Marx Kapital Reaction

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In Chapter 14 of Das Kapital, Marx talks about the division of labor and the changing nature of manufacturing. Marx laments how individual handcraft is moving to large factories using interchangeable parts and workers. Marx doesn’t like how this is giving an advantage to the wealthy who are able to use their wealth to become wealthier while forcing most of the people to be a cog on the assembly line. However, one thing which Marx does not mention is that this change lowered the cost of consumer goods. If we look back a hundred years ago, advances in manufacturing have made cheaper consumer goods. This decrease in price has allowed more people to afford these goods who were previously unable, raising their standards of living. We saw this at work in the American middle class.

In Chapter 15, Marx has talked about the increase of machines has made work harder, not easier for workers. Again, let us look back over the last 100 years. Many rudimentary things are now done all by machine. (Though, manufacturing in China is currently undergoing this transition from mass labor to mechanization.) It is interesting that Marx seems welcoming of mechanization. Contemporary labor unions often try to protect jobs against increasing mechanization. For example, union work rules often seek to prevent mechanization or still require a worker present. I suppose Marx felt like these people would be taken care of through Communism, and would not have to work if they did not have to. The capitalist systems main paradigm is that people need to work in order to provide for themselves.