

JACQUES CAMATTE
**SUBSTITUTION AND
EXTINCTION**



*Capital would gladly give all its billions
of primitive accumulation for the scalp
of its great enemy: Mankind.*

A. BORDIGA

THE establishment of agriculture, livestock breeding and then the invention of pottery during the Neolithic period led to production becoming the fundamental mode of doing of the species. However, due to the separation from nature that resulted, the break in continuity was imposed and, artificially, the establishment of a dynamic of the substitution of what is natural by the artificial, founding the natural-artificial duality: naturality preserving the link to the past and artificiality that to the present and especially to the future that will become preponderant. Everything that is immediate, in relation to natural continuity, will be substituted, in particular human relationships. Due to the emergence of the friendship-enemy dyad, also resulting from the break in continuity where the second part becomes preponderant as the generator of a new continuity from the discontinuous compensating for the loss of the natural one. For this, a movement must take place that connects the discontinuous, links must be established

between the substituted elements in order to unite them. Now, to bind contains an ambiguity, first of all the idea of union already noted and that of attaching in order to imprison. From then on, not to be bound is not to depend, not to be a slave or serf. The child being considered as a dependent being, becoming an adult is to come out of the minority. Producing is a dynamic to get out of dependence and the re-



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sult of production are goods, material objects or not, different according to the quantum of value they contain, that is to say ultimately the quantum of work incorporated in them, which can be exchanged if there is equality of quanta: law of value which sanctions the validity of the links. The movement which connects the discontinuous is represented thus by Marx: C-M-C, simple circulation of goods where C [=Commodities (T.N.)] is a materiality and M, money which can be considered as an immaterial link allowing continuity to be ensured. This circulation can be considered as the succession of three metamorphoses. Their setting in motion is dependent on another law that of competition which is, ultimately, an activation of enmity: everything is subject to it.

This is accentuated by the passage of money to the stage of universal currency. commodification of the world, and goods tend to replace human beings. The goal is no longer to obtain a product that has become a commodity but money and Marx thus represents the new movement: M-C-M' with M'>M and what is essential is not the quality but the quantified and therefore it can constitute a support to express dissatisfaction, insatiability.

What is true for things is true for human beings, said Marx, and he also affirmed that behind things, there were men. Thus, having lost their immediacy, the economic movement serves them to express the products of their psyche: substitution, just as communities were substituted by States. So in the Neolithic, the break in continuity engenders the substitution of human relations by the economic movement and enmity has become a determining element in the behavior of human beings, even within what remains of communities such as the

family or non-profit associations. It appears as an operator of affirmation given that the break in continuity engenders the loss of certainty; of security and the crisis of presence: the world conceals a threat, from which one must defend oneself.

Apart from acts of great violence, there are various manifestations of enmity in everyday life: controversy, denigration, irony, humor, the desire to distinguish oneself, to be recognized, challenges, various competitions (where one must prevail over), operating to get out of an ambiguity, symbolically killing the father. The fear of a manifestation of enmity can condition an inhibition of that of sympathy, fear also of speaking out, of getting involved precisely in a world dominated by enmity, of being drawn into a future in relation to an outpouring that one does not solicit. Let us also mention the repression of the child's naturality, misogyny which can go as far as rape, murder, or exploitation in production and dependency in social relations with difficulty of assertion, and more or less violent reactions following a questioning itself aroused by enmity.

Let us note that in the past the dominants had the right, even outside periods of war, to carry and use weapons. In reaction, the dominated transformed some of their tools and developed martial arts practiced with bare hands or with sticks, rakes, etc.

The most serious and the most consequential in the transformations that took place in the Neolithic period is the generation of insatiability linked to the break in continuity. Indeed, living in it generated plenitude and satisfaction, now it is necessary to produce, therefore to work to fill a lack (continuity) which generates insatiability due to the impossibility of achieving this goal.

The enormous development of the phenomenon of value allowed to give scope to conspicuous consumption, to the production of a large number of links and to the increase of ambiguity but also to another form of insatiability with usury and hoarding: the miser is never satisfied with what he has acquired because what he hoards are substitutes and not tangible realities. This hoarding can even concern human relations: accumulating links, in order to be recognized, then the need for recognition replaces that of affection.

When we move from the simple circulation $C-M-C$, the materiality, the use value is the goal of the exchange, while with the monetary phase it is the exchange value and therefore, that par excellence, money, and especially its incrementation: $M-C-M'$ with $M'>M$, which can allow to be the support for a becoming to insatiability. It can allow to satisfy it but not to arouse it. It only has the form of incrementation.

Money operating as representation and mediation can allow the development of substitution through the as if. Indeed, an ugly man can very well buy women and appear beautiful due to the acquisition of the consequence of beauty: to please. As a result, everything happens as if he were beautiful. This is a theme often treated in literature, for example by Goethe and Shakespeare, and which K. Marx cited in the *Manuscripts of 1844* to show the universal character of money. Under the old regime, one could buy titles of nobility and become noble, which is why money was reviled as a perverter of morals. It allows the realization of artificial human relations but does not allow complete substitutions, remaining in the appearance, facilitating a substitution but not creating it.

Speculation already operating in antiquity is a means of satisfying insatiability through money but it does not arouse it.

Humanity opposed to the movement of value, to a movement of substitution that was part of the dynamics of domestication, and thus, at the end of antiquity, value declined considerably, disappearing in places, giving rise to a major phase of land tenure: feudalism, which lasted several centuries: land is the foundation of the life process, which will give rise to the anthropomorphosis of landed property, a sort of inversion (return to the land) without questioning the relations of domination.

Feudalism produced its own ideology where faith was decisive and science secondary, which did not imply technical stagnation or ignorance, or even obscurantism. The essential thing was the relationships of dependence: to the land, between men.

The era of the Renaissance and the Reformation is characterized, on the one hand, by the flowering of the philosophy of doing which becomes the fundamental concept to define the species supplanting — replacing essence, existence, concepts of the continuous, man is what he makes himself. On the other hand, man is not, he becomes (Erasmus), innateness is only secondary, then follows the need for intense work to ensure this becoming, and the need for progress which becomes the essential objective and can arouse insatiability with the possibility of autonomy. Hence the exceptional importance of the entrepreneur. Production and simulation make it possible to increase the phenomenon of separation, as happened in the 15th century with the invention of the landscape.

Becoming in separation, in autonomisation is the basis on which insatiability can arise.

This period has known important substitutions, that of faith, religion and even partly philosophy by rationality, by science, of what remained of community by the individual, which also implies that of behavior dominated by passivity from another involving an active affirmation of doing often with arrogance, that due to the possession of money as is verified in the bourgeois who substitutes himself for the landowner. In saying this, we do not forget that substitution does not imply disappearance. It is a kind of *Aufhebung*, of surpassing, according to W. Hegel. If this were not the case, naturality would have already disappeared.

Doing and working become absolutely essential to adapt to becoming outside nature. Progress is measured by the degree of distance from it. This is the phase of the anthropomorphosis of work from which capital will emerge - a phase in which labor and value develop. This is the period in which the system of enclosures develops, that is to say the privatization of communal goods, and in order to achieve intensive sheep breeding - a manifestation of insatiability - there is a substitution of sheep for men, as K. Marx pointed out. We therefore had the expropriation of men who were dispossessed and reduced to their labor force, the proletarians, and the flowering of enmity.¹ Thus the holders of money were able to buy labor force and give birth to capital. These were new men: entrepreneurs for whom the purpose of the enterprise, that is, the realization of a project, a given production, is not simply profane, obtaining a profit, but soteriological. The realization of the latter would be evidence of the salvation of the one who un-

dertook it. The era in which capital appeared was an era of uncertainty, despair, dereliction and, as Max Weber explained, succeeding in one's enterprise was proof of one's salvation. Salvation derived from the adoption of a new ethos, which again was only possible for the dominant.

The dynamic of the scientist is similar in aim to that of the entrepreneur and is based on empiricism. Indeed, he starts from a certain number of facts that he tries to organize and issues a hypothesis whose accuracy he must verify by an experiment that corresponds in some way to the moment when salvation must be verified, which is therefore subject to the rules of rationality, to the use of reason. It was developed at the end of the feudal period, during the Renaissance, where fideism and ancient beliefs were called into question as well as the omnipotence of nature. Consequently, women were considered too natural, too linked to nature, irrational, accused of being witches, many of whom were burned. The Renaissance period until the phase of superficial domination of capital over society is the second after the Neolithic period of the enslavement of women which saw the establishment of production, the separation from nature. With capital it is the triumph of artificiality, the domination of nature (it was first necessary to separate from it).

So the two phases of separation are phases of decline for the status of women and regression of the condition of children. We note that in some cases there is even an attempt to replace women: the invention of obstetrics.

The similarity in the aims of the scientist and the entrepreneur reveal to what extent Mankind is gripped by anxiety, by his uncertainty in the world, induced by the

¹ I will not insist. The question is treated exhaustively in the first book of *Capital*.

breaks in continuity, and that he uses knowledge to found himself, to secure himself.

The development of science is inseparable from the genesis of capital if only because of the need for technology — development of fixed capital — and that of the elimination of previous or contemporary knowledge, as already noted, as well as the refusal of dependence claimed by F. Bacon, R. Descartes, corresponding to a desire to dominate and escape from nature, which is at the base of dissatisfaction, of insatiability. It was also necessary to justify a supposed inferiority of women. The necessities of capitalist production called into question such an *a priori* without making misogyny disappear, which has other foundations. Thus the two sexes came to be considered undifferentiated but with a preponderance for men thanks to rationality, rigor, and distrust of intuition.

From the beginning of its establishment, capital operates a substitution: the worker is replaced by the machine, the law of value by that of capital and this will increase. Also due to the great development of fixed capital (machines) the quantum of labor is reduced enormously and it is this fixed capital which has become *Human Being* which produces in fact, which replaces the natural man. As a result, the number of productive workers decreases more and more and that of the unproductive goes in the opposite direction. In the *Grundriss*, Marx writes that if the latter come to surpass the former, it would be a revolution. However, in 1956 this happened for the first time in the USA, then it became generalized. This caused in some way the loss of the proletarian spirit by adoption (or substitution) of a consumer spirit while the great development of the general intellect, of fixed capital, caused the physical disap-

pearance of the proletariat. At first we spoke of potential death, then of actual death of capital due to the fact that the value-labor dyad operating when it was founded had disappeared, as had disappeared the superficial (formal) then real domination within the immediate production process, then in society due to its escape and its autonomization. It was an immediate phenomenon, historically limited. In doing so we evade escape and autonomization that we had nevertheless highlighted. Indeed, because of this fact capital, which has always tended to escape the contradictions and the substantification that inhibit it, succeeds in escaping, in becoming autonomous and being no more than a form without content and this form is that of the continued increment, possible thanks to innovation. Being a form without content it can become autonomous and suit anything. Thus each human being becomes a support for a form of capital allowing the full realization of the anthropomorphization of the latter by becoming a substitute for the species, the speciose man, and the individual an ontosed man, where naturality is more and more compressed, reduced.

How does insatiability arise in speciose man? Given that capital manifests itself, realizes itself in the mode of incrementation — it only exists if it continually produces an increment — it can be the substitute support for human insatiability. And this is because it is reduced to a form. Now, even more than in the case of value, it is a form in search of a content; but also a content that imposes itself by vivifying the one that initially encloses it and has made it access its fullness where it seems to have dissolved in it. And Marx notes that:

Almost in all countries and in almost all historical epochs where the mode of production is at an inferior stage and the economic structure of society is insufficiently developed, we find interest-bearing money, money that posits money, therefore formal capital.²

The money that effectuates this movement is capital, or again: the value that has become autonomous in money, that effectuates this process, is the form in which capital presents itself or appears first.³

Thus, from the beginning, capital is exploitation, a manifestation of enmity and insatiability. If usury is then replaced by the production process, let us note that hoarding and avarice were practices to protect against a threat, that of a lack and, as a result, there is continuity with capital. The original mutual aid was completely substituted.

How is this done today? Shoshana Zuboff's book *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism* impressively highlights how this substitution is achieved through the extensive use of conditional reflexes operating according to Skinner's method, and the me-

ans of the Internet that are even more powerful because it is the Internet user who operates freely for himself, who carries out the substitution of which he is the victim. The goal of the various leaders of Internet service providers is to achieve a dystopia and they are all megalomaniacs, dissatisfied, insatiable. We have already talked about all this in "Clarifications at risk of extinction" and do not want to come back to it but only to point out that it is the dominants, the dissatisfied and insatiable who condition the behavior of human beings and that it is therefore from them that substitutions take place because they are men substituted in capital (end of the anthropomorphization process) and that therefore insatiability persists in them with the constant need for incrementation.

But things are even more complex. In her book, *What Remains of Our Dreams*, Flore Vasseur⁴ highlights that the creation of the Web by Aaron Swarts results from the realization of a project by a teenager aspiring to the union of all humans and the desire that they do not lose their inner child. He wanted to save the world. Such an affirmation in the non-continuity with others could only appear as a repression. Also he incurred all sorts of refusals, denials, embezzlements on the part of the dominants feeling called into question, which led him, still a teenager, to suicide. And the substitution mechanism flourishes without really encountering any obstacles and instead of the dreamed union we had unleashed enmity. The dominants, the followers of capital could not accept that their means of domination, the algorithms, be used for purposes other than their own because this is what allows to give shape and operate substitutions and to found in-

² K. Marx *Manuscripts of 1861-1863*, 1^o part, MEGA, II, 1 p. 26. In Ed. Sociales p.35, we have the following translation : «(...) we find interest-bearing money, money that poses money, therefore, from a formal point of view, capital.» ¶ But Marx wrote: "finden wir Zintragendes Geld, Gels das Gels setzt, also formel Capital". Consequently I translate as follows: "we find interest-bearing money, money that poses money, therefore formal Capital". Note that in German the comma is not after formel but after pose (*setzt*). To speak from a formal point of view is to refer only to the subjectivity of K. Marx, to his mode of relating to the object of his investigation. However, it is also fundamentally a question here of the mode of appearance of capital.

³ *Manuscripts of 1861-1863*, (Notebooks I to V) Ed. Sociales, 1979, p. 15 - Mega, 1976, Band 3, p. 9.

⁴ Éditions des Équateurs.

satiability particularly in education and instruction. In all cases the dominant-dominated relations conceal a latent enmity from where the serious danger of advocating a fight between the two to supposedly solve the problem.

Another example is provided by an article from *Le Figaro* (3-4. 12. 2022) "How social networks boost family life", the authors state:

The digital transformation is a cultural revolution that directly impacts the development of children who remain dependent on social interactions to build themselves. Both on the parents' side and on the child's side, a dynamic of insatiability has been set up.

The possibility of asserting oneself, of being recognized by posting photos of their children online encourages the development of insatiability, of an addiction where children are in fact denied, reduced to objects serving only as a foil – also a means of capitalizing on the child.

As for children, they use social networks in order to make themselves known, to have friends, but they are never satisfied because they never have enough, due to the lack of affectivity; the effective goal is recognition and the need for it is dictatorial and insatiable.

They serve as supports for the manifestation of the insatiability of capital and are in fact human beings in the process of being substituted capital. Given that for there to be substitution there must be an already constituted being, the substituted capital being is not, it becomes and its becoming consists in its distancing from its naturality, which will undergo a reduction but will not

be eliminated, leaving the possibility of a return of the repressed.

Given that a pre-existing being is necessary for a substitution to take place, the substituted capital being is not it becomes, it cannot be without a certain pre-existing naturality hence the possibility of a return of the repressed and its becoming corresponds to its distancing from its naturality in particular to eliminate affectivity, an essential component of the psyche. Hence a strong repression of naturality especially among the dominants which will diminish following its regression resulting from the completion of the substitution.

Examples of capital-men are dominant men like Elon Musk or Bill Gates. They are the ones who determine the social future, bypassing the State, being stronger than it. This is why it is not a question of hyper-individualism because that would still maintain a link with man, but of an impersonal hyper-domination.

Through the substituted men, capital imposes itself as an obvious fact that cannot be questioned. Consequently, its permanence is assured; there can be no questioning about an extinction, the dominants are blind to it. They are all the more so since affectivity, the psyche are increasingly reduced in them, attenuating their perception of reality. Similarly, the Freudian unconscious cannot arise due to an absence of contradiction, reality being accepted as it is, since it is that of capital, reflection on itself, actualizing a kind of society of the spectacle. The power to access the absolute must be reflecting in itself.

The separation from nature is best expressed in the question of reproduction as we see with the demand for medically assisted procreation for lesbians, gays, transsexuals, bisexuals with the desire for the re-

alization of the augmented man, but it is still a human dynamic, pathological. It will therefore be substituted, with regard to sexuality with the artificial uterus⁵ which allows the mass production of perfect children, and multiple varied sexual relations thanks to cybersexuality.

Finally, to bring into harmony an increasingly artificial environment and the beings who live there, development for example of a mass production of robot dogs.⁶ Everything will be a manifestation of capital.

To finish, let us not forget that capital substitutes itself in all areas of human life and that it therefore also operates in the so-called spiritual domain. To compensate for their suffering and the despair of having only a brief life, they have conceived an eternal life for after their death. Now K. Marx repeatedly points out the desire for eternity (*Unvergänglichkeit, Ewigkeit*) of capital.⁷ We can say that it is inevitable because it poses itself in the mode of incrementation and conceiving things in this way the positing of a certain quantum of time implies the generation of another, indefinitely.

Certainly all this takes place at the level of the dominants but inevitably affects the dominated because of the limitations placed on their naturality and because it engenders the possibility of the manifestation of an enmity, the cause of another form of extinction.

The greatest danger of extinction that threatens the species is its substitution by capital, because it is an absolutely invis-

ible threat because it is not conscious. Let us recall in this regard that by producing capital the species aimed to escape the imprint of an old threat, that of extinction, in order to escape from nature, its support, and thus ensure its security. So nothing is resolved. The destruction of the planet leads some like Elon Musk to recommend going to colonize Mars but there, again, dissatisfaction, insatiability and substitution will manifest themselves due to the persistence of enmity.

According to the implacable rationality of the dynamics of substitution by capital, only an unforeseen but not improbable event, reactivating our naturality can allow to relaunch the dynamic capable of saving us: the inversion, due to the activation of the greatest force of the species, its psyche.

Only the inversion implying the non-separation with nature, that between form and content, the reduction of production and the end of its autonomization linked to the disappearance of the insatiability resulting from the restoration of continuity, can allow the full reaffirmation of naturality, therefore to escape any substitution and to be in satisfaction, outside of any insatiability in the presence and continuity with nature.

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⁵ www.youtube.com/watch?v=O2RIvJ1U7RE.

⁶ www.youtube.com/watch?v=ECgSiBZtwpM.

⁷ It is obvious that the reference to eternity is not appropriate, since there was a beginning, and I do not share this conception of death.