What "Every Child Knows" and What it Will, Still, Experience; Labour and the Money Measure of Labour

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Two alternative readings of the beginning of Capital are proposed. One in which money and especially its determining role is disregarded in favour of a determining `labour theory of value' (a fashionable view). Another in which that beginning grounds a monetary theory par excellence. I favour the second, although it is seriously hindered both by Marx's commodity theory of money and by his methodological procedure of postponing the introduction into his presentation of credit-money, banking and finance (cf. De Brunhoff 1973, Campbell 1998, 2002, Bellofiore 2003).

I highlight the monetary character of the shapes of value in the circuit of capital (cf. Arthur 1998 and Taylor 2003). I also indicate that whereas value is the product of capital (Arthur 1993), nevertheless labour is its unique source because it is the co-source of use-value (here I give a twist to Marx's argument). This refocuses the role of money both ontologically and methodologically.

The core problem of capitalist money is that it is inherently a variable entity (as Marx points out) as well as the basis for the measure of capitalist success (another insight of Marx). In the playing out of this problem – to which Capital did not reach – lies one of the central weaknesses of the capitalist system, related to money as finance (pre-validation) and to the polity's role in the vestige of money and the legitimization of the system (pseudo validation – cf. De Brunhoff's work of the 1970s).