

On Marx's Concept of Capital as Subject of Capitalist Society

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In several passages of his texts, Marx says that capital is Subject: For example, in the *Grundrisse*, he says that “Capital is the all-dominating economic power of bourgeois society” (p. 107) and further on, considered it as value, “Value enters as subject” (p. 311); in *Capital* he characterizes it as “an automatic subject”, “self-valorizing value”, “the subject of a process”, the “dominating subject”, “a self-moving substance”, “value in process, money in process” (PP. 255-6). This means that men are not rigorously the subjects (in a plain ontological sense) of capitalist production but capital. In *Capital*, he considers men as “the personification of economic categories, the bearers [*Träger*] of particular class-relations and interests,” (p. 92) and, further on, he says, “As the conscious bearer [*Träger*] of this movement, the possessor of money becomes a capitalist... The objective content of the circulation ... -the valorization of value- is his subjective purpose, and it is only in so far as the appropriation of ever more wealth in the abstract is the sole driving force behind his operation that he functions as a capitalist, i.e. as capital personified and endowed with consciousness and a will.” (p. 254) In the *Grundrisse*, Marx uses Hegelian language to characterize the capitalist and the worker as bearers: “capital in its being-for-itself is the *capitalist*. ... “As a worker he is nothing more than labour in its being-for-itself.” (303-4)

This paper discusses the meanings of Marx's concepts of capital as Subject and of men as bearers of the subject capital in capitalist society. It also discusses that men have been and have not been subjects throughout, what Marx calls in the *Contribution*, “the prehistory of human society” (p. 22) which closes with capitalist society. This means that, in their prehistory, as subject men exist only through their predicates, that is, as ‘citizens’ and ‘slaves’, or as ‘feudal lords’ and ‘serfs’, or as ‘capitalists’ and ‘proletariats’. The meaning of man as a predicate is contrasted with the anti-anthropologist and anti-humanist thought that suppresses men (as the Althusserian structuralism) and the anthropologist and humanist thought that posits men as subjects from the beginning.