

## Resist to exist

Ali Kadri

Empires practise imperialism. Empires subordinate masses and nations and exact tribute from them. The reason and means by which tribute is exacted change by changing historical circumstance. Imperialism assumes new forms and there are many ways to define imperialism. Each definition depends on the angle one takes or the level of abstraction one assumes. For instance, I can depart from my understanding of capital, the dominant social relation in the historical stage known as capitalism, as that relation which ‘drips with blood’ (as per Marx 1859). Such is not a hyperbolic statement. Unlike past forms of imperialist barbarity, the violence of capitalism is both means and end. In the era of monopoly-finance capital, stretching from the turn of the last century to the present, the stimulus for imperialist wars has risen in tandem with the crisis of capital. The principal contradiction of capital, the capital–labour contradiction, has further moved into a North/South divide. The resolution of capital’s contradictions depends more and more on the degree to which imperialist countries oppress and exploit developing countries. This shift of the imperialist class structure from a class to class exploitation into the utter ruination or financial enslavement of other nations signals a change in the substance of the imperialist class, and hence the specificity of modern imperialism.

At another level of abstraction, one more related to the current existential crisis of humanity, imperialism, the intense or more violent facet of capital, metabolises more of man and nature to meet higher profit rates. Capital produces commodities, but it has more than proportionately produced waste.<sup>1</sup> As things stand, the pollution and destruction to man and nature are already cataclysmic. Such waste, the environmental degradation and war, is the product humanity pays for in order to self-harm. For instance, humanity pays for toxins and trash to be removed. It pays for the diseases that these wars and polluting elements generate. It pays for the waste of militarism and war effort. Its method of payment for waste and waste products is twofold. The first is the straightforward way; it pays out of its wage share in clean-air taxes and medical bills. The second way is not so straightforward; it pays for waste by shortened lives.

Very low wages decrease life’s quality and expectancy, while the waste and wars all on their own are lethal to life. These modes of payment undercut human life. In value terms, they reduce the necessary labour or the social cost of the reproduction of labour. Waste is a mode of accumulation by which capital simultaneously expands and disposes of labour before its

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<sup>1</sup> The term imperialism is either used as a condensed form of the capital relationship or as imperialist practice. Whenever imperialism appears as a subset of accumulation by waste, what I mean is imperialist practice.



historically due time. Transfers in money value form and real value in exchange for waste products show that the diktat of the law of value, the law that allocates resources under capitalism, forces people to pay for the wars and the erosion sustained by nature from the necessary labour time or value by which they reproduce their own lives.

Furthermore, the irreplaceable and combined loss to life and specie since the onset of capitalism and its wars is un-compensable by any amount of neoclassical or hypothetical consumer-surplus. The wealth, the heap of commodities, cannot remotely offset the outstanding war losses or the enormous damage sustained by nature thus far. Wealth is more a heap of poisonous commodities than a heap of useful commodities. The metabolic rift, Marx's way to describe the fatigue of nature when subjected to the oppression of profit driven production, morphed into an abysmal rupture. At last, humanity has given itself more problems than it could handle, or as such, the irrational has become real.

Waste is the internality of the capitalist system as opposed to the commonly held view of externality. However, it should rather be said that waste is neither an internality nor an externality, it is the system, the organic whole whose components, whether realised in waste or set-aside and wasted, equally obey the predisposition of waste production. Just as the natives of the colonies and current global population are superfluous to the reigning ideology, the economic textbooks of yesteryears designated water and air as free and abundant resources. It may have taken a while for environmental waste to exchange for a price and be recognised as value, but imperialist war has always been central to the general category of waste. Its value manifestations in price are innumerable and time incoherent. In a system of metabolic production subjected to market forces, it is the resultant of the latter that determines which constituent part of the system acquires a price and when, but that in no way means that value corresponds to price. At any rate, that prices converge to natural prices, long term average costs or price of production is a hypothetical accounting framework. The only real relation is the balance of power by which capital drives a wedge between value and price, footing a low wage bill relative to profits.

The neo-Ricardian omission of the value category is an omission of the organic nature of production, especially the value provided by a Third World violently consumed in war or decommissioned by imperialist aggression to become a predicate or pedestal for the industry of their 'more advanced culture.' In an un-interrelated, ahistorical and asocial neo-Ricardian world, value lost its significance because each physical production activity has no contiguous social relationship *qua* relationship of power such as imperialism associated with it.

But that was not the Marxian category of value. Value is the ubiquitous relation under capitalism. It is there to be seen everywhere, even in the price of a coke can for instance.



The real cost of a coke can is not 1 dollar, or so, but much, much more. How? Because we could possibly be paying for the wars to fetch the tin at cheap prices, for the pollution caused by the chemical components that circularly inflict diseases upon us, and we pay for the reorganisation/remaking of labour to produce the can by violently busting unions or bombing Third World nations, etc. By suppressing the demands of people for better lives, stripping them of their power to negotiate and reducing the value of their labour and their environment to pittance in money form, capital earns higher profits and still shifts onto society the costs of the making of the can at different intervals in time. It is this whole process, which is the value relation, and in which the point of stripping people of their will by measures of violence or ideological dummification is central. Just as putting labour to work for cheap wages over long hours, the more imperialism bamboozles or bombs nations into submission and conditions of slavery, the more it creates in surplus value, and the more it may possibly earn in profits. This waste, the polluting, the depopulation and ideological production of consumerist man are the bigger industry and the bigger sources of profits under capitalism. The death of Arabs and Africans is a product that trades in the background of every commodity as the value behind the making of that commodity and a commodity itself. As such, it matters little whether white man was superior when he settled America or whether the white European Zionist claims that his ancestors inhabited Palestine three millennia ago, they all must industrially depopulate by means of war no matter the justification. That Arabs or Africans, for instance, should die earlier is an ontological or a condition associated with their very birth on their continents.

The genocidal wars or war for war's sake and the waste for waste production are not untransformed value without a price, no matter how low the price. Commodities do not produce commodities, as per neo-Ricardian eurocentrism. Social man or society produce to be reproduced in a system driven by symbolism and not the reified context of things producing things. Just as the losses to nature have acquired high prices after a long gestation period, as the masses of the Third World rise, their historical losses, which had then sold for pittance, will acquire astronomical prices as compensation for colonial plunder. The contribution of power to price formation irrespective of its value content annuls the so-called transformation problem. There is a closer relationship between the rate of exploitation and the degree of oppression than that between the rate of surplus value and its price form. The case may be that the losses to earth are a window of opportunity that avails itself to us in order to drag into the mainstream debate the uncompensated past victims of imperialism, man reproduced by nature, ergo social nature, as under-paid value in their own right.

Waste has its own market-gestation time. In the case of imperialist wars, the cycle closes with the war spending cycle and the duration in which the mown lives, through real and ideological channels, begin to reduce necessary labour. In the case of the environment, it



exhibits a lengthy turnover cycle, a social-time determined cycle, or the time at the command of capital. As of late, through the deliberations of markets for exchange, environmental waste accumulated over many years acquired a price and/or a money form of value. It entered the value chain and became the product of a value relationship. Waste, including the waste of militarism, becomes the product of the labour of society, or the time it takes to produce the commodities and the lives with which society *sustains* or *unsustains* itself.

Waste is certainly an undesired product, but then again to use the old adage, ‘people make their own history, but they do not make it as they please.’

Capital brutalises its labour and natural inputs to reduce costs and concomitantly raise profits. At first, society pays a superficially low price for a useful commodity that short-changes the real costs to nature and man. The cheap inputs that went into the making of that commodity include the moneyed and non-moneyed losses to nature and man. Society finds itself paying for the abusive measures of production employed in the past. At this juncture, society pays for the war damage in taxation and lost lives and for what capital discloses of the natural disaster. Why what capital discloses of the natural disaster?

The production of knowledge, science and scientists kowtow the power structure. The subordination of knowledge to power, an axiom of the sociology of knowledge, brings into the picture the possibility of concealed natural losses, losses that resurface as the planet fries at some future date. Ninety-seven percent of scientists concur that climate change is man or rather class-made. Peculiarly, that is the same figure for the percentage of physicists who adhered to national socialism in Germany during the Second Great War. Scientists here only legitimate observable phenomena. In Mount Hermon, one of the oldest farming communities on earth, the farmers lament the disappearance of the snow cap as early as June in the summer season. Stories of climatic perturbation abound. Scientists work in research areas and projects funded and conditioned by capital, for which man and nature are open season. Just as there was little valour in documenting meteors as scientific facts by the Royal Society, there is also little valour in establishing as scientific fact blatant variations in climate or loss of specie.

In ‘Unprecedented Crime: Climate Science Denial and Game Changers for Survival,’ the authors, Carter and Woodworth (2018), argued to outlaw ecocide and ‘indict corporate and governmental bodies identified without hyperbole by the authors as guilty of crimes against humanity.’ However, the intelligentsia, the personification of the power of dominant ideology, sit atop the social pyramid. The scientific community and its scientists, vulnerable to the flattery of the rich and their Nobel Prizes, whom ‘they serve without imagination but with great zeal,’ are just as culpable in remaking the environmental tragedy. No pleading of



Gründlichkeit (the thoroughness that the obsequious pursue in effecting orders), the very word used as justification for crimes against humanity at the Nuremburg trials, exonerates scientists who daily observe in their experiments that substance admits contrary qualities (Aristotle's Categories), yet their political agency is blighted by formalism. By formalism, I mean the resignation that emerges in popular consciousness as the desired change becomes an alienated ideal, a puritan idea, which materialises only when all of humanity becomes a clone of all that is virtuous. Waiting for the impossible to happen before engaging in direct action is least scientific. The futility of struggle, the theological notion that nothing could be changed because people have not changed, undermines effective opposition to ecocide, imperialist genocide, or accumulation by waste in general. The anti-formalism, the struggle of ideas, which lingers from times past until the present, mirrors the class struggle, a struggle to date countered by the inflated 'I' of liberalism, class privilege, status and consumerism.

People are not supposed to mature into some non-existent ideal or acquire a revolutionary consciousness by messianic élan to effect change. Just as science progresses despite the impurities of experiments, and just as scientific categories grow from the inalienable bond between theory and practice, so too are the social-scientific categories as each different component of the substance, here the social class, exercises its own cultural and political particularity in anti-imperialist struggle. The anti-imperialist or historically definitive category becomes a moment, a stage or a part of the same substance, the anti-systemic struggle, which circularly gels in the praxis of anti-capital. Scientists, whose contribution to knowledge is defined by commodity expansion and militarism, exhibit a defeatism that stunts their ability to *practically reason* the necessity for cross-global organisation against capital as the sole ethical imperative. The hitherto known and, worse yet, concealed environmental disasters are the product of their reigning ideas. The only sure thing is that scientists are just as guilty of imperialist practice and ecocide as the political class. Doubtless, work, the activity of labour, metabolises both subject and object, man and nature, to produce additional value. The profit motive however, imposes a production of value that draws on the intensity of labour and the role that nature plays in supporting the production of commodities, which in turn supports the reproduction of human labour. Man is both the building block of capital and the culmination of capital's activity. Under capital, the consumption of nature and man is means to private ends signified in money form. Alongside imperialist wars, the erosion of nature undermines the material and spiritual support platforms of the working class. The climate calamity, austerity and war uproot people from direct production everywhere. Just as primitive accumulation, they deracinate and socialise labour and resources on a massive scale. Imperialist wars and wars of colonisation, in particular, uproot and disperse the human and physical assets of whole nations. However, just as the forms of primitive



accumulation intensify in different shapes in response to the crisis of capital, so does their key form of exploitation, commercial exploitation, whose striking appearance is slavery. The eradication of sources of independent support for labour de-subjectifies and caps the autonomy of the working class.

As in imperialist war, the degradation of nature by capital, the incarnation of the impersonal and objective forces of history, is means to control or regulate the reproduction of labour. Labour is the source of surplus value, the unmediated profits. The erosion of the social and natural support platforms of labour, the measures that reduce populations or shorten life's expectancy relative to the historically determined level, shrink the share of value from the social product obtained by labour or undermine the spirit of labour; the spirit of labour here refers to fighting subject in the working of class, which would otherwise enhance the share of labour from the social product. A definitive relationship is established between shortened quality and length of lives with surplus value. As a measure of variations in surplus value, an index of the reduction in the quality of life, life expectancy and the deaths in wars, mirrors the facts of social production more closely than variations in profits signified in the dollar form. Life expectancy, for instance, could parallel the changes in the rate of exploitation, but the time lags are those of abstract time. Abstract or social time is the historical time in which the repressive groundwork set by the law of value, the wars and the evisceration of nature, intensifies the dollar profit efficacy of the socially necessary labour time in production. The counter implication of such formulaic approach brings into focus Istvan Mészáros's suggestion that socialist growth is 'the expansion of ecologically benign use values rather than an unlimited increase in merely quantifiable material outputs (Mészáros 1995).' The end of the value relation is the gradual termination of capital as the consumption of man and nature, the production of waste for profits. To be sure, the category of value in political economy is not some goodness to things as current in colloquial vernacular. Value is a category of the market economy under capital, transforming by its own contradictions, and mediated by a competitive market process, which reconstitutes the social condition for additional value making by the most egregious and violent ways. There is not a dark or a lighter side to value. Value de-reproduces as well as reproduces society by market deliberations. Value is aesthetically and ethically repulsive. The waste product and waste production have long been significant to production and value relations. Nature and people are either hired as inputs for pittance or commandeered by imperialist aggression into slave-like conditions. Nature here is the social nature that presupposes the reproduction of social and biological life. In the circularity of life's reproduction, the production of waste is associated with a significant rate of exploitation. It literally consumes lives in the making of commodities, which are also in great part waste.

The waste category is a domain of accumulation with sub-industries. Accumulation is a





social process. The production of waste has long been instituted in forms of social organisation and introjected in thought, such that many fail to see it as either the system or as just a part of the system. Waste's sub-industries include militarism and its imperialist wars, the industries of pure waste. As such, waste just like the sub-stratum of energy, articulates and undergirds the whole of social production. Moreover, just like other commodities produced and alienated from the labourers, waste, the very death of man and the environment, acquire a price determined by the power of markets, and as such their exchange for other commodities, as opposed to the needs of society, dictates the allocation of resources or how society self-sustains. Waste products also acquire a fetish quality. Fetishism in its class related aspect means that the price or money form of commodities as a form of value becomes a weapon against working people. The production and exchange of waste determine the reproduction of life or how we live.

Imperialist war is a prerequisite for the expansion of capital and its market economy and the outstanding industry of waste. It is a permanent feature of the market economy. It engages labour and consumes labourers. It is a foundation for the expansion of other industries. War is not an inherent attribute associated with human fallibility. War occurs under different historical conditions at different periods for reasons which requalify its content or the laws reformulating its being. The imperialist wars of the finance age do not materialise for the same reasons as the ones prior to the age of monopoly finance. The permanent state of war in the age of finance is a significant surplus value engine. It produces much waste and also extinguishes or redeploys many resources in an already overproducing world economy.

As the world economy began to overtake the economy of the world in the long sixteenth century, as per Fernand Braudel, war in its early forms employed waged soldiers and sailors. Imperialist war was a precursor of capitalism and the first capitalist industry to relocate to the Southern hemisphere. The nature and people that white colonists encountered abroad and exterminated were inputs and outputs in a market of war and waste. The living and the dying in wars had value, generated surplus value by their very lives as input and deaths as output. Destruction exchanged for a price, and thusly, the genocides were a market for the skins of natives. Yet, such atrocities were not recognised as such in the European corpus. Wasting lives in war was not an industry; it was simply the loot of a humanity predisposed to war by inherent myth. These past imperialist wars are mostly explained outside the circuit of capital, outside value relations, and vacuously as an inherent bent of all empires.

As any other theory emerging from Europe, the Western Marxist theory of value is also Eurocentric. Immersed in empiricism, it mostly assumes that value is an object or a thing. It omits the subject, labour or capital, in value. It more significantly neglects value as a historical process within a value relationship. It especially overlooks the power relation in

control of time and space, the imperialist power that lays the historical foundation for actors to act upon.

Because Europe currently feels the deoxygenation of the planet and because natural waste has acquired a heavier price, the ‘noble savages,’ the ex-colonies and their territories, by logical implication, are no longer just vestiges whose past or current devastation did not generate any value. Just as professed by Indian-American wisdom, the insistence on the unity of man and nature, modern rates of pollution appear to have brought the dead in colonial and imperialist wars back into the circuit of capital.

Ironically, the Third Worlders are fortunate as a result of the environmental degradation because they could re-enter the discourse as victims of capital, just as nature did. The war-wasted lives are inputs, necessary predicates for the expansion of production, and outputs. Although capital indifferently metabolises both man and nature, the aristocratic nations mourn only nature but not Third World man. It is as if the human population is an infestation of some mammal species, which requires culling by Safari hunting trips. For capital, it is much easier to compensate nature with a token tax than paying compensation for colonial and ongoing imperialist slaughter. The rate of population reduction relative to the secular trend, which actually grows by the imposed underdevelopment upon the Third World, is a tendency in overproducing markets counteracted by the power balance of the class struggle.

Unlike pre-capitalist times, modern imperialist war has different drivers. Looking back at the twentieth century, it has also been irrational and devastating. Under finance-monopoly capital, private appropriation and imperialist rents more than sever the correspondence between what people need and what people produce. Waste, militarism, wars and war technology are foremost examples of what people do not need, yet society continues to produce. These are alienated processes falling outside social control. The better machinery of modern times accentuates overproduction and induces wars that resolve crises of overproduction. Even the machinery, which is intended to reduce the waste, will still search for cheaper inputs in unregulated areas, abuse nature, in order to relieve a supposedly divisible natural disaster elsewhere.

Accumulation by waste, militarism, and imperialist wars are class-made events. Classes are the state of social being of people. Unfortunately, waste and imperialist war are introjected conditions because of their differential existentialist impact upon social classes. Some classes and nations hurt more than others. Just as there is a ‘keeping up with the Jones’s,’ there is also the ‘we are lucky we are not Starving Yemenites.’ There are many ways to explain herding, the formalised, or rather phantasmagorical, mode of thinking that grips popular imagination. Wilhelm Reich’s way was to dub it a class-mental disease, a phenomenal-sickness, originating from the ideological apparatuses, which force upon the psyche an





*identification with power* as means of survival (Reich 2014). For the less psychoanalytical Davis (1993), the insecurity of the transition to a better world pushes huge sections of the working class into cohabitating with capital, a pragmatic or short-sighted position held by an otherwise alienated working class. At any rate, the war of ideas is chiefly a struggle against formalism. It is a struggle to de-reify perceptions, to put back gradated change as scientific observation from which categories evolve, and to extirpate the lethargic conservatism that dominates popular culture. Revolutionary change auto-suffices by the degree to which the contradictions of capital are laid bare before labour.

For now, a society of the spectacle (as per Guy Debord) tolerates a race to the bottom, so long as the other suffers more. It rejects the ghastly shows of Islamic State (IS), yet it is oblivious to the much bigger crimes of the power structure, the policies of austerity, war and wanton environmental rampage, committed by the institutions and ideas propelled by Western-suited people in charge of the planet. The bigger daily crimes are not aired by the media. The only revolutions on TV are of the coloured sort, the ones that crushed Libya and the Ukraine, the sort in which people vote for politicians that deprive them of basic necessities and a better natural environment. De-sensitisation to war and waste is capital's ideological trophy. Capital produces the waste and the willing waste-consuming subject.

The accumulated wealth, power and the culture of imperialism are altogether the historical surplus value. The world's uneven power structure is no conspiracy, it is there to be seen, and it is a product of imperialism. This structure is the objective and impersonal force of history, a crushing structure commanded by the fetish of auto-growing waste. Beyond their peace-loving cant, capital's institutions systemically, practically and as a matter of historically established fact, justify the ruination of labour and the environment. As more is taken from people and the environment at cheap prices today, more is being put into profits, more of life's quality and expectancy will have to be sacrificed tomorrow.

Capital is an uncontrollable social relation. It is its own compass to the process of being as a whole and the social map by which the whole reproduces by the simultaneous act of wealth creation and destruction. The war outside the commodity is a magnification of the contradiction of the value relationship within the commodity: the repulsion between use and exchange value. So long as the product of labour and its usefulness are forcefully alienated from the direct producer and mediated by exchange, war and its violence are a must. Although humanity has always produced waste by waste and sold it, at this historical juncture, humanity wars for the sake of war, wastes more for the sake of waste. This is an unprecedented degree of alienation, the estrangement of consciousness from social being.

Imperialist wars destroy wealth stocks, indenture natural wealth and labour, reduce the number of labourers, or force more people to become refugees, and hence lessen the wage bill.



Imperialist spending on wars exhibits positive returns and crowds in the private sector. War spending absorbs and redeploys excess accumulated financial and monopoly profits that would otherwise not generate much in return and/or fuel other crises. Militarism and its war spending are also stopgap measures to redress power balances and to pull a market out of its slump. Producing waste by war is lucrative in the immediate term, and it diminishes the share of value accruing to labour, in the long term.

Such is the overarching spectrum of reasons for the imperialist war such as the one visited upon Syria and other countries. Why would the US be interested in a few billion-dollar trade with a country whose GDP was around 40 billion US\$ in 2007? The imperialist war in Syria and elsewhere is impetus for the expansion of militarism and its associated indebtedness, supported by US-security issuance. It is this win-win situation with the expansion of militarism fattening finance, undermining labour, while creating huge waste, which makes US-led capital the only imperialism. The US-led imperialist is defined by its type, the imperialist rentier type as well as by its principal function, the intensification of accumulation by waste.

## Postscript: An ontology of imperialism as intensified waste

At this point, I would like to interject with an aide memoire about the origins of waste in Marxian political economy. To begin with, Western Marxism primarily *measures* the metabolic rift by the rate of depletion of nature relative to its rate of replenishment or generalise Marx's view of entropic capitalism from 'the disruption of the soil cycle in industrialised capitalist agriculture, which constituted nothing less than a rift (Bellamy-Foster 2013)'. The point here is that it over emphasises *measurement*; that is, it tracks theoretical development from the immediacy represented by empirical fact. Adjacently, it rather pedantically searches for the word metabolism in Marx to establish a negative dialectic of nature. Such an approach considers waste more a functional aspect of value as opposed to an intrinsic characteristic. In the latter case, the waste momentum does not arise from facing resource limitation, but rather waste, the purposeful wasting of man and nature, is a sphere of production and an end in itself. As waste itself becomes a product of production, the idea that the wasted peoples in imperialist and colonial wars alongside nature were outputs, as well as inputs into surplus value making, comes to the fore.

In the negative dialectic of capital, presupposed by a relation of subject to object or man to nature, waste is a principal category and a domain of accumulation. Immanently, waste within the contradiction of the forces shaping history, the totality, is the concrete manifestation of the more abstract process: the practice of the law of value in surplus value making. In view of the retreat in anti-systemic forces, waste as a concrete surrogate of



the law of value reveals itself as the primal or leading moment of capital. Yes, other moments/relations exist, but only waste and waste producing relations guide the development of capital. I am not synthetically deriving waste on the basis of some *a priori logic*; nor, am I saying that waste actualises because it can be inferred on the basis of first principles, or from an unchanging attribute of man. The production of waste is both profitable and it undermines the autonomy of the working class and the development of its revolutionary consciousness.

In more abstract but real terms, waste, the natural degradation, the wars, the erosion of the biological bases reproducing man, is a process into which capital, the unity of subject/object, resolves/culminates in order to not auto-dissolve. Theoretically, it is defined conterminously by following capital's own objective development in time while assigning to these developments historically definitive categories. That law of motion of capital, the actualisation of waste, is no other than the law of value.

In *Capital*, Volume III, Marx drops the tone of the critique of political economy in Volume I, the economics of his days, for the more holistic language of revolutionary science. He leaves behind the fake neutrality of positivism, which he adopted from time to time only to critique it. In the passage below, as he explains the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, he also illustrates that the transmutation of value into prices occurs by outright immiseration.

[t]he rate of self-expansion of the total capital, or the rate of profit, being the goal of capitalist production, its fall checks the formation of new independent capitals and thus appears as a threat to the development of the capitalist production process. It breeds over-production, speculation, crises, and surplus-capital alongside surplus-population. Those economists, therefore, who, like Ricardo, regard the capitalist mode of production as absolute, feel at this point that it creates a barrier itself, and for this reason attribute the barrier to Nature (in the theory of rent), not to production... The creation of this surplus-value makes up the direct process of production... But this production of surplus-value completes but the first act of the capitalist process of production — the direct production process. Capital has absorbed so and so much *unpaid* labour (my emphasis) ... Now comes the second act of the process. The entire mass of commodities, i.e. the total product, including the portion which replaces the constant and variable capital, and that representing surplus-value, must be sold. If this is not done, or done only in part, this can be bound up with a total or partial failure to realise the surplus-value ... the conditions of direct exploitation, and those of realising it, are not identical... It is no contradiction at all on this self-contradictory basis that there should be an excess of capital simultaneously with a growing surplus of population (Marx 1894).

Marx points to the historicity of capitalism, its moribund state, with nature subsumed under the totality of production. The social crisis is itself both reason and consequence of the economic crisis. Alleviating the economic crisis entails and requires the relative, and possibly absolute, eradication of man and nature, the pillars that presuppose and support the reproduction of man. In that sense, capitalism is one big rift or contradiction that underlies all of its processes, including nature.

Accumulation and the expansion of exchange value, the spark and end of capital, materialise by the creation of surplus value and its concrete form in waste. Waste is not an intended or unintended consequence of capital accumulation, it is actualisation of capital accumulation. Every social–natural system is entropic, however, capitalism is overly so. The transformative resolution, the historical mediation of the social oppression of labour, all the dread of the labour process making up value, into profits, baffles the minds of metaphysical economists in search of formal consistency. Formal logic is removed from the real grounds upon which the law of value, the immiseration proceeding in abstract or social time, consuming both man and nature, the latter is literally the life of man, constitutes the heart of economic activity. What they do not understand is why making someone really miserable, not just unhappy with the disutility of labour, makes profits.

Mainstream economists eschew the concrete, the actual pains of paid and *unpaid* labour in the making of surplus value. Notice here too that in the above-quoted passage, Marx reemphasises *unpaid* labour, the labour of birth and the labour of the trenches included, as a constituent of surplus value. In Marx’s holistic perspective, the perspective of Capital Volume III, the factory unit of English political economy has already morphed into global and social production. The latter includes the metabolic order of war and enslavement amongst other plunders, realised as always in social or abstract time, the labour time repressively condensed and readied for consumption by capital.

For the economists, all that exists are the appearances of prices and quantities, but these do not exist on their own. They are the market-mediated expression of the social category, the state of becoming of value by the practice of the law of value. Social immiseration, the law of value at work, follows from the edicts of markets and contributes to markets. However, the concept of surplus value, a concept alien to old and modern economics, a concept that cannot be processed by formal tools, includes the disposable time of human beings *qua* the social time considered both necessary and, more determinedly, unnecessary for the optimal functioning of capital. It is this relationship of unnecessary labour, its excess labour time, to waste, which is a lacuna in political economy.

Advancements in productivity along with underutilization, ‘profoundly affect the nature of productive activity itself, determining at the same time also the ratio with which a given



society's total available time is going to be distributed between the activity required for its basic metabolic interchange with nature and all the other functions and activities in which the individuals of the society in question engage' (Mészáros 1995). Mészáros further follows up by saying that 'as a result of the absurd reversal of productive advancements in favour of quickly 'used-up' products *and destructively dissipated resources*, 'advanced capitalism' tends to impose on humanity a most perverse kind of 'from hand to mouth' existence. This perverse existence, under the reign of capital, degrades the energy of the system (entropy) or, equivalently, the potential value, the store of wealth in the stock of social labour time available to the social system. Every consumption process is also production. In my work, I have considered the destruction of resources, including the human resource, especially by means of imperialist war, as a form of production. The realisation of the war commodity, the dead and the waste, is the final realisation stage.

The stock of value *qua* wealth, the physical form of the social product derived from a history commanded by capital, is not only waste because of the observed pollution component, but it is also *immanently* waste. Immanence here means that waste has to happen, necessarily but not exclusively, because of logical and historical reasons inherent in the contradiction between social production and the private appropriation characterising capital. Real wealth, the incremental additions of added surplus value, is the pile of commodities. It is this real wealth that actualises as wasted nature and humans whose metabolism, the value wrought by their consumption, contributes to surplus value but whose costs are *unpaid*; why so?

A falling rate of utilisation follows a falling rate of profit or a crisis of overproduction. The expansion of exchange value, riveted by surplus value, is the only goal of capital, as opposed to use value being a social end in and of itself. For capital, the usefulness of the commodities it produces is rather means to an end. It produces in a way that expands value, a value whose substance is socially necessary labour time, subject to market exchange and private ends. However, because of the domination of exchange value over use value, value proper or the alienated but objectified labour time, the self-expanding category, grows by its waste form. The violent repulsion between use and exchange value grows by consuming cheapened humans and nature, and by lacing the commodity with the deleterious component that shrinks the lifecycle of labour and its share in necessary labour. Coincidentally and necessarily, the bomb is an example of a namely-waste commodity, which also mows lives as per its usual business—the dead are the products of its production cycle.

Conversely, the well-being of society emerges from the balance of the class struggle or the way it manages its surpluses, specifically, its disposable time, or the time that is above what is necessary for maintaining the capital-determined level of living standards. Capital, by

reason of its internal contradiction, the contradiction of rising production relative to excess population ‘seeks to resolve itself through expansion of the outlying field of production, but the more productiveness develops, the more it finds itself at variance with the narrow basis on which the conditions of consumption rest (Marx 1894)’. Here emerges the constant crisis of overproduction and the necessity to manage the demographic side of the labour process with measures of depopulation. Marx is blunt about capital’s unconcern for human beings.

Hence the concern of the English economists over the decline of the rate of profit. The fact that the bare possibility of this happening should worry Ricardo, shows his profound understanding of the conditions of capitalist production. It is that which is held against him, it is his unconcern about ‘human beings,’ and his having an eye solely for the development of the productive forces, whatever the cost in human beings and capital-values—it is precisely that which is the important thing about him. Development of the productive forces of social labour is the historical task and justification of capital. This is just the way in which it unconsciously creates the material requirements of a higher mode of production. What worries Ricardo is the fact that the rate of profit, the stimulating principle of capitalist production, the fundamental premise and driving force of accumulation, should be endangered by the development of production itself (Marx 1894)

In parallel, severing what society needs from what society produces means that even the commodities that support life will be *persistently* laced with poison. I say, persistently to draw attention to the tendency for auto-destruction or the phenomenon that capital *inherently* dictates that surplus value should assume the form of waste. What is namely being sold on the market are not the civilian-end use commodities or the wars to protect the American way of life, it is the sudden or premature deaths, which also encapsulate socially necessary time in the production of waste. The destruction of nature aims at the destruction of man and the remaking of his consent as power; that is de-subjectification or the premise upon which surplus value is made within the actualisation of the value relationship. As said, wasteful production re-actualises surplus value in profits and attenuates permanent crises. Waste is itself a commodity and, otherwise, internal to all the civilian-end use commodities. Waste foregrounds the reproduction of both labour and commodity production.

Since Ricardo, the contradiction between capital and population was ignored or assumed under an abstract law (the metaphysical abstract of forms). Capital creates the overpopulation and consumes it in the historical process governed by profit making for profit making. In the process of exchange, as society willingly buys the commodities or the wars, prices conceal value. Fetishism hides in exchange value the waste/death within the surplus value. Along with socialist ideological retreat, or as exchange value overly conceals surplus value, it also further dominates use value. The hegemony of exchange value in forms



of consumerism heightens the tendency for waste and the dependence of monopoly/finance capital on the spread of waste. Militarism and wars, the pure forms of waste, domains of accumulation on their own, burgeon. The more the process of exchange obscures the reality of surplus value making, the more private its substance, the control of labour and its associated socially necessary labour time, also become. Unbridled capital, the capital that acts as the political expression of the social class, yet represents the vested interest of each individual capitalist, reduces the living wage, deepening its own crisis. The freer the rule of capital, the more irrational history becomes and the more it will approach its logical end. It oppresses labour and replaces living with dead labour, thereby limiting the scope for its own expansion. The ensuing surplus population, its death, immiseration, the destruction of nature or waste become concrete moments of the same category, the law of value and its surplus value. Marx does not need to be so specific about a relationship of capital with nature that mainly arises from land abuse in agriculture, otherwise he would be either logically deductive, meaning he constructs his whole logic from an observed fact in agriculture, or ludicrous, meaning, he provides boring details about agricultural abuse and projects these as characteristics of the capital relationship. Capital for Marx is one auto-destructive process. Conveyed adequately, surplus value is then the metabolic rate at which nature and people perish by the diktat of capital's social time or the time conjured by capital to expand exchange value and, correspondingly, value.

For mainstream economics, the concept of surplus value is non-existent. It simply cannot fit into their perfect models. Marx unmasked the reality by exposing the hidden surplus value, with 'the demolition of the theoretical chains which bind us to the monetary system, the concepts and social constructs which reflect the fictions of bourgeois society (Marx 1894).' He stressed that a real violent contradiction exists between the realisation of surplus value and realisation of profit. As such, the harmonious identity arrived at by transcendence and auto-negation prevalent in Hegelian contradictions disappears. Marx's contradiction, the transformation of social reality to support human life, is destructive. As I further contend in this work, capital is a system of high entropy.

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