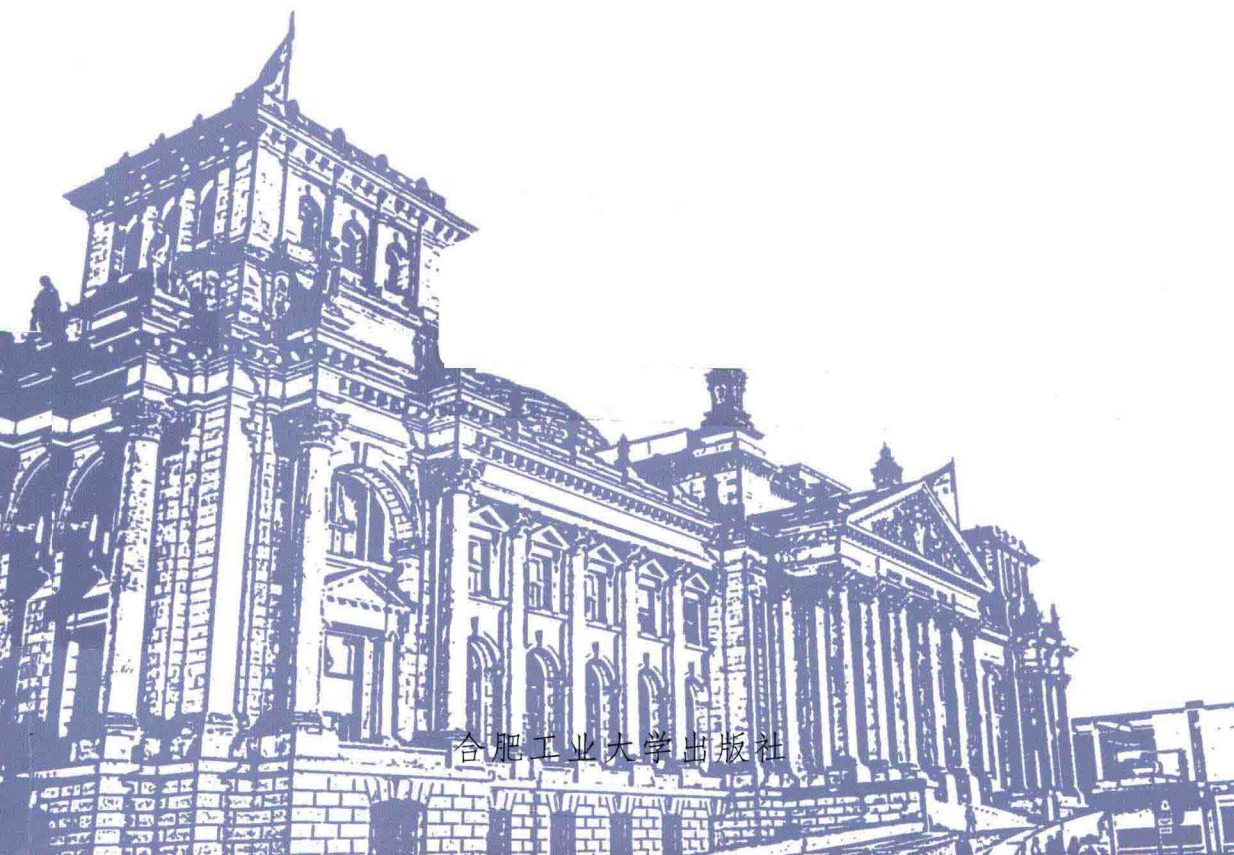


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SELECTED READINGS
FROM CAPITAL

《资本论》选读

曹瑞澜 主编



合肥工业大学出版社

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Abstract

The basic viewpoints of Marxist Political Economics are mainly included in *Capital*, an important work composed by Karl Marx. This course book, functioning as a textbook for overseas students in China to learn Marxist Political Economics, is a selection from Volume One of *Capital* of commodities and money, the transformation of money into capital, the production of absolute surplus-value, the production of relative surplus-value, and the accumulation of capital which compose the five parts of this book respectively. Furthermore, it offers explanations of some basic viewpoints of Marxist Political Economics.

The book has five parts, 15 sections in sum. In each section, there are three steps, namely, pre-class reading, in-class learning, and post-class thinking. In pre-class reading, texts are selected from Volume One of *Capital* for readers to read original basic viewpoints of Marxist Political Economics, know and get familiar with glossaries involved, and get well-prepared for in-class learning which is vital among the three steps. In-class learning, via thematic interpretations of the selected original texts, and analyses of basic viewpoints of Marxist Political Economics, aims to help readers understand the original words, guide and assist readers to discuss issues with a Marxist standpoint, viewpoint and method. Post-class thinking is an extension of the previous two steps with the purpose to navigate readers to utilise what has been acquired in pre-class reading and in-class learning, and creatively analyse phenomena and solve problems in economic activities in the market economy.

摘 要

马克思主义政治经济学的基本观点主要包括在马克思的重要著作《资本论》中。本书作为为来华留学生学习马克思主义政治经济学而编写的读本,从《资本论》(第一卷)中精选了商品和货币、货币转化为资本、绝对剩余价值的生产、相对剩余价值的生产、资本的积累过程五个部分的内容,并对马克思主义政治经济学原理进行阐释。

全书分五大部分,共 15 节。在每一节中设置了课前阅读、课内学习和课外思考三个环节。课前阅读内容选自《资本论》(第一卷)原文,旨在让读者读到原汁原味的马克思主义政治经济学基本原理,了解并熟悉其中涉及的专业术语,为课内学习做好准备。课内学习是这三个环节中的重要一环,旨在通过对《资本论》原文部分的专题解读,分析马克思主义政治经济学基本原理,帮助读者理解原著内容,引导和帮助读者运用马克思主义的立场、观点和方法分析问题。课后思考是课内学习的拓展,旨在引导读者运用在课前阅读和课内学习中所学的知识创造性地分析和解决市场经济环境下经济活动中的现象和问题。

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Part I Commodities and Money

Section 1 Commodities

Pre-Class Reading

A commodity is, in the first place, an object outside us, a thing that by its properties satisfies human wants of some sort or another. The nature of such wants, whether, for instance, they spring from the stomach or from fancy, makes no difference. Neither are we here concerned to know how the object satisfies these wants, whether directly as means of subsistence, or indirectly as means of production.

Every useful thing, as iron, paper, &c. , may be looked at from the two points of view of quality and quantity. It is an assemblage of many properties, and may therefore be of use in various ways. To discover the various uses of things is the work of history. (*Capital*: 3)

The utility of a thing makes it a use value. But this utility is not a thing of air. Being limited by the physical properties of the commodity, it has no existence apart from that commodity. A commodity, such as iron, corn, or a diamond, is therefore, so far as it is a material thing, a use value, something useful. This property of a commodity is independent of the amount of labour required to appropriate its useful qualities. When treating of use value, we

always assume to be dealing with definite quantities, such as dozens of watches, yards of linen, or tons of iron. The use values of commodities furnish the material for a special study, that of the commercial knowledge of commodities. Use values become a reality only by use or consumption; they also constitute the substance of all wealth, whatever may be the social form of that wealth. In the form of society we are about to consider, they are, in addition, the material depositories of exchange value.

Exchange value, at first sight, presents itself as a quantitative relation, as the proportion in which values in use of one sort are exchanged for those of another sort, a relation constantly changing with time and place. Hence exchange value appears to be something accidental and purely relative, and consequently an intrinsic value, *i. e.*, an exchange value that is inseparably connected with, inherent in commodities, seems a contradiction in terms. (*Capital*: 3-4)

Some people might think that if the value of a commodity is determined by the quantity of labour spent on it, the more idle and unskilful the labourer, the more valuable would his commodity be, because more time would be required in its production. The labour, however, that forms the substance of value, is homogeneous human labour, expenditure of one uniform labour power. The total labour power of society, which is embodied in the sum total of the values of all commodities produced by that society, counts here as one homogeneous mass of human labour power, composed though it be of innumerable individual units. Each of these units is the same as any other, so far as it has the character of the average labour power of society, and takes effect as such; that is, so far as it requires for producing a commodity, no more time than is needed on an average, no more than is socially necessary. The labour time socially necessary is that required to produce an article under the normal conditions of production, and with the average degree of skill and intensity prevalent at the time. (*Capital*: 6)

We see then that which determines the magnitude of the value of any article is the amount of labour socially necessary, or the labour time socially necessary for its production. Each individual commodity, in this connexion, is to be considered as an average sample of its class. Commodities, therefore, in which equal quantities of labour are embodied, or which can be produced in the same time, have the same value. The value of one commodity is to the value of any other, as the labour time necessary for the production of the one is to that necessary for the production of the other. "As values, all commodities are only definite masses of congealed labour time. "

The value of a commodity would therefore remain constant, if the labour time required for its production also remained constant. But the latter changes with every variation in the productiveness of labour. This productiveness is determined by various circumstances, amongst others, by the average amount of skill of the workmen, the state of science, and the degree of its practical application, the social organisation of production, the extent and capabilities of the means of production, and by physical conditions. (*Capital*: 6—7)

In general, the greater the productiveness of labour, the less is the labour time required for the production of an article, the less is the amount of labour crystallised in that article, and the less is its value; and *visè versâ*, the less the productiveness of labour, the greater is the labour time required for the production of an article, and the greater is its value. The value of a commodity, therefore, varies directly as the quantity, and inversely as the productiveness, of the labour incorporated in it.

A thing can be a use value, without having value. This is the case whenever its utility to man is not due to labour. Such are air, virgin soil, natural meadows, &c. A thing can be useful, and the product of human labour, without being a commodity. Whoever directly satisfies his wants with the produce of his own labour, creates, indeed, use values, but not commodities. In order to produce the latter, he must not only produce use

values, but use values for others, social use values. (*Capital*: 7—8)

Lastly, nothing can have value, without being an object of utility. If the thing is useless, so is the labour contained in it; the labour does not count as labour, and therefore creates no value. (*Capital*: 8)

To all the different varieties of values in use there correspond as many different kinds of useful labour, classified according to the order, genus, species, and variety to which they belong in the social division of labour. This division of labour is a necessary condition for the production of commodities, but it does not follow, conversely, that the production of commodities is a necessary condition for the division of labour. In the primitive Indian community there is social division of labour, without production of commodities. Or, to take an example nearer home, in every factory the labour is divided according to a system, but this division is not brought about by the operatives mutually exchanging their individual products. Only such products can become commodities with regard to each other, as result from different kinds of labour, each kind being carried on independently and for the account of private individuals. (*Capital*: 9)

But the value of a commodity represents human labour in the abstract, the expenditure of human labour in general... It is the expenditure of simple labour power, *i. e.*, of the labour power which, on an average, apart from any special development, exists in the organism of every ordinary individual. Simple average labour, it is true, varies in character in different countries and at different times, but in a particular society it is given. Skilled labour counts only as simple labour intensified, or rather, as multiplied simple labour, a given quantity of skilled being considered equal to a greater quantity of simple labour. Experience shows that this reduction is constantly being made. A commodity may be the product of the most skilled labour, but its value, by equating it to the product of simple unskilled labour, represents a definite quantity of the latter labour alone. The different proportions in which

different sorts of labour are reduced to unskilled labour as their standard, are established by a social process that goes on behind the backs of the producers, and, consequently, appear to be fixed by custom. (*Capital*: 11)

As a general rule, articles of utility become commodities, only because they are products of the labour of private individuals or groups of individuals who carry on their work independently of each other. The sum total of the labour of all these private individuals forms the aggregate labour of society. Since the producers do not come into social contact with each other until they exchange their products, the specific social character of each producer's labour does not show itself except in the act of exchange. In other words, the labour of the individual asserts itself as a part of the labour of society, only by means of the relations which the act of exchange establishes directly between the products, and indirectly, through them, between the producers. To the latter, therefore, the relations connecting the labour of one individual with that of the rest appear, not as direct social relations between individuals at work, but as what they really are, material relations between persons and social relations between things. It is only by being exchanged that the products of labour acquire, as values, one uniform social status, distinct from their varied forms of existence as objects of utility. This division of a product into a useful thing and a value becomes practically important, only when exchange has acquired such an extension that useful articles are produced for the purpose of being exchanged, and their character as values has therefore to be taken into account, beforehand, during production. From this moment the labour of the individual producer acquires socially a two-fold character. On the one hand, it must, as a definite useful kind of labour, satisfy a definite social want, and thus hold its place as part and parcel of the collective labour of all, as a branch of a social division of labour that has sprung up spontaneously. On the other hand, it can satisfy the manifold wants of the individual producer himself, only in so far as the mutual exchangeability of all kinds of useful

private labour is an established social fact, and therefore the private useful labour of each producer ranks on an equality with that of all others. (*Capital*: 37—38)

Hence, when we bring the products of our labour into relation with each other as values, it is not because we see in these articles the material receptacles of homogeneous human labour. Quite the contrary: whenever, by an exchange, we equate as values our different products, by that very act, we also equate, as human labour, the different kinds of labour expended upon them. (*Capital*: 38—39)

What, first of all, practically concerns producers when they make an exchange, is the question, how much of some other product they get for their own? in what proportions the products are exchangeable? (*Capital*: 39)

In-Class Learning

1. The Natural Property of Commodities and the Quality of Commodities

A commodity should be counted as an independent and external phenomenon in the first place. Relying on its own natural property, this object could satisfy the physical demands of people on its own. But this does not mean that all things are commodities. Although goods, products, and commodities are all physical objects, they all distinguish from each other. In general, goods refer to things which could naturally meet the needs of people. Products refer to things produced and processed by people and are then capable of satisfying people's demand, while commodities are products used for exchange, which involve two factors—use value and value. Thus, commodities possess a duality and unity of opposites—having both use value and exchange value. In this sense, a product which is not used for exchange of labour is not a commodity. Although a natural object possesses exchange value and price, it cannot be a commodity either, for it only obtains the surface form of a commodity.

Natural properties of commodities refer to natural attributes of commodities, such as geometric, physical, chemical, and other natural properties. They determine the use or use value of commodities. Different natural properties of different commodities determine their different use value, and multiple natural properties of a commodity mean that it has multiple use value. We would not know who planted the wheat just by tasting it. Similarly on the simple basis of labour process, we could not know what happened when a commodity was produced. Hence, whether the use value or quality of commodities is superior or inferior depends on consistency degree between commodities and natural properties of the commodities. If a commodity is fully in line with its natural attributes, it is a qualified product with superior quality; if part of it conforms to the natural properties, it is an inferior one with poor quality; but if it does not comply with the natural properties at all, it is a waste with no quality.

2. Natural Property of Commodities and Commodity Development

The use value of each commodity can be examined from two perspectives—quality and quantity. Quality refers to usage of commodities. Quantity refers to how to count commodities. The quality of use value depends on its natural properties, while the quantity of use value relies on the nature of the commodities and social habits.

First, from the perspective of quality, use value of commodities is determined by their natural properties. Different commodities have different use values because of the differences in their natural properties. The natural properties of wheat are different from those of cotton. Therefore, wheat has particular use value which is different from cotton and this particular use value makes wheat differ from cotton. It is the difference in quality and natural properties of commodities that decides their use value and properties.

Second, each kind of commodity, with a variety of different natural properties, is usually a bundle of many attributes, and thus has many