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Capability of Co-operation, Automatic Machinery and Moral Depreciation —Reflection
based on the part 4 of “Capital”: production of the relative surplus value—

Introduction

Starting from the part 4 of “Capital” (cap. 13 Co-operation, cap. 14 Division of Labor and Manufacture and cap. 15 Machinery and Modern Industry), this presentation tries to clarify the implication of the so called “Moral Depreciation” (1). And after Marx, reconsiderations about the theoretical achievements by Weber, Lukács and Adorno will follow (2). Based on these arguments, Fukushima disaster complex is proved to be one of the critical models to verify the theoretical foundation by Marx (3).

I.

The ability of human beings to work together and the paradoxical phenomena that the collective power of the masses appears as if it is originated from the dominating part would be understood without many difficulties. Yet about “so to speak moral depreciation” (in German, *sozusagen moralischer Verschleiß*) most discussions had failed to understand the implications by Marx at the second German edition of “Das Kapital” 1873. For example, D. Harvey identifies it simply with the “economic depreciation” (in: *A Companion to Marx’s Capital*, 2010). It must mean;

- 1) prolongation of the working day, intensification of labor (“Capital” vol.1),
- 2) negligence of safety net against dangers arising from modern technology and factory (“Capital” vol.3),
- 3) prevention against the new development of science and technology for the benefit of preservation of the used outdated machinery. Investments in the fixed capital should be repaid (“Capital” vol.2).

II.

This paper pays attention to the centuries after Marx:

- 1) theory of rationalization by Weber, his analysis of modern bureaucracy
- 2) theory of reification by Lukács, his concept about the combination of bureaucracy and technology
- 3) and “Dialectic of Enlightenment” by Horkheimer / Adorno, their concept of domination over nature and culture.

Based on these arguments I conclude a critical model: complex of techno-bureaucracy and bureau-technocracy as a sort of “automatic machinery” for the interest of capital and state.

(Refer to my article: „Ein weiterer Beitrag zur Diskussion Lukács vs. Adorno (1), (2)“, in: Jahrbuch der Internationalen Georg Lukács Gesellschaft, 2016, 2018.)

III.

About the problem of nuclear power plant in general, we have to take its political and military circumstances into consideration. From the viewpoint of “what we may call a moral depreciation”,

- 1) dangerous tasks which cannot be replaced by automatic machinery bear down upon outsourced workers,
- 2) scientific alarms about the earthquake and tsunami were neglected and prevented,
- 3) and not only the nuclear power plants as fixed capital have been preserved and are now partly going to be operated, the development of renewable natural energy is prevented by many ways in Japan.

We would be able to show many other cases that verify the adequacy of critical arguments in “Capital” by Marx. By “moral depreciation” he meant the aspects of destructions of human capability by the capitalistic mode of production through automatic machinery.

Conclusion

The social productive power of labor or the productive power of social labor as a capability of the species is destructed by capital and state, not only through techno-bureaucracy, but also through bureau-technocracy. The pathology of the latter apparatus, together with the authoritarian mobs, should be integrated into a critical perspective. In this way the “Capital” shall be a foundation towards the critical theory of the new formation of science-technology, society and culture.