

LABOUR IN SOCIAL SPACETIME: A PHILOSOPHIC UPDATER FOR MARXISM*

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RESUMO *A compreensão da maioria dos estudiosos acerca do trabalho é ambígua em razão da variedade de contradições filosóficas embutidas no fato de suas teorias plausíveis não serem explicitamente declaradas, mas presumidas de modo irracional. Nós, assim, inquisitivamente, dirigimos nossa total atenção ao espaço-tempo social no qual, e através do qual, o trabalho ocorre, em sua totalidade. Em seguida, consideramos a divisão de trabalho em espaço-tempo natural como apenas uma aparência da alienação do trabalho em espaço-tempo social, segundo nossa renovação marxista da noção de trabalho – assim manifestando seu benefício em uma explicação atualizada do ser humano, segundo a qual um trabalhador deve lutar para sobreviver como um ser humano parado dentro do espaço-tempo social, lutar contra o todo-poderoso império do capitalismo na era da globalização.*

Palavras-chave *Trabalho, Espaço-tempo social, Divisão do trabalho, Alienação do trabalho, Marxismo.*

ABSTRACT *Most scholars' comprehension on labour are ambiguous because of the variety of philosophical contradictions embedded in their plausible theories being not explicitly stated but irrationally taken for granted. We,*

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therefore, inquisitively direct sole attention to social spacetime in which, and by which, labour in totality takes place. And then consider the division of labour in natural spacetime as just the appearance of the alienation of labour in social spacetime by our Marxist renewal of the notion of labour – thus manifesting its benefaction to an essential up-to-date explanation of human being, on which a labourer could struggle to survive as still a human being within social spacetime, to fight against the almighty empire of capitalism in the era of globalisation.

Keywords: *Labour, Social spacetime, Division of labour, Alienation of labour, Marxism.*

“But the essence of man is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations”.¹

“But just as idealism underwent a series of stages of development, so also did materialism. With each epoch-making discovery even in the sphere of natural science it has to change its form; and history too having been subjected to materialistic treatment, a new avenue of development has opened here as well”.²

“Since materialism in general explains consciousness as the outcome of being, and not conversely, then materialism as applied to the social life of mankind has to explain social consciousness as the outcome of social being”.³

1 Introduction

Labour, just as Prometheus did in Greek mythology, had then indeed created rears, and ultimately will unbind mankind, so it is not strange to be an imprisoned hero tortured by Zeus for exploitation in that also had he stolen the fire of logos from Mount Desire and given it to mankind.

However, in the age of globalisation, labour, the key notion of Marxism, together with the value it has produced, is called in question again and again for its impotence of hermeneutically erecting most post-industrial economies such as asset-based economy, leisure economy, knowledge economy, Internet economy, virtual economy, etc.

1 MARX. “Theses on Feuerbach [original version].”, 2010, p. 4.

2 ENGELS. “Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy”, 2010, p. 369.

3 LENIN. “Karl Marx (A Brief Biographical Sketch with an Exposition of Marxism)”, 1977, p. 55.

Empirically by this token, most bourgeois scholars proclaim the end of Marxism. A fortunate air of the triumph of capitalism over socialism, i.e. the triumph of capital over labour, therefore, exudes from tip to toe of the golden body of pragmatic naturalism.

Lenin, the greatest Russian Marxist who later had turned socialism from theory into reality for the first time in human history, was very willing to be the Hercules of labour, so in 1908, he insightfully honoured spacetime the objectively real form of being and perceived its relativity in human conceptions:

Just as things or bodies are not mere phenomena, not complexes of sensations, but objective realities acting on our senses, so space and time are not mere forms of phenomena, but objectively real forms of being. There is nothing in the world but matter in motion, and matter in motion cannot move otherwise than in space and time. Human conceptions of space and time are relative, but these relative conceptions go to compound absolute truth. These relative conceptions, in their development, move towards absolute truth and approach nearer and nearer to it. The mutability of human conceptions of space and time no more refutes the objective reality of space and time than the mutability of scientific knowledge of the structure and forms of matter in motion refutes the objective reality of the external world.⁴

This is the very match having lit up a rough road to the universal truth that pushes human history forward. Below are the following matches that will strike their tiny successor, right in this paper, from Matchbox Marxism, devoted to human being.

Fourscore years ago, inspired by George Herbert Mead (1932),⁵ Alexandrovich Sorokin and Robert King Merton (1937)⁶ introduced a brand new concept of “social time”, other than “astronomical time”, as a methodological category to enhance the discovery of social periodicities. Then, “social time” has become a growing academic conception by virtue of the discourses of scholars such as Georges Gurvitch (1964),⁷ Godelieve Marian Kinget (1975),⁸ Edward Shils (1981),⁹ Jeremy Rifkin (1987),¹⁰ Barbara Adam (1990),¹¹ Patrick Baert (1992),¹²

4 LENIN. “Materialism and Empirio-criticism. Critical Comments on a Reactionary Philosophy.” In: *Lenin Collected Works*, Vol. 14, p. 175.

5 MEAD. “The Philosophy of the Present”.

6 SOROKIN, MERTON. “Social Time: A Methodological and Functional Analysis”.

7 GURVITCH, G. “The Spectrum of Social Time”.

8 KINGET. “On Being Human: A Systematic View”.

9 SHILS. “Tradition”.

10 RIFKIN. “Time Wars: The Primary Conflict in Human History”.

11 ADAM. “Time & Social Theory”.

12 BAERT. “Time, Self and Social Being: Outline of a Temporalised Sociology”.

Sebastian Olma (2006),¹³ Josué Pereira da Silva (2009),¹⁴ Raili Nugin (2010),¹⁵ Klaus Dörre (2011),¹⁶ Roberto Cipriani (2013),¹⁷ etc.

On the other side, thanks to a sequence of original ideas presented by Hannah Arendt (1958),¹⁸ Jürgen Habermas (1962),¹⁹ Michel Foucault (1966),²⁰ Jean Baudrillard (1973),²¹ Henri Lefebvre (1974),²² Roy Bhaskar (1975),²³ Anthony Giddens (1976),²⁴ Pierre Bourdieu (1977),²⁵ Robert David Sack (1980),²⁶ Richard Jacob Bernstein (1983),²⁷ Brian Kooyman (2006),²⁸ Andrea Geyer and Ulrike Müller (2009),²⁹ Eleonora Montuschi (2010),³⁰ Jeanne Haffner (2013),³¹ etc., “social space” has become a central issue as well as a powerful classifier of social philosophy.

In particular, Doreen Barbara Massey (1984)³² applied a spatial approach to the new interpretation of “labour” in the geographical perspective. Not alone, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (1994)³³ (2000)³⁴ (2004)³⁵ (2009)³⁶ posted and analysed the growing trend of labour’s slipping into non-material production from the angle of political philosophy.

In the light of Einstein’s theory of relativity, we (2013)³⁷ articulated that all scientific explanations for social phenomena will be benefited greatly from the unification of the two interdependent notions—“social time” and “social space” together as one—“social spacetime”, and then drew a new portrait of labour within the globalised social spacetime. In such a manner, *Хажисмель*

13 OLMA. “Social time”.

14 SILVA. “The tension between social time and individual time”.

15 NUGIN. “Social Time as the Basis of Generational Consciousness”.

16 DORRE. “Capitalism, Landnahme and social time regimes: An outline”.

17 CIPRIANI. “The many faces of social time: A sociological approach”.

18 ARENDT. “The Human Condition”.

19 HABERMAS. “Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit: Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft”.

20 FOUCAULT. “Les Mots et les Choses”.

21 BAUDRILLARD. “Le Miroir de la Production; ou l'illusion critique du matérialisme historique”.

22 LEFEBVRE. “La production de l'espace”.

23 BHASKAR. “A Realist Theory of Science”.

24 GIDDENS. “New Rules of Sociological Method”.

25 BOURDIEU. “Outline of a Theory of Practice”.

26 SACK. “Conceptions of Space in Social Thought: A Geographic Perspective”.

27 BERNSTEIN. “Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics and Praxis”.

28 KOOYMAN. “Boundary theory as a means to understanding social space in archaeological sites.”

29 GEYER, MÜLLER. “An Idea-Driven Social Space”.

30 MONTUSCHI. “Social Space of Reason. From Hegel onwards”.

31 HAFFNER. “The View from Above: The Science of Social Space”.

32 MASSEY. “Spatial Divisions of Labor: Social Structures and the Geography of Production”.

33 HARDT, NEGRI. “Labor of Dionysus: a Critique of the State-form”.

34 HARDT, NEGRI. “Empire”.

35 HARDT, NEGRI. “Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire”.

36 HARDT, NEGRI. “Commonwealth”.

37 LIU, YAO. “From Between Marx and Arendt to Einstein: Labor Theory of Value Revived in Scientism.”

Гусович Тхагансов (2015)³⁸ presented “social space-time continuum” (SSTC) as a philosophical category in order to better explain the “contradictory multidimensionality of social existence of our times”.

All these works are instructive, but we would like to go further because other times, other manners.

2 Natural Spacetime vs. Social Spacetime

Being keenly aware of—then keeping an eagle eye on—the social relations by which human is human, Marx wrote on *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* April 7, 1849:

In production, men enter into relation not only with nature. They produce only by co-operating in a certain way and mutually exchanging their activities. In order to produce, they enter into definite connections and relations with one another and only within these social connections and relations does their relation with nature, does production, take place...Thus the social relations within which individuals produce, the social relations of production, change, are transformed, with the change and development of the material means of production, the productive forces. The relations of production in their totality constitute what are called the social relations, society, and, specifically, a society at a definite stage of historical development, a society with a peculiar, distinctive character.³⁹

In the above inconspicuous citation, Marx made three assertions:

1. Men need a certain thing more than nature to implement production;
2. Since only by men’s co-operating in a definite way and mutually exchanging their activities can production take place, such a definite thing should be social connections and relations within which individuals produce;
3. Society equals social relations, i.e. the relations of production in their totality.

Enlightened by the assertions above, we audaciously decide to upgrade “social relations” to “social spacetime” to endeavour to transfuse more rationality and less ambiguity to an updated comprehension of Marxist historical materialism. Without the notion of natural spacetime, we cannot scientifically define and comprehend natural being as well as its motions. Neither, likewise, can we scientifically define and comprehend social being as well as its movements without the notion of social spacetime.

This is the very launch of our philosophic journey into the very pith and core of Marxism.

38 TKHAGAPSOYEV. “Revisiting a philosophical category: social space-time continuum”.

39 MARX. “Wage Labour and Capital.” In: *Marx & Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 9, pp. 211-212.

Whence in a sense, social spacetime is both the form and the content of every social being and mainly owns the following 5 substantive characteristics:

1. Social spacetime is rooted merely and deeply in natural spacetime. Both kinds of spacetime are indispensable and cannot be divorced in making human to be human. Human beings enter into their primary natural presence in natural spacetime and then secondary social presence in social spacetime. Without entering the primary natural presence, the human is just a presence like a ghost; without entering the secondary social presence, the human is simply a real presence like dust.

2. Natural spacetime is a necessity *a priori* to all natural beings while social spacetime an *a posteriori* sufficiency for all social beings. The cosmos shares the same lifecycle with the natural spacetime, while a human⁴⁰ with the social spacetime.

3. Natural spacetime provides the workshop of material production and reproduction of all entities, while the social spacetime only of the human Gattungswesen and its correlatives.

4. Social spacetime that men have created belongs to themselves, meanwhile, evolves them respectively in return. Thus, unlike natural spacetime, social spacetime differs greatly depending upon the difference its various owners own.

Take one example in daily life. We walk into a famous restaurant for dinner but cannot find any free table: Table A is occupied by an affianced couple; they are planning the upcoming honeymoon; Table B is occupied by some real estate developers; they are discussing how to carve up a piece of beach; Table C is occupied by a senior official and his secretaries; they are analyzing the local people's livelihood; Table D is occupied by a group of retired officers; they are recalling the bloody past..... Clearly, for those diners at different tables; the social spacetime differs greatly despite the same natural spacetime the diners share.

5. Natural spacetime is the only existent form of all objective things; while social spacetime is the final product of social relations' interaction through which labour is engendered to compose the whole human history.

All in all, the philosophic jargon "labour" should be assigned to all human teleologically active behaviours in both natural spacetime and social spacetime only differentiated in the forms of their immediate products: matter in nature and consciousness in society.

40 Precisely the category properly related should be any intelligent being with highly organizational intentions, creations and behaviors. For human is the only one in the universe yet known, we use "human" herein and after.

However, remarkably, to regard social spacetime as something purely abstract, i.e. a product only of certain human ideas is the most significant misconstruction of the notion of it. It is not the human ideas that produce the social spacetime, but the social spacetime breeds all human ideas. Social spacetime is nothing but a natural product of the natural spacetime in which human being inhabited, and it ceases to exist where no human being exists. Philosophically in no sense, does social spacetime achieve the primary, or parallel primary. It is the very secondary. Take an extreme case: is there any logic, aesthetic, legal, or ethical idea in the mind of a wolf-child just having returned to the human society? Certainly none. Only after he or she had successfully re-entered into a particular social spacetime, could be few of these human ideas, lamentedly not all of them, re-entered into his or her mind gradually and slowly.

So we see that every man is an individual being in natural spacetime meanwhile a total being in social spacetime.

3 Marxist Renewal of the Notion of “Labour”

Marx initiated a scientific definition of “labour” in his greatest monograph:

We shall, therefore, in the first place, have to consider the labour process independently of the particular form it assumes under given social conditions. Labour is, in the first place, a process in which both man and Nature participate, and in which man of his own accord starts, regulates, and controls the material reactions between himself and Nature. He opposes himself to Nature as one of her own forces, setting in motion arms and legs, head and hands, the natural forces of his body, in order to appropriate Nature’s productions in a form adapted to his own wants. By thus acting on the external world and changing it, he at the same time changes his own nature.⁴¹

A step further, in our language, labour must take place in natural spacetime in producing some material beings and all physical parts of a human while labour must be done in social spacetime in producing all social beings and all mental parts of mankind.

The past century has welcomed an explosion of science and technology so that put a series of queries to categories in defining human beings. One typical query relevant to our topic is: can labour still be perceived as the essence, the patent and even the creator of human beings on account of apes’ or artificially intelligent machines’ capability of producing simple tools as equipment sometimes not merely for subsistence?

41 MARX. “Capital: A Critique of Political Economy. Volume I.” In: *Marx & Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 35, p. 187.

In order to refute such a query, we must clarify the notion of labour within the Marxist classics in the first place.

In his magnum opus, which has changed human history, Marx wrote:

We presuppose labour in a form that stamps it as exclusively human. A spider conducts operations that resemble those of a weaver, and a bee puts to shame many an architect in the construction of her cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality. At the end of every labour process, we get a result that already existed in the imagination of the labourer at its commencement. He not only effects a change of form in the material on which he works, but he also realises a purpose of his own that gives the law to his modus operandi, and to which he must subordinate his will. And this subordination is no mere momentary act.⁴²

From the above citations, we know that only human being can labour, and the labourer's imagination, purpose and will before his or her physical work is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for the labour.

But in this way, the products of labour can be divided into two kinds: spiritual vs. material while the former prior to the latter during labour process even though the causation of their final sets—superstructure vs. base—leads to the opposite result according to Marxism.

Seemingly an inbuilt theoretical paradox of Marxism arises.

In fact, it stems from the oblivion of materialist dialectics.

Explicitly, Marx disagrees with the idealistic teleologists who hold that “history, like truth, becomes a person apart, a metaphysical subject of which the real human individuals are merely the bearers” in that “plants exist to be eaten by animals, and animals to be eaten by men, history exists in order to serve as the act of consumption of theoretical eating—proving”⁴³, and then, Marx considers human history never a priori schema at all but an empirical outcome of all social processes in human systemic production following the dialectic line.

Any explanation of labour based on abstract teleology without materialist dialectics is nothing but a fable narrated by some modern *Schoolmen*, for any human being is, according to Marxism, firstly, a natural being and secondly a social being. A human being as mere natural being purely consisted of chemical elements along with their combination does not exist at all. Take the body of a dead man just passed away: it is only a mixture of organic and inorganic compounds though still, it looks like a human in a sound sleep, nevertheless,

42 MARX. “Capital: A Critique of Political Economy. Volume I.” In: *Marx & Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 35, p. 188.

43 MARX, ENGELS. “The Holy Family, or Critique of Critical Criticism. Against Bruno Bauer and Company.” In: *Marx & Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 4, p. 79.

no more labour exists because no longer can his physical brain stimulate mental activity as well as his material body physical activity. The body is not a human anymore; “he” is gone forever but “it” remains.

The contemporary scientific studies have confirmed the presence of intellectual activities in guiding physical activities of certain animals in their own survival and reproduction, but all these activities, whether intellectual or physical, are occurred within some biological communities at best, thus having no occupation of social spacetime, so none of them can be called labour. Far from it. That stands to the similar reason Marx and Engels implied:

The production of life, both of one’s own in labour and of fresh life in procreation, now appears as a twofold relation: on the one hand as a natural, on the other as a social relation—social in the sense that it denotes the co-operation of several individuals, no matter under what conditions, in what manner and to what end. . . . Where there exists a relationship, it exists for me: the animal does not “relate” itself to anything, it does not “relate” itself at all. For the animal its relation to others does not exist as a relation. Consciousness is, therefore, from the very beginning a social product, and remains so as long as men exist at all.⁴⁴

Consciousness, in our point of view, refers to a universal set of ideas based on biochemical reactions induced by labour in social spacetime and subsequently peculiar to a human being; it is substantially material and includes all human mental, esp. logical and psychological, activities and their products processed and afterwards stored in the human brain. It is the most indispensable social prerequisite for human material production through its self-objectification in creatively guiding the material force’s creation of the fully new material entities never existed in reality before. In none other than this process, consciousness inevitably extends itself to be social consciousness suffused in social spacetime.

In general, through labour in the production, human beings produce, both materially and spiritually, all products by which they live and then evolve in the form of matter or consciousness. In other words, labour, just labour alone, realises the unity of the two opposites—production and consumption—within not only natural spacetime but also social spacetime. Without intentional and teleological labour, human beings are merely natural beings like stones or animals.

Emile Durkheim, however, rejected Marxist presupposition of labour, thus misperceiving the division of labour to such an absurd:⁴⁵

44 MARX, ENGELS. “The German Ideology.” In: *Marx & Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 5, pp. 43-44.

45 A natural but quite absurd inference from Durkheimian notion of labour is that any stretch or contraction of one amoeba’s pseudopodia is labour for sure.

Indeed, since the work of Wolff, von Baer and Milne-Edwards we know that the law of the division of labour applies to organisms as well as to societies. It may even be stated that an organism occupies the more exalted a place in the animal hierarchy the more specialised its functions are.⁴⁶

We, therefore, go all the way with *György Lukács*' conclusion that there are 3 kinds of being: inorganic, organic and social, in such a sequential order not only in line with their first appearance on the Earth but also from the chain of causation.

Moreover, we rate labour in social spacetime the only social noumenon of all social beings owing to 4 main distinct facts:

1. Labour in social spacetime produces all other social beings, including a human being as the ensemble of the social relations.

2. The value could only be produced by labour, whether in social spacetime or in natural spacetime.

3. Only via labour in social spacetime can all other social beings devote their contributions to the changes of natural beings in natural spacetime.

4. Only via labour in social spacetime can necessity and contingency be properly identified and understood.

For the facts outlined above, we have a philosophic comprehension of labour in social spacetime in terms of Marxist dialectical materialism. It differs from *Lukács*' ontology of social being mainly in that it takes stock of labour by an updated notion of social relations in totality—social spacetime from which most of the novel modes of production come, so that “an insuperable contingency”⁴⁷ in natural spacetime could be reinterpreted as an insuperable necessity in social spacetime, and also, a boundary between natural beings and social beings could be spanned by labour's teleological chains of causation, thus giving a new and thorough understanding of “a dynamic totality, a unity of complexity and process”.⁴⁸

Yet we have gone further than *Lukács* and reached the heart of the matter: most products of labour in social spacetime, despite their non-material forms and thanks to their primary contribution to creative labour in natural spacetime, could be commodities in that they do have value and usually use value too.

There is something else we would like to add in telling our unique acquaintance of “labour” from others'. In this connection, we classify Hannah Arendt's “work” together with “action” as “labour” in our language because of

46 DURKHEIM. “The Division of Labour in Society”, pp. 2-3.

47 LUKÁCS. “The Ontology of Social Being. 2. Marx: Marx's Basic Ontological Principles”, p. 50.

48 LUKÁCS. “The Ontology of Social Being. 2. Marx: Marx's Basic Ontological Principles”, p. 27.

their necessary occupation of certain fragments of social spacetime. Likewise are the same cases Jürgen Habermas' "*kommunikativen Handelns*" as well as Marx and Engels' "*Verkehr*".⁴⁹

By and large, significant differences between labour in natural spacetime and labour in social spacetime demonstrate themselves in:

1. In natural spacetime, labour possesses substantiality; it produces use value; its value equals to its occupation of natural spacetime. When its occupation of natural space is roughly same, the labour could be valued by its occupation of natural time—"socially necessary labour time" in the language of traditional Marxism.

2. In social spacetime, labour possesses no substantiality; it produces human *Gattungswesen*; its value equals to its occupation of social spacetime. As the social spacetime varies greatly to various subjects, its value varies directly as well.

Labour, then, has constructed the whole human history, in essence of totality. And only for the sake of the absence of labour in social spacetime, becomes Jean Baudrillard's "mirror of production" a distorting one in which the reversed causalities between the signified and the signifier, production and consumption, and even matter and consciousness can admire themselves.

At the very beginning of his lifetime adventure in probing the nature of human being, Marx attributed man as a peculiar species-being only for his dual identity of an individual existence as well as a social being:

In this natural species-relationship man's relation to nature is immediately his relation to man, just as his relation to man is immediately his relation to nature—his own natural destination. In this relationship, therefore, is sensuously manifested, reduced to an observable fact, the extent to which the human essence has become nature to man, or to which nature to him has become the human essence of man. From this relationship one can therefore judge man's whole level of development. From the character of this relationship follows how much man as a species-being, as man, has come to be himself and to comprehend himself; the relation of man to woman is the most natural relation of human being to human being. It therefore reveals the extent to which man's natural behaviour has become human, or the extent to which the human essence in him has become a natural essence—the extent to which his human nature has come to be natural to him. This relationship also reveals the extent to which man's need has become a human need; the extent to which, therefore, the other person as a person has become for him a need—the extent to which he in his individual existence is at the same time a social being.⁵⁰

49 MARX, ENGELS. "The German Ideology." In: *Marx & Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 5, p. 32.

50 MARX. "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844." In: *Marx & Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 3, pp. 295-296.

Simply put, labour, far more than “simple mechanical motion”,⁵¹ produces some natural beings in natural spacetime meanwhile all social beings in social spacetime “to such an extent that, in a sense, we have to say that labour created man himself.”⁵²

Essentially, a twice-told naive tale that land is the source of rent, capital profit, labour wage, etc. is nothing else but replacing production with exchange, or in our language, confusing the distinction between natural spacetime and social spacetime by surreptitiously regarding labour in the latter as if it always were in the former, thus projecting a materialist cloak of idealism. Such a cloak is the very fiction scripted by capitalists and their farming elites. So we must draw a sound conclusion that labour in natural spacetime is the material basis of labour in social spacetime does not proof the latter’s dispensability at all.

Thus we are forced to infer that labour is the sole bridge connecting natural spacetime and social spacetime for human beings, and neither kind of spacetime together with the representation and contribution of labour in it can be overlooked in exactly grasping the notion of labour. We have, then, a novel Marxist philosophic idea of labour with negative feedbacks in neither theory nor practice. This idea will be strengthened and proven by our subsequent expositions.

4 Alienation and Division of Labour

Traditional Marxists maintain that the individual occupation of natural space determines his or her occupation of free natural time in freeing and developing himself or herself against the alienation of labour, while other thinkers argue that the individual ability to occupy social space may account for it.

Nevertheless, due to the extrinsic dominance of the division of labour, all labourers are so respectively restricted to their own private sphere that an accurately comprehensive view of the alienation of labour has become an inaccessible mirage. However, appearances are deceitful. Contrary to popular wisdom, we argue, it is the alienation—essentially the uniform intrinsic essence—of labour that gives birth to the division—essentially the diversiform appearances—of labour, not vice versa.

Further, we consider the privatisation of social spacetime the true reason for the alienation of labour, just as Marx considered the formation of species consciousness the vital cause for a human being to be a social being:

51 MARX. “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844.” In: *Marx & Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 3, p. 322.

52 ENGELS. “Dialectics of Nature.” In: *Marx & Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 25, p. 452.

Not only is the material of my activity given to me as a social product (as is even the language in which the thinker is active): my own existence is social activity, and therefore that which I make of myself, I make of myself for society and with the consciousness of myself as a social being. My general consciousness is only the theoretical shape of that of which the living shape is the real community, the social fabric, although at the present day general consciousness is an abstraction from real life and as such confronts it with hostility. The activity of my general consciousness, as an activity, is therefore also my theoretical existence as a social being...In his consciousness of species man confirms his real social life and simply repeats his real existence in thought, just as conversely the being of the species confirms itself in species consciousness and exists for itself in its generality as a thinking being. Man, much as he may therefore be a particular individual (and it is precisely his particularity which makes him an individual, and a real individual social being), is just as much the totality—the ideal totality—the subjective existence of imagined and experienced society for itself; just as he exists also in the real world both as awareness and real enjoyment of social existence, and as a totality of human manifestation of life. Thinking and being are thus certainly distinct, but at the same time they are in unity with each other.⁵³

Division of labour, accordingly, sprang from the division of the role human plays “in the sexual act”, then developed “spontaneously or ‘naturally’ by virtue of natural predisposition” and only became “truly such from the moment when a division of material and mental labour appears”, in that consciousness “really represents something without representing something real” to “emancipate itself from the world and to proceed to the formation of ‘pure’ theory, theology, philosophy, morality, etc.”⁵⁴

As a typical disputant, Emile Durkheim, superficially and illogically again, not only attributed the most significant feature of “the division of labour” to the “moral effect” it has rendered rather than the “economic services” it has produced whence its “true function is to create between two or more people a feeling of solidarity”,⁵⁵ but also regarded “social inequalities express precisely natural inequalities” as “a necessary and sufficient condition”⁵⁶ for its spontaneity.

Marx and Engels believe that the contradictions among “the productive forces, the state of society and consciousness” presented as “intellectual and material activity”, “enjoyment and labour”, “production and consumption” which is devolved on different individuals will come to an end only when the division of labour is negated, further, “division of labour” and “private property” are “identical expressions” in that the former is an “activity” whilst the latter the “product”⁵⁷ of it.

53 MARX. “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844.” In: *Marx & Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 3, pp. 298-299.

54 MARX, ENGELS. “The German Ideology.” In: *Marx & Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 5, pp. 44-45.

55 DURKHEIM. “The Division of Labour in Society”, p. 17.

56 DURKHEIM. “The Division of Labour in Society”, p. 313.

57 MARX, ENGELS. “The German Ideology.” In: *Marx & Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 5, p. 45-46.

Marx advanced that “all commodities, as values, are realised human labour, and therefore commensurable” by the “immanent” measure—”labour time” rather than “the phenomenal form”—”money”.⁵⁸ The division of labour, therefore, had to “convert the product of labour into a commodity” destined to be converted into “money” although “the accomplishment of this transubstantiation” is “quite accidental”.⁵⁹ Moreover, the “anarchy in the social division of labour and despotism in that of the workshop are mutual conditions the one of the other” in “a society with capitalist production”.⁶⁰

Engels evolved the truth that the producers kept being the “masters of their process of production and of their product” as long as production was carried on to “the narrowest limits” of “larger or smaller communistic communities” in which “any alien, phantom powers against them” could not be conjured up until the division of labour “undermined the communality of production and appropriation” to induce “the production of commodities”. Thus, “products and production” seem to “fall victim to chance” although “the inherent necessity and regularity” are doomed to “assert” and “demonstrate” themselves in this chance “as if by natural necessity”.⁶¹

Marx’s argued that “labour’s realisation is its objectification”—a material labour “embodied in an object” despite being “something alien” and “independent of the producer”, hence, “this realisation of labour appears as loss of realisation for the workers; objectification as loss of the object and bondage to it; appropriation as estrangement, as alienation”, finally, “the worker is related to the product of his labour as to an alien object” in that “production itself”, like “labour itself”, is “active alienation, the alienation of activity, the activity of alienation”.⁶² Therefore, Marx deemed labour only “an expression of human activity within alienation, of the manifestation of life as the alienation of life”, thereby the division of labour nothing but “the estranged, alienated positing of human activity as a real activity of the species or as activity of man as a species-being”.⁶³

Because labour in social spacetime is the major premise for the division of labour, it is bound to, in our point of view, change the social spacetime of the

58 MARX. “Capital: A Critique of Political Economy. Volume I.” In: *Marx & Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 35, p. 104.

59 MARX. “Capital: A Critique of Political Economy. Volume I.” In: *Marx & Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 35, p. 117.

60 MARX. “Capital: A Critique of Political Economy. Volume I.” In: *Marx & Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 35, p. 362.

61 ENGELS. “The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State.” In: *Marx & Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 273.

62 MARX. “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844.” In: *Marx & Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 3, pp. 272-274.

63 MARX. “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844.” In: *Marx & Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 3, p. 317.

corresponding labourer along with others in social relations with him or her, and vice versa. Because of its inherent relative independence formerly conferred upon it and which it has gradually enlarged, labour in social spacetime reacts greatly in turn upon “the conditions and the course of production” in natural spacetime. Strivings for “political power” in social spacetime and blendings in “economic trend”⁶⁴ in natural spacetime present us cases in point.

Clearly, according to Marx and Engels, the labour’s objectification engenders its estrangement and even alienation from which the division of labour and thereupon the private property arise. But is it a matter of course?

It is, in our scope of labour in social spacetime, notably not.

We will pronounce upon the dominance of the allocation and transformation of social spacetime accounting for the alienation of labour *vide infra*.

Topologically, to abide by Marxist subject-object dichotomy, natural spacetime is filled with continuity everywhere due to its objectivity while social spacetime, *per contra* due to its subjectivity, is privatized into seemingly continuous but actually discrete fragments according to the value of all involved subjects’ social variables such as gender, rank, estate, position, occupation, religion, regulation, etc. Consequently, different subjects occupy different fragments of social spacetime, sometimes overlap to some extent, sometimes estrange from each other. Via labour in social spacetime, all isolated subjects in overtly unequal fragments of social spacetime return into overtly equal covertly otherwise unity of natural spacetime so that they could fulfil the material production in order to meet their physical needs like animals.

However, the generally increasing difficulty of objectification of labour in social spacetime is most likely to be responsible for the alienation of labour, just because of the never-ending evolution of human being from a purely natural being into a sophisticated social being by virtue of the never-ending innovation of the mode of production. So the more certainty we have captured in social spacetime to unveil the pretending chance in natural spacetime, the least bitterness we have to endure.

Due to the limits of the natural spacetime in which they lived, Marx and Engels could not reach a judgment that given the rise and the development of capitalist mode of production, commodity production will be distinctly split into two parts: the production in natural spacetime largely in charge of workers and the production in social spacetime largely in charge of capitalists; the former part, in any sense, is the prerequisite for the latter although its sustainable operation none the less depends on the growing efficiency of the latter.

64 ENGELS. “Engels to Conrad Schmidt. 27 October 1890.” In: *Marx & Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 49, pp. 59-60.

Obviously, other than the possession of the means of production in traditional Marxist view, capitalists' occupation of greatly larger—compared with workers'— fragments of social spacetime, in which much more social beings and consciousness, including social relations, science and technology, etc. are gestated, is more answerable for the rationality of their purchasing workers' labour in natural spacetime as much as possible, thus deporting workers' labour in social spacetime as clean as possible with the goal of better allocation of various resources along with better organization of production and consumption.

In this sense, we dare to say, capitalists are labourers in social spacetime other than exploiters in natural spacetime. The comparative advantages of the occupation of labour in social spacetime taken by monopolists account for their reasonably enslaving capitalists, then capitalists and workers go in the same way. Such comparative advantages, however, will be regenerated and amplified in forming a positive feedback loop: the comparative advantages of the occupation of labour in social spacetime will amplify the comparative advantages of the occupation of labour in natural spacetime, and vice versa in return. Positive feedbacks in the social system, like they in electro circuit, is predestinated to cause increasing oscillations until the system they serve crashes in the end. John Maynard Keynes' great contribution to the relatively long-term stability of the modern capitalist system offers the best empirical evidence for our nagging elaboration.

All men are equal in the eyes of labour. Capitalists become slaves in social spacetime once they have enslaved workers in natural spacetime in that labour alienates not only workers in natural spacetime but also capitalists in social spacetime. Now despairingly, thanks to the alienation of labour accelerated by the capitalist mode of production, workers are condemned prisoners in natural spacetime while capitalists are fanatical gamblers in social spacetime. That is why capitalism tortures human beings with no escape to such an extent that “in general, we should observe that in those cases where worker and capitalist equally suffer, the worker suffers in his very existence, the capitalist in the profit on his dead mammon.”⁶⁵

Thus, “*La Comédie Humaine*” stages the best and last philosophic tragedy on the stage of capitalism ever in human history, because human history is only made of human together with nature of human, for human and by human. The only saviour, in our opinion, should be none other than the complete realisation of communism in both natural spacetime and social spacetime.

65 MARX. “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844.” In: *Marx & Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 3, p. 237.

History has proven and will continue to prove that the success of the revolution against the private property in natural spacetime dedicates no thorough negation of capitalist mode of production, because the alienation of labour caused by the estrangement of subjective social spacetime will never dedicate a rebellion, on the contrary, to regain the paradise of capitalism, it rebels against every progress human have achieved. In conclusion, the ambition of human solidarity in totally producing and reproducing actual life as a united community will become a reality only when alienation of labour has been banished from both natural spacetime and social spacetime.

Truly, we are living in the era of globalisation prevalently considered as the rebirth of Dionysus of capitalism given by Zeus of science and technology, but we deem globalisation nothing but an evil *Lethe* flowing with capitalist hallucinogen for the banality of human thirst for true freedom, because indeed “capitalism has triumphed all over the world, but this triumph is only the prelude to the triumph of labour over capital”,⁶⁶ merely in that the insuperable alienation of labour will call forth the inevitable extinction of capital in the end, and right in this play, labourers’ initiative awareness and wise reconstruction of labour in social spacetime is a doubtless necessity.

5 Concluding Remarks

Knowledge in harns and tools in hands, Robinson Crusoe, the castaway protagonist of the Daniel Defoe’s namesake novel published in 1719, had resoundingly not only survived alone on a remote uninhabited island for 30 years, but also freed a native cannibal prisoner and then named him “Friday”, taught him English language and civilized him, finally converted him to Christianity. Such a story is regularly used by some neoclassical economists to illustrate the possibility of individual labour, production and living in the absence of society. But be noted that Robinson Crusoe’s knowledge, tools and belief are all created and acquired within the human society in which he had grown up, therefore, he has never been absent from the social spacetime of “British Empire” in spite of his undoubted absence from the natural spacetime of it. Always, Robinson Crusoe is a human being for he did be alone physically but never be lonely in mind, because he never loses himself in social spacetime thus “he himself for himself” is “a social being” just as society is “a being for him” in this “social object”.⁶⁷

66 LENIN. “The Three Sources and Three Component Parts of Marxism.” In: *Lenin Collected Works*, Vol. 19, p. 27.

67 MARX. “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844.” In: *Marx & Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 3, p. 301.

Thus Robinson Crusoe makes us side with such a view that labour in social spacetime, from its very birth is the very architect of human history:

What is society, irrespective of its form? The product of man's interaction upon man. The simple fact that every succeeding generation finds productive forces acquired by the preceding generation and which serve it as the raw material of further production, engenders a relatedness in the history of man, engenders a history of mankind, which is all the more a history of mankind as man's productive forces, and hence his social relations, have expanded. From this it can only be concluded that the social history of man is never anything else than the history of his individual development, whether he is conscious of this or not.⁶⁸

Dialectical materialism regards the world nothing else except matter in motion while historical materialism regards the human history only made up of the economic base along with superstructure in the definite forms of consciousness. At this point of view, unlike Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, we insist that what have been changed in "Empire" are merely the forms rather than the contents of the exploitation of man as well as the alienation of labour. "Empire" in the era of globalisation has successfully renewed the form of labour, and then sneakily extended exploitation and alienation from natural spacetime to social spacetime. Hence, we must update the language of Marxism in return following Marx's instruction:

Labour, which is no more than an abstraction and taken by itself does not exist at all, or, if we take that which is behind it, the productive activity of human beings in general, by which they promote the interchange with Nature, divested not only of every social form and well-defined character, but even in its bare natural existence, independent of society, removed from all societies, and as an expression and confirmation of life which the still non-social man in general has in common with the one who is in any way social.⁶⁹

Sharply in a topological view, it is the very homotopy of all miscellaneous labour in natural spacetime that provides the very reason not only for the rationality of "law of value", but also for the exclusive enchantment of capital in concealing the rationality of "labour theory of value". Many who stick to any interpretation of labour in natural spacetime are doomed to fall astray into a quagmire of the vulgar theory of the omnipotence of productive forces and moreover, a belief in utilitarianism, opportunism, or even worse, nihilism.

68 MARX. "Marx to Pavel Vasilyevich Annenkov. 28 December 1846." In: *Marx & Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 38, p. 96.

69 MARX. "Capital: A Critique of Political Economy. Volume III." In: *Marx & Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 37, p. 802.

So conducted by any revolutionary class, any reaction against all reactionary classes must start from the discovery of labour in social spacetime—the very effort we want to make in this paper.

Finally, it goes without saying that a thorough understanding of “labour in social spacetime” cannot be easily obtained from one brief sitting upon our tiny egg full of chaotic thoughts. Such being the case, in order not to let itself “be led astray by text-books and other secondary sources”⁷⁰ that have been “confused by bourgeois scholars, writers and philosophers”,⁷¹ most of our words choose to be inspired by the classical Marxism and some other valuable thoughts in “the original source books and not at second-hand”,⁷² even though the tedious excerpts may frustrate most readers.

Because we firmly believe that the closer to the sages, the wiser we are.
Dictum sapient sat.

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70 ENGELS. “Engels to Georg Heinrich von Vollmar. 13 August 1884.” In: *Marx & Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 47, p. 187.

71 LENIN. “The State: A Lecture Delivered at the Sverdlov University. July 11, 1919”. In: *Lenin Collected Works*, Vol. 29, p. 470.

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