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The Young Marx: Process of Production and Formation of the
Common Powers

Raný Marx: Proces produkce a formace společných
schopností

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ABSTRACT

In Marx's early writings, human sensibility is understood in terms of essential powers and their objects. Marx's idea that human senses are impoverished in the capitalist society signifies that the latter effectuates a reduction of sensibility to possession and of powers to a single labor power. Alienation, as I interpret it, is the actual process of this reduction; it is a production of beings whose essence realizes the reduction of senses and powers. Production understood in this way does not have a productive outside in the sense of a free or non-alienated production, but a political or destructive outside. Liberation of human sensibility is thus a twofold process in which destruction coincides with invention of powers.

KEYWORDS

Karl Marx, sensibility, powers, essence, production, labor, alienation, politics

ABSTRAKT

V Marxových raných spisech je lidská smyslovost chápána na základě pojmu bytostních sil a jejich předmětů. Marxova myšlenka, že lidské smysly jsou v kapitalistické společnosti ochuzeny, značí, že tato společnost zapřičiňuje redukci smyslovosti na vlastnění a sil na jedinou pracovní sílu. Odcizení interpretuji jako reálný proces této redukce. Jde o produkci bytostí, kterých esence uskutečňuje redukci smyslů a sil. Takto chápána produkce nemá produktivní vnějšek ve smyslu svobodné nebo neodcizené produkce, ale vnějšek politický či destruktivní. Osvobození lidských smyslů je tedy dvojitý proces, ve kterém destrukce koinciduje s invencí sil.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

Karel Marx, smysly, síly, esence, produkce, práce, odcizení, politika

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INTRODUCTION

My thesis is divided into three parts. It begins with what could be called a theory of human senses or powers, where I attempt to systematize the most significant ontological features of Marx's early writings. The next part is an interpretation of the concept of alienation, while the last part, divided into two sub-parts, deals with the possibility of a non-productive outside of production. The latter, as I conclude, is political or destructive and at the same time playful or inventive. I shall now proceed to shortly summarize the successive arguments.

The notion that has always fascinated me in Marx's early – and occasionally mature – writings is that the capitalist society effectuates an impoverishment of human senses. This assertion appears quite commonsensical at first sight, and it makes good sense even to those who tend not to agree with it, yet it proves quite problematic when examined more closely. As far as I know, Marx rarely talks about an impoverishment of humanity's nature or essence, the latter being an eternal ideal of which 'man' falls short at this particular moment.¹ My claim would be that sensibility, at least in Marx's early writings, is not a given but has an event-like character. "The dealer in minerals sees only the commercial value, and not the beauty and peculiar nature of the minerals; he lacks a mineralogical sense".² Similarly, Marx says that one has to have an ear for "the most beautiful music".³ However, the receptive quality or the ability of a being to be touched by a particular object is something acquired, i.e., it is a result of an event. Instead of referring the concepts such as sensuous powers, essential powers and sensuous objects back to Marx's philosophical predecessors, I decided to construct a tentative yet – in my opinion – admissible ontology based of the notion of sensibility. Sense, understood as an event, is an acquisition of a power to sense a particular object. At the same time, sense is a movement by which the power becomes essential, that is, becomes the power of a particular being which in turn also becomes essential when it comes to accounting for the acquisition of the said power. Since the event-like character of sense precludes the possibility of defining once and for all the set of human powers, the impoverishment of senses should not be understood as a lack vis-à-vis some eternal essence. For the acquisition of a power is simultaneously a reorganization of the plurality of sensuous objects and the emergence of a new frame of reference.

¹ Cf. Norman Geras, *Marx and Human Nature: Refutation of a Legend* (London: Verso, 1983). Also Iring Fetscher, "Karl Marx on Human Nature", *Social Research* 40, no. 3 (1973), pp. 443-467.

² Karl Marx, *Early Writings* (London: Penguin Books, 1975), p. 353.

³ *Ibid.*

It is from within this new reference frame that one assesses the state of the powers. Here I deemed it necessary to draw upon some similarities with the philosophy of Charles Fourier.

Impoverishment, then, is a form of reduction, it is a blockage of the possibility to acquire a new sensuous power. Marx accounts for this sensuous blockage in terms of 'having'. Hence, one can speak of impoverishment of the senses as the latter are turned into a possession-relation rather than recognized in their event-like character. The sense of having or sense as property, however, has a content similar to that of any other sense – it is a fold consisting of a power and its corresponding object. The blockage of sense by the sense of having is thus accompanied by the reduction of powers to a single power, labor power. Every possible sensuous relation is transformed into labor, into a relation of laboring, while all objects turn into commodities. The actual process of essentialization is retained, for labor power does not simply appear out of nothing. A laboring being – a being whose essence envelops labor power and its corresponding commodified reality – is materially produced, and it is thanks to the capitalist state that it comes into being.

This is where Marx's later economic theory becomes indispensable in order to elucidate his earlier thought. The worker, being a commodity, has an exchange value consisting of a definite socially necessary labor time required in exchange for his production: "It is the cost required for maintaining the worker as a worker and of developing him into a worker."⁴ It is in this sense that the productive, laboring essence is fulfilled in a laboring being. This process of a being's essentialization in labor power, or, in other words, the process of alienation, never truly begins, for it belongs to the never-ending nature of a capitalist state, thereby determining the final cause of its entire institutional scaffolding. Production is not alienated but is itself alienation, or rather, alienation is the production of a particular form of existence, an existence modelled on the pre-given essence consisting of the labor-commodity relation. An alienated being, a fully produced being, does not possess any other power than labor power and is incapable of other sensuous relations than those consisting in the direct possession of commodities, i.e., the relations of private property. Through labor power, the alienated being produces the commodified reality to which it has been always already reduced. Its needs, its pre-established needs, the satisfaction of which requires a pre-established amount of labor and energy, are then put at the service of this being's reproduction through the only power that its essence involves. The capitalist code is thus made up of three elements: (a) property-sense, (b) labor power and (c) commodity-object.

I draw upon the crucial re-writing of the early Marx attempted by Deleuze and Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus*, where alienation is understood as a self-reproductive process of differential

⁴ Karl Marx, *Wage Labour and Capital*, in: R. C. Tucker (ed.), *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York: Norton, 1978), p. 206.

appropriation. However, such a conception of alienation still presupposes a ground that is itself productive, and alienation remains alienation from a non-alienated production, even if the latter is conceived as a pure virtuality. What I am proposing is a conception of alienation according to which the latter would signify 'production *tout court*'; this meaning that there would be no other production, be it free production or desiring-production. Simply put, in Deleuze and Guattari the outside of production remains a specular representation of production. A solution to this problem – and I am using *Anti-Oedipus* specifically because I believe that the problem appears in a crystallized form here – can be found in Marx's own writings, that is, in the specific position which political practice occupies within his early philosophy.

First of all, my claim is that in the early Marx, the outside of the capitalist production is not productive but political. Secondly, what makes a phenomenon political is that it has a destructive relation towards the capitalist state and its institutions which – through their productive practices – sustain the aforementioned reduction of sensibility to the sole sense of property and of the powers to a single labor power. Thirdly, destruction is necessarily doubled by what could be called a second facet of the outside, namely, the liberation of sensibility in a dynamic acquisition of the sensuous powers. What distinguishes Marx's system from, say, Fourier's, is that the inventive outside does not precede here the destructive one. Or rather, Marx postulates three degrees of intensity of the outside: if 'crude communism' is nothing else but a specular representation of the capitalist code, the second degree is transitional instead and points to the operative dissociation between the two forms of the outside; finally, the most intensive degree, 'real communism', designates the unity of the destruction of the capitalist state and the liberation of the powers.

Because, at times, it appeared necessary to me to scratch the surface of Marx's criticism of the dialectics, I would like to add a few sentences for the purpose of clarification. Contradictions, as far as they in one way or another bear upon the existence of the state's subjects, constitute the proper domain of what we call state politics. They are, on the one hand, a dislocation or the effective concealment of a sickness. On the other hand, due to the necessity of resolution which they harbor, they constitute the very spreading of the sickness. The overt contradiction, for example, between the so-called civil society and the political state, as Marx analyzes it in his early manuscript, conceals the sickness that the capitalist social formation is in the totality of its material existence. Democratic participation – and democracy is the truth of all political constitutions according to Marx⁵ – allows the sickness to spread and reproduce itself on an ever-larger scale. Finally, the annihilation of contradictions – i.e., of the basic conceptual and operative units of the capitalist state – by way of acceleration constitutes the revolutionary or destructive modality of politics. This modality, as I

⁵ Marx, *Early Writings*, pp. 88-89.

already mentioned, is the necessary double of the inventive play proper to the common powers or, which is the same, of the liberation of sensibility.

PART I: SENSES AND POWERS

The deterioration of senses is a persistent theme in the Manuscripts of 1844. In a well-known passage, Marx asserts that “private property has made us so stupid and one-sided that an object is only ours when we have it, when it exists for us as capital”. As a result, and purportedly a necessary one, “all the physical and intellectual senses have been replaced by the simple alienation of all these senses – the sense of having.”⁶ But how should one understand this sense of having or sense as a property relation? What is sense in general and how can such a thing be impoverished? Sense appears to be of a twofold nature, it has two distinct yet inseparable sides that arise simultaneously and therefore always refer to one another. Sense is a fold of the sensing and the sensed, it is a unity of the two that, once suspended and observed, breaks up into the subjective and objective side or position. It becomes a relation. It is to be kept in mind that the subject and the object are merely two perspectives from which the sense in question, belonging to neither and yet to both at once, can be grasped. Sense perceived subjectively is a power to be affected by a particular sensed object. Every object is a sensed object and every sense, understood subjectively, is a power of sensing that corresponds to the sensed object. It is not very important for Marx what kind of an object it is; a mathematical object, an artistic object, etc.⁷ What is important is that the object is sensed and that this sense is in turn a power that allows the subject to receive it, to be receptive in this particular way. The unity of these two sides is what constitutes the sense as an event. The notion of power and the notion of sense appear identical if considered from the position of subjectivity or receptivity, and Marx indeed uses them interchangeably in his early writings. It is this pole, the pole of the receptive powers – because the irreducible plurality of sensed objects presupposes just as irreducible plurality of sensing powers – that interests Marx in his early texts.

There is a plurality of senses, of objects and powers that correspond to them, and this plurality is undoubtedly referred to all kinds of determinations – organic, animal, material, etc. –, some of which tend to occur in a dualistic form, yet never in a contradictory way. It might also be true that certain senses are more complex or developed than others and that they consequently require a larger amount of energy in order for the infolding of the power and the sensed object to take place; or, in a word, in order for an event of sense to occur. Sense is like an attractor, for it

⁶ Ibid., pp. 351-352.

⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 353. „The dealer in minerals sees only the commercial value, and not the beauty and peculiar nature of the minerals; he lacks a mineralogical sense”. There is no bourgeois moralism involved in this, the sense simply exists or not.

unfolds by way of positive feedback circuits and, as it were, sucks one in. But how can such a thing be impoverished? How can the stupidity of senses be established? And what is the *modus operandi* of this institution?

When pondering the possibility of senses being impoverished, one is tempted to posit a certain sensuous basis, a standard against which the change would be measurable. Yet there are two different ways of going about this difficulty. One can either posit an absolute basis for a relative change in its positive or negative modality, i.e., a fixed point of reference that would allow us to assess the state of the senses or the state of a particular power of sensing in any given space-time. Or one can posit a relative basis, a basis which is mobile or, so to say, migrant, and where the said impoverishment always refers to a previous enrichment. This enrichment – for lack of a better word – effectuates a kind of displacement, an instantaneous reorganization or restructuring of the plurality of objects and their corresponding powers. It should not be understood as an accumulative enrichment in the sense in which capital is accumulated; for the reorganization of the objective field as an effect of the sensuous event is at the same time a partial effacement of the relative basis that might have served as a measure before the acceleration of sense. This, however, does not imply any relativism that would render the assessment of sensuousness impossible due to the absence of a stable system of reference. Sense is the acquisition of the power of sensing an object, it is a fold of the two that accomplishes a regrouping of the objective plurality of sensed objects.

A power becomes essential (*Wesenskraft*) once it belongs to a being which occupies a subjective or receptive position of sensing, thereby making the object its own. It is a certain form of essentialization or realization by acquisition whereby a being, e.g., a particular human community, ascends to a power of sensing and simultaneously regroups the plurality which corresponds to the latter. It also sets up a new frame of reference on the basis of which a relative sensuous impoverishment can be assessed. This becoming essential of powers, this assumption of powers upon the part of beings who thus become included in a relationship of receptivity towards the sensed object, is at once the becoming essential of the beings themselves; it consists in the development of a set of determinations which makes the being what it is, thereby making it different from other beings. One might say that a being is enriched when it ascends or accelerates towards the sensuous attractor and thus becomes involved in a sensuous relation, when it acquires a power of sensing and at the same time reorganizes the field of objective plurality to which it belongs. So far we've been talking as if it was the sense which is impoverished in the capitalist society, whereas in truth it is the essential power, the power as belonging to a being whose essence is acquired through the sensuous event. Senses can be blocked, for they are events or accelerations by way of which a power of sensing assumes a being (and a being assumes a power) whose determinate essence is produced through this operation. This essence always refers back to a certain restructuring of

objectivity which has taken place within the process of essentialization of the powers. In other words, the essence of a being now envelops a particular field of objective plurality whose internal organization – its thresholds and passages – is a result of the sensuous event. To take an example, a musical composer invents a new sonorous sensation. This sensation, being a power, can essentialize itself in a ‘musical ear’ – as Marx would say – of a being;⁸ it thus becomes the latter’s essential power. The set of sonorous objects to which the being is receptive after the sensuous event is necessarily reorganized. In other words, the essence of the being is transformed. This explains the fact that an absolute basis or an absolute point of reference is missing. There are dynamic or shifting bases of reference that always refer to a specific power or a specific set of powers and their corresponding objectivities.

The sensuous powers are open insofar as there is a possibility of enriching or transforming the essence of a being through power acquisition, through an event consisting in a new relation between the power and the sensed object. A new relative basis of reference is established together with the plurality of objects being reorganized. A being becomes essential, powers become its powers, i.e., essential powers, in this relatively new objective plurality that encompasses a field within which reference, and thus a certain ecological and selective assessment of powers, becomes possible.

This relative openness of powers is reminiscent of the philosophical system of Charles Fourier, the founder of group magick.⁹ The influence that he had on Marx is obvious, yet the terminological differences render it quite difficult to determine the exact scope of this influence. The concept of human passions indeed is quite close to that of the essential powers, yet the acceleration – explained by the separate notion of sense as the folding of the power and its object – is as if already implied in Fourier’s concept of the passions. A passion is a unit of energy consummated in its own movement, in its ‘passional attraction’ towards an end immanent to it; passions are autotelic, they are energetic in an Aristotelian sense.¹⁰ Fourier, as we know, recognizes three different modalities of development of the passions: brute or mean, subversive and harmonic. The brute or mean one – its derogatory denomination is crucial and will be reflected in Marx’s own writings – signifies the present state of the powers, the highest level attainable in the capitalist society. The subversive development, on the other hand, does not even attain the brute or mean development of a particular power, it is a “scale of privations, which, in the present system, extend more or less to the various classes”. The third, harmonic development indicates a possible openness of the powers,

⁸ Ibid., p. 351.

⁹ Group magick is the art of creating groups.

¹⁰ Arist. *Metaph.* 1048b18-36.

it is a positive gradation or self-expansion of the passions that will ensue from the “material regeneration of the race”.¹¹ The mean development would correspond to a certain blockage of sense, while the subversion manifested in a scale of privations refers to the powers as essential. Yet if the present state of affairs truly is an abomination as Fourier would have it, what is the external instance that accomplishes the reverse movement consisting in a deceleration of the passions? For Fourier, it is always the political instance, yet here the political does not signify an outside of the passions. Quite the opposite, it is radically included as the trajectory itself of the passional attraction, it is a dispersion of the points of inflexion in the immanent development of the passions. Fourier begins his exposition with the passions of the five senses, then adds the higher affective passions, the latter being already incomprehensible outside of the group formation: ambition, friendship, love and kinship. Of the highest order are the passions of the serial distribution among groups; the whole system is then completed by the unifying sense of harmonyism. The associational structure is never external to the passional attraction or – which is the same thing – to the acquisition of powers in a sensuous fold. It rather represents the immanent condition of the passional development towards harmonyism. The transformation of the forms of association, in other words, the art of creating groups, is directly transformative of the possibility of acquiring powers together with their objectivities. The passions, then, are directly political and politics is directly passional.

The external instance is a political instance and, in one of its modalities, a repressive instance of the state which harbors the relative impoverishment of the essential powers. But it is to be answered how exactly, by what apparatuses and semiotic procedures does the sensuous blockage take place. If it was said that the reference is always relative and migrant due to the dynamic acquisition of new powers and the corresponding restructuring of the objective plurality, it also means that an absolute enclosure of powers in a stable referential system is impossible. In order to realize the relative impoverishment of powers, to produce a scale of privations, as Fourier would say, we need an essential power that would play the role of the absolute reference frame with regard to the beings whose powers meant to become essential. It would represent, so to say, a constant reservoir through which a being is obliged to pass in order to become essential, for powers to become its powers and therefore essential powers. It would itself be a peculiar type of power, a mediating power in respect to the other powers, it would function as their common denominator.

Capitalist society is a society of production in the sense that every activity, passivity or manifestation of life is coded in such a way as to appear as a part of production; everything must refer back to production in order to be granted the status of reality. It is from this perspective that

¹¹ Charles Fourier, *Harmonian Man: Selected Writings of Charles Fourier* (New York: Doubleday, 1971), p. 107.

“all human activity up to now has been labour”.¹² The outside of production is always already incorporated, semiotically in the first place, so as to at least appear productive and, subsequently, to become actually productive. With regard to the problem of the essential powers and their deterioration, it is now clear that they undergo the same process of productive transformation; the reality of powers is denied outside of the framework of labor which mediates them so as to make them useful.¹³ The universal reference point that causes the impoverishment of the being’s powers and influences the essentialization of powers in such a way that they become, in this very process, stupefied, is labor power (*Arbeitskraft*), a universal human disposition to perform labor. It is a certain kind of reduction consisting in an ideological yet effective projection of a stable referential frame unto the realm of powers; it monopolizes powers and establishes itself as the spatially and temporally infinite ground of their development. In a rudimentary way, Marx outlines the concept of labor power already in the Manuscripts where the latter is linked to a certain pre-established life minimum: it is life from the perspective of political economy.¹⁴ This reduction has a specific content which can be illuminated through the labor theory of value. It also has a function in relation to the different modes of energy expenditure.

Labor power is the subjective or receptive side of an equally universal sense that replaces its original event-like nature. The sense of having retains its fold-like structure containing the power and its object, yet the nature of the correspondence between the objectivity and the power changes. If it is correct to say that labor power establishes an absolute frame of reference for all powers, thereby replacing them with a scale of privations relative to itself, then the senses understood as property represent a similar sensuous standard, notably, a universal form of sensing. The sense of having contains labor power and its object which is now perceived as an object of labor, a moment in the activity of a productive transformation. The power-object relation is no longer a relation establishing its own levels of energetic consummation, but a transformation with a preconceived end and predetermined energetic requirements of consumption. The object is given in advance of the power, yet the power of labor itself is always ready at hand so as to approach the numb objectivity that naturally corresponds to it. It is no longer a mutual coming into being, an event-like correspondence of the power and its object, but a coming into a one-sided relation of transformation where the unitary power to perform labor takes up its commodified object.

Once there is a power that is always presupposed as a ground and model for all the powers, one can also imagine possible beings capable of acquiring powers and becoming essential in a pre-

¹² Marx, *Early Writings*, p. 354.

¹³ Commodities have use value, but not objects in general.

¹⁴ Marx, *Early Writings*, p. 360.

given way. Such beings would be presupposed as possessing the universal power to perform labor, while their acquisition of senses would be limited to a property relation. The power to carry out labor becomes essential, the only power able to become essential, at the same time as the being becomes an essential being – its essence is now labor power enveloping the objective reality of commodities. The plurality of objects is then all at once transformed and reduced to a unitary commodified reality ready to be labored over by a being whose entire essence is that of production. Every object becomes an object of labor, something to be productively transformed rather than arising together with a power adequate to it. The reciprocity of powers and objects in a sensuous fold is lost, sense as such is lost once the power becomes a fixed disposition applicable to any object whatsoever, and when the object becomes an operative unity: a dumb givenness ready to be used up in the activity of labor. The event of sense through which a new power is acquired becomes an abstract fabulation; it could have happened in the past, but it is no longer possible or requisite.

What is labor power as regards its content? It is an aggregate of mental and physical capabilities existing in every living human being.¹⁵ It is, as a matter of course, a concept proper to political economy, and just like any other concept whose birth certificate was issued by the bourgeois guardians of thought, it is a double impasse. For labor power is a commodity, it becomes a commodity in its essentialization or realization in a being; its value is determined by the definite quantity of time that is socially necessary for its production. This aggregate of human capabilities – this universal power that forms an abstract *grex* of all the possible powers – is therefore produced in a process which is real yet virtual, meaning that it always runs underneath, so to speak, the actual course of events. It is produced both in its being and concept, as Spinoza would say, because, and this is how historical materialism coincides with Spinozism, its concept is a mere representation of its material, i.e. productive, reality.¹⁶ It has its proper place within production as much as within the code of political economy, and this is because the code is directly productive. As has been said earlier, an operation takes places within the capitalist society in which sense – understood as an event in which a new power is acquired together with its object – is blocked, and in its place an immobile sense of property is installed, its content being a unitary power of labor with its pre-given commodified reality. On the basis of such blockage of sense, a being can equally be understood as something given, something with needs and calculable behavior. But again, for there to be a possibility of conceiving it as such, it must have first of all been produced as such. Natural needs refer to a pre-established objectivity requiring a certain amount of labor, and consequently a certain

¹⁵ Karl Marx, *Capital: Volume I* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), p. 270.

¹⁶ On the idea/matter parallelism in Marxism see Louis Althusser, *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, in: *Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays* (New Left Books: London, 1971). “Ideology has a material existence.”

amount of energy to be used up. It is clear that this production of beings with a pre-given objective essence does not happen within the production of commodities in the strict sense; the process of exploitation is a mere finalization or a reproductive enclosure of the entire code, it is determined rather than determining. It ought to be said that it is the production of a particular essence, of power as labor and of sense as property that makes exploitation possible in the last instance. And since it precedes exploitation both ontologically and phylogenetically, it is this production of a laboring essence and thus of a laboring being that the concept of alienation takes for its content: “although private property appears as the basis and cause of alienated labor, it is in fact its consequence”.¹⁷

¹⁷ Marx, *Early Writings*, p. 332.

PART II: ALIENATION

The capitalist productive code consists in the following three elements: (1) senses are understood as property; (2) power is transformed into labor through which the property is acquired; (3) and objective plurality is assumed as a pre-existing set of commodities which is ready to be taken up by labor. Nothing can escape this framework which fabricates essences to be adopted by beings which in turn become essential in compliance with the framework itself. The subjective side of the senses is fixed within a unitary essence that contains nothing but labor power, while the objective side is reduced to a unity of commodities, to an objective reality that answers nothing but labor. The object is never truly new, for the possibility of novelty within the sphere of objective plurality is precluded by the relation of labor contained in the sense of property. It is a world of finalities, the object to be produced by labor necessarily precedes the activity of labor; the energy to be expended is allotted in advance so as to allow the laboring being to subsist. The necessities required for the production and maintenance of labor power are simultaneously real and abstract, yet always arbitrary. In truth there are no natural necessities, e.g., junkies die without junk due to their metabolic system being transformed completely. One cannot even explain the plurality of beings on the basis of the bourgeois concept of life-necessities. A lion does not hunt in order to survive; it has a desire to kill, a very concrete sensation without which it wouldn't exist. This arbitrary limit, this reductive minimum that the capitalist society calls 'life', is an objective energetic counterpart to the absolute frame of reference as discussed with regard to the powers. A system of energy saving is established in which everything that possibly exceeds this universal standard is saved; the denial of life becomes its positive definition, the unpredictability of sense, the possibility of acquiring new powers is saved for every being, it is deferred to a nondescript future of 'after-the-necessities'. Saving, saving, saving: to live now means to save oneself for an imaginary later. The moral ideal of political economy, the science of thrift, "is the worker who puts a part of their wages into savings".¹⁸ Even procreation becomes a variable in the universal equation of energy saving: there are too many people, one should be economic in fucking. Scared into existence in which everything except lying, working and fucking has been indefinitely postponed.

In such a framework everything is dead, even and especially the so-called living labor, the use value of labor power as the being laboring *actualiter*, or, which is the same thing, awaiting its irrevocable perdition in a limbo of postponed death. Two options have circumscribed the boundaries

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 361.

of reality, either play the game or “die all alone, incestuous, homosexual, and a zombie.”¹⁹ In a constant mode of energy saving, the being wallows in its protracted, meandering demise, utilizing the universal power of production which incidentally had to be beaten out of the slaves in the colonies who apparently did not understand that it was a universal human disposition to work.

The question then is: alienation of whom, and from what? Is the being alienated from its productive essence so that, once liberated, it will finally produce freely under the good old sign of labor power? Alienation surely does not start with the worker selling out his physical and mental capabilities to the capitalist – as if the brain and the muscles were the worker’s property in the sense of him having an option not to alienate it in the commodity production. The universal power of labor indeed is a property of the worker, yet the worker does not have a separate existence outside of this property, he is the property of private property. This tautological expression simply signifies that the transubstantiation of bodies and minds into private property has never taken place, that there’s never been an exigency of this kind. If there is any meaning to the notion of alienation, it is to be conceived as a process that by itself establishes the reality of an alienated being: “it’s not poverty that pushes people to sell themselves; on the contrary it is their own abundant wealth that forces them to.”²⁰ In order for exploitation to be a finalization of the productive code, there must be a laboring essence first, a living labor power. An alienated being is far from being empty, it is overflowing with usefulness. If it is not put into use, labor power is wasted; too much energy has been expended in its production for it not to objectify itself, not to empty itself out and establish the reality of commodities.

An alienated being, a laboring being, is produced; but when does this happen? Is it in production or in consumption? Is it in the factory, in school, or in the family? Or is it in the raising classes? Who determines the needs of a being that must essentialize itself as labor power in order to procure them, and when did this determination happen? Alienation never truly happens because everything is in place already; everything is produced according to the law of maximal utility and minimal cost. Labor power exists: necessities, subsistence and needs exist because they have been produced as such. And when the time is ready for exploitation, these needs are used to measure the necessary amount of commodities required for the maintenance of labor power. Phenomenologists will keep on talking about an originary bodily subjectivity preceding the reality of political economy.²¹ The truth of the matter is that in its imaginary pre-capitalist givenness, the body is as reactionary as

¹⁹ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), p. 71.

²⁰ Pierre Klossowski, *Living Currency* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), p. 27.

²¹ Cf. Michel Henry, *Marx: A Philosophy of Human Reality* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983).

the mind. One should not even say that the ground has been sold from unborn feet.²² Since the biological operation of birth has always been part of political economy, it is rather the beautiful organic subjectivity, the unborn brains and muscles that have been sold in advance. There is no objectivity, no reality beneath the economic reality of commodities. There is no other, more fundamental realm from which political economy – with its living/dead labor – would be extracted, whether historically or as a virtual process. The ultimate ground, the empty site of freedom defined by way of negating the economic necessity, is a properly bourgeois delusion.

Deleuze and Guattari understand 'alienation' as a differential kind of relation to a flow, a virtual appropriation of desiring-production – the supposedly positive regime of production – serving the purposeless purpose of reproducing the capitalist social formation. The alienated being is at the end of the process, it is a residue of a complex nexus of subjugating forces. The differential relation to a flow – dy/dx – concretizes itself within a particular space-time, e.g., in dy constituting the variable capital and dx constituting the constant capital.²³ An institutional constellation of forces determines the passage through the three unconscious syntheses in their respective modalities – either repressive or free – and produces beings as reduced to labor power under the sign of property, or, and this is crucial, it spits them out as new essences involving new sensuous relations between powers and objects. An essence through which a being becomes what it is can be either given or virtually created. But isn't this creation a mere de-sublimated mirror of the mechanisms by which one becomes essential in compliance with the framework of capitalism? There obtains, supposedly, a positive modality of the unconscious syntheses, a positive regime of production. Yet does desiring-production exist outside of its alienation in the social machine? Does the entire project end up being caught in an impasse of determining the other of capitalism in terms of free production against the alienated one? But why would this require a 'productivist' vocabulary and, along with it, the bourgeois dialectics of freedom and necessity? And into what would ideology and its corresponding apparatuses fall back? The supposedly positive side is presented as an empty position, a void to be filled in. It is not certain whether the assumption of powers, their becoming essential, should at the same time be viewed as their creation. It is possible that new powers come into being through a completely different regime than that of production and that the empty spot, the one which would be taken up by such new sensuous relations, cannot be filled with a different kind of production. If one pushes the logic of productivity to its limit, one does not break through to a positive regime of production but, perhaps, to something of a completely different nature.

²² Would this be true of 'feudalism', whose symbolic system of privileges contained land ownership as one of its aspects? But when did this aspect become determinant with respect to the 'whole society'?

²³ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, pp. 227-228.

Marx tells us that a being is alienated from the product of its labor, from the activity of labor itself and from its essence as a common, human essence.²⁴ Yet what is important is that the being is alienated, that it underwent a process through which it became alienated, and that it cannot escape this essence of labor without escaping the intensive process of its production. There is something important about the two regimes of production theorized by Deleuze and Guattari; yet the question remains: Is the positive regime of production really a regime of *production*? Why not a regime of destruction, a political regime instead? The depressive de-sublimation cannot be eluded by constructing an outside of production situated on the same plane as the production of commodities, i.e., a non-capitalist production or a post-capitalist production. Alienation happens within the family as much as in the factory, and the exploitation of labor power for the purpose of obtaining surplus is in a way a salvation for a being whose only power is labor and which can receive objects only insofar as they respond to this power: labor/commodity relation is the only imaginable relation. It has been said that desire is destructive by going to the limit of any productive sphere within which it finds itself. But would production still be production in this case? Or do we not rather enter a different space-time as we cross the limit? Energy saving is defied by going to the limit of production, by spending up all the energy to a relation that *per definitionem* allows only a pre-determined quantum to be invested. The productive relation is thus destabilized *in toto* and a new realm, no longer that of production, would emerge. In *Anti-Oedipus*, the crossing of the energetic limit results in a depressive de-sublimation that mirrors the content established by the capitalist code. It is of no avail to replace the death drive by a positive, constructive drive, for this constructivism once again finds its *modus operandi* in the negated mechanisms of capitalist reproduction. Marx's concept of alienation must be interpreted in a different way.

It is the senses, the movement of power acquisition and the essentialization-process of beings, which serve as a disavowed condition of possibility of alienation. Even though we are dealing with real institutions, with real apparatuses of captivation – or perhaps directly with the state as such – that harbor in themselves alienation as a process through which a being goes through, the true possibility of these material practices resides in the substitution of a dynamic power acquisition by a universal power of labor and its commodified world. It is necessary to distinguish the beings from the powers through which they become essential. One has never started becoming labor power, for the realm of powers is properly speaking immaterial. The material practices in a way support the reduction of senses or powers, for it is through them that labor power becomes an essential power.

²⁴ On the development of the concept of alienation see Marcello Musto, "Revisiting Marx's Concept of Alienation", *Socialism and Democracy* 24, no. 3 (2010), pp. 79-101. Also the brilliant commentary of Erich Fromm, *Marx's Concept of Man* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2004).

It is closer to truth to say that the powers or senses are alienated and not beings, for the latter are always essential and therefore cannot exist prior to the alienation. Alienation is a virtual process of productive appropriation, but one always already is caught up in this process, in becoming labor power.²⁵ It is in this sense that the process is virtual and that the appropriation concretizes itself. Perhaps we should not talk about appropriation at all, since nothing is in the strict sense appropriated, there is only production – alienation is production of a being as labor power, all production is alienated and all alienation is productive. “Alienation appears not only in the fact that the means of my life belong to another and that my desire is the inaccessible possession of another, but also in the fact that all things are other than themselves, that my activity is other than itself”.²⁶ In other words, it is a total dispossession, and it coincides with production once we understand the latter as a totality.

The differential relation to a flow is productive, it does not have two modalities just as the unconscious syntheses in *Anti-Oedipus* don't have their free and repressive regime. One does not become labor power through alienated production but through the production of alienation. This production indeed is virtual and its actualization depends on the particular socio-historical coordinates – it is the role of the state to always adjust the institutional practices and their corresponding ideology to the present requirements of social reproduction.²⁷ The outcome, however, is always labor power as the representative of all powers, sense blocked in the sense of having, and the plurality of objects as a commodified reality. Labor power transforms commodities – for labor does not have access to anything else – into commodities, its result is always a commodity. Commodities enter into sensuous events as property, as that which is sensuously had and which at least potentially responds to labor power (consumption is not distinct from production from the perspective of powers).²⁸ There is no restructuring of the objective plurality; the latter remains an aggregate of commodities on the basis of which a certain abstract minimum can be constructed. Depending on the plurality of powers whose objects are all commodities for labor power, a set quantity required for the reproduction of labor power is established: the needs. The essence of a

²⁵ Cf. Marx, *Early Writings*, p. 332. “Although private property appears as the basis and cause of alienated labor, it is in fact its consequence”.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 366.

²⁷ On the impromptu character of the capitalist state see Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right. Introduction*, in: *Early Writings*, pp. 243-257. Also Marx's numerous political writings, e.g., Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, in: Karl Marx, *The Political Writings* (London: Verso, 2019).

²⁸ Cf. Marx, *Early Writings*, p. 362.

being becomes an abstract – yet definite within a given space-time – quantity of commodities to be procured by labor. Labor power then envelops its corresponding objectivity in a fixed sensuous relationship of having; one has needs whose satisfaction fosters an energetic system that constantly aims at an energetic equilibrium through a meticulous interplay of saving and spending.²⁹ Sense is an energy expenditure, yet when a power is acquired together with its object, the amount of energy required for this event to occur is not determined in advance. Every sensuous event has its corresponding block of energy to be consummated. Yet consummation differs from consumption in that the latter presupposes a system of energetic equilibrium in the relationship between labor power and commodities. The amounts of energy are allotted *a priori* so as to always uphold an equilibrium and, consequently, a universal and stable space-time in which value – the abstract social necessity – can be apprehended. In a sensuous event, on the other hand, a block of energy is a fold of space-time which absorbs and releases a being and at the same time re-organizes the objectivity that, as a result, corresponds to the new power. Here, energy is consummated *in toto* and a new frame of reference emerges in which a new sensuous event can occur.

Impoverishment of senses ultimately means that objects of powers are in advance transformed into commodities; that the plurality of powers turns into a scale of privations in relation to one power; and that a fixed system of energy saving is established within which the capitalist social formation reproduces itself by always opting for an equilibrium and precluding the emergence of an unquantifiable block of energy in a new sense-event that could possibly destabilize the unity of its commodified reality. It is now clear why Marx, repeating Fourier's insight, often says that the capitalist is alienated in the same way as the worker: "the possessing class and the proletarian class represent one and the same human self-alienation."³⁰ It is only the scale of privations in relation to the universal power of labor upon which the economic classes come to bear. What, for example, is an artwork to the capitalist class? It is a commodity which – precisely because it is not originally a commodity – can be invested with an arbitrary exchange value having absolutely nothing to do with the labor time necessary for its production. It is forcefully subsumed under the only form of sensing that the bourgeois is capable of: sensing as having. A work of art thus becomes an inessential pastime, an object of relaxation from the essential activity of labor.³¹ One does not need singular powers anymore, for one power suffices for all the commodities. The productive framework is

²⁹ As Marx brilliantly points out, political economy is the science of denial, starvation, saving and asceticism. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 360-361.

³⁰ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Holy Family*, in: R. C. Tucker (ed.), *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York: Norton, 1978), p. 133.

³¹ Cf. Marx, *Early Writings*, p. 368.

useless when it comes to accounting for novelty in sensing, yet if its radicalization does not bring about a different kind of production, i.e., a non-alienated production, it is to be answered what exactly is meant by the outside of the capitalist code. What is more, it seems that the acquisition of a power is not the same thing as its invention. It is not certain whether there is a difference in nature between these two events or whether their difference should be conceptualized on the basis of a fluid gradation.

PART III: THE OUTSIDE OF PRODUCTION

1: THE POLITICAL OR DESTRUCTIVE NATURE OF THE OUTSIDE

Production does not have a productive outside or an outside situated on the same plane as production. The capitalist code is bound to project its own outside out of itself, the other which would in turn support it and constitute a contradiction within which it could reproduce itself. Labor, supposedly, is on the way to becoming more free than it is right now – an imagery quite effective in soliciting participation from the purportedly unfree subjects. They repeat the process of alienation all over again and put a stamp of approval on it. To be a citizen means to affirm one’s own physical and spiritual destitution, to be grateful for the state’s little charities whose only purpose is to prevent an overflow of energy and a possible disintegration of the produced beings’ individuality. It is clear that the lineage must be broken. Fourier was content to sit on his patio and wait for the government officials to come for advice, for he believed that the capitalist state will by itself adopt the art of group formation. Yet did the state ever give you more than the absolute minimum necessary for its own reproduction? And did it not always take everything back when possible? Marx indeed took a step further than Fourier in this respect. For not only is dialectic devoid of any content – and Marxism is empty³² insofar as it is dialectical –, but it betrays all revolutionary principles, which is much worse.³³ The only objection that Marx raises against Communards is that they did not destroy enough. They left too many institutions intact, they remained standing respectfully in front of them.³⁴ Marx establishes the principle of no compromises with the capitalist state as early as in the 1843 *Critique of Hegel’s Doctrine of the State*. It ought to be repeated *ad infinitum* that this text is not a call for democracy but against it. It is a resolute denunciation of democracy as the ultimate ideology of the capitalist state; for it is democracy that neutralizes revolutionary insurrections in their larval stages and turns destruction into an endless, meandering reform. In every constitution one in truth fights democracy – it is in this sense that “democracy is the essence of all political constitutions” and that “all forms of the state have democracy for their truth”.³⁵ In this text, Marx

³² It becomes a science of history.

³³ Cf. Karl Marx, *Critique of Hegel’s Dialectic and General Philosophy*, in: *Early Writings*, pp. 379-400.

³⁴ Cf. Karl Marx, *The Civil War in France*, in: R. C. Tucker (ed.), *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York: Norton, 1978).

³⁵ Marx, *Early Writings*, pp. 88-89.

crosses the boundary of realizing the pointlessness of turning Hegel on his head; a boundary that Engels never reaches with respect to the critique of the dialectic.³⁶

The third part of Marx's unpublished manuscript is strangely reminiscent of Nietzsche. "Real extremes cannot be mediated precisely because they are real extremes. Nor do they require mediation, for their natures are wholly opposed. They have nothing in common with one another, they have no need for one another, they do not complement one another. The one does not bear within its womb a longing, a need, an anticipation of the other."³⁷ The need for mediation merely signifies that the master is a slave in disguise. The master/slave dialectic is a slave/slave dialectic, it never ends, or, rather, it has an end in the imaginary; just one last time, but then again, and again. Out of the shit into the feces, analysis interminable. The same is true for the supposed contradiction between the civil society and the political state – the need for mediation envelops the underlying sickness, while participation constitutes the very moment of contagion. Marx was especially sensitive to all the lies and stupidity with which the capitalist state covers all objects and beings. One has to have a sense for it too, and the ability to stay away is a proof of distinction. If there is a principle that Marx held on to firmly, it is that one ought to perish rather than beg the state for its alms. But how does this go together with what was said earlier, namely that the political instance disperses the points of inflection in a sensuous event? If Fourier believed that the political instance is directly transformative of the essential powers, Marx does not so much disagree but adds one step in between – namely, that group formation should never be accepted insofar as it is offered by the state itself. For the state already constitutes an outside in the sense of effectuating the reduction of powers to labor and of senses to property, it is the material guarantor of the reproduction accomplished in the name of the code. The only thing that one can do with the state consequently is to dismantle it. And it is the primary task, the most urgent task. In Marx's later writings, "the destructive side"³⁸ is represented by proletariat, or rather, proletariat becomes the carrier of the principle of destruction. It is clear that what Fourier lacks is this intermediary step of destruction, for nothing genuinely new can emerge without destruction. To be 'political' means, first of all, to be destructive. Art is political not on account of depicting a particular thing or employing a content; it is political to the extent that it destroys the established forms of sensibility upon which the capitalist being relies. Magritte's *Automaton*, the gleaming perpetuum mobile on the background of a cozy wooden half wall, is a perfect depiction of the ridiculous fragility of the bourgeois

³⁶ On this point see Lucio Colletti's brilliant introduction in Marx, *Early Writings*, pp. 7-56.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 155.

³⁸ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Holy Family*, in: R. C. Tucker (ed.), *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York: Norton, 1978), p. 134.

subjectivity. Philosophy is political insofar as it destroys the established values, the conceptual paradigms of the capitalist society. For all of the pre-established is harbored by the state, it is its very content. There is indeed an internal conflict within philosophy itself, there are two philosophies rather – philosophy as state thought and philosophy as revolutionary thought. A philosophical concept, says Deleuze, “is a brick. It can be used to build the courthouse of reason. Or it can be thrown through the window.”³⁹ “The ruthless criticism of everything existing,”⁴⁰ repeats Marx as regards the task of philosophy, for one can destroy as much by setting a police car on fire as by creating a concept.

If sense itself is a blocked acceleration, then the instance blocking it must itself be accelerated towards self-annihilation. This is the destructive sub-step introduced by Marx, the annihilating outside that opens up a space where experimentation with the powers becomes possible once again. It is quite inconsequential to form a non-revolutionary group, for such a group would necessarily be a simulacrum, a representation of not its members but the state, the latter being already a representation; such a group is desired by “economists, philanthropists, humanitarians, improvers of the condition of the working class, organisers of charity, members of societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals, temperance fanatics, hole-and-corner reformers of every imaginable kind.”⁴¹ It is destruction as such that precludes the reformism of representation by dispersing the points of inflection in the acquisition of powers. The nature of the reduction to labor power is such that it channels all activity and passivity through a common supply pipe of drudge and toil. Everything has turned into labor for us, including learning, eating, sex and the so-called leisure, the anxious and frenzied filling up of an emptiness left over by the productive essence.

The emphasis that Marx lays on the notion of enjoyment has largely been neglected. The enjoyment of an object does not in truth take any seriousness out of the object, which would be a false dichotomy. The bourgeois contradiction between freedom and necessity is refurbished in the idea of the reality or seriousness of work as opposed to joy and play. But life must have already been degraded if its manifestations present themselves through the above-mentioned dichotomy – “life as

³⁹ From an interview with Deleuze, cf. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), p. XII.

⁴⁰ Marx, *Early Writings*, p. 207.

⁴¹ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, in: R. C. Tucker (ed.), *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York: Norton, 1978), p. 496.

the sacrifice of life".⁴² In truth, it is saving, "gain, labour, thrift and sobriety" to which enjoyment is opposed.⁴³

For Marx, then, the outside of production is first of all destructive, it is political in the sense of being "the dynamic principle of the immediate future."⁴⁴ Marx postulates three degrees of communist action, and these degrees coincide with the degrees of either intensification or descent towards the realm of powers and sensuous events.

(1) The first degree is the most superficial, it is Marx's depiction of the principle of specular representation and bears the name of crude communism. Here "the category of worker is not abolished but extended to all men". Once again we encounter here the notion of a 'preconceived minimum', now universalized, signifying the pre-established needs of a laboring being and the definite exchange value necessary for their satisfaction. Moreover, the entire group or community becomes "a community of labour and equality of wages, which are paid out by the communal capital, the community as universal capitalist."⁴⁵ What Marx presents here is the lowest degree of intensity of the destructive outside, the latter being farthest from sensuousness and from power formation, albeit not any less destructive for that matter, because the difference is in kind. The stage of alienation that corresponds to this degree is the alienation from the object of labor.⁴⁶ The re-appropriation of this object is a mere specular representation, a return and thus a reproduction of the code; one barely escapes the dialectic at this level of destructiveness.

(2) The second degree is ambivalent because it bears on the very activity of labor, and it is either of political nature – i.e., within the political state, be it democratic or despotic – or not. It is no longer a representation and maintains a vacillating propinquity with the forming powers; "it is still held captive and contaminated by private property",⁴⁷ yet it manages to escape through the singular instances of destruction. This is where one encounters the problems of organization and of proper group formation: strategy or the manifesto's content concerning the total actualization of partial revolutionary instances.

(3) The third degree of intensity, named 'real communism' by Marx, signifies the necessary simultaneity or coextension of the liberation of sensibility and the destruction of the capitalist state,

⁴² Marx, *Early Writings*, p. 266.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 362.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 358.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 346-347.

⁴⁶ On this point see David Resnick, "Crude Communism and Revolution", *The American Political Science Review* 70, no. 4 (1976), pp. 1136-1145.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 347-348.

its reality principle or its productive code. This is where political practice ceases being a mere point of application of a philosophy and becomes the latter's constitutive element. At the same time philosophy ceases being ideological and becomes directly transformative of the world. The realization of philosophy does not consist in overcoming itself, for this would be a Hegelian-Feuerbachian theme. This thesis rather presents philosophy in its destructive best, it grasps it in its highest degree of intensity and by the same process renders interpretation a mere lack of destruction.⁴⁸ Since destruction and liberation coexist in the third stage, there is no need for any additional temporal resolution. All conflicts and contradictions that in one way or another sustain the necessity of labor – “between man and nature, between existence and essence, between objectification and self-affirmation, between freedom and necessity, between individual and species”⁴⁹ – are cancelled out and thrown in the garbage. What destruction liberates is neither the human being (the naturalized citizen, the abortive, pre-disabled product of a particular form of state power); nor society (the frightened and confused mass of private selves stacked behind barbed wire, receiving their personalized little portion of the world through a media screen), but sensibility as a possibility and event. A being “profoundly and abundantly endowed with all the senses”⁵⁰ exists as a direct annihilation of labor power essentialized in the very same being – ripped open, multiplied and thrown into the nexus of the powers in their plurality. The outside of production is political insofar as it dismantles the labor-commodity blockage of sensuousness in the totality of its institutional scaffolding set up by the capitalist state.

2: THE PLAYFUL OR INVENTIVE NATURE OF THE OUTSIDE

All powers are common powers,⁵¹ including labor power, the universal power of a universal citizen-laborer. The form of the common thus depends on the alliances established on the basis of the sensuous powers; or, in other words, on the basis of the forms and the types of connections that make a group essential in one way or another. Forming a group can be considered an art because

⁴⁸ On the relationship between philosophy and the world see Carol Johnson, “Philosophy and Revolution in the Young Marx”, *Science & Society* 47, no. 1 (1983), pp. 66-83. Also Marcello Musto, *Another Marx: Early Manuscripts to the International* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), pp. 45-55.

⁴⁹ Marx, *Early Writings*, p. 348.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 354.

⁵¹ I am in common with others “even if I am active in the field of science, etc. – an activity which I am seldom able to perform in direct association with other men”. *Ibid.*, p. 350.

what is at stake is a new constellation of powers, a new constellation with regard to the process of incorporating various sensuous relations. The principle here is sensibility as such, the ability to essentialize – according to degrees of intensity as is required by specific powers, for each power has its own particular intension – the relations of power-objects and thus produce a filiation or a branch with sub-branches that internally organizes the community or the group. It is true that when Marx talks about the impoverishment of human sensibility, the assessment is ecological; it is also true that ecology is the logic of a total economy. When economy breaks loose from production proper and begins to devour all aspects of being, it becomes ecology. It would be quite pointless at this point to talk about determination in the last instance by the economy, for there no longer is any external instance that could be determined qua superstructure. Money, for example, produces the romantic sphere of the non-exchangeable. But the existence of money is not in any way characteristic of capitalism and does not define it⁵² – it is rather a residue from earlier state formations that capitalism tolerates as long as it is necessary for its development. Marx already knew that capitalism’s tendency is to do away with money in its material form, that the future is a direct production of bodily affects and sensations.⁵³ Political economy has long ago formulated its moral utopia of credit, of social credit, whereby money acquires a completely ideal existence while “my personal existence, my flesh and blood, my social worth and status”, becomes the – now no longer separate – universal equivalent. “The human being itself is transformed into money, or, in other words, money is incarnate in it.”⁵⁴ We see that the sphere of the non-exchangeable is requisite as the simulated other, thus forming a contradiction within which money develops towards its “more perfect forms”.⁵⁵ Ecology, i.e., a totalized economy which is no longer able to distinguish production from other manifestations of life, becomes the realized utopia of political economy or the practice bringing about this utopia.

Let’s say that within a definite social and historical environment, the reactive tendencies – the reduction of powers, their transformation into labor-form, the commodification of objects, the blockage of sensuous relations different than that of property or having – are to be suppressed. But how can one conceptualize the difference between this practice being ecological and reformist or, on

⁵² That “the product must be a commodity and therefore express itself as money” is only “the first condition” for the emergence of capitalist production. Cf. Karl Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*, in: R. C. Tucker (ed.), *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York: Norton, 1978), p. 444.

⁵³ Karl Marx, *The Grundrisse*, in: *Ibid.*, p. 262. “Paper money and the numerous paper representatives of money are the more perfect forms of money as money and a necessary stage in the progress of the money system.”

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 264.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 262.

the contrary, counter-ecological and revolutionary? It is definitely not, at least not primarily, a matter of content or of the practices – a specular representation can easily claim to be revolutionary. The touchstone is the coextension or separation of the two facets of the outside: the play or invention of the powers must never precede the destructive drive in its active or passive modality. The group seeks an interface of the two, a limit with the highest degree of intensity where destruction coincides with play. It is the same as with art – the limit is never sought in the content but in the form, it is the form that subverts the aesthetic order. One does not “hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening and criticise after dinner,”⁵⁶ i.e., emulate a bourgeois lifestyle, unless as a function – an excess and an experiment – of destruction. It is not possible to distinguish between subversive and harmonic development of the powers, or, in more popular terms, between reform and revolution, without this linkage functioning as a selective principle that eternally identifies opportunism.

The capitalist state labors furiously in order to code an element that can only appear as absolutely hostile and completely disaffiliated – yet what does it mean to be disaffiliated from an abstraction as idiotic as that of a nation or society? Undoubtedly, “one does feel national shame”⁵⁷ as a precursor, a processual station or a tentative identification vis-à-vis the outside of production, for one does not break all the ties at once; the ties are heavy, they have been produced institutionally by practices both corporeal and spiritual – this is what the concept of alienation signifies. The purpose of the abstraction is again to bedim, to dislocate; when a produced essence begins to crumble, all the nonsense generated by the state and its paraphernalia like the nuclear family reveals its founding hideousness. Yet there is nothing depressive about this, it is not a labor of any kind. Destruction as joy and play, for a community fixed upon minimizing the necessary toil will never cross over to the community of play with the powers. It will forever remain preoccupied with imaginary necessities, conditions and laws of being. Such a community will at best solidify the property-sense, transform everyone into a worker and institute a generalized slavery in the name of ‘society’. Marx was very well aware of the necessarily conservative tendencies of labor unions, even if they do comprehend the labor theory value. “A fair day's wage for a fair day's work!”⁵⁸ – a demand paradigmatic in that it falls short of the equation saving=losing. On the other hand, one does not need to wait for any ripeness of conditions, since the conditions are all totally there. There is no such thing as too much Luddism. It is rather interesting that an opposition to and a slandering of a phenomenon is at its

⁵⁶ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, in: *Ibid.*, p. 160.

⁵⁷ Marx, *Early Writings*, p. 199.

⁵⁸ See the last two chapters of Karl Marx, *Value, Price and Profit* (New York: International Publishers, 1969), pp. 24-30.

fiercest precisely when the phenomenon is almost completely missing. One perhaps only needs a tape recorder, a screen such as television or newspaper, and a whole army of highly aggressive cowards is born, an army that always comes handy to the state when the reserve army of capital leaves its ghetto and the police station finds its familial intimacy threatened.

When Marx introduces the third degree of intensity of the communist practice, destruction coincides, in actuality, with the acquisition of new powers. Yet virtually, as to their concepts, the two facets of the outside are distinct. While destruction does not seem to pose any great difficulty as to its conceptualization, the inventive relation to the essential powers remains a kind of injunction and seems to reintroduce the reality principle under a different guise, namely that of openness. This conception of the outside, however, is held captive by the lowest degree of practice or by the specular representation of production. Destruction is an instrument or a means to an end only insofar as the powers precede and supplement a being's essence. But such a thing can never happen because the essence would always already exist as produced, and a produced essence, due to its saturation with labor, does not permit any supplement before destruction is carried out. It is in this sense that destruction does not precede anything and is not of a lower order in comparison with anything else. This also means that powers, insofar as they are conceived of as sensuous events, constitute the essence of a being, let's say of a group, on the move, as it were, or as the immediate function of its destructive practice. Destruction becomes self-sufficient, yet the concurrent power acquisition is not desired or requisite – this is what it means that the latter is an event. A political strategy is rigid and does not allow much experimentation, yet this fact should always be understood as pertaining to the second or transitive degree of communism, which is neither the reversed representation of production nor the immanence of destruction. We rather have a succession; the powers receive an approximated image, a superposition consisting of the powers after-the-destruction, while the political instance absorbs all the particular revolutionary manifestations and is thus rendered more or less consistent. It is to be emphasized that this stage – and this also goes for 'crude communism' – neither precedes, in a positively historical sense, what Marx calls 'real communism', nor is a critique of the wrong conception of the latter. It is a degree of intensity within one and the same phenomenon.

Yet the conception of the common, of what is common in communism, changes together with the three political degrees. The lower degree would coincide with Feuerbach's 'species' as "the absolute measure, law, and criterion of man."⁵⁹ The powers of 'feeling', 'thought' and 'will' are eternally anchored in the essence of human beings and unfold themselves in new individuals.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity* (London: Trübner & Co., 1881), p. 16.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

Feuerbach's static ontology completely lacks the inventive or experimental relation to the powers as much as the concurrent destructive process. He is a caricature of Hegel, as Marx repeatedly points out, for Hegel at least puts the powers into motion: they are an outcome – a secondary one, for a power is not an object – of production. Yet production cannot have as its result any other power than labor power. It is true that 'man' produces his own powers, if by powers we mean labor power. At any event, it is Feuerbach who breaks this specular representation of production by positing the power-object relation as the basis of sensuousness. Yet this relation remains a 'dumb generality' – the active side, the destructive side, is missing.⁶¹ "The object of feeling," says Feuerbach, "is feeling objective to itself. If thou hast no sensibility, no feeling for music, thou perceivest in the finest music nothing more than in the wind that whistles by thy ear, or than in the brook which rushes past thy feet."⁶² Marx repeats: "only music can awaken the musical sense in man and the most beautiful music has no sense for the unmusical ear".⁶³ The power has its corresponding object, it is a fold where one pole of sense does not exist without the other. In *Grundrisse* we read: "But doesn't the pianist produce music and satisfy our musical ear, does he not even to a certain extent produce the latter? He does indeed: his labour produces something".⁶⁴ It is as if music had to be coded as labor in order to be intelligible. But does the pianist really 'produce' the ear? Couldn't we say, under certain conditions, that he destroys the ear? "The object of art – like every other product – creates a public which is sensitive to art and enjoys beauty",⁶⁵ i.e., it invents a common power or a power shared within a particular community. Yet is musical composition really a satisfaction of the musical ear? Let's say that the composer invents a new sonorous sensation and that this sensation, as a new power, essentializes itself in a 'musical ear' of a being. But how is this process any more productive than it is destructive? "His labour produces something; but that does not make it productive labour in the economic sense".⁶⁶ Productive labor in the non-economic sense, non-productive labor, non-labor.

⁶¹ Cf. Karl Marx, *Theses on Feuerbach*, in: *Early Writings*, pp. 421-423.

⁶² Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, p. 9.

⁶³ Marx, *Early Writings*, p. 351.

⁶⁴ Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy* (London: Penguin Books, 1993), p. 305.

⁶⁵ Marx, *The Grundrisse*, in: R. C. Tucker (ed.), *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York: Norton, 1978), p. 230.

⁶⁶ Marx, *Grundrisse*, p. 305.

CONCLUSIONS

There are two kinds of political accelerationism. Marx stands at the crossroads or at the point of differentiation of the two. One accelerates the contradictions of the capitalist state so as to continue, once the future of after-the-acceleration is reached, with a different version of the same domain which is to be accelerated. Or else, one accelerates with a purpose completely foreign to the accelerated domain, that is to say, the destruction of capitalism does not have, as its goal, a different economic system; incidentally, there is no other 'economic system' than capitalism, for 'the economic' simply functions as the operative limit or enclosure of a particular social formation. In his early writings, Marx recognizes the necessity of destruction in its political – i.e., anti-state – signification, yet the goal resides elsewhere, it revolves around sensibility as a possibility and as an event. His proclamations about human senses and their liberation always have, as the condition of their actualization, an intensive double in political practice. Indeed, the two coincide *sub specie intensitatis*, even though they tend to appear distinct under the influence of the fourth dimension of extension. The intensive unity of the two facets of the outside of production is, as already said, an eternal weapon against opportunism. It therefore constitutes a positive principle.

A community or a group holds together by the sharing of sensibility or of the sensuous powers; firstly, according to the degrees of intension within every power, and secondly, according to the dynamic relations between the powers. Yet if the above-mentioned unity is to be maintained, one must say that the group holds together as much by destruction, by its intensity and its specific objects shared in various degrees and grades. Fourier is right in saying that group formation is an art, for one has to count with both facets at the same time; political practice as a dispersion of the points of inflexion – or, using a different mathematical notion, of singularities – in the acquisition of new powers of sensing. It is obvious that an essential community of this kind differs in nature from the state. The latter's content, the citizen, is a perfectly produced barrel of labor power fearfully waiting to be filled in. This is why it is not quite correct to say that one labors in order to survive; it is closer to truth to say that one labors because otherwise there would be nothing to do. Optimism, and Marx was never short of it, stems from the realization that there is very little to be preserved and a whole lot to be destroyed.

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