
I. What is a Commodity?
“To say that something is properly regarded as a commodity is to claim that the norms of the market are appropriate for regulating its production, exchange, and enjoyment. To the extent that moral principles or ethical ideals preclude the application of market norms to a good, we may say that the good is not a (proper) commodity.” (72)

Q: Whose moral principles and ethical ideals are they that preclude the application of market norms?
   Everyones? (Then no problem)
   Some people’s? (Then may they legitimately impose their values on others who do not agree?)

Reasons against commodification— Ex: Market norms may “fail to value it in the appropriate way.”

“Any ideal of human life includes a conception of how different things and persons should be valued. Let us reserve the term ‘use’ to refer to the mode of valuation proper to commodities, which follows the market norm of treating things solely in accordance with the owner’s nonmoral preferences. Then the Kantian argument against commodifying persons can be generalized to apply to other cases. It can be argued that many objects which are worthy of a higher mode of valuation than use are not properly regarded as mere commodities.” (72)

Claim: “To fail to value things appropriately is to embody in one’s life an inferior conception of human flourishing.” (73)

II. Children as Commodities

Explanation of and standard argument for surrogacy: (74-5)

Question: To what extent is the account of children and their value (pp. 75-6) parochial and culturally specific? Certainly there are cultures that <have not valued/do not value> children in the way Anderson describes here. If we were to find some people who don’t value their children in this way, would it provide a reason to restrict the scope of Anderson’s argument, or would we more properly conclude that they (these people) had adopted a problematical (inferior?) value system?

Conditional and Unconditional Love: (76) Should children be loved for their characteristics (conditional love) or regardless of their characteristics? If parents are enabled to select (probable) characteristics of their children, does this undermine their ability to love their children unconditionally?

Preventing or Breaking Bonds of Love: Is there something intrinsically inappropriate (degrading? exploitative?) about an institution that prevents surrogates from developing bonds of love with the children they carry?

Interests of the Child: Does/would surrogacy change the way children think of themselves? (77)

Baby Selling: “That the mother regards only her labor and not her child as requiring compensation is also irrelevant. No one would argue that the baker does not treat his bread as property just because he sees the income from the sale as compensation for his labor and expenses and not for the bread itself, which he doesn’t care to keep.” (78)

Question: Does Anderson’s emphasis on gestational and genetic ties between children and parents (and grandparents and…) inappropriately fetishize aspects of the relationship that are completely contingent and normatively (morally) irrelevant? Adoptive parents are parents whether the ties between themselves and their children include these contingencies or not.
III. Women’s Labor as a Commodity:

“Commercial surrogacy attempts to transform what is specifically woman’s labor—the work of bringing forth children into the world—into a commodity.” (80)

Three ways the application of economic norms to women’s labor violates women’s claim to respect:
“First, by requiring the surrogate mother to repress whatever parental love she feels for the child, these norms convert women’s labor into a form of alienated labor. Second, by manipulating and denying legitimacy to the surrogate mother’s evolving perspective on her own pregnancy, the norms of the market degrade her. Third, by taking advantage of the surrogate mother’s noncommercial motivations without offering anything but what the norms of commerce demand in return, these norms leave her open to exploitation.”

Surrogacy as Alienated Labor: “In the surrogate contract, she [the birth mother] agrees no to form or to attempt to form a parent-child relationship with her offspring. Her labor is alienated because she must divert it from the end which the social practices of pregnancy rightly promote—an emotional bond with her child. The surrogate contract thus replaces a norm of parenthood, that during pregnancy one create a loving attachment to one’s child, with a norm of commercial production, that the producer shall not form any special emotional ties to her product.

The demand to deliberately alienate oneself from one’s love for one’s own child is a demand which can reasonably and decently be made of no one.” (82)

Degradation: “The treatment and interpretation of surrogate mothers’ grief raises the deepest problems of degradation.” (83)

IV. Commercial Surrogacy, Freedom, and the Law

Autonomy: “....we have seen, however, that the content of the surrogate contract itself compromises the autonomy of surrogate mothers. It uses the norms of commerce in a manipulative way and commands the surrogate mothers to conform their emotions to the interests of the other parties to the contract. The surrogate industry fails to acknowledge the surrogate mothers as possessing an independent perspective worthy of consideration. And it takes advantage of motivations—such as self-effacing ‘altruism,’ which women have formed under social conditions inconsistent with genuine autonomy. Hence the surrogate industry itself, far from expanding the realm of autonomy for women, actually undermines the external and internal conditions required for fully autonomous choice by women.” (91) (Emphasis added.)
MARX ON EXPLOITATION, ALIENATION, AND THE DEVALUATION OF WORKERS

Question: What is exploitation?

Case 1: I find a stranded motorist in the desert. Knowing that she will die of thirst without my help, I offer her my help... but only on condition that she sign a legally binding document that gives me title to her house, car, and all her worldly possessions.

Problem: Obviously my offer is unfair, but without me this person would be even worse off than she is with my help. How can my act be harmful or wrong, since it results in her being better off than she would have been without my help?

Case 2: Same as case 1, except that the motorist is stranded because I put holes in her tires before she set off. I then set off to find her, knowing that my act would cause her to be stranded so that she would need my help... and so that she will be willing to offer me most anything for my help.

1) The general conception of exploitation: Exploitation occurs iff a person A harmfully utilizes a person B as a mere means for A's benefit. Exploitation is the harmful, merely instrumental use of persons for the benefit of others who utilize them.

2) The Transhistorical conception of exploitation in the labor process: This conception is more specialized than (1). It is limited to relations within the labor process, while (1) is not. According to Marx, each type of social formation in the history of class divided societies has its own distinctive labor process: in ancient city-states, it was slavery, in the Middle ages, it was the Feudal system of serf labor, in modern capitalist society, it's wage-labor. The following conception is 'transhistorical' in that it picks out elements common to all the labor processes of the various class divided societies. These elements:
   1) The labor is forced
   2) Part of the labor is uncompensated
   3) the labor produces surplus products
   4) the worker doesn't have control over the product.

Surplus product is the value created by the worker which goes beyond the value embodied in his wages. According to Marx, the worker receives only compensation for his necessary labor (the amount of labor necessary to provide for his subsistence needs) and that the surplus goes to the owner.

3) The concept of exploitation in Capitalism: (The Wage Labor Process)
Even more specialized: applies only to capitalism.
   1) Labor is forced not through violence, but through monopoly, by which the capitalist provides the only means of production: the worker must work for the capitalist to survive.
   2) Worker is paid only for part of the value he produces
   3) there is surplus value created
   4) the worker does not own the product, since the owner has legal rights over it.

THEORY OF ALIENATION:
   1) Shows how people can be used as means
   2) shows why this is harmful to people.

WHAT CONSTITUTES ALIENATION OF LABOR? 1) Labor is external to the worker, 2) labor is forced, 3) worker puts value into commodity, 4) worker's value (objectified) is no longer his own, 5) this value is used as a means to his continued oppression.

HOW ESTRANGED LABOR HARMs THE WORKER: 1) alienates “nature from man” (object is no longer the workers'), 2) “man from himself” (put into the object) 3) turns one’s species-being into a being alien, and a mere means for one’s existence, 4) alienates “man from man”
"Let me hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, breed cattle in the evening, and criticize after dinner, just as I like, without ever becoming a hunter, fisher, herdsman, or critic." (The German Ideology)

**Marx on the DEVALUATION OF THE WORKER:** "The devaluation of the worker (and the worker's misery) is in direct proportion to the power and volume of the worker's production." (1143)

1) As the worker produces more, the owner becomes richer. (Where there's a surplus of labor, impersonal working conditions, and few employers, the worker's subsistence wages don't change as s/he works harder)
2) The wealth of the owner just is the work of the worker: the worker sells work to the owner.
3) But work is the creative product of the worker; it is the worker's value. (In selling this human value to the owner, Marx believes that the worker has entered a kind of slavery contract.)
4) Through the labor process, a worker objectifies his or her human value by changing labor into a commodity.
5) Except for wages, this is surplus value and is the property of the owner, not the worker.
6) To the owner, this surplus value is power. (As the owner becomes richer, s/he gains more power.)
7) The owners power is used to maintain the status quo, and to find better and more efficient ways to make workers work harder (to oppress the workers). Thus there is an inverse relation between the value of workers and the volume of their production.)
9) Ultimately, it is the worker's own value which is the means to his and her oppression.

**MEASURING EXPLOITATION: SURPLUS VALUE AND WAGES:**

**SURPLUS VALUE:** (value produced by the worker - value of wages paid) In a monopoly, it is most economically rational for the monopolist to pay the worker as little as he can. That is, just enough for him to subsist. Since there's no way for the worker to survive except by working for the monopolist, he will be willing to work for mere subsistence.

Rate of Marxian exploitation= surplus value/value of wages
= (time worked - 'time required to produce value of wages)/value of wages

**SPECIES BEING:** Property that distinguishes us from other things—what’s special about us. According to Marx, what's special about us is our capacity for creativity and productivity: the capacity to work.

**MARX ON THE VALUE OF WORK:**
1145: an animal is not distinct from the activities it performs.<br>
1146: animals create only in response to need, but Humans create even when free from physical need, and truly produces only in freedom from such need. Animals produce only according to the standards of need, while human beings produce according to standards of beauty.<br>
1144: Alienated laborers are "at home" only in their animal functions, and are "not at home" when they are exercising their highest human capacities. Alienation as the "loss of self."

According to Marx, Alienation makes a person’s "species life" a mere means to physical (animal) existence.
Questions on Marx:

1) What is the characteristic that distinguishes human beings from nonhuman animals? Compare Marx's view on this question to Aristotle's view. How is this capacity related to Marx's theory of exploitation?

2) What does Marx mean in claiming that exploited workers are alienated (i) from nature, (ii) from themselves, (iii) from one another?

3) What, in general, is Marx account of exploitation? What is the difference between the general account, and the more specific accounts of the way exploitation takes place in difference kinds of societies?

4) How, according to Marx, are workers exploited in capitalist societies?

5) Compare Marx, Rousseau, and Thrasyymachus on the nature of "justice," explaining similarities & differences.

6) Why does Marx believe that workers will be more deeply oppressed the harder they work?

9) Why does Marx believe that workers' wages will be bare subsistence wages?

10) What is the value of "work" for Marx? How is our capacity for work connected with our need for freedom?

11) Explain the elements of Marx's concept of "alienation" [estrangement] of labor.