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## INTERVIEW N° 1 WITH JACQUES CAMATTE BY CERCLE MARX

CERCLE MARX: So, Jacques, you were born in 1935 in Cannes.

JACQUES CAMATTE: No, not in Cannes.

CM: Not in Cannes?

JC: No, nonsense. That's Wikipedia.

CM: Exactly (laughs), that's where I wanted to start.

JC: No, I was born in 1935, that's true. But I was born in Plan-de-Cuques, near Marseilles.

CM: So why does Wikipedia have false information about you?

JC: On Wikipedia over the past twenty years I've read different biographies of myself. One in particular said that I've ended up in a Buddhist monastery.

CM: I think I saw that information too. So it's completely false?

JC: Buddhism for me is unbearable. Buddhism is complete repression.

CM: Repression of impulses, of sensuality, of the body?

JC: Of everything! It's the lack of permanence. And if you aren't permanent, how can you find yourself? That's when you need an external rule.

CM: (Laughs) So you are born in 1935.

JC: Yes, that part is true.

CM: So you are two generations older than me.

JC: Ah yes (Laughs). I have granddaughters that are about your age, one of them who is a mother, which makes me a great-grandfather.

CM: I'm really very honored to...

JC: What is that photo?

CM: This is a photo of Bordiga.

JC: I've never seen that photo.

CM: I mean well a drawing, a sketch.

JC: That's a photo that was taken at Piombino in '58. So in '58, he was 69 years old.

CM: So, speaking of which, in relation to Bordiga, you say in this book Bordiga and the Passion for Communism, that he didn't go through to the end of his possibilities, of his potentialities.

JC: Yes.

CM: Can you retrace your approach to Bordiga and the importance he had for you?

JC: Oh, for me he was decisive. Oh yes, he was an extraordinary man. He was against the cult of the individual, and he pushed it through to the end. He would border on saying that the Self is nothing and other abhorrent things without realizing that by this, he was rejoining the becoming of capital, which negates the individual. It exalts the individual on one side, but negates him [or her or them] in reality. And so affirming the individual's capacities would have put him in an even more awkward position. It is possible to think that he [Bordiga] saw himself as a leader, a great man, a great theoretician, etc. But really no. He was traumatized by the development of leaders, of the cult of personality within the party, by certain people in the USSR. And so this is why he didn't go through to the end of his thinking. He had extraordinary intuitions, like in '51 he said already "we have built enough, we must destroy." What the people of degrowth are developing now. And it's been 60 years that we know that. In '51! Can you imagine? And the militants used to a Marxism of the development of the productive forces couldn't understand this extraordinary moment, this perception he had of the danger. That a certain development of the productive forces was necessary, but past a certain point was deadly. He denounced the mineralization of nature, I mean all of that. He was a really really human man. It's rare to see men of that stature develop such an affectivity.

CM: Effectively you reproach Bordiga for having in a sense negated the individual.

JC: Yes.

CM: Of having rejoined capital by negating individuality.

JC: Without meaning it.

CM: Yes, without meaning it, unconsciously. You explain that communism will reconcile human individuality with the collective.

JC: Yes. That is the essence. And even Marx didn't go through to the end, for me, in this dimension of his thought, the *Gemeinwesen*. If individuality doesn't have the dimension of community, the *Gemeinwesen*, then there will always be a need for mediation, and then it's over, it's over. If there is mediation, there will be manipulation; there will be the organization of the leader. While if all individuality, and even all beings now keep their natural dimension, staying more or less rooted, they will have a communitarian dimension. I even see this in the discourse on the common good, on the collective, which says that the individual was good at first for progress etc, but that now individualism has become an obstacle. I tell myself, this is unbelievable. They always stay in these terms; they can't reach this thinking. This is because, from the theoretical point of view, people can think the totality, multiplicity and unity. But they can't pass the community, because without the community, all that can unify, can function, only by mediations. Without the community, this means that individuality posits itself already as *mein Wesen*. It posits and manifests itself as *mein Wesen*.

CM: It exists only by a collectivity that preexists it?

JC: No, it's not that. It's that it doesn't have the community dimension inscribed in it. And because of this, there is mediation between total community and individuality. As for multiplicity, as it is made up of all these individualities, there aren't any more problems. And that is why I focus on this process of knowing. Excuse me, what is that text?

CM: Ah yes, it's your text; I was going to read it to you after.

JC: Ah yes, because I couldn't see it.

CM: April 1977, and then March 1977, it's on "Beaubourg, the Cancer of the Future," I was going to read it to you after. But to come back to Bordiga, you effectively explain well that his was a negative conception of the individual, but really communism will be the reconciliation of the individual with the community.

JC: Ah yes, what capital does is the negation of the individual. Capital could dominate, and can dominate ever better insofar as it is not even capital but its autonomized form that dominates, only if individuals are interchangeable, undifferentiated. And that is why one of the illnesses the most characteristic of our epoch is cancer. So what is cancer? It is a phenomenon of undifferentiation.

CM: And of individualism. We have a part that separates itself from the community of the whole that forms the organism.

JC: It is cells that multiply for themselves, for themselves, for themselves.

CM: If Bordiga fell into a cult of Lenin, into a Leninism, is it in part because of this?

JC: It's because for him, it was the only way to get out. Lenin, in '17, is the one to say, "OK, we must take power." He's also the one to say in '17, "it's time to stop the war, we must conclude a peace," while everyone was saying, "no, we must defend the territory." And he says "No, it's of little importance" because he understood that if they made peace, it would have huge reverberations in the West. Especially given that at that time there were huge strikes, there was the development of the women's movement, and so the intervention of women. So it was a good thing that they made peace with Brest-Litovsk, but it was three months too late. That's my impression of Lenin, that he was able to understand the situation and the moment.

CM: And so, was October 1917 a real communist revolution, or a false revolution?

JC: The importance of Bordiga is in his analysis of a double revolution, meaning that it was both the accomplishment of what the bourgeoisie would have wanted and the assumption

of power by the proletariat. But the proletariat didn't have the infrastructure, which is given by the bourgeois revolution. And that is why it was capital that the revolution burst in the West. At that moment, Lenin stepped to the side, for the English, the Germans, or the French, except they weren't up to the task. The Bolsheviks weren't, either, actually. This was a good thing, but it was insufficient. They didn't keep Marx's position, from the latter part of his life.

CM: The drafts of responses to Vera Zasulich?

JC: That's it. If they had maintained that, instead of seeing the peasantry in a kind of Marxist approach to the French peasants, they could have seen that it could have been an important lever for pushing forward the community, and we wouldn't have had the errors that were committed in Ukraine. Those are the problems when we don't think ideas through to the end. What prevents theoreticians from thinking through to the end?

CM: For you, Bordiga is the one that takes up Marx's method and accomplishes it, in a way? He rethinks contemporary problems based on Marx's method? When you speak of invariance, you speak of methodological continuity. Invariance is the structural invariance through which Marx's method remains pertinent for understanding the world.

JC: Yes, but it is especially the invariance of a perspective. It's the invariance of the theory that at first was posited with the appearance of the proletarian class in 1848. And as a project that has not been realized, there is invariance. This is why I later got out of this frame, and on the site there is an explication of the different moments of the affirmation of invariance.

CM: Speaking of which, regarding this you say "we must irrevocably leave this world, but in proclaiming this we still remain in dialogue with Bordiga." You are then still in dialogue with Bordiga?

JC: And with Marx.

CM: Some have understood this as a rupture.

JC: I never ruptured! But I am not satisfied with what they did. Even Marx. I wrote in

"Emergence of Homo Gemeinwesen," I showed the limits of Marx on the question of capital. Same for value. I said that Marx had exposed the development of value but he hadn't explained the origin of value. Of value tout court, because at first the movement of value is effected above all from use-value. Accumulation through the potlatch, those are material elements, that allow the great man to affirm himself. Products will acquire value gradually by ascending towards this superior being. And he [this being] will distribute them, and after we have what I call the horizontal movement. It's complicated!

CM: And this you bring back to the accumulation of capital?

JC: No, I have criticized this term "accumulation," it's a very bad term. What we must say is the reproduction of capital. Because when capital is accumulated, it's a congestion, so it can't develop any more, so it doesn't look for accumulation. It looks for its reproduction, and so each time it looks to reproduce itself on a bigger scale.

CM: Expanded reproduction?

JC: Yes, the movement of capital is  $K$  that becomes  $K$  plus delta  $K$ .

CM: So you say that we must irrevocably leave this world. If the world is the place of all places, if the world is now obviously that of capital that has become a totality, how can we leave this world? Do you think you've left this world?

JC: Yes. We cannot leave this world materially, but we leave it insofar as we no longer accept its givens. But we are forced to live. But for example, I live here, I don't vote, it's been 27 years that I haven't gone to vote, but I am on good terms with the mayor. That it's him and not another it's all the same. That's that world. And I live on the outside, as far as I can, because it's obvious that I am caught up by taxes, by this, by that. So by all my thinking process, by all my behavior, I don't feel myself reproducing this society. But even more than before, with the process of inversion, I move on to something else.

CM: Participation in elections is an alienation, a way to reproduce this capitalist society, that is why you stop all that.

JC: Absolutely. And I said this with Bordiga, the rejection of democracy for me was visceral. The only thing that Bordiga had, well, was a discourse that was a little moral regarding the “democratic lie.” And I wrote to him, “no, lets not talk about the democratic lie, but instead mystification,” giving him plenty of examples from Hegel and Marx, I don’t remember. Mystification. All the more because it is the whole dynamic of the movement of capital, that things appear as decisive, with their relations. And Marx says that behind relations between things there are relations between men and women.

CM: That’s commodity fetishism.

JC: There you go. And because of this now people live in total mystification, since they are only in relations with things.

CM: And democracy is the political state system that completes this, in a certain way.

JC: It’s not that it completes this, but that it allows it. Because now it goes beyond this. Democracy no longer exists. Formally it exists, we see elections and everything. But what is decisive in life? It’s not political relations, it’s economic domination.

CM: The domination of the commodity?

JC: The commodity dominates nothing. It’s capital. That is an error, to see the commodity in that way. The commodity is an ancient category. Marx says well in his chapter “The Results of the Immediate Process of Production,” what we call the new Chapter 6, that commodities existed before capital, and that capital makes capital commodities. But after, it is a moment in the metamorphosis of capital. There is the commodity-form, the money-form, and the productive form, meaning the productive process.

CM: Capital is value that takes on several forms, that metamorphoses, and the commodity is only one form among others.

JC: Yes, but it is no longer decisive at all, because the commodity can exist only if it has its

concreteness. But capital no longer has a concreteness, other than its growth.

CM: Capital becomes an impersonal social relation that still has concrete effects, and this you speak of. You write in March 1977, “We meet with the essential project of capital dominating the future, otherwise its power can be questioned and its domination can not be real. This is already included in the concept of capital but it is only at a given moment in its life that it can realize it.” And then you add, “the future of capital is the complete uprooting of men in such a way that they will be fully liberated and will be put in whatever direction, will effect whatever possibility that is imposed on them. We will have human life without being human, like cancer... maximum alienation and life excluding the proper life of the being where he [or she or they] developed.” Do you think, Jacques, that we are at the end of capitalist uprooting?

JC: Oh yes!

CM: Now that we are in 2019.

JC: It can be seen particularly in the most spectacular way in the problems of reproduction and relations to children. We start to consider the child not as a living being but as an object.

CM: This is the thingification of capital?

JC: Yes, that we produce. So you have medically assisted procreation, all that. And the ultimate goal is the artificial uterus, where it would be a kind of cash box, you put in coins or something else, a credit card, and you program according to your wealth the type of kid you want. What stronger uprooting could we get than that?

CM: But do you think that we are at the end of this process or that it is simply really starting now?

JC: Oh but it is realizing itself, so it cannot go further. We can go further in this realization, in the technical development of this project, but we cannot go further than this uprooting. The problem that is posed is extinction, not only linked to the climate factor, but it is that the species as it posited itself 300 thousand years ago ends!

CM: Do you in a way think that capital has become a totality that no longer has an outside, that no longer has an exterior, and that in relation to this totality class struggle is now only an internal phenomenon to capital, that the real opposition for you becomes that between humanity and capital. The real decisive opposition is no longer between classes?

JC: Yes, and now I go even further, in the sense that we cannot posit an opposition between humans and capital because when we are in this dynamic, we are still in the dynamic of enmity, and to oppose something is to reinforce it.

CM: There you go. Meaning that capital absorbs everything to be able to reinforce itself.

JC: You have to recognize it! To oppose it you have to recognize it, and so you keep it living. The old problem is to make something else outside.

CM: But how can you succeed in making something outside once it has become the whole?

JC: It has become the whole, but there is always this deep root that is the naturalness of the human, that makes it so that from that you can create something else.

CM: This is what you have tried to do. What I have understood reading here and there in various communist journals is that some have understood that you have broken off, that you had an approach of rupture, of distancing, that you had become a hermit. But that is not how it needs to be understood. You never broke off with the fight against capital.

JC: But I saw that now we can no longer fight against capital. Not because capital is too strong but because it keeps it living.

CM: Fighting against capital inevitably ends up reinforcing it.

JC: Absolutely.

CM: So we must look for something else to be able to struggle.

JC: If I oppose myself to you, I allow you to exist. But if I don't oppose myself to you and I let you do what you want without bothering you, well then it's over. Me, I can develop

myself. This is the big problem; we always have immense theoretical problems. It's not the negation that is important. It is the affirmation. I affirm myself because I feel that that is what needs to be done and I let you affirm yourself, but I won't compete with you. I don't need to negate you. Here is a subtle dialectic because the moment I negate you is the moment I affirm you, and so I don't affirm myself. Because to affirm myself is to affirm myself in my reality and not in a dynamic of opposition to you, etc.

CM: So, far from representing the negation of capitalism, the class struggle for you is its reinforcement.

JC: Yes, but it's no longer around, the class struggle.

CM: I was going to talk to you about the movement of the yellow vests. How do you interpret what is happening now?

JC: To tell the truth, I know very little about the yellow vest movement. I haven't studied it. But what I felt at the beginning was important was the fact of totally refusing the world as it is. And it is the need for recognition, and it is pretty extraordinary, the fact that we put on a yellow vest that renders visible, and that they go on the roundabouts shows the problem of being seen. But it cannot open onto something else; it maintains itself in opposition to others.

CM: The yellow vest movement, as I knew it on the ground, at the base, was spontaneous, very anti-establishment. It was very subversive, really an opposition to this system, but I think that it was completely absorbed, recuperated, turned around, incorporated into capital, and that this would support your thesis according to which the more you oppose capital, the more capital absorbs that contestation to use it as an instrument of valorization.

JC: That's why I always had sympathy for this movement. I didn't write anything because I didn't have any solid facts, but I always had lots of sympathy for the movement that preceded that one, the "Nuit Debout" [Night Awake] movement. But there you go, it doesn't go through to the end, and because it

stays in this whole theme not only of this society but also of the development of capital. What is needed is to get out of it. It must be said that it is true that the community has been destroyed and is no longer operational, but the natural communitarian dimension still exists. It's from there that we must go. It's an affirmation that negates—no, not negates, but is outside what is happening.

CM: Do you not think that the Nuit Debout movement, in contradistinction to the yellow vest movement, was from the start oriented ideologically, even constructed ideologically, by antifascism, by the left-wing of capital that Bordiga critiqued?

JC: Yes but there as well I don't know the movement very well. The only thing to which I was sympathetic, was, through the intermediary of a philosophy prof that I listened to on the radio criticizing the movement because it talked, talked, talked. I found that amazing, that they talked to try to find an agreement. What is important is that everyone expresses themselves and that in the end each person can check others that may have different opinions, as long as there is a convergence towards a goal. While in the democratic dynamic, at a certain moment we have elections, where those with the most votes are those that are right. It's completely abhorrent; it's despotism.

CM: Democracy as it is presented in our current society of capitalist relations of production is a despotism?

JC: Yes but even at its beginnings, Greek democracy was supported by the existence of slaves.

CM: Which brings us back to Engels's book *The Origin of the Family, the State, and Private Property* or the "Critique of the Gotha Program" where Marx affirms that ———— the last form of domination of capital is democracy. Commercial and capitalist society begins and ends with democracy? You say that "there are two major characteristics of the contemporary epoch, that is the dissolution of one part and the emergence of another." So as far as the dissolution goes, I understand well: it's

that of social relations, of naturalness, everything that Marx anticipated. But what is this emergence?

JC: Let's say that dissolution poses the possibility of an emergence. We see this well in all the abhorrent forms of affirmation that are apparently in rupture with this society. We speak of common good, etc. Emergence is a potentiality. From the fact of dissolution, it is possible that there remains something to call us back. To use Freudian language, the repressed which is the natural community will reaffirm itself. That's the return of the repressed.

CM: The community has been shattered. It is there in us in an internal way, a repressed that will come back out.

JC: Yes. The whole dynamic is there. What is education if not the repression of naturalness? As much on the individual level as on the social level, we are in the presence of this rejection. In order to affirm ourselves we are obligated to repress our naturalness, so not to live in this society.

CM: Capitalism destroys nature. Communism will be the reconciliation finally found of the human with nature. But how can we think about this transition phase? Marx exposes the phases of transition in the "Critique of the Gotha Program," but you, Jacques, how do you see the transition phase?

JC: I think that there is no longer a transition phase. Meaning that we start right away. I am in that dynamic. I reforest, I try to restore the soils, I have a property that is pretty big, it allows me to do this, and it is this that allows me to live. When I go into the city, I am sick, even though Cahors is a small city. So when I go to Montpellier or Toulouse! (Sigh) It's terrible. Or when I see photos of cities like Chicago or Hong Kong. So that's it. There is no transition phase. There is a concept that is very important for me, which is inversion. We have lived for thousands of years on a process of separation from nature, of antagonism with nature, within the community, within the couple, etc. All this must be inverted.

CM: The overthrow of capital must be overthrown.

JC: Yes, that's inversion.

CM: The separation of the human from the cosmos, from naturalness that you describe so well in *Invariance*, must be overthrown. This allows me to bounce back with another question. What text of Marx's is the most important for you, or which one has had the most impact? When I read *Invariance*, I get the impression that the strongest influence is that of the 1844 manuscripts.

JC: Yes. The 1844 manuscripts were really an illumination for me.

CM: Because you talk a lot about pleasure, and it's true that Marx in the 1844 manuscripts posits the realization of communism as pleasure.

JC: It's the whole development of the repression of pleasure, and that's why when they said that I had become Buddhist, I [reacted so strongly]. Buddhism is the negation of pleasure. And that I cannot.

CM: So you would say the 1844 manuscripts.

JC: Yes. And also the notes on James Mill. The two are important. But a chapter, a really remarkable text that that was decisive for me, for the development of my whole analysis of capital, even more, is the fragment of the primitive version of the contribution to [the critique of] political economy, what we call the *Urtext*. The original text in which Marx takes an original approach, as I indicated in "Capital and Community," to the subject of the origin of capital. He gives evidence that value can develop itself etc., but that it has a limit in the sense that it cannot posit itself as a community. And capital, by getting a hold of labor-power, can found a community, which is what I later called the material community of capital.

CM: A false community? It created a community, but it's in the end an illusion?

JC: Yes, a fictitious, artificial community. Even more than fictitious, it's artificial. But that is all of economic development since the beginning. It's the replacement of human rela-

tions with economic phenomena. It can be seen very well with—

CM: The thingification of the human is substantial with the history of civilization as capitalist civilization. So you would say that the more we advance in history, the more mystified, misleading, illusory do social relations become? Because you also talk a lot about falseness. When you attack capital, you explain well that the falseness of human relations is in the social relation since it tends more and more towards being thingified, to be confounded with a relation between things. You explain that well. And so, would you say that currently we are at the paroxysm of this commodity falseness of capitalist social relations? There is no more truth? There is no more authenticity?

JC: There is no more humanity. The big problem is that in order to be able to dominate humans, affectivity had to be eliminated. And that is the formidable turning point, with the development of cybernetics. It's still interesting to know the project, which is that of telling ourselves, "humans left to their own devices do stupid things, like the Second World War, etc. So let's update something." And that is abstraction. Let's call it a rationality, no longer an affectivity. Affectivity must be eliminated; it is what makes humans ungovernable.

CM: The carnal, sensual, emotional, affective dimension is all replaced by capitalist abstractions, by rationalization pushed to the extreme. The calculating mind, the mathematization of the world.

JC: The development of all the algorithms. What they call artificial intelligence is actually the autonomization of the algorithms.

CM: And so the paroxysm of the domination of capital.

JC: Yes, but I've repeated, especially since the '80s and '90s, that for me and capital, I spoke at the beginning of a potential death. But capital is dead. Because there is no longer a proletariat. Wage-labor is no longer the essential element. The selling of labor-power it's... So it is the autonomized form, the form of incremen-

tation that is everywhere. We see it for example in the dynamic of the augmented human.

CM: Transhumanism?

JC: There you go.

CM: The augmentation of the human by technology that arrives to in the end accomplish the thingification of the human by the commodity.

JC: And it's its realization, and that is fabulous. What Günther Enders talked about: the obsolescence of the human. The natural human is obsolete. It no longer serves any purpose.

CM: The natural human, the rooted human no longer serves the interests of capital. It [the natural human] doesn't enter into it's [capital's] calculation program.

JC: It's not only accepted by the dominant, but also by the dominated, meaning that they want to be augmented to be more powerful, realizing themselves better. I was very impressed by a guy in South Africa that didn't have any legs, that had made prosthetics and that developed himself with extraordinary rapidity. And so there were some people that said to themselves, "We should take off our legs to replace them with those, because then we could do more feats."

CM: It's a overcoming of the natural limits of the human. Do you see in it an alienation or the conditions of possibility for emancipation? Will modern technology allow humanity to emancipate itself?

JC: It will allow it to destroy it [humanity].

CM: And you talk about the new chapter ["Results of the Immediate Process of Production"] in which Marx shows well that science and modern technology are incorporated into capital. The mechanic autonomization is nothing but an instrument of capital to increase its domination over humans. So you don't see any possibility of salvation for humanity? We are right to be technophobic in a sense. I am here in your home, there are no technological devices, and we are in a very calm, natural corner.

JC: Well downstairs I do have a computer. You see the problem. How do I live? People no longer communicate by the post, etc. If I shut myself off like a friend in Italy who doesn't want to get a computer, with that he has a terrible reasoning, because he says the computer makes you an idiot etc, things like that. But what do I do? It is complicated, for example, to get a letter, I have to go to Pressac to buy stamps, ten kilometers from here, and twenty round-trip. I did it but from the moment I got a computer and that I got access to the Internet, well then yes I write texts that I can send him [Camatte's friend in Italy]. I have to print them out and send them to him. It's not money that is missing but time. So I do that but without thinking that it is emancipatory. It's a tool that capital gives me to survive.

CM: We are in the world of augmented survival. So would you say that modern technology is completely negative as soon as it is completely put in motion by capital or are there still somewhat positive points in modern technology? Should we be completely technophobic?

JC: I think that the problem of technology is delicate because at the origin technology was what allowed humans to augment their continuity with nature. André Leroi-Gourhan illustrated this very well. And after there is the intervention, visibly, of capital, etc. So we cannot say necessarily that everything is negative. We need to say, "well what are we going to do? Let's see what we can use," and then after we'll see what is usable. Now it's all up in the air, because I don't know into what ensemble I will be putting it [technology].

CM: What are the elements of modern technology that we can re-appropriate with a perspective of human emancipation? What will we keep of this capitalist world?

JC: It's complicated because the technology developed by capital is not in complete discontinuity with the technical movement of the species. It's this internal substratum at the base that we need to consider, to see how we can use it. Now I think that it's a little abstract to say how. It's in the concreteness of development

that we'll say what we can use. For example, it is obvious to me that we will reject medically assisted procreation.

CM: There you go, because behind there is the critique of progress. Does technology really emancipate humans? Does progress tout court emancipate humans? The specificity of the left-wing of capital is after all to say yes to capital's every step forward, notably to medically assisted procreation. So how can we explain to people on the left-wing of capital that medically assisted procreation is not a progress that will emancipate humanity but is instead a step towards the capitalist thingification of the human. So the progress of capital is the regression of humans?

JC: Yes, the notion of progress... These are complex dynamics that attach themselves at the beginning to the problem of work. Work at first appears as the activity that will allow salvation. For example, the guy who has debts in the Athenian epoch, he can save himself by working for you. So work is a way to get out of servitude. But if there is no more servitude, there is no more work, there is no more progress. The notion of progress is a borderline repressive notion, because you must progress. It is not something that is natural.

CM: Marx says in the Grundrisse that all progress in civilization allows capital to valorize itself. He doesn't say it exactly like that but the idea is there. The progress of civilization increases the domination of capital over labor. Humans cannot not transform nature in order to survive, in order to satisfy their needs. In a way, they emancipate themselves from nature, and so they dominate nature. They make the acquisition of a form of liberty in relation to nature, but does modern technology not have a role to play in this process of the liberation of humans from natural constraints?

JC: What are natural constraints?

CM: Hunger, thirst, primary needs.

JC: Are those constraints? It's giving a process of life. Indeed we do need to drink, eat. It is

not a constraint; it is imposed on me by no one.

CM: It is part of the natural order. So does this notion of natural order make any sense in Marx? Is nature not something that is purely social and historical in Marx?

JC: Oh yes, that is another aspect of the question. But it is obvious that in any case the notion of nature has a social foundation. Meaning that along the course of development of different societies, each society has had its way of positing nature.

CM: Humans cannot not transform nature in order to survive. In order to satisfy their needs, they emancipate themselves from "natural constraints" through labor; through technology and in a way this process ends up turning back against them and subjugating humans themselves. This is called capitalism. Do you agree in saying that capitalism is a process of the transformation of nature, a process of the mastering of nature that does not know how to master itself, that has simply escaped the mastery of humans?

JC: In any case, that's the dynamic of capital; it's escaping everything.

CM: The conditions of labor autonomize themselves in the face of the human who can no longer master this process. The human becomes an appendage to the machine.

JC: That's it. From the moment we cut continuity with the totality, when there is no longer the participation that Lucien Lévy-Bruhl talked about regarding what he called the primitives, and for which he was enormously criticized, well then ersatz must be found. That is the problem of artificiality. To start from the beginning, from the moment when there is no longer immediacy, when there is a break, something must be found. Here is where is posed the problem of finding an organization to reshape a whole. I like a citation that I have maybe attributed to Bordiga in my head, but I can't find it again. He may have written, before the '20s that "there will be socialism the day we stop worrying about organizing." Julien Coupat asked me where that's from and

I told him I would look, but I haven't found it.

CM: That's normal, it can be understood, given your age. Your memory may be starting to play tricks on you.

JC: No.

CM: No, it's not age.

JC: No, no, no, it would be rather a phenomenon of false recollection.

CM: So you met Bordiga, you were in correspondence with him?

JC: No, I collaborated for thirteen years with him.

CM: Would you say that he was a friend? What was the relationship you had with him?

JC: He was a comrade, which is something extraordinary. Speaking psychologically, if we were to psychoanalyze, we could say that he played the role of the ideal father. I don't deny it. But that wasn't sufficient. He had this extraordinary affectivity with everyone, really. I would see him with the braccianti, the agricultural workers from Apulia, he would hug them. But these weren't hugs that you give just when you see each other; this was really [something special].

CM: He was human.

JC: That man lived. It was unbelievable. It was really something remarkable.

CM: So Bordiga passed away in...

JC: In '70.

CM: Yes, there you go. He's an author that I discovered not that long ago. There are some of his texts that have terribly contemporary significance. Notably "Marxism of the Stammerers." I'm not sure if you remember it. In it, he explains well how all these "innovations" that present themselves as innovations of Marxian thought in fact constitute regressions.

JC: Yes, you cite that but there are also from my point of view extraordinary texts like "The Human Species and the Earth's Crust", which anticipates the Rome Club and even more contemporary events. And there are others.

CM: His critique of antifascism has terribly contemporary import, in the sense that the an-

tifascist gesticulations forget to make the precision that they combat a capitalist form that has disappeared since 1945 and that we currently live under the reign of democratic domination. Meaning that antifascism intervenes ideologically as an instrument of valorization of capital's democracy. He says that at that time we had fought against fascism, but we felt an "even greater" danger coming, called antifascism.

JC: Oh yes, Bordiga said that the worst product of fascism was antifascism. I completely agree. Yes, for me, Bordiga is an illumination. It allowed me to enter, to be outside in particular. Even before the split with Damen, comrades in the Italian Left has written in *Battaglia Comunista* I think "with neither Truman nor Stalin." And that suited me. For me it was six of one, half a dozen of the other. He was the only one; he inserted himself in the human process of society, rather than enter into the defense or fascism. While there we were on the outside. And that gave me an internationalist perspective that goes back to 1848, through the Second and Third International... It wasn't something in the now. Not that I am against contemporary thought, I think that we can find things that haven't been said before, but this was important.

CM: When you leave the French Communist Party [Camatte was not a member of the PCF, but rather the PCInt] in November 1966, is this also due to a break with Bordiga? Did you judge that the Communist Party at the time was moving too far away from Bordiga's methodology? And so you decided to leave?

JC: Yes, it's that the whole development of the party was done in a rupture with Bordiga's deep perspective.

CM: And in the end with the contestation of capitalism, because what we now call the Communist Party is a capitalist shell.

JC: On top of that, it proceeded with this idea that "from the moment there is no party there is nothing." But with the whole youth insurrectionary movement of the 60s, and in relation to May '68—

CM: Well perfect, I was going to ask you about that. May '68, for you, Jacques...

JC: Oh, it's extraordinary.

CM: Extraordinary at first, before seeing the fall, the recuperation? How did you experience May '68?

JC: In May and June '68, I was in Paris and I remember May 13th I was at the demonstration. We were leaving from Barbes, which wasn't far from the high school where I taught, the Lycée Jacques Decour. And so I'm there waiting, and then all of a sudden I see these young boys, no older than thirteen arriving; they were my students in seventh grade, you see!

CM: What did you teach?

JC: I taught biology and geology. And so I kept them with me and we were happy. Then came these people from the OCI, the International Communist Organization, the Trotskyists. They were saying, "comrades, we must organize ourselves, what are you doing?" I said, "We're living," (laughs). That's it, the emergence of spontaneous natural life, people talking, that was May.

CM: May '68 is life against death, it's the community against the capitalist destruction of the community?

JC: Yes.

CM: That's pleasure, right?

JC: Yes, that's it. After people said, "ah, all the recuperation!" But what did they recuperate? They recuperated the theorizations developed about this subject. And that's why a movement that after all did express a rupture, it's the Situationists. Even if they didn't go through to the end.

CM: I was going to ask you, Guy Debord, Situationism: what did you make of that?

JC: It interested me as far as rupture goes. But for example for me on the theoretical level, it sucks.

CM: The Society of the Spectacle doesn't make the cut for you?

JC: No, no. He remained at the Lukácsian theorization of the commodity, that can't

work. It's in that way a parody of Marx's Capital.

CM: You don't think that the way he takes up the Marxian critique of commodity fetishism is pertinent?

JC: It's one form of it, but he doesn't go through to the end. But it's true that it was he who represented the most, and all the guys who wanted to impose themselves a little took it up. I understood completely the problem of May '68 and the Situationist's *détournement*, but only when I studied Freud. His first theorization of what we call his theorization of seduction, well seduction comes from a German word that we could translate as *détournement*. Meaning that seduction turns you away from what you are. And so for the Situationists, it's as if they were saying that we have been unconsciously turned away from reality.

CM: Because the Situationist practice of *détournement* consists of taking capital's official truths and turning them back.

JC: Yes, to be able to affirm oneself.

CM: It is a question of taking over modern culture to be able to negate it, right? So Debord for you, no?

JC: Oh no, no. Debord, no.

CM: You knew him?

JC: No. I had friends that were more or less in contact with him, an Italian Nico Valaport, who was good friends with [Gianfranco] Sanguinetti.

CM: Sanguinetti who wrote *On Terrorism and the State*.

JC: Yes and they were friends with Debord. It seems that around there they knew about *Invariance*.

CM: It's now 2019, Jacques. What was the impact of *Invariance* in those years?

JC: Oh, I have no idea. All I know is that *Invariance* had a certain reception and that in the last ten years it has even become "the mythical journal" or something like that. It had an importance from the theoretical point of view because almost all the groups that have tried to update things have more or less taken up the

analysis that I laid out in “Capital and Community.”

CM: There are some that wouldn’t know, but in terms of quantity of work, you put a considerable effort into Invariance. I have with me several issues, notably the one on the [“Results of the Immediate Process of Production”]. In terms of commentary and understanding and attempted clarification of the works of Marx, you’ve achieved a considerable work. It’s just an objective remark. How much time would you say you dedicate to this daily, if it is quantifiable?

JC: Well, not that much.

CM: Not that much time?

JC: No, I often work outside. I need to work outside. It bothers me to lock myself up. I don’t spend enough time reading to have the proper documentation to write.

CM: That’s now, but what about back then?

JC: Even back then. A little more, but I was teaching.

CM: Yes, you were a teacher, and on the side you published Invariance.

JC: Yes, I still needed to take care of my classes. I did still want to be up to the task that I had to do. And I did very much like my students.

CM: Did you know Maximilien Rubel?

JC: I saw him once or twice with Roger Dangeville, who was one of his secretaries. He’s a man that I really appreciate. Very sympathetic, and in particular on the question of communism in Russia, on the relation of Marx to Russia. He made a very interesting report.

CM: Dangeville was Rubel’s secretary?

JC: One of his secretaries. Rubel worked this way: He would do his work, and, needing references to Marx, he needed people to translate for him, even if he could read German perfectly well.

CM: Louis Janover as well?

JC: Yes, it’s possible but I knew him only later. So with Dangeville, what happened was—

CM: Because Dangeville was at Editions Sociales, right?

JC: No. So Dangeville would get these manuscripts. For example he got the manuscripts for the [“Results of the Immediate Process of Production”]. The Grundrisse had been published by Ditz Verlag in East Germany, but for example the [“Results of the Immediate Process of Production”] he [Dangeville] saw it and he did it [the translation] with a friend Jacques Angot, at a time when it wasn’t widely read. He photocopied it and kept a copy for himself, and that’s how it was translated. Which is how I got to work on the [“Results of the Immediate Process of Production”] even before it was published by Bourois.

CM: You were able to work on the [“Results of the Immediate Process of Production”] through the intermediary of Roger Dangeville, who wrote an introduction for 10|18.

JC: Yes and so after Dangeville published that with his preface, I had knowledge of it very quickly and he studied the question of the party in Marx and so it’s him that speaking, who poses the question of formal/historical party based on a letter, I don’t remember if its to [Indistinguishable, 1:07:20] or someone else. But I knew that text, and that allowed me to write in ’60 on the Origin and Function of the Party Form, thanks to Dangeville. He had a very good mastery of German, which people don’t understand, but since he had important theoretical a priori, he did some very bad translations, eliminating all the Hegelian language. He was, you know, anti-Althusserian, who looked for when Marx broke with Hegel.

CM: I was going to talk about Althusser after. Epistemological break or not, forget it, we won’t talk about it. Althusser is bad, we agree, right? Did you know that Althusser is still pushed in the universities? Oh it’s a catastrophe. Raymond Aron and Althusser in the university, still in the 2010s. So you also knew Roger Dangeville.

JC: Yes, he was in the party, we left together. And after we split up [with Dangeville], because they actually were reproducing the same themes.

CM: A fetishization of Lenin, a bit?

JC: No, not at all.

CM: Not for Dangeville.

JC: But a fetishization of organization, that there needed to be a center. I said, "but how many are we, at the scale of 2, 3 countries, meaning France, Belgium, and Italy? A maximum of 50 or so." So is it necessary to have a center, and a periphery? It's completely abhorrent. In the end, the center was he. No, I couldn't.

CM: To you he was a comrade.

JC: Oh, well yes, he was a comrade, a really cool, really nice guy. By the way I did see him later when I was in Provence, he came to see me well after he had stopped publishing [the journal] *Le Fil du Temps*. We remained good friends, but that's all, it was impossible, he had his a priori, it's impossible, and he always stayed in the old orbit. But he was really a remarkable comrade.

CM: When we were speaking of Debord earlier you made reference to the Lukácsian critique of reification. History and Class Consciousness, what did you make of that thing back in the day?

JC: I myself read it, but in the party no one was interested in Lukács. Lukács was outside, you know. I was interested in History and Class Consciousness, but I must admit that it was insufficient for me, like I said, to remain at the [level of the] commodity. It's like Sohn-Rethel, staying especially at the level of the commodity.

CM: And a thinker a bit more distant from the Marxian perspective, like Heidegger, for example?

JC: Oh well in the party, we didn't care about that. I got interested in Heidegger later, it's interesting. It's not what allows be to affirm anything, but I got interested in it for its own sake, and also because he was an author that had a great influence on Ernesto de Martino, who had a disciple, an important student, Placido Cherchi, whom I knew, who wrote books on de Martino and so gave me access to Heidegger by that intermediary. But otherwise, no. It's complicated. To see what there is

of interest, of importance in Heidegger, you have to really mine his thought to the end, it's complicated.

CM: You know that, if I'm not mistaken, in his letter on humanism, he recognizes that Marxist historiography, the Marxian method to history, is the most pertinent? Marxist historiography is the most pertinent historiographical approaches. Meaning that he recognizes that Marxism has a methodological pertinence superior to all other approaches to history.

JC: I've read that letter, but I don't remember that.

CM: He says that a dialogue with Marxism is necessary, that the Marxian methodological approach is basically the most pertinent for understanding history. Basically.

JC: Which is curious because that it more or less Sartre's approach.

CM: Oh, perfect. I was going to talk to you about Sartre. You have written, if I'm not mistaken, in July 1980, a text about Sartre's death.

JC: Yes.

CM: You conclude by saying, "being, liberty, conscience, these elements of Jean-Paul Sartre's problematic, have no sense for us. He testifies to a reality that is now past, subsisting in the actual [reality], vitalized by the combinatory of capital. What is now the matter is the passion to live." Meaning that you don't rejoice in Sartre's death but that you in a way consider his work...

JC: No, like I say I can't.

CM: Yes you say it in the beginning, "one cannot rejoice in the death of a man," but on the other hand, existentialism, there you go [it's bad].

JC: Yes, there you go. And no, because at the same time, it's interesting. This man tried to understand a fact, tried for the emancipation of humans. That's not nothing. We can't laugh. I'm thinking of a Communist Party militant, Jean-Pierre Axelrad, whose name was apparently Martin, actually. He wrote a book to critique the Critique of Dialectical Reason.

CM: There you go, because in Critique of Dialectical Reason, Sartre basically spends the

end of his life trying to reconcile his philosophy of liberty with determinist Marxist thought.

JC: And so Jean-Pierre starts by saying, “don’t worry, I haven’t read that.” And I find that horrible. To critique a book based on a representation we have, that’s a negation of Sartre, I find that incredible.

CM: You can’t judge a book without having read it.

JC: Even more so since I have to admit: when I was eighteen I was pretty fascinated by Sartre. I read *Being and Nothingness* and I heavily annotated it, I wanted to show basically that it was a philosophical mystery novel. But I put that to the side because I didn’t have time to take all that up again. But that doesn’t invalidate that. And his way of speaking, before the *situs*, of being and the situation.

CM: Yes, yes, of course, because liberty is in situation for Sartre.

JC: It’s being in situation and all that. And then there are extraordinary analyses in *Being and Nothingness* for example on the gaze.

CM: Thingification by the Other’s gaze.

JC: And we are ashamed of ourselves in front of the Other. As long as there is no Other we aren’t ashamed. It’s a first approach to shame that is interesting. The other was that of Günther Anders, who is extraordinary. Who goes much further, but it’s not the same historical period either, or maybe not, since it was in the ‘50s that he wrote that. He says “man has a Promethean shame because he wasn’t constructed.” That’s pretty incredible. And you see the problem we were talking about earlier, of the augmented human, who is ashamed because they have not been augmented, we can say now. There is an interesting group in Grenoble, *Pièces et Main D’oeuvre*, they wrote an interesting text on the problem.

CM: [“The Promethean problem of technology,”] right?

JC: Yes, that’s it, where the last denounce medically assisted procreation, etc. But they cite a transhumanist manifesto that says “in any case, now or later, if we don’t accept their dy-

namic we’ll stay at the level of the chimpanzee compared to today’s human. It’s terrifying! It’s the obsolescence of man. And on that Günther Anders is absolutely extraordinary, and well before the *situs*, too.

CM: You remember the myth of Prometheus, right? Prometheus and Epimetheus that steal from the gods the knowledge of technology, this divine power that places man in front of something supernatural. Prometheus ends up with his liver eternally devoured, punished by Zeus. Is that not what awaits us?

JC: But the end is also interesting. That in the end he is saved by Hercules, Zeus’s son.

CM: But then who is this Hercules that will come to save us, Jacques?

JC: There is no one that will save us; it is ourselves. We won’t be in a dynamic of salvation, but in a dynamic of life, of the recuperation of life.

CM: I was going to ask you, do you think that Marx’s thought is a kind of messianism, a bit religious, with a bit of a religious background? Does the revolution not come to replace Christ the savior of humanity? Is there not a kind of messianism in Marx?

JC: Oh yes, we can’t deny it. But that was because, well, we have to find who will get us out of this. It’s the proletariat. That’s the problem, Marx’s limit. That’s it. But all the rest of his theoretical work... But there too Marx is difficult. For example the Marx that writes about English policy in India, that creates the only revolution (of the Sepoys). He sees capital in a dynamic of acceleration. That’s why we see the whole current that we call accelerationism, that wants to do the same thing, push, push—

CM: It’s Toni Negri? It’s about supporting capital’s every step forward, even when it is a step towards the horrors of the commodity, since this will allow the rushing in of capital’s collapse, basically, if I understand correctly.

JC: That’s about it, yes. And that’s the break with Bordiga in 1951, when he puts an end to this dynamic. There you go, that’s what’s important. So there is this period there in Marx that is untenable for us now. But there is the pe-

riod at the end of his life in which he abandons the study of capital and applies himself to the study of primitive societies, starting the study of the obshchina, learning Russian and everything and poses the problem of trying to find another solution how to get out. Because he did realize that capital, like he said in his posthumous works, not published at the time, meaning the Grundrisse, can always surmount its contradictions, and so that the proletariat was a contradiction that would be surmounted. Something else must be found. And that's what interests us. He doesn't only study the obshchina, but also all the societies of South America, for example. The whole problem is there. That's what he writes in the Grundrisse, the famous chapter on the forms that precede capitalist production. That's an exceptional chapter. No one has used it.

CM: But you say that he abandoned the study of capital. He still tries to absolutely finish [Capital] Volume II. He struggles with this Volume II. In their correspondence, Engels asks him, "when are you going to finish it?"

JC: It's Engels that pushed him to finish, but he doesn't manage to do both at the same time. Even though everything is already in the Grundrisse.

CM: Some people maintain that the Grundrisse are in a sense superior to Capital. Do you share this opinion?

JC: No, I mean I don't think that way.

CM: There are commentators that say clearly that Capital is, I don't want to say a regression, but that it is less powerful methodologically than the Grundrisse.

JC: Well it's that in the Grundrisse, Marx's thought goes further. In this sense he goes even beyond what it is possible to think in his time. In Capital, he really stays in the situation he is examining.

CM: The "Fragment on the Machines," for example, on mechanical autonomization, that's in the Grundrisse.

JC: Yes, but it's also the '63 manuscripts. There are the Grundrisse but there are also the famous manuscripts of '63. There are the frag-

ments on the machines and everything. And it's in these manuscripts that there is this famous sentence, for me, right, where he says, "in all the social forms, in all societies where there is money, that can produce money, there is formal capital." In Editions Sociales they said there is "formally capital." And for me that's false. It's not formally, it's formal capital, which is where the extraordinary problem arises: how with this form acquire a content. That's everything that I developed in the movement of capital.

CM: And so you retranslated parts of the work, and you show well that translation, the relation to the German text, is essential.

JC: Oh yes, but that's something, I can be mistaken, I am not a specialist of the German language, far from it. I especially studied the German of Marx and Hegel. But outside of that I don't know. You see, translating Adorno, for example, that is for me impossible, because it's yet another language.

CM: Heidegger, too, must be something, with all his German neologisms. Can we come back very quickly to Sartre, because we don't realize in 2019, but at the time Sartre's influence was quite something.

JC: It's extraordinary!

CM: So you were more impressed by Sartre than by Heidegger at the time?

JC: Well we didn't talk about Heidegger.

CM: The one that was "front and center" was Sartre.

JC: It was Sartre, because Heidegger we knew existed because Sartre talked about him, but no. It was a social phenomenon. All the existentialist cellars and even a song that said "I want to be existentialist when I am in love with you." Coming down the Champs Élysées, you'd see a guy, "I want to be existentialist." It was formidable in terms of quantity. I remember in '51 or '52, there was a moment when there was a rupture of supply of gasoline, and a journal wrote "Essence [gasoline in French] Precedes Existence," (laughs). You simply needed to see where it was headed. Sartre's

thought was not well-known. It's so complicated, but his fundamental aim was—

CM: Man as project, man as liberty, as self-determination.

JC: There you go. It was a phenomenon. Existentialism was something extraordinary.

CM: There was an existentialist fad. But it I understand correctly, and I may be mistaken, for you Sartre was the embodiment of the bourgeois intellectual.

JC: I wouldn't say bourgeois because I don't reason with those categories any more, but he was the intellectual that couldn't stand his condition. And who rejects his—

CM: Who did everything to uproot it?

JC: That's especially it. And because I found that his book *The Words* was still something remarkable from that perspective. Every time he tried to surpass his petit bourgeois condition, as we'd say back in the day. And that is still pretty sympathetic. That's what bothers me in many people, it's that as soon as they are not completely in agreement, they reject and—

CM: Because he was a little wrong about the USSR, Sartre.

JC: Yes, yes, but that is obvious. We must take into account what he was looking for, because otherwise, and here is where I don't agree with Marx... It's true that humans have illusions about situations, but if we negate their representation, we negate them. The problem is to say, "yes, that's it..." But I recognize what they wanted, you know. If I reject from the get-go Sartre's project, I negate Sartre. It's not even worth the trouble to try to read him.

CM: And Sartre still finishes his life's work with *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, in which he tries to reconcile his thought with Marxist determinism. I wouldn't say that the two are in agreement, but in a sense Sartre and Marx say the same thing, namely that man is free, but in conditions that he has not chosen and that are posited by the development of history. We can bring them closer together. Existentialism is not the same thing as Marxian thought, we agree, but we can bring them closer together and did you see in existentialism a fruitful dia-

logue with Marxian thought, or did you simply consider it a little bourgeois fad.

JC: It was a trend. It's true, but I saw in Sartre's effort to surpass his condition, a real effort to emancipate the species. We must not reduce him. It's not because we don't agree with him that we are going to... If we don't care about the profound carnality of human beings we cannot progress. That's not true. I don't use the word progress in the sense of progress but in the sense of developing oneself, to arrive at something, you see.

CM: But at the end you still say, "what is now the matter is the passion to live." This passion for life was foreign to Sartre's existence?

JC: But he had it too, but it was masked by all this theory. Because existentialism is still the autonomization of existence. But without an essence we cannot live. Without substance to make a substantialist theory, you see.

CM: You write in a text, for which I don't have the citation, "following Bordiga, we affirm the invariance of Marxist theory, the theory of the proletariat, since its emergence in 1848. This brought us to try to develop all the possibilities contained in this theory." Is your whole approach, in a certain sense, Jacques, this one? That of developing all the possibilities that were contained in the work of Marx?

JC: Yes, indeed, as in the work of Bordiga. And then at a certain time, rightly or wrongly, I think that it's done and I am brought to do it myself.

CM: All alone to lead the struggle.

JC: Not the struggle, I don't struggle. But to understand, to develop, and the important moment when I find the solution, but here I am again indebted to Bordiga, not in a direct way but indirectly, it's in updating the concept of inversion. As I explain it in "Inversion et dévoilement" ["Inversion and Unmasking"], it's to show how in history the problem of inversion is posed particularly with Bordiga. Like in '51, he says, "we must no longer construct, but deconstruct, do something else." That's already a phenomenon of inversion. And so at that moment I can no longer sup-

port myself with Marx or on Bordiga. But they are always the bedrock without which I could not continue to do this theorization. And then it would be a negation of a dimension of the Gemeinwesen.

CM: Which is what you say, right, that you are always in a relation of dialogue with thinkers that gave you the conceptual and methodological tools to think the complexity of reality.

JC: Yes, for example I have been very impressed by the work of André Leroi-Gourhan. Actually he was the only person I met in my life, as he had a comrade, Marianne Dumartheray, who worked with him, I asked her if there wasn't a way she could get me a meeting with Leroi-Gourhan. And in '77 I did that and I was very happy because at first he was very perturbed because he had Parkinson's, so he was trembling. And then little by little he saw that I hadn't come for this or that but that I had come and that I considered the considerable extent of his work and that I wanted to ask him questions in relation to... and I said in particular, how could he see the movement of May '68 that broke with a dynamic of liberation that was in the end a dynamic that ended up with its opposite. And also for example the refusal of technology, the possibility of artisanal development, etc. I said, "how should one see the development of the species?" And so he told me something that stupefied me. He said, "Me, I have a 5,000 year plan for the species." And he was telling me, it was curious, that he had a little hope for the USSR in the sense that they could do something else. And here again it's not the fact that he was unique that is important. It's the fact that he was looking for something. And that's why he's a man [for whom] I have an enormous gratitude. For me, he is one of the most extraordinary thinkers to have existed. He's like Ernesto De Martino, you see, or Ashley Montagu, Lewis Mumford, you see. I don't simply remain at Marx. But these are men that really bring... With Leroi-Gourhan I am still in the course of... Because of his whole dynamic of showing that the liberation of things ends up

with dispossession he ends up even thinking that humans in their development would liberate themselves even from their arms and all that and would become almost like a simple brain, a head. There, there is something, you see. And I feel that there is the limit of his theorization, that he didn't see that each time there was liberation in development, there were also compensatory phenomena. And that he didn't see. So the problem is to see how it can be done now and now we can get out of this calamity.

CM: We were talking about the USSR very briefly. 1989, Jacques, the Berlin Wall falls. How did you react?

JC: Well...

CM: No surprises?

JC: No, for me it was obvious. The only thing was in the interpretations of the cause of the fall. There were lots of political phenomena but even the church appropriated the thing by saying that it was due to... It's true that there was the Christians' refusal through Solidarnosc, etc. But they forget something important, which is that the system was not viable from the moment of what we call the Southeast Asian Tigers' emergence, meaning Hong Kong, Singapore, etc, that were producing in large quantities and but cheaper than Czechoslovakia etc. Because I'm still with the MAIF [French schoolteacher's insurance], but when I would order for example a camera, it would come from Czechoslovakia. Now everything that is produced comes from China and those countries. So the system that was created controlled that, but it was possible only as long as there was this complementarity between Soviet despotism and the economic development of those countries. From the moment that system was no longer possible, those countries were attracted by other situations. And that is something that was not indicated. Now everything that has been developed around the Berlin Wall stays in the purely antistalinist dynamic, like the same dynamic regarding fascism. It doesn't go far. It could be sympathetic; it's in any case the questioning of terrible forms of repression, which can be sympathetic. But it

aimed in the end for a revalorization of Western democracy. There you go.

CM: And so the most modern form of capital, in the end.

JC: Yes, that's it.

CM: But you never thought for a single second that the USSR was communism?

JC: Oh, never.

CM: There you go. No, because you know that in the contemporary history or propaganda books in national education we continue to sell it that way. The USSR was communist and then it wasn't anymore. I mean in certain books, I don't want to say all. There was never communism in Russia?

JC: No. And for Bordiga, Russia was at the stage of building the bases, meaning building capitalism. There you go. It was that: building capitalism but we have the power. The power under the proletariat. But from the moment it doesn't exist anymore, nothing. And it's a terrible form of development because what puts it in evidence is that in the USSR, it's a struggle of gangs, of gangsters, of packs and ultramodern forms. But it's not a state capitalism like he said, no. It was, it is extraordinary. Already in "Proprietà e capitale" he put the development of the enterprise without capital. It's a stretch. No, we were talking about communism in Russia, no. It's always the same, it's... We don't see all the aspects, all the problems that are posed in reality. So it's so great to say that there was communism in Russia, there's no better repellent.

CM: Maybe Sartre fell into this illusion of seeing in the USSR a kind of credible alternative to Western capitalism.

JC: Yes, that's his limit, one of his limits, because he has others. But he was such a nice guy (laughs).

CM: You never met him?

JC: No.

CM: Could it have happened?

JC: No, I didn't want to.

CM: You weren't in Paris at that time? The '80s?

JC: No I wasn't in Paris anymore. I lived in Paris from '64 to '69. After May I said it's all over.

CM: After May, there you go. After May '68, it was finished.

JC: And I said, "I have to return to nature." I was first at Brignoles and little by little I came back here. And so I'm in the countryside, I'm happy.

CM: So in the same text I cited earlier, for which I forgot the reference, you say, I think you conclude with this Jacques: "At the beginning we worked in a dynamic of struggle, opposition, of the negation of a world, of a society with the goal of affirming the human being, the true, the Gemeinwesen of humanity. We abandoned it [the dynamic] because it was ineffective, and we looked for another dynamic of life. This led us to situate the point of departure, the origin of Homo sapiens and perceive the emergence of another species." What is going to happen to the human species, Jacques?

JC: Well the problem for me is that the human species Homo sapiens is disappearing and there is where is posed the problem of the emergence of Homo Gemeinwesen.

CM: You know that your work shatters numerous works from the universities, right. I mean that there are lots of things that come out that suck compared to what you did in Invariance. I mean really. Meaning that it is very solid.

JC: But I don't know if it has a wide reach, because the number of views on the site varies between one hundred and two hundred, while at a certain time it was between three hundred and seven hundred and it would go up to a thousand.

CM: Per day?

JC: Yes, per day. What is two hundred per day? I have no idea what that can mean for people, I don't know. Although I do know that there is capillarity, you see. But, it's not important; I don't do that to be famous. I do it because it is an important necessity to say this. And also because I do this important thing that I said in Bordiga and the Passion for Communism, speaking of Bordiga, he didn't want

the trace of all those who had struggled to disappear. That's why he needed to testify about everything that happened. Well for me it's the same, what I call the human thread of all those who rebelled against society, that wanted to re-form a community. That's what I want to maintain.

CM: It's a work of critique of the existing social order, but also a work of transmission. Will the dynamic of pleasure start again once the Homo Gemeinwesen finally emerges, finally appears? You talk about the dynamic of pleasure in your texts. Is this dynamic called to accomplish itself authentically with the Gemeinwesen?

JC: Oh yes, but that's it. To live is to enjoy. Life is joy, normally. That's it. But that's what is not allowed for us to do. It's always the same, we are mutilated, but we are given ersatz. The whole development of forms of sexuality, because it's pretty wonderful. It's extraordinary, for example even the term sexuality is replaced by the word sex. And I read a scientific book on the problems there, the origins of sexuality, where they say, "well after all, how many sexes are there?" Can you imagine, these are scientists that are saying that! While for me it's obvious. There are two sexes, male and female.

CM: After it's gender theory. It's this ideal on which...

JC: Oh, gender theory, it's completely crazy. Can you imagine transforming us into a grammatical form? On top of that, the word gender, there is the grammatical form but there is also the taxonomical term, meaning that which enters into a system, meaning that a certain number of species forms a gender. For example the gender Oak, or *Quercus*, implies the cork oak, the white oak, the common oak, the sessile oak, etc. And so there are already all these confusions of language. And to say that sex is a social fact. But the word sex itself is a social construction. Because from the moment men and women separate themselves, a justification must be found. What is it they make of the difference? So we say that it is the sex. One has a penis and the other has a vagina. But it

was a justification of what had come from this separation. So it's always the same. And so this will allow us to say that there are several, so there is the gender woman, the gender man.

CM: Transgender, agender, gender-fluid, all those things.

JC: And then no gender. Et then even those that don't want to be gendered.

CM: It's in vogue nowadays.

JC: But can you imagine? If that's not the obsolescence of... That's why Homo sapiens has lived thanks to its process of consciousness. It allowed [Homo sapiens] to always adapt, always compensate. And here is the autonomization of the process of consciousness that allows [Homo sapiens] to imagine whatever. The process of consciousness says that this is possible, so we will transform this possibility into reality. And there is the power of virtuality. Because what is virtuality? It's—

CM: The virtualization of social relations, right?

JC: Yes, of everything. I think that there is a big confusion that I was trying to raise between potential and virtual. I can say that in the acorn there potentially exists the oak because through everything there are the possibilities... But I can't say that for example a statue exists potentially in marble. It exists virtually. But to pass to its reality, all the external creative work would be needed. Meaning that it's not the marble that makes, it's the human that makes.

CM: This distinction that you make between potentiality and virtuality, I think that Aristotle already made it, I think.

JC: That's possible.

CM: And here I am ignorant. It seems to me that Aristotle made the distinction between the two. Unless it was Hegel, I don't remember.

JC: And so, well. What happens now? It's all virtual beings and thanks to totally autonomized technology, we are going to actually create something. The augmented human, the different sexes, etc. Or the different genders as they say. Then that's... You see it's really the autonomization. But if... from the moment we

are no longer in continuity, we no longer participate.

CM: In rupture with totality.

JC: We no longer participate in nature and in the cosmos; it's over.

CM: There you go. Capital is the divorce of the human and the cosmos. Which gives this idea that communism will reconcile humanity with the cosmicity of the cosmos.

JC: Yes because necessity is an enormous fact. It's like, well, things are complicated. For example: the notion of eternity. Humans at a given moment of their development produced time.

CM: The representation of time.

JC: Yes. Time doesn't exist; it's a human creation. So it exists as a creation. Just like the hammer doesn't exist in nature. But it exists, but it is a human creation. Because of this fact, we are no longer able to live eternity. It's not that we will be eternal; but that it is by our capacity to imagine that we can imagine what happened long before us, imagine what can happen after. Meaning that we live in eternity.

CM: Eternity is outside of time, right?

JC: There is no time, there is no time.

CM: A notion that we oppose to immortality. Immortality is the fact of not dying, of living all the time but of being in time.

JC: Yes, because we can dream of being immortal. We can't dream of being eternal, since we are born.

CM: Eternity is outside of time, transcends even the idea of time. Time, you would say, is a construction of capitalist modernity, of civilization?

JC: But it still precedes even capital. Only it's with capital that time takes on this enormous importance. There are lots, by the way—

CM: Marx in *The Poverty of Philosophy*, "time is everything, man is nothing."

JC: "He is, at the most, time's carcass."

CM: A very beautiful text, that you comment on at some point, I think.

JC: Oh yes, that I found extraordinary. Like you say I still dialogue with Marx. There's a

text about censure or about wood, I don't remember. Where he says, "death would be preferable to a life that is the continual conjuration of death." Something like that, that's the sense of it. But that is really what is happening. That's what we must understand. When Marx says that the root is man, that's it, but the root is the human psyche.

CM: To be radical is to take things at the root.

JC: And the root is out psyche. What makes it that we have entered into a restless wandering? What can we make of that psyche? It's extraordinary because it allowed us to enter the primitive human, without external connotation, the initial human, if we can say that, with it's capacity for empathy, etc., of projection, allowing it to situate itself in the world, to live itself, that we have lost.

CM: We have lost the possibility of being able to situate ourselves?

JC: Yes but that is what we search for all the time. I even approached this with this scientists' idea of looking for what makes the human unique. So what is the logo of man? It's about a book by Naomi Klein in which she writes about the logo. I don't remember the title exactly. A very interesting book. Like *The Shock Doctrine*, oh yes, that is a very, very interesting book.

CM: Would you say that we live in a world of indifferenciation, capital having reached it's real domination.

JC: Yes but it's the word. As we are in indifferenciation, individuals try to find a difference again, and that is why this generates totally abhorrent conducts.

CM: It's the will to singularize oneself, but in capitalist alienation.

JC: Yes, trying to no longer be indifferent. Because the worst thing is not the fact of being betrayed or being loved or the non-loved, it's indifference. If someone is indifferent, I don't exist. I no longer have utility. Even the concept of utility, when does it appear? From the moment I enter into indifference, or rather when I am put into the sphere of indifference,

I no longer have utility, that is what is extraordinary.

CM: The reduction of a being to a utilitarian function is one of capital's inventions?

JC: No, it precedes.

CM: It precedes capital?

JC: But yes, capital goes much further; it's always the same.

CM: In 2019, Jacques, in the month of October, the year 2020 approaches quickly. Will 2020 be the year of the Homo Gemeinwesen?

JC: Oh no. We can think that there will be elements for that. But we'll need a long historical process to arrive at the Homo Gemeinwesen. For example, we took 10,000 years to arrive at the situation in which we find ourselves. In particular, the absolutely abhorrent overpopulation. It can be solved in a few years, nor in a few centuries. We'll need thousands of years to bring the human population back to maybe between five hundred and two hundred—

CM: Oh yeah? That is a thesis that you defend? The necessity of population reduction?

JC: Yes.

CM: But not in a coercive, military, way, none of that, right?

JC: No, because otherwise there would be no inversion. We would still be in the... We cannot wish for the death of anyone. We can wish that the human species, that the individuals that compose it, pose the question of reducing the number of... So we must know in particular why people in particular want to have children.

CM: We can want to have children for the wrong reasons. It can happen.

JC: No, but it happens all the time.

CM: But in relation to overpopulation you remember that Marx critiques Malthus in relation to the principle of overpopulation.

JC: Yes but he critiqued Malthus because of the conclusions that he arrived at. Otherwise, from an immediate point of view, Marx is wrong. Malthus is right. Overpopulation is a blight.

CM: But this overpopulation is not autonomous, Jacques. It is a consequence of capital.

JC: Yes but what Marx reproached was that Malthus, by doing that [a polemic on overpopulation] was in the end making an apology for his society.

CM: A discourse of bourgeois ideological justification.

JC: It's to defend the dominant. But otherwise, objectively, Malthus is right. That's what happened. Can you imagine? He saw overpopulation and he was right. But it's the mechanism by which this overpopulation was effected and that Malthus wanted, there Marx was right, we can't accept it.

CM: And in the Marx-Proudhon debate, with your respectable age, do you know fall more on the Marx side or the Proudhon side?

JC: Oh, I fall always on the Marx side, but—

CM: Yes, there you go.

JC: But I recognize that what is important in Proudhon is his art of being able to pose problems without being capable for solving them. But—

CM: He saw the problems well, in his exposition of *The System of Economic Contradictions*.

JC: There you go. And there is still something remarkable. But only on top of that, Proudhon is a pain to read. Because it's an enormous logomachy.

CM: So we are in 2019, soon 2020, Jacques. I leave to you the word of conclusion. If you want to conclude, what would you say if you wanted to conclude, if even the idea of conclusion makes sense?

JC: No, exactly, there is no conclusion. There is a process. There is a process that for me is important, which is the process of inversion. Of the return of this species into nature, that is more considered an enemy, and there is even an ambiguity because the species has always rejected nature even while glorifying it. It's the cruel mother and the [loving] mother. And here it brings me to extraordinary things, the importance of ambiguity.

CM: Equivocity, the paradox? When you say ambiguity, what do you mean?

JC: Ambiguity is what makes it so that the species cannot situate itself. The things are there, it's ambiguous because of just this relation. The species felt negated at a certain point in time by nature because there was this possibility of extinction. Ambiguity reappears fundamentally in every generation because parents and mothers in particular love their children yet inflict on them a repression. The mother is the ambiguous character par excellence. It's not me saying that, that's something that is said by a considerable number of psychologists and in particular by psychoanalysts. Well, ambiguity is an incredible thing because it even poses itself in mathematics. I was stunned to read a study on Évariste Galois, to see that he talked about this in his testament, by which I mean his letter to [indistinguishable, 1:57:04 that was fatal. He was in the middle of updating a theory on ambiguity. And what is extraordinary is that a very great mathematician from the last century, since he passed away in '87 [Camatte is mistaken here, Grothendieck passed away in 2014], Alexandre Grothendieck also approached this thesis. By the way, this Alexander Grothendieck was a fabulous man, because his father was a Spartacist, his mother as well. He was abandoned by his parents that had left for the Spanish Civil War, so he has a pretty eventful life. He entered into contradiction with his colleagues, and he founded the first ecological journal, *To Survive...and to Live*, it's pretty curious. He retired to the Ariège, and he has I don't know 20,000 pages of manuscripts that are at the University of Montpellier, in which there are properly mathematical manuscripts but also plenty of things on psychology, mysticism, and everything, because he had been influenced. There's a book he wrote and that I got access to through a friend who is a math professor who knew him. It's *Récoltes et semailles* [Harvesting and Sowing]. It's really very interesting. So this problem of ambiguity, how we don't get out, even though there are excesses. To surmount ambiguity, either you go

in one direction or you go in another. Which can make understandable the fact that at a given point in time people who were at the extreme left and who didn't succeed in solving their problems passed to the other side to the extreme right. That was the case for François Bochet.

CM: Reality is traversed by torsions. Reality [is] put in motion by contradictions that are surmounted, that are surmounted. Do you agree with Hegel when he says that the contradiction puts in motion, or that what moves the world, is the contradiction?

JC: But that is an interpretation. I think that the idea of contradiction is linked to the process of consciousness dominated by enmity. To think that there are forces in contradiction that are inimical, to take Heraclitus's expression. But for certain things, why would I say that they are in contradiction? They are not the same. They are different. It's a very complicated discourse to have.

CM: You were talking about ecology, about the protection of nature in the end. But in our current moment is ecology not an imposture? When we speak of ecology, we speak of nature, but when capital speaks of ecology, you would agree that it's an imposture? Capital sells us the protection of nature, all while keeping the capitalist relations of production. It's this not a mystification?

JC: Exactly, I was never an ecologist.

CM: There you go. You are not an ecologist.

JC: Ecology is after all pretty huge. When was it born? The term was created in 1865 by Haeckel, who created other interesting things too. So it's already then a question of compensating the destruction of nature for capital, so it's not ecology that can solve our problems. And then it's still in the dynamic of the relations between things being decisive. It's the relations of man to nature that must change. And that's not ecology, that's more than that.

CM: We have to be done with capital, right? All these debates on the protection of nature are false debates. The only debate is capital or Gemeinwesen.

JC: Yes, by the way, the problem that is posed nowadays is the only activities that are a little negative of what is, and so a little positivity can be extracted from them with relation to the ongoing destruction, are the movements on the ground. It's not the governments and all that, no. By the way I said it well in a text from this year I think, called "Inimitié et extinction" [Enmity and Extinction]. I say that actually the problem is enmity, meaning that humans are always struggling and everything. For example one measure that no one proposes that would be let's say immediately productive of improvements, is to be done with armies. No more armies, no more military industries. But can you imagine what the military does on the ground, in the air, in space, on the oceans, everywhere and it's incredible. But how do we get there? We'll tell you it's not possible, or that if we do that it will be a problem right away. That's why a phenomenon that is extraordinarily interesting is the phenomenon of Greta Thunberg.

CM: She is a mystification, you agree?

JC: Not her.

CM: You think Greta Thunberg is sincere?

JC: Yes! It's not her that poses a problem.

CM: It's the social relation that makes it so there is a Greta Thunberg?

JC: There is after all something extraordinary. This kid has her strike one Friday in front of the parliament in Stockholm and while she is there a friend of her parents, who founded a start-up company to develop green capitalism, who sees her, and that day he puts her on social media. So she is recuperated right away. Right away.

CM: So there there is mystification, we agree?

JC: Yes, but it's not her.

CM: Yes, it's not her individually, she is not the problem.

JC: Her speech at the UN was after all pretty extraordinary. When she says, "how dare you?" it's after all pretty huge.

CM: That made an impression on you.

JC: Yes, it's beautiful what she says.

CM: It's beautiful, but that doesn't stop it from being inscribed into this society, into the perspective of this capitalist commodity-producing society, of mystification, of imposture, of reversal.

JC: Yes, but that is because she comes into opposition. She doesn't really enter into enmity but—

CM: But it's a false opposition.

JC: No, it's an opposition, but like I've told you, struggling against something reinforces it. But we can't ask a 16 year-old girl to arrive at all these conceptions, you understand?

CM: Don't you find it infantilizing to put a 16 year-old girl on scene, infantilizing for the spectators, by which I mean the humans of modernity who are spectators?

JC: But they feel it is infantilizing. Because what is a child? It's a dependent being. And all human beings want to flee dependence, so they aspire to be adults and through this they will dominate, from being dominated they will become dominant, even if they are dominated in society. So the fact that a kid can say this, "it's", as Michel Onfray would say, "the world upside down." She can't accept this. So it is infantilizing but that's what's terrible. It's that the child is what is infantile, it's the dependent, it's the incompetent, it's whom we have to govern, we have to educate, to raise. All absolutely frightful terms. And so that's what's interesting. And also what is interesting is that in '92, at a summit on the Earth like that one, there was a young girl, I don't remember from which nationality, she was maybe 18 years-old, who had more or less the same speech as Greta Thunberg. You see that is its after all unbelievable. And here it's the same; it's an uprising, we don't know where it will go. It's a certain uprising of the children that we can compare to that of the youth in the last century.

CM: It's also a generational problem, meaning, do you also see in a certain way a clash of generations, a tension between the generations that are coming and those that are still here? Is there not this idea that the children that will arrive or are arriving now will

turn towards their predecessors and say, “what have you done?”

JC: Well yes, I hope they do it (laughs).

CM: So from that point of view, Greta Thunberg is good, I mean is positive.

JC: But Greta Thunberg is complicated. Greta Thunberg is after all an extraordinary case. She’s autistic.

CM: Yes, well, it seems so.

JC: She is autistic and she acknowledges it, she is classified autistic with Asperger’s syndrome. Asperger was a psychiatrist that apparently was more or less fascist, at least according to Élisabeth Roudinesco. But that’s not important. But what is autism? Autism is the retreat into oneself. It’s the refusal of—

CM: Of socialization?

JC: The refusal of—

CM: Of otherness?

JC: Of parents, of everything. It’s the being that has not been recognized. And so it protects itself. And so this kid used the problem of the climate to say that she has not been recognized. And she says that all the panic that experienced. And a curious thing, it’s from the moment she did this that her parents activated their ecological positions, let’s say. It’s in the dynamic of green capitalism, you see. But she was trapped. She thought she was recognized but actually what was recognized was not her real being, but her being in opposition to a phenomenon.

CM: But an opposition that ends up serving the interests of capital, that continues to valorize capital. Because you will after all agree to say that Greta Thunberg, supposing that her approach is sincere, etc., etc., has been used, or in any case has been put on stage to allow capital to...

JC: Yes, but that I told you from the start!

CM: Yes, yes, I heard you, but...

JC: From the start she has been used.

CM: I have trouble understanding what positives there are in this, meaning...

JC: What is positive is the accusation of adults, of telling them “Look—”

CM: There you go. It’s the act of accusation.

JC: Yes.

CM: By which we are going to address ourselves to a preceding generation and say basically, “what have you done?”

JC: Yes, but it ties into something very deep for me, if you will. Because at the age of seven, I asked myself the question, “why are adults so mean?”

CM: Capital has naturalized meanness?

JC: No, that’s another question.

CM: Meanness is a product of capital?

JC: (Laughs).

CM: No, but we could ask the question.

JC: No, meanness exists even before capital.

CM: OK.

JC: “Why are adults so mean?” And so it was an act not even of revolt, it was an assessment that I couldn’t resolve, and it is a question that stuck with me, unconsciously, and that reappeared years and years later. And I hadn’t realized that this question had determined my research. For example, if I became a communist, it’s because it was a way, finally, to understand that it was actually a certain number of men that were mean, etc., etc. And I saw later the insufficiency of that whole dynamic. So Greta Thunberg refuses something, but her refusal doesn’t attain its goal, particularly to see that we have negated her naturalness. And so she is totally trapped. There’s an extraordinary thing, it’s that she became autistic because we didn’t recognize her naturalness. But as she enters this dynamic that she thinks is positive, it is actually the dynamic, as you say, of capital. What happens? She is recognized? But she is recognized in an enormous way. So much so that she is asphyxiated. I’m thinking of all the guys that have met her, it’s incredible. And what we did for her. She crossed the Atlantic in a sailboat.

CM: So all she has to do now is become a communist.

JC: Well no, she needs above all to... She’ll surpass everything if by facts I can’t determine, she could manage to discover that actu-

ally it's that. It's her reality that has been negated. And that is the questioning of her parents; it's the questioning of everything.

CM: Of the social relation.

JC: Yes, obviously.

CM: But Jacques, how are we to surpass the falseness of the social relation when we are in it, when we are prisoners of the social relation. When you say that you want to leave this world, that you are leaving this world, that you stay in dialogue with Marx and Bordiga, are you in a sense trying to extract yourself from the alienating, false, capitalist social relation?

JC: Yes, but I explained to you that I am dependent on the system. But I don't recognize it. I'm trying for example here to (not like those that try to get social credits) plant my trees, that's all. I know that that is necessary. You see that it's not in capital's dynamic.

CM: It's in the margins.

JC: Yes, but all we can do is be in the margins.

CM: All we can do is be in the margins.

JC: All we can do is be in the margins. But it's curious because in the margins and inside at the same time.

CM: There you go.

JC: Because we operate still with the men and women of this society.

CM: Of course.

JC: And it's there that we are inside. Me, I'll keep contact with anyone, you see. It doesn't bother me. Because it's about feeling the human being in all its naturalness, asphyxiated through all the repression that it has been subjected to.

CM: In any case I wanted to thank you (audio cuts).