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AUTHORS: Murat BIRDAL

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# LOCKE'S THEORY OF PROPERTY AND ITS MARXIST CRITIQUE: LOCKE AND MARX ON PROPERTY RIGHTS AND INDIVIDUAL LIBERTIES

Ar. Gör. Murat BİRDAL\*

## Abstract

*Locke was a late seventeenth century philosopher who wrote before the industrial revolution. Hence, what Locke aimed to justify was the pre-industrial form of property in its personal form. However, Locke's popularity among the nineteenth century liberals suggests that his theory transcended his own time and formed the theoretical basis of a new form of property that gained social character with the changing mode of production. Locke begins with a justification of property right based on one's own labor; however ends up as an apologist of capitalism legitimizing the unlimited accumulation of capital. His labor theory of value plays a crucial role in his chain of arguments. Contrary to Locke, who views property right as an essential part of individual freedom, Marx employs the labor theory of value to argue for the abolition of private property, which he perceives as a source of alienation and a major obstacle for the attainment of individual freedom. By comparing these two thinkers, this paper develops a critique of the well known liberal arguments that relate private property rights to political democracy.*

## Özet

*Locke'un Mülkiyet Teorisi ve Marksist Eleştirisi:  
Mülkiyet Hakkı ve Bireysel Özgürlükler Üzerinden Locke ve Marx Karşılaştırması*

*Sanayi devriminden bir asır önce yazmış bir düşünür olarak Locke'un meşrulaştırmayı amaçladığı bireysel yapıdaki endüstri öncesi mülkiyet biçimidir. Ne var ki teorisinin 19. yüzyılın liberal düşünürleri üzerindeki belirleyici etkisinden de anlaşıldığı gibi argümanları zamanın ötesine geçmiş ve değişen üretim biçimiyle birlikte sosyal bir karaktere bürünmüş olan modern kapitalist mülkiyetin teorik temelini oluşturmuştur. Emek değer teorisi mülkiyetin meşrulaştırılmasına yönelik bu argümanlar zincirinde kritik bir rol oynamaktadır.*

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\* İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi, İktisat Bölümü

*Öte yandan, Marx özel mülkiyeti yabancılaşmanın temel nedeni ve bireysel özgürlüklerin önündeki en önemli engel olarak değerlendirmiştir. Özel mülkiyeti bireysel özgürlüklerin temeli olarak ele alan Locke'un aksine Marx'ın elinde emek değer teorisi özel mülkiyete dayalı kapitalist sistemin eleştirisine yönelik en önemli araca dönüşür. Makalede iki düşünürün karşılaştırması üzerinden kişisel mülkiyet haklarını demokrasi ile ilişkilendiren popüler liberal argümanların bir eleştirisi sunulmaktadır.*

## 1. Introduction

One cannot compare Locke and Marx by abstracting them from the historical conditions of their time. Locke was a late seventeenth century philosopher, who wrote before the industrial revolution. Marx, on the other hand, wrote after the industrial revolution in a society going through a drastic change. Because of this historical fact, many scholars argued that what Locke aimed to justify was the pre-industrial form of property in its personal form. Nevertheless, Locke's popularity among the nineteenth century liberals suggests that his theory transcended his own time and provided the theoretical means to argue in favor of a new form of property that gained social character with the changing mode of production.

In this context, Locke begins with a justification of property right based on one's own labor; however, ends up as an apologist of capitalism legitimizing the unlimited accumulation of capital. His labor theory of value plays an important role in this process.

Contrary to Locke, who views property right as an essential part of individual freedom, Marx employs the labor theory of value to argue for the abolition of private property, which he sees as a source of alienation and a major obstacle for the attainment of individual freedom.

Finally, we should note that while comparing Locke and Marx, we will also be making use of Engels' writings, since his theory is inseparable from that of Marx's.

## 2. Locke's Theory of Property

### 2.1. Property as a Natural Right

When John Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* was first published in 1690, nothing could have shocked the ruling classes more. Before Locke, property had been viewed as something created by government. In contrast to this common belief, Locke maintained that it was instead the source of government and as a consequence, government had "*no other end but the preservation of property*" (Locke, 2002 [1690]: 329). The message, in other words, was that property and property rights existed prior to government.

To what extent Locke's assertion was in support of the English Revolution of 1688 is a matter of debate. In his preface, he expresses the hope "*to establish the throne of our great restorer, our present King William . . . , to justify to the world the people of England, whose love of their just and natural rights with their resolution to preserve them, saved the nation, when it was on the very brink of slavery and ruin*" (Locke, 2002 [1690]: 137).

Locke's reference to "natural rights" so early in his treatise symbolized his central thrust. But to understand fully Lockean natural rights, it is necessary to examine the arguments of his chief opponents, the supporters of absolute monarchy, whose position was represented in Robert Filmer's *Patriarcha*, published in 1680 (Filmer, 1991[1680]). Filmer believed that the relation between King and subject was the same as that between father and child, it followed logically that individual property could be granted only by the crown. It was this argument that Locke firmly rejected. God, he insisted, had not bestowed property rights on the monarchy exclusively. Not only was private property already in existence prior to government, but was it also upheld by natural law and the doctrine of natural rights.

In his "Second Treatise" of Government, Locke begins with the premise that all men begin in a state of nature in which they are all equal and independent. From that premise, he manages to argue for the legitimacy of a government formed for the purpose of preserving unequal property rights among individuals in a society. In Locke's portrayal of human nature all men are "*naturally induced to seek communion and fellowship with others*" (Locke, 2002 [1690]: 278).

According to Locke, state of nature is the state of perfect freedom, in which men "*order their actions, and dispose of their possessions and persons, as they think fit, within the bounds of the law of nature, without asking leave or depending upon the will of any other man*" (Locke, 2002 [1690]: 269). The law of nature or of reason is that all men are equal and independent. Therefore, "*no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions*" (Locke, 2002 [1690]: 271). Since all men are equal, "*all the power and jurisdiction is reciprocal, no one having more than another*" (Locke, 2002 [1690]: 269). Not only does it seem obvious to Locke that all men are equal and therefore exempt from subordination (except for the special case of slavery, which he later discusses), but he also provides the argument that because all men are products of God's creation, none retains full property rights even over himself, let alone over others.

## 2.2. Locke's Justification of Private Property

It is from these statements concerning man's initial state of being that Locke's statements about property arise. Property as a natural right plays an essential role in Locke's portrayal of the state of nature. Locke argues that people come to have a right to private property in the state of nature: "*Men, once being born, have a right to their preservation, and consequently to meat and drink, and such other things, as nature affords for their subsistence*" (Locke, 2002 [1690]: 285). According to Locke, the world initially belongs to everyone in common, but every individual is entitled to take some of the common property and make it their own. This is justified by appeal to natural law, which Locke believes knowable by reason, and scripture: "*God, who has given the world to men in common, has also given them reason to make use of it to the best advantage of life and convenience*" (Locke, 2002 [1690]: 287).

The use of the phrase "in common" might at first suggest elements of communal property as in primitive communist societies. However, in Locke's presentation common ownership means simply the absence of ownership; in other words, open access property. Therefore, it does not describe a different type of societal organization, but points out the absence of organization before the formation of civil society.

As for Locke's natural rights, these range from the broad and philosophical, to the narrow and materialistic. Among the former are the rights

to one's own life and liberty. The latter relate to rights to produce not only useful consumer goods but also to any concomitant producer-good such as the improved land. Locke claims that one gains property rights over the fruits of the earth and over land by mixing one's labor, which is fully one's own. In the passage quoted below, Locke offers a normative theory of the creation of property rights: "*Though the earth and all inferior creatures be common to all men, yet every man has a property in his own "person." This nobody has any right to but himself. The labour of his body and the work of his hands, we may say, are properly his. Whatsoever, then, he removes out of the state that Nature has provided and left it in, he has mixed his labour with it, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his property*" (Locke, 2002 [1690]: 287-288).

In Locke's theory, men are justified in taking a part of the common property and making it their own in the state of nature for three reasons:

- 1- Men cannot live without eating. But, in order to eat, it is "necessary" to appropriate common property and to make it our own. Thus, the right to private property follows from our right to life.
- 2- In taking common property and making it our own, we do not take from other people. Property left unused in nature is wasted since it contributes nothing to human well-being. Also, Locke notes that land left in the commons is much less productive than land that has become the private property of some person. The productivity of the land comes not from the beneficence of God, but from what we are able to make of the land. Thus, when common land becomes someone's private property, it is able to produce much more and it benefits everyone.
- 3- Given the first two reasons, it is evident for Locke that labor gives us title to land. We have property in our own bodies, thus in our labor. We mix our labor with land, making that land our own. For it is only by doing this that we can live and that we can improve the productivity of the land.

However, Locke also mentions that there are bounds placed upon appropriation, which again are dictated by the law of reason. Man has a right to what he appropriates through his labor, "*at least where there is enough, and as*

good, left in common for others" (Locke, 2002 [1690]: 288). Locke justifies this first limitation based on natural law which dictates the equality of men. There is also a second limitation, that of spoilage: "*As much as anyone can make use of to any advantage of life before it spoils, so much he may by his labour fix a property in: whatever is beyond this, is more than his share and belongs to others*" (Locke, 2002 [1690]: 290). This limitation is justified, not by invoking the equality of men, but by reference to the claim that "*Nothing was made by God for man to spoil or destroy*" (Locke, 2002 [1690]: 290).

These two limitations play an important role for Locke to come up with consistent arguments based on the natural rights he defined earlier. Nevertheless, once the property right is justified on the grounds of natural rights and natural laws, Locke removes all limits from the property right and aims to justify the unlimited accumulation of capital. Later in the paper, we will see how these limitations are transcended by means of money.

### 2.3. Locke's Labor Theory of Value

On his way to establishing a moral ground for private property, Locke makes a major contribution to the economic theory and formulates the labor theory of value: "... *labour put a distinction between them and common. That added something to them more than Nature, the common mother of all, had done, and so they became his private right* (Locke, 2002 [1690]: 288).

His theory constituted the basis of classical political economy and became a central component of the theories developed by several major economists including Adam Smith, David Ricardo and Karl Marx. Marx took a step forward and employed the same theoretical argument to demonstrate the exploitation of labor in the capitalist system.

By developing the labor theory of value, Locke aims to prove that one has a moral right to that which he has mixed his labor with. So, according to Locke, by picking an apple from a tree or cultivating a virgin piece of land a man does not only become the owner of the apple or the agricultural product, but he also appropriates the tree he picked the apple from or the land he cultivated. However, Locke's critiques point out that private property in these two different sorts of utilities requires different justifications. Thus, the labor theory of value by itself justifies the ownership of a man only on the product of his labor, not on the means of production (besides his own labor), such as the tree or the land in

this case. Mill, for instance, agrees with Locke that the foundation of the former property right is "the right of producers to what they themselves have produced", but maintains that this principle cannot justify private property in land since "no man made the land" (Day, 1966: 207).

In analyzing Locke's labor theory of value, Day points out another limitation on property, which is later eliminated in expense of consistency (Day, 1966:219). As Day argues, "*the right of producers to what they themselves have produced restricts the amount of property, which a man may rightfully possess to that which he himself produced or received in exchange for his products*" (Day, 1966: 209). Later on, Locke aims to eliminate this restriction by the "turfs argument": "*the grass my horse has bit, the turfs my servant has cut, and the ore I have digged in any place, where I have a right to them in common with others, become my property without the assignation or consent of anybody. The labour that was mine, removing them out of that common state they were in, has fixed my property in them*" (Locke, 2002 [1690]: 289).

Thus, while Locke originally states that labor is the foundation of property, he also adds that such labor need not be one's own. Instead, it could be that of another who was employed for the purpose, thereby overcoming the labor limitation on appropriation. In his paper, Day demonstrates the inconsistency in Locke's reasoning in great detail and argues that this proposition cannot be justified on the ground of the right of producers to what they themselves produced and needs further justification which is avoided by Locke. Whether it is justified or not, the "turfs" argument is a crucial turn in Locke's reasoning, which makes it possible to justify the capital accumulation. We should also note that, later on, Locke's doctrine was given a radical turn in the hands of socialist thinkers by the rejection of the "turfs" argument.

#### **2.4. Evolution of Property Relations and the Formation of the State**

As we noted earlier, Locke aimed to justify the unlimited accumulation of capital. For this aim, he based the property right on natural right and natural law, and then removed all limits from the property right (Macpherson, 1962: 199). Introduction of money to the economy is a crucial step towards this aim.

For Locke, property right by itself is not a reason for any kind of conflict among men in the state of nature. Since there is "*plenty of natural provisions*" for men to make use of, there is "*little room for quarrels or contentions about*



*property so established*" (Locke, 2002 [1690]: 290). However, Locke admits that as the economy expands with the use of money, it leads to a state of inequality in private possessions, which makes social relations more complicated to deal with within the state of nature.

According to Locke, there are three stages in the evolution of property relations, which parallel the men's social evolution. In the first stage where all men are equal, labor and the product of a man's labor belong to that man alone. Due to the limits imposed upon them by nature, men must leave enough room and resources for others, for if a man tries to accumulate more goods than he can tend on his own, they will spoil and go to waste. This situation is changed by the invention of money, which represents the second stage in Locke's social evolution. Since money does not spoil, it creates a reason for the men to expand their possessions beyond the use of his family, therefore hoarding becomes rational.

In the final stage, a civil society is formed to protect unequal possessions, which have already in the state of nature given rise to unequal rights. As the property relations get more complicated in the state of nature, the fact that everyone has executive power will inevitably lead to confusion and disorder. Locke argues that it is unreasonable to expect men to be fair judges in their own cases when they believe someone have transgressed the law of nature because they will undoubtedly be influenced by self-love, partiality, passion, and revenge. Besides, differing perceptions and applications of the law of nature cause confusion and create great inconveniences. At this point, the expansion of the economy and the increase in inequality of property make the state of nature more vulnerable to any conflict over the natural resources and thus generate a need for an *"established, settled, known law allowed by common consent to be the standard of right and wrong"* to further the security of property rights (Locke, 2002 [1690]: 351). So, the primary motive behind a man's consent to enter civil society is to secure the property as it is established in the state of nature and eliminate the inconveniences of the state of nature to further the achievement of security.

Thus, the civil society emerges as men quit their natural powers and transfers it to the community. And the commonwealth, which is built on the *"tacit"* and *"voluntary"* consent of each and every member of it, comes by the power to make and execute the laws. Once the commonwealth is established,

every individual is now bound by its laws since everyone has consented to give up his force for the execution of the laws in favor of it.

At this point, we should note that Locke's attempt to legitimize unlimited capital accumulation inevitably leads to differential class rights and the legitimization of a class state. Since the chief end of the civil society is the preservation of the established property relations, people who are without property or not capable of having property (lacking rationality and therefore cannot possibly serve this end) are not considered as full members of the civil society.

According to Locke, the object of the state is the preservation of the private property, which he defines in two ways, as broad and narrow. Broad definition includes individual rights (primarily a man's right to live), and "liberties", as well as "estates". By this definition, everyone has a certain degree of interest in the establishment of civil society and is capable of entering it. On the other hand, the narrow definition of private property consists of only material belongings (goods and land). Citizens without these are not entitled to full membership, because, although they have private property in the broad sense, they don't have it in the narrow sense. Therefore, they lack two essential requirements that are necessary for full participation in the civil society: full interest in the preservation of private property and full rationality enabling them to be voluntarily obligated to the law of reason.

While, formulating his account of differential membership Locke makes a distinction between tacit and express consent (Locke, 2002[1690]: 347-350). According to his distinction everyone who derives some advantage from living in the civil society gives his tacit consent. However, only those who give their express consent can be "perfect members", and they are the landowners and the ones who are expected to inherit land.

### 2.5. Lockean Accommodation

In spite of his emphasis on property ownership as a determinant of full membership to the civil society, Locke himself never explicitly discussed its implications on political rights. However, Locke's formulation of "differential membership" inspired the ruling classes of the new born capitalism who believed that social harmony was to be ensured by limiting political participation to the propertied classes. These suffrage restrictions were later

called as "Lockean accommodation" and were practiced throughout Europe until World War I. According to Bowles and Gintis, nineteenth century liberals generally recognized three sorts of restrictions of a Lockean nature (Bowles and Gintis, 1987: 42). First one was the *regime censitaire*, limiting suffrage on the basis of the wealth each individual possesses or on the total amount of tax the individual pays. The second one was the *regime capacitaire*, which restricts suffrage on the basis of literacy and formal education. And the last one was the household responsibility criterion, limiting political participation to heads of households occupying dwellings of a minimum size or rent. Among these restrictions, the property restriction was mostly favored. The idea behind this choice was very similar to Locke's argument that the affairs of the national community should be left to those who have "real stakes" in the society in the form of property and investments.

Hence the Lockean accommodation reconciled representative government with capitalism by disfranchising a major part of the population that is most likely to challenge the existing distribution of wealth and the hegemony of the ruling classes: the working class itself. Political representation has always been one of the primary goals of the organized working class emanating from the Industrial Revolution. However, they faced a strong resistance of the hegemonic classes and were suppressed by any means available. For instance in England, the cradle of liberal thought, genuine manhood suffrage was delayed until 1918 and universal suffrage had still longer to wait.

Lockean accommodation never held the central position in the New World as it did in Europe. "*Unlike Europe, where land titles had been the focus of social strife for centuries, the prospect of virtually universal landownership in North America offered a vision of a new liberal order with little need to suffer the conflict of personal and property rights*" (Bowles and Gintis, 1987: 47). This new order could be called as Jeffersonian accommodation, which was simply the harmonization of private property and democracy through the generalization of private property at least to all freeborn male household heads. Obviously, the main reason behind this American exceptionalism was the abundance of land, which prepared the material conditions for an extended suffrage.

### 3. Marxist Critique of Private Property

#### 3.1. Property as a Natural Right

Marx's view on Locke's description "natural rights" can be found in his criticisms of the doctrine of the Rights of Man. In his early writings, Marx argues that political freedoms as articulated in the 1789 French doctrine of the "Rights of Man" are paradoxical in a number of ways, which are interrelated with each other. Marx asserts that all rights do not possess equal importance; rather there is a hierarchy among them and the right of property is a foundational limitation on all other rights. As stated in the French constitution of 1793, the right of private property allows each and every citizen the enjoyment and disposition "*...as he will of his goods and revenues, of the fruits of his work and industry*" (Marx, 2000[1843]: 60). According to Marx, this "as he will" forces the individual to view his fellow man as an enemy standing in his way of the acquirement or preservation of property. In order to retain the right of property, one must possess property. Otherwise, the right becomes hollow and fictitious. This also means that each individual must accept "materialistic" goals as his personal goals to secure his personal property and other rights. If a man gives higher priority to other goals, he will be vulnerable to any attack on his property or his personal rights (Sichel, 1972: 355).

Thus, Marx asserts that all other rights must be understood as subservient to the property right. For instance, equality of rights as argued in French constitution does not mean much to Marx. If the laws exist to protect property rights then there can be no equality before the laws without property. Hence, the propertyless worker who does not even possess his own labor does not possess this right. Measuring unequal individuals by the same yardstick does not change the fact that unequals are not equal. This notion of equality is "*.... therefore a right of inequality in its content, like every right*" (Marx, 2000[1875]: 615). In this sense, the term "equal" serves to legitimize the inequality in practice.

#### 3.2. On Property Right as a Determinant of Alienation

According to Marx, the property right as a right of man and as the foundation of the government is inextricably intertwined with a man's life, his personality and his relationship with the others (Sichel, 1972: 356). "*As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore coincides with their production, both with what they produce and how they produce*"

(Marx, 2000[1845]: 177). Here Marx describes a reciprocal relationship that determines the state of man during any historical period. On one hand, it is the man's economic activity that makes the world on the other hand, his production and the mode of production reflect back on the individual determining his life even his personality. Thus, the right of property as a necessary concomitant to the capitalist mode of production becomes a directional force determining the quality of man's life; that is "mentally and physically dehumanized (Sichel,1972: 357).Marx uses the phrase "alienation" to denote this dehumanization, which turns the man into a commodity in both form and content.

As a direct result of the property right, which emanates from the mode of production, equality has become inequality, liberty is replaced by self interest, and security means the protection of property even when it is the ownership of human beings. In his early works Marx gives several examples of alienation generated by property ownership and the capitalist mode of production. Since it is the property right, which puts one man's labor under the domination of another man it is also the main determinant of alienation between the worker and the capitalist that emerges as a direct consequence of the disparity in property ownership. Another one is the alienation between worker and worker competing for the limited employment opportunities. There is also the alienation between the worker and the product of his labor since work is seen as an "unfree activity" borne in the attempt to obtain and retain property. And of course, the alienation of the worker to himself whose purpose in life "*seems to be the maintenance of his individual life, to gain the means to live*" (Marx, 2000[1844a]: 128). In one of his early writings, Marx puts it very clearly "*Appropriation appears as alienation and alienation as appropriation*" (Marx, 2000[1844b]: 95). Through this alienation man loses his identity and becomes an object. "*Private property*", Marx says "*... is on one hand the product of alienated labor, and on the other hand the means by which labor is alienated, the realization of his alienation* " (Marx, 2000[1844b]: 93).

According to Marx, for a man to regain his true authentic being he must get rid of the profanity of private property. He must cease characterizing himself "*as a private individual...[treating] other men as means*" and become a self conscious being, organically united with the world "*in accordance with the laws of beauty*" (Sichel,1972:358). Marx believes that this can occur only

through movement from “freedom of property” to “freedom from property”, which can be attained after a period of revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat. This period of transition to socialism brings property ownership (and its consequences such as the exploitation of labor, alienation) to creating a new socioeconomic structure allowing individuals to explore their authentic identity. Thus, man can quit becoming an object and become a subject, the real man absorbing the “abstract citizen” and only then “human emancipation will be completed” (Marx, 2000[1843]: 64).

### 3.3. Labor Theory of Value and the Exploitation of Labor

The treatment of labor as the only source of value, first developed by Locke to argue against the monarchy and later by Adam Smith and David Ricardo to provide support to the emerging capitalist proprietors in their struggle with the landed interests was appropriated later by socialists, leading to its hasty abandonment and rejection by the supporters of the bourgeoisie (Bowles and Gintis, 1987: 162). Marx’s labor theory of value was a further development and perfection of this theory as it emanated from classical economists, and especially of Ricardo’s version.

Marx’s major contribution was the use of the concept of abstract social labor as the foundation of his theory. Marx considered this as his main achievement along with his formulation of surplus value (Marx, 1977[1867]: 42). This contribution led Marx to make a distinction between concrete labor, which determines the use value of commodities and abstract labor, which determines their exchange value: *“The value added is of a certain definite amount, not because his labor has a particular useful content but because it lasts for a certain length of time”* (Marx, 1977[1867]: 308). Therefore, for Marx, the value of a given commodity is determined by the quantity of simple labor (skilled labor being reduced to simple through a given coefficient) socially necessary for its production (that is, at a given average productivity of labor).

Another important distinction is the one between labor and labor power. Marx asserts that what the laborer sells in the market is not his labor but his labor power and the value of labor power, like the value of any other commodity, depends on the quantity of labor necessary for its production. Thus the wage of a worker is equal to an amount that is necessary for the reproduction of his life activity as a worker. The value of labor power, like the

value of any other commodity, depends on the development of productive forces and on the production relations to which they correspond. *"If the owner of labor-power works today, tomorrow he must again be able to repeat the same process in the same conditions as regards health and strength. His means of subsistence must therefore be sufficient to maintain him in his normal state as a working individual. His natural wants, such as food, clothing, fuel, and housing, vary according to the climatic and other peculiarities of his country. On the other hand, the number and extent of his so-called necessary wants, as also the modes of satisfying them, are themselves the product of historical development, and depend therefore to a great extent on the degree of civilization of a country, more particularly on the conditions under which, and consequently on the habits and degree of comfort in which, the class of free workers has been formed"* (Marx, 1977[1867]: 275).

Thus, the value of labor power is subject to certain historical and moral elements and it varies across different countries can depending on what is socially necessary. For instance, in China it might consist of a bowl of rice a day, while in affluent America, it might include the means necessary to supply the worker with a late model automobile.

The labor power as a commodity is bought and sold at its full value but the value of its product exceeds its own value. Marx argues that the exchange value of the product is bought and paid for, but what is actually acquired is the use value of labor that creates the surplus value. Therefore, only a part of worker's working day is spent in replacing the equivalent of his own value ( the wage goods required to reproduce labor power for the next working day); and for the remainder of the day he works for the capitalist. Hence, surplus value is nothing but the "unpaid labor".

We should note that when Marx formulates the exploitation of labor he does not argue in terms of just or unjust. On the contrary he emphasizes that *"It is an extraordinarily cheap kind of sentimentality which declares this method of determining the value of labor-power, a method prescribed by the very nature of the case, is brutal...."* (Marx, 1977[1867]: 277). The same reasoning led Marx to reject slogans like "a fair day's wage for a fair day's work, or to criticize the Lassalleian demand for a "fair distribution" (Marx, 2000[1875]: 612-614).

In Marxist analysis, "justice" or "fairness" has nothing to do with economic relations. Economic relations are not ruled by juridical concepts; on the contrary these concepts arise out of economic relations. Hence, there are no absolute rights in Marxist theory. Every economic system creates its own set of moral standards and existing economic relations are indeed the very own nature of the capitalist economy. *"The sphere of circulation or commodity exchange, within whose boundaries the sale and purchase of labor-power goes on, is in fact a very Eden of the innate rights of man. It is the exclusive realm of Freedom, Equality, Property and Bentham... The only force bringing them together and putting them in relation with each other, is the selfishness, the gain and the private interests of each"* (Marx, 1977[1867]: 280).

In Capital, Marx also criticizes the use of labor theory of value to justify private property under capitalism. *"Originally," Marx says, "property rights appeared to us to be based on one's own labor. At least this assumption must be made, since only commodity-owners with equal property rights confronted each other, and the only means of appropriating an alien commodity was by alienating one's own commodities, which could only be replaced by labor"* (Wood, 1972: 264). In a mode of production in which each individual producer owns his own means of production and exchanges the commodities he produces with other individual producers such an argument would make sense, since property rights would be based entirely on a man's labor. In different places, Marx calls this system the "individual property system". In such a case, the laborer would appropriate the full value of his product and any act of depriving him from his self "earned property" could be considered as "unjust". However, capitalist economy operates on completely different grounds. First of all, capitalist production requires further specialization by which individual labor is replaced cooperative labor. In factories, no worker by himself produces the final product; instead every worker produces certain parts of it. Secondly and more importantly, capitalism is predicated on the separation labor from the means of production, on the division of society in to a class which owns the means of production and a class that owns only labor power. As capitalism develops this polarization becomes more and more evident.



### 3.4. Economic Inequality and Capitalist Democracy

In Marxian analysis, capitalist development is argued to be a process resulting in the concentration of means of production in a few hands (monopolization of capital). As a direct result of this process, which strengthens the dominance of one class over another, we witness growing inequalities in the socioeconomic structure. On the other hand, long before Marx, many thinkers from Aristotle to Jefferson argued that democracy requires substantial equality in the distribution of income and wealth. The main reason behind this argument was their belief that great inequalities in economic circumstances would eventually turn into political inequality.

As a fundamental principle of democracy, political equality requires each person carrying the same weight in voting, political decision making and in the conduct of all the public business. Lockean accommodation was a direct form of this political inequality under which the upper classes (property owners) officially established their rule over the "propertyless" who were denied the right to vote. Under these political circumstances, "universal suffrage" had been a priority for the nineteenth century labor movement. In the following paragraph, Engels not only acknowledges the importance of this demand, but also points out that universal suffrage is only a step for the proletariat to achieve "real democracy":

*"The highest form of the state, the democratic republic ... is the form of state in which alone the last decisive battle between proletariat and bourgeoisie can be fought out — the democratic republic no longer officially recognises differences of property. Wealth here employs its power indirectly, but all the more surely. It does this in two ways: by plain corruption of officials..., and by an alliance between the government and the stock exchange ... Universal suffrage is thus the gauge of the maturity of the working class. It cannot and never will be anything more in the modern state; but that is enough. On the day when the thermometer of universal suffrage shows boiling-point among the workers, they as well as the capitalists will know where they stand (Engels, 1972[1884]: 232).*

In the paragraph above, Engels discusses the "indirect" relationship between wealth and political power in the "democratic republic", where there is no restriction on suffrage. The relationship is indirect in the sense that officially everyone has the right to vote; therefore at least a formal political equality is

achieved. However, domination of one class over the others in the economic sphere has its own social and political consequences.

The ideal society for the practice of democracy, according to both Aristotle and Jefferson, is one with a large middle class built on a wide dispersion of private property, without an arrogant and overbearing wealthy class, and without a discontented and dangerous poverty stricken-class. Karl Marx argued, however, that only with the abolition of class society, meaning only when those whose labor produced all wealth owned the means for producing wealth, could democracy exist. According to Marx, capitalism has an inherent tendency to reproduce this inequality structure and it is private property that generates this inequality. Therefore, for Marx, democracy is inconceivable without socialism, by which he means public ownership and administration of all major means of production by and for the working classes.

### **3.5. Abolition of Private Property and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat**

According to Marx and Engels, all other movements in the history were movements of minorities or based on the interests of minorities. In this sense, one distinguishing of the proletarian movement is that it represents the interests of the immense majority. In the Communist Manifesto, Marx and Engels argue that being the lowest segment of the society, proletariat cannot raise itself up without raising the society as a whole (Engels and Marx, 2000[1848]: 254). Therefore, the revolution of the proletariat is different from the previous revolutions, because it does not aim to reproduce the class domination on its behalf, but aims to create a classless society in which a "true democracy" can flourish.

In this context, the writers assert that the "*theory of the communists can be summed up as: the abolition of private property*". One obvious objection to this formulation would be on the grounds of "personal freedom, activity and independence", denouncing it as an act against the "hard won", "self earned" property (Engels and Marx, 2000[1848]: 256). But writers point out that self earned property means the property of the independent producer (petty artisans and small peasants) and there is no need to abolish that kind of property since it has already been destroyed to a great extent and being gradually destroyed by the development of capitalist economy, which causes the monopolization of

capital. At this point, writers note: *"the distinguishing feature of communism is not the abolition of property generally, but the abolition of bourgeois property. But modern bourgeois private property is the final and most complete expression of the system of producing and appropriating products that is based on class antagonisms, on the exploitation of the many by the few"* (Engels and Marx, 2000[1848]: 256).

As noted above, modern bourgeois property, as opposed to the private property of the independent producer, is based on the exploitation of labor; therefore it has different social and political consequences. A necessary condition for its existence (in the hands of a few) is its non-existence for the immense majority of society. Under these circumstances, being a capitalist is not something personal; it brings social power and status in production and in the society. Hence, when capital is converted into common property, it does not transform personal property into social property. *It is only the social character of the property that is changed. It loses its class character* (Engels and Marx, 2000[1848]: 257). Therefore, *"Communism deprives no man of the power to appropriate the products of society; all that it does is to deprive him of the power to subjugate the labor of others by means of such appropriations"* (Engels and Marx, 2000[1848]: 258).

One crucial step in the transformation of the capitalist society into a socialist one is the dictatorship of the proletariat. The dictatorship of the proletariat, being one of the most controversial definitions in the writings of Marx and Engels, means nothing other than the political rule of the working class. The term "dictatorship" as used by Marx and Engels does not mean tyranny or absolutism or rule by a single individual, a minority or even a single party but the control by the associated producers—the working class, which constitutes the overwhelming majority of society—of the productive forces they themselves have created. In other words, the dictatorship of the proletariat means nothing other than the establishment of genuine democracy.

We should also mention that, this kind of use of the term "dictatorship" is not something unique to Marx and Engels. When we look at their contemporaries, we see that the term "dictatorship" was used in the same sense by defenders of the ruling classes in their opposition to universal suffrage and the development of democratic forms of rule. As Hal Draper noted in his study of this question: *"The London Times thundered against giving the vote to the*

majority of the people on the ground that this would in effect disenfranchise 'the present electors' by making the lower class 'supreme'. Manchester capitalists denounced a strike as 'the tyranny of Democracy'. The liberal Tocqueville, writing in 1856 about the Great French Revolution, regretted that it had been carried through by 'the masses on behalf of the sovereignty of the people' instead of by an 'enlightened autocrat'; the revolution was a period of 'popular' dictatorship, he wrote. It was perfectly clear that the 'dictatorship' he lamented was the establishment of 'popular sovereignty' (Draper, 1987:17).

Obviously, Marx and Engels did not counterpose the dictatorship of the proletariat to democracy. Rather, they insisted, it was the form through which genuine democracy was established. This is clear from their analysis of the Paris Commune of 1871, which, for a period of 72 days, established a "dictatorship of the proletariat." In his 1891 introduction to the re-issue of Marx's analysis of the Commune in *The Civil War in France*, Engels explained that the Commune, which was nothing other than the "dictatorship of the proletariat", began with the "shattering of the former state power and its replacement by a new and truly democratic one" (Engels, 1966[1891]:17).

There were two characteristics of the new state. As Marx puts it: "While the merely repressive organs of the old governmental power were to be amputated, its legitimate functions were to be wrested from an authority usurping pre-eminence over society itself, and restored to the responsible agents of society. Instead of deciding once in three or six years which member of the ruling class was to misrepresent the people in parliament, universal suffrage was to serve the people, constituted in Communes, as individual suffrage serves every other employer in the search for workmen and managers in his business" (Marx, 1966[1871]:69).

There were two means by which this transformation was effected. It filled all posts on the basis of universal suffrage, with the right of recall at any time by the electors and it ensured that all officials were paid wages no higher than those received by other workers. In his first draft for *The Civil War in France*, Marx emphasized its democratic character as follows: "The Commune—the reabsorption of the state power by society as its own living forces instead of as forces controlling and subduing it, by the popular masses themselves, forming their own forces instead of the organized force of their suppression—the political form of their social emancipation, instead of the artificial force

*appropriated by their oppressors (their own force opposed to and organized against them) of society wielded for their oppression by their enemies. This form was simple like all great things"* (Marx, 1966[1871]: 168). The Commune abolished the "*whole sham of state mysteries and state pretensions*" and made public functions the activities of working people instead of "*the hidden attributes of a trained caste.*" Its tendency of development, Marx emphasized, was "*a government of the people by the people*" (Marx, 1966[1871]: 170).

Marx and Engels believed that capitalist society was founded upon the division of labor between mental and manual labor. Therefore, the form of democracy corresponding to this mode of production was a political system in which one class of people decides what should be done and another class of people acts accordingly. Writers argued that in order to transcend class society, proletarian democracy should go beyond the limitations of representative democracy and aim to establish a participatory democracy. Since the writers do not give a satisfactory account of this proletarian democracy, their argument may seem too simple and far too idealistic for a skeptic reader. However, after the Paris Commune, both writers claimed that they saw the hints of this society that was yet to come. In spite of its all imperfections, Marx and Engels always defended the Paris Commune as an example of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and as an important step towards achievement of a "true democracy".

#### 4. Conclusion

Macpherson describes Locke's methodology as first "*to base the property right on natural right and natural law, and then remove all the natural law limits from the property right*" (Macpherson, 1962:199). In his "Second Treatise", Locke begins with a justification of property rights based on one's own labor. Here, the labor theory of value -later employed by Marxists to argue for the abolition of the private property- plays a crucial role for Locke to come up with consistent arguments based on "natural rights". For Locke, individual essence consists of self proprietorship of "life, liberty and estate", which owes nothing to society except the mutual recognition of the right of private property. Hence, property right is something purely personal as an inseparable part of man's nature.

However, right at this point Locke brings in the “turfs argument”, in order to overcome the labor limitation on appropriation, and adds that while labor is the foundation of property, such labor need not be one's own. With this sudden turn in the argument, his definition of private property gains a social character that draws the line between the property of the independent producer and that of the capitalist.

From this argument he moves on to deal with the other restrictions in order to establish a positive moral basis for the unlimited accumulation of capital. A crucial step in this legitimization is the introduction of tacit consent in relation to money. With the invention of money it becomes rational for a man to accumulate capital and to own more than he needs since money does not spoil. This leads the way to growing inequality of wealth and increases the possibility of conflict among individuals; therefore creates a need for civil society in order to protect unequal possessions.

Thus, we see the transformation of Locke's former stress on the equality of natural rights into differential rights. The “industrious and rational” rightfully appropriated the land and left the rest with the only option of selling their labor to stay alive. Individuals no longer have a natural right to landed property and the propertyless that are dependent on the others are also subject to their jurisdiction.

Whether Locke's theory paves the way to suffrage restrictions is still a matter of debate among scholars. However, we can safely argue that it allows for huge inequalities of wealth and aims to justify its political consequences. As Macpherson emphasized, the greatness of Locke's liberalism lay in its *“assertion of the free rational individual as the criterion of the good society. Yet its “tragedy was that this very assertion was necessarily a denial of individualism to half the nation”* (Macpherson, 1962: 262 ).

In Contrary to Locke, Marx does not argue on the grounds of justice or natural rights. For Marx, every mode of production creates its own cultural values and moral standards; therefore there is no absolute “right” or “wrong”. In the capitalist mode of production private property dominates all other personal rights.

Marx also criticizes the use of labor theory of value to justify private property under capitalism and argues that this argument could only make sense

under the "individual property system" that operates on completely different grounds. Under the capitalist mode of production, based on division of labor and separation of labor from the means of production, private property gains a social character that reproduces the dominance of one class over the other.

While Locke places the right to property to the center of individual freedom, Marxists argue that individual freedom can only be achieved by the abolition of property right. For Marx, as a direct result of property right, which emanates from the mode of production, production becomes the directional force determining a man's life that is being mentally and physically dehumanized. This dehumanization is called alienation, and it turns the man into a commodity that is being bought and sold in the market. And the only way for the man to regain his authentic being is to move from "freedom of property" to "freedom from property" by eliminating private property through a revolutionary period of dictatorship of the proletariat. Marx and Engels emphasize that "*being the lowest segment of the society proletariat cannot raise itself up, without raising the society as a whole*" (Engels and Marx, 2000[1848]: 254). Therefore, "the revolution of the proletariat", as formulated by Marx and Engels, does not aim to reproduce class domination on its behalf, but aims to create a classless society in which true democracy can flourish and individual freedom can be achieved.

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