalist production. Abstract labor, the equality of all labors, is the *substance* of value that is materialized or objectified in a commodity. The value of the commodity, which is measured by the amount of time that it takes to create it, does not show itself directly or immediately; it shows itself in the relation between one commodity and another, as *exchange value*. For this reason, the social relation between producers that creates value appears as a property of the thing-like character of the commodities. Fetishism arises from the *necessity* of value to assume a form of appearance that belies its essence. This mystified form of appearance is *adequate to its concept*, for it corresponds to the nature of an actual labor process in which living labor, an activity, is transformed into a *thing* in the process of production: "It is nothing but the definite social relation between men themselves which assumes here, for them, the fantastic form of a relation between things."<sup>42</sup> Marx summed it up as follows: "This fetishism of the world of commodities arises from the peculiar social character of the labor that produces them."<sup>43</sup>

This fetishism of commodities is so overpowering that even those who proclaimed that labor is the source of all value – Smith and Ricar-

41 Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (London: Merlin Press, 1978), 170.

42 Marx, *Capital* Volume One, 165.

43 *Ibid.*, 165.



do – fell victim to it. Despite their discovery, they thought it completely “natural” to view labor as a *thing* that could be bought and sold. In doing so they fell prey to the fetishism that treats value as a property of *things* instead of as the expression of social relations that take on the form of things. By distinguishing between labor and labor power, Marx broke through the fetishism that ascribes value to the physical character of things. As the Marxist-Humanist philosopher Raya Dunayevskaya put it,

[Marx] rejected the concept of labor as a commodity. Labor is an *activity*, not a *commodity*. It was no accident that Ricardo used one and the same word for the activity and for the commodity. He was a prisoner of his concept of the human laborer as a thing. Marx, on the other hand, showed that what the laborer sold was not his labor, but only his capacity to labor, his *labor power*.<sup>44</sup>

Yet if commodity fetishism is an *adequate* expression of existing social relations, how did Marx manage to grasp its transitory and historical nature? Marx himself provided the answer: “The whole mystery of commodities, all the magic and necromancy that surrounds the products of labor on the basis of commodity production, vanishes therefore as soon as we come to other forms of production.”<sup>45</sup> *The only way to overcome the fetishism that attaches itself to products of labor is to step outside of capitalism’s confines and examine it from the standpoint of non-capitalist social relations.* Marx does so by examining value production from the vantage point of both pre-capitalist *and* post-capitalist social relations. In doing so he deepens his insight in the *Grundrisse* that “the correct grasp of the present” hinges on “the understanding of the past” which “leads to points which indicate the transcendence of the present form of production relations, the movement coming into being, thus *foreshadowing* the future [...] for a new state of society.”<sup>46</sup>

After discussing the pre-capitalist relations of feudal Europe, he turns to the *future*, writing: “Let us finally imagine, for a change, an association of free men, working with the means of production held in common, and expending their many different forms of labor power in full self-awareness as one single social labor.”<sup>47</sup> He then *specifies* this utopia as follows: “The total product of our imagined association is a social

44 Dunayevskaya, *Marxism and Freedom*, 108.

45 Marx, *Capital* Volume One, 169.

46 Marx, *Grundrisse*, 389.

47 Marx, *Capital* Volume One, 171.

product.”<sup>48</sup> One part of the aggregate social product serves to renew or reproduce the means of production. It “remains social” since it is not individually consumed. The other part of it “is consumed by members of the association as means of subsistence.”<sup>49</sup> How is this division of the aggregate product to occur? No mechanism independent of the free association of the producers decides this for them. It is decided by the conscious deliberation of the free association itself. Marx does not go into any details of how this would be arranged, since it “will vary with the particular kind of social organization of production and the corresponding level of social development attained by the producers.”<sup>50</sup> Marx is wary of suggesting any mechanism or formula that operates irrespective of what the freely associated individuals decide to do based upon their specific level of social development.

He then writes, “We shall assume, but only for the sake of a parallel with the production of commodities, that the share of each individual producer in the means of subsistence is determined by his labor time.”<sup>51</sup> He says that labor time plays a double role in this new society: it is divided up or proportioned in accordance with the need to: 1) replenish the means of production, and 2) meet the consumption needs of individuals. The specific share of each individual in social consumption is determined by the *actual amount* of labor time that they perform in the community.

It is important to pay close attention to Marx’s wording. Although he speaks of a “parallel” with commodity production in so far as “the share of each individual producer in the means of subsistence is determined by his labor time,” he is not suggesting that the new society is governed by *socially necessary* labor time. As noted earlier, there is a vast difference between *actual* labor time and *socially necessary* labor time. Under capitalism, actual labor time does not create value; instead, the social *average* of *necessary* labor time creates value. That he does not envision value production as operating in a post-capitalist society is indicated by the following sentence: “The social relations of the individual producers, both towards their labor and the products of their labor, are here transparent in their simplicity, in production as well as in distribution.”<sup>52</sup> Social relations based on necessary labor time are anything but transparent since they are established behind the backs

---

48 Ibid., 171.

49 Ibid., 172.

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid.

52 Ibid.

of the producers by an average that operates outside of their control. If social relations in a new society are “transparent in their simplicity,” it can only mean that the product is distributed not on the basis of socially necessary labor time but rather on the actual amount of time that the individual engages in to produce it. Such a principle is completely alien to value production.

The distinction between actual labor time and socially necessary labor time is of cardinal importance, since conflating the two leads to the erroneous conclusion that Marx posits value production as continuing to operate after capitalism. Georg Lukács fell into this erroneous conclusion in his *Ontology of Social Being* and *The Process of Democratization*. He argued,

For Marx, labor exploitation can exist under socialism if labor time is expropriated from the laborer, since ‘the share of every producer to the means of production is determined by his labor time’ [...]. For Marx, the law of value is not dependent upon commodity production [...] according to Marx these classical categories are applicable to any mode of production.<sup>53</sup>

Lukács misreads Marx’s phrase “for the sake of a parallel with the production of commodities” as suggesting not just a parallel but an *identity* between commodity production and forms that prevail after capitalism. He posits value production as a transhistorical feature of human existence by failing to distinguish between actual labor time and socially necessary labor time. No wonder that Lukács ended his philosophical career by calling for the democratization of *existing* “socialist” societies rather than the creation of a totally new kind of socialism that transcends the horizon of value production.

So how is value production to be overcome? The answer centers on the issue of *time*. With the creation of a free association of individuals who consciously plan out the production and distribution of the social product, labor ceases to be subject to the dictatorship of time as an external, abstract, and impermeable force governing them irrespective of their will and needs. Once time becomes the space for the individual’s deliberation and development, social relations become “transparent,” since they are no longer governed by an abstract average that operates behind their backs. “Society” no longer appears as a person apart but rather as the sum total of the free and conscious activity of individuals. Labor now becomes directly social, on the basis of freedom. Once the dictatorship of abstract time is abolished in the actual

---

<sup>53</sup> Georg Lukács, *The Process of Democratization*, trans. Susanne Bernhardt (Albany: SUNY Press, 1991), 120-21.

process of production, it becomes possible to distribute the social product on the basis of the actual amount of time that the producers contribute to society. Hence, the time chits that Marx earlier castigated when proposed for a society governed by value production can now become utilized by a totally different kind of society that has surmounted its horizon.

This important, albeit brief, discussion of the new society in *Capital* is further spelled out in Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Program* – his most explicit exposition of a future, non-capitalist society. He directly delves into the future in writing,

Within the collective society based on common ownership of the means of production, the producers do not exchange their products; just as little does the labor employed on the product appear here *as the value* of these products, as a material quality possessed by them, since now, in contrast to capitalist society, individual labor no longer exists in an *indirect* fashion but *directly* as a component part of the total labor.<sup>54</sup>

It is critical to recognize that Marx is *not* describing a higher phase of socialism or communism, in which “from each according to their ability, from each according to their needs” prevails. He is describing the *lower* phase of socialism or communism, “just as it emerges from capitalist society, which is in every respect, economically, morally and intellectually, still stamped with the birthmarks of the old society from whose womb it emerges.”<sup>55</sup> And yet even here, at this *defective* stage of a new society, *there is no value production*. Indeed, he even says that as of this *initial* phase “the producers do not exchange their products.”

This is because individual labor “no longer exists in an indirect fashion but directly as a component part of the total labor.” In capitalism, individual labor exists *indirectly* as a part of the sum of total labor, since the only labor that counts is that which corresponds to the average amount of time socially necessary to create a product. This situation prevails so long as actual labor time is subsumed by socially necessary labor time. With the *initial* phase of socialism or communism, on the other hand, the disregard of actual labor time in favor of socially necessary labor time is abolished. The exertion of concrete acts of labor in producing use values, performed by freely associated individuals, becomes the one and only expression of living labor. No longer does a force operate behind the backs of the producers – socially necessary

<sup>54</sup> Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Program*, 85.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

labor time – that renders their individual activity useless or unproductive if it fails to meet an abstract standard. The dominance of time as an abstract standard is shattered through the formation of *freely* associated production relations, in which the producers organize the manner, form, and content of their activity. The *replacement of the dictatorship of abstract time with time as the space for human development serves as the basis for a new kind of labor – directly social labor*. With this momentous transformation the split between abstract and concrete labor is healed. With the elimination of the dual character of labor, the substance of value – abstract labor – drops out of existence. As a result, value production itself ceases to exist. Therefore, the “labor employed on the products” no longer appears in the form of “the value of these products.”

With the abolition of the conditions of value production, the form of appearance value – exchange value – likewise ceases to exist. Value *must* take on a form of appearance distinct from itself, as exchange value; *but exchange value can only be the appearance of something if there is something to appear*. Yet with the abolition of abstract or alienated labor, the conditions for the possibility of value – and hence of exchange value as well – cease to exist. Labor now becomes directly social on a free basis, instead of indirectly social, as in capitalism.

However, if value and exchange value cease to exist, how is the mutual and universal exchangeability of products of labor possible? *The answer is that they can't be mutually exchangeable*. This is why Marx writes that even in the initial phase of a socialist or communist society “the producers do not exchange their products.” Instead, there is an “exchange” of mutually agreed upon *activities* – exactly the point that he earlier made in discussing the new society in the *Grundrisse* and *Capital*.

However, if this lower phase of socialism or communism is “still stamped with the birthmarks of the old society from whose womb it emerges,” how are producers to be remunerated? Since, for Marx, a radical break occurs between capitalism and even the most initial phase of socialism or communism, it is crucial that the defining characteristics of capitalism be eliminated from the outset. And a defining characteristic of capitalism is wage labor. He makes it clear that there is no place for it in the initial phase of a new society by spelling out an alternative form of remuneration: each individual *gives to society* “his individual quantum of labor,” which is measured in “the sum of hours of work.” The individual then *receives* back from society a corresponding amount of means of subsistence. Remuneration is based on an “equal standard” – the *actual amount* of labor time performed by the freely associated individuals.

Marx is *not* saying that the worker's labor is remunerated on the basis of a social *average* of labor time. Here, labor time simply refers to the amount of actual hours of work performed by the individual. This is completely different from capitalism, which is based on *socially necessary* labor time. As Marx puts it, "The same *amount* of labor which he has given to society in one form he receives back in another."<sup>56</sup> This also would include kinds of work that is not valued under capitalism, such as women's domestic labor, childrearing, and pre-school education.

Most important of all, Marx is *not* suggesting that remuneration in this lower phase of socialism or communism is based on the level of productive output. It is instead based on "the natural measure of labor"<sup>57</sup> – *time*, the actual number of hours performed by the individual. The difference between labor and labor time is a critical analytical distinction, and conflating the two readily leads to misconstruing Marx's position. He is not suggesting that the operative principle of the lower phase of socialism or communism is "from each according to their ability, to each according to their work." *No such formulation appears either in the Critique of the Gotha Program or in any of Marx's work.* Yet it became the widespread interpretation of Marx in the Stalinist regimes of the twentieth century. As János Kornai writes,

Under classical socialism the principle of socialist distribution stated in every textbook is, 'To each according to his work.' But the question remains of how performance can be measured and what the income proportionate with the performance should be. To an extent the principle 'distribution according to work' applies under capitalism as well, at least in the case of earned income. There performance is measured and rewards are set mainly (but not exclusively) by an anonymous, decentralized process: the labor market, on which the relative wages emerge. Whereas in a classical socialist economy the question of what income is due for what quantity and type of work is decided arbitrarily by persons appointed to do so.<sup>58</sup>

56 Ibid., 86. My emphasis.

57 Engels used this phrase in his *Anti-Dühring* in explaining why distribution according to actual time labor in a new society does not imply value production. See Frederick Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, in *Marx-Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 25 (New York: International Publishers, 1987), 288. The book was written shortly after Marx composed the *Critique of the Gotha Program* and Marx was familiar with its content.

58 János Kornai, *The Socialist System: The Political Economy of Communism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 324.

Kornai is correct that “distribution according to work” became the justification by which the centralized command economies in the USSR, Eastern Europe and China imposed draconian social control upon the workforce. Far from representing a form of the “new” society, it became an administrative formula for forcing the workers to produce under degrading conditions for the sake of “catching up with the West.” He is also correct that “distribution according to work” is not at odds with the operative principle of *capitalism*. Kornai fails to notice, however, that Marx was fully aware of this, *which is why no such formulation or conception enters his own discussion of a post-capitalist society*. Marx is not concerned with the form by which the worker is compelled to provide greater and greater amounts of output for the controlling agents of society. He is not concerned with whether the mechanism that compels the workers to produce more than they consume is accomplished through the arbitrary vehicle of the market or through the equally arbitrary whims of government officials. Both forms “reward” laborers for their productive output; they are made to produce more and more within a given unit of time in accordance with the average amount of time that it takes to produce the product on the world market. In this sense, both forms rest upon the existence of wage labor, which is inseparable from the despotic plan of capital.

In direct contrast, Marx’s concept of socialism or communism is based on the abolition of wage labor, capital and value production. The workers are not “paid” according to whether or not their *labor* conforms to some invariable standard over which they have no control. Distribution according to labor is entirely consistent with value production, whereas distribution according to *actual* labor time reflects or expresses a fundamental break from value production altogether.

## In Place of a Conclusion

We can see that even in discussing the most initial phase of a new society, Marx envisions a far more radical and fundamental social transformation than has been envisaged by both his followers and critics. Communism for Marx couldn’t be further from an “idealized image of capitalism.” So why is it that so many fail to see this? It has much to do with a failure to grasp the depth of Marx’s critique of capitalism. He did not object to capitalism simply because of the existence of private property and the market (both of which existed long before capitalism). Nor did he object to capitalism simply because it was “an-

archic” and lacked a centralized plan (many *despotic* societies were also planned). He objected to capitalism because it is a *perverse* society in which human relations take on the form of relations between things. And human relations take on the form of relations between things because of the dominance of value production – the subjection of living individuals to abstract forms of domination of their own making.

Marx reached for a totally *new* kind of society, one that would *annul* the prevailing concept of time in capitalist society.<sup>59</sup> But this critical determinant becomes totally obscured if one fails to grasp the great divide between *actual* labor time – expressed in time as the space for human development – and *socially necessary* labor time, which suppresses human development. Once these two radically opposed concepts of time are conflated, Marx’s revolutionary vision of freedom and liberation readily becomes corrupted into a counter-revolutionary tyranny.

Yes, ideas *do* matter. “Ideas ‘think,’ not sequentially, but *consequential*ly, related to other Ideas that emerge out of *historic* ground, and do not care where all this might lead to, including transformation into opposite.”<sup>60</sup>

I have singled out only a few examples of how Marx addresses the alternative to capitalism. There is much, much more about this in his writings than I have discussed here – or even in *Marx’s Concept of the Alternative to Capitalism*. This does not suggest that Marx has the “answer” all worked out. We are the ones who have to work it out, on the basis of the realities of *our* time. But we can’t build the roof without the foundation – which is supplied by the creative Mind of Marx.

February 28, 2014

59 The parallels with Hegel’s discussion of “the annulment of time” in the chapter on “Absolute Knowledge” in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* are hardly accidental. This will be the subject of a forthcoming study on my part.

60 Raya Dunayevskaya, “The Power of Abstraction,” in *The Power of Negativity: Selected Writings on the Dialectic in Hegel and Marx*, ed. by Peter Hudis and Kevin B. Anderson (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2002), 310.

He objected to capitalism because it is a *perverse* society in which human relations take on the form of relations between things. And human relations take on the form of relations between things because of the dominance of value production – the subjection of living individuals to abstract forms of domination of their own making.



PETER HUDIS – Professor of Philosophy at Oakton Community College in Illinois, USA. He has written widely on Hegelian philosophy, Marxist theory, and contemporary politics. His most recent book is *Marx's Concept of the Alternative to Capitalism*. He is general editor of *The Complete Works of Rosa Luxemburg*, a forthcoming 14-volume project; two volumes have appeared so far. He is a member of the International Marxist-Humanist Organization.

PETER HUDIS – Profesor filozofii na Oakton Community College w Illinois. Pisał przede wszystkim o filozofii heglowskiej, marksizmie i polityce współczesnej. Wydał ostatnio w prestiżowej serii Historical Materialism wydawnictwa Brill książkę pt. *Marx's Concept of the Alternative to Capitalism*. Redaguje angielskie wydanie 14 tomów dzieł wszystkich Róży Luksemburg. Jest członkiem International Marxist-Humanist Organization.

**Address data:**

Peter Hudis  
Oakton Community College Room 2701  
1600 East Golf  
Road Des Plaines, IL 60016  
**e-mail:** phudis@oakton.edu

**Citation:**

P. Hudis, Yes, There Is An Alternative – And It Can Be Found in Marx, „Praktyka Teoretyczna” nr 3(9)/2013, [http://www.praktykateoretyczna.pl/PT\\_nr9\\_2013\\_Po\\_kapitalizmie/02.Hudis.pdf](http://www.praktykateoretyczna.pl/PT_nr9_2013_Po_kapitalizmie/02.Hudis.pdf) (dostęp dzień miesiąc rok)

**Autor:** Peter Hudis

**Tytuł:** Tak, jest alternatywa i można ją znaleźć u Marksa

**Abstrakt:** Choć istnieje kilka istotniejszych pytań niż to, czy możliwa jest realna alternatywa dla kapitalizmu, radykalna teoria społeczna unikała podjęcia tej kwestii wprost – mimo tego, że teoretyczne i praktyczne koszty stwierdzenia „nie ma alternatywy dla kapitalizmu” są powszechnie znane. Esej ten dowodzi, że przeszkoda w określeniu realnej alternatywy musi mieć początek w rewizji marksowskiej krytyki kapitalizmu, jak również jego oceny ówczesnych komunistycznych i socjalistycznych tendencji. Z marksowską krytyką logiki kapitału i niemożnością uchycenia jej przez radykalnych myślicieli jego czasów związana jest określona wizja społeczeństwa postkapitalistycznego, którą współczesne ruchy społeczne lekceważą na własne ryzyko. Spoglądając ponownie na dzieła Marksa przez pryzmat tego, jak

mogą one nam pomóc w wyobrażeniu sobie życia po kapitalizmie, będziemy być może w stanie dostrzec gruntowne znaczenie, jakie mają współcześnie jego prace.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Marks, ekonomia polityczna, czas pracy, wartość produkcyjna, post-kapitalizm