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A Periodisation of Marx's Views on the Division of Labour

While any attempt to divide Marx's discourse into developmental stages is bound to encounter difficulties, a threefold scheme probably constitutes the most adequate periodisation of his changing views on the division of labour: (1) the early writings, from the *1844 Manuscripts* to *The German Ideology* – at this stage Marx has a vision of total emancipation and completely assimilates 'division of labour' to 'class'; (2) a transitional stage, chiefly represented by *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1847), in which Marx separates 'social division of labour' from the division of labour in manufacture – this period also contains some important political writings which register an attempt to detach the analysis of the state from a reduction to 'division of labour' *tout court*; (3) the mature writings, beginning with the *Grundrisse* (1856–7), in which Marx develops the theory of surplus value and begins to separate 'class' from the 'division of labour' in his analysis. I shall examine each period in turn.

It is first necessary, however, to enter a caveat concerning this periodisation. It must be emphasised that the proposed segmentation relates specifically to Marx's views on the division of labour and cannot necessarily function by itself as a representation of Marx's intellectual development in some more general sense although, in so far as any overall interpretation of this development must make reference to his views on class and the division of labour, the periodisation suggested here necessarily carries implications for it. At the same time my account cannot be completely abstracted from a specific conception of Marx's general intellectual formation. Instead of setting out this interpretation separately at this stage, however, I have integrated it into the discussion that follows.