

Selections from Marx: On Cattle, Capital, & Labour

Capital originally means cattle.

– Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*



In so far as the capitalist mode of production is manifested here typically, it occurs at first particularly in sheep-herding and cattle-raising.



– Karl Marx, *Capital, Vol. III*, Part VI: Transformation of Surplus-Profit into Ground-Rent
Chapter 40. Second Form of Differential Rent

This appearance of capital as an independent and leading force in agriculture does not take place all at once and generally, but gradually and in particular lines of production. It encompasses at first, not agriculture proper, but such branches of production as cattle-breeding, especially sheep-raising, whose principal product, wool, offers at the early stages a constant excess of market-price over price of production during the rise of industry, and this does not level out until later.

– Karl Marx, *Capital, Vol. III*, Part VI: Transformation of Surplus-Profit into Ground-Rent
Chapter 47. Genesis of Capitalist Ground-Rent



A head of cattle for instance, as labouring cattle (instrument of labour), represents the material mode of existence of fixed capital, while as cattle for fattening (raw material) it is a constituent part of the farmer's circulating capital.

– Karl Marx, *Capital, Vol. II*
Part Two: The Turnover of Capital,
Chapter 10: Theories of Fixed and Circulating Capital.



In the serf relation he appears as a moment of property in land itself, is an appendage of the soil, exactly like draught-cattle.



– Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*

If one fine morning the lord appropriates to himself the land, the cattle, the seed, in a word, the, means of production of this peasant, the latter will thenceforth be obliged to sell his labour-power to the lord.

– Karl Marx, *Capital, Vol. I*

Part VII: The Accumulation of Capital

Chapter 23: Simple Reproduction



One of four causes of the downfall of the free ownership of the self-managing peasant:

“usurpation by big landowners of the common lands, which constitute the second supplement of the management of land parcels everywhere and which alone enable it to raise cattle”



– Karl Marx, *Capital, Vol. III*
Part VI: Transformation of Surplus-Profit into Ground-Rent
Chapter 47: Genesis of Capitalist Ground-Rent

Ultimately, only the big estate can produce such food as cattle, etc.

Therefore it regulates the rent of other land and can force it down to a minimum.

The small landed proprietor working on his own land stands then to the big landowner in the same relation as an artisan possessing his own tool to the factory owner.

Small property in land has become a mere instrument of labour.

– Karl Marx, "Rent of Land," *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*



A part of the herd (supply of cattle) remains in the process of production, while another part is sold annually as a product. In this case only a part of the capital is turned over every year, just as in the case of fixed capital: machinery, working cattle, etc.

– Karl Marx, *Capital, Vol. II*
Part Two: The Turnover of Capital,
Chapter 13: The Time of Production.



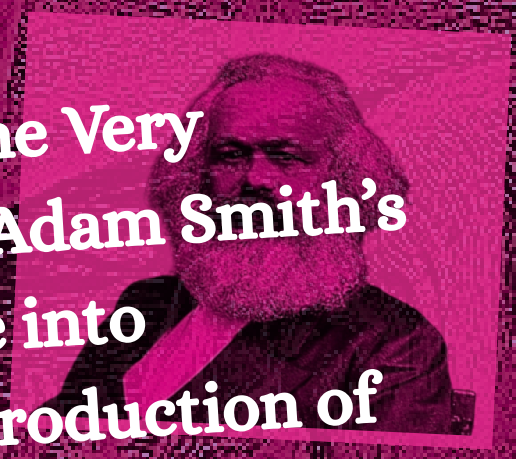
Livestock (for fattening or draught animals) in turn serves not only as means of subsistence, but its fur, hide, fat, bones, horns etc. supply raw materials for a large number of industries, and it also provides motive power, partly for agriculture itself and partly for the transport industry.

– Karl Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value, Marx 1861-3*, Chapter XVII: Ricardo's Theory of Accumulation and a Critique of it. (The Very Nature of Capital Leads to Crises); 1. Adam Smith's and Ricardo's Error in Failing to Take into Consideration Constant Capital. Reproduction of the Different Parts of Constant Capital.



In all industries, in which the period of reproduction extends over more than a year, as is the case with a major part of livestock, timber etc., but whose products at the same time have to be continuously reproduced, thus requiring the application of a certain amount of labour, accumulation and reproduction coincide in so far as the newly-added labour, which includes not only paid but also unpaid labour, must be accumulated in kind, until the product is ready for sale.

– Karl Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value, Marx 1861-3*, Chapter XVII: Ricardo's Theory of Accumulation and a Critique of it. (The Very Nature of Capital Leads to Crises); 1. Adam Smith's and Ricardo's Error in Failing to Take into Consideration Constant Capital. Reproduction of the Different Parts of Constant Capital.



On the corruption of agricultural communes:

The mere accumulation over time of movable property, beginning with wealth in livestock and even extending to wealth in serfs, combines with the ever more prominent role played by movables in agriculture itself and with a host of other circumstances, inseparable from such accumulation, which would take me too far from the central theme.

All these factors, then, serve to dissolve economic and social equality, generating within the commune itself a conflict of interests which leads, first, to the conversion of arable land into private property, and ultimately to the private appropriation of forests, pastures, waste ground, etc., already no more than communal appendages of private property.

– Karl Marx, *Marx-Zasulich Correspondence February/March 1881*, The 'First' Draft.



On the corruption of agricultural communes:

Apart from all the malignant outside influences, the commune bore within its own breast the elements that were poisoning its life.

As we have seen, private land ownership bad already crept into the commune in the shape of a house with its own country-yard that could become a strong-point for an attack upon communal land.

But the key factor was fragmented labour as the source of private appropriation.

It gave rise to the accumulation of movable goods such as livestock, money, and sometimes even: slaves or serfs.

Such movable property, not subject to communal control, open to individual trading in which there was plenty of scope for trickery and chance, came to weigh ever more heavily upon the entire rural economy.

Here was the dissolver of primitive economic and social equality.

It introduced heterogeneous elements into the commune, provoking conflicts of interest and passion liable to erode communal owner ship first of the cultivable land, and then of the forests, pastures, waste ground, etc.

Once converted into communal appendages of private property, these will also fall in the long run.

– Karl Marx, *Marx-Zasulich Correspondence*
February/March 1881, The Third Draft.



Capital exploits:

People

Animals

Ecosystems



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