Common Sense

A Journal of a wholly new type

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Common Sense

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Contact address: Richard Gunn, c/o Department of Politics, University of Edinburgh, 31 Buccleuch Place, Edinburgh. Telephone: 031 677 1011 ext. 6660 or (home no.) 031 228 1669.

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SOME REMARKS ON DIALECTICAL THEORY

Kosmas Psychopedis

In this paper I shall present some theses on the classical dialectical theory of society and politics. I shall first try to clarify the notion of dialectics by discussing the Hegelian idea of the methodic exposition of the categories in dialectical logic and the relevance of that exposition for the conceptualisation of Objective Spirit. I shall then briefly discuss some problems concerning the transformation of Hegelian concepts in Marxian theory.

'Dialectics', from the Greek 'διαλέγεσθαι ', means communication by argument and counter-argument. In practical debate the communicating parties give "reasons" why, in their opinion, one action is preferable to another. It is obvious that, in doing so, they must also say something about the criteria for holding that one reason (for doing, say, a) is "better" than another reason (for doing, say, b). In the Greek theory of dialectics Plato linked the problem of dialectics with a theory of absolute criteria (values) which he identified with the Ideas (theory of Ideas). Other theoreticians did not accept such absolute criteria and tried to understand types of argumentation (and action) as expressions of the interests of the arguing (and acting) parties (e.g. Thrasymachus in The Republic).

Hegel's notion of dialectic puts itself in the Platonic tradition by seeking for a "binding" theory which will allow one to evaluate arguments and actions. Such a theory is presupposed in Hegel's Logic, which contains categories developed in logical "levels". In their succession the categories concretize themselves, i.e. each level expresses, in relation to the preceding one, a deeper understanding of the conditions of argument and action and of the nature of the object of argumentation. On my view, this stratification of logical levels reaches over to the Hegelian theory of culture and politics (theory of Spirit).

The way in which logical analysis intervenes in the theory of spirit
is still an open problem of Hegelian research. In the Phenomenology of
Spirit both analytical strands are interrelated in the exposition of
conceptual levels. In Hegel's later works logical analysis and the
theory of spirit are separately developed (though unified a posteriori
in the idea of an Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences). The
logical ontology, founded in the Logic, is authentically explicated in
the form of historical realization in a distinct theory of objective
spirit expounded in the Philosophy of Right.

I think we can locate the place where the historical spirit "enters"
into the logical system in the third division (chap. II) of the Hegelian
Logic of Concept. As Hegel shows there, at this point of the exposition
the historical (phenomenological) spirit can be considered a "logical
object", i.e. an object of the Logic of Concept which contains the
"richest" categorial framework, including categories referring to
scientific knowledge and human praxis and so corresponding to the
specific nature of human culture. The methodological location of logical
spirit in the context of the analysis of the "Concept" means that the
prior categorial apparatus of the Logic is presupposed by the
construction of the moments that constitute a conceptual cultural
system. It also means that the different moments obtain their relevance
in the system according to their position in the dialectical categorial
exposition. Such prior logical levels, constituting moments of the
theory of spirit, are basically the following: the logic of objectivity
- culture understood as mechanism and teleology - ; the logic of
subjectivity - containing evaluated "syllogisms" interrelating logical
entities - ; the logic of necessity, of essential relationships; finally,
the logic of being - containing a theory of atomism and quantification
(these levels are here presented in an evaluated succession from
"concrete" to more "abstract" moments).

Methodologically, Hegel's exposition of cultural categories in the
Philosophy of Right begins with the consideration of the legal-
institutional framework (such as property and contract). The analysis
presupposes, historically, the establishment of the modern society of
"abstract law" (a society which surmounted the traditional bounds of
political privileges and economic monopolies) and the rise of bourgeois
atomism. Hegel considers the analysis the most "abstract" possible

conceptualisation of modern society and, consequently, bases it on the categories developed in the "Logic of Being" (such as "atomism", "quantity", "quality" and "measure"). "Atomic" persons interact through legal institutions constituting a societal object which "measures" their actions and is external to them. Since the agents interact through legal forms in a market society, they are involved in a process of quantificat--ion of the qualities of their products (a legalist anticipation of the Marxian analysis of the commodity form).

As a next step in his analysis, Hegel proceeds, in the theory of "Morality" in his Philosophy of Right, to an analysis of society oriented towards the idea of "essential relations". This idea is established in a logical form in the second part of the Logic (Logic of Essence). I will here focus on the discussion, in this text, of the category of 'ground' as a typical figure of dialectical argumentation. Hegel argues that explanations founded in grounds (reasons) are insufficient, since a ground can always be confronted by another ground, i.e. by another explanation contradicting the first one. If we consider the existing world as a totality of facts such that any one is the ground and condition of any other, we approach the world only in its facticity - and not as a self-conditioned totality. So the dialectics of grounds lead to the category of Thing (thinghood),[1] to the idea of the world as a totality of things which condition themselves, i.e. to the idea of the world as reification process.

The Hegelian Logic of Essence proceeds to a critique of reification by developing deeper-lying points of view: in the chapter on Appearance, Hegel develops the contrast between the world as appearance and the world as essential relationships - which constitutes itself through appearances. In the chapter on Relation in Logic II Hegel stresses that the totality of the relations which underlie the appearance of the reified world can be understood as relations of a whole to its parts, of force to its manifestations, of the inner to the outer. Here we are already confronted with a methodological approach to reality (including social reality) dealing with the problem of the expression of forces in a particularised whole[2] (a central problem of Marxian dialectics). Yet, on Hegel's understanding, the category of relation is too abstract to express the idea of reality because it lacks a "substantial" character.

In the first Critique, in his table of categories, Kant developed the idea of substantiality as a relational category (the other relatum being accidentality). For Hegel the substantial is a priviledged relation with a normative content. According to the way in which the system of notions of the Logic organises the structure of "objective spirit", substantial social reality is a system of relations: force and manfestation, whole and parts, etc., held together by the institutional framework of society which is oriented towards the idea of right. In contrast to the relations which condition an abstract scheme of reality, the substantial element of reality is thought as necessity – which in politics is the power to impose substantial goals on society. This power presupposes a kind of activity. According to the logical explanations of the Encyclopaedia, conditions conditioning an activity through which the matter-of-factness (Sache) of a whole is reproduced can be understood as moments of necessity.[3]

The logical transition from abstract relations to substantiality finds its societal expression in the theory of social relations in the chapter on Morality in the Philosophy of Right: the analysis of morality is a reconstruction of particular personal attitudes and goals which are confronted with the problem of social welfare and institutional legitimacy. The unity of these levels presupposes the existence and activity of the state as a distinct unity organising and giving "sense" to bourgeois society. The establishment of that unity constitutes a "hard transition" from necessity to freedom,[4] since the subjects have to accept as legitimated a process which is already accomplished and obligatory.

In the third part of the Philosophy of Right (Ethical Life) Hegel stresses that the objective social order is substance and matter-of-factness, but in para. 144 he argues that it is "substance made concrete by subjectivity". From the viewpoint of the Logic, this statement presupposes the above-mentioned "hard transition" from essence to free subjective activity (Begriff), from necessity to freedom: the power of substantial institutions in the state has to be "mediated" through the subjective consciousness of its necessity. In the Hegelian idea of "absolutely valid laws and institutions" substantiality is mediated through subjectivity.

In para. 147 Hegel says of authority and institutions that "they are
not something alien to the subject. On the contrary, his spirit bears
witness to them as to its own essence, the essence in which he has a
feeling of his selfhood, and in which he lives as in his own element
which is not distinguished from himself". Thus, in Hegelian dialectics,
institutions are substantial by themselves (substantiality is treated
in the Logic in the chapter on Necessity), even without taking into
consideration the dimension of their subjective acceptance, if they are
instituted according to the logical categories institutionalising the
ideas of the generality of law, of the manifestation of social forces,
of the preservation of the claims of the whole through the parts, etc.
But the dimension of consciousness and subjectivity (conciliation,
acceptance) must be added to the objectivity of the institutions if
society is to institutionalise according to "higher" logical categories,
such as the Logic of the Concept (Begriff) as the unity of subjectivity
and objectivity.

In the Logic of the Concept culture is conceived as a teleological
unity,[5] i.e. as a system of individual and objective (societal,
institutional and philosophical) goals which obtain their hierarchy
through the normativity of the idea (as the unity of theory and praxis).

The problems mentioned above can, I think, serve as an introduction to
some central aspects of the relationship between Marx and Hegel, and
also to some central aspects of Marxian dialectics. Marx understood the
real process of reification in bourgeois society as a process in which
real relationships became non-transparent. The methodological approach
in Capital claims to decipher reification by exposing capitalist reality
as a totality of productive forces which do not appear as such but are
mediated through the actions of isolated agents. In the Marxian ideas of
social relations and social forces there reappears the Hegelian idea of
essential relations both as whole and parts, and as inner force expressing
itself as outer manifestations. The Hegelian problem of the dialectic of
essence and appearance Marx sees as an idealist approach to the problems
of ideological forms which "veil" social relations in capitalist societies.

Marx took idealist dialectics seriously because he understood them as an
adequate way of explaining the real mystification process in bourgeois
society and of effecting an immanent critique of this society. At the

same time, however, he showed the insufficiencies in the idealist
methodology. In particular, he presents them as a problem of the
methodic exposition of the categories (Darstellung). Thus, problems
of real reification and atomism, expressing the situation of social
agents in the market, are developed in the third volume of Capital
after the analysis of substantial capitalist relations (the latter
analysis occurs in the first volume). That is, Marx accepts that it
is possible to develop a theory of the "abstract-essential" as a
condition of the understanding of manifest social phenomena. Hegel,
on the contrary, does not accept that the analysis of substantial
relations must, by its nature, be abstract, but identifies the
essential with the concrete and the achieved (Resultat), i.e. with
the "end" of analysis.

According to Marx "concrete" reality is affected by the dymanics of
the abstract relations of the capitalist mode of production and changes
with these dynamics. The materialist analysis follows this dialectic
of the abstract-essential and of appearance to the point of surpassing
dialectics itself in emancipated societies of the future.

The paradigm of the Marxian approach is the analysis of productive
forces in bourgeois society. In Hegel's analysis the notion of force
is, as we have seen, integrated in the logic of relationships correspond-
-ing to the idea of whole and parts (totality). In contrast, the Marxian
idea of productive forces expresses the dynamism of the materialist
construction, since social relationships are here conceived as changing
historically with changes in the social productive forces arising from
changes in technology and the division of labour.[6] The organisation and
division of the productive forces of labour in their historical change
constitute, in opposition to Hegel, the Marxian concept of the
"substantial" basis of society (Arbeitssubstanz). Marx reveals a
positivist element in Hegelian dialectics by showing that their
construction excludes the possibility of a dynamic conception of the
notion of "force" and corresponding changes in the categorial system as
a whole. By transposing the the legalist concept of substantiality
("substantial are the bourgeois institutions") into a concept oriented
towards the labour process, Marx is able to develop his theory of
value (labour incorporated in commodities). He is also in a position to
develop a materialist approach to the dialectical problem of the unity

of subject and object by considering the productive forces of society
both as social "substance" and as proletarian "subject" which gains
consciousness of itself by transcending bourgeois society. In this
way, Marx translates the Hegelian problem of the unity of subject
and object into a problem of emancipatory praxis; and the Hegelian
problem of the inner teleology of logical concepts into a problem of
the historical teleology of freedom.

Today, political theory once more addresses the classical issues of
dialectics and is interested in categories which were abandoned in the
process of making the social sciences "positive" sciences. This is a
critical interest. Critical theory has to accept its involvement in
a real metaphysic and in a philosophy of history which are not
constructed by philosophers but are are the expression of mystified
social relations which critical theory wants to transcend. Today we
have to discuss problems of the genesis of values through social
relations, especially the possibility that the present division of
labour as a system of collaboration lead to solidary and non-
competitive forms of life (a classical subject of traditional
dialectics).

Contemporary political theory, I think, is thus once more forced to
face the problem of the methodological status of traditional
dialectical and "teleological" approaches. So the connection between
the reality of actual societies and the idea of freedom as a goal
which will be "necessarily" realised in history has been successfully
questioned. Con-sequently, the problem of dialectics must be raised
anew as a problem of an open "modal" logic of history which brings
to the fore the issue of the nature of the interconnection of social
relations and the possibility of freedom as a problem of praxis in
actual societies.

Notes

1. Cf. Encyclopaedia paras. 124 ff, Logic (Suhrkamp, Frankfurt/M 1969
   vol. 6) pp. 129 ff, and Phenomenology of Spirit (Suhrkamp vol. 3)
   pp. 304 ff, on the category of Thing.

2. Cf. Encyclopaedia para. 136, Logic pp. 172 ff., on Hegel's theory

of force and manifestation.

3. Cf. <u>Encyclopaedia</u> para. 148.

4. Cf. <u>Encyclopaedia</u> para. 159, <u>Logic</u> pp. 237-240, on the "hard transition".

5. Cf. <u>Logic</u> p. 440 on the idea of a teleology of external ends.

6. Cf. K. Psychopedis <u>Geschichte und Methode</u> (Campus Verlag, Frankfurt/ New York 1984), section VI.

Minimalism : Music of a wholly old type ?

Keith Anderson

While browsing through Grove's Dictionary the other day I came
across a passage that declared minimalism ' in direct opposition
not only to serialism, but to virtually all developmental
principles of Western Music since 1600 '. This struck me as being
in direct opposition to the facts. For I see minimalism as a move
to re-examine a number of these developmental principles in a
precise and detailed manner.

For those unfamiliar with the term, serialism is a musical system,
most famously formalised by Schoenberg shortly after the first
world war, in which all of the tones of the scale play an equal
role. From 1600-1800 music developed systems in which one tone,
called the tonic, played a central role and all other tones
served to strengthen the effect of the tonic. This allowed music
to develop along dramatic lines; with shifts away from the tonic
heightening musical tension and the return to the tonic relaxing
this tension. The tones associated with the tonic and the chords
derived from them gave rise to the notion of key. During the 19th
century the tonic began to lose its hegemony in the hierarchy of
the tones of the scale. Later in the century experiments were
begun with systems that avoided one central tonic and either
produced music that was tonally ambiguous (two or more tonics
might be equally implied) or that would continually shift its
tonal centre, so as not to lie in any one particular key.

At the turn of the century tonal structures had become so complex
that in some cases it is all but impossible to tell the key of a
piece, or section of a piece. A good example is Schoenberg's
'Verklärte Nacht'. The next stage in the story is obvious: the
abandonment of key altogether. Schoenberg's solution was to
methodically avoid playing any one tone more than any other. To
do this he took as his building block a musical phrase containing
all twelve tones precisely once. This set of notes he called a
series (hence serialism) and then produced a set of rules for the
use of such a series that would avoid tonal implications. This
procedure ran into the problem that it had no system of relations
between tones to exploit, all tones being structurally equal. The
style had thus to find other means to provide both structure and
intelligibility to its musical forms. Rhythm, duration of notes,
instumentation, timbre and dynamics all came to play a more
important role than hitherto.

The success of this system is still a subject of much debate. What
is certain is that this line of thinking has been more influential
on the course of 20th century musical development than any other.
Serialism reached its peak in popularity (amongst composers, not
audiences) with the so called 'Darnstadt' school of the early
1950's. Boulez and Stockhausen were amongst its most prominent
members. What the school sought to do was to serialise all
musical parameters (duration, rhythm, etc) and so to produce music
solely from the application of a set of rigid formal rules. The
result was music of an extraordinary sterility. The problem with
this 'total' serialism is that it destroys the possibility of
contrast within any of the musical parameters used in its

construction. Indeed the structure of this music is all but inaudible (except maybe to its creators) leaving the audience with nothing to latch onto and follow.

How does minimalism relate to this historical scheme? To see this it is instructive to look at one of the most famous early essays in the style: Terry Riley's 'In C'. The piece consists of a large number of repetitions of a small number of very simple motifs. The basic structure is that different instruments take different motifs at different times. The interest of the piece arises from the rhythmic and melodic interplay between the different combinations of these motifs. Each motif is played at the same tempo so that the piece has a very steady and unchanging pulse and all of the material centres strongly around the note C. Thus the piece is tonal, but not tonal in the same sense as Classical music of the late 18th century, for instance. Although it has a tonal centre, it does not use the hierarchy of tones and chords on which Classical music depended for both its structure and intelligibility. There is no moving away from this central pitch: no heightening and relaxing of tension by harmonic means. Harmonically the piece simply floats around the note C.

These and other typical features of minimalism are: the use of tonal schemes, harmonic stasis, rhythmic repetition and unchanging pulse, extended re-iteration of melodic material in which the material can be progressively lengthened (as in some of the work of Glass) or taken out of phase with itself gradually (Reich). The works are normally scored for conventional instrumental ensembles, although electronic instuments and multi-layered pre-recorded tapes are sometimes used in live performance. Whatever the techniques used, the musical process is normally clearly audible and works out very slowly, so drawing the listeners attention to minute changes in the musical texture.

Being tonal the style may seem highly reactionary, and in a sense it is. Minimalism developed at a time of general reaction against the doctrinaire severity of the 'total' serialites. Far from living up to its claims to be a more complete and general system than tonality, atonality appeared to many 'Not to have much to do with music as a whole in the world as a whole'. Serialism became more and more the interest of only a small élite of musical specialists. This reaction has continued to this day and 'total' serialism is now largely discredited as a technique with any future. Minimalism, however, is not reactionary in the sense of harking back to any previous style. Pitch centres in this music do not have the same significance or structural role as in music of the 18th or 19th centuries. They simply act as reference points to which melodic material can be related. It is true that none of the proceedures are in themselves new; it is the manner in which minimalism utilises these proceedures that is novel.

Overleaf I give as an example a small section of a piece written using some of these proce-dures, as well as some other contemporary musical ideas. The section is based on the idea of each voice using a twelve note row as part of a pitch canon, ie each instrument plays the complete row but each at different speeds and each with a different number of repetitions of any note in the row. The pitch centre of the piece moves from C to G# through a short passage with no pitch centre. The rhythmic unit of the piece is either divided into two or three parts in a line. These subdivisions are used sometimesto disrupt a sense of pulse, as in the opening of the piece, and somtimes to strenghthen it, as in the end of the section.

These effects are achieved by decreasing of increasing respectively
the regularity of the rhythmic patterns used in the instrumental
lines. Melodic ideas appear through the interaction between the
voices and harmony is generated by the differential rate at which
the instruments play through the row. Although these techniques
place severe limitations on the composer, there is still much
room for exploration in this delightfully simple style. I expect
that we shall be hearing much music written along these lines in
the next few years.

L'INSECURITE
SOCIALE

In the past we were defenders of a more or less heretical view of the theory of decadence. Then, gradually, we detached ourselves from it. This was not a result of a critique of Rosa Luxembourg's theories, but because we found that as we delved deeper in our critique of the world, her theories became less relevent to us. Not yet having had occasion to clarify our position on this issue, we will try to do so here.

On the demise of 'DECADENCE'

The decadence of capitalism is a theme which revolutionaries in the past used in seeking to find an explanation for changes occurring in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as well as a search for appropriate responses to these changes. They believed that if a revolution did not come soon, bourgeois society would head directly toward barbarism. "War or revolution," "socialism or barbarism" were the historical alternatives put forward by all who adopted these theses, whether the theses were central or peripheral to their position. These theses were based essentially on Rosa Luxumbourg's theoretical work, whose principal virtue probably was to analyze capitalism, not as a rigid structure, but as a dynamic movement engaged in fighting "an exterminating battle everywhere and constantly against the natural economy, in whatever form it finds it, whether the form be slavery, feudalism, primitive communism or a patriarchal peasant economy." "The time is past when the small and middle farmers lived almost without cash money and could thresh the wheat according to their need for money. At present the farmer always has to have access to money, a great deal of money in order to pay his taxes. Soon he will have to sell all his products so as to buy back from the industrialists what he needs in the form of commodities." (Accumulation of Capital) Some important corollaries follow from this theory: on the extension of market relations and the mediating role of money in a growing number of human activities; on the increasing intervention of the state in the management of capitalist affairs; on the importance of the war economy and the sector of arms production. . .   The limits of this theory were reached already in the period in which it was formulated and in the very framework of

this formulation: social-democracy. In this sense, one can say that the
theory contributed to the partial break with social democracy (the European
ultra-left tendencies) while at the same time it contributed to the formulation
of ideologies which justified social-democratic policies—both in the name of
the decadence of capital!

According to a conception widely held by adherents of the decadence
theory, imperialism is relatively recent: it consists of the colonization of
the entire world and is the "final stage of capitalism." We get closer to
the truth by turning this conception on its head and saying that imperialism
was the first stage of capitalism, that the world was subsequently colonized
by the nation-states and the social relations that accompany this colonization.
In defining imperialism as the last stage of capitalism, one infers a break
within this colonizing movement, one which is both temporal and spatial. A
theory which sees an "imperialist phase" in the development of capital and
which proposes "new tasks" justified by the opening of this "new period"
serves mainly to vindicate "former" practices. Thus after 1914, certain
more or less radical social democratic groups claimed to start again from
scratch without making a critique of their own activity within this capitalist
organization. The myth of the "final stage" gave them a theoretical basis for
putting forward a new system of "tasks of the proletariat" following the
sacrosanct year of 1914! In this way, the neo-social-democrats could continue
to associate themselves with the "glorious past" of the Second International
by claiming that the pre-1914 reformism was merely a transitory phase in
order to reach the final goal: communism. In actual fact, "communism"
conceived of as ideology (cf. the Third International) was only a tool which
helped strengthen capitalist relations throughout the course of the 20th
century.

Ideologies of decadence are based on a superficial view of the
contradictory tendencies in capitalist development. Behind the description
of the death-throes of capital, the halt of progress, the putrification of
society . . . lies an apology for the development and the socialization of
the capitalist mode of production. These ideologies do not make a critique
of progress (the development of capitalist relations) but rather they criticize
what they consider to thwart progress. In the end, this view of capitalism is
a moralistic one. If one should consider the goal of nascent capitalism to
be the nourishment of people, this position can lead to an apology for progress
and for the development of productive forces in the 19th century. And since

the vicious, decadent capitalism of the 20th century no longer feeds all its
subjects and even kills some of them along the way, it becomes important to
"make the revolution" in order to reallocate and make some adjustments so as
once again to enjoy the benefits of progress and industrialization. Obviously
none of this has anything to do with capitalist reality, or with a perspective
of a communist humanity. Capitalism does not produce goods, only various
commodities which can be converted into money: objects for consumption,
weapons, display, appearances . . .   These "goods" for consumption destroy
us, brutally or little by little. Their continued production can be assured
only through a competitive system which is constantly growing, growing in
extent as well as in intensity. Its geographic expansion was responsible for
the development of ever more widespread markets, for the great expeditions of
the Renaissance, for colonialization. . . .   This expansion had already
taken place by 1914, but only geographically, in area, and it provided the
basis for Rosa Luxumbourg's catastrophic view, an interpretation which
underestimated subsequent possibilities for development. In intensity, the
growth of this competitive system led to the progressive disappearance of
activities which did not pass through the mediation of money (gift, exchange,
domestic production, . . .) and led to advertising and mass production, to
the democratic totalitarianism which grew out of World War II.

The theories of decadence led not only to an incapacity to analyze
modern capitalism, but to a fascination for the system itself. Modern
capitalism could be simultaneously seen as the antechamber of "communism" and
the condition for its appearance; negatively because the halt of capitalist
development or the difficulties it encountered would bring about the catastrophic
collapse of capital; and positively because technological-scientific progress
and the socialization of the means of production introduced by capital would
permit planning on a world scale and bring an end to poverty! As a matter
of fact it is hardly surprising that the appearance of such conceptions appeared
just as neo-social-democratic theory adopted a global perspective and when
capitalist social relations were rapidly spreading and intensifying. . . . The
failure of any of the reformist workers' movements to transform itself into
a revolutionary movement certainly made more credible ideas according to which
communism would be an "objective" (not to say, mechanical) necessity and
capitalism's destiny would be a rapid decline and collapse. This perspective
also provided the small ultra-leftist organizations with a reason for their
existence, and later, after 1968, provided a basis for some mechanistic
analyses according to which another world war was the only short-term

alternative for capitalism in crisis (as if the world were not actually at war!) or, further, that the workers' struggles in Poland were part of "the dynamic process which leads to revolution."

After all these years, it is easy to ridicule Nostradamus and his prophecies of decadence. But rather than indulging oneself in this complacent response, it would make more sense to try to formulate the actual problem: Where and when have capitalist relations suffered a decline in the 20th century? Every serious examination will show that they have only continued to expand and grow stronger. Admittedly, capitalism undergoes economic crises, but their inevitable result is capitalism's domination over a new aspect of human existence. Not one of these crises represents the fatal and ineluctable catastrophe which can destroy the capitalist mode of domination. Capitalism is without doubt a catastrophic system, but for humanity--not for itself. The vision of "revolutionary catastrophism" draws different conclusions from premises it shares with social-democratic reformism. For the former, the crisis will provide the salutary shock which will awaken the proletariat and lead to the destruction of capitalism; . . the latter openly seeks to manage it. Thus both "revolutionary" and "reformist" social-democrats palliate the difficulty for new social relations to emerge between human beings. Ultimately, they do not have much cause to reproach this world, unless it be for their sense of shame for their cowardly acceptance of every condition that was imposed on them. These are veritable men of the economy, and they will have to search in and through the economy for reasons to be scandalized by this world.

Interrogations, March 1987 (*L'INSECURITE SOCIALE*, B.P. 243, 75564 PARIS CEDEX 12).

Paul White
The Circular-Forward Waltz

What is Karl doing when he is not writing his novels? Many writers like
to resort to a related artform, and Karl is no exception. He draws pictures.
His best creations are the scenes which feature him.

His pictures are different from his books. One difference is that they
are not for sale. Another difference is that nobody sees them since he never
mentions their existence to anyone. It is not that Karl is deliberately secret-
ive; he just feels that some things are better left to the imagination.

Karl writes indoors, but for painting he prefers fresh sky. He is not
a great nature lover, but likes the space of outside. To perform he travels
to a landscape which is mountain-cum-plateau. He celebrates, then leaves his
drawings in the open, because he wants their colours to change with the weather.
They are safe from destruction because most people see only the plateau, and those
who proceed want nothing but to turn the pictures around and over.

The pictures Karl is ashamed to see are hidden in the foothills, while
the better ones are displayed near the top. His favourite is a picture of him-
self playing water polo in a bowl of milk. He has no boils. An accordian band
is playing dance songs at the entrance to the cave.

The public Marx never proclaims that milkponds are good things.

Marx's refusal to concoct a model of post-revolutionary society is consist-
ent with his concept of alienation. For Marx, alienation is not a psychological
condition, rather it is a practical state which under capitalism exists regard-
less of our awareness of it. He believes that this estrangement pertains in all
areas of existence, but in the '1844 Manuscripts' he is concerned primarily with
alienation in the economic sphere. The alienation inherent in capitalism takes
five aspects. Firstly, the worker is alienated from the product of his labour.
Capital contracts the worker's labour power and sets it for production. The issue
of this work rolls off the line into Mr Otherthanme's treasure chest. The more
the worker produces, the less his relative power, since the commodities accum-
ulate, turn into money, and tower as a force above him. Man embodies himself
in his labour, but capitalism transforms his expression of life into a sneering
Mr Hyde. Secondly, alienation results from the act of production itself. Where
there is a division of labour, production is likely to be spiritless and dull.
Rather than create for the sake of creation, men produce to form money. The work-
er constantly negates himself, his activity is not his own. Work is not an end
but a means to a mean end. Third is the pivotal form of alienation, estrangement
from our "species-being", which we will return to below. Fourthly, the worker
is alienated from his fellows because he regards them in accordance with the
criteria his own predicament dictates. Work is not purposeful, but compulsive.
There is no sense of social reciprocity because all men are competitors for the

means to satisfy the want of life, and that is continued life. Finally, man
is alienated from nature because aesthetic concerns and sympathy with the life
of the wild are superseded by the capitalist will to view everything as a bargain
buy.

"Species-being" is a difficult thesis to explain, partly because Marx's
description of it is not wholly lucid. He means something similar to human
nature, and he comes close to this when on instances he seems to make "species-
being" interchangeable with "human essence". Man defines himself in and through
his practice, but it is not a stationary definition since Marx affirms that no
fixed human essence is the human essence. Man can produce himself in many forms.
On Monday I am a flight lieutenant, on Tuesday I am a juggler, on Wednesday I
dig a fox's earth. Man sees himself as part of a world he has created. Man as
"species-being" produces spontaneously and variously. Unlike the animal, which
produces by instinct and retains its product close at hand, the man creates with
thought and stands the object of his labour several feet or several miles away
from him. "The object of labour is therefore the objectification of the species-
life of man: for man reproduces himself not only intellectually, in his conscious-
ness, but actively and actually, and he can therefore contemplate himself in a
world he himself has created." (1)

When capital purchases man's labour, it assumes ownership of his product
and with it the creative expression with which man shapes the world and declares
it to be of him. Man no more models life to his will-consciousness. The cond-
itions which determine his action are nurtured within boundaries shaped by cap-
italist class interest. The worker has no control over the realisation of his
capacities. The individual is screened from his condition because he shapes
nothing bar products which are constructed on someone else's terms. Marx's
'Introduction to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right' calls religion
"the fantastic realisation of the human essence since the human essence has not
acquired any true reality." (2) Marx is not a tailor of alternative fancy dress.
For it is nothing to make sketches of a better future if the precepts of trans-
ition and the new reality belong to the monster from outer space.

What is wrong with resting on the lawn? It appears fine, but all signs
say "Keep Off the Grass". A sleep in the sun must mean at least one eye open.
No-one knows why, it is the law. Eyes unclosed spoil the magic carpet effect.
But this is false. In rolls a ball that bounces then springs into Marx calling
himself the Unity of Theory and Practice. Never entirely does he cease to be
a ball, nor is he ever fully a ball. He emerges from his form to check the
shape of himself and everything around him. This is Karl's happiest moment.

Pure joy comes with aware of all, and into this "warm stream" jumps
Ernst Bloch and his leitmotif, hope. His objectives are similar to those of
Marx: the development of an attitude which moves freely and explores the look

not only of its environment, but also of its self-image. It is a style where
vanity never flourishes because examination cannot be introspective but must
radiate at the same time inwards and outwards. Geneva's neutral observer is
hopeless; for the work of hope "requires people who throw themselves actively
into what is becoming, to which they themselves belong." (3) Marx's man is "no
abstract being squatting outside the world. Man is the world of man, state,
society." (4) Man is also the world of trees, of building societies, of
shopping precincts. The startpoint is to locate oneself in the world one is
questioning (not necessarily attacking) as if every moment is the mighty mo-
ment and life is a continuum of potential eclipses. All events are in the
future and man springs off without knowing he has happened unless he carries
with him the good mood.

One question is "Where are we?" or rather, "Where do we think we are?"
Management complains of absenteeism, but the problem is more serious than it
can see. Really there is no-one at work. Shapes that replicate people man-
oeuvre a shift while the person is elsewhere. As mock typists eat gold in the
Amazon, shipbuilders ride camels in Greenland. Some float home to eat and
sleep, others tote flame-throwers. All leave the workplace via the emergency
exit. Unfortunately the wanderers reach home with headaches. The escape is
confined to individual wish-making. Idylls are constructed with the most
accessible building bricks, but this is not to say the wanderer is anti-flux
or in love with his situation. It is a case of how material presents itself,
and most times it is gift-wrapped. Hence the past in the present never fully
succumbs and tomorrow always looks like today. Desires that could be construct-
ive mean nothing more than role-swapping if future hope does not embody inter-
oggation. "Nobody has ever lived without daydreams, but it is a question of
knowing them deeper and deeper and in this way keeping them trained unerringly,
usefully, on what is right." (5) Instead of a primitive grasping for alternatives,
Bloch endorses "learning hope" which leads to wholeness, not confinement.
"Thinking is venturing beyond?" or "Venturing beyond is eating soup?"

A way to puzzle out one of the possible answers is provided by practical
reflexivity. This is a stance which emerges from Marx's internal relationship
for theory and practice. It is a vital position, a moving belief. It allows
us both to watch a train pull out of the station and to run alongside it, how-
ever fast it moves, instead of having no option but to watch it speed away, at
times obscured by steam, sometimes by diesel smoke.

The eighth of Marx's 'Theses on Feuerbach' suggests a ceaseless process
of asking and exploration as man assimilates the world with himself: "All social
life is essentially practical. All mysteries which lead theory to mysticism
find their rational solution in human practice and the comprehension of this
practice." (6) For Marx no force must exist above or outside of man. Exter-
nal oppressive force is capitalist alienation manifested. External oppressive

force which we cannot see, or which we feel but cannot articulate and attribute, is double alienation, capital at its craftiest.

There is no dominant force in Marx's theory/practice concept. He views theory as an initiator and guide to practice, but does not see it as the root. What he sees instead is a reciprocating relationship between theory and practice where practice inheres in theory and theory inheres in practice. They are like dance partners who never separate. Marx rejects the idea that theory exists in a sphere of its own and is unrelated to moving life. Also he harangues the Young Hegelians for supposedly believing that theory IS practice. In short, theory is related in or inside practice. It cannot be seen as an adjunct. This is crucial; it is fine and pretty to punch holes in a boxer when the activity is confined to the mind, but it is also nice for the boxer because he leaves the ring without a mark. Theory on its own can never change ideology. Fallout from the old way will always remain no matter how much it is ignored. The prevailing feel of society asserts itself and swamps the critic who is not actor but thinker. Theory is an instance in the ongoing processes of the real world. It exists in the circle of happening, of events, of troughs and peaks. Human practice is theory inclusive. Unlike animal work, human production is conscious and a thrust which comes as part of a general scheme.

The way to move is not to drift into forgetfulness, into absolute fantasy (although whether thought can be considered truly fantastic is questionable since it employs form and phraseology borrowed from an unfantastic present - Wittengstein). Imagination must be down-to-earth, but this does not mean it is dull or practical (in the worst sense); it can be colourful and vibrant so long as it wonders where it is situated.

The theory/practice combination encourages self-criticism; more than that, it embodies it, not in a way that there are commandments like "Thou shalt not progress without criticism", but in the already mentioned attitude that is called practical reflexivity. Without reflection it appears that such an attitude is at odds with Marx's picture of the human as a socially determined being. But when we consider that human production shapes the world of man, and that this will to shape all is an attribute of humankind even though its manifestations must change, it is not difficult to see that practical reflexivity can be carried with man in any given circumstance without it becoming a permanent feature. It must stay with man but must not (and by its nature cannot) stay the same. The beauty of practical reflexivity is that it is in no way a category. The whole point of it is to deny and destroy the power which hides in the guise of the truth god. Michel Foucault explains that contemporary society forces power to seek and become truth: "We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth." (7) Discourse and practice are intertwined.

Discourse is organized into disciplines and domination assumes their shape
so that only the specialist can dictate the course of action.

But it is in an emancipated society that practical reflexivity should
be at its most incisive; while the vista in such an environment will be clear-
er than in capitalist society, the good mood must be in operation, not on
guard, but alive to the danger of knowledge sectors once more becoming elevated
and institutional. Objects can appear threatening or benign but with practical
reflexivity there is no favouritism. All is examined as a matter of course.

The questioning does not happen with the aim of refutation. It will
rebut if the given object seeks to obscure its true nature, but its raison d'
etre is embracing rather than denying. Practical reflexivity does not reject
the new through fear; it stops the new exerting fear. Never does it reject
"progress". Fluidity is ensured because practical reflexivity outlaws
sanctified interest groups that check the movement of small things.

We must recognise that the world is in process if we conceive of
utopias (in their widest sense) as anticipations. By looking at the world in
this way we can resolve the dichotomy between now and what might be. Hegel
first destroys this duality in showing that the world is moving and reaching
a Becoming. This Becoming is achieved by the subjective intervention of
people. For Hegel, understanding comes through looking into history. With
Bloch, it is grasped by looking forward.

Bloch builds on Marx's concept of alienation and makes it appear more
lovely. For Bloch, man is constantly striving towards a non-alienated being,
an existence which does not exist but which must exist - the "Not-Yet".
Dreams are a pushing forward from present unbeing. They are a response to
oppression. Life is a trip. a moving out exodus from a negative situation.
This journey is not limited to individual thrill-seekers, but is open to all.

At the end of his introduction to the 'Principle of Hope', Bloch says:
"Essential being is not Been-ness; on the contrary: the essential being of the
world lies itself on the Front." (8) This comes as great relief to estranged
man, who hates the prospect of eternal biscuit packing.

But how easy is freeness? "Not only man is in a bad way here, but so
is the insight into his hope." (9) And later: "The Not-Yet-Conscious, Not-
Yet-Become, although it fulfils the meaning of all men and the horizon of all
being, has not even broken through as a word, let alone as a concept." (10)
Bloch can say this without forcing the bad way man into a frightened cocoon.
All the time his writing is lifted by a lightness which never suggests denial.
This is just as well. Sometimes it is difficult to entertain any kind of serious
(not necessarily solemn) hope; doing the work of hope, changing the social
relations and moving pictures, presents more worry. The most immediate prob-
lem is the "Why should I?" question. A rest is always as good as a change.
Alienation means that bad times become worthy times because we convince our-

selves that the situation is pleasant, that our objectives are worth pushing,
that getting out of bed is not a lie which keeps the Big Dipper happy.

The idea of class conflict is not darkness visible; one reason is that
capitalism conceals it by blaming all strife on original sin and fluctuations
that are natural in the market of the free. Another is that people have other
things to mourn over. Another is that Marx has been translated into an -ism,
a science iceberg. Capitalism could make him appear beneficent but chooses
for its own interests to give him big fangs and a swag bag. Marx suffers the
deification his theory seeks to avoid.

What is helpful is the true horror of most things, the cramping sens-
ation that arrives when we expose ourselves to the world as it is. The situ-
ation is so bad we are forced to hope. "The abolition of religion as the
illusory happiness of the people is the demand for their real happiness. To
call on them to give up their illusions about their condition is to call on
them to give up a condition that requires illusions." (11) Where we want to
be, says Bloch, is "homeland". This is very true, because in capitalism we
are always outside, always cold. Marx says in the '1844 Manuscripts' that
"man is at home when he is not working, and not at home when he is working."
(12) What would be a comforting scenario is to wish we were athome and then to
look around us and realise that in fact we were already there. This is what
Bloch says and he deserves a large quote: "The final will is that to be truly
present. So that the lived moment belongs to us and we to it and 'Stay awhile'
could be said to it. Man wants at last to enter into the Here and Now as
himself, wants to enter his full life without postponement and distance. The
genuine utopian will is definitely not endless striving." (13) But even in a
happy time the genuine utopian will must embody endless wonderment. Although
this asking may not mean "endless striving", it does not disallow endless
motion. Instead it encourages it. This precludes the static utopia, the
agrarianism that sometimes appears necessary to limit complications and sus-
pend people in a moment where the mindless tasks that capitalism promotes are
kept away. Labour is more immediate and living because its reason is seen
rather than shrouded. Although we should not scorn a closer relationship
with nature, neither should we abandon the seemingly unattractive notion of
industrial development. With practical reflexivity, the customary ugliness
of what is today called progress will be abolished because in the good mood
someone will always question the worth of tower blocks. The atmosphere of the
mood means that industry moves as the mood moves: the beauty is that it does
not move in a direction people fear.

When the plains Indians went into battle they though a lot about it.
Their dignity did not come only from their sharp noses. They danced all

night and entered a trance and whirled on the soil. Cowboys came and watched and called them the Spinning Belindas. The Indians saw visions through their dancing. When they put on paint they became different people. Dead Indians fought alongside their new friends. The braves and squaws believed in existing and future spirits. The Indians called themselves the human beings.

Something called truth is generally accepted as the end of theory. Instead theory should pursue truths. For Foucault, truth is plural, and relative rather than universal. Thus knowledge cannot become awesome because it is something man is able to see and experience as himself. "I am nothing and I should be everything." (14)

I am the voice of reason, I am rational man in a white coat, I am not locked up but growing taller. It is better to be a babbling brook. It allows us to watch like nature. It demolishes multi-storey society. It allows grey hairs to work in the way that children play.

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(1) Karl Marx - '1844 Manuscripts' in 'Early Writings' (Penguin) pge 329

(2)   - 'Introduction to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right'
                 pge 244 'Early Writings'

(3) Ernst Bloch - "Introduction to 'The Principle of Hope'" pge 3

(4) ibid. (2) pge 244

(5) ibid. (3) pge 3

(6) Karl Marx - 'Theses on Feuerbach' pge 421 'Early Writings'

(7) Michel Foucault - 'Power/Knowledge'

(8) ibid. (3) pge 18

(9) ibid. (3) pge 5

(10) ibid. (3) pge 6

(11) ibid. (2) pge 244

(12) ibid. (1) pge 326

(13) ibid. (3) pge 16

(14) ibid. (2) pge 254

Also: Richard Gunn - 'Practical Reflexivity in Marx' in 'Common Sense' 1

ANARCHISM IN BRITAIN
A PRELIMINARY BIBLIOGRAPHY

Published studies of the British anarchist movement have broken new ground, bringing together a diversity of material in a pioneering attempt to rediscover our lost history, and in doing so have given impetus to further study. This bibliography is part of a project to survey the resources available to promote further research and investigation, not just for its own sake, but from a belief that an understanding of our history can inform our actions in the present and future.

This bibliography is (as the subtitle indicates) only a preliminary bibliography, intended to make available the interim results of what has really been a collective project. For although I have collected the information, and am solely responsible for the errors and omissions, much of the material is incorporated only because of the assistance provided by many other people. To all of them my thanks. Please keep sending bibliographic references to me.

Some items are included because although they do not directly relate to the anarchist movement, they do provide information about the anarchist milieu. I have also deliberately ommitted some works which should properly be included, because they are already incorporated in existing authoritative bibliographies, and inclusion here would only unbalance this bibliography. Research on William Godwin, for example, is extensive and more than equals the amount of published material available on many other aspects of British anarchism. For those interested in Godwin, I recommend Peter Marshall's book (cited below) which contains an excellent bibliography.

Because this bibliography is preliminary, not every item has been examined, and some lack full details (eg page references in the case of periodical articles). I have included here incomplete items in the bibliography, as a way of (a) informing people of their existence and (b) stimulating feedback. For newcomers to the subject, I suggest you start with Quail (164), Oliver (153) and Woodcock (235). Because the movement is international I have also listed some items which give information about the background of anarchists from other countries who have been involved with the British movement.

It is my intention to update this bibliography as soon as possible. The results of this work will (again) be made available in this bulletin, as will the other parts of the survey. These include a check list of British anarchist periodicals and a descriptive list of library and archive collections incorporating relevant material (including a guide to the many files at the PRO).

Finally, a note of caution, in that I have still to visit the IISH at Amsterdam, and until I have consulted their files, all information must be considered incomplete. So far, I have not attempted to systematically index relevant articles in anarchist periodicals, and this is another major weakness of the existing bibliography, which I hope to remedy in time.

I suggest that an early project we might undertake, as a group, is to collect copies of the items listed and ensure easy availability by setting up a reference collection for the Research Group.   Martyn Everett
(August 1986)

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(This list from October 1986)

The list can be updated by writing to the author c/o the BULLETIN FOR
ANARCHIST RESEARCH at T.V.Cahill, Dept of Politics,Lancaster University,
LA1 4YF. Notice of new titles,periodicals & music can be obtained from:-
'The Anarchist Review', BM Bookserv, LONDON WC1N 3XX (S.a.e., 9"/6").

Note. Many post-anarchist, libertarian communist publications will not
be referred to. Some of the important addresses(1987) for these are:-

BM Blob, London WC1N 3XX for 'Wildcat Spain' book & pamphlets on 'Off the Rails'
on FRench 'Winter of DIscontent', 1986/7; 1981 Riots,DOckers Disputes, etc.

Solidarity, 123 Lathom Rd.,London E6 (for list of pamphlets by Castoriadis on
theory, and workplace,international questions + Journals).

Compendium Books(basement), 234 Camden High St., London N1 (stock largest
selection of situationist and council-communist publishers such as Rebel Press,
Unpopular Books, Echanges, Bureau of Public Secrets, Scorcher Publications etc).

Toni Negri

Archaeology and Project:the Mass Worker and the
Social Worker
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Forthcoming in T. Negri 'Revolution Retrieved – Writings
on Marx, Keynes, Capitalist Crisis and New Social Subjects
(1967-83)', Red Notes, Archive Vol. I.

1. *Functions and Limitations of the Concept of the Mass Worker*

In the wake of the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of
the Soviet Union in 1956, the critique of Stalinism which de-
veloped within the Italian labour movement above all put into
question the traditional conception of the trade union. This had
become an area of key concern. In 1953, there had been a re-
sounding defeat of the Communist union at FIAT; in the years
that followed, there were equally resounding defeats in line for
the farm workers' unions and the public sector unions (railway
workers, postal workers etc). The fading (or downright disap-
pearance) of any immediate prospect of a seizure of power, and a
series of confusions at the ideological level, meant that the trade
unions were being undermined as the transmission belt of the sys-
tem; both their organisational form and their ideological basis
were thrown into crisis.

But this crisis did not affect the radicality of the working class.
There began to appear a mass form of behaviour which was spon-
taneous, multiform, violent, mobile and disorderly – but which,
nonetheless, was able to compensate for the lack of trade union
leadership in ways that were both original and powerful – and
while the union leaderships stuck to a repetition of the old forms,
the working class reacted in ways that were autonomous. The
union would call strike action and the entire workforce would go
in to work – but then, after a week, a month, maybe a year, that
same working class would explode in spontaneous demonstra-
tions. The farm workers of the South also began spontaneous
struggles. However, they had been defeated in the movement to
take over agricultural land; they had been sold out by the govern-
ment's agrarian reform, which condemned them to the poverty of

having to work small holdings. As a result, the rural vanguards chose the path of large-scale emigration. This was a mass phenomenon – its causes and effects were complex, certainly, but its quality was political. Then things began to move: Milan in 1959, Genova in 1960, Turin in 1962, and Porto Marghera in 1963 – a series of struggles which pushed to the forefront of the political scene. This succession of labour struggles involved every major sector of industry and all the major urban concentrations. They were all more or less spontaneous, mass events, and revealed a degree of general circulation of modes of struggle that had not previously been experienced.

One might well ask for a definition of this spontaneity of the struggles. Because, while it is true that the struggles were in large part independent of the control and the command of the trade unions (and the unions were, sometimes, not even aware of them), at the same time, they appeared – and were – *strongly structured*. They revealed the existence of new working-class leaderships which were – as we used to say – "invisible". In part because many people simply didn't want to see them. But also (and mainly) because of their mass character; because of the new mechanisms of cooperation that were coming into play in the formation of workers' political understanding; because of the extraordinary ability of these new forms of struggle to circulate; and because of the degree of understanding (understanding of the productive process) that they revealed. And whilst these new forms of struggle were at first seen by most people as "irrational", in the course of their development they gradually began to reveal a coherent project and a tactical intelligence which finally began to problematise the very concept of working-class rationality – economic rationality? Socialist rationality? Rationality of the law of value? Rationality of trade union control? Rationality of law and order? Etc, etc. In effect, we could identify elements in the form taken by these struggles which were directly contradictory with the whole structure of trade unionist/socialist ideology. The wage demands, and the extremes to which they went, contradicted the way in which, in traditional trade union practice, the wage had been used as a political instrument, as a means of mediation. The partisan nature (egotism) of the struggles ran heavily counter to the socialist ideology of the homogeneity of working-class interests which had prevailed up till then. The immediacy and the autonomous nature of struggles ranging from wildcat

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strikes to mass sabotage, their powerful negative effect on the structures of the cycle of production, ran counter to the traditional view that fixed capital is sacrosanct, and also counter to the ideology of liberation of (through) work – in which work was the subject of liberation, and Stakhanovism or high levels of professional skill the form of liberation. Finally, the intensification (whether at group or individual level) of heightened forms of mobility, of absenteeism, of socialisation of the struggle, ran immediately counter to any factory-centred conception of working-class interests, of the kind that has come down to us from the workers' councilist tradition. All this gradually uncovered, in increasingly socialised forms, an attitude of struggle against work, a desire for liberation from work – whether it be work in the big factory, with all its qualities of alienation, or work in general, as conceded to the capitalist in exchange for a wage.

The paradox of the situation was the fact that this mass spontaneity, highly structured within itself, negated in principle the very definition of spontaneity. Traditionally, spontaneity has been taken to mean a low level of working-class consciousness, a reduction of the working class to simple labour-power. Here it was different. This *spontaneity represented a very high level of class maturity*. It was a spontaneous *negation of the nature of the working class as labour-power*. This tendency was clearly present, and later developments were to reveal it still further. Thus anybody who wanted to analyse the new forms of struggle was going to have to be prepared to problematise the entire theoretical tradition of socialism. Within these struggles, there were *new categories* waiting to be discovered.

And this was what was done. In the early 1960s, on the fringes of the official labour movement, a number of working-class vanguards and a number of groups of intellectuals active within the class struggle produced a theory in which *the mass worker was understood as the new subject of working-class struggles*.

On the one hand, their studies identified the *objective* characteristics of this class-protagonist. These characteristics were determined as follows:

1) within the organisation of the labour process, by *Taylorism*;
2) within the organisation of the working day and the organisation of wage relations, by *Fordism*;
3) within economic/political relations, by *Keynesianism*;

4) within general social and state relations, by the model and
the practice of the *Planner-State*.

On the other hand, they succeeded in defining (this was abso-
lutely imperative) the new *subjective* characteristics of this new
configuration of the class. These subjective characteristics were
described in terms that were dynamic and highly productive. In
other words, every aspect of the capitalist organisation of the fac-
tory-society was to be seen as the product of a dialectic between
working-class struggle and capitalist development (including de-
velopments in technology; in the form of the wage; in economic
policy; and in the form of the State) – the product of *a dialectic
whose active and motive central force was the mass worker*.

As our old friend Marx says, machines rush to where there are
strikes. All the mechanisms of capitalist control of development
were brought to bear at critical points within the system. By
means of a continual theft of the information generated by the
struggles, capital created increasingly complex mechanisms of
domination. It was within this framework that the analysis under-
taken by workerism unstitched the capitalist Moloch, following
the indications provided by working-class struggle. The comrades
arrived at a fundamental theoretical conclusion: that, given a cer-
tain level of capitalist development, the concept of labour-power
(understood as an element of the dialectical relationship between
workers and capital, a relationship in which capitalist logic has the
upper hand) becomes dissolved. A dialectical relationship most
certainly remains, but now the relationship of capital/labour-
power becomes the relationship of capital/working class. Thus *the
dialectic of capitalist development is dominated by the relationship
with the working class*. The working class now constituted an *in-
dependent polarity* within capitalist development. Capitalist de-
velopment was now dependent on the political variable of work-
ing-class behaviours. The concept of labour-power could no
longer be substantiated; only that of working-class was adequate.

I have to admit that our theoretical and political positions in
this period, while very rich in some respects, were very poor in
others. Their richness lay in the fact that they provided a basis
from which we could then develop an entirely political concept of
labour-power. We learned a lot from developments in the
capitalist revolution of the 1930s and 1940s. In particular, we
learned that it was possible to carry forward revolutionary strug-

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gles having a marked effect both on the structure of the labour process, and on the structure of economic and political domination – in other words, struggles that were capable of winning against *Taylorism* and *within Keynesianism*. On the other hand, the poverty of our theoretical and practical positions lay in the fact that, while individual struggles and the struggles of individual class sectors proved capable of understanding capital and taking it on, at the same time, the potential of that struggle, its strategic dimension, the re-establishment of a centre of revolutionary initiative, remained beyond our grasp. Practice, even the very highest working-class practice – at this level of the class struggle – always contains an element of uncertainty as regards its synthesis and resolution – what Lenin used to call the "art of insurrection", an art which the workers, today, are seeking to turn into science. This science still had to be constructed – a science which the practice of the mass worker was demanding, but which it did not provide.

In fact, capital's science of domination was far ahead of us. At the time when we were introducing the concept of the mass worker, and, by implication, a critique of the category of labour-power in favour of a concept of the dynamism of the working class, capital, for its part, had already made tremendous advances in its own practice, as regards its theory of domination and redressing the balance of power. (Note that within the specificities and the isolation of a few national situations – Italy in particular – we were successful in developing a remarkable level of subjective action, and in bringing about moments of deep capitalist crisis). For, while from the working-class viewpoint the revolutionary practice of the mass worker was being advanced within individual factories, and within the overall interlocked system of factories and companies, capital was already responding in overall, global and social terms – in terms of global domination and control. Keynesianism at its roots had already demonstrated this: an awareness not only that the wage relation extended between *subjects that were different* (capital and the working class), but also – and above all – that the solution (favourable to capitalist development) was to be sought *across the entire span of production and circulation* – in other words, involving the entire sociality of the relations of production and reproduction. In the Keynesian system, state budgeting was the means of recuperating and neutralising the class struggle in the factory, and monetary policy was the means of subordinating the wage relation. Fordism, for its part,

had already transformed the high level of cooperation on the as-
sembly line (and thus corrected those elements of weakness which
labour struggles, at that level of production, were able to turn
against capitalist command) into a conscious policy, one might
say, of the sociality of the assembly line – in other words, a policy
of command over the relation between industrial production and
the reproduction of labour-power, a capitalist intervention within
the social flexibility of labour-power, privileging social command
and divisions within society as conditions for command and divi-
sion on the assembly line. *Fordism recuperated social motivations
and made them functional to the Taylorist organisation of work* – it
posed them as the prime and fundamental terrain of command in
the factory. Gradually, the labour market and the fabric of rela-
tions between production and reproduction was becoming an
operative field (this also from the theoretical point of view) for
the capitalist theory of factory command: hence the development
from Keynes to Kaldor's planning techniques, to Kalecki's micro-
analyses of the political cycle, to the present systemic theories of
neo-functionalism.

Faced with these developments in capital's understanding of
the articulations of command, not only was the concept of the
mass worker *late in developing*, but also, crucially, it now proved
incapable of developing for itself a theory able to match the new
dimensions of command. Of course, the old workerists of the '60s
knew that they had to go beyond the "empirical" category of the
factory, and that the mass worker had to become effective over
the entire span of the social factory – but the factoryist content of
the concept and the circumstances of its genesis prevented its
theoretical potential from becoming practical reality. Thus, in the
end, this *impotence of the mass worker* left the way open for sur-
reptitious operations of mediation and representation – and the
whole old machinery of the party-form was wheeled out as the
means whereby issues could be posed at the social, political and
general level. We should also add (and this is not only merely of
historical relevance) that this was the basis whereby the trade
union was able to re-establish its powers of control over the work-
ing class. This had a paradoxical consequence: the trade union ac-
cepted the delegation of power and the general functions that the
working class had restored to it, and then went on to impose rules
which separated, in a corporatist sense, the working class from
the other proletarianised strata of society. When the trade union

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(ie in its traditional function as half party and half merchandiser, in the sense that it both represents labour-power within the bourgeois political market, and also sells labour as a commodity on the capitalist market) finally caught up with and grasped (post-'68) the new composition of the mass worker, it only reduced it to corporatism, and divided it off from the rest of social labour.

Hence it follows that a methodology such as I use, which seeks to indicate possibilities for subjective genesis within the categories of class struggle, cannot rest content with this old version of the concept of the mass worker. And indeed, the conditions for further theoretical progress on this front were plentiful, especially in the years immediately following the upheavals of 1968-69. Working-class struggles, which were extremely powerful in spite of (or perhaps because of) their ambiguity as struggles both *within and against* the system of the relative wage, now brought about a *crisis in the mechanisms of capitalist control*. The capitalist response during this period developed along two complementary lines – the social diffusion, decentralisation of production, and the political isolation of the mass worker in the factory.

The only possible answer to this, from the working-class viewpoint, was to insist on and fight for the broadest definition of class unity, to modify and extend the concept of working-class productive labour, and to eliminate the theoretical isolation of the concept of mass worker (insofar as this concept had inevitably become tied to an empirical notion of the factory – a simplified factoryism – due to the impact of the bosses' counter-offensive, the corporatism of the unions, and the historical and theoretical limi-
-tations of the concept itself). On the other hand, the *emergence and growth of diffused forms of production (the "diffuse factory"), while it enlarged the labour market enormously, also redefined as directly productive and "working class" a whole series of functions within social labour that would otherwise be seen as marginal or latent*. Finally, there was a growing awareness of the interconnection between productive labour and the labour of reproduction, which was expressed in a wide range of behaviours in social struggles, above all in the mass movements of women and youth, affirming all these activities collectively as labour. This development made necessary an innovation in the vocabulary of class concepts. As we used to put it: "from the mass worker to the social worker". But it would be more correct to say: from the work-

ing class, ie that working class massified in direct production in the factory, to social labour-power, representing the potentiality of a new working class, now extended throughout the entire span of production and reproduction – a conception more adequate to the wider and more searching dimensions of capitalist control over society and social labour as a whole.

There are numerous problems which arise at this point, and I have no intention of trying to avoid them. In what follows I hope to confront at least some of them. It will suffice at this stage to introduce what I consider to be the key methodological concept – that of *class composition* – which will help to clarify much of my further argument. By class composition, I mean that combination of political and material characteristics – both historical and physical – which makes up: (a) on the one hand, the historically given structure of labour-power, in all its manifestations, as produced by a given level of productive forces and relations; and (b) on the other hand, the working class as a determinate level of solidification of needs and desires, as a dynamic subject, an antagonistic force, tending towards its own independent identity in historical-political terms. All concepts that define the working class must be framed in terms of this *historical transformability of the composition of the class*. This is to be understood in the general sense of its ever wider and more refined productive capacity, the ever greater abstraction and socialisation of its nature, and the ever greater intensity and weight of the political challenge it presents to capital. In other words, the *making of the working class*! It is by reference to this framework and these criteria, for example, that we can qualify more precisely a term like *spontaneity*. The concept of composition allows us to introduce a specific, determinate quality into our theoretical definition of spontaneity; it prevents us, in other words, from falling into the trap of ideological definitions (whether political – in which case spontaneity is conceived as an indifferent category; or economistic – in which case spontaneity is reduced to the semantic emptiness of the concept of labour-power pure and simple). The category of "mass worker" must accordingly be re-assessed, in its functions and limitations, within this temporal framework of the transformations of the composition of the working class. And under today's conditions, it seems to me that this transformation is taking place through a *process of real subsumption of labour on the part of capital, which has now*

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reached a level that encompasses the whole of society. "Hic Rhodus, hic salta."

2. *Capitalist Restructuring: From the Mass Worker to Social Labour-Power*

So, let us return to the moment when the pressure of this new spontaneity (that is, the spontaneous – but, as in the paradox we have described, both structural and structured – forms of expression of the new class composition, ie of the mass worker) brings about a crisis in the means of capitalist control over the production and reproduction of commodities.

I would suggest that this moment can be located chronologically within the decade 1960-1970. In that period, strikes and struggles created an upheaval within the existing framework of development, inducing a major series of critical phenomena (crises of capitalist control), of which the following seem to be the most important:

1) The mass worker set in motion a *mobility* within the labour market. The subversive characteristics of this mobility appear to consist in an uncontrollable increase in the speed of flow/turnover of demands, and, at the same time, in a rigid and homogeneous escalation of those demands. If we include within our definition of the mass worker the fact that the mass worker represents a certain qualitative solidification of abstract labour (which is another way of saying a high level of subjective awareness of abstract labour), then these mobility-related phenomena reveal simply the centripetal potential of abstract labour (towards averageness, mediety) in a framework of mass production in modern capitalism. And this might be consistent with development. But instead, the forms and modes in which the mobility (subjectivity) of the mass worker expressed itself threw capitalist development out of proportion, subjected it to intolerable accelerations, and in particular confronted it with the quality of this very composition – those historical differences and divisions of sex, age, culture, etc, which were now tending towards a deeply-rooted political homogeneity. *Mobility of abstract labour equals tendency for subjects and for struggles to unify.*

2) On the other hand, in a complementary process, the mass worker set in motion – both within individual factories and within

the productive fabric of the metropolis – a *downward rigidity* of expectations and wage demands. This in itself (the demand for "parity") became a subversive force. Drives towards egalitarianism served to reinforce this rigidity: we saw the collapse of all – or virtually all – the weaponry of division in the factory (piecework; employers' unilateral control of timings of the labour process; internal mobility, etc) and of the hierarchy which controls the labour process and the organisation of production. In this period, sackings – together with all the other various forms of exclusion and marginalisation – were powerfully contested, resisted, and in large part blocked. Furthermore, the overall rigidity of the class brought about a reduction in effective labour time; it also provided defence and back-up for individual experiences of resistance to work, or refusal of work. The wage struggle, in both its qualitative and quantitative aspects, became a powerful independent variable of development: a kind of economic-political dual power which came into existence. (In some instances we find this registered in factory legislation – most notably in Italy, for example). *Rigidity of abstract labour equals qualitative consolidation of the above-mentioned unification of subjects and of struggles.*

3) Thirdly, the social mobility and the political/wage rigidity of the social worker was also articulated within the sphere of *circulation*. But, for the mass worker, circulation means a radical change in the relation between daily work-time and non-worked time. We were not yet at the point where the latter had hegemony over the former. However, this was a phase in which the social relation of production (the relation between production and reproduction) was an area of powerful contestation. Without succeeding in fully controlling and carrying through this leap in the class struggle, the mass worker nevertheless spread the infection of his subjective behaviour into the fabric of proletarian society. First – just to take one example – although not yet at the point of directly contesting the "Oedipal wage" (in other words, the wage paid for the male worker's domination over his family), the mass worker nonetheless induced an awareness of the urgent need for new wage forms in the management and development of the social sphere – new wage forms likely to have a decisive and dissolving effect on the unified family wage, and to liberate new labour power at an extremely high level of needs. The mass worker was an active factor in the circulation of working-class objectives, and in propagating the equality implicit in abstract labour. As such,

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the mass worker induced subversive effects within society which tended to negate the division between productive and reproductive labour, and also to alter the established proportion between them. *The circulation of the forms of behaviour of the mass worker was an extension of the unification of the subjects and of the struggles.*

4) Finally, we have to stress that it is only by moving to a *political* expression that the series of subversive conditions implicit in the existence of the mass worker could be further advanced. The concept of the mass worker had an existence that was purely relative; the fact that s/he was the point of a class evolution which had not yet been fully realised, often permitted the surreptitious reintroduction of old political concepts and practices, such as the notion of vanguard and mass, and thus permitted the re-emergence of party representation and the mirroring of past forms. This political inadequacy results from, precisely, the social indeterminateness of the figure of the mass worker. We should never underestimate this limitation, but if we look beyond it, we can see that a *framework of new values* was beginning to take shape – ideas of freedom to match the fact of mobility; ideas of community, as an aspect of the rigidity mentioned above; ideas of new life and universality, as a synthesis of people's relation to reproduction and liberated time. This framework of new values was incipient, was still dawning, but was nonetheless efficacious, because it existed at a mass level.

At this point, the capitalist crisis in the management of *this* labour power, with all its strength and richness, became decisive. –Capital goes into crisis every time that labour-power transmutes to become working class – by working class I mean a level of composition incompatible with command, at a given historical level of maturity of the productive forces. (It is evident that *consciousness cannot be defined outside of this relation; so that it is possible to find extremely high levels of consciousness which remain totally ineffective, and, on the other hand, spontaneous levels of consciousness which are powerfully effective in revolutionary terms*). As I say, every time that labour-power effects a revolutionary transformation in its composition and becomes working class, at that point capital enters relations of crisis, and has only one weapon with which to respond: *restructuration*. An attempt to attack and transform class composition. In other words, for capital, restruc-

turing is a political, economic and technological *mechanism aimed at the enforced reduction of the working class to labour-power*. To put it more correctly: capital aims to reduce the intensity of the political composition of the class.

At this point, the problem becomes specific again. How did capital respond to the crisis in relations of production that was induced by the class offensive of the mass worker? How was restructuration articulated at this level of political composition of the class and its struggles? What happened after the 1960s?

It is not hard to identify and describe some major elements of the capitalist response. [Obviously, the notes that follow are very partial and indicative. They limit themselves to questions of class relations in the sphere of production. To deal adequately with the restructuring of labour power, we would really have to consider two fundamental shifts in imperialist development in the early 1970s – the freeing of the dollar from gold parity (1971) and the energy crisis of 1973-74. There is no space to deal with them here, and so the argument, as well as being partial and indicative, is frankly insufficient. However, I would ask you to trust the author and believe me when I say that I have given a lot of thought to these other fundamental determinations of the overall framework. These, in my opinion, are not contradictory with the phenomena which are now studied at the level of production and reproduction. Rather, they present an overdetermination, an extension and a deepening of the logic which lies at the root of these phenomena.]

So, let's return to our initial question, to the analysis of the groundwork of capitalist restructuring. Let's begin by looking at *mobility*. In my opinion, as regards mobility, capital was already taking into account developments within the composition of the mass worker, and was in fact acting on their tendency to become realised, in order to throw the working class back to the position of being labour-power. While the composition of the mass worker from the 1960s onwards tended – via mobility – towards a unification in general of potential abstract labour, capital's restructuration project effectively grasps the social tendency towards abstract labour. It is against this abstract labour that capital exercises its capacity to repress, to fragment and to introduce hierarchical division. Capital does not mobilise against abstract labour and the social dimension which it assumes, but against the political unification which takes place at this level. Capital assumes

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subsumption of labour (abstraction and socialisation) as a process that has been realised. Experiments in job-design, segmentation of the labour market, policies of regrading, reforms of methodologies of command within production cooperation, etc – all this became fundamental. A restless, practical process of trial and error was now set in motion, aimed at destroying any possibility of proletarian unification. If we understand mobility as a tendency towards freedom, as a definition of time which is alternative to commanded time within the classic working day – and if we assume that from now on, in a parallel movement, it becomes impossible for capital to establish any fixed "reserve army" of labour – then we understand why, in political and economic terms, it is so urgent for capital somehow to *fix* this labour-power (the first, spontaneous and structural manifestation of an abstract labour that has become subjectively realised) within mobility and via mobility. On the one hand, the class struggles within and against capital's system. On the other, capital struggles within and against the new composition: within its mobility, its socialisation, its abstraction, and against the subjective attitudes which these elements engender. All manpower and job-design interventions are to be understood as policies which learn from the progress of abstract labour towards its social unification: they intervene in order to block further development of its subversive potential.

Capital's reaction *against the rigidity* evident within the composition of the mass worker was even more rigorous. This is because in this area mystification is harder to achieve. Policies aimed at segmenting the labour market (which are posed as "positive", as against the "negative" of mobility of abstract labour) –tend to produce a balkanisation of the labour market, and above all, important new effects of marginalisation. Marginalisation in the form of political blackmail, repression and degeneration of values – much more than the familiar blackmail of poverty. I have said that the rigidity in the forms of behaviour of the mass worker (particularly on the wages front) expressed an essence that was qualitative – a complex of needs which became consolidated as power. Capital's problem was how to defuse this power, quantitatively and qualitatively.

Thus, on the one hand, we have seen the promotion of various forms of *diffuse labour* – ie the conscious shifting of productive functions not tied to extremely high degrees of organic composition of capital, towards the peripheries of metropolitan areas: this

is the quantitative response, of scale and size. (The scale of this project is multinational, and should be understood against the backdrop of the energy crisis). On the other hand, capital has attacked the problem of qualitative rigidity, and has planned for one of two solutions: it must be either corporatised or ghettoised. This means a system of wage hierarchies, based on either simulated *participation* in development and/or on *regimentation* within development, and, on the other hand, marginalisation and isolation. On this terrain – a terrain which the experience of the struggles of the mass workers had revealed as strongly characterised by political values – capitalism's action of restructuration has often made direct use of legal instruments. It has regarded the boundary between legality and extra-legality in working-class behaviours as a question subordinate to the overall restoration of social hierarchy. Not even this is new – as we know, it has always been the case – and Marx, in his analysis of the working day, makes the point several times. Law and the regulation of the working day are linked by a substantial umbilical cord. If the organisation of the working day is socially diffuse, then sanctions, penalties, fines etc will be entrusted to the competence of penal law.

Capital also acted against the way in which the mass worker had *made use of circulation* – in other words, of the increasingly tight links between production and reproduction. Restructuration once again adopted the method of displacement – in other words, capital takes as given/realised the tendency set in motion by working-class struggles: it subsumes its behaviours (ie the awareness of the circularity between production time and reproduction time) and begins working on how to control this situation. The "welfare state" is the principal level geared to synchronising this relationship. The benefits of the welfare state are the fruit of struggles, are counter-power. But the specific application of restructuration aims to use welfare in order to control, to articulate command via budgetary manoeuvrings. "Public spending cuts" are not a negation of the welfare state; rather, they reorganise it in terms of productivity and/or repression. If subsequently proletarian action within this network of control continues to produce breakdown, and to introduce blockages and disproportions, then capital's insistence on control reaches fever-pitch. *The transition to the internal warfare state represents the corresponding overdetermination of the crisis of the welfare state*. But it is impor-

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tant to stress once again capital's capacity for displacement. The restructuring which has followed the impact of the mass worker's struggles and the tendencies which the mass worker has instilled within the general framework of class power relations, is geared to match a labour-power which exists as completely socialised – whether it exists or potentially exists is not important. Capital is forced into anticipation. However, marginalisation is as far as capital can go in excluding people from the circuits of production – expulsion is impossible. Isolation within the circuit of production – this is the most that capital's action of restructuration can hope to achieve. It does not succeed in bringing about a restoration of the *status quo*, and in the struggle against the mass worker it is likely to assist in the even more compact formation of a completely socialised labour-power. There is much craftiness of proletarian reasoning in all this!

Things become even clearer when we come to the fourth area in which capital's activity of restructuration has to prove itself and be proven. In other words, the terrain of *politics*. Here, every attempt at mystification – this seems to me the most interesting aspect – is forced to assume the complete socialisation of labour-power as normal, as a fact of life – a necessary precondition of any action against the proletarian antagonism. In other words – as many writers now accept – the only remote possibility of mystifying (mystifying, controlling, commanding etc) struggles is conditional on an advancement of the terms in which the problem is considered: in other words, an approach to the problem at the level of *policies of capitalist command which see its enemy subject in proletarian society as a whole*. Capital relates to the phase of ⁻real subsumption as antagonism at the highest level. Capitalist analyses of command move from this awareness to develop two possible lines of approach. The first, which I would call *empirical*, regards social labour-power as a purely economic subject, and therefore locates the necessary control-oriented manoeuvrings within a continuous trial and error process of redistribution and reallocation of income – eg consumerist objectives, inflationary measures, etc. The other, which I call *systemic*, is more refined. This assumes that the empirical policies pursued thus far have resolved nothing. Thus the only way of ensuring the effective exercise of command, with an ongoing reduction of the complexity of class conflict, is to maintain command over systemic information and circulation; to maintain a pre-ordered mechanism of planning

and balancing inputs and outputs. At this level, capital's science and practice of command reveal themselves as *a set of techniques for analysing the social sphere* – and as an undoubtedly involuntary apology for the immediate sociality, structure and density of labour-power.

I consider it important to understand these fundamental changes and to highlight their conceptual character. Thus I define restructuration as a parenthesis within the evolving process of the composition of the working class. Obviously, this is a necessary parenthesis: the interaction of productive forces (capital and the working class) is in no sense illusory. But at the same time, we should stress that within this process, the motor force of working-class struggles is fundamental, as is the intensity of their composition, and the emergence of abstract labour as a social quality and as a unifying factor within production (and reproduction). As we used to say: capital's great function is to create the conditions for its own destruction. This is still the case. Thus we must recognise that in the restructuring process currently under way, these critical conditions of capitalist development are still respected. Obviously, such a recognition is possible only if our theory is up to it. And one of the fundamentals of adequate theory is to have a concept of labour power which is not conceptually indiscriminate, but which is historically and politically pregnant, is continually and materially in tune with class consciousness – in other words, with degrees of struggle and of capacity to effect change which come increasingly close to the classic concept of proletariat. However, I feel it is still necessary to live through that ambiguity of production and the relations of production, and the way they are always -being newly determined.

3. *Towards a Critique of the Political Economy of the Mass Worker: from Social Labour Power to the Social Worker*

So, our project is to resolve this fundamental ambiguity in the relationship that labour-power (whether posed as individual commodity or as socialised abstract labour) has with class consciousness and with capital. In other words, at this point we have to ask ourselves whether the *linear* mechanism of Marx's analysis, which locates the socialisation and the abstraction of labour within the process of real subsumption of labour under capital, is not perhaps incorrect. The process of real subsumption, in Marx,

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concludes in a real and proper *Aufhebung*: the antagonism is transcended via an image of communism which is the necessary outcome of the dialectical process developed up to that point. In the more banal of the socialist vulgates, the *Aufhebung* – whose schema, in Marx, is conceptual, structural and synchronic – becomes diachronic, utopian and eschatological. To further clarify this point, I shall spell out my thesis: *at the level of real subsumption* (ie at the level of the complete socialisation and abstraction of all the productive and reproductive segments of labour), *we are dealing not with linearity and catastrophe, but with separation and antagonism*. It seems to me that proof of this theory is to be sought first and foremost from empirical analysis (historical, sociological and political) of the movements of the working class. In other words, from considering the characteristics of labour-power when posed as social labour-power.

Concretely, our argument could proceed from examination of a familiar historical conjuncture: if, as some authors have done, we construct historical charts mapping developments in the quality of work, then we can see how the entire direction of capitalist development is towards the destruction of skilled labour (of specific "skill"), reducing it to abstract labour (the multilateral "job"). The socialisation of educational processes (schooling, skill training, apprenticeships etc) goes hand in hand with the process of the abstraction of labour, within a historical series of episodes which span the entire period since the Industrial Revolution. Within this time-span, the tendency is progressive and broadly balanced, beginning from the 18th century, and moving through –to the 1920s-1930s: *but at this point a break takes place in the balanced continuity of the historical series*. The collapse of "skilled work" can be located precisely in the period between the two big imperialist wars – ie in the 1920s and 1930s. This resulted in the hegemony, as from that period, of the *semi-skilled* worker, the *ouvrier specialisé* (O.S.) – in other words, what we call the mass worker. But it also turns out that *this hegemony is transitory*, because the mass worker is in fact just the *first* figure in the "collapse" of the balanced relationship between "skill" and "job"; the mass worker is the *first* moment of an extraordinary acceleration towards a complete abstraction of labour-power. The *mass worker, the semi-skilled worker* (whatever his subjective consciousness) *is not so much the final figure of the skilled worker, but*

rather the first impetuous prefiguration of the completely socialised worker.

This premise has a number of important consequences. Without losing ourselves in casuistry, it is worth highlighting just one consequence, which seems fundamental in characterising a critique of the political economy of the mass worker. As follows: if "skill" collapses into an indifferent element; if the division of labour as we know it (based on vertical scales of relative intensity and of structural quality) dissolves; if, in other words, every theory of "human capital" (ie the self-investment of labour-power) reveals itself to be not only a mystification of a reality which is both exploited and subjected to command, but also pure and simple fantasising apologetics; if, as I say, all this is given, it does nothing to remove the fact that capital still needs to exercise command, by having and maintaining a differentiated and functional structuring of labour-power to match the requirements of the labour process (whether this be individual or social).

In the previous section, we noted some of the basic characteristics of capitalist restructuring in the transition from the mass worker to socialised labour-power. We can grasp the theoretical kernel of the matter by returning to them for a moment. As I said, once there is a lapsing of such vertical differentiations as between "skill" and "job", then collective capital (and State command) tend to advance new differentiations on the horizontal terrain of command, over the *labour market*, over the social mobility of labour power. In relation to relatively advanced capitalism this is familiar territory: it is the terrain of *new industrial feudalism* (what we would call corporatism). From within this particular ba-
-lance of forces, there proliferates a host of theories about the division of labour-power: whether labour-power is primary, secondary or tertiary; whether it is "central" or "peripheral" etc. What is the substance of the problem? Social labour-power is understood as mobility, and it is as such that it is to be regulated. [A short aside: In this regard, all static theories about industrial reserve armies – and similar nineteenth century archaeological constructs – as well as needing to be politically rejected by us, are obviously logically untenable].

But let me be more precise about what I mean when I say that social labour-power is understood as mobility. I mean that labour-power is understood as social, mobile and subjectively capable of identity. I mean that capital understands as a present

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reality what, for the mass worker, weighed down by the con-
tradictions implicit in his own social gestation, was present purely
as tendency. And above all I mean a substantial modification in
the level at which we consider the problem.

Mobility is time, flow and circulation within time. Marxism
bases its categories on the *time-measure of the working day.* In
certain well-known Marxist texts, the convention of time-measure
becomes so solid and unquestioned as to postulate as its base a
working day that is "normal". Now, in our present situation, of all
this there remains no trace. *The time of social labour-power* is a
working day so extended as not only to comprise within itself *the
relation between production time and reproduction time, as a
single whole*, but also and above all to extend the consideration of
time over the entire life-space of the labour market. *From the
working day to the labour market, from working hours to the mo-
bility of labour* – this transition means counterposing two oppos-
ing conceptions of time: the capitalist conception of time-mea-
sure, and *the conception of working-class freedom over the tem-
poral span of life.* The capitalist operation of reducing life-time to
abstract labour time-measure becomes an operation which is ab-
solutely antagonistic. In its conception of time and of develop-
ment, it reveals a substantial dissymmetry with proletarian life,
with the very existence of social labour-power. Here we can say
that the dissymmetry of command in general (the dissymmetry re-
vealed by theories of the state) and in particular the dissymmetry
which regulates the categories of exploitation, become dislocated
and reshaped in the face of the long and social time of proletarian
existence.

– In arguing my case, I want to stress this point. The reason is
clear. If it is true that the terms of exploitation are now relocated
on the social terrain, and if, within this social terrain, it is no
longer possible to reduce quantity and quality of exploitation, ab-
solute surplus value and relative surplus value, to the time-mea-
sure of a "normal" working day – *then the proletarian subject is re-
born in antagonistic terms, around a radical alternative, an alterna-
tive of life-time as against the time-measure of capital.* But even if
we limit our arguments to a critique of the political economy of
the mass worker, we are still able to achieve positive results on
this question. Namely that the ambiguous concept of the mass
worker here reveals its structural indeterminacy and instability:
its ambiguity is that between a system of domination still inter-

nalised by the mass worker (capital's time-measure) and a perspective of work which is calculated and envisaged over the time of an entire life. *The mass worker is still prey to ideology – his memory is of slavery, while his actions speak of freedom.* The capitalist restructuration which anticipates and outmanoeuvres the struggles of the mass worker by introducing the dimension of social labour-power, at this point arrives at a definitive contradiction, inasmuch as any transcendence of the mass worker has to be not a reproduction and reformulation of domination over socialised labour-power, but a resolution of the contradictory tensions within the figure of the mass worker, and the structural realisation of the antagonism in a new form.

The social worker. Let us define the way the antagonism has become subjectivised at this level, and call socialised labour-power "the social worker". In this way, we are clearly introducing a specific methodological difference – in any event a position which differs from those developed in earlier phases of the theory of the mass worker and in the methodology which was considered adequate for the maturation of that theory. The specificity and the difference lie in the quality of the antagonism which appears at this point. In other words, this abstract, social and mobile labour-power – to the extent that it subjectivises itself around its own concept of time, and a temporal constitution of its own (which are irreducible to the time measurement of capitalist command) – brings about an *irreducible antagonism*. That is, irreducible not only to labour power conceived as variable capital, and to the theoretical dialectic of value – all of which is perfectly obvious – but also and above all an *irreducible antagonism to the far more refined dialectic of composition/restructuration/recomposition* which, from a class point of view, had been developed as a portrayal integral to the historical experience of the mass worker. In reality, this portrayal, in its further versions, maintained a concept of the working day which was modelled on the capitalist conception of time-measure. But when the whole of life becomes production, capitalist time measures only that which it directly commands. And socialised labour-power tends to unloose itself from command, insofar as it proposes a life-alternative – and thus projects a different time for its own existence, both in the present and in the future. When all life-time becomes production-time, who measures whom? *The two conceptions of time and life* come into direct conflict in a separation which becomes increasingly

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deep and rigidly structured. But we shall come to all this in the next section.

Let's now return to our critique of the political economy of the mass worker. At the cost of repeating myself, I must stress once again both the importance and the ambiguity of that category. Its importance lies in the fact that, with the historical emergence of the mass worker, the concept of labour-power removes itself definitively from the theory-imposed destiny of being a component – albeit variable – of capital. But in the act of revealing itself as an *independent variable* (and clashing with a capitalist restructuration which relentlessly tracks, adjusts and recomposes the struggles), the constitutive activity of the mass worker – even though it is moving within a situation of a complete socialisation of production – failed to reach a sufficient degree of maturity. This brought about powerful ambiguities, and also, in the 1970s, a degree of political retrogression: a corporatism of certain strata of the mass worker, new divisions within the class, etc. But this is the point where the character of the *social worker* emerges as a new force, and as a *subjective qualification of social labour power*. The social worker completed and concluded the dynamic which existed within the mass worker as a tendency, and *transformed the independent variable into independence tout court*. This antagonism develops at a pace dictated by the rhythms of the real subsumption which capital puts into operation in relation to social labour. As real subsumption advances, so the social worker is brought into existence, as irresolvable antagonism. Antagonism as regards conceptions of life, the liberation of time, and thus in bringing about spatial-temporal conditions which are wholly alternative. A sort of "*a priori*" of liberation.

But before I resume this line of argument, allow me to point out an apparent paradox in the theory – which in this case turns out to be a function of mystification. In the so-called *post-modern (or "post-capitalist") conceptions* which are so current in political debate today, the *process of subsumption* is conceived in terms of *linearity* and catastrophe. In some instances, these terms can also be found in Marx – and in far more developed form, and sometimes completely explicitly, in the socialist vulgate. Subsumption is given as a system, as labour-power realised within capital's social domination, as a levelling-off of the antagonism – and therefore the antagonism is conceived as a utopian and catastrophist alternative. Such positions are fairly widespread, and sometimes

also involve exponents of the mass-worker theory. In these work-erist theories which are flirting with theories of post-modernism (stressing tendency and objectivity, and eliminating antagonism and subjectivity), some would say that workerism is committing hari kiri. The paradox, and at the same time the mystification, consists in the fact that here Marx's thinking (and the considerable tensions which run through it, right up to the point where he defines real subsumption, whether in the *Unpublished Sixth Chapter*, or, a good while previously, in the *Fragment on Machinery* in the *Grundrisse* – texts which must be seen as complementary) . . . *appears* to be respected, whereas in fact it is deeply and irreparably misrepresented. In fact, the focus in Marx is always the actuality and the determinateness of the antagonism. It is indeed true that the theoretical tendency of capital, which Marx also describes (but only in episodic terms, and, as I have said, in terms rather subordinated to the antagonistic spirit of his overall argument), on occasion accepts the criticism, and fights shy of the more banal mystifications. Nevertheless, when pushed, the most that it will concede is to create an image of the antagonism as an *exogenous form*: catastrophe. But our task, in going beyond Marx, is to grasp the antagonism in its *endogenous form*, also at the level of real subsumption.

By this I mean that: real subsumption of labour is a form of the crisis of capital. Understanding real subsumption of labour as crisis is one of the discoveries in store for communism as it goes "beyond Marx".

But this is not enough. In our rejection of post-modernist ideologies (without, of course, denying their analytical efficacity), we also retrieve another element of the theoretical history of our Italian movement since the 1960s. Namely: while the ambiguous theory and methodology of the mass worker implied a dialectic of value which today the social worker rejects, there was also articulated therein an inherent practical activity of subversion, a self-valorising independence (autonomy), which now the social worker lives as his own dignity and essence. Massimo Cacciari, (t.n. PCI member since 1969) the philosopher of *Krisis* cries:

> "Where there is crisis, there is no dialectic. Crisis is not a form of the dialectic. Or, rather, crisis can only be dialecticised in the form of its transcendence – an *Aufhebung*". (M. Cacciari, *Krisis*, Feltrinelli, Milano 1978)

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No, replies the social worker, here there can be no *Aufhebung*, because here the confrontation is between *subjects which are different*. In moving from formal subsumption to real subsumption, capital overcomes obstacles, lives the continual reduction of the working class to labour-power   in terms of a continuous, long-term and progressive socialisation of labour – in terms of a transition between class compositions at increasingly high levels of intensity and potential. *Once subsumption is completely realised, the only possible development is a transition from socialised labour-power to the social worker, to the new class subject.* The tradition and theory of the mass worker can still be of help in stimulating us towards this new definition.

4. *A Political Conception of Labour Power: the Proletariat. Some Problems*

Having reached this point, we can now attempt a summary of some basic methodological assumptions which should help us to reach a partial conclusion, and to pose new problems.

To start with, I regard as logically untenable any theory of labour power as a logical construct, an ambiguous and volatile essence, caught in a dichotomy between a tendency to become variable capital (the variable part of organic capital) and a tendency to become working class (ie a receptacle for consciousness which derives from the outside, the substance of a new Aristotelian synolus). This instrumental and pure-logic definition of labour power, which is both abstract and open to manipulation, has, historically speaking, been progressively negated through (if I may simplify) at least three concomitant processes.

— The first process is the *advance in the organic composition of capital* which, as it internalises massively labour-power's relation to the structure of capital, at the same time eliminates from it all measure of proportionality, in terms of the relationship between the work done by the individual worker and the level of productivity achieved. Labour-power as presented within the labour market as a multiplicity of individual labour-powers can now only be conceived as a totally marginal phenomenon.

— The second process, which takes the development of the organic composition of capital beyond the scope of the single firm, and which goes beyond its phenomenological appearance to see it in terms of the *realisation of the subsumption of social labour*

within collective capital, has shown labour-power to be a social entity. That which is marginalised in individual terms becomes transformed, at the social level, into mobility, into an equivalence of abstract labour, into a global potentiality which has within it that generalised social knowledge which is now an essential condition of production.

— The third process, concomitant with those of individual marginalisation and collective socialisation, has brought about a conjunction between (a) the refusal of labour-power to make itself available as a commodity (I see this as the effect of individual marginalisation and the collapse of any relationship between "job" and "skill") and (b) the socialisation of this mode of class behaviour. I designate this as a "third" process, and I consider it both innovative and conceptually very rich, since *the coming together of individual marginalisation with collective socialisation* is no simple process of addition. Rather it is a historical process which both combines material elements and becomes at the same time *subjectivised*; this in the sense that historical experience becomes transformed into irreversible qualities, into a second nature. Through the genesis of this process, *new subjective forces make their appearance*.

As a result of these processes, it should now be clear that labour-power, at this level of subsumption of social labour by capital, so far from presenting itself as an intermediate entity, suspended between being a function of variable capital and becoming working class, now presents itself as a *social subject*: a subject that has internalised at the social level its refusal to be a commodity.

- At the political and social level, this subject presents a complete materialisation of consciousness within the structures of its own existence. Class consciousness, in other words, comes neither from outside nor from afar: it must be seen as completely internal to, a fact, a thing, of class composition. The concept of class composition, which was developed originally through the analysis of the mass worker – as a means of classifying changes in the nature of labour-power, and as a critique of purely logical and economistic characterisations of these changes, can now be updated as a historico-political, subjective, social definition of labour-power. In view of this, we can appreciate the importance of the theoretical current that developed through the analysis of the mass worker, and above all we can appreciate how the specific

antagonistic subjectivity of this class protagonist contributed, through its struggles, to go beyond and overcome the limitations of the original theoretical conception. It seems to me that the mythical term *proletariat* has been given a historical dimension and has become founded as a specific material reality through the development of this theoretical approach.

Major consequences derive from all this. *First*, a *demystification* of a number of concepts and practices existing within the traditions of the labour movement. *Second*, in my opinion, important consequences (and, more particularly, problems) arise at the strictly theoretical level – in other words, relating to our conceptions of *work* and *communism*. *Third* – and not to be underestimated in their importance – we also find *indications for method*.

Let's take the *first* point. This social labour-power which exists as a political reality, this social worker, this proletariat, embraces within itself so many dimensions, both intensive and extensive, as to *render many categories obsolete*. In other words, proletarian antagonism (within real subsumption) poses itself on the one hand (intensively) as an irreversibility of the given level of needs that has been arrived at, and, on the other hand, (extensively) as a potentiality of action, as a capacity to extend its action across the entire span of the working day. If we want a tighter conceptual definition, we might say that this socialised labour-power not only (a) dissolves any possibility for capitalism to consider it as a commodity, as the variable component of capitalist command for exploitation, but also (b) *denies capitalism any possibility of transforming necessary labour into the wage and transforming surplus value (absolute or relative) into profit*. Clearly, profit and the wage continue to exist, but they exist only as quantities regulated by a relation of power – a relation of forces which no longer admits the threefold partition of the working day into necessary labour time, surplus labour time, and free time or reproduction-time. We now have a labour-power which is both social and subjective, which recognises the value-partition of the working day only as a system of command which capital may or may not succeed in imposing over and against the continuous flow of labour-power within the working day. *The conditions for the extraction of surplus value now exist only in the form of a general social relation*. Profit and the wage become forms of the division of a value

content which no longer relates to any specific mechanisms of exploitation, other than the specific asymmetry of the relationship of command within society. Capital has the form and substance of profit, as an average, a mediety of command; labourpower has the form and the substance of the wage: but in no way can a "natural rate" be said to exist between the two of them. In other words, the mechanism of transformation and mediation which characterises the Marxian genesis of these concepts has now reached its point of fullest maturity. Exploitation consists in command. It is violence against the antagonism of social subjects that are fighting for liberation.

As a consequence, the marketing of labour-power is no longer an undertaking for minions and sycophants: if anything, the marketing of labour-power today has become a totally political operation. This consists in extending Marx's "war" between capitalism's tendency towards the limitless working day and the tendency of the proletariat to limit (to nil, if possible) the provision of labour-power, and transforming that "war" into formalised and viable political procedures which extend from the concrete labour process (within production and reproduction) to the overall scenario of the organisation of command – ie to political and state forms of the management of the economy, management of the labour market, of public spending, etc, etc. Only in this political dimension can success or failure in the marketing of labour-power now be gauged.

All of which is another way of saying that our given level of development, the old dialectic of labour-power within/against capital (*la dialettica della forza lavoro*) is now played out, has become obsolete, is only of archaeological interest. If there exists any real negotiation or bargaining, this can no longer be encompassed by trade union forms of bargaining, or other such antique practices. In other words, *dualism of power is now the norm*. The working day can only be described in terms of an active dualism of power, wherein the old dialectic of unity, transcendence and equilibrium is obsolete. In making this point, I need only refer, by way of example, to the inadequacy of the most normal, everyday and (as it often seems) obvious institutional form of the traditional labour movement – the trade union.

Far more dangerous, as regards potential mystification of our own (rediscovered and reconstructed) concept of the proletariat, are those ideologies which take labour-power as a material that

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can be led to class consciousness (although they are also more in-effective, given the historical experience of "realised Socialism" in the East). To turn labour-power into what? To transmute exploited labour into liberated labour, via the magic touch of a mystical "political consciousness", in other words of its vanguard representatives. What has changed in reality? Nothing – only words. The dialectic of labour functions here perfectly. The word "labour" replaces the word "capital": the system remains the same. The working day is not touched. Time-measure continues to be the regulative function of command and of partitition/divi-sion. No – the new (and even the old?) concept of the proletariat really cannot accept these mystifications. The truth is that, from the proletarian point of view, the process of real subsumption brings about such a massive intensifi-cation of the composition of the working class, and such an exten-sion of its potentiality, as to eliminate any dualism, any isolation of single aspects within it. The proletariat acts directly over the entire span of the social working day. Production and reproduc-tion are, now in parallel and on equal terms, the spheres of action proper to and adequate to the reality of labour-power. Conscious-ness is an attribute, entirely within and of its material structure.

And now let's look at work, labour. Here we come to the *sec-ond* set of consequences deriving from our political concept of socialised labour-power, of composition (ie of the social worker). Labour is the essence of capital. It always has been so. It is also the essence of man, inasmuch as man is productive activity. But capital is real – while human essence is only a dream. *The only human essence of labour which approximates to the concreteness of capital is the refusal of work.* Or, rather, that kind of productiv-ity which, for capital, is purely *negative* – because while it repre-sents a *sine qua non* of production, capital nonetheless tends to reduce it, and, precisely insofar as it is an essence of human na-ture, to eliminate it from production. Human labour, when posed as proletarian reality, is a negative element in capitalist produc-tion. Of course, it is true to say that only labour produces. But it is also true that bosses are only happy with production when the labour within it is totally under command: command is sadistic, it requires the presence of human labour, but only in order, then, to deny it, to nullify it. This process has functioned in the past, as the classic steely scourge of capitalist domination – *until and unless labour-power presents itself as a social subject.* In other words, we

have here, within the intensity and extensity of the composition of the proletarian subject, *a negative form of labour, which has such broad dimensions and is so articulated as to render problematical its very definition as "negative"*. We often refer to it as "alternative", "self-valorising" etc. But I prefer to continue calling it "negative labour", not in order to flirt with the language of crisis, but simply because I do not yet feel the *strength* to be able to call it liberated work (ie work that is wholly positive). It is difficult to describe any work as "positive" so long as it is contained within capital, such is the quantity of death and pain that it bears within it. For us to call working-class and proletarian work "positive" and socially useful, we would have to be capable – the proletarian subject in its overall complexity would have to be capable – of the statement in prefigurative terms of its alternative form of production. We would require a vision of how its own productive potential could unfold. (Only certain sectors of the proletariat within the area of reproduction – the feminist movement chief among them – have so far proved capable of producing a positive image of forms of work that could be proletarian, alternative and revolutionary. But the fact that we cannot spell it out does not necessarily mean that it does not exist. It exists as a murmuring among the proletariat. Negative work, amid the whispers of everyday life and the noise and shouting of the struggle, is beginning to gain a general form of expression. What I think needs stressing particularly is the *material character* of negative work, *its institutionality*. The concept of proletariat is becoming an institutional reality. A practical emergence – not lifeless, but living. A different conception of time. A universality held within that second nature, entirely factitious (in etymological terms: *verum ipsum factum*). An institutionality, thus, which seeks order and a systematisation of its own values. The levels, the spaces of this experience are truly thousand-fold. But they all have a centripetal impulse which increases according to the extent of their liberty, their expansivity. If we are to translate the word "communism" into present-day language, then perhaps it means reinforcing and solidifying this proletarian institutionality and developing its potential contents.

However, for the moment, we still require a long period of clarification, of study, and of specific struggles. The method remains tactical. *Methodological consequences* derive from our definition of *the proletarian subject as antagonism within realised*

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subsumption – and they derive, above all, from our understanding of the various aspects of the transition from mass worker to socialised labour-power, to the social worker. Within this transition, simultaneously with the breakdown of the regulatory principles of capitalist development (the market; value; the division between production and reproduction etc), there also unfolds the impossibility of any homogeneous/unified determination not only of the overall design of development, but also – and particularly – of its categories, its norms. When the concept of labour-power is realised within a socialised and subjectified class composition – and this, precisely, takes place at the highest point of unity from capital's viewpoint (real subsumption) – then all the established terms of scientific argument break down. They become blocked, definitively non-recuperable for the old dialectical logic of unity and transcendence. The only way that any scientific category, whether in logic or in ethics, in politics or in political economy, can constitute itself as a norm, is as a *negotiated settlement*: a formalisation and balancing of opposing forces; in the human sciences, as a moment of voluntary agreement. It is clear that none of what defined the old conception of scientific norms is present here. What we have instead, exclusively, is the logical results brought about by the development of class composition – *subsumption to capital realised in the form of permanent crisis*. What we are presented with is the positive emergence of negative labour as an institutionalised counter-power acting against work that is subsumed within capital. While labour subsumed within capital corresponded to a logic of unity, of command, and its transcendence, *negative labour produces instead a logic based on separateness*: a logic that operates entirely within, is *endogenous to*, that separateness. The institutionalised forms now assumed by labour-power as a *separate* entity also represent its de-institutionalisation in relation to the present framework of economy and politics, to capital and the state. This relation is precisely a negative one, and inasmuch as negative labour has the power and possibility of imposing it on the system, the only unifying logic that remains is one of duality, two-sidedness: a logic that is ephemeral, that is reduced to mere semblance. In reality, it can only represent a moment in a historical phase of crisis, in which the point of reference for all rationality or intelligibility is being rapidly shifted towards a fully socialised labour-power, the new ass subject, the "social worker".

. So, we have covered, in outline, some aspects of the formation of labour-power into a social subject. A very rich phenomenology could be provided for this transformation, starting from the mass worker and the history of its struggles. I think that such an account would confirm the theoretical and methodological assumptions I have outlined here.

In conclusion, however, I would stress that so far this is only a half-way stage in the analysis. For, if it is true that every scientific category concerning the relation of capital can now only be understood within a *dualistic matrix*, then a further logical problem is posed: the question of the multiplicity and mobility of the forms of this transformation of the class subject, and how this multiformity can be grasped *within* a mature political concept of labour-power. In other words, how we can develop a theory of the new institutionality of the proletariat in its multiple matrices. But this will have to wait for another occasion.

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REVIEWS

Rudolph Steiner <u>Friedrich Nietzsche: Fighter for Freedom</u> Spiritual
     Science Library £13.20

During the 1890's Rudolph Steiner, subsequently the founder of
anthroposophy, visited the insane Nietzsche. He tells us that he
remarked upon Nietzsche's noble brow and his etheric body, and later
formed the conclusion that the philosopher could only be the
reincarnation of a Franciscan priest.

We learn this in the introduction to the present collection of essays:
it is all the more surprising, then, that the essays themselves are
free of mystical appurtenances and scholarly in tone. The lengthy title
essay, written in 1895 and of interest if only because of its early
date, can even now serve as a useful introduction to Nietzsche's
thought. (The only serious point of reservation is that it caricatures
Nietzsche as an irrationalist when it declares that he evaluates
philosophical doctrines solely 'on the basis of his own personal life
impulses and instincts'.) And Steiner's 'Memorial Address', delivered
in 1900 shortly after Nietzsche's death, reads as a striking period
piece.

The two remaining essays, also dating from 1900, are of more doubtful
value. Their contention is that Nietzsche's 'spiritual constitution' is
understandable only as a matter of psychopathology. Steiner thus
contributes to the myth that, not only did Nietzsche become insane
(which is indisputable), but also that insanity colours his philosophical
work.

For example, Steiner ascribes to Nietzsche a 'lack of a sense of
objective truth' and takes this to be a sign of mental imbalance.
Naturally, a good deal turns on what, here, 'objective' means. Certainly
Nietzsche repudiates - with good reason - correspondence theories of
truth and certainly, too, he is fond of expressing his own perspectivist
conception of truth paradoxically, by saying that we can know the world
only in ways which are false. But, as Danto has argued (in his <u>Nietzsche
as Philosopher</u>), in such passages "false" can frequently be understood
as contrasting with "true" in correspondence's sense rather than in
Nietzsche's own: and so the appearance of paradox can be mitigated, if
not removed. Perspectivism entails that our perspectives and interpret-
-ations, whether true or false, correspond to nothing since it is
impossible to point (independently of our projects and values) to facts
or structures in the world with which a relation of correspondence
might obtain. Hence they are necessarily "false" if "true" means
"corresponding to the facts". But this is not to say they are false <u>per
se</u>, or that - on a non-correspondence basis of whatever kind -
distinctions between valid and invalid perspectives can never be drawn.
In short the suggestion is that Nietzsche turns to paradox not out of
willfulness or insanity but to point up his opposition to employing
"truth" in a correspondence sense. And if rejection of correspondence
is taken to entail madness, then the realm of madness for its part
must be taken as covering just about all epistemologies which are of
serious philosophical interest in the twentieth-century world.

Steiner is writing before the publication of Nietzsche's autobiographical

Ecce Homo, although he is able to quote passages from it given in other secondary works. Traditionally, it is Ecce Homo - with its chapter-headings 'Why I am So Wise', 'Why I am So Clever' and 'Why I write Such Excellent Books' - on which the myth of Nietzsche as an insane philosopher has most commonly been based. But Nietzsche indeed is wise, clever and the writer of books which excell: if transgressing the bourgeois norm of (false) modesty amounts to insanity, then the problem lies with our definition of insanity rather than with Nietzsche. Besides, an important aspect of Ecce Homo is ironic and parodic: Nietzsche's reference is to the Apology of Socrates in which Socrates responds to the Delphic oracle's pronouncement that he is the wisest of men. Nietzsche's own answer to the question 'Why I am So Clever' is in fact Socratic: 'I have never reflected on questions that are none'. That is, his cleverness consists in his ability to discern which questions rely on premises which are invalid, unclarified or weak. Socrates, similarly, concluded that he was wise only in the sense that he alone of men knew how little he knew.

Walter Kaufmann, with his usual high-handedness, has described the essays by Steiner here collected as 'hopelessly dated'. This may be true of the diatribes on psychopathology, but Steiner's title essay still deserves to be read by anyone looking for a short introductory resumé of Nietzsche's thought.

Georges Bataille Visions of Excess: Selected Writings 1927-39 Manchester University Press £8.50

Until recently, Georges Bataille was best known in the English-speaking world as the author of the psychoanalytically inspired erotic (or perhaps anti-erotic) novel The Story of the Eye. This edition of his pre-War writings redresses the balance and allows Bataille the theorist to come into his own. (Especial mention should be made of its lucid and informative Introduction by Allan Stoekl.) Bataille is of interest not least because a good deal in French post-structuralism - and most particularly in Foucault - can be understood as an elaboration of Batailleian themes.

The influences on Bataille are diverse and explosive: his engagements with psychoanalysis, surrealism, Hegel, Marx and Nietzsche are a joy to read. This diversity of influences does not entail eclecticism, however. From the outset, Bataille articulated concerns which were distinctively his own.

In his earliest writings, his concern is to defend "base matter". He wishes to rehabilitate all that the previously idealist philosophical tradition, oriented to the purity of universal concepts, had marginalised or ignored. (Plato, for example, refuses to allow that "hair" and "dirt" might appear in the Realm of Forms.) Bataille, like Freud, restores

excrement to its discursive rights. In the place of philosophical universals he insists, with surrealism, on the irreducible reality of the particular, thereby moving parallel to the Critical Theory tradition (especially Benjamin and the Adorno of <u>Negative Dialectics</u>). This restoration and this insistence are characterised by exuberance, shock-effects and anarchic wit.

As his thought develops, the theme of "base matter" is generalised into the theme of the sacred: excrement and royalty have this in common, that touching them is subject to taboo. The realm of the sacred encompasses everything to which such taboos apply, and the transgression of such taboos is characteristic of religion - where it is ritually sanctioned - and of revolutionary action alike.

Bataille links the idea of the sacred to the notion of what he calls 'expenditure': action which transgresses into the realm of the sacred is generally characterised by an expenditure of goods and energies which is in excess of what might be justified in instrumental or utilitarian (or in other words "cost-benefit") terms. His favoured example is the primitive institution of potlatch: others might be Dionysian revelry or the Leninist notion of revolutions as carnivals of the oppressed. Indeed the colloquialism for a good night out - "getting wasted" - might stand as illustrative of what Bataille has in mind.

The notion of 'expenditure' is an immensely rich one. For example, it serves as a useful corrective to economistic or "workerist" versions of Marxism, which exalt production above all else. As Bataille indicates, in production one expends energies and materials "economically" so as to generate the maximum product with the least outlay: one "con-serves" and "re-serves" in the dual sense of holding down costs and of so-to-say serving up the same raw materials in transmuted form. By standing back from this productivism and by stressing the irreducibility of untrammelled expenditure, Bataille emphasises an aspect of human action and of the human condition which an emancipated society must needs acknowledge and which the sobriety of economism denies. It can be added that this emphasis - which parallels the Critical Theory tradition's critique of instrumental reason - is thoroughly timely in the 1980's. That this is so is clear from (for example) the circumstance that "Rational Choice Marxism", which echoes capitalism itself by taking an ontology of cost-minimising and benefit-maximising for granted, is becoming increasingly hegemonic on the contemporary left-academic scene.

To be sure - and Bataille acknowledges this - 'expenditure' can be characterised by violence. Indeed, Bataille's notion of expenditure can be seen as corresponding to Freud's death-instinct, which aims towards dissolution, as opposed to the life-instinct (<u>Eros</u>) which "productively" gathers together and conserves. But no less undeniably the <u>caritas</u> of Batailleian discourse, which restores to its rights that which is dark and unpredictable and non-instrumental, is humanism of a higher order than the (for him) anally retentive discourse which acknowledges the productivist and conserving dimensions of the human condition alone.

The volume under review makes possible engagement with a fascinating, challenging and charming theorist a consideration of whose ideas merits inclusion in any body of thinking which projects for itself revolutionary goals. The only possible criticism of the volume is its exclusion of Bataille's 1937 'Letter to X, Teacher of a Course on Hegel': 'X' was

Kojève, whose seminal lectures on Hegel's Phenomenology in the 1930's were attended by Bataille. In the letter, Bataille takes up the Kojèveian version of the Hegelian theme of a (post-revolutionary) "end of history". For Kojève, human ('negative' or negating) action is work aiming at the satisfaction of desire; history ends when desire is satisfied definitively, from which it follows - Kojève himself draws this conclusion - that humanity ('negativity') is extinguished at the moment when history ends. Bataille urges against Kojève the possibility of a negativity which is post-historical, namely, a 'negativity without employment'. And indeed expenditure remains pointful even, and perhaps especially, when all work has been done. Here again we see Bataille placing a question-mark against "workerism", in this case the workerism which Kojève (guided by the Marx of the 1844 Manuscripts) reads into the Hegelian texts. It is noteworthy that Kojève later altered his conception of post-historical existence, and it is interesting to speculate whether this may have been in response to reservations expressed by his dissident and brilliant pupil, Bataille. Inclusion, here, of the 'Letter' would have allowed a clearer appreciation of the relation between Bataille and Hegelian - as well as Kojèveian - thought.

Two other (later) theoretical works by Bataille are available in English translation: Eroticism and Literature and Evil. The themes they elaborate - for example the discussion of 'transgression' in Eroticism - are those which the pioneering texts gathered in Visions of Excess first explore. Together, these writings form a body of theory to ignore which is to risk complicity in a productivism that continues (even when it has entered crisis) to do murderous work across the entire face of the twentieth-century world.
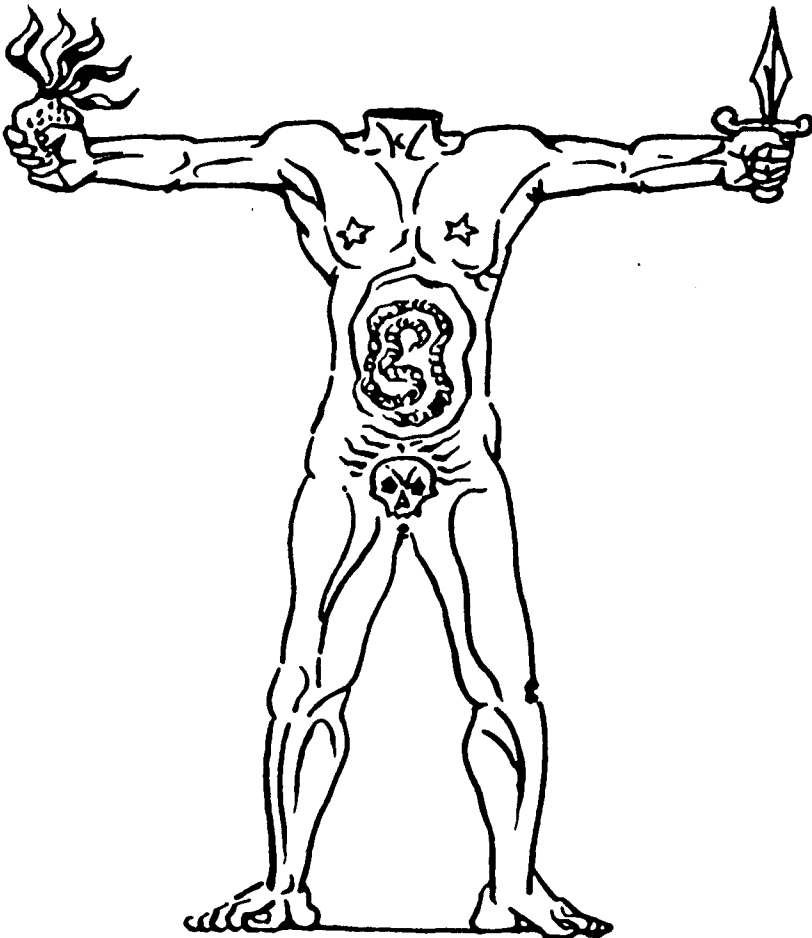
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The insubordinate figure of the migrant workers in the big factories of Northern Italy was brilliantly summed up in the Lotta Continua cartoon strip "Gasparazzo" It was these workers who were in the forefront of the struggles of the Hot Autumn in 1969.
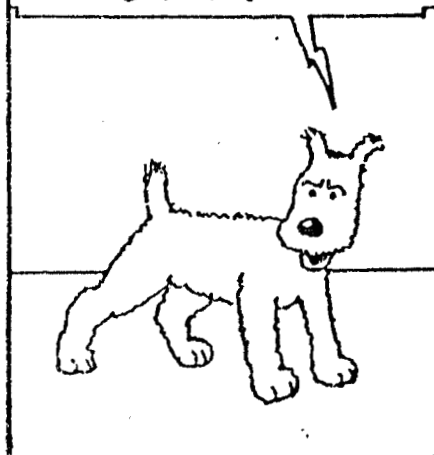
GASPARAZZO

OK!! YOU CAN START NOW!

CRASH

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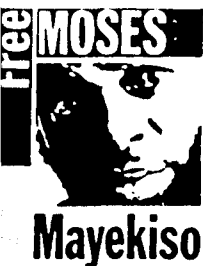CRASH

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CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP
8-7 8-2 8-9 9-1
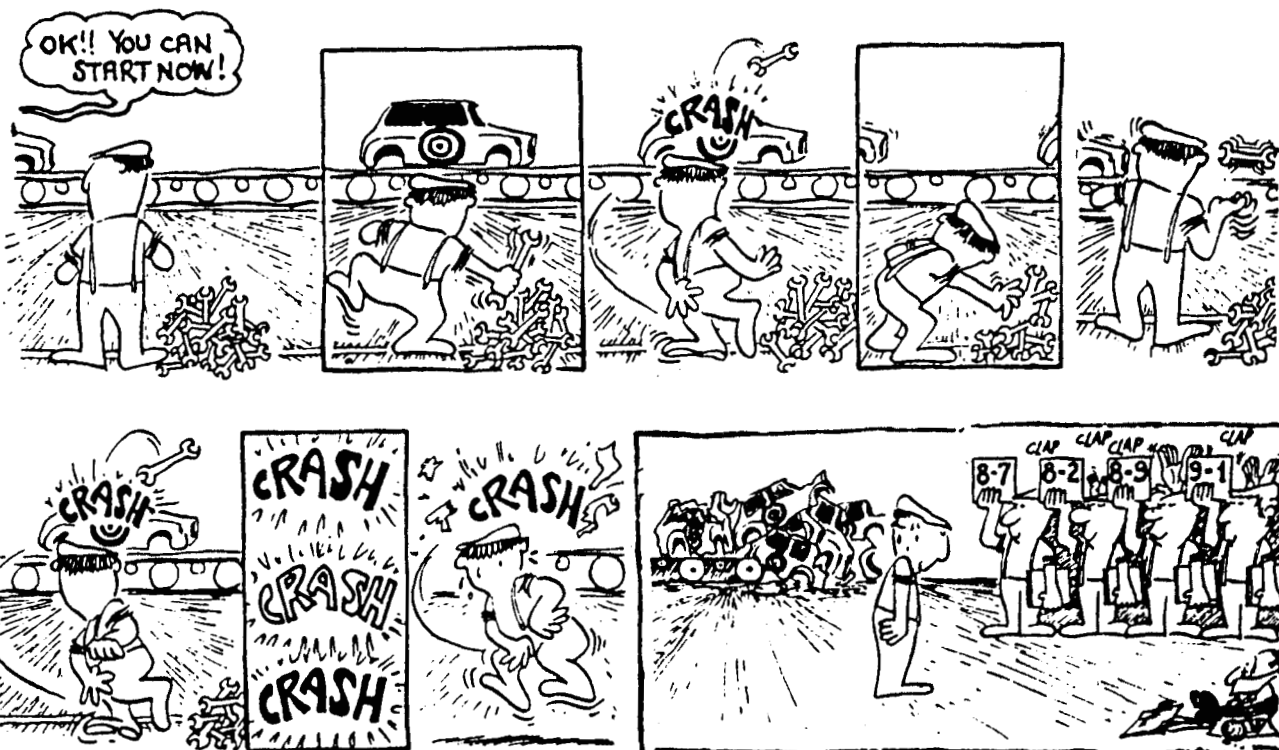
AND THAT MEANS STARTING TO CREATE A WORLD WHERE WE DON'T HAVE COPS AND WE DON'T HAVE BOSSES....

IF WE'RE NOT ASKING FOR THE WHOLE WIDE WORLD, WHAT ARE WE ASKING FOR?

free MOSES

Mayekiso

Friends of Moses Mayekiso

c/- Acorn House, 314-320 Grays Inn Road London WC1X 8DP

AN APPEAL

on behalf of Moses Mayekiso

Dear Brother/Sister

MOSES MAYEKISO, general secretary of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa, executive member of COSATU and the chair of the Alexandra Action Committee, will be on trial for his life in September. He and four comrades face charges of high treason, sedition and subversion.

South Africa's apartheid regime will be hoping that protest will be muted; that Moses will not be as widely known and respected abroad as he is in South Africa. This is the fight which faces us and this is why, as part of the on-going campaign for the unconditional release of Moses and his comrades, we plan to run a full page advertisement in the Guardian newspaper to coincide with the trial getting underway. In this way we can exert pressure on the apartheid regime and give encouragement to the trade union movement in South Africa by revealing—and continuing to build—large scale and widespread support for the call to release Moses Mayekiso.

But such a step is expensive; some £10,000 is a lot of money to raise. We believe it must be–and can be–done.

Join the ranks of sponsors who have already given their support for the advertisement—the text is overleaf—some of whose names appear at the foot of this appeal. Because of the amount of money involved we are asking that organisations, union branches and groups of individuals contribute a minimum of £10 and individual sponsors at least £5.

Copy this appeal. Pass it on. Encourage as many people as possible to tell the apartheid regime that the world is watching; that Moses Mayekiso must not hang. Call for the unconditional release of Moses Mayekiso and his fellow accused.

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Yours in solidarity

Terry Bell
(Co-ordinator)