

# FOR A MINIMAL THEORY OF CAPITAL

ANTHOLOGY COLLECTION  
OF EXCERPTS ON KEY CONCEPTS



KARL MARX, JACQUES CAMATTE, JEAN BAUDRILLARD, GÜNTHER ANDERS, AMADEO BORDIGA, GUY DEBORD, ROBERT KURZ, LEWIS MUMFORD, FREDY PERLMAN, MARSHALL SAHLINS, ALFRED SOHN-RETHEL, T.S. ELIOT, JERRY MANDER, IVAN ILLICH, COSTANTINOS KAVAFIS, LOTARIO DI SEGNI (INNOCENZO III), GIANNI COLLU, ERNEST MANDEL, JACQUES CAMATTE & GIANNI COLLU, JAIME SEMPRUN, JULIET B. SCHOR, JOSEPH DE MAISTRE, MARCO IANNUCCI, ROBERT MUSIL, MARCUS VALERIUS MARTIALIS, ARISTOTÉLÈS, ALASDAIR MACINTYRE, DAVID GRAEBER & DAVID WENGROW, LUDWIG KLAGES, EURIPIDÈS, STEPHEN SMITH, ROBERTO PECCHIOLI, LUDWIG FEUERBACH, STEFANO ISOLA, A.E. VAN VOGT, ANDRÉ LEROI-GOURHAN, GIORGIO CESARANO & GIANNI COLLU, CHUCK PALAHNIUK, JEAN VIOLAC, CARL SCHMITT, CORNELIUS CASTORIADIS, EDGAR ALLAN POE, HENRY DAVID THOREAU, LUDWIG VON BERTALANFFY, GIORGIO AGAMBEN, GEORG SIMMEL, SIMONE WEIL, JUAN DONOSO CORTÉS, ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE.

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## PURPOSE AND CURATORS OF THIS COLLECTION

A VAST LITERATURE IS NOW AVAILABLE THAT IMPLICITLY contains and fertiley develops a truthful (i.e., fully confirmed by historical process) theoretical core that originates in a number of Marx's insights. It must be recognized, however, that in the bulk of the scholar's manuscripts and works, the seminal texts of that core are scattered and in a distinct minority compared to those that propose different and even opposing theses (these moreover largely refuted by factual criticism). ¶ While it is therefore necessary to take note of the failure of the claim to consider "revolutionary theory" a discordant whole such as the Marxian and Marxist corpus (*The Ghost of Theory* just the title of Jaime Semprun's fine essay), nevertheless in our view a coherent subset, a "theory of capital," exists. Although, as mentioned, implicit and currently not available in complete and coherent form except perhaps the work of Jacques Camatte. It is not difficult to point to some of the scholars who in fact in that field, following their own and different paths, have produced important results; a few names in alphabetical order: GÜNTHER ANDERS, JEAN BAUDRILLARD, WALTER BENJAMIN, AMADEO BORDIGA, JACQUES CAMATTE, CORNELIUS CASTORIADIS, GIANNI COLLU, GUY DEBORD, JACQUES ELLUL, IVAN ILLICH, ROBERT KURZ, HENRI LEFEBVRE, ANDRÉ LEROI-GOURHAN, MARCEL MAUSS, MARSHALL McLUHAN, LEWIS MUMFORD, FREDY PERLMAN, BRUNO RIZZI, ISAAC RUBIN, MARSHALL SAHLINS, KOHEI SAITO, ALFRED SOHN-RETHEL, FERDINAND TÖNNIES, SIMONE WEIL, JEAN VIOLAC. ¶ The project does not set out to produce an organic drafting of that

theoretical core, which we will tentatively call the *Minimal Theory of Capital*, but only to list what appear to be the key concepts, accompanying them with quotations from various sources for the purpose of both aiding understanding of the concept and showing its substantial consistency.

❗ **CAVEAT:** Some of the first comments on this anthology ("They are documents of terrible but healthy clarity", "A distressing read for me and which risks making us forget how much joy and truth still exists in our lives") push us to underline, using the common analogy between capital and tumor forms justified by the equal limitlessness of growth, that this collection concerns *exclusively* the genesis and development of the disease and *not as living with it* and possible *cures*. However, we consider it useful, because treatments can benefit from understanding the mechanism of what they counteract.

This project, the result of collaboration among several individualities, is Open Source and as such has given itself the tools to resolve decisions when the need arises. The resulting product is therefore in the public domain, and different research paths or divergences among participants may result in derivations with full use of materials and results of previous, and even future, work.

*Participants have operated in the spirit of the curator (whether lay, Catholic or Buddhist) of a hypothetical encyclopedic entry on Manichean Theology, a spirit that does not imply adherence to what is enunciated, but rather the intent of maximum completeness and clarity:* Aldo Zanchetta, Armando Ermini, Claudio Catanese, Enrico Salvatori, Fabrizio Bertini, Francesco Borselli, Franco Senia, Gabriella Rouf, Giacomo Di Meo, Giuseppe Petrozzi, Luigi Picchi, Marco Iannucci, Marisa Fadoni Strik, Riccardo De Benedetti, Stefano Borselli, Stefano Isola. Contacts: ✉il.covile@protonmail.com





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*From the paradise, that Marx created for  
us, no-one shall be able to expel us.*

( PSEUDO HILBERT )



## CHAPTER I. OBSERVED FACTS

### §I.I. POVERTY OF THE ANCIENTS AND WEALTH OF THE MODERNS OR VICE VERSA? VICE VERSA

✍ HENRY DAVID THOREAU 1854

The farmer is endeavoring to solve the  
problem of a livelihood by a formula  
more complicated than the problem  
itself. [...] This is the reason he is poor;  
and for a similar reason we are all poor  
in respect to a thousand savage  
comforts, though surrounded by  
luxuries. surrounded by luxury, in  
comparison with the thousand comforts  
the savages have. [*Walden or, Life in the  
Woods*]

✍ GUY DEBORD 1978

From progress to promotion, they lost  
what little they had, and gained what  
nobody wanted. [*In girum imus nocte et  
consumimur igni*]

*The Original Affluent Society*

If economics is the dismal science, the study of hunting and gathering economies must be its most advanced branch. Almost universally committed to the proposition that life was hard in the paleolithic, our textbooks compete to convey a sense of impending doom, leaving one to wonder not only how hunters managed to live, but whether, after all, this was living? The specter of starvation stalks the stalker through these pages. His technical incompetence is said to enjoin continuous work just to survive, affording him neither respite nor surplus, hence not even the “leisure” to “build culture”. Even so, for all his efforts, the hunter pulls the lowest grades in thermodynamics — less energy / capita/year than any other mode of production. And in treatises on economic development he is condemned to play the role of bad example: the so-called “subsistence economy”. ¶ The traditional wisdom is always refractory. One is forced to oppose it polemically, to phrase the necessary revisions dialectically: in fact, this was, when you come to examine it, the original affluent society. Paradoxical, that phrasing leads to another useful and unexpected conclusion. By the common understanding, an affluent society is one in which all the people’s material wants are easily satisfied. To assert that the hunters are affluent is to deny then that the human condition is an ordained tragedy, with man the prisoner at hard labor of a perpetual disparity between his unlimited wants and his insufficient means. ¶ For there are two possible courses to affluence. Wants may be “easily satisfied” either by producing much or desiring little. The familiar conception, the Galbraithian way, makes assumptions peculiarly appropriate to market economies:

that man's wants are great, not to say infinite, whereas his means are limited, although improvable: thus, the gap between means and ends can be narrowed by industrial productivity, at least to the point that "urgent goods" become plentiful. But there is also a Zen road to affluence, departing from premises somewhat different from our own: that human material wants are finite and few, and technical means unchanging but on the whole adequate. Adopting the Zen strategy, a people can enjoy an unparalleled material plenty-with a low standard of living. ¶ That, I think, describes the hunters. And it helps explain some of their more curious economic behavior: their "prodigality" for example — the inclination to consume at once all stocks on hand, as if they had it made. Free from market obsessions of scarcity, hunters' economic propensities may be more consistently predicated on abundance than our own. Destutt de Tracy, "fish-blooded bourgeois doctrinaire" though he might have been, at least compelled Marx's agreement on the observation that "in poor nations the people are comfortable", whereas in rich nations "they are generally poor". [...]

*Sources of the Misconception*

"Mere subsistence economy" "limited leisure save in exceptional circumstances", "incessant quest for food", "meagre and relatively unreliable" natural resources, "absence of an economic surplus," "maximum energy from a maximum number of people" — so runs the fair average anthropological opinion of hunting and gathering.

[...] in reference to South American hunters:

"The nomadic hunters and gatherers barely met minimum subsistence needs and often fell far short of them. Their population of 1 person to 10 or 20 square miles reflects this. Constantly on the move in search of food,

they clearly lacked the leisure hours for nonsubsistence activities of any significance, and they could transport little of what they might manufacture in spare moments. To them, adequacy of production meant physical survival, and they rarely had surplus of either products or time" (Steward & Faron 1958, p. 60).

But the traditional dismal view of the hunters' fix is also preanthropological and extra-anthropological, at once historical and referable to the larger economic context in which anthropology operates. It goes back to the time Adam Smith was writing, and probably to a time before anyone was writing. Probably it was one of the first distinctly neolithic prejudices, an ideological appreciation of the hunter's capacity to exploit the earth's resources most congenial to the historic task of depriving him of the same. [...] ¶ Is it so paradoxical to contend that hunters have affluent economies, their absolute poverty notwithstanding? Modern capitalist societies, however richly endowed, dedicate themselves to the proposition of scarcity. Inadequacy of economic means is the first principle of the world's wealthiest peoples. The apparent material status of the economy seems to be no clue to its accomplishments; something has to be said for the mode of economic organization. ¶ The market-industrial system institutes scarcity, in a manner completely unparalleled and to a degree nowhere else approximated.[...] ¶ Both Eyre and Sir George Grey, whose sanguine view of the indigenous economy we have already noted ("I have always found the greatest abundance in their huts") left specific assessments, in hours per day, of the Australians' subsistence labors. (This in Grey's case would include inhabitants of quite undesirable parts of western Australia.) The testimony of these gentlemen and explorers accords very closely with the Arnhem Land averages obtained by



McCarthy and McArthur. “In all ordinary seasons”, wrote Grey, (that is, when the people are not confined to their huts by bad weather)

“they can obtain, *in two or three hours* a sufficient supply of food for the day, but their usual custom is to roam indolently from spot to spot, lazily collecting it as they wander along” (1841, vol. 2, p. 263; emphasis mine).

Similarly, Eyre states:

“In almost every part of the continent which I have visited, where the presence of Europeans, or their stock, has not limited, or destroyed their original means of subsistence, I have found that the natives could usually, *in three or four hours*, procure as much food as would last for the day, and that without fatigue or labour” (1845, pp. 254-255; emphasis mine).

[*Stone age economics*, pp. 1-4, 26]

JEAN BAUDRILLARD 1970

*The Palaeolithic, or the First Affluent Society* ¶ We must abandon the received idea we have of an affluent society as a society in which all material (and cultural) needs are easily met, for that leaves all social logic out of account. We should rather espouse the notion recently propounded by Marshall Sahlins in his article on the first affluent society, that it is our industrial and productivist societies which, unlike certain primitive societies, are dominated by scarcity, by the obsession with scarcity characteristic of the market economy. The more one produces, the more clearly does one show up, amidst plenty, how irremediably far off is that final point which affluence would represent, defined as an equilibrium between human production and human goals. Since what is satisfied in a growth society, and increasingly satisfied as productivity grows, are the

very needs of the order of production, not the 'needs' of man(the whole system depends indeed on these being mis-recognized), it is clear that affluence recedes indefinitely: more precisely, it is irrevocably rejected and the organized reign of scarcity (structural penury) preferred. ¶ For Sahlins, it was the hunter-gatherers (the primitive nomadic tribes of Australia, the Kalahari, etc.) who, in spite of their absolute 'poverty', knew true affluence. The primitive people of those societies have no personal possessions; they are not obsessed by their objects, which they throw away as and when they need to in order to be able to move about more easily. ¶ They have no apparatus of production, or 'work': they hunt and gather 'at their leisure', as we might say, and share everything within the group. They are entirely prodigal: they consume everything immediately, make no economic calculations and amass no stores. The hunter-gatherer has nothing of that bourgeois invention, economic man, about him. He is ignorant of the basic principles of Political Economy. And, indeed, he never exploits human energies, natural resources or the effective economic possibilities to the full. ¶ He sleeps a lot. He has a trust – and this is what characterizes his economic system – in the wealth of natural resources, whereas our system is characterized (ever more so with technical advance) by despair at the insufficiency of human means, by a radical, catastrophic anxiety which is the deep effect of the market economy and generalized competition. ¶ The collective 'improvidence' and 'prodigality' characteristic of primitive societies are the sign of real affluence. We have only the signs of affluence. ¶ Beneath a gigantic apparatus of production, we anxiously eye the signs of poverty and scarcity. But poverty consists, says Sahlins, neither in a small quantity of goods, nor simply in a relation between ends and means: it is, above all, a re-

lation between human beings. The basis for the confidence of primitive peoples and for the fact that, within hunger, they live a life of plenty, is ultimately the transparency and reciprocity of social relations. It is the fact that no monopolization whatever of nature, the soil, the instruments or products of 'labour' intervenes to obstruct exchange and institute scarcity. ¶ There is among them no accumulation, which is always the source of power. ¶ In the economy of the gift and symbolic exchange, a small and always finite quantity of goods is sufficient to create general wealth since those goods pass constantly from one person to the other. Wealth has its basis not in goods, but in the concrete exchange between persons. It is, therefore, unlimited since the cycle of exchange is endless, even among a limited number of individuals, with each moment of the exchange cycle adding to the value of the object exchanged. It is this concrete and relational dialectic which we find inverted, as a dialectic of penury and unlimited need, in the process of competition and differentiation characteristic of our civilized, industrial societies. Where, in primitive exchange, every relationship adds to the social wealth, in our 'differential' societies every social relationship adds to individual lack, since every thing possessed is relativized in relation to others (in primitive exchange, it is valorized by the very relationship with others). ¶ It is not, therefore, paradoxical to argue that in our 'affluent' societies abundance is lost and that it will not be restored by an interminable increase in productivity, by unleashing new productive forces. Since the structural definition of abundance and wealth lies in social organization, only a revolution of the social organization and of social relations could bring those things about. Will we return, one day, beyond the market economy, to prodigality? Instead of prodigality, we have 'consump-

tion', forced consumption in perpetuity, twin sister to scarcity. It was social logic which brought primitive peoples the 'first' (and only) affluent society. It is our social logic which condemns us to luxurious and spectacular penury. [*The Consumer Society*, pp. 85-86]

✍ JEAN BAUDRILLARD 1986

The only comparable distress is that of a man eating alone in the heart of the city. You see people doing that in New York, the human flotsam of conviviality, no longer even concealing themselves to eat leftovers in public. But this still belongs to the world of urban, industrial poverty. The thousands of lone men, each running on their own account, with no thought for others, with a stereophonic fluid in their heads that oozes through into their eyes, that is the world of *Blade Runner*, the *post-catastrophe world*. Not to be aware of the natural light of California, nor even of a mountain fire that has been driven ten miles out to sea by the hot wind, and is enveloping the offshore oil platforms in its smoke, to see nothing of all this and obstinately to carry on running by a sort of lymphatic flagellation till sacrificial exhaustion is reached, that is truly a sign from the beyond. It is like the obese person who keeps on getting fatter, the record rotating endlessly in the same groove, the cells of a tumour proliferating, like everything that has lost the formula for stopping itself. This entire society, including its active, productive part - everyone - is running straight ahead, because they have lost the formula for stopping. [*America*]

✍ JULIET B. SCHOR 1993

*"The labouring man will take his rest long in the morning;  
a good piece of the day is spent afore he come at his work;  
then he must have his breakfast, though he have not earned*

*it at his accustomed hour, or else there is grudging and murmuring; when the clock smiteth, he will cast down his burden in the midway, and whatsoever he is in hand with, he will leave it as it is, though many times it is marred afore he come again; he may not lose his meat, what danger soever the work is in. At noon he must have his sleeping time, then his bever in the afternoon, which spendeth a great part of the day; and when his hour cometh at night, at the first stroke of the clock he casteth down his tools, leaveth his work, in what need or case soever the work standeth."*

(James Pilkington, Bishop of Durham, ca. 1570)

One of capitalism's most durable myths is that it has reduced human toil. This myth is typically defended by a comparison of the modern forty-hour week with its seventy- or eighty-hour counterpart in the nineteenth century. The implicit — but rarely articulated — assumption is that the eighty-hour standard has prevailed for centuries. The comparison conjures up the dreary life of medieval peasants, toiling steadily from dawn to dusk. We are asked to imagine the journeyman artisan in a cold, damp garret, rising even before the sun, laboring by candlelight late into the night. ¶ These images are backward projections of modern work patterns. And they are false. Before capitalism, most people did not work very long hours at all. The tempo of life was slow, even leisurely; the pace of work relaxed. Our ancestors may not have been rich, but they had an abundance of leisure. When capitalism raised their incomes, it also took away their time. Indeed, there is good reason to believe that working hours in the mid-nineteenth century constitute the most prodigious work effort in the entire history of humankind. ¶ Therefore, we must take a longer view and look back not just one hundred years, but three or four, even six or seven hundred. Consider a typical working day in the me-

dieval period. It stretched from dawn to dusk (sixteen hours in summer and eight in winter), but, as the Bishop Pilkington has noted, work was intermittent — called to a halt for breakfast, lunch, the customary afternoon nap, and dinner. Depending on time and place, there were also midmorning and midafternoon refreshment breaks. These rest periods were the traditional rights of laborers, which they enjoyed even during peak harvest times. During slack periods, which accounted for a large part of the year, adherence to regular working hours was not usual. According to Oxford Professor James E. Thorold Rogers, the medieval workday was not more than eight hours. The worker participating in the eight-hour movements of the late nineteenth century was "simply striving to recover what his ancestor worked by four or five centuries ago." [...]

¶ The contrast between capitalist and precapitalist work patterns is most striking in respect to the working year. The medieval calendar was filled with holidays. Official — that is, church — holidays included not only long "vacations" at Christmas, Easter, and midsummer but also numerous saints' and rest days. These were spent both in sober churchgoing and in feasting, drinking and merrymaking. In addition to official celebrations, there were often weeks' worth of ales — to mark important life events [...] as well as less momentous occasions (scot ale, lamb ale, and hock ale) [...] . All told, holiday leisure time in medieval England took up probably about one-third of the year. And the English were apparently working harder than their neighbors. The ancien régime in France is reported to have guaranteed fifty-two Sundays, ninety rest days, and thirty-eight holidays. In Spain, travelers noted that holidays totaled five months per year.

*[Pre-industrial workers had a shorter workweek than today's]*

✍ JAI ME SEMPRUN 1993

Progress appears fundamentally flawed, and as a general rule, everything that should have made life easier devours it. The idea that the historical process that began in the Renaissance can know a happy ending is now so lacking in credibility that it can be said that Modernity has reached pure perfection - for perfection is the characteristic of that which cannot be improved. Modernity therefore ends; it had begun in the cities, and in the cities it ends.

[*Dialogues sur l'achèvement des temps modernes*]

✍ DAVID GRAEBER & DAVID WENGROW 2021

Lahontan anticipates some of these arguments in his *Memoirs*, when he notes that Americans who had actually been to Europe — here, he was very likely thinking primarily of Kandiaronk himself, as well as a number of former captives who had been put to work as galley slaves — came back contemptuous of European claims to cultural superiority. Those Native Americans who had been in France, he wrote,

“...were continually teasing us with the faults and disorders they observed in our towns, as being occasioned by money. There’s no point in trying to remonstrate with them about how useful the distinction of property is for the support of society: they make a joke of anything you say on that account. In short, they neither quarrel nor fight, nor slander one another; they scoff at arts and sciences, and laugh at the difference of ranks which is observed with us. They brand us for slaves, and call us miserable souls, whose life is not worth having, alleging that we degrade ourselves in subjecting ourselves to one man [the king] who possesses all the power, and is bound by no law but his own will.”

In other words, we find here all the familiar criticisms of European society that the earliest missionaries had to contend with — the squabbling, the lack of mutual aid, the blind submission to authority — but with a new element added in: the organization of private property. Lahontan continues:

“They think it unaccountable that one man should have more than another, and that the rich should have more respect than the poor. In short, they say, the name of savages, which we bestow upon them, would fit ourselves better, since there is nothing in our actions that bears an appearance of wisdom.”

[*The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity*]

🏠 IDÉES REÇUES: 📖 ERNEST MANDEL 1974

*Primitive communities based on poverty* ¶ During the major part of prehistoric existence, humanity lived in conditions of extreme poverty and could only obtain the food necessary for subsistence by hunting, fishing and fruit gathering. ¶ Humanity lived off nature as a parasite, since it was unable to increase the natural resources which were the basis of its subsistence. Humanity could not control these resources. ¶ Primitive communities are organised to guarantee collective survival in these extremely difficult conditions of existence. Everyone is obliged to take part in current production, and everyone's labour is necessary to keep the communities alive. The granting of material privileges to one part of the tribe would condemn another part to famine, would deprive it of the possibility of working normally, and would therefore undermine the conditions for collective survival. This is why social organisation, at this stage in the development of human societies, tends to maintain maximum equality within human communities. ¶ After examining 425 primitive tribes, the English anthropologists Hobhouse, Wheeler and Ginsberg



found a total absence of social classes amongst all the tribes who knew nothing about agriculture. ¶ *The Neolithic revolution* ¶ It was only the development of techniques of agriculture and animal husbandry which modified this situation of fundamental poverty in any long term way. The technique of agriculture, the greatest economic revolution in humanity's existence, is attributable to women, as are a series of other important discoveries in pre-history (notably the techniques of pottery and weaving). ¶ This started to take place around 15,000 B.C. in a few places in the world, most probably first of all in Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, Iran and Turkestan, gradually progressing into Egypt, India, China, North Africa and Mediterranean Europe. It is called the neolithic revolution because it happened during that part of the Stone Age when the principal tools of work were made of polished stone (the final epoch of the Stone Age). ¶ The neolithic revolution allowed humanity to produce its food itself, and therefore to control more or less its own subsistence. Primitive humanity's dependence on the forces of nature was diminished. It permitted the building up of *food reserves*, which in turn released certain members of the community from the need to produce their own food. Thus a *certain economic division of labour* could develop, a specialisation of jobs, which increased the productivity of human labour. In primitive society there are as yet only the bare outlines of such specialisation. As one of the first Spanish explorers said in the Sixteenth Century about the American Indians: "They (the primitive people) want to use all their time gathering together food, because if they used it in any other way, they would be overcome with hunger."

[*From Class Society to Communism. An introduction to marxism*]

## 1.2. ABSTRACTION

✍ LUDWIG FEUERBACH 1843

But for the present age, which prefers  
the sign to the thing signified, the copy  
to the original, representation to  
reality, appearance to essence. [*The  
Essence of Christianity*, Preface to the Second  
Edition]

✍ KARL MARX 1847

Time is everything, man is nothing; he  
is, at the most, time's carcase. [*The  
Poverty of Philosophy. Answer to the Philosophy of  
Poverty by M. Proudhon*]

✍ GIANNI COLLU 2010

Marx? A ghost buster. [*Testimonianze di  
Danilo Fabbroni*]

✍ JACQUES CAMATTE 1974

[...] capital abstracts man, i.e., it takes all his content, all  
his material nature; labor power, all human substance is  
capital. [...] Man is abstract man defined by the constitu-  
tion. Moreover, one should not forget capital has con-  
quered all science, all human intellectual work, and it  
dominates the very name of this amassed knowledge. In  
opposition to the man of feudal society, which was animal  
above all, man of bourgeois society is a pure spirit. [*This  
World We Must Leave*]

A widely misunderstood Soviet film, *Solaris*, directed by Andre Tarkovski from the book by Stanislaw Lem, depicts problems faced by some astronauts in a space station that is orbiting the planet Solaris in a faraway galaxy. ¶ Of an original group of eighty-five astronauts, only two are left. Most have fled, others have gone mad and been shipped back to Earth. Several have killed themselves. ¶ The surface of Solaris is one vast ocean, which is also a single living mind. This planet-ocean-mind is playing some kind of awful mental trick on its visitors. ¶ Back on Earth, puzzled space officials send a psychologist, Kris Kelvin, to investigate. Before leaving the planet for outer space, Kelvin spends his final weeks visiting his father in a small house deep in some woods. He immerses himself in the forest and takes long, silent walks through meadows. The film moves exceedingly slowly at this point. There are long sequences in which nothing but natural events of the forest pass by the camera lens. Nature-time. ¶ Sometimes the camera follows Kelvin's eyes as they absorb the surroundings. It rains. He is soaked. Back at his cabin, his body is warmed by a fire. ¶ Finally it is time to leave. Now the camera is in the front seat of the car, sitting where Kelvin is sitting. We see what he sees. ¶ Slowly the terrain changes. Winding wooded roads give way to straight, one-lane roads. The foliage recedes from the highway. Then we are on a freeway. The environment has become speeding cars, overpasses, underpasses, tunnels. Soon, we are in a city. There is noise, light, buildings everywhere. The natural landscape is submerged, invisible. Homocentric landscapes, abstract reality prevail. From there it's a fast cut to space. ¶ Kelvin is alone in a small space vehicle, heading toward Solaris. Earth is gone. His

roots have been abandoned. Grounding, by definition, is impossible. His whole environment is abstract. His planetary home now exists only in memory. ¶ Arriving at the space station, Kelvin understands Solaris' trick. It enters visitors' memories and then creates real-life manifestations of them. This begins to happen to Kelvin. His long-dead wife appears in his room. At first he believes it is an image of her; then he realizes it is not just an image, it is actually she. And yet, they are both aware that she is only a manifestation of his mind. So she is simultaneously real and imaginary. ¶ Other people from Kelvin's life appear in the lab. He encounters the re-created memories of the other two astronauts; relatives, old friends, toys, scraps of long-abandoned clothing, technical equipment, potted plants, dogs, dwarfs from a childhood circus, fields of grass. Things are strewn wildly about as the visitors from Earth try to figure out what to do with all the real/unreal stuff that keeps appearing from their memories. The space station takes on the quality of a dream, a carnival, a lunatic asylum. ¶ The scientists consider returning to Earth as the others have. Kelvin favors this move as he feels his sanity slipping, yet he realizes that to leave means "killing" his rediscovered wife. Back on Earth she will be a memory, much as Earth has become in this space station. She understands this, and it is a source of anguish for both of them. [*Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television*]

✍ IVAN ILLICH 2002

Formerly one left the world by dying. Until then one lived in it. Both of us belong to that generation that still had been born "into the world", but who are now threatened to die without a foothold in it. Unlike any other generation we have lived through the break with the world. ¶ Formerly, the drop-out set off on a pilgrimage to

Santiago; begged for *Stabilitas* at the entrance of the monastery; joined the lepers. The Russian and Greek world also offered the possibility to become not a monk but a holy fool, and for the rest of life cadge with dogs and beggars in the atrium of a Church. But even for those extreme world fugitives, "the world" remained the sensual frame of their passing existence. The "world" remained a temptation especially for the one who wanted to renounce it. Most of those who pretended to have left the world soon caught themselves in cheating. The history of Christian asceticism is that of a heroic attempt of sincerity in the renunciation of a "world" to which every fiber adhered. When dying my uncle Alberto still had served to him the Vin Santo harvested in the year of his birth. ¶ Today this has changed. The 2000-year epoch of Christian Europe is gone. That world has passed, into which our generation was born. Not only to the young but also for us, the old, it has become incomprehensible, impalpable. The old have always remembered better times, but that is no excuse for us, who were alive during the regimes of Stalin, Roosevelt, Hitler and Franco, to forget the farewell to the world we lived through. ¶ I remember the day when I became old once and for all. I cannot forget the dark clouds of March in the evening sun and the vineyard on the Sommerleite between Pötzleinsdorf and Salmansdorf near Vienna, two days before the "Anschluss". Until that hour it had been a certainty for me that some day I would give children to the old tower on the Dalmatian Island. Since that lonely walk this seemed impossible. Then, as a twelve year old boy, I experienced the disembedding of the flesh from the warp and weft of history, even before a command was issued from Berlin to gas all fools in the Reich. ¶ To talk to each other about this break in the experience of world and

death is a privilege of the generation who knew what had been before. Hellmut, I think I am writing to someone who also knew that. When, very young, destiny made me into a colleague, counselor and friend of women and men several generations my elders. Thus I learned to let myself be shaped and cultivated by people who were too old to take part in the experience of that disembodiment. On the other hand without exception our students are offspring of the epoch after Guernica, Dresden, Bergen-Belsen and Los Alamos. Genocide and Human Genome-Project; the death of the forests and hydroponics; heart-transplants and medicide on insurance -these all are equally tasteless, without smell, impalpable and unworldly. We, who are just old enough and yet young enough to have lived through the End of Nature, the end of a world proportionate to the senses, should be able to die like no one else. ¶ What has been composed can decompose. The past can be re-evoked. But Paul Celan knew that only smoke remains from the world-dwindling that we have experienced. It is the virtual drive of my computer that serves me as the symbol for this irretrievable disappearance, and through which the loss of world and flesh can be envisaged. The worldliness of the world is not deposited like ruins in deeper layers of the ground. It is gone, like an erased line of the RAM drive. ¶ This is why we, the seventy years old, can be unique witnesses, not only for names but also for perceptions that no one knows any more. Yet, many who have stood in this break have been broken by it. I do know some who themselves tore their threads to an existence before the Atom bomb, Auschwitz and AIDS. Deep in their hearts in the middle of their existence they have become *viejos verdes*, old greens, who pretend it were possible to have fathers in the manageable show that became a "system". What had been

propaganda in the Nazi Period and could be undermined by hearsay, is now being sold - as a Menu with the computer program or with the insurance policy; as counseling for education, bereavement or cancer treatment; as group therapy for those affected. We old ones belong to the generation of pioneers of that non-sense. We are the last of that generation who helped to transform the systems of development, communication and services into a world-wide need. The world-estranged disembodiment and programmed helplessness which we have propagated, by far exceeds the waste that in our generation has been deposited in heaven and on earth, in ground waters below and the stratosphere above. ¶ We were in key positions when TV removed daily life from people. I myself have fought that the university TV station should, rain proof, broadcast from every village square of Puerto Rico. I did not know then how much this inevitably would reduce the range of the senses, and how much the horizon would be barricaded by administered presentation furniture. I didn't think that soon the European weather report from the evening show would color the first light of dawn seen through the window. For decades I have been too free and easy in handling inconceivable abstractions, like: one billion people in a bar chart. Since January my statement of account at the Chase Manhattan Bank is decorated with a graphic chart that allows me to compare at one glance my expenses for food and drink and office-material. Hundreds of minuteſt ingratiating services in information, administration and counseling deliver to me an interpretation of my *conditio humana*. When, more than twenty years ago, I discussed that topic with you, Hellmut, I could not imagine that the integration of the educational enterprise into life-long everyday life would be so smooth and slick. ¶ Sensual reality sinks deeper and

deeper under the foils of commands on how to see, hear and taste. The education into an unreal construction begins with schoolbooks whose text has shrunk to subtitles for graphic boxes and ends with the grip of the dying on to encouraging test-results about their condition. Exciting, soul-capturing abstractions have extended themselves over the perception of world and self like plastic pillowcases. I notice it when I speak to young people about the Resurrection from the dead: their difficulty consists not so much in a lack of confidence then in the disembodiment of their perceptions and of their life in constant distraction from their soma. ¶ In a world, which is inimical to death, you and I prepare ourselves not to come to a mortal end but to die in the intransitive sense. On the occasion of your seventieth birthday let us celebrate friendship in which we shall praise God for the sensual glory of the real world through our good-bye from it. [*The loss of world and flesh* ✎ Barbara Duden & Muska Nagel]

### §1.3. EVANESCENCE OF IMMEDIACY

✎ JEAN BAUDRILLARD 1970

It is the same with relationships. The system is built upon a total liquidation of personal ties, of concrete social relations. It is to this extent that it becomes necessarily and systematically productive of relationship (public relations, human relations, etc.). The production of relationships has become one of the key sectors of production. And because they no longer have anything spontaneous about them, because they are produced, those relationships are necessarily fated, like all that is produced, to be consumed (unlike social relations, which are the unconscious product of social labour and not the result of delib-



erate, controlled industrial production: these are not 'consumed' but are, in fact, the site of social contradictions). [*The Consumer Society*, note 1 p. 216]

✍ IVAN ILLICH 1982

For example, men and women have always grown up; now they need "education" to do so. In traditional societies, they matured without the conditions for growth being perceived as scarce. Now, educational institutions teach them that desirable learning and competence are scarce goods for which men and women must compete. Thus, education turns into the name for learning to live under an assumption of scarcity. [*Gender*, Chap. 1]

✍ JACQUES CAMATTE 1991

Let's analyze the phenomenon. A man, a woman, love; they come together, have a child. For the capital-spirit it is a crime, because it is a free act. They have obtained a being, considered by the supporters of the dynamics of capitalism, as an object, a product, but without paying anything. Instead, tomorrow they will no longer mate, but will buy an embryo in common. Depending on their financial resources, they will be able to procure a genie or a cretin. The advantage is that they will always be able to complain if the product does not match what they wanted as far as sex, eye color, IQ, etc., are concerned. Moreover, the separation of the sexes will be fully possible [...] since it will be possible, then, to make artificial generation profitable and job-creating, they will actually use such arguments. ¶ The benefit of full asepsis, the possibility of eliminating tares, will be invoked. This has as a corollary the need to prove that every human being is normally tare (unless science intervenes). Medical tares will replace original sin, and Christianity will thus be saved. The

priests will be able to take care of their artificial flock. ¶ Better still, it will be shown, as is already being done [...] that sexuality is dangerous, that all contact is pathogenic risk. From there, all the mercantile exaltation of AIDS, of sexually transmitted diseases. At the limit, being natural will (as the authors of science fiction have already written, cf. *Défense de coucher* for example) only generate disgust, hence the forced plunge into virtuality [...]. If there are no more contacts, everything can be protected, but *Homo sapiens* will be stripped of sexuality, as they tend to be of thought thanks to the computer. As well as of all intraspecific relationships. [*Gloses en marge d'une réalité VI* 2<sub>A</sub> Machine translation ❶]

#### §1.4. SOLITUDE AND ECSTASY OF PROMISCUITY

✍ EDGAR ALLAN POE 1840

Others, still a numerous class, were restless in their movements, had flushed faces, and talked and gesticulated to themselves, as if feeling in solitude on account of the very denseness of the company around. [*The man of the crowd*]

✍ JEAN BAUDRILLARD 1986

The number of people here who think alone, sing alone, and eat and talk alone in the streets is mind-boggling. And yet they don't add up. Quite the reverse. They subtract from each other and their resemblance to one another is uncertain. ¶ Yet there is a certain solitude like no other - that of the man preparing his meal in public on a wall, or on the hood of his car, or along a fence, alone. You see that all the time here. It is the saddest sight in the world. Sadder than destitution, sadder than the beggar is

the man who eats alone in public. Nothing more contradicts the laws of man or beast, for animals always do each other the honour of sharing or disputing each other's food. He who eats alone is dead (but not he who drinks alone. Why is this?). ¶ Why do people live in New York? There is no relationship between them. Except for an inner electricity which results from the simple fact of their being crowded together. A magical sensation of contiguity and attraction for an artificial centrality. ¶ This is what makes it a self-attracting universe, which there is no reason to leave. There is no human reason to be here, except for the sheer ecstasy of being crowded together. [*America*]

## §1.5. GENERALIZED ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION

✍️GIORGIO CESARANO & GIANNI COLLU 1973

[*Thesis 49*] The anthropomorphization of the laws of capital goes hand in hand with the intensification of the overall pathological forms, of which everyone's daily life is set to be a simple listing or summary. Thus it becomes possible to grasp unambiguously what is the social pathogenesis of every form of "mental illness" as a specifically capitalist disease. When the individual becomes personally involved in the process of valorization and devalorization, the same nervous functionality becomes a mere double of it. (While in the sphere of objective exteriority the royal domain integrates every being to itself, reducing it to its own organism, in the sphere of colonized interiority the capital-being reduces the functionality of the egoarchic organization to itself, but fails to take over the organic essence. On this ground it cannot go beyond a stage of formal domination. In the organic essence. the antagonistic subjectivity of the revolutionary proletariat is now polarized). ¶ Just as in the commodity cycle the value produced

must circulate by performing various metamorphoses, under the seductive guise of any use-value, in order to succeed in realizing itself, thus to turn out to be valorized; so it is for the individual reduced to a fragment of the overall moment of value, who must, in an obsessively coerced continuum (a matter of "life" or "death"), valorize his own survival, which as an image with the appearance of use-value can, either realize itself by becoming the matrix of a series, or meet the disaster of devalorization. What the real domination of capital seeks to program in this sphere is a "simple circulation" of the different forms of survival, however designed or packaged, in which competition completely prevails. The Egovalore, which becomes small business operating in the marketplace according to the classical scheme of the law of value (exchange of pseudo-equivalents), is the subject of the ultimate "*proudhonian*" utopia of capital, the free market society of survival. ¶ The manic euphoric cycle and the depressive cycle, which now constitute the focal and defining moments of the daily non-living, and govern its distorted emotional scanning, are now the one's blatant reflection of the successful valorization of value, which is then the attainment of a wholly unreal ontological dignity, the other of an always potentially fatal bankruptcy. Cyclothymia looms as a collective destiny. [*Apocalisse e rivoluzione* x<sub>A</sub> Machine translation ①]

## §I.6. SHUTTING-IN

✍ JACQUES CAMATTE 2004

What is it that prevents men and women from living this enjoyment and which delivers them into dependence ?

- It is the shutting-in in an out-of-nature becoming that is founded in the break in continuity with nature and with

the cosmos, to escape a threat whose reason and fundamentals have long been lost, forgotten, scotomized and repressed.

- It is the shutting-in inside a domestication linked to the abandonment of all naturalness, to a détournement into the artificial — fundamentals of parental repression.
- It is the shutting-in in a mode of knowing that primarily seeks to find justification for the wandering that began with the separation from nature.
- It is the shutting-in in a supernature populated with hypostases, entities, in a virtual world, which is a profane form of supernature. [*Index and some pages of presentation*]

✍ AA.VV. 2024.

*Hikikomori* also known as severe social withdrawal, is total withdrawal from society and seeking extreme degrees of social isolation and confinement. *Hikikomori* refers to both the phenomenon in general and the recluses themselves. The concept is primarily recognized only in Japan, although similar concepts exist in other languages and cultures. Estimates suggest that half a million Japanese youths have become social recluses, as well as more than half a million middle-aged individuals. While the terminology *hikikomori* is of Japanese origin, the phenomenon is not unique to Japan. There have been cases found in the United States, the United Kingdom, Oman, Spain, Germany, Italy, India, Sweden, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea, France and Russia. [*Common information*]

## §1.7. CONTROL AND SURVEILLANCE

✍ ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE 1840

I had remarked during my stay in the United States, that a democratic state of society, similar to that of the Americans, might offer singular facilities for the establishment of despotism; [...]

No sovereign ever lived in former ages so absolute or so powerful as to undertake to administer by his own agency, and without the assistance of intermediate powers, all the parts of a great empire: none ever attempted to subject all his subjects indiscriminately to strict uniformity of regulation, and personally to tutor and direct every member of the community. [...]

The emperors possessed, it is true, an immense and unchecked power, which allowed them to gratify all their whimsical tastes, and to employ for that purpose the whole strength of the State. They frequently abused that power arbitrarily to deprive their subjects of property or of life: their tyranny was extremely onerous to the few, but it did not reach the greater number; it was fixed to some few main objects, and neglected the rest; it was violent, but its range was limited. ¶ But it would seem that if despotism were to be established amongst the democratic nations of our days, it might assume a different character; it would be more extensive and more mild; it would degrade men without tormenting them. I do not question, that in an age of instruction and equality like our own, sovereigns might more easily succeed in collecting all political power into their own hands, and might interfere more habitually and decidedly within the circle of private interests, than any sovereign of antiquity could ever do. [...]

When I consider the petty passions of our contempo-

rarities, the mildness of their manners, the extent of their education, the purity of their religion, the gentleness of their morality, their regular and industrious habits, and the restraint which they almost all observe in their vices no less than in their virtues, I have no fear that they will meet with tyrants in their rulers, but rather guardians. [...]

I am trying myself to choose an expression which will accurately convey the whole of the idea I have formed of it, but in vain; the old words “despotism” and “tyranny” are inappropriate: the thing itself is new; and since I cannot name it, I must attempt to define it. ¶ I seek to trace the novel features under which despotism may appear in the world. The first thing that strikes the observation is an innumerable multitude of men all equal and alike, incessantly endeavoring to procure the petty and paltry pleasures with which they glut their lives. Each of them, living apart, is as a stranger to the fate of all the rest — his children and his private friends constitute to him the whole of mankind; as for the rest of his fellow-citizens, he is close to them, but he sees them not — he touches them, but he feels them not; he exists but in himself and for himself alone; and if his kindred still remain to him, he may be said at any rate to have lost his country. Above this race of men stands an immense and tutelary power, which takes upon itself alone to secure their gratifications, and to watch over their fate. That power is absolute, minute, regular, provident, and mild. It would be like the authority of a parent, if, like that authority, its object was to prepare men for manhood; but it seeks on the contrary to keep them in perpetual childhood: it is well content that the people should rejoice, provided they think of nothing but rejoicing. For their happiness such a government willingly labors, but it chooses to be the sole agent and the

only arbiter of that happiness: it provides for their security, foresees and supplies their necessities, facilitates their pleasures, manages their principal concerns, directs their industry, regulates the descent of property, and subdivides their inheritances — what remains, but to spare them all the care of thinking and all the trouble of living? Thus it every day renders the exercise of the free agency of man less useful and less frequent; it circumscribes the will within a narrower range, and gradually robs a man of all the uses of himself. [...] . [*Democracy in America*, book II, part IV, chap. VI]

✍ JUAN DONOSO CORTÉS 1849

The foundation, gentlemen, of all of your errors consists of not knowing what the direction of civilization and the world is. You think that civilization and the world are on their way out, when civilization and the world are on the way back. The world, gentlemen, walks in gigantic steps to the most gigantic and desolating despotism of which there is memory among men... [...]

Consider one thing, gentlemen. In the ancient world tyranny was fierce, devastating, and yet it was limited, because all states were small, and because international relations were impossible: consequently in antiquity there could be only one, great tyranny, that of Rome. But now, how things have changed! The way is prepared for a gigantic, colossal, universal, immense tyrant; everything is prepared for him. Look, gentlemen, already there is no physical resistance, because with ships and with railroads there are no more frontiers, and with the telegraph distances have been cancelled; and there is no moral resistance, because all spirits are divided and all patriotism is dead. [*Discurso sobre la dictadura*]



## §1.8. UNLIMITED COMMODIFICATION

✍ KARL MARX 1844

The *devaluation* of the world of men is  
in direct proportion to the *increasing*  
*value* of the world of things. [*Economic &*  
*Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*]

✍ CHUCK PALAHNIUK 2005

That's the American Dream: to make  
your life into something you can sell.  
[*Haunted*]

✍ KARL MARX 1847

Finally, there came a time when everything that men had considered as inalienable became an object of exchange, of traffic and could be alienated. This is the time when the very things which till then had been communicated, but never exchanged; given, but never sold; acquired, but never bought – virtue, love, conviction, knowledge, conscience, etc. – when everything, in short, passed into commerce. It is the time of general corruption, of universal venality, or, to speak in terms of political economy, the time when everything, moral or physical, having become a marketable value, is brought to the market to be assessed at its truest value. [*The Poverty of Philosophy. Answer to the Philosophy of Poverty by M. Proudhon*, Chap. I §1]

✍ KARL MARX 1867

The circulation of money as capital, on the other hand, is an end in itself, because the utilization of value only exists within this constantly renewed movement. The movement of capital is therefore boundless. [*The capital*]

## 1.9. COMBINATORICS AND COMBINISM

JEAN BAUDRILLARD 1968

What the serial object lacks is thus less the material itself than a certain consistency between material and form which ensures the model's finished quality. In series this consistency, this set of necessary relations, is destroyed for the sake of the differentiating action of forms, colours and accessories. Style gives way to combination. The process of downgrading referred to above in connection with the technical aspect is here more of a destructuring tendency. In the case of the model object, details and the workings of details are not the point. Rolls-Royces are black, and that's that. The model is literally *hors série*, without peer - hence out of the game: only the 'personalization' of objects allows the play of differences to expand in proportion with the length of the series (as when fifteen or twenty different shades are available for a single make of car); at the other extreme - the return to pure utility - the play of differences once more ceases to exist (for a very long time the Citroën 2CV came only in a grey that was hardly a colour at all). The model has a harmony, a unity, a homogeneity, a consistency of space, form, substance, and function; it is, in short, a syntax. The serial object is merely juxtaposition, haphazard combination, inarticulate discourse. As a detotalized form, it is nothing more than a collection of details relating in mechanical fashion to parallel series. [*The system of objects*, pp. 147-148]

JEAN BAUDRILLARD 1970

*Distinction or Conformism?* ¶ [...] Thus, the function of this system of differentiation goes far beyond the satisfaction of needs of prestige. If we accept a hypothesis we advanced earlier, we can see that the system never operates

in terms of real (singular, irreducible) differences between persons. What grounds it as a system is precisely the fact that it eliminates the specific content, the (necessarily different) specificity of each human being, and substitutes the differential form, which can be industrialized and commercialized as a distinguishing sign. It eliminates all original qualities and retains only the schema generative of distinctions and the systematic production of that schema. At this level, differences are no longer exclusive: not only do they logically imply one another in the combinatory of fashion (in the same way as there is 'play' between different colours), but, in sociological terms, it is the exchange of differences which clinches group integration. Differences coded in this way, far from dividing individuals, become rather the matter of exchange. This is a fundamental point, through which consumption is defined: not any longer (1) as a functional practice of objects – possession, etc., or (2) as a mere individual or group prestige function, but (3) as a system of communication and exchange, as a code of signs continually being sent, received and reinvented – as language. ¶ In the past, differences of birth, blood and religion were not exchanged: they were not differences of fashion, but essential distinctions. They were not 'consumed'. Current differences (of clothing, ideology, and even sex) are exchanged within a vast consortium of consumption. This is a socialized exchange of signs. And if everything can be exchanged in this way, in the form of signs, this is not by virtue of some 'liberalization' of mores, but because differences are systematically produced in accordance with an order which integrates them all as identifying signs and, being substitutable one for another, there is no more tension or contradiction between them than there is between high and low or left and right. [*The Consumer Society*, pp. 109-110]

[entry: "*Combinatorics and Combinism*"] *Combinism*: theory and behavior - theory and practice are not separate - the basis of which is combinatorics. This implies that the real results from the establishment of that, and that the occurrence of that, its manifestation, implies a combinatorics of epistemes, even very old ones, and a combinatorics of practices. These present themselves as manipulations, in the most general sense, which includes both scientific experimentation and bricolage, thus the entire technical arsenal produced over thousands of years. There can be combinatorics only if there is coexistence, tolerance, permissiveness, playfulness or staging; only if each element has a certain play; on the other hand, transparency, adaptability and its complement, selection, are necessary, which also implies obsolescence for combinatorics to be renewed, and the illusion of progress, as well as imagination, innovation. All is possible, and above all probable, imposes itself thanks to networks and communication, essential agents of the initiation of combinatorics and its realization. § *Combinatorics* is in a sense despotic: it encompasses everything, reclaims everything, even values. It is the game of capital that has become completely autonomous, deprived of substance, of interiority (autonomized anthropomorphization), which lends itself to everything thanks to the expansion of communication that men and women perceive as value, in order to still be able to situate themselves in their world. However, combinatorics can only be effective if agents affiliate to the dynamic that, in definitive, is epiphanization of the infernal mechanism. A moral imperative dominates the whole, even if one does not say so: one must combine in order to adapt and, for that, one must divest oneself of everything

in us that may inhibit communication, the engine of combinatorics. ¶ Vital phenomena are interpreted, experienced, through combinatorics. Ex: sexuality. It is combined in order to exist. [*Glossaire* ✂ Machine translation ①]



## CHAPTER 2. REMOTE PRESUPPOSITIONS OF THE PROCESS

✍ ANDRÉ LEROI-GOURHAN 1964

Well-preserved habitats before the appearance of *Homo sapiens* are rare, and few of them have so far been researched with sufficient precision to yield very detailed fossil records. The little we do know is, however, enough to show that a profound change took place at a moment which coincided with the development of the cerebral apparatus of forms close to *Homo sapiens* and also with the development of abstract symbolism, as well as with the intensive diversification of ethnic units. These archaeological observations enable us to identify the phenomena of spatiotemporal insertion, from the Upper Paleolithic onward, with the symbolic apparatus of which language is the main instrument. They correspond to a real taking possession of time and space through the intermediacy of symbols, to a domestication in the strictest sense of the term, since they lead to the creation of controllable space and time within the home and radiating outward from the home. ¶ As a result of this symbolic "domestication" the human was able to pass from the natural rhythmicity of seasons, days, and walking distances to a rhythmicity regulated and packaged within a network of symbols - calendrical, horary, or metric that turned humanized time and space into a theatrical stage upon which the play of nature was humanly controlled. The rhythm of regularized cadences and intervals took the place of the chaotic rhythmicity of the natural world and became the principal element of human socialization, the very image of social integration, to a point where our triumphant society's

framework is today a checkerboard of cities and roads on which the movements of individuals are controlled by horary time. The link between humanized space-time and society is perceived so strongly that for some centuries an individual desiring to recover his or her spiritual balance has had nowhere to go except to a monastery or a desert cave, ending up like St. Simeon Stylites or the Bodhisattva in a contemplative immobility that is a rejection of both time and space. [*Gesture and Speech*, pp 314-315]

## §2.1. REJECTION OF REALITY

✍ T.S. ELIOT 1935

Go, go, go, said the bird: human kind /  
Cannot bear very much reality. [*Four  
Quartets : Burnt Norton*]

## 🧠 2.1.1. REPRESENTATION • SPECTACLE

✍ GUY DEBORD 1967

[*Thesis 1*] In societies where modern conditions of production prevail, *all of life* presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles. Everything that was directly lived has moved away into a representation. [*Society of the Spectacle*]

✍ ANDRÉ LEROI-GOURHAN 1964

Isolated inside their micro-ethnicity, the group's members had to make their own shirts and construct their own social aesthetic as best they could, losing so much time in

the process that the profit to the community as a whole was only slight. A considerable saving is obviously achieved in a system where the producing individual's life is divided between productive ' activity and passive reception of his or her share of community life, a share chosen, measured, prethought, and lived by others. Like the freeing from culinary art through canned food, freeing from social operations through television is a collective gain. The gain is offset by a risk of social hierarchization probably more pronounced than heretofore; a process of stratification by rational selection will skim off the rare elements in the mass of society and make of them the purveyors of remote-controlled adventure. An increasingly small minority will plan not only society's vital political, administrative, and technical programs but also its ration of emotions, its epic adventures, its image of a life which will have become totally figurative—for the transition from real social life to one that is purely figurative can take place quite smoothly. The first step was taken with the first hunter's tale told by a Paleoanthropian, and with the first novel and the first traveler's tale the path widened. Our society's emotional ration is already largely made up of ethnographic accounts of groups that have ceased to exist — Sioux: Indians, cannibals, sea pirates — forming the framework for responsiveness systems of great poverty and arbitrariness. One may wonder what the level of reality of these images will be when their creators are drawn from a fourth generation of people remote-controlled in their audiovisual contacts with a fictitious world. The imagination, which is nothing other than the ability to make something new out of lived experience, is in danger of declining appreciably. The mediocrity of our popular literature, illustrated magazines, radio, and television is an interesting pointer. It reflects a natural selection of au-



thors and subjects, and we may assume that the statistical majority of consumers are getting the emotional food they need and can assimilate. But our world lives on a capital of survivors with which it may be able to recapture some degree of lived reality. Ten generations from now a writer selected to produce social fiction will probably be sent on a “renaturation” course in a park a corner of which he or she will have to till with a plough copied from a museum exhibit and pulled by a horse borrowed from a zoo. He or she will cook and eat the family meal at the family table, organize neighborhood visits, enact a wedding, sell cabbages from a market stall to other participants in the same course, and learn anew how to relate the ancient writings of Gustave Flaubert to the meagerly reconstituted reality, after which this person will no doubt be capable of submitting a batch of freshened-up emotions to the broadcasting authorities. [*Gesture and Speech*, pp. 360-361]

✍ AA.VV. 1982

[entry: “Representation”] [...] The first attempt to theorize the process of representation [*Vorstellung*] as a distorted and mystified systematization of reality is found in *German Ideology*. To represent oneself is to be represented elsewhere and by others from scratch, i.e. “to share for each historical epoch the illusion of that epoch”. As for ideology, the notion of representation indicates that it captures elements of knowledge for the sole purpose of globalizing them into a system (of representations), and that it also acts on men as an objective material force:

“The ‘imagination’, the ‘representation’ that (determined) men make of their actual practice is transformed into the sole determining and active power that dominates and determines the practice of these men”.

In *Capital*, Marx also explains how representation as a distorting effect results, in the consciousness of the agents of production, from the opacity of the functioning of the capitalist mode of production itself. [...] [*Dictionnaire critique du marxisme* ✎ Machine translation ①]

## 🧠 2.1.2. ABERRANT DEVELOPMENT OF PROSTHESES • ERSATZ • REPLACEMENT

🍷 MARCUS VALERIUS MARTIALIS 86-102

Tais has black teeth, Lecania white as  
snow. / Which is the reason? This one  
has bought some, that one hers.  
[*Epigramme*]

🍷 KARL MARX 1844

By possessing the property of buying everything, by possessing the property of appropriating all objects, *money* is thus the *object* of eminent possession. The universality of its *property* is the omnipotence of its being. It is therefore regarded as an omnipotent being. Money is the *procurer* between man's need and the object, between his life and his means of life. But *that which* mediates *my* life for me, also *mediates* the existence of other people for me. For me it is the *other* person.

“What, man! confound it, hands and feet / And head and backside, all are yours! / And what we take while life is sweet, / Is that to be declared not ours? / Six stallions, say, I can afford, / Is not their strength my property? / I tear along, a sporting lord, / As if their legs belonged to me.” Goethe: *Faust* (Mephistopheles)

Shakespeare in *Timon of Athens*:

“Gold? Yellow, glittering, precious gold? No, Gods, / I am no idle votarist! ... Thus much of this will / make black white, foul fair, / Wrong right, base noble, old young, coward valiant. / ... Why, this / Will lug your priests and servants from your sides, / Pluck stout men’s pillows from below their heads: / This yellow slave / Will knit and break religions, bless the accursed; / Make the hoar leprosy adored, place thieves / And give them title, knee and approbation / With senators on the bench: This is it / That makes the wappen’d widow wed again; / She, whom the spital-house and ulcerous sores / Would cast the gorge at, this embalms and spices / To the April day again. Come, damned earth, / Thou common whore of mankind, that putt’s odds / Among the rout of nations.”

And also later:

“O thou sweet king-killer, and dear divorce / Twixt natural son and sire! thou bright defiler / Of Hymen’s purest bed! thou valiant Mars! / Thou ever young, fresh, loved and delicate wooer, / Whose blush doth thaw the consecrated snow / That lies on Dian’s lap! Thou *visible God*! / That solder’s close impossibilities, / And makest them kiss! That speak’st with every tongue, / To every purpose! O thou touch of hearts! / Think, thy slave man rebels, and by thy virtue / Set them into confounding odds, that beasts / May have the world in empire!”

Shakespeare excellently depicts the real nature of *money*. To understand him, let us begin, first of all, by expounding the passage from Goethe. ¶ That which is for me through the medium of *money* – that for which I can pay (i.e., which money can buy) – that am *I myself*, the possessor of the money. The extent of the power of money is the extent of my power. Money’s properties are my – the

possessor's – properties and essential powers. Thus, what I *am* and *am* capable of is by no means determined by my individuality. I *am* ugly, but I can buy for myself the *most beautiful* of women. Therefore I am not ugly, for the effect of *ugliness* – its deterrent power – is nullified by money. I, according to my individual characteristics, am lame, but money furnishes me with twenty-four feet. Therefore I am not lame. I am bad, dishonest, unscrupulous, stupid; but money is honored, and hence its possessor. Money is the supreme good, therefore its possessor is good. Money, besides, saves me the trouble of being dishonest: I am therefore presumed honest. I am *brainless*, but money is the *real brain* of all things and how then should its possessor be brainless? Besides, he can buy clever people for himself, and is he who has [In the manuscript: "is". – Ed.] power over the clever not more clever than the clever? Do not I, who thanks to money am capable of *all* that the human heart longs for, possess all human capacities? Does not my money, therefore, transform all my incapacities into their contrary? ¶ If *money* is the bond binding me to *human* life, binding society to me, connecting me with nature and man, is not money the bond of all *bonds*? Can it not dissolve and bind all ties? Is it not, therefore, also the *universal agent of separation*? It is the *coin* that *really separates* as well as the *real binding agent* – the [...] [In the manuscript one word cannot be deciphered. – Ed.] *chemical power of society*. ¶ Shakespeare stresses especially two properties of money: ¶ 1. It is the visible divinity – the transformation of all human and natural properties into their contraries, the universal confounding and distorting of things: impossibilities are soldered together by it. ¶ 2. It is the common whore, the common procurer of people and nations. ¶ The distorting

and confounding of all human and natural qualities, the fraternization of impossibilities – the *divine power* of money – lies in its *character* as men’s estranged, alienating and self-disposing species-nature. Money is the alienated *ability of mankind*. [*Economic & Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*]

✍ GÜNTHER ANDERS 1956

In fact, there is nothing that more disastrously alienates us more from ourselves and the world than the fact that we pass our existence almost uninterruptedly accompanied by these false family members, these spectral slaves, that in our bedroom—now that the alternation of sleeping and waking had given way to that of sleeping and listening to the radio—we perform a ceremony so somnolent that the first fragment of the world serves us as a morning audience, so that they question us, look at us, sing to us, encourage us, console us, they instill us with vigor or they make us more relaxed and thus we begin the day, which is not our day; nor is there anything that makes self-alienation more unquestionable than starting the day under the aegis of these pseudo-friends, since even if we could frequent the company of real friends, we prefer to continue to live in the company of our *portable chums*, since we do not consider them to be replacements for real men, but as our real friends. [*The Outdatedness of Human Beings*]

✍ STEFANO ISOLA 2023

If in the first phase of AI, the term “intelligence” referred to an attempt, however crude and naively reductionist, to build mechanical models of it, current AI is rather about *automated decision-making processes* that have little or nothing to do with human intelligence. The persistent use of the term “intelligence” thus institutes what Eric

Sadin has called a *rhetorical act of force*, and contributes in no small part to the general puerility with which AI performance is spoken of. But the use of misleading vocabulary does not stop there: not only do various devices often have names inspired by biological life, neuro-this, neuro-that, etc., but it is commonplace to say that a machine “thinks,” “sees,” “reads,” “learns,” “understands,” “speaks,” etc. This fiction, increasingly established in our culture, has a precondition, as we have seen: the assimilation of individual subjectivity to an isolated atom, operated by liberalism [read capitalism, *Ed. note*] from its origins and operationally reinforced by modern behaviorism. By the way, artificial intelligence used today is called narrow AI in that it is designed to perform specific tasks and only those tasks (e.g., only gaming, only facial recognition, only Internet searches, only driving a car, only text writing, only musical synthesis, etc.). But the long-term goal of many researchers is to create a general AI capable of equaling or surpassing humans in almost all cognitive tasks: according to the aforementioned Ray Kurzweil, computers will pass the Turing test by 2029, thus demonstrating that they possess a “mind” indistinguishable from that of humans (but far superior to it in all tasks of a computational nature). ¶ [...] the famous *Turing test* states that a machine can be called “intelligent” only when the nature of the (hidden) interlocutor can no longer be established during a conversation conducted indifferently by a person or a machine. [*For good: the new power of artificial reason*]

### 2.1.3. REMOVAL • EXCAMOTAGE • DÉTOURNEMENT

✍ JACQUES CAMATTE 2010-2023

[entry: “*Removal*”] Concept coined by S. Freud that indicates the unconscious process that prevents (inhibiting) that which causes an intolerable suffering or which could recall it, reactivate it, from becoming conscious. What he perceived in the immediate is the reemergence of the repressed (unconscious phenomenon for the patient), particularly through organic signs (symptoms). He deduced from this that there had been a phenomenon of removal (*Verdrängung*) in the origins. [*Glossaire* ✎ Machine translation ①]

✍ JACQUES CAMATTE 2010-2023

[entry: “*Excarnotage*”] Dynamics that makes an important data point disappear, often giving the impression that it is taken into account. [*Glossaire*]

✍ JACQUES CAMATTE 2010-2023

[entry: “*Détournement*”] Concept coined by members of the Situationist International, and which had great popularity beginning in 1968. I believe it connotes something in common with that of *Verführung* (S. Freud), translated as “seduction.” The fundamental *Détournement*, which determines an imprint that will be able to be reactivated and induce replays, consists in the fact that parents distort the child from its naturalness so that it adapts to the world outside of nature and artificial. [...] [*Glossaire* ✎ Machine translation ①]

#### 2.I.4. ANTHROPOMORPHOSIS

✍ KARL MARX 1844

The domination of the land as an alien power over men is already inherent in feudal landed property. [...] Likewise, the lord of an entailed estate, the first-born son, belongs to the land. It inherits him. [...] In the same way, feudal landed property gives its name to its lord, as does a kingdom to its king. His family history, the history of his house, etc. — all this individualizes the estate for him and makes it literally his house, personifies it. [*Economic & Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*]

✍ KARL MARX 1844

What constitutes the essence of *credit*? [...] *Credit* is the economic judgment on the *morality* of a man. In credit, the *man* himself, instead of metal or paper, has become the mediator of exchange, not however as a man, but as the *mode of existence of capital* and interest. The medium of exchange, therefore, has certainly returned out of its material form and been put back in man, but only because the man himself has been put outside himself and has himself assumed a material form. Within the credit relationship, it is not the case that money is transcended in man, but that man himself is turned into *money*, or money is *incorporated* in him. *Human individuality*, human *morality* itself, has become both an object of commerce and the material in which money exists. Instead of money, or paper, it is my own personal existence, my flesh and blood, my social virtue and importance, which constitutes the material, corporeal form of the *spirit of money*. Credit no longer resolves the value of money into money but into human flesh and the human heart. [...] Since, owing to



this completely *nominal* existence of money, *counterfeiting* cannot be undertaken by man in any other material than his own person, he has to make himself into counterfeit coin, obtain credit by stealth, by lying, etc., and this credit relationship [...] becomes an object of commerce, an object of mutual deception and misuse. [Comments on James Mill, *Éléments D'économie Politique* ]

✍ JACQUES CAMATTE 2010-2023

[entry: “*Anthropomorphosis*”] ~ of divinity. Metamorphosis of the numen (of the sacred) into a human figure. It is accompanied by a divinomorphosis that originally concerned the higher representative unit of the abstracted community that became the state in its primitive form. Subsequently it may concern the mystics.

~ of land ownership. Phenomenon expounded by K. Marx in *For the Critique of Hegel's filosofia of Law* where he affermine in particular that it is not man who inherits landed property, but the other way around. This anthropomorphification is the supreme expression of the phenomenon of fondiarization, the cult of autochthony, the mystific of the soil. Its complement, according to K. Marx, is a zoomorphosis of men and women. One might add a ctonization, compulsion to return to what is posited as foundation, as origin: the earth as soil (burial would be a support of it) and “mystique” of it.

~ of labor. Phenomenon that imposed itself on the occasion of the dissolution of the feudal mode of production with the autonomization of the feudal form and the emergence of craftsmanship. It is expressed through the great artistic movement beginning in Flanders and Italy, with the emergence of the figure of the engineer, with the afferation of the filosofia of making. It is one of the components of the genesis of experimental science. ¶ Its

influence is felt within the socialist movement, especially among what K. Marx called the Ricardian socialists, in J. P. Proudhon, in the First International; in effects it is found in K. Marx and F. Engels in their exaltation of labor as a specifically human activity. It is found in the disarray generated by what is presently called the finish of labor. ¶ Its complement is the dependence on labor to such an extent that man is essentially defined by it and only through it can he be understood; you have Homo faber and the exaltation of technique, humanism as well as activism and movement (movement is everything).

~ of capital. Phenomenon that makes capital become man, "a human being" according to K. Marx. Its complement is the capitalization of men and women who tend to become technical objects, immersed in the immediacy of capital, which can also be perceived as its immanence.

[*Glossaire* ✂ Machine translation ①]

## §2.2. ABSTRACT ASPIRATIONS

### 🧠 2.2.1. IMMORTALITY

📖 ANONYMOUS 2600-2450 a.C.

What you seek you shall never find. For  
when the Gods made man, They kept  
immortality to themselves. Fill your  
belly. [*The Epic Of Gilgamesh*]

## 🧠 2.2.1.1. ENMITY

🍃 A.E. VAN VOGT 1971

While he considered that, he had another thought. “This thousand business,” he said. “How did you Zouvgites get yourselves down to that low a number?” “It’s one family,” explained the committee member. His attention seemed to be elsewhere. “Obviously, where there are many families, one must eventually exterminate the others. That happened long ago —” [*The Battle of Forever*]

🍃 JACQUES CAMATTE 2010-2023

[*entry: “Enmity”*] A dynamic by which the “other” is used as a support to presentify the enemy and, from there, initiate the deployment of various violences. ¶ The enemy can be transitory, in games, in debates, in all forms of competition. ¶ It grounds the behavior of a species cut off from nature. [*Glossaire*]

## 🧠 2.2.2. IDEA OF POWER • TOTAL CONTROL

🍃 LUDWIG VON BERTALANFFY 1968

We have a fair idea what a scientifically controlled world would look like. In the best case, it would be like Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*, in the worst, like Orwell’s 1984. [...] The methods of mass suggestion, of the release of the instincts of the human beast, of conditioning and thought control are developed to highest efficacy; just be-

cause modern totalitarianism is so terrifically scientific, it makes the absolutism of former periods appear a dilettantish and comparatively harmless make-shift. Scientific control of society is no highway to Utopia. [*General System Theory. Foundations, Development, Applications*, p. 52]

✍ CORNELIUS CASTORIADIS 1986

We must try to penetrate more deeply into the question. The unconscious illusion of the "virtual omnipotence" of technology, an illusion that has dominated modern times, is based on another undiscussed and concealed idea: the idea of *power*. Once this is understood, it becomes clear that it's not enough to simply ask: power *for what*, power *for whom*? The question is: what is power and, indeed, in what non-trivial sense *is* there ever really power?

Behind the idea of power lies the phantasm of total control, of the will or desire mastering every object and every circumstance. Admittedly, this phantasm has always been present in human history, either "materialized" in magic, etc., or projected onto some divine image. But, curiously enough, there has also always been an awareness of certain limits forbidden to man, as shown by the myth of the Tower of Babel, or the Greek *hubris*. That the idea of total control or, better still, total mastery is intrinsically absurd is something that everyone would obviously admit. The fact remains, however, that it *is* the idea of total control that forms the hidden driving force behind modern technological development. The direct absurdity of the idea of total mastery is camouflaged behind the less brutal absurdity of "asymptotic progression". Western mankind has lived for centuries on the implicit assumption that more power is always possible and achievable. The fact that, in this particular field and for this particular purpose, "more" could be achieved was taken to mean that, in

all fields taken together and for every conceivable purpose, "power" could be expanded without limit.

What we now know for certain is that successively conquered fragments of "power" always remain local, limited, insufficient and, most likely, intrinsically inconsistent if not outright incompatible with each other. No major technical "conquest" escapes the possibility of being used otherwise than originally intended, none is free from "undesirable" side-effects, none avoids interfering with the rest - none, in any case, among those produced by the type of technology and science we have "developed". In this respect, increased "power" is also, *ipso facto*, increased impotence, or even "anti-power", the power to bring about the opposite of what was intended; and who will calculate the net balance, in what terms, on what assumptions, for what time horizon?

Here again, the operative condition of illusion is the idea of separability. To "control" things is to isolate separate factors and precisely circumscribe the "effects" of their action. This works, up to a point, with everyday objects; it's how we repair a car engine. But the further we go, the clearer it becomes that separability is no more than a "working hypothesis" with limited local validity. Contemporary physicists are beginning to realize the true state of affairs; they suspect that the seemingly insurmountable impassés of theoretical physics are due to the idea that there are such things as separate, singular "phenomena", and wonder whether the Universe should not instead be treated as a single, unitary entity <sup>8</sup>. In another way, ecological problems force us to recognize that the situation is similar when it comes to technology. Here too, beyond certain limits, separability cannot be taken for granted; and these limits remain unknown until catastrophe threatens.

Pollution and the devices designed to combat it provide a first illustration - trivial, and easily disputed. [*Réflexions sur le «développement» et la «rationalité»* ✎ Machine translation ①]

### 🧠 2.2.3. PROMETHEAN SHAME

✍ GÜNTHER ANDERS 1956

When I try to investigate this “Promethean shame” further, then its basis, “the basic flaw” of the one who is feeling shame appears to be the nature of his own origins. T. is ashamed about having naturally grown instead of having been made. [*The Outdatedness of Human Beings*]


✍ JEAN BAUDRILLARD 1968

Technological society thrives on a tenacious myth, the myth of uninterrupted technical progress accompanied by a continuing moral ‘backwardness’ of man relative thereto. [*The system of objects*, p. 123]

✍ JACQUES CAMATTE 2012

Subsequently, the idea of having lost the struggle for recognition, of not having lived up to it, will merge self-shame, self-hatred, with blaming oneself for not having lived up to it. This is what Günther Anders tells us about a variety of shame that he has identified: “... *Promethean shame ... the shame one feels at the humiliating height of the quality of self-made objects.*” It is a replay of a form of shame that, like its other types, affects the origin of itself. “*If I try to delve into this ‘Promethean shame,’ I find that its*

*fundamental object, that is, the 'fundamental stain' of the one who is ashamed, is the origin. T. is ashamed of having become instead of having been made."* One can go even further and say that shame comes from having an origin. Shame of self induces not only a dynamic of self-loathing, but an unconscious dynamic of putting oneself outside the "human condition" in order to compensate for this shame, to console oneself with it, by despising those who remain attached to it. Then man can erase any origin by generating himself as a machine (the post-human). But by denying origin, humans also affirm a datum of naturalness: they have none since they come from emergence. Moreover, G. Anders highlights data that have become relevant with recent developments in society-community. "In compensation the 'Promethean shame' manifests itself in man's relation to the thing. Here then the observer, the other man before whom one feels shame, is missing." And he points out, the shame "...is not of being reified but, on the contrary, of *not being reified*." [Inversion et dévoilement ♣ Machine translation ❶]

 IDÉES REÇUES: ♣ EURIPIDES 428 a.C.

O Zeus, why did you ever set women in our sunlit world to lead men astray with their corrupting ways? If you wanted to propagate a race of human beings, you should not have done so using women. Instead of that, men could have carried into your holy shrines bronze or iron or a load of gold and purchased offspring, each man paying according to his means, and then they could have lived in their own homes as free men — free of women! [*Hippolytus*]

♣ IDÉES REÇUES: ♣ LOTARIO DI SEGNI (INNOCENZO III) ~1195

Man was formed of dust, slime, and ashes; what is even more vile, of the filthiest seed. He was conceived from the itch of the flesh, in the heat of passion and the stench of lust, and worse yet, with the stain of sin. He was born to toil, dread, and trouble; and more wretched still, was born only to die. (...) Man is conceived of blood by the ardent putrefaction of desire, as if sinister worms were standing beside his body. Alive, he generates lice and earthworms; dead, he generates worms and flies. Alive, it produces excrement and vomit; dead, it produces rot and stench. Alive, it fattens only one man; dead, it fattens many worms. [*On the Misery of the Human Condition*]

### §2.3. EARLY DAYS OF CIVILIZATION (ATTEMPTS AT CONTROL)

♣ ANDRÉ LEROI-GOURHAN 1964

The individualization of time reflects the gradual integration of individuals in the social superorganism: Over tens of thousands of years a fabric of symbols, extremely loosely woven in the early stages, became superimposed upon the complex and elastic movement of natural time. The life of animals is no less regular than that of the nineteenth-century peasant — "up with the sun, to bed with the fowls" — both are still integrated within a cycle governed by a trilateral contract among nature, the individual, and society. But what was true of rural life until the twentieth century had no longer been true for several centuries of the urban environment and especially of its most socialized strata, the religious and military classes. For these, the progress and survival of the social group depend upon abstract time. Their motor and intellectual integration rests upon a vigorous rhythmic system materialized in



bells and bugles, signals of a code of integration as well as segments of time. Faced with the need to ensure the collective's survival — for in all major religions the normal course of the universe depends upon the punctuality of sacrifices — the religious were the first, at the very dawn of civilization, both in the Old and in the New Worlds, to divide time into ideally regular segments, thereby becoming the dispensers of months, days, and hours. Not until recently, with the integration of the masses in a social mechanism where any failure on the part of a specialist can cause collective disorder, did symbolic time assume an absolutely imperative value. In earlier chapters we have seen on several occasions that the liberation of a faculty always leads to accelerated improvement, not of the individual as such but of the individual as an element of the social supermechanism. Expressed a thousand times by sociologists of all persuasions, this fact arises from the existence, parallel with biological evolution, of the stream of material development that sprang forth from the human as soon as language had pierced the confines of the concrete. It has led to the exteriorization of tools (already achieved much earlier as a fundamental condition), of muscle, and eventually of the nervous system of responsiveness. The exteriorization of time took place simultaneously but along different lines; time became the grid within which individuals became locked at the moment when the system of responsiveness reduced the period required for transmission to hours, minutes, and eventually to seconds. In sectors where the limit has been reached, the individual functions as a cell, an element of the collective program, within a network of signals that not only control his or her gestures or effective mental activity but also regulate his or her right to absence, that is, to rest or leisure time. The primitive indi-

vidual comes to terms with time, but perfect social time does not come to terms with anyone or anything, not even with space, for space no longer exists except in terms of the time required to travel through it. Socialized time implies a totally symbolic humanized space like that of our cities where day and night fall at prescribed hours, summer and winter have been reduced to average proportions, and the relationship between individuals and their place of activity is instantaneous. This ideal has been only partially achieved; we need only think what the urban lighting, heating, and public transport must have been like a century ago to acknowledge that much of the journey is already done. [*Gesture and Speech*, pp. 317-318]

✍ ANDRÉ LEROI-GOURHAN 1964

The integration of humanized space in the external universe takes place according to certain fundamental laws which, not surprisingly, are met with at all stages of human history, whatever the level of technoeconomic or ideological evolution of the particular group concerned. That which expresses itself in the human through architectural or figurative symbols applies in animals to the most elementary forms of acquisitive behavior; the physical and psychic balance of species which, like humans, draw a distinction between the refuge and the outside world rests upon comings and goings between the shelter and the territory. It is therefore only natural that the "shelter/territory" relationship should be the main term in the formula of spatiotemporal representation and that the form of the shelter should not simply meet the practical requirements of protection and economy but also serve as the hinge between shelter and territory, between humanized space and untamed universe, the twin terms of spatiotemporal integration both static and dynamic. ¶ As

we have seen, a tremendous break occurred when the primitive world adopted a new mode of integration in space through the settling of agriculture. Although no change in the basic ground plan was possible once that mode was established, major variations did take place, and they affected the ideology underlying the choice of forms. To put it differently, once the ground plan for the most ancient cities had been drawn, there was no reason for fundamental change throughout Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and down to the present day. Throughout its history the city must preserve its cosmogonic character, but the manner in which it is perceived as the image of the world may be profoundly altered by ideological evolution and historical circumstances. ¶ Creating an artificial area within which the human is isolated as in a magic circle is inseparable from being able to introduce into that area, materially or symbolically, the controlled elements of the external universe. Integrating the granary, repository of nourishment, is not so different from integrating the temple, symbol of the controlled universe. Transposing this proposition to the animal level, we can say that there is no categorical distinction between the burrow as a refuge and as a store of consumable goods. In the Mesopotamian city and the Dogon village alike, the temple and the storehouse are close to one another; indeed they are linked together within a close ideological network. 'The reason why the fabric of symbols that covers the functional reality of human institutions exhibits such extraordinary coincidences is precisely because the underlying forms are so deeply similar. ¶ It is a striking fact that the cities of classical Mediterranean antiquity within the Greek or Roman spheres of influence retain a geometrical layout directly inspired by archaic architectural ideas, although, by the time they were built, the old ideology of effective corre-

spondences had already faded. Right into the modern era processions went on reproducing the movement of heavenly bodies and sacrifices signaled the start of the agricultural cycle, but they did so in an intellectual context with explanations supplied by functional realism. This is particularly noticeable in the development of the Roman world where, although every action was still imbued with religious significance, the rational development of the sciences had already begun to furnish a lateral explanation of the universe. A great distance already lay between the Heracleian world, or that of Gilgamesh, and the universe of Herodotus or Seneca. By a process already described many times, a new explanatory mode came into being—the mode of scientific explanation which, without completely eliminating the preceding stages, relegated them to half-tones. A parallel with the present situation of astronomy and astrology comes to mind: No one would dream of questioning the scientific reality of the sidereal universe upon which our feeling of universal integration is now founded, yet a thousand times more human beings read horoscopes than works of astronomy. 'The old system of cosmogonic correspondences has survived in the background. [*Gesture and Speech*, pp. 335-335']

### §2.3.1. RELIGION

✍ JACQUES CAMATTE 2010-2023

[*entry: "Religion"*] Union of an episteme and a praxis (series of rites). It is related to the state and involves the reinstating of something that has been lost. [*Glossaire* ✎ Machine

translation ❶]

## §2.3.2. STATE

📖 JACQUES CAMATTE 2010-2023

[*entry: "State"*] (~*first form Ed.*) It can be defined, originally, only through the exposition of the process of abstracting the community that generates a superior unit (pharaoh, lugal, king of kings, etc.) that represents its totality. It is the emergence of the state in its first form, which is effected at the same time that the movement of value in its vertical dimension (process of valorization) is established. At the same time an anthropomorphosis of divinity and a divinomorphosis of the higher unity take place, and religion is established.

(~*second form Ed.*) Subsequently, a second form is imposed determined by the movement of value in its horizontal dimension, a phenomenon that cannot be reduced exclusively to the economic sphere. ¶ Fundamentally, the state, through these various forms, developed from the first two mentioned above, tends to define man, woman, to enclose them in its determinations. [*Glossaire* ✎ Machine translation ❶]

## 🧠 2.3.3. ORGANIZATION • BUREAUCRACY

📖 AMADEO BORDIGA 1966

Capital today presents itself at all times in the form of an "organization," - and behind this word [... ] behind the inexpressive and antimnemonic acronym of the elusive corporation, among businessmen, administrators, technicians, skilled workers, laborers, electronic brains, robots and watchdogs, of the factors of production and the stimulators of the national income, it fulfills the vile function

it has always performed, indeed a function immensely more vile than that of the entrepreneur in personal name who charged intelligence, courage and true pioneering at the dawn of bourgeois society. [*Struttura economica e sociale della Russia d'oggi* ❧ Machine translation ❶]

✍ LEWIS MUMFORD 1967

The Benedictine Order, instituted by Benedict of Nursia in the sixth century, distinguished itself from many similar monastic organizations by imposing a special obligation beyond the usual one of constant prayer, obedience to their superiors, the acceptance of poverty, and the daily scrutiny of each other's conduct. To all these duties they added a new one: the performance of daily work as a Christian duty. Manual labor was prescribed for no less than five hours a day; and as in the organization of the original human machine, a squad of ten monks was under the supervision of a dean. ¶ In its organization as a self-governing economic and religious society, the Benedictine monastery laid down a basis of order as strict as that which held together the earlier megamachines: the difference lay in its modest size, its voluntary constitution, and in the fact that its sternest discipline was self-imposed. Of the seventy-two chapters comprising the Benedictine rule, twenty-nine are concerned with discipline and the penal code, while ten refer to internal administration: more than half in all. ¶ By consent, the monk's renunciation of his own will matched that imposed upon its human parts by the earlier megamachine. Authority, sub mission, subordination to superior orders were an integral part of this etherealized and moralized megamachine. The Benedictine Order even anticipated a later phase of mechanization, by being on a twenty-four hour basis; for not merely were lights burned in the dormitory during the

night, but the monks, like soldiers in combat, slept in daytime clothes, so as to be ready at once for canonical duties that broke into their sleep. In some ways this order was more strict and far-reaching than that of any army, for no periodic letdowns orsprees were permitted. These systematic privations and renunciations, along with regularity and regimentation, passed into the discipline of later capitalist society. [*The Myth of the Machine*, Chap. 12, 1]

✍ JACQUES CAMATTE & GIANNI COLLU 1969

Capital, as a social mode of production, accomplishes its real domination when it succeeds in replacing all the pre-existing social and natural presuppositions with its own particular *forms of organization* which mediate the submission of the whole of physical and social life to its real needs of valorization. The essence of the *Gemeinschaft* of capital is organization. [*Transition* ]

### 🧠 2.3.3.I. MEGAMACHINE

✍ LEWIS MUMFORD 1967

In doing justice to the immense power and scope of Divine Kingship both as myth and active institution I have so far left one important aspect for closer examination, its greatest and most durable contribution — the invention of the archetypal machine. This extraordinary invention proved in fact to be the earliest working model for all later complex machines, though the emphasis slowly shifted from the human operatives to the more reliable mechanical parts. The unique act of kingship was to assemble the man power and to discipline the organization that made possible the performance of work on a scale

never attempted before. As a result of this invention, huge engineering tasks were accomplished five thousand years ago that match the best present performances in mass production, standardization, and meticulous design. ¶ [...] Men of ordinary capacity, relying on muscle power and traditional skills alone, were capable of performing a wide variety of tasks, including pottery manufacture and weaving, without any external direction or scientific guidance, beyond that available in the tradition of the local community. Not so with the megamachine. Only kings, aided by the discipline of astronomical science and supported by the sanctions of religion, had the capability of assembling and directing the megamachine. This was an invisible structure composed of living, but rigid, human parts, each assigned to his special office, role, and task, to make possible the immense work output and grand designs of this great collective organization. ¶ [...] That invention was the supreme feat of early civilization: a technological exploit which served as a model for all later forms of mechanical organization. This model was transmitted, sometimes with all its parts in good working condition, sometimes in a makeshift form, through purely human agents, for some five thousand years, before it was done over in a material structure that corresponded more closely to its own specifications, and was embodied in a comprehensive institutional pattern that covered every aspect of life. ¶ [...] Though the megamachine was first assembled during the period when copper for tools and weapons came into use, it was an independent innovation: the mechanization of men had long preceded the mechanization of their working instruments, in the far more ancient order of ritual. But once conceived, this new mechanism spread rapidly, not just by being imitated in self-defense, but by being forcefully imposed by kings acting as only gods or



the anointed representatives of the gods could act. Wherever it was successfully put together the megamachine multiplied the output of energy and performed labor on a scale that was never conceivable before. ¶ [...] With the energies available through the royal machine, the dimensions of space and time were vastly enlarged: operations that once could hardly have been finished in centuries were now accomplished in less than an age. On the level plains, man-made mountains of stone or baked clay, pyramids and ziggurats, arose in response to royal command: in fact the whole landscape was transformed, and bore in its strict boundaries and geometric shapes the impress of both a cosmic order and an inflexible human will. No complex power machines at all comparable to this mechanism were utilized on any scale until clocks and watermills and windmills swept over Western Europe from the fourteenth century of our era on. ¶ Why did this new mechanism remain invisible to the archaeologist and the historian? For a simple reason already implied in our first definition: because it was composed solely of human parts; and it possessed a definite functional structure only as long as the religious exaltation, the magical-abracadabra and the royal commands that put it together were accepted as beyond human challenge by all the members of the society. Once the polarizing force of kingship was weakened, whether by death or defeat in battle, by skepticism or by a vengeful uprising, the whole machine would collapse. Then its parts would either regroup in smaller units (feudal or urban) or completely disappear, much in the way that a routed army does when the chain of command is broken. ¶ [...] Now to call these collective entities machines is no idle play on words. If a machine be defined, more or less in accord with the classic definition of Franz Reuleaux, as a combination of resistant parts,

each specialized in function, operating under human control, to utilize energy and to perform work, then the great labor machine was in every aspect a genuine machine: all the more because its components, though made of human bone, nerve, and muscle, were reduced to their bare mechanical elements and rigidly standardized for the performance of their limited tasks. The taskmaster's lash ensured conformity. Such machines had already been assembled if not invented by kings in the early part of the Pyramid Age, from the end of the Fourth Millennium on. ¶ Just because of their detachment from any fixed external structures, these labor machines had much fuller capacities for change and adaptation than the more rigid metallic counterparts of a modern assembly line. In the building of the pyramids we find not only the first indubitable evidence of the machine's existence, but the proof of its astonishing efficiency. Wherever kingship spread, the 'invisible machine,' in its destructive if not its constructive form, went with it. This holds as true for Mesopotamia, India, China, Yucatan, Peru, as for Egypt. [*The Myth of the Machine*, Chap. 9, 1]

✍ JAIME SEMPRUN 2007

And so the automobile, a machine that cannot be more mundane and almost archaic, which everyone agrees finds so useful and even indispensable to our freedom of movement, becomes something else if we place it in the society of machines, in the general organization of which it is a simple component, a cog. We then see a complex system, a gigantic organization composed of roads and highways, oil fields and pipelines, gas stations and motels, organized bus travel and large areas with their parking lots, inter-changers and bypass roads, assembly lines and "research and development" offices; but also police surveillance,

signaling, codes, regulations, standards, specialized surgical care, "pollution control," mountains of used tires, batteries to recycle, sheet metal to press. And in all of this, like parasites living in symbiosis with the host organism, affectionate aphid tickles machines, men busy caring for them, maintaining them, feeding them and still serving them while they believe they are circulating on their own initiative, since they must be so consumed and destroyed at the prescribed rate so that their reproduction, the functioning of the general machine system, is not interrupted for even a moment. [*Défense et illustration de la novlangue française* ✎ Machine translation ①]

#### 🧠 2.3.4. PRIVATE PROPERTY

✍️ COSTANTINOS KAVAFIS 1927

In the golden bull that Alexius  
Comnenus issued / Especially to honour  
his mother, / The very sagacious Anna  
Dalassene -- / Who was renowned in  
both her deeds and habits of life / --  
There are many words of praise. / Here,  
of them all, I present just one phrase, /  
One that is beautiful and sublime: /  
"That, between us, those cold words  
'mine' and 'yours' were never spoken."

[*Anna Dalassene* ✎ Lynda Garland]

✍️ KARL MARX 1844

Only at the *culmination* of the development of private property does this, its secret, appear again, namely, that on the one hand it is the *product* of alienated labor, and

that on the other it is the *means* by which labor alienates itself, the *realization of this alienation*. [*Economic & Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* ]

✍ KARL MARX 1844

*Private property* is thus the product, Private property is thus the product, the result, the necessary consequence, of *alienated labor*, of the external relation of the worker to nature and to himself. [*Economic & Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* ]

✍ KARL MARX 1867

From the standpoint of a higher economic form of society, private ownership of the globe by single individuals will appear quite as absurd as private ownership of one man by another. Even a whole society, a nation, or even all simultaneously existing societies taken together, are not the owners of the globe. They are only its possessors, its usufructuaries, and, like *boni patres familias*, they must hand it down to succeeding generations in an improved condition. [*The capital*, Vol. III, VI, Chap. 46 ]



## CHAPTER 3. THE PROCESS • DOUBLE MOVEMENT

✍ ROBERT MUSIL 1930–1943

This sense of Austro-Hungarian nationhood was an entity so strangely formed that it seems almost futile to try to explain it to anyone who has not experienced it himself. It did not consist of an Austrian and a Hungarian part that, as one might imagine, combined to form a unity, but of a whole and a part, namely of a Hungarian and an Austro-Hungarian sense of nation hood; and the latter was at home in Austria, whereby the Austrian sense of nationhood actually became homeless.

[*The Man Without Qualities*, Chap. 42.]

✍ JACQUES CAMATTE 1989

The phenomenon of value is inextricably linked to that of capital. Between the two there is continuity and discontinuity. Continuity in the sense that the former is actually the presupposition of the latter; discontinuity in the sense that capital achieves autonomization and community, which is impossible for value. Discontinuity was possible when separation was finally achieved. [9. *Le phénomène de la*

*valeur* ✎ Machine translation ①]

✍ JACQUES CAMATTE 2022

[...] I was able to arrive to highlight the aporia of the statement: capital dominates value, because it substitutes itself for value, just as it substitutes itself for community, nature, etc... In other words, what is substituted still ex-

ists, but is no longer determined by its own evolution, but by that of capital, just as human relations were, in the Neolithic period, substituted by the economic movement that founded the duality of naturality and artificiality.

[*Précisions au sujet de Capital et Valeur* ✎ Machine translation ❶]

### §3.I. VALUE MOVEMENT

✎ CARL SCHMITT 1959

Of course, even before the philosophy of values, people talked about values, and also about non-value. However, a distinction was usually made, stating: things have value, people have dignity. It was considered undignified to value dignity. Today, however, dignity also becomes a value. This means a considerable elevation in the rank of value. Value has in a sense been valorized. [*Die Tyrannei der Werte* ✎ Machine

translation ❶]

✎ JACQUES CAMATTE 1989

One of the greatest traumas that the species has experienced is that caused by the emergence of the value movement, because it can only occur when the dissolution of the community, the formation of individuals, private property, classes, the mediating state, phenomena that constitute both the prerequisites and the consequences, occur simultaneously. ¶ Thus, with this advent comes an upheaval of the fundamental relationship, the relationship with the world, the relationship between human beings, women, as well as a seizure, a seizure of an increasingly anthropomorphized world. ¶ This is the essential articulation of the shift from the species still immersed in

nature to the species creating an artificial world, increasingly outside of nature, and this is because not only does it operate in the dynamic of cleavage like the phenomenon of the state, which simply places the species in discontinuity with nature, but because it founds a positivity to the extent that value will tend to found another community. ¶ In other words, the value movement is what enables the autonomization of the above presuppositions and thus their adherence to a strictly perceivable and actual existence, and then autonomizing from them and founding them; this posits two moments: that of a formal domain and that of an actual domain. ¶ The value movement tended to emerge wherever these presuppositions occurred, hence the great diversity of forms because, as we have already indicated, in all areas of development of the species there was a certain tendency to produce private property, the individual, etc. But this did not develop everywhere; consequently value itself could not reach the stage of its effectiveness. Moreover, in certain cases, as in the Chinese East, value actually tended to become autonomous, but this autonomy was prevented by the despotic community; so that it was only in the West that it was able to become effective and later transformed into capital. [9.

*Le phénomène de la valeur* ✎ Machine translation ① ]

### 🧠 3.I.I. ROBINSONATE

📖 AA.VV. 1982

[entry: “*Robinsonnades*”] In the *Grundrisse*, Marx uses the ironic term “robinsonnades” to refer to the idea of isolated individuals, which has served as a starting point for

many theorists in explaining the genesis of social bodies. Thus "the individual, isolated hunter and fisherman, with whom Smith and Ricardo begin, are part of the plates fictions of the seventeenth century". To Rousseau's credit, Marx admits that this was an illusion of the time. On the other hand, he finds no excuse for those who, like Bastiat, Carey and Proudhon, return "in the midst of modern political economy" to the myth of origin. ¶ In *Capital*, Marx explains the genesis of robinsonnades by arguing that "reflection on the forms of social life, and, consequently, their scientific analysis, follows a route completely opposed to the real movement. It begins, after the fact, with data that has already been established, with the results of development". Hence the taste of political economy and Ricardo, once again quoted, for robinsonnades. [...] ¶ Behind the "robinsonnades", which are the appearance of a process of anticipation of bourgeois society, lies a dual critique of individualism and social utopias.

[*Dictionnaire critique du marxisme* ✎ Machine translation ❶]

### 🧠 3.1.2. VALUE • USE VALUE • EXCHANGE VALUE

✍ ALASDAIR MACINTYRE 1981

One crucial point of incompatibility was noted long ago by D.H. Lawrence.

When Franklin assents, «Rarely use venery but for health or offspring...», Lawrence replies, «Never *use* venery».

[*After Virtue. A Study in Moral Theory*]



✍ GUY DEBORD 1967

[*Thesis 46*] Exchange value could arise only as a representative of use value, but the victory it eventually won with its own weapons created the conditions for its own autonomous power. By mobilizing all human use, value and monopolizing its fulfillment, exchange value ultimately succeeded in *controlling use*. Use has come to be seen purely in terms of exchange value, and is now completely at its mercy. Starting out like a *condottiere* in the service of use value, exchange value has ended up waging the war for its own sake. [*Society of the Spectacle*]

✍ JEAN BAUDRILLARD 1972

The status of use value in Marxian theory is ambiguous. We know that the commodity is both exchange value and use value. But the latter is always concrete and particular, contingent on its own destiny, whether this be in the process of individual consumption or in the labor process. (In this case, lard is valued as lard, cotton as cotton: they cannot be substituted for each other, nor thus "exchanged.") Exchange value, on the other hand, is abstract and general. To be sure, there could be no exchange value without use value the two are coupled; but neither is strongly implied by the other:

"In order to define the notion of commodity, it is not important to know its particular content and its exact destination. It suffices that before it is a commodity — in other words, the vehicle (support) of exchange value the article satisfy a given social need by possessing the corresponding useful property. That is all." (*Capital*, I, VI)

Thus, use value is not implicated in the logic peculiar to exchange value, which is a logic of equivalence. Besides, there can be use value without exchange value (equally for labor power as for products, in the sphere outside the market). Even if it is continually reclaimed by the process of production and exchange, use value is never truly inscribed in the field of the market economy: it has its own finality, albeit restricted. And within it is contained, from this standpoint, the promise of a resurgence beyond the market economy, money and exchange value, in the glorious autonomy of man's simple relation to his work and his products. ¶ So it appears that commodity fetishism (that is, where social relations are disguised in the qualities and attributes of the commodity itself) is not a function of the commodity defined *simultaneously* as exchange value and use value, but of exchange value alone. Use value, in this restrictive analysis of fetishism, appears neither as a social relation nor hence as the locus of fetishization. Utility as such escapes the historical determination of class. It represents an objective, final relation of intrinsic purpose (*destination propre*), which does not mask itself and whose transparency, as form, defies history (even if its content changes continually with respect to social and cultural determinations). It is here that Marxian idealism goes to work; it is here that we have to be more logical than Marx himself and more radical, in the true sense of the word. For use value indeed, utility itself is a fetishized social relation, just like the abstract equivalence of commodities. Use value is an abstraction. It is an abstraction of the system of needs cloaked in the false evidence of a concrete destination and purpose, an intrinsic finality of goods and products. It is just like the abstraction of social labor, which is the basis for the logic of equivalence (exchange value), hiding beneath the "innate" value of commodities.

¶ In effect, our hypothesis is that needs (i.e., the system of needs) are the equivalent of abstract social labor: on them is erected the system of use value, just as abstract social labor is the basis for the system of exchange value. This hypothesis also implies that, for there to be a system at all, use value and exchange value must be regulated by an identical abstract logic of equivalence, an identical code. The code of utility is also a code of abstract equivalence of objects and subjects (for each category in itself and for the two taken together in their relation); hence, it is a combinatory code involving potential calculation (we will return to this point). Furthermore, it is in itself, as system, that use value can be “fetishized”, and certainly not as a practical operation. It is always the systematic abstraction that is fetishized. The same goes for exchange value. And it is the two fetishizations, reunited — that of use value and that of exchange value that constitute commodity fetishism. ¶ Marx defines the form of exchange value and of the commodity by the fact that they can be equated on the basis of abstract social labor. Inversely, he posits the “incomparability” of use values. Now, it must be seen that:

1. For there to be economic exchange and exchange value, it is also necessary that the principle of utility has already become the reality principle of the object or product. To be abstractly and generally exchangeable, products must also be thought and rationalized in terms of utility. Where they are not (as in primitive symbolic exchange), they can have no exchange value. The reduction to the status of utility is the basis of (economic) exchangeability.
2. If the exchange principle and the utility principle have such an affinity (and do not merely coexist in the commodity), it is because utility is already entirely infused with the logic of equivalence, contrary to what Marx says

about the “incomparability” of use values. If use value is not quantitative in the strictly arithmetical sense, it still involves equivalence. Considered as useful values, all goods are already comparable among themselves, because they are assigned to the same rational-functional common denominator, the same abstract determination. Only objects or categories of goods cathected in the singular and personal act of symbolic exchange (the gift, the present) are strictly incomparable. The personal relation (non-economic exchange) renders them absolutely unique. On the other hand, as a useful value, the object attains an abstract universality, an “objectivity” (through the reduction of every symbolic function).

3. What is involved here, then, is an object form whose general equivalent is utility. And this is no mere “analogy” with the formulas of exchange value. The same logical form is involved. Every object is translatable into the general abstract code of equivalence, which is its rationale, its objective law, its meaning — and this is achieved independently of who makes use of it and what purpose it serves. It is functionality which supports it and carries it along as code; and this code, founded on the mere adequation of an object to its (useful) end, subordinates all real or potential objects to itself, without taking any one into account at all. Here, the economic is born: the economic calculus. The commodity form is only its developed form, and returns to it continually.

4. Now, contrary to the anthropological illusion that claims to exhaust the idea of utility in the simple relation of a human need to a useful property of the object, use value is very much a social relation. Just as, in terms of exchange value, the producer does not appear as a creator, but as abstract social labor power, so in the system of use value, the consumer never appears as desire and enjoy-

ment, but as abstract social need power (one could say *Bedürfniskraft*, *Bedürfnisvermögen*, by analogy with *Arbeitskraft*, *Arbeitsvermögen*). [*For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, Chap. 7]

✍ JACQUES CAMATTE 1989

Value is an operator of humano-feminine activity, from the moment there is a split with the community. It is a concept that includes measurement, quantification and the judgment of existence. It becomes purified as it becomes autonomous, i.e. as it detaches itself from mythical representations, and takes on new determinations as a result of its operability in various fields — outside the strictly economic one from which it emerged in its determination that made it operative — which may experience more or less divergent futures. [9. *Le phénomène de la valeur*, 9.1.13.]

✍ JACQUES CAMATTE 1995-1997

*Note 2.* In the first edition of *Capital* Marx writes:

”We now know the substance of value: it is labor. We know the measure of its magnitude: it is labor time. It remains for us to analyze the form, that form which gives value the character of exchange (p. 31).”

Marx seems to think here that value pre-exists exchange value. It is unfortunate that he did not address the problem of the origin of value (see Note 4). [...]

*Note 4.* According to other analyses of Marx, it would seem that it is human activity, originally, that is potentially value.

”If we say: as value commodities are nothing but coagulated human labor, our analysis of them is reduced to the value-abstraction, it does not give us a value-form

other than its natural form. Differently it goes in the value relationship between one commodity and another. Its value character arises from its relation to the other commodity (*Le Capital*, Ed. Sociales, L.I, t.I, p. 65).

One can interpret this by saying that human labor is only potentially value. Its reality of value is accessed only through abstraction. It is therefore in this phenomenon of potentiality of value that lies the idea that there can be value before exchange value.

It is not sufficient, however, to express the specific character of labor in which the value of the cloth consists. Human labor power in its fluid state or human labor constitutes value. It becomes value only in the coagulated state in an objectified form (Idem, p. 65).

What is thus essential, but appeared secondarily, is the objectified form without which value cannot appear. Moreover, the objectification included in this process is pregnant with alienation [...]. [*Forme, réalité, effectivité, virtualité* ✂ Machine translation 1]

✂ ROBERT KURZ 2004

But occasionally Marx's critical intention must be pushed further against the letter of his theory. If the central concepts in the critique of political economy are to be understood as negative, critical ones, then this also applies to use value. It does not denote "usefulness" per se, but only usefulness under the dictates of the modern commodity-producing system. This was perhaps not yet so clear for Marx in the 19th century. Bread and wine, books and shoes, house-building and nursing always seemed to be the same things, whether they were capitalistically produced or not. That has changed radically. Food is bred according to packaging standards; products contain "artificial wear and tear" so that new ones have to be bought

quickly; sick people are treated according to economic standards like cars in a car wash. The now decades-old debate about the destructive consequences of private transport and urban sprawl has remained completely inconsequential. ¶ "Usefulness" is obviously becoming increasingly dubious. What does it still have to do with the old ethos and pathos of utility value when you can watch a movie on a postage stamp-sized screen while walking with high-tech effort? As capitalist development progresses, it becomes clear that the category of use value itself is a negative one in the system of commodity production. It is not a question of the sensual-qualitative opposition to exchange value, but of the way in which the sensual qualities themselves are appropriated by exchange value. Use value turns out to be the "devaluation" of pleasure and beauty through the subjugation of things to the abstraction of exchange value. It is the category of "value" that unites both sides, the "use" and the abstract social form. ¶ It is, more precisely, a reduction of the concept of "utility" itself. The starting point is the use value of the commodity of labor power. As is well known, this does not consist in the fact that it produces concretely useful things, but that it produces surplus value. The use value is thereby already completely degraded to the function of exchange value. And this specific use value of the commodity labor power is increasingly rubbing off on all other commodities. It is becoming increasingly obvious that things are actually only waste products of capital valorization. On the material-content level, all that remains is the mere "functioning". The landmine should also go off reliably, that is its "usefulness". Capitalism is not concerned with the "what", the quality of the content as such, but only with the "how". [*Farewell to utility value* x<sub>A</sub> Machine translation ①]

✍ JACQUES CAMATTE 2010-2023

[entry: “Value”] “It is the phenomenon of the representation of the discontinuous operating in the disintegrating community; which poses the need for a quantification that makes suitable the representation of the positioning of its members within it.” ¶ “Value is an operator of human-feminine activity, beginning at the moment when there is cleavage with the community. It is a concept that includes measurement, quantification, judgment of existence. It is purified in the course of its autonomization, that is, it is detached from mythical representations and charged with new determinations as a result of its operation in various spheres — outside of the strictly economic one from which it arose in its determination that made it operative — that may know more or less divergent becoming.” ¶ Every value is a general equivalent, be it economic value, justice, honor, love, goodness, etc... [Glossaire ✂ Machine translation  
●]

### 🧠 3.1.3. EXCHANGE • GIFT • BARTER

✍ KARL MARX 1844

The *community of men*, or the manifestation of the nature of men, their mutual complementing the result of which is species-life, truly human life – this community is conceived by political economy in the form of *exchange* and *trade*. *Society*, says Destutt de Tracy, is a *series of mutual exchanges*. It is precisely this process of mutual integration. *Society*, says Adam Smith, is a *commercial society*. Each of its members is a *merchant*. ¶ It is seen that political economy *defines* the *estranged* form of social inter-



course as the *essential* and *original* form corresponding to man's nature. [...]

*Exchange* or *barter* is therefore the social act, the species-act, the community, the social intercourse and integration of men within *private ownership*, and therefore the external, *alienated* species-act. It is just for this reason that it appears as barter. For this reason, likewise, it is the opposite of the social relationship. [...]

Hence the greater and the more developed the social power appears to be within the private property relationship, the more egoistic, asocial and estranged from his own nature does man become. ¶ Just as the mutual exchange of the products of *human activity* appears as *barter*, as trade, so the mutual completion and exchange of the activity itself appears as *division of labour*, which turns man as far as possible into an abstract being, a machine tool, etc., and transforms him into a spiritual and physical monster. ¶ It is precisely the *unity* of human labour that is regarded merely as *division* of labour, because social nature only comes into existence as its opposite, in the form of estrangement. [Comments on James Mill, *Éléments D'économie Politique*]

✍ JACQUES CAMATTE 1989

[...] Cl. Lévi-Strauss:

"There is a link, a continuity, between hostile relations and the provision of reciprocal services: exchanges are wars peacefully resolved, wars are the outcome of unhappy transactions" (*Structures élémentaires de la parenté*, ed. Puf, p. 86).

[...] However, it should not be forgotten that the phenomenon concerns communities:

"First of all, they are not individuals, they are collectivities that mutually oblige, exchange and contract" (M. Mauss, *Essai sur le don*, in *Sociologie et anthropologie*, éd. PUF, p. 150).

What's more, it's a totality that is transmitted:

"Moreover, what they exchange is not exclusively goods and riches, furniture and real estate, economically useful things. They are above all courtesies, feasts, rites, military services, women, children, dances, festivals and fairs, of which the market is only one moment, and where the circulation of wealth is only one of the terms of a much more general and permanent contract" (Idem., p. 151).

At this level, various elements are sketched out that will form the basis of value. Value cannot be asserted, as there is no real exchange, but rather a phenomenon of compensation. On the other hand, it's not the objects produced that are important, but the affirmation they provide. ¶ This mechanism expresses a reality in which there is an affirmation of a desire for non-dependence, for autarky, and for the abolition of any movement towards inequality. ¶ Finally, insofar as it is two communities or two phratries of the same community which, as M. Mauss points out, are confronting each other, we may well ask whether this confrontation is not aimed at getting to know each other, at managing to represent each other to each other, through various activities. ¶ This brings us back to the phenomenon of compensation.

"But here we are at the heart of a contradiction typical of primitive mentality. The notion of equivalence and compensation, i.e. redemption, overlap, or rather the former generates the latter" (L. e R. Makarius, *L'origine de l'exogamie et du totémisme*, p. 319).

Indeed, to achieve compensation, we need to calculate what a thing or an act represents. Nowadays, we say that we have to estimate it, to evaluate it, which postulates the existence of the whole system of values. ¶ Here we have another essential component of value formation: it's no longer a question of determining power, but of determining compensation. But this has a wider generality. M. Mauss points out:

"But if we extend our field of observation, the notion of *tonga* immediately takes on a different scope. In Maori, Tahitian, Tongan and Mangarevan, it connotes everything that is property, everything that can be exchanged, an object of compensation" (o.c., p. 157).

We might add that, in the final analysis, exchange is initially a phenomenon of compensation. [9. *Le phénomène de la valeur*, 9.I.12., 9.I.9.]

### 🧠 3.I.4. MERCHANDISE

📖 FREDY PERLMAN 1968

Marx's principal aim was not to study scarcity, or to explain price, or to allocate resources, but to analyze how the working activity of people is regulated in a capitalist economy. The subject of the analysis is a determined social structure, a particular culture, namely commodity-capitalism, a social form of economy in which the relations among people are not regulated directly, but through things. Consequently, "the specific character of economic theory as a science which deals with the commodity capitalist economy lies precisely in the fact that it

deals with production relations which acquire material forms.” (Rubin, p.47). [*Commodity Fetishism. An introduction to I.I. Rubin’s Essay on Marx’s Theory of Value*]

### 🧠 3.1.5. ALIENATION

✍ GÜNTHER ANDERS 1956

It is possible that there is something amiss with the thesis that our need for “insinuating supplied friends” and for the “banalized world” also alienates us, the men of our time. And not because the proposition goes too far, but because it does not go far enough, since a currently unjustified optimism speaks from the basis of the assumption that, although we are beings nourished exclusively on substitutes, models and illusions, we are still “egos” with a separate selfhood, and that therefore we are still capable of having a real identity without being capable of being “our true selves” or of recovering “our true selves”. Hasn’t the time come and gone since “alienation” was still possible as action and process, at least in some countries? Do we not find ourselves now in a situation in which we are not “our true selves”, but only the sum total of substitutes with which we are stuffed to the gills on a daily basis? Can one dispossess the dispossessed, pillage the pillaged, cause the mass-man to be alienated from himself? *Is alienation still an ongoing process? Or is it rather a fait accompli?* ¶ Not so long ago we ridiculed the “soulless psychologies”, which scoffed at categories such as the “ego” or “selfhood” as ridiculous metaphysical leftovers, as falsifications of man. But were we right to do so? Wasn’t our disdain pure sentimentalism? Was it those psychologists who falsified man? Weren’t those psychologists of falsified

man, man as robot, justified in their pursuit of robotology instead of psychology? And justified as well in their falsehoods, because the man whom they studied was precisely man in his falseness? [*The Outdatedness of Human Beings*]

✍️ GIORGIO AGAMBEN 1996

The Marxian analysis must be integrated in the sense that capitalism (or whatever other name one wants to give to the process that dominates world history today) was aimed not only at the expropriation of productive activity, but also and above all at the alienation of language itself, of the communicative nature of man. [*Means Without End: Notes of Politics* ✂️ Machine translation ①]

✍️ JACQUES CAMATTE 2010-2023

[*entry: "Alienation"*] Process in the course of which what was proper becomes other, foreign. The negative, harmful nature of this phenomenon stems from the fact that the other contains a dimension antagonistic to the self, to what is our own. ¶ "Connected with the movement of separation-division (...) is that of autonomization (*Verselbstständigung*) of the products generated by human activity, that of the social relations it has generated. It is likewise accompanied by a dispossession-expropriation (*Enteignung*) while the externalization (*Veräußerung*) of capacities in the course of the manifestation (*Äusserung*) of human beings is in fact a dispossession (*Entäußerung*). There is at the same time an estrangement (*Entfremdung*) due to the fact that the products become alien to the producers and these to their community. The resulting movement is an inversion-reversal (*Verkehrung*) which causes things to become subjects (*Versubjektivierung*) and subjects, things (*Versachlichung*); which constitutes a mystifi-

cation whose result is the fetishism of the commodity or capital, which causes things to have the property-qualities of men.” ¶ This set of processes implies that ultimately a “figure” is generated that is hostile to the person who has operated; which also implies the existence of a mechanism of which men and women are unaware and which tends to reverse the purpose of what they intend to achieve. Thus they find themselves enclosed, trapped, in a becoming they wanted to avoid. With that, alienation is likened to madness. [...] [*Glossaire* ✎Machine translation ❶]

### ❷ 3.1.6. COMMODITY EXCLUDED • GENERAL EQUIVALENT

✎ JACQUES CAMATTE 2010-2023

[*entry: “General equivalent”*] It is the result of a phenomenon of exclusion of an element from a set, an element which, from then on, can represent any element in the set. K. Marx highlighted this with regard to money (value), but it is valid for all values. Exclusion is accompanied by election. In other words, what is excluded becomes elected, elevated to the higher degree of unity that it founds and represents. Concepts are in general general equivalents. Thus Man is a general equivalent. It presupposes the exclusion of a given type of man - the one determined by the rise of the capitalist mode of production - which will tend to represent all possible types of men (which existed and still exist). This appears distinctly when it comes to the rights of Man. [*Glossaire* ✎Machine translation

❶]

### 3.1.7. MONEY

✍ ALFRED SOHN-RETHEL 1970

Anybody who carries coins in his pocket and understands their functions bears in his mind, whether or not he is aware of it, ideas which, no matter how hazily, reflect the postulates of the exchange abstraction. [*Intellectual and Manual Labour. A Critique of Epistemology*, p. 59]

✍ ALFRED SOHN-RETHEL 1990

Strictly speaking [...] there is no right matter in nature to make money. [*Das Geld, die bare Munze des Apriori* ✎ Machine translation ①]

✍ KARL MARX 1844

The complete domination of the estranged thing *over* man has become evident in *money*, which is completely indifferent both to the nature of the material, i.e., to the specific nature of the private property, and to the personality of the property owner. What was the domination of person over person is now the general domination of the *thing* over the *person*, of the product over the producer. [*Comments on James Mill, Éléments D'économie Politique*]

✍ KARL MARX 1858

Money is “impersonal” property. I can carry it around with me in my pocket as the universal social power and the universal social nexus, the social substance. Money puts social power as a thing into the hands of the private person, who as such uses this power. The social nexus, the social exchange of matter, itself appears in money as

something entirely external, not having any individual relation at all to its possessor, so that the power he wields appears to be something quite incidental and external to him. [(Urtext) *Second Draft of Critique of Political Economy*]

✍ GEORG SIMMEL 1917

Money is the only cultural product that is pure *force*, which has removed the bearer from itself, becoming absolutely and only a symbol. Up to this point it is the most characterizing of all the phenomena of our time, in which *dynamics* has conquered the leadership of all theory and praxis. That it is *pure relation* (and in this way equally historically characteristic), without including any content in it, is not contradictory. Force in reality is nothing but relation. [*Aus dem nachgelassen Tagebuch*]

✍ ALFRED SOHN-RETHEL 1990

Money thus serves as the socially recognized form of exchangeability of all other commodities and is thus the separate bearer of the real abstraction of exchange. Money is an abstract thing and its abstractness is recognizable as social abstractness. In the form of money this abstractly social property is explicitly imprinted on its natural form. Once coined into money, money is no longer a matter intended for use, but is a matter-money employed only for the purposes of exchange, and its structure thus coined now corresponds to the norms of uniformity, divisibility, type of movement, and quantification proper to abstraction-exchange. Certainly these norms still remain in money simple implications as long as it serves exclusively its practical-economic and commercial purposes, and the possessor of money never comes to identify them spontaneously. [*Das Geld, die bare Münze des Apriori* ✂ Machine translation ①]



✍ KARL MARX 1844

What constitutes the essence of *credit*? [...] *Credit* is the economic judgment on the *morality* of a man. In credit, the *man* himself, instead of metal or paper, has become the mediator of exchange, not however as a man, but as the *mode of existence of capital* and interest. The medium of exchange, therefore, has certainly returned out of its material form and been put back in man, but only because the man himself has been put outside himself and has himself assumed a material form. Within the credit relationship, it is not the case that money is transcended in man, but that man himself is turned into *money*, or money is *incorporated* in him. *Human individuality*, human *morality* itself, has become both an object of commerce and the material in which money exists. Instead of money, or paper, it is my own personal existence, my flesh and blood, my social virtue and importance, which constitutes the material, corporeal form of the *spirit of money*. Credit no longer resolves the value of money into money but into human flesh and the human heart. [...] Since, owing to this completely *nominal* existence of money, *counterfeiting* cannot be undertaken by man in any other material than his own person, he has to make himself into counterfeit coin, obtain credit by stealth, by lying, etc., and this credit relationship [...] becomes an object of commerce, an object of mutual deception and misuse. [Comments on James Mill, *Éléments D'économie Politique*]

✍ JACQUES CAMATTE 1975

Credit has taken many forms over the ages. Certainly, it can only exist when men are able to consider a future action as real. We can agree with Mauss that with the potlach, a system of gifts and counter-gifts, there was basically a credit phenomenon. What needs to be added is that the movement of value was then vertical, culminating in the offer to a god, and then it acquired a horizontal movement. On the other hand, in this system, exchange value fails to become autonomous; on the other hand, it can be said that the use-value pole of value becomes autonomous and generates a certain alienation of men. The determining principle is utility; with the empowerment of exchange value, it will be productivity. [*C'est ici qu'est la peur, c'est ici qu'il faut sauter*, Note 9 ✎ Machine translation ①]

### 🧠 3.1.9. REAL ABSTRACTION

✍ KARL MARX 1847

but this equalizing of labor [...] it is purely and simply a fact of modern industry. ¶ In the automatic workshop, one worker's labor is scarcely distinguishable in any way from another worker's labor: workers can only be distinguished one from another by the length of time they take for their work. Nevertheless, this quantitative difference becomes, from a certain point of view, qualitative, in that the time they take for their work depends partly on purely material causes, such as physical constitution, age and sex; partly on purely negative moral causes, such as patience, imperturbability, diligence. In short, if there is a difference of quality in the labor of different workers, it is at

most a quality of the last kind, which is far from being a distinctive speciality. This is what the state of affairs in modern industry amounts to in the last analysis. It is upon this equality, already realized in automatic labor, that M. Proudhon wields his smoothing-plane of “equalization,” which he means to establish universally in “time to come!” [*The Poverty of Philosophy. Answer to the Philosophy of Poverty by M. Proudhon*]

✍ ALFRED SOHN-RETHEL 1970

Labor is not abstract by nature, and its abstraction into “abstractly human labor” is not its own doing. Labor does not become abstract by itself. The seat of abstraction lies outside labor, in the socially determined form of the relation established by the exchange relationship. [...] The result of this relation is the commodity-value. The commodity-value has for its form the abstracted exchange relation and for its substance the abstracted labor. In this abstract relational determinacy of “form-value,” labor, as “substance-value,” becomes the purely quantitative determinative cause of “size-value.” [*Intellectual and Manual Labour. A Critique of Epistemology* ✎ Machine translation ❶]

✍ ALFRED SOHN-RETHEL 1970

The exchange of goods is abstract because it is not only different from their use, but is also temporally separated from it. The action of exchange and the action of use are mutually exclusive of each other in time. [...] A commodity with its ultimate price [...] undergoes the fiction of full material immutability, which does not concern only human hands. It is as if even nature holds its breath in the body of commodities, as long as the price must remain unchanged. The action of exchange in fact only changes the social status of commodities [...]. Exchange is thus ab-

stract for as long as it takes place. In this case "abstract" means that all signs of the possible use of the commodity have been deducted. By "use" we mean the use of production and consumption, synonymous with the whole sphere in which the organic exchange of man with nature is included, according to Marx. [...]

The action of exchange, by imposing separation from use, or more precisely from the actions of use, postulates the market as a spatially and temporally measured vacuum in the human process of organic replacement with nature. In this vacuum, commodity exchange realizes pure socialization as such, socialization *in abstracto*. Our question, "How is socialization possible in the forms of commodity exchange?" can also be formulated as a question about the possibility of socialization separate from the human process of organic exchange with nature. Commodity exchange is only able to exercise its socializing function or, to use one of our categories, its socially synthetic function, through its abstractness. Consequently, we could give a new formulation to the initial question, namely, "How is pure socialization possible?" [...]

In the exchange of commodities, the action and consciousness, the acting and thinking of the exchanger separate from each other and travel different paths. Only the action of exchange is abstracted from use, but not the consciousness of those who exchange. [...]

The commodity-form is the real abstraction that has its seat and origin only in exchange, from which it extends to labor and thought throughout the breadth and depth of developed commodity production. ¶ Thought is not touched by the abstraction-exchange directly, but only when it sees before it its results in completed form, that is, only *post festum* of the circulation process. Only then do the different aspects of abstraction communicate them-

selves to thought without giving any indication of their origin. "The mediating movement disappears in the result without leaving a trace." [...]

The *execution* of the exchange action puts the abstraction in force, while the exchanger has no consciousness of this effect. It is certain that the actual abstraction of social exchange is the root cause of all the traces left by this abstraction in men's thinking. [*Intellectual and Manual Labour. A Critique of Epistemology*]

✍ ALFRED SOHN-RETHEL 1970

The essence of commodity abstraction, however, is that it is not thought-induced; it does not originate in men's minds but in their actions. And yet this does not give 'abstraction' a merely metaphorical meaning. It is abstraction in its precise, literal sense. The economic concept of value resulting from it is characterised by a complete absence of quality, a differentiation purely by quantity and by applicability to every kind of commodity and service which can occur on the market. These qualities of the economic value abstraction indeed display a striking similarity with fundamental categories of quantifying natural science without, admittedly, the slightest inner relationship between these heterogeneous spheres being as yet recognisable. While the concepts of natural science are thought abstractions, the economic concept of value is a real one. It exists nowhere other than in the human mind but it does not spring from it. Rather it is purely social in character, arising in the spatio-temporal sphere of human interrelations. It is not people who originate these abstractions but their actions. "They do this without being aware of it". In order to do justice to Marx's *Critique of Political Economy* the commodity or value abstraction revealed in his analysis must be viewed as a real abstraction resulting

from spatio-temporal activity. Understood in this way, Marx's discovery stands in irreconcilable contradiction to the entire tradition of theoretical philosophy and this contradiction must be brought into the open by critical confrontation of the two conflicting standpoints. But such a confrontation does not form part of the Marxian analysis. I agree with Louis Althusser that in the theoretical foundations of Capital more fundamental issues are at stake than those showing in the purely economic argument. [*Intellectual and Manual Labour. A Critique of Epistemology*, pp. 16-17]

✍ JAIME SEMPRUN 1993

And then it's always the same story: Marxism is criticized for being "grossly reductive" by explaining everything in terms of the present economic organization, whereas it's not in theory but in reality that the economy "reduces" all human life. It's very crude indeed, but it's a crudeness that must be treated as it deserves: grossly. [*Dialogues sur l'achèvement des temps modernes*]

✍ JAIME SEMPRUN 2003

One can in any event tranquilly concur that the critical analysis of commodity fetishism is far from having become a mere archaeological curiosity in the world in which we live, and it does not need to be repeated that it is not Marx's theory that "reduces" everything to economics, but "market society that constitutes the most extensive reductionism ever seen"; and that "to escape from this reductionism one must escape from capitalism, not from its critique". [*The ghost of theory*]

"History" is the name to be given to human becoming when a tribe appears that takes the path that leads it to dissolve the communal ties anchored in transformative activity and attempt to become autonomous from being in natural common (the two processes are then one). ¶ But do such moments actually occur? The answer is yes: there is a mode of human praxis capable of simultaneously involving socialization (realizing it in the abstract) and the process of organic exchange with nature (separating it from *this* socialization) and it is a widespread praxis: the *exchange* that transforms *products* into *merchandise*. Indeed, it is the proper character of such acts of exchange to take place in a state of both spatial and temporal (I might therefore say: essential) separation from the process of organic exchange between human subjects and nature. The more widespread is the exchange relationship disengaged from sacral, ritual, religious, magical, reciprocity, etc., prescriptions, and governed only by the quantitative consideration of the values at stake, the more the entire human praxis becomes abstracted from the organic link with natural constraints. ¶ The process has stages, and it is no accident that exchanges arose where community ties were suspended, i.e., as Marx observes, "exchange does not begin between individuals within a community, but there where communities stop - at their boundaries, in the contact zone of different communities." ¶ The point is that during acts of exchange organic relations are interrupted, "nature stops" [A. Sohn-Rethel]. This emptiness of experience, this rupture of continuity between man and nature, happens not only *de facto* but by necessity and irretrievably from the moment when it is the movement of value that holds up interhuman ties. For the act of ex-

change happens in a space and time that is necessarily abstract, that is, other than the space and time in which the interchange between human community and natural community based on transformative activity takes place. ¶ Relationships between individuals thus begin to revolve around an *abstraction* that is *real*, since it does not originate in thought but in (exchange) actions and is thus capable of radically altering the unitary locus of experience, that is, the correspondence between the natural *Gemeinwesen* and the human *Gemeinwesen*. In its place is established the separation between nature opposed as object and human subjects who are now only *individual* separated and mutually opposed in the motivations of their actions. [*Un percorso nell'essere in comune.* ✂ Machine translation ❶]

### 🧠 3.1.10. IMMORTALITY (SOUGHT IN VALUE)

✍ KARL MARX 1858

The imperishability (*Unvergänglichkeit*)  
for which money strives as it negatively  
sets itself with respect to circulation (by  
withdrawing itself from it) [...]. [(*Urtext*)  
*Second Draft of Critique of Political Economy*]

### §3.2. MOVEMENT OF CAPITAL



### 3.2.1. CAPITAL

✍ JACQUES CAMATTE 2010-2023

[entry: “Capital”] It is defined on the basis of K. Marx’s work: the value that has reached autonomy and can perpetuate itself as a result of the subjugation of the social movement, through the domination of the wage ratio (subjugation of labor to capital). [Glossaire ✂ Machine translation ①]

✍ MARCO IANNUCCI 2018

I still remember well the emotion I felt when I first read that book [*The Capital*]. It was the emotion one feels when one is faced with an unveiling, when something that was concealed, hidden, is suddenly revealed to us. The unveiling worked by Marx is profound and at the same time rich in detail, and I can only refer back to his words. But I want to recall here only three cornerstones, those that even then struck me most powerfully:

- first of all I was astonished and at the same time enlightened the moment Marx clarified to me that *capital is not a thing, but a social relation between people, mediated by things*. “But then,” I thought, “capital ultimately should not be treated as an object within the economy: if it governs relations between people, it means that it does not belong to a particular sphere, but it is what determines the way men and women live, it is what gives shapes to their lives. Therefore, to propose to dismantle capital, to deactivate it, to pull oneself out of it, is not to perform a politico-economic operation, but it means to redesign one’s life in another form, and this redesign is not limited to a predefined sphere, but is total, and goes to the root of the human.” I was also beginning to understand that if what appears on the surface are “things” (commodities,


money) while what does not appear is that these things mediate social relations, that is then why things can always be talked about, while about the form that social relations take as they are shaped by these things is best to gloss over;

- But of what social relations does capital bear when it settles among men? Evidently of social relations corresponding to its nature. And what is its nature? Second unveiling: capital is money in process, it is money that enhances itself, that increases its quantity. Further astonishing enlightenment: but then he is telling me that human relations, if they submit to capital, take as their linchpin the money that must increase, i.e., they take a shape which is functional to a process that must eventually bring, in the pockets of those who put (invested) money in it, more money than was there initially. Human relations are thus shaped according to this increase of money at one of their poles, that is, the valorization that makes money capital. This valorization becomes the binder of human relations, with an inversion that Marx emphasizes, whereby social relations at that point are no longer "immediately social relations between people [...] but rather, relations of things between people and social relations between things." If you do not play along, the process relegates you to the margins of social life, which often means life tout court. Because valorization demands that all goods become commodities, and if you don't have access to commodities, you die, socially and physically. And in order to have access to commodities you must possess money, and the main way it is proposed to you to acquire it is to become a commodity yourself, selling your human faculties. You can see what enormous consequences cascade from here;

- But what limit of penetration does this process have in

men's lives? Where does it stop? Marx's answer and third unveiling: it has no predetermined limit; *capital stops at nothing*. This means that it tends to transform all intrahuman relations and relations between the species and nature into relations functional to its valorization. This is true *in extension* (Marx in this regard emphasized capital's need to create a world market for itself) but it is also true *in intension*, with its capillary entry into determining the actions that individuals perform every day. Marx, for example, provided the elements to understand that it is capital's need not to create products for needs, but needs for products. The acts that we believe we perform naturally and simply to satisfy our needs are actually piloted so as to go through the purchase and consumption of commodities, so as to ensure the maximum valorization of capital. Our actions are appendages of this valorization. This requires that the mental representations associated with our acts be similarly modeled on the needs of capital (this is what advertising and mass information are charged with). [*Un percorso nell'essere in comune.*]

### 3.2.1.1. CREMATISTICS

 ARISTOTÉLĒS IV a.C.

Among the arts of patrimonial acquisition, only one species is a natural part of the economy, for one must have at one's disposal-or such an art makes available-a stock of goods useful to the city or household community. ¶ And it is plausible that in such goods consists genuine wealth. How much, of such possession, suffices for a life well lived, is not without limits, as Solon says in that verse of his: "for human wealth, / no clear term is decreed." ¶ A

term, on the other hand, exists, as for the other arts: there is no means without a term, in number or size, for any art; and wealth is nothing but the sum of economic and political means. It is evident, then, that there is an art of wealth acquisition that belongs by nature to those who are concerned with economics and politics. And for there to be one, it is equally evident. ¶ But there is another art of asset acquisition that is precisely - and rightly - called "chrematistics," "the art of producing assets." It is because of such an art that no apparent limit is given to wealth and acquisition. Many believe that it is equal and identical to the art we have just discussed, given the affinity between the two: but it is neither identical nor too far removed. Only that the former is natural, the latter is not, but rather comes from some experience and acquired art. ¶ Let us begin with this point. Given a good, two uses can be made of it: both conform to the nature of the good, but not in the same way, since the first is proper to the object, the other is not. Example: a shoe. It can be worn, or be an object of exchange. And both are ways of using the shoe. One who exchanges a shoe with one who needs it, and gains money or nourishment from it, uses the shoe as a shoe, but does not put it to its proper use: the shoe is not meant to be bartered! And so it is with all goods. ¶ [...] In the primary community-which is the domestic community-obviously no practice of exchange is given; it is given instead in the more extensive communities. The members of the domestic community had in common, all of them, the same goods, while those who find themselves living in separate communities have access to many different goods, of which a reciprocal exchange is necessarily given, according to concrete needs, as is still the case among many barbarian peoples, through barter. And so mere useful goods are the object of exchange: a good for an equivalent

good, but nothing more; for example, they give or take wine or grain, and so for any other similar good. Such a form of exchange is not against nature, nor does it in any way fall under crematistics, because it tends to complete natural self-sufficiency. ¶ Yet it is precisely from this form of exchange that crematistics logically derived. ¶ When recourse to foreign countries to import what was lacking and to export surplus goods became more systematic, the use of currency was resorted to as a matter of necessity. Not all naturally necessary goods are easy to transport: and so, in order to carry out exchanges, it was agreed to give and accept a good of a certain kind; a good that was useful in itself, but easier to handle for everyday needs: for example, iron, or silver, or other similar material, which at first was defined simply by its size and weight; later, however, they took to imprinting a mark on it, so that measurement could be avoided: the mark was worth as a sign of quantity. ¶ After the invention of currency, from the exchange practiced out of sheer necessity arose another species of chrematistics: trade. It, at first, was perhaps a rudimentary trade; but then, as experience increased, it became a more cunning art: and they knew well where and how to carry out exchanges in order to make a greater profit. ¶ Therefore, it seems, chrematistics has money as its object, and its specific function is to know from which sources to derive the most goods, because chrematistics is an art aimed at the production of wealth and goods. Not surprisingly, it is a common idea that wealth coincides with the abundance of money, because money is the object of trade and chrematistics. ¶ Sometimes, however, money seems a trifle, and a mere convention, devoid of natural value: it is enough for the subjects of exchange to change its conventional value, and lo and behold, money is no longer worth anything, and

can no longer satisfy any vital need; so that, he who is rich in money, will often have nothing to eat. And indeed it is a well-curious wealth, that which will starve those who are rich in it: like that Midas of legend, who wanted too much, and prayed that all that was presented to him would become gold. And that is why we go in search of another kind of wealth, or creaminess: and not wrongly. There is another kind of wealth, another kind of chrematistics, and that is economics in the genuine sense. The one based on trade, on the other hand, produces goods, yes, but not in the absolute sense: it produces goods only through the exchange of goods. And it has money as its object, because money is the element and end of exchange. And that which comes from crematistics is a wealth that has no limit. [Τά πολιτικά ✎ Machine translation ①]

### 🧠 3.2.2. SURPLUS VALUE

✍ STEPHEN SMITH 2022

My daughter is an aerospace engineer.

When she went to get her Master's degree, she left many of her notebooks at home. As a pilot, I was curious and pulled one out to give it a look. It must have been from one of her first classes.

The very first thing on the first page was this: "What is the goal of an aerospace company?" The answer was perfect. "To make money." [*Comment in a forum*]

Marxist ideology has most often defined Capital as a "social relation of production"; Marx's own definition is undeniably accurate: insofar as the very essence of being is located in the labor of individuals, Capital can only have as its basis or foundation a certain mode of actualization of this labor, conditioned by the relationship workers have with each other. ¶ However, this definition is insufficient to circumscribe Capital's mode of being, precisely because it recognizes the alienation of labor, i.e. its becoming-other. ¶ Labor is alienated because it is actualized by another and for another, and its act then becomes the act of another: the whole question is to know who this other is for whom labor is alienated, and who through its alienation conquers a power it lacks in principle. ¶ Yet the specificity of the system is that it does not alienate one group of men for the benefit of another: this type of exploitative relationship, which remains immanent to the field of praxis, is characteristic of slavery or serfdom, where exploiters appropriate the particular products of particular workers, and use and abuse the exploited to satisfy their particular ends. ¶ This type of social relationship may be condemned as unjust or justified as inevitable: the fact remains, however, that it is subjective praxis — in this case, that of the exploiters — that remains constitutive: thus, the Greek world, founded on slavery, is in its essence praxical. ¶ The capitalist system, on the other hand, removes production from particular subjective praxis, transferring it to an abstract totality that alone has the status of subject. ¶ By focusing on capitalists, Marxism has often overlooked Marx's constant reminder that "the capitalist himself is the holder of power only as the personification of Capital", and that the capitalist,

even if he is a beneficiary of the system, is just as dispossessed of his status as subject, and has no autonomy in relation to the objective process of production. ¶ The capitalist is not the subject of the process; he is merely a servant of Capital, and never exercises more than the power the latter grants him. [*L'époque de la Technique. Marx, Heidegger et l'accomplissement de la métaphysique* ✎ Machine translation ①]

### 🧠 3.2.3. AUTONOMY • SELF-PROCESSING SUBJECT

✍ JOSEPH DE MAISTRE 1796

Men do not lead the revolution; it is the  
Revolution that uses men. [*Considérations  
sur la France*]

✍ KARL MARX 1857

And in this totally extraneized form of profit, and to the same extent that the form of profit conceals its inner core, capital increasingly acquires a reified [*sachliche*] form, from relation it becomes more and more a thing, but a thing that has social relation in its body, that has engulfed it, a thing that relates to itself with a fictitious life and autonomy, a supersensible sentient being [*sinnlich-übersinnliches Wesen*]; and in this form of capital and profit it appears on the surface as an accomplished presupposition. This is its actual form or, rather, its form of actual existence. And it is the form in which it lives in the consciousness of its agents (supports), the capitalists, who unfold it in their representations. ¶ This fixed and ossified (metamorphosed) form of profit (and thus of capital as its creator, because capital is the reason, profit the consequence; capital cause, profit effect; capital substance,



profit accident; capital is only as profit-creating capital, as value creating profit, additional value). [*Marx-Engels-Werke (MEW)* ✎ Machine translation ❶]

✍ KARL MARX 1858

In capital money has lost its rigidity and from a tangible thing has become a process. Money and commodity as such, just as the simple circulation itself, exist for capital merely as particular abstract moments of its being in which it just as continually appears, passing from the one into the other, and just as continually disappears. The process of becoming independent appears not only in the form that capital confronts circulation as an independent abstract exchange value-money-but also in that circulation is simultaneously the process of its becoming independent, that it stems from circulation as something become independent. [(Urtext) *Second Draft of Critique of Political Economy*]

✍ KARL MARX 1867

[...] constantly passes from one form into the other without losing itself in this movement, and thus transforms itself into an automatic, self-processing subject. [*The capital*]

✍ LUDWIG KLAGES 1913

Before the progressive research of modern times could be undertaken, the intellectuals had to be conditioned to adopt a philosophical theory upon which would be founded a required practice: we call that practice capitalism. ¶ No intelligent person can have the slightest doubt that the dazzling achievements of Physics and Chemistry have been pressed into the exclusive service of "Capital". The identifying characteristic of modern science is its substitution of numerical quantities for unique qualities,

thus merely recapitulating, in the cognitive form, the fundamental law that the will must control everything, even that which resides in the brightly-colored domain of the soul and its values: the values of blood, beauty, dignity, ardor, grace, warmth, and the maternal sense; these must yield to the insidious values of the power which judges the worth of a man by the weight of his gold. A new word for this viewpoint has even been coined: "Mammonism." Nevertheless, how few are conscious of the fact that this "Mammon" is a genuine, substantial entity, which seizes hold of man, and wields him as if he were a mere tool that might help Mammon eradicate the life of the earth. [*Man and Earth*]

✍ ANDRÉ LEROI-GOURHAN 1964

Humankind's fabulous triumph over matter has been achieved through a substitution. We have seen how, in the course of anthropoid evolution, zoological balance was gradually replaced by a new balance, perceptible from the very beginnings of *Homo sapiens* in the Upper Paleolithic. The ethnic group — the "nation" — came to replace the species, and the human, whose body is still that of a normal mammal, merged into a collective organism with a practically unlimited potential for achievement. The human internal economy, however, was still that of a highly predatory mammal even after the transition to farming and stockbreeding. From that point on the collective organism's preponderance became more and more imperative, and human beings became the instrument of a technical and economic ascent to which they lent their brains and hands. In this way human society became the chief consumer of humans, through violence or through work, with the result that the human has gradually gained complete possession of the natural world. If we project the

technical and economic terms of today into the future, we see the process ending in total victory, with the last small oil deposit being emptied for the purpose of cooking the last handful of grass to accompany the last rat. The prospect is not so much a utopia as the acknowledgment of the singular properties of the human economy, an economy of which nothing as yet suggests that it may one day be properly controllable by the zoological (i.e., intelligent) human. In the last twenty years or so, the consumption ideal has at least been tempered by a growing skepticism about the infallibility of techno economic determinism. [*Gesture and Speech*, pp. 184-185]

✍ JACQUES CAMATTE 1966-1968

Capital has grown at the expense of human labor, not only that of proletarians, but also that of all generations of past (*vergangene*) labor. Now, it is an automated monster: "like a vampire, it constantly impregnates itself with living labor as soul — *es als ein Vampyr die lebendige Arbeit beständig als Seele einsaugt* —" (*Grundrisse*). Through the movement of society, capital has grabbed all the materiality of man, who is no longer anything but a subject of exploitation, a determined time of labor: "Time is everything, man is no longer anything; he is at most the carcass of time" [...]. Thus, capital has become the material community of man; between the movement of society and economic movement there is no longer any gap, the latter has totally subordinated the former. [*Le Sixieme chapitre inédit du Capital et l'œuvre économique de Marx* [*Capital et Gemeinwesen*]] ✎ Machine trans-

lation ❶]

The social relation of production is thus, more precisely, a production device. ¶ Once this device is in place, Capital effectively becomes a subject, breaking its ties with its own determinacy. ¶ There is certainly a whole set of historical conditions necessary for the advent of Capital: but these conditions fall outside Capital itself once the latter has been constituted. ¶ Once Capital is complete, it is no longer a social relation, but a subjectivized thing. ¶ In his study of speculative economics, Marx points out that

”Capital acquires more and more a chosic configuration and, from being a relation, is transformed more and more into a thing, into a thing that behaves with respect to itself as endowed with a fictitious life and autonomy”.  
(Marx, *Theories on surplus value*).

Capital exists from the moment when the monetary pole posits itself as “the foundation of itself (*Grund von sich*)”; from this moment onwards, Capital not only disavows any heteronomous foundation, but also produces its own presuppositions, and in so doing fully deploys its speculative logic:

”The presuppositions of its becoming are surpassed in its existence. The conditions and presuppositions of becoming, of the genesis of Capital, imply precisely that it is not yet, but only becomes; they disappear therefore with the actual advent of Capital, with Capital which, starting from its own reality, itself poses the conditions of its realization [...] Capital, as soon as it has become Capital, creates its own presuppositions.” (Marx, *Grundrisse*).

[*L'époque de la Technique. Marx, Heidegger et l'accomplissement de la métaphysique* ✎ Machine translation ❶]

### 3.2.4. FORMAL AND REAL LABOR SUBSUMPTION

✍ KARL MARX 1867

[...] it is in the nature of the matter that where a subsumption of the labour process under capital takes place it occurs on the basis of an *existing labour process*, which was there before its subsumption under capital, and was formed on the basis of various earlier processes of production and other conditions of production. Capital thus subsumes under itself a *given, existing labour process*, such as handicraft labour, the mode of agriculture corresponding to small-scale independent peasant farming. If changes take place in these traditional *labour processes* which have been brought under the command of capital, these modifications can only be the gradual *consequences* of the subsumption of given, traditional labour processes under capital, which has already occurred. [Draft Chapter 6 of Capital. Results of the Direct Production Process]

✍ KARL MARX 1867

What is generally characteristic of *formal subsumption* remains valid in this case too, i.e. the direct subordination to *capital of the labour process*, in whatever way the latter may be conducted technologically. But on this basis there arises a *mode of production* — the capitalist mode of production — which is *specific* technologically and in other ways, and *transforms the real nature of the labour process and its real conditions*. Only when this enters the picture does the *real subsumption of labour under capital* take place. [...] ¶ With the real subsumption of labour under capital there takes place a complete [and a constant, continuous,

and repeated a] revolution in the mode of production itself, in the productivity of labour and in the relation between capitalist and worker. ¶ In the case of the real subsumption of labour under capital, all the **changes** in the labour process itself, analysed by us previously, actually take effect. *Labour's social powers of production* are developed, and with labour on a large scale the application of science and machinery to direct production takes place. On the one hand, the *capitalist mode of production*, which now takes shape as a mode of production *sui generis* [in its own right]; changes the shape of material production. On the other hand, this alteration of production's material shape forms the basis for the development of the capital-relation, which in its adequate shape therefore corresponds to a specific level of development of the productive powers of labour. [...] ¶ The capitalist mode of production develops the productivity of labour, the amount of production, the size of the population, and the size of the surplus population. With tile capital and labour thus released, new branches of business are constantly called into existence, and in these capital can again work on a small scale and again pass through the different developments outlined until these new branches of business are also conducted on a social scale. ¶ This is a constant process. At the same time capitalist production tends to conquer all branches of industry it has not yet [479] taken control of, where there is as yet only formal subsumption. Once it has taken control of agriculture, the mining industry, the manufacture of the main materials for clothing, etc., it seizes on the other spheres, where the subsumption is as yet only formal or there are still even independent handicraftsmen. We already noted when considering machinery[235] how its introduction into one branch

brings about its introduction into others, and at the same time into other varieties of the same branch. [*Draft Chapter 6 of Capital. Results of the Direct Production Process*]

✍ KARL MARX 1867

The knowledge, the judgement, and the will, which, though in ever so small a degree, are practised by the independent peasant or handicraftsman, in the same way as the savage makes the whole art of war consist in the exercise of his personal cunning these faculties are now required only for the workshop as a whole. Intelligence in production expands in one direction, because it vanishes in many others. What is lost by the detail labourers, is concentrated in the capital that employs them. [43] It is a result of the division of labour in manufactures, that the labourer is brought face to face with the intellectual potencies of the material process of production, as the property of another, and as a ruling power. This separation begins in simple co-operation, where the capitalist represents to the single workman, the oneness and the will of the associated labour. It is developed in manufacture which cuts down the labourer into a detail labourer. It is completed in modern industry, which makes science a productive force distinct from labour and presses it into the service of capital. [*The capital*]

3.2.4.1. EXTENSION OF SUBSUMPTION TO LEISURE,  
SOCIETY, BODY

✍ JACQUES CAMATTE 1972

In the period of formal domination, capital does not get to subjugate to itself and thus incorporate labor-power, which is reluctant to it, rebels against it to the point of endangering the development of its process, since it is totally dependent on it. But the introduction of machines changes everything. Capital then takes over all the activity that the proletariat deploys in the factory. With the development of cybernetics, we see that capital appropriates, incorporates into itself the human brain; with information technology, it creates its own language on which human language must model itself, etc. At this level, it is no longer only the proletarians alone - those who produce surplus value - who are subjugated to capital, but all humans, most of whom are proletarianized. This is real domination over society, domination in which all men become slaves of capital (generalized slavery, then, convergence with the Asian mode of production). ¶ Thus it is no longer labor, a definite and particular moment of human activity, that is subjugated and incorporated into capital, but rather the entire life process of men. The process of embodiment (*Einverleibung*) of capital, which began in the West almost five centuries ago, is over. Capital is now the common being (*Gemeinwesen*) oppressor of men. [Nota del 1972 «A proposito di dominio formale e dominio reale del capitale» ✎ Machine translation ❶]



### 3.2.4.2. THE TIME OF THE CAPITAL

✍ KARL MARX 1847

[...] men are effaced by their labor; [...] the pendulum of the clock has become as accurate a measure of the relative activity of two workers as it is of the speed of two locomotives. Therefore, we should not say that one man's hour is worth another man's hour, but rather that one man during an hour is worth just as much as another man during an hour. Time is everything, man is nothing; he is, at the most, time's carcass. Quality no longer matters. Quantity alone decides everything [ *The Poverty of Philosophy. Answer to the Philosophy of Poverty by M. Proudhon, Part 2* ]

✍ GUY DEBORD 1967

[ *Thesis 147* ] The time of production-commodified time-is an infinite accumulation of equivalent intervals. It is irreversible time made abstract, in which each segment need only demonstrate by the clock its purely quantitative equality with all the others. It has no reality apart from its *exchangeability*. Under the social reign of commodified time, "time is everything, man is nothing; he is at most the carcass of time" ( *The Poverty of Philosophy* ). This devalued time is the complete opposite of time as "terrain of human development." [ *Society of the Spectacle* ]

✍ JACQUES CAMATTE & GIANNI COLLU 1969

The real domination of capital therefore means that not only the tempo of life and the mental capacity of the proletariat are expropriated, but that circulation time now prevails over production time (on a spatial level). The society of capital creates an «unproductive» population on a large scale, i.e. it creates its own «life» in function of its

own need: to fix them then in the sphere of circulation and the metamorphoses of accumulated surplus-value. The cycle closes with an identity: *all men's time is socially necessary time* for creation and circulation – realization of surplus-value. Everything can be measured by the hands of a clock. «Time is everything, man is nothing; he is, at the most, time's carcass». [*Transition*]

✍ JACQUES CAMATTE 1976

It came down to the organization of time for capital, and it is from this that capital was able to fine-tune the scheduling of every aspect of human life. [*Marx et la Gemeinwesen* ✎ Machine translation ①]

### 🧠 3.2.4.3. THE MERCHANDISE OF CAPITAL

✍ GIORGIO CESARANO & GIANNI COLLU 1973

[*Thesis 65*] The anthropomorphosis of capital shifts the axis of valorization from the quantitative production of commodities to the quantized production of human-value. Valorization-devaluation equilibrium, and species-planet equilibrium, can only be seen as an attainable goal by a capital-man who, while he has made each person the entrepreneur of his own valorization, fictitiously erases from his mode of being the domain of externalized quantification, in order to reproduce it, at a higher level of mystification, within the valorization of the Ego. It is not so much that the quantities of consumer "goods" and "*status symbols*" in which each has hitherto been urged to valorize itself are destined to count again, as it is destined to count, in a neo-Christian civilization of bureaucratized egalitarianism, the quantities of self realized as values in the re-

stricted circulation, but multiplied in infinities of identical ones, of exchange relations between entrepreneurial "personalities." ¶ Just as object-producing capital required what

*"conditions and presuppositions given (to one's valorization): 1) a society whose competing members face each other as persons who stand before each other only as possessors of commodities, and only as such come into contact with each other (which excludes slavery, etc.), and 2) that the social product be produced as merce (which excludes all forms in which, for the immediate producers, use-value is the main purpose, and at most the surplus of the product is transformed into commodities, etc.)"*;

man-value producing capital demands as given conditions and preconditions: 1) a society whose competing members face each other as persons who stand before each other only as *possessors of "personality"*, and only as such come into contact with each other (which excludes alienation to "things" as symbols of acquired value and self-realization), and 2) that the social product is produced as the *value of the commodity "person"* (which excludes all forms in which, for the immediate producers, the exchange value of "things" is the main goal, and at most the surplus of the product is transformed into devaluation). [*Apocalisse e rivoluzione* ✎ Machine translation ①]

✎ GIORGIO CESARANO & GIANNI COLLU 1973

[*Thesis 66*] Only if it is well understood how the moment of commodity circulation is in the classical valorization process a *place only* of the commutations by which D is transformed into D', can one look without scandal, from the standpoint of capitalist nationality, at the project of

self-critical economics. Progressive commentators on the MIT report and the Mansholt proposals are wrong when they say that capital cannot subsist without continuing to increase the production of commodities on which it valorizes itself, if they mean by commodities only "things." It does not matter what nature the commodity has, whether of "thing" rather than of "person", for capital to be able to continue to increase as such: it is sufficient that there subsists a moment in the circulation in which *any commodity* takes on the task of exchanging itself for D in order to reciprocate subsequently with D'. This is perfectly possible, theoretically, when the commodity-thing is substituted for the commodity-man, provided that constant capital converts its majority investment from plants suitable for producing only objects to plants suitable for producing "social persons" (social services, and "personal services"). [*Apocalisse e rivoluzione* ✎ Machine translation ①]

✎ GIORGIO CESARANO & GIANNI COLLU 1973

[*Thesis 67*] Capital commodified men from the beginning, producing them as labor-power incorporated into things. In this consisted the alienation: in each person's being an attribute of the commodity, in being denied his own subjectivity to see himself aggregated as a thing to the process of growth upon itself of an impersonal and alien subjectivity, which appropriated its force by rejecting its human substance as useless dross. By reversing the trend, capital merely reinvests itself in the subjectivity of each, subordinating the production of commodity-things to its own survival, rather than subordinating the survival of each to the production of commodities. And so that it can attempt, by grafting into each person an autonomized repeater of its own will, to overcome the critical point where production of commodities-things and survival be-

come irreconcilable, reduction of living labor and increase of useless population form a detonating mixture, pollution and decrease of energy resources undermine the survival of its realm. [*Apocalisse e rivoluzione* ✂ Machine translation ❶]

✂ JACQUES CAMATTE 2017

Back to *Capital*. The first section is entitled "Commodity and Money." In the context of a study of capital, not pointing out the character of commodity and money could lead to confusion. However, Marx in another text states,

"We begin with the commodity, with this specifically social form of the product, as the basis and presupposition of capitalist production. [...] But on the other hand the commodity is the product, the result, of this production: what appears at first as one of its elements, then represents its most specific product. For it is only on the basis of capitalist production that the product takes on the general form of the commodity, and the more capitalist production develops, the more all the components of this process become commodities" [K. Marx, *Results of the Immediate Process of Production* (also called the *6th unpublished chapter of Capital*)].

The capitalist mode of production generalizes the commodity form, which is fully recognized and fashionable today under the name of commodification. By this, capital secures a solid premise for the growth of its own process. Such commodification, on the other hand, is now an archaic, concluded phenomenon; what it is about at this point is capitalization. ¶ Consequently, it would have been good to formulate the title of the first chapter, "Commodity and Money as 'presuppositions!'" of capital, and then explain how not only money (money) but commodities (labor power as the means of production) are

transformed into capital in the course of an immediate production process, a unity of a labor process and a valorization process. If this were not the case, the duality, the money-commodity duality, would persist and the discontinuity that normally imposes itself would be excised: "Capitalist production is the production of surplus value." This gives the money form and the commodity form a new content. It should not be forgotten that if the movement of capital is possible only as a result of the separation of men, women, their communities, the land and the means of production, it is established and imposed as a phenomenon of union, of the fusion of money and commodity, of labor-power and the means of production. Then a phenomenon of substitution develops: all the assumptions of capital are reproduced in capitalized form.

[12. *Le mouvement du capital* x Machine translation 1]

### 🧠 3.2.4.4. THE TECHNIQUE OF CAPITAL

🍂 KARL MARX 1857–1858

As long as the means of labour remains a means of labour in the proper sense of the term, such as it is directly, historically, adopted by capital and included in its realization process, it undergoes a merely formal modification, by appearing now as a means of labour not only in regard to its material side, but also at the same time as a particular mode of the presence of capital, determined by its total process – as *fixed capital*. But, once adopted into the production process of capital, the means of labour passes through different metamorphoses, whose culmination is the *machine*, or rather, an *automatic system of machinery* (system of machinery: the *automaticone* is

merely its most complete, most adequate form, and alone transforms machinery into a system), set in motion by an automaton, a moving power that moves itself; this automaton consisting of numerous mechanical and intellectual organs, so that the workers themselves are cast merely as its conscious linkages. In the machine, and even more in machinery as an automatic system, the use value, i.e. the material quality of the means of labour, is transformed into an existence adequate to fixed capital and to capital as such; and the form in which it was adopted into the production process of capital, the direct means of labour, is superseded by a form posited by capital itself and corresponding to it. In no way does the machine appear as the individual worker's means of labour. Its distinguishing characteristic is not in the least, as with the means of labour, to transmit the worker's activity to the object; this activity, rather, is posited in such a way that it merely transmits the machine's work, the machine's action, on to the raw material – supervises it and guards against interruptions. Not as with the instrument, which the worker animates and makes into his organ with his skill and strength, and whose handling therefore depends on his virtuosity. Rather, it is the machine which possesses skill and strength in place of the worker, is itself the virtuoso, with a soul of its own in the mechanical laws acting through it; and it consumes coal, oil etc. (*matières instrumentales*), just as the worker consumes food, to keep up its perpetual motion. The worker's activity, reduced to a mere abstraction of activity, is determined and regulated on all sides by the movement of the machinery, and not the opposite. The science which compels the inanimate limbs of the machinery, by their construction, to act purposefully, as an automaton, does not exist in the worker's consciousness, but rather acts upon him through the ma-

chine as an alien power, as the power of the machine itself. The appropriation of living labour by objectified labour – of the power or activity which creates value by value existing for-itself – which lies in the concept of capital, is posited, in production resting on machinery, as the character of the production process itself, including its material elements and its material motion. The production process has ceased to be a labour process in the sense of a process dominated by labour as its governing unity. Labour appears, rather, merely as a conscious organ, scattered among the individual living workers at numerous points of the mechanical system; subsumed under the total process of the machinery itself, as itself only a link of the system, whose unity exists not in the living workers, but rather in the living (active) machinery, which confronts his individual, insignificant doings as a mighty organism. In machinery, objectified labour confronts living labour within the labour process itself as the power which rules it; a power which, as the appropriation of living labour, is the form of capital. The transformation of the means of labour into machinery, and of living labour into a mere living accessory of this machinery, as the means of its action, also posits the absorption of the labour process in its material character as a mere moment of the realization process of capital. [*Fragment on Machines*]

### 🧠 3.2.4.5. THE PRODUCTIVE FORCES OF CAPITAL

📖 SIMONE WEIL 1934

Actually, Marx gives a first-rate account of the mechanism of capitalist oppression; but so good is it that one finds it hard to visualize how this mechanism could cease



to function. As a rule, it is only the economic aspect of this oppression that holds our attention, that is to say the extortion of surplus value; and, if we confine ourselves to this point of view, it is certainly easy to explain to the masses that this extortion is bound up with competition, which latter is in turn bound up with private property, and that the day when property becomes collective all will be well. Nevertheless, even within the limits of this apparently simple reasoning, a thousand difficulties present themselves on careful examination. For Marx showed clearly that the true reason for the exploitation of the workers is not any desire on the part of the capitalists to enjoy and consume, but the need to expand the undertaking as rapidly as possible so as to make it more powerful than its rivals. Now not only a business undertaking, but any sort of working collectivity, no matter what it may be, has to exercise the maximum restraint on the consumption of its members so as to devote as much time as possible to forging weapons for use against rival collectivities; so that as long as there is, on the surface of the globe, a struggle for power, and as long as the decisive factor in victory is industrial production, the workers will be exploited. As a matter of fact, what Marx assumed, without, however, proving it, was that every kind of struggle for power will disappear on the day socialism is established in all industrial countries; the only trouble is that, as Marx himself recognized, revolution cannot take place every where at once; and when it does take place in one country, it does not for that country do away with the need for exploiting and oppressing the mass of workers, but on the contrary accentuates the need, lest it be found weaker than the other nations. The history of the Russian Revolution furnishes a painful illustration of this. ¶ If we consider other aspects of capitalist oppression, other still more formida-

ble difficulties appear, or rather the same difficulty under a more glaring light. The power which the bourgeoisie has to exploit and oppress the workers lies at the very foundations of our social life, and cannot be destroyed by any political and juridical transformation. This power consists in the first place and essentially in the modern system of production itself, that is to say big industry. Pungent dicta abound in Marx's writings on this subject of living labour being enslaved to dead labour, the reversal of the relationship between subject and object, the subordination of the worker to the material conditions of work. In the factory, he writes in *Capital*,

there exists a mechanism independent of the workers, which incorporates them as living cogs. . . . The separation of the spiritual forces that play a part in production from manual labour, and the transformation of the former into power exercised by capital over labour, attain their fulfilment in big industry founded on mechanization. The detail of the individual destiny of the machine worker fades into insignificance before the science, the tremendous natural forces and the collective labour which are incorporated in the machines as a whole and constitute with them the employers power.

Thus the workers complete subordination to the undertaking and to those who run it is founded on the factory organization and not on the system of property. Similarly, the separation of the spiritual forces that play a part in production from manual labour, or, according to another formula, the degrading division of labour into manual and intellectual labour, is the very foundation of our culture, which is a culture of specialists. [...]

The whole of our civilization is founded on specialization, which implies the enslavement of those who execute to those who co-ordinate; and on such a basis one can only

organize and perfect oppression, not lighten it. Far from capitalist society having developed within itself the material conditions for a régime of liberty and equality, the establishment of such a régime presupposes a preliminary transformation in the realm of production and that of culture. [...]

It is seldom, however, that comforting beliefs are at the same time rational. Before even examining the Marxist conception of productive forces, one is struck by the mythological character it presents in all socialist literature, where it is assumed as a postulate. Marx never explains why productive forces should tend to increase; [...]

The rise of big industry made of productive forces the divinity of a kind of religion whose influence Marx came under, despite himself, when formulating his conception of history. The term religion may seem surprising in connection with Marx; but to believe that our will coincides with a mysterious will which is at work in the universe and helps us to conquer is to think religiously, to believe in Providence. Besides, Marx's vocabulary itself testifies to this since it contains quasi-mystical expressions such as the historic mission of the proletariat. ¶ This religion of productive forces, in whose name generations of industrial employers have ground down the labouring masses without the slightest qualm, also constitutes a factor making for oppression within the socialist movement. All religions make man into a mere instrument of Providence, and socialism, too, puts men at the service of historical progress, that is to say of productive progress. That is why, whatever may be the insult inflicted on Marx's memory by the cult which the Russian oppressors of our time entertain for him, it is not altogether undeserved.

[*Oppression and Liberty*, pp. 40-45]

🍂 JACQUES CAMATTE 1973

Yet in the course of his analysis he [Marx] points to the possibility for capital to escape from human conditions. We perceive that it is not the productive forces that become autonomous, but capital, since at a given moment the productive forces become 'a barrier which it strives to overpower'. This takes place as follows: the productive forces are no longer productive forces of human beings but of capital; they are for capital. [*Decline of the Capitalist Mode of Production or Decline of Humanity?*]

🍂 JEAN BAUDRILLARD 1976

In this sense, the Luddites were much clearer than Marx on the impact of the irruption of the industrial order, and today, at the *catastrophic* end of this process, to which Marx himself has misled us in the *dialectical* euphoria of productive forces, they have in some sense exacted their revenge. [*Symbolic Exchange and Death*]

### 🧠 3.2.5. OBJECTIFICATION

🍂 JACQUES CAMATTE 2010-2023

[*entry: "Objectification"*] The fact of considering oneself, or even behaving, as an object. [*Glossaire* 🔄 Machine translation 🗨]

### 3.2.6. IMMORTALITY (SOUGHT IN THE CAPITAL)

✍ KARL MARX 1861

The imperishability (*Unvergänglichkeit*) for which money strives as it negatively sets itself with respect to circulation (by withdrawing itself from it) is acquired by capital in that it preserves itself precisely by giving itself up to circulation [modified]. [(Urtext) *Second Draft of Critique of Political Economy*]

✍ KARL MARX 1858

The Imperishability [*Unvergänglichkeit*] for which money strives as it negatively sets itself with respect to circulation (by withdrawing itself from it) is acquired by capital in that it preserves itself precisely by giving itself up to circulation. Capital as exchange value implying circulation, preposited to it and preserving itself in it, alternately assumes the form of both these moments contained in the simple circulation, but not as in the simple circulation, in which it merely passes from either form into the other, but so that in each of the determinations it simultaneously preserves the relation to the opposite moment. If it appears as money, it is now merely a one-sided abstract expression of it as universality; shedding this form as well, it sheds only its opposite-based determination (sheds the opposite-based form of universality). If it is posited as money, i.e. as this opposite-based form of the universality of exchange value, it is simultaneously posited within it that it must lose not universality as in the simple circulation, but its opposite-based determination, or that it assumes the form of money no more than fleetingly, i.e. is once again exchanged for the commodity, but a commod-

ity which even in its particularity expresses the universality of the exchange value and so keeps changing its determinate form. [*Fragment des Urtextes von „Zur Kritik der politischen Ökonomie“*]

✍ KARL MARX 1861

Capital posits the Imperishability [*Unvergänglichkeit*] of value (to a certain degree) by incarnating itself in fleeting commodities and taking on their form, but at the same time changing them just as constantly; alternates between its eternal form in money and its passing form in commodities; permanence is posited as the only thing it can be, a passing passage – process – life. But capital obtains this ability only by constantly sucking in living labour as its soul, vampire-like. The Imperishability [*Unvergänglichkeit*] – the duration of value in its form as capital – is posited only through reproduction, which is itself double, reproduction as commodity, reproduction as money, and unity of both these reproduction processes [modified]. [*Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*]

✍ JACQUES GAMATTE 1976

Capital is the accumulation of time; it resorbs it, absorbs it (we can have both modalities) and, as a result, it posits itself as eternity. Marx approaches this question of eternity from the formal side. He speaks of *Unvergänglichkeit*, which expresses the idea of something imperishable, as well as the idea that one cannot move on to something else. ¶ “Eternity - the duration of value in its capital form - is only posited by production, which itself is dual: reproduction as commodity, reproduction as money, and the unity of these two processes of reproduction” (*Grundrisse*) ¶ Developed from the point of view of substance, the eternity of capital also implies the evanescence of men, i.e.

both their weak durability and their insignificance. Capital takes time away from man - the element of his development, according to Marx. It creates a void where time abolishes itself; man loses an important reference point; he can no longer recognize or perceive himself. And frozen time confronts him. [*Marx and Gemeinwesen* ✕<sub>A</sub> Machine translation ❶]

✍ JACQUES CAMATTE 2017

Marx ends the first book with the seventh section, "The Accumulation of Capital," which is in correspondence, concordance, with the third part of Chapter I results, namely, "Capitalist production is production and reproduction of the specifically capitalist production relation." ¶ We add that in the seventh section there is some confusion of terms between accumulation and reproduction. Capital does not accumulate, nor does it accumulate, but it reproduces on a constantly enlarged scale. It is money, as numerary, as currency, that was accumulated in the form of treasure, hoarded, which was an obstacle to the movement of value. If capital accumulated, it would not have invaded all spheres of human life, as it actually did as a result of its ever-expanding reproduction. Accumulation evokes something static; one might say a static nature. In contrast, reproduction implies fluidity, as is explained in *Results*. [12. *Le mouvement du capital* ✕<sub>A</sub> Machine translation ❶]

### 3.2.7. POTENTIAL DEATH OF CAPITAL

✍️ JEAN BAUDRILLARD 1976

There have always been churches to hide the death of God, or to hide that God was everywhere, which is the same thing. There will always be animal and Indian reservations to hide that these are dead, and that we are all Indians. There will always be factories to hide that labor is dead, that production is dead, or that it is everywhere and nowhere. Because today there is no point in fighting capital in certain forms. On the other hand, if it becomes clear that it is no longer determined by anyone, and that its absolute weapon is to reproduce labor as imaginary, then it is capital itself that is very close to croaking.

[*L'échange symbolique et la mort* ✂️ Machine translation ①]

✍️ JACQUES CAMATTE 2010-2023

[*entry: "Potential death of capital"*] It takes place from the moment when the number of those who circulate surplus value becomes greater than the number of those who produce it. It first verified in the U.S. in the mid-1950s and tends to differ in different areas. It is also linked to a huge substantification (production of fixed capital) that inhibits the ceaseless movement of capital, which is such only if it capitalizes indefinitely. Hence the massive deployment of speculation that corresponds to an autonomization of the capital form and, tendentially, its evanescence into virtuality. [*Glossaire* ✂️ Machine translation ①]





## CHAPTER 4. RESULTS AND GOALS OF THE PROCESS

### 4.1. REPLACEMENT OF THE COMMUNITY • MATERIAL COMMUNITY

✍ KARL MARX 1858

Here, money does indeed appear as  
their material community  
(*Gemeinwesen*) that exists apart from  
them. [(Urtext) *Second Draft of Critique of  
Political Economy*]

✍ KARL MARX 1844

But the community from which the workers is *isolated* is a community of quite different reality and scope than the *political* community. The community from which *his own labor* separates him is *life* itself, physical and spiritual life, human morality, human activity, human enjoyment, human nature. *Human nature is the true community of men* [Das *menschliche Wesen* ist das *wahre Gemeinwesen der Menschen*]. Just as the disastrous isolation from this nature is disproportionately more far-reaching, unbearable, terrible and contradictory than the isolation from the political community, so too the transcending of this isolation and even a partial reaction, a *rebellion* against it, is so much greater, just as the man is greater than the citizen and human life than political life. [*Critical Notes on the Article: "The King of Prussia and Social Reform By a Prussian"*]

✍ KARL MARX 1844

If *money* is the bond binding me to *human* life, binding society to me, connecting me with nature and man, is not money the bond of all *bonds*? [*Economic & Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*]

✍ KARL MARX 1861

The general exchange of activities and products, which has become a vital condition for each individual – their mutual interconnection – here appears as something alien to them, autonomous, as a thing. [...] The less social power the medium of exchange possesses (and at this stage it is still closely bound to the nature of the direct product of labour and the direct needs of the partners in exchange) the greater must be the power of the community which binds the individuals together, the patriarchal relation, the community of antiquity, feudalism and the guild system. [*Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*]

✍ KARL MARX 1861

In the case of the world market, the connection of the individual with all, but at the same time also the independence of this connection from the individual, have developed to such a high level that the formation of the world market already at the same time contains the conditions for going beyond it.) Comparison in place of real communality and generality. [*Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*]

✍ KARL MARX 1861

It is itself the community [*Gemeinwesen*], and can tolerate none other standing above it. [...] Where money is not itself the community [*Gemeinwesen*], it must dissolve the community. [*Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*]

✍ KARL MARX 1861

In bourgeois society, the worker e.g. stands there purely without objectivity, subjectively; but the thing which stands opposite him has now become the true community [*Gemeinwesen*], which he tries to make a meal of, and which makes a meal of him. [*Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*]

✍ KARL MARX 1861

Money thereby directly and simultaneously becomes the *real community* [*Gemeinwesen*], since it is the general substance of survival for all... [*Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*]

✍ KARL MARX 1867

The obstacles presented by the internal solidity and organisation of pre-capitalistic, national modes of production to the corrosive influence of commerce are strikingly illustrated in the intercourse of the English with India and China. The broad basis of the mode of production here is formed by the unity of small-scale agriculture and home industry, to which in India we should add the form of village communities built upon the common ownership of land, which, incidentally, was the original form in China as well. In India the English lost no time in exercising their direct political and economic power, as rulers and landlords, to disrupt these small economic communities. [...] the low prices of its goods served to destroy the spinning and weaving industries, which were an ancient integrating element of this unity of industrial and agricultural production. And even so this work of dissolution proceeds very gradually. And still more slowly in China, where it is not reinforced by direct political power.

(Note 6. [...] in the north-west [of India] they [the British] did all they could to transform the Indian economic community with common ownership of the soil into a caricature of itself.) [*The capital*]

✍ JACQUES CAMATTE & GIANNI COLLU 1969

The starting point for the critique of the existing society of capital has to be the restatement of the concepts of formal and real domination as the historical phases of capitalist development. All other periodizations of the process of the autonomization of value, [...] really only mystifies the passage of value to its complete autonomy, that is, the objectification of the abstract quantity in process in the concrete community. [*Transition*]

✍ JACQUES CAMATTE 1976

Thus, in Marx's complete works, there is a juxtaposition between, on the one hand, the individualisation of that movement through which capital constitutes itself as the material community and, on the other, an affirmation of the impossibility thereof, linked to a mad hope that the proletariat will, in time, rebel and destroy the capitalist mode of production (CMP). Yet, capital's community exists; this implies an abandonment of any classist theory and the understanding that an immense historical phase is over. [*Marx and Gemeinwesen*]

✍ KARL MARX 1844

[...] my human, common being (*mein menschliches, mein Gemeinwesen*).

[*Economic & Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*]

✍ KARL MARX 1844

Let us suppose that we had carried out production as human beings. Each of us would have in *two ways affirmed* himself and the other person. 1) In my *production* I would have objectified my *individuality, its specific character*, and therefore enjoyed not only an individual *manifestation of my life* during the activity, but also when looking at the object I would have the individual pleasure of knowing my personality to be *objective, visible to the senses* and hence a power *beyond all doubt*. 2) In your enjoyment or use of my product I would have the *direct* enjoyment both of being conscious of having satisfied a *human* need by my work, that is, of having objectified *man's* essential nature, and of having thus created an object corresponding to the need of another *man's* essential nature. 3) I would have been for you the *mediator* between you and the species, and therefore would become recognised and felt by you yourself as a completion of your own essential nature and as a necessary part of yourself, and consequently would know myself to be confirmed both in your thought and your love. 4) In the individual expression of my life I would have directly created your expression of your life, and therefore in my individual activity I would have directly *confirmed* and *realised* my true nature, my *human* nature, my *communal* nature. [*Comments on James Mill, Éléments D'économie Politique*]

Since *human* nature is the *true community* (*Gemeinwesen*) of men, by manifesting their *nature* men *create*, produce, the *human community* (*Gemeinwesen*), the social entity, which is no abstract universal power opposed to the single individual, but is the essential nature of each individual, his own activity, his own life, his own spirit, his own wealth. Hence this *true community* (*Gemeinwesen*) does not come into being through reflection, it appears owing to the *need* and *egoism* of individuals, i.e., it is produced directly by their life activity itself. It does not depend on man whether this community (*Gemeinwesen*) exists or not; but as long as man does not recognise himself as man, and therefore has not organised the world in a human way, this *community* (*Gemeinwesen*) appears in the form of *estrangement*, because its *subject*, man, is a being estranged from himself. Men, not as an abstraction, but as real, living, particular individuals, are this entity. Hence, as they are, so is this entity itself. To say that *man* is estranged from himself, therefore, is the same thing as saying that the *society* of this estranged man is a caricature of his *real community* (*Gemeinwesen*), of his true species-life, that his activity therefore appears to him as a torment, his own creation as an alien power, his wealth as poverty, the *essential bond* linking him with other men as an unessential bond, and separation from his fellow men, on the other hand, as his true mode of existence, his life as a sacrifice of his life, the realisation of his nature as making his life unreal, his production as the production of his nullity, his power over an object as the power of the object over him,

and he himself, the lord of his creation, as the servant of this creation. [*Comments on James Mill, Éléments D'économie Politique*]

✍ KARL MARX 1861

This naturally arisen clan community, or, if one will, pastoral society, is the first presupposition – the communality [*Gemeinschaftlichkeit*] of blood, language, customs – for the appropriation of the objective conditions of their life, and of their life's reproducing and objectifying activity (activity as herdsmen, hunters, tillers etc.). The earth is the great workshop, the arsenal which furnishes both means and material of labour, as well as the seat, the base of the community. They relate naïvely to it as the property of the community, of the community producing and reproducing itself in living labour. Each individual conducts himself only as a link, as a member of this community as proprietor or possessor. The real appropriation through the labour process happens under these presuppositions, which are not themselves the product of labour, but appear as its natural or divine presuppositions.

[*Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*]

✍ KARL MARX 1879

In primitive communities in which, e.g., means of livelihood are produced communally and distributed amongst the members of the community, the common product directly satisfies the vital needs of each community member, of each producer; the social character of the product, of the use-value, here lies in its (*common*) *communal character*. [*Notes on Adolph Wagner's "Lehrbuch der politischen Ökonomie"*]

✍ JACQUES CAMATTE 2010-2023

[entry: “*Individuality*”] Aptitude to stand as the moment of emergence and perceptible unity of the phenomenon of life. ¶ To tend to avoid any reduction, I speak of *individuality-Gemeinwesen* to signify that there is no separation between the two, nor a fortiori opposition. Individuality has the *Gemeinwesen* dimension by the very fact of its emergence, not followed by separation, but by the maintenance of participation in the life phenomenon. [Glossaire

✍ Machine translation ❶]

✍ JACQUES CAMATTE 2010-2023

[entry: “*Gemeinwesen*”] Concept widely used by K. Marx and G.W.F. Hegel. It indicates not only common being, but also common nature and essence (*Wesen*). It is what grounds and unites us, participating in the same being, the same essence, the same nature. It is the mode of manifestation of this participating being. ¶ I may add a personal interpretation of *gemein*. *Ge* is an inseparable particle that expresses generality, the common, the collective. *Mein* indicates that which is individual: my own. In this there emerges in implication the idea of a non-separation between what is common and what is individual; which implies the concept of participation in which one perceives self in a whole that is as consubstantial. ¶ *Gemeinwesen* thus presents itself as the totality of individualities, the community that results from their activities in nature and in the world created by the species; at the same time it encompasses them, and gives them their naturalness (indicated by *wesen*), their substance as generality (indicated by *gemein*), in a becoming (*wesen*). [Glossaire ✍ Machine translation ❶

]



If I now turn my gaze again in the direction of the world of nature I can grasp it more clearly, well understood in a relational-differential key with respect to transformative activity (there is no other way in): the world-environment on which human activity stands out to me is manifested as a field of processes in which everything happens in the form of the *reciprocal production* of one thing with another. But a field in which everything is constituted within the interplay of relations is a *common* field. This is how the living world appears to me whose boundaries, as far as I know, coincide with those of our planet. The human community intervenes on a world *which itself has the structure of a community*, with the transformative activity that after all functions in a similar way, as a relational context that has a determining power over the beings it involves. It is because we look at it from this position of ours, that the mutual production of things in nature appears to us humans as a *making of itself*. [...]

But does being in common have boundaries? [...]

How far does the sphere within which things are produced in a state of mutual action reach? Here, for the first time, I must turn to a dimension beyond the horizon of the human world. But I always have the transformative activity and the being-in-common human as revealers, mediators of everything, and keeping them in mind I can attempt another widening of gaze. This ground from which I come and in which I ultimately consist, what does it teach me? First, that everything I can reach *is a node of relationships*, emerges *inside* relationships. ¶ I try to widen my gaze beyond the boundaries of the living world on planet Earth and I see that, sure, life as I know it here breaks down there, but what lies beyond is in continuity with it,

the Sun even in such a way that without it I cannot conceive of life, but also of the Moon the knowledge handed down tells me that it affects life down here in many ways. Every broader horizon that I draw upon only extends without limit this relational continuity: stars, galaxies, the boundaries of the knowable universe... ¶ I then make a further effort, of an almost intuitive kind, and broaden my vision beyond all boundaries, toward an all-encompassing horizon as the horizon of all relations. What I reach is a field *totally inclusive* and therefore *unique*. Nothing exists outside of it. But I don't mean this in the empirical sense of measurable spatiality, so I go to the boundaries of the universe, "look out" and see that there is nothing. Such a way of thinking is absurd and generates endless paradoxes. It is in an essential, that is, relational, sense that I understand it, because *to exist is to be in relation*. Therefore, something that stands outside the field of all relations simply *does not exist*, is an idle assumption that is instantly autonomous. ¶ This field, being unique, draws an insurmountable horizon that is of *community*, that is, within which everything is determined with everything. I derive from this an even more decisive confirmation that nature, the field in which transformative activity intervenes, itself has the structure of a being in common, and every action that takes place there can only reconfirm in itself this ultimate structure. [*Un percorso nell'essere in comune.*]

#### 🧠 4.2. REPLACEMENT OF MAN

🪄 AMADEO BORDIGA 1950

Capital offers all the billions of four centuries of accumulation for the scalp of its great enemy: Man. [*Imprese economiche di Pantalone* ✎ Machine translation ①]

We must distinguish what belongs to the *mode* and what belongs to the *code* of production. Before becoming an element of the commodity law of value, labour power is initially a status, a structure of obedience to a code. Before becoming exchange -value or use-value, it is already, like any other commodity, the *sign* of the operation of nature as value, which defines production and is the basic axiom of our culture and no other. This message, much more profoundly than quantitative equivalences, runs beneath commodities from the outset: to remove indeterminacy from nature (and man) in order to submit it to the determinacy of value. This is confirmed in the constructionist mania for bulldozers, motorways, 'infrastructures', and in the civilising mania of the era of production, a mania for leaving no fragment unproduced, for countersigning everything with production, without even the hope of an excess of wealth. Producing in order to mark, producing in order to reproduce the marked man. What is production today apart from this terrorism of the code? This is as clear for us as it was for the first industrial generations, who dealt with machines as with an absolute enemy, harbingers of total destructure, before the comforting dream of a historical dialectic of production developed. The Luddite practices which arose everywhere to some extent, the savagery of attacking the instrument of production (primarily attacking itself as the productive force), endemic sabotage and defection bear lengthy testimony to the fragility of the productive order. Smashing machines is an aberrant act if they are the *means* of production, if any ambiguity remains over their future use-value. If, however, the *ends* of this production collapse, then the respect due to the means of production also col-

lapses, and the machines appear as their true end, as direct and immediate operational signs of the social relation to death on which capital is nourished. Nothing then stands in the way of their destruction. In this sense, the Luddites were much clearer than Marx on the impact of the irruption of the industrial order, and today, at the *catastrophic* end of this process, to which Marx himself has misled us in the *dialectical* euphoria of productive forces, they have in some sense exacted their revenge. [*Symbolic Exchange and Death*]

✍ ROBERTO PECCHIOLO 2024

Harari asserts in *From Animals to Gods* that

”there seems to be no insurmountable technical barrier preventing the production of superhumans. The main obstacles are the ethical and political objections that have slowed the pace of human research. And no matter how compelling the ethical arguments may be, it is difficult to see how they can withstand the next step for long, especially when what is at stake is the possibility of indefinitely prolonging human life, defeating incurable diseases, and improving our cognitive and mental capabilities.”

The bait is health, but the goal is death. ¶ At Davos, enchanted mountain of transhuman *Agenda 2030*, this is how Harari expressed himself:

”Science is replacing evolution by natural selection with evolution by intelligent design. This is not the intelligent design of some God beyond the clouds [*clouds*], but it is OUR intelligent design, of our clouds [*the computer clouds, Ed. note*], the clouds of IBM and Microsoft. These are the clouds that will guide our evolution.”

The roaring applause of those present -- all leading members of the economic, financial, technological and political oligarchies -- show what the dominant thinking is, the crude materialism by which it is animated, the delusion of omnipotence convinced that it has dethroned and replaced God. ¶ For the power dome, drunk on *hybris*, transhuman future humanity, anthropologically and ontologically different from the old, needs a drastic thinning. Harari, has the virtue of candor. Most people are "useless," no longer "necessary." We are obsolete, surplus, a hindrance to be solved. He runs a chill down his spine.

"We simply will no longer need the vast majority of the population, because the future envisions the development of increasingly sophisticated technologies, such as artificial intelligence [and] bioengineering."

[*The useless man and the ark of the oligarchy* ✎ Machine translation ①]

### 🧠 4.3. REPLACEMENT OF NATURE

🍷 LUDWIG KLAGES 1913

A new word for this viewpoint has even been coined: "Mammonism."

Nevertheless, how few are conscious of the fact that this "Mammon" is a genuine, substantial entity, which seizes hold of man, and wields him as if he were a mere tool that might help Mammon eradicate the life of the earth.

[*Man and Earth*]

🍷 LUDWIG KLAGES 1913

However, as soon as the man of "progress" arrives on the scene, he announces his masterful presence by spreading death and the horror of death all around him. How many

of the species of creatures that flourished in ancient Germanic lands have lasted into our century? Bear and wolf, lynx and wildcat, bison, elk and aurochs, eagle and vulture, crane and falcon, swan and owl, have all become creatures inhabiting only our fairy-tales; this was the case, in fact, even *before* the introduction of our new and improved wars of annihilation. But there is cause for even deeper merriment. Under the most moronic of all pretexts — which insists that vast numbers of animal species are actually noxious pests — our progress-monger has extirpated nearly every creature who happens not to be a partridge, a roe-deer, a pheasant, or, if need be, a pig. Wild boar, ibex, fox, pine marten, weasel, duck and otter — all animals with which the legends dear to our memory are intimately intertwined — are shrinking in numbers, where, that is, they have not already become extinct; sea gull, tern, cormorant, duck, heron, kingfisher, red kite and owl are all ruthlessly hunted down; the communities of seals on the coasts of the North Sea and the Baltic are condemned to destruction. We know more than two hundred names of German towns and villages whose names derive from the word "beaver," a fact that constitutes proof of the flourishing of these industrious rodents in earlier times; today there still exists a small preserve on the Elbe river between Torgau and Wittenberg, but even this refuge will soon disappear without immediate statutory protection. And who is not afflicted with grave anxiety to witness, year after year, the disappearance of our beloved singers, the migratory birds? Only a mere generation ago the blue air of our cities was filled all summer long with the whir and buzz of swallows and the cries of sailors, sounds that, emerging from the distance, seemed to fill one with the yearning for travel. At that time, one could count, in one suburb of Munich alone, as many as

three hundred occupied nests, whereas today one can only find four or five. More ominously, the countryside has become eerily silent, throbbing no longer as it once did every dew-laden morning in the joyous melody of Eichendorff's "countless larks." Already one must consider oneself fortunate if, whilst walking along a remote forest path near a grassy, sunlit hollow, one is privileged to hear just once the luminous and yearning call of the quail; at one time, throughout the length and breadth of Germany, these birds numbered many, many thousands, and they lived in the songs of the common people as well as in the works of our poets. Magpie, woodpecker, golden oriole, warbler, rooster, grouse, and nightingale, they are all disappearing, and the decline seems to be utterly beyond remedy. [*Man and Earth*]

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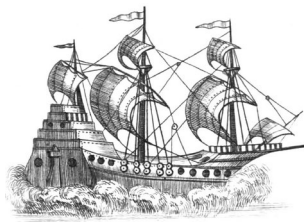
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