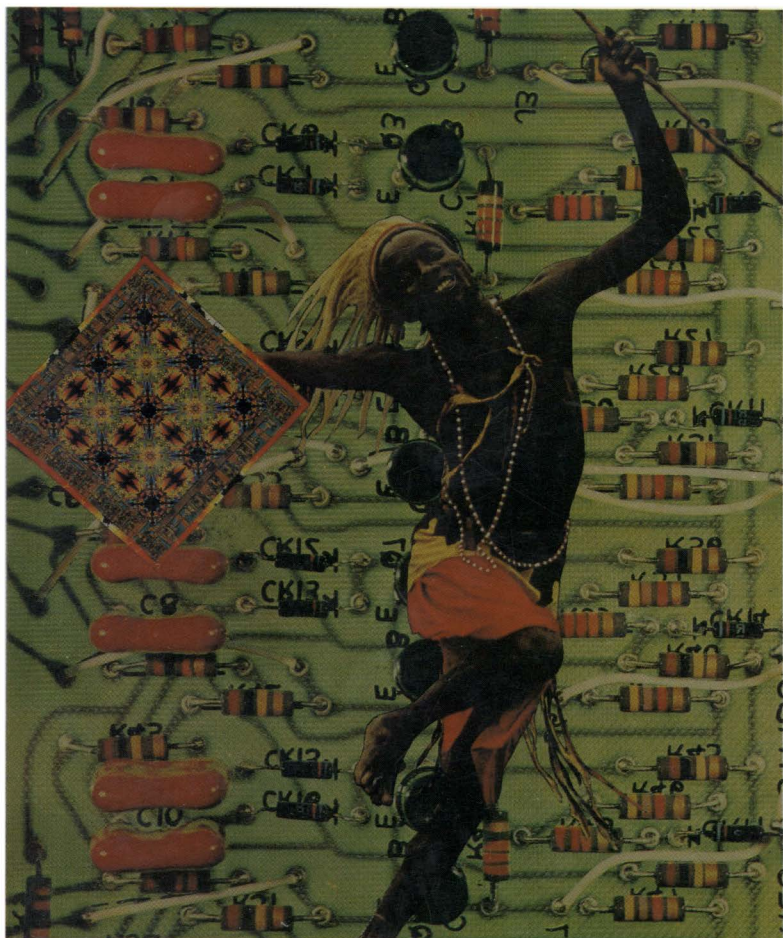


THIS WORLD WE MUST LEAVE

AND OTHER ESSAYS



JACQUES CAMATTE

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AND OTHER ESSAYS

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JACQUES CAMATTE

EDITED BY ALEX TROTTER

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Autonomedia
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INTRODUCTION

Herein are gathered several essays by Jacques Camatte, editor of the journal *Invariance*, that exist in English translation. This is the first of three volumes of Camatte's writings to be published by Autonomedia. Most of these essays have been published previously as pamphlets.

Jacques Camatte comes out of a political tradition, the Italian communist left, that has had little impact and almost no existence in North America. The closest political tendencies to it today are the International Communist Current (to whom Camatte is a *bête noire*), the remnants of council communism, and, to some lesser extent, anarchosyndicalism. The International Communist Party, the organization that Bordiga, one of the founders and early leaders of the Italian Communist Party, and Camatte were active in, is still extant in western Europe. (More information about the PCI and other currents in the Italian communist left is contained in a translator's footnote to "On Organization.")

Like many in France, Camatte started to question marxism about the time of the epochal 1968 worker-student uprising. He came to reject marxist cornerstone concepts such as the theory of the proletariat and the necessity of the party. Rather than the scenario described by Marx of the class struggle between bourgeoisie and proletariat, Camatte maintains that

capital has successfully absorbed this contradiction, and he sees today a proletarianized humanity at large dominated by the “despotism of capital,” which has constituted itself as an anthropomorphized, all-encompassing material community controlling not only society and the economy but all of space and time, culture, imagination, and life on earth as well. His ideas since the late sixties, however, have remained deeply influenced by marxian and bordighist themes. The very title of *Invariance*, taken from Bordiga’s theory of the “invariance” of the communist program since 1848 (meaning that communism has been an immediate possibility since that time, without waiting for the maturation of productive forces; Camatte’s modification holds that communism has always been possible throughout history) attests to this, as does Camatte’s retention of Marx’s term *Gemeinwesen* (human essence, collective being of the human species—the goal of communism).

Camatte has never been an anarchist; in fact, he explains that his critique of formal political organizations applies as much to anarchist entities such as syndicalist federations as it does to the councilist or partyist currents of marxism. He claims no direct affinity with other ultraleft marxist groups such as *Socialisme ou Barbarie* or the Situationist International, because they were formal organizations and clung to the old council communism in their political programs. His attitude toward individualist anarchism is ambivalent. He credits it with having maintained the spark of rebellion, autonomy, and critical consciousness. But he refuses to support the egoism of Max Stirner, and he makes no mention in any of his writings of the nineteenth-century American individualists Josiah Warren, Benjamin Tucker, and Lysander Spooner. Camatte seems to believe that individualism, like parliamentary democracy, would ultimately prove to be an obstacle to the constitution of the *Gemeinwesen*.

Camatte makes occasional use of insights from Parisian postphilosophers such as Foucault, but unlike them he remains to a great extent a champion of Marx and much less so of Nietzsche and Freud. You will not hear any enthusiasm from Camatte for (post)structuralism. He calls Baudrillard a polemicist in oedipal revolt against his father (Marx). He evinces no respect for the academic marxologists such as Althusser. Even the Frankfurt School is taken to task in Camatte's assertion that Adorno failed to understand the true nature of fascism's mass appeal.

Camatte advocates regeneration of nature through the end or radical curtailment of civilization and technology, and a new way of life outside the capitalist/socialist mode of production. He believes that the human species must undergo fundamental changes in order to exist in harmony with the community of all living things and with the earth itself (compare this with the Gaia hypothesis). In North America, Black and Red press, which was the first to publish "The Wandering of Humanity" in English, is close to Camatte's version of Marx beyond marxism. Otherwise, Invariance's group of affinity—albeit significantly less flavored with Marx—has included the publications *Anarchy*, *Fifth Estate* (in earlier days), and the short-lived *Demolition Derby*.

In "On Organization" Camatte and Collu explain the reasons for their break with the International Communist Party, describing it, like all other political organizations, as a gang or racket. The gang seduces its recruits, then vampirizes their creative abilities and suppresses their desires and their individuality in the name of an illusory community. The critique of organization here refers not only to "groupuscules" on the ultraleft, but to the entire social fabric of capitalist society as it exists in the late twentieth century. The organization is the

modern depersonalized and collective capitalist, the capitalist without capital whose stock in trade is speculation and ideological commodities. In this society, organized politics of the left or right, parliamentary or extraparliamentary, is part and parcel of the functioning of the system, and cannot effect a revolutionary change.

Camatte fingers representation as the essence of politics. He points out that Marx rejected popularity and the cult of personality, and saw communism not as doctrine and frozen ideology, but as movement and theory. Camatte makes use of Marx's distinction between the formal party and the historic party. For Marx, the formal party is an actual, but ephemeral and contingent, organization that exists during a time of heightened revolutionary activity. In times of counterrevolution, when there is little activity, revolutionaries should maintain loose networks of personal contacts to maintain the continuity of critical theory. These networks he called the historic party. For Camatte, the formal party is now a useless concept, having degenerated into numerous sectarian rackets. Marxists have made a fetish of the formal party. The communist movement can now (since 1968) exist only as a party in the historic sense; the proletariat (humanity) cannot recognize itself in any organized representation.

In "The Wandering of Humanity," "Against Domestication," and "This World We Must Leave" Camatte criticizes marxism in greater depth. Marx had proclaimed in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, "Communism is the riddle of history solved, and it knows itself to be this solution," and described the proletariat as the estate or class that is the negation of itself as of all other classes, because it is the vehicle for the realization of the human community. If communism has been a possibility since the middle of the nineteenth century, then subsequent history can be described as the

frustrated, bloody, and increasingly desperate wandering of humanity away from its own real interests, resulting in the misery and destruction of human beings and nature.

The problem has been defined by marxists as largely one of consciousness, as Camatte points out. A proletariat unconscious of its historical mission cannot succeed in making the communist revolution and remains a mere sociological category. Therefore the correct form of consciousness has to be produced, even if it has to be introduced to the workers from 'outside' (i.e., by revolutionary intellectuals). The German Social Democrats, already veering away from Marx's theoretical rigor, established a workerist consciousness, Socialist ideology, as a goal in itself that became reified in an organization, the Social Democratic Party, the guardian of that consciousness and all it entailed: pride in worker identity and belief in the dignity of labor. Camatte calls marxism repressive consciousness, because it requires that the true, mediate, and historical goal be repressed in favor of immediate appearance and organization.

The Social Democracy became a countersociety in Europe that was eventually absorbed by the dominant society of capital. Lenin and the Bolsheviks compounded the errors of Social Democracy by insisting on a more extreme program of instilling the proletariat and other insurrectional classes with a dogmatic consciousness that served as a mechanism of repression and provided only the illusion of liberation.

As a result of fascism (another workerist ideology), social democracy, and World War II the old proletarian movement was defeated, wage labor became universalized, and the proletariat lost its specificity. The state found it increasingly difficult to enforce universal values owing to the superannuation of the bourgeoisie, and the countersociety lost its unity owing to the diffusion of the proletariat. In this strange post-World War

II society, in which a despotic western capitalism has absorbed and repressed classes, the general equivalent has given way, the center will not hold. Revolt, particularly since the 1960s, has splintered into numerous movements that have drifted ever further from universalism and a critique of the totality. The racketization of consciousness has increased, becoming more specialized, like segments of a consumer market. In Camatte's terminology, repressive consciousness has been superseded by the disintegration of consciousness. As examples he cites the U.S. women's liberation movement, gay liberation, antipsychiatry, and other leftist movements that define themselves only in relation to what they are against. All of these movements grouped around partial demands have lent themselves easily to recuperation by capital's material community.

In his exposition of the development of capitalism and how it has arrived at its present domination of the planet, Camatte uses another theme taken from Marx—the periodization of capital's history into two principal stages, formal domination and real domination over society. Marx had analyzed capitalism's origins as an agricultural revolution which first expropriated human beings from the land, then reduced them to laboring in factories. The first stage of industrial capitalism, which Marx called the formal subsumption of labor under capital, was marked by the continuing predominance of the countryside over the town, the survival of handicraft production, and the dependence of the capitalist's profit on absolute surplus value, determined by the length of the working day. In the second stage, real subsumption, capital and the bourgeois class established definitive control over the production process and the state (early to mid-nineteenth century in Britain), and profit derived principally from relative surplus value brought about through the revolutionizing of technology.

Marx's periodization is a useful model but limited, because it applies only to the production process. In Camatte's version, capital moved on from real domination over the economy and politics (bourgeois society) to real domination over humans in their biological being (material community of capital). Capital has become representation—a point of agreement Camatte has with other theorists such as Debord—and has escaped from human control, including that of the dominant classes. In the West, the period of transition to real domination occurred in the years around World War II and was effected by such movements as fascism and the New Deal. Bourgeois society disappeared but capital thrived and only tightened its grip. The movement toward real domination is an ongoing process. In many parts of the world (India, Africa) capital still reigns only as formal domination, distinct classes continue to exist, and peasant communities still constitute the majority of the population. Russia is an intermediate case, closer to the West, but not fully under the real domination of capital, and China likewise is increasingly moving down the path of real domination.

Camatte criticizes Marx's beliefs that exchange value could not become autonomous by escaping from the law of value and a rigorous general equivalent (i.e., gold), that science and progress could only bring good things, and that communism would be a superior mode of production that would bring about a liberation of productive forces imprisoned by the capitalist mode of production. In fact, Camatte says, capital has developed economic forces of production far beyond what Marx or anyone in the nineteenth century could have dreamed.

It is this identification of progress with development of productive forces in the economy that is one of the most baleful characteristics of marxism and that has made of "socialism" merely a variant of capitalism. When human beings are

seen primarily as producers and laborers, they become nothing but the activity of capital, and the full dimensions of communism as the liberation of human creative capacities cannot be realized. Camatte argues that when Marx talked of capitalism imprisoning productive forces, he was referring to the frustration of human productive forces as much as, or more than, to economic stagnation. Here Camatte, like Bordiga, rejects the theory of capitalist decadence. This theory, originally developed by Rosa Luxemburg and now held by groups such as the International Communist Current, states that capitalism has been, since the early twentieth century, in historical decline as a mode of production capable of furthering progress for humanity. To Camatte, it is absurd to view the reign of capital as ever having been “progressive,” and now “decadent” and in need of replacement by a superior mode of production. Communism is a new way of life in harmony with nature, not a mode of economic production, and it is humanity, not capital, that is decadent.

Marxism, as the ideology of economic development, has a positivistic optimism about science and technology that it shares with frankly pro-capitalist ideologies. This positivism has led it to downplay or ignore the environmental consequences of unlimited growth of productive forces. Industrial production has resulted in countless environmental and human catastrophes—oil and chemical spills, leaks and explosions of toxic gases, nuclear accidents, despoliation of nature, etc.—that have been particularly severe in the former Soviet Union.

Capital has reduced nature and human beings to a state of domestication. The imagination and the libido have been enclosed as surely as the forests, oceans, and common lands. Camatte still uses the word revolution to describe the process of overcoming capital (though elsewhere he criticizes the concept of revolution, saying “Capital...is itself

revolution"). But he sees this revolution not as an overthrow of the capitalist mode of production, but rather as its abandonment. The revolution must take place in a biological dimension and will be a human revolt, not delimited as the dictatorship of a social class. He defends hippies, Yippies (punks too? one wonders), regionalists, vegetarians, and organic agriculture, saying that counterculture groups, although limited in their aims, can unleash a more significant social movement that will supersede them.

In "Echoes of the Past" Camatte discusses various subjects—patriarchy and feminism, Christianity and Islam, nominalism and universalism, and the political right. He expands the concept of the wandering of humanity by projecting it further back in time—not just back to the nineteenth century, but to the sixth century B.C., with the advent of the Greek *polis*. This is the moment (Western civilization) he identifies as the definitive rupture with nature and the triumph of male dominance, although he also points out that this process had already begun long before among peoples practicing pastoralism. Patriarchy as such comes to an end with the victory of capital (i.e., autonomized exchange value), but the society dominated by capital remains male-dominated because patriarchy survives in residual form through its offspring, "phallocracy" (a term used in the discourse of French feminism that is bound to be unfamiliar to most American readers outside academe). Camatte sees the modern feminist movement as one of the results of the failure of the proletarian movement. He credits the feminists with having made valuable contributions to the critique of the left's representation, but criticizes them as well for their tendency to produce yet more representations, which can then be recuperated. The liberation of women within capitalist society gives capital a new lease on life; it can now exploit and distort the capacities of women as it has those of men.

Having blasted marxism and the left at such length, Camatte turns his attention to the right, specifically *la Nouvelle Droite* (“New Right”) in France and its leading intellectual, Alain de Benoist. This movement had its origin as the reaction to May 1968, although it is in fact not as “new” as it claims. It is instead a resuscitation of rightist currents from sixty years or more ago, just as the May uprising reactivated all the important themes of the avant-gardes of the 1920s. Unlike the liberal and leftist antifascists, who simply demonize fascism without making a serious attempt to understand it fully, Camatte recognizes that movements such as fascism and nazism, though certainly antihuman, incorporated tendencies in genuine revolt against the phenomenon of capital and for the restoration of community and reconciliation with nature. These themes are with us still, “echoes of the past,” and the New Right tries to exploit them and channel them into a new, quasi-fascist, representation—the false community of pure ethnic cultures.

De Benoist has affinities with nazism, Romanticism, and Slavophilism but also with various movements usually thought of as left-wing, such as anti-imperialism. He decries the homogenizing force of Americanization and calls for a community, but one embracing only Europe, not the human species. Camatte denies that De Benoist’s thought holds any originality; although De Benoist tries to demonstrate that marxism is unscientific, he owes most of his concepts to Hegel and Marx. His movement stands for a defense of natural inequality. Its rejection of Christianity is actually a rejection of marxism because marxism and (early) Christianity are leveling doctrines with true affinity for each other; marxism is a secularized Christianity painted red. The right imposes the tyranny of elitist privilege, and the left imposes the tyranny of

abstract equality. Fascist movements play both sides of the coin. Camatte concludes, perhaps prematurely, that the New Right has no future either in service to capital or against it.

The writings in this volume date mostly from the 1970s; the most recent is from 1980. The world has undergone tremendous changes since then, especially within the last five or six years, and some of Camatte's statements may now seem dated. Among them: his endorsement of Bordiga's overoptimistic prediction that the communist revolution would be accomplished by the end of the 1970s, and his confidence that "the capitalist system has long since accepted rises in wages." But he does not rule out the possibility of capitalism suffering in the future another economic dislocation as severe as that of 1929.

There are aspects of Camatte's worldview with which one can argue. He is suspicious of the call for the abolition of work, even calling it a "capitalist slogan," because he fears it plays into capital's tendency to rob people of all fulfilling activity and dominate their leisure as much as their work. It seems possible that here Camatte is mistaken, that the zerowork concept, by explicitly opposing the reduction of human beings to pawns of economic production, and fighting for "the right to be lazy," actually makes a significant, perhaps the most significant, gesture against domestication.

Little, if anything, from *Invariance* has been translated into English in the last decade. Those who read French and wish to obtain more recent issues of *Invariance* can reach Jacques Camatte at the following address:

Spiralhêtre—le Segala
46140 Belaye
FRANCE

Thanks to the following people for their help in realizing the publication of Camatte's collected writings: Robby Barnes, Freddie Baer, Bob Black, François Bochet, David Brown, Jim Fleming, Steve Izma, Tad Kepley, David Loneragan, Lorraine Perlman, Henri Simon, Paul Z. Simons, Michael William, and John Zerzan.

Alex Trotter

ON ORGANIZATION

The following letter (dated 04.09.69) led to the dissolution of the group that had begun to form on the basis of the positions set forth in *Invariance*. The letter opened an important area of reflection and debate that has gone on since, certain conclusions of which have already been discussed in "Transition," no. 8, série 1.

Although certain points raised by the letters have been partially dealt with, others have hardly been touched upon. That's why it's necessary—given the importance of making a more clean break with the past—to publish it now. Our publishing it should enable the reader to appreciate the work accomplished thus far, and what still remains to be done.

Since it is simultaneously a break (and thus a conclusion) and a point of departure, the letter contains a certain number of imprecisions, seeds of possible errors. We shall indicate the most important ones in a note. In addition, since it was possible for us then, once we had rejected the group method, to outline "concretely" how to be revolutionaries, our rejection of the small group could have been interpreted as a return to a more or less Stirnerian individualism. As if the only guarantee from now on was going to be the subjectivity cultivated by each individual revolutionary! Not at all. It was necessary to publicly reject a certain perception of social reality and the practice connected with it, since they were a point of departure for the process of racketization. If we therefore withdrew

totally from the groupuscule movement, it was to be able simultaneously to enter into liaison with other revolutionaries who had made an analogous break. Now there is a direct production of revolutionaries who supersede almost immediately the point we were at when we had to make our break. Thus, there is a potential "union" that would be considered if we were not to carry the break with the political point of view to the depths of our individual consciousnesses. Since the essence of politics is fundamentally representation, each group is forever trying to project an impressive image on the social screen. The groups are always explaining how they represent themselves in order to be recognized by certain people as the vanguard for representing others, the class. This is revealed in the famous "what distinguishes us" of various small groups in search of recognition. All delimitation is limitation and often leads rather rapidly to reducing the delimitation to some representative slogans for racketeerist marketing. All political representation is a screen and therefore an obstacle to a fusion of forces. Since representation can occur on the individual as well as the group level, recourse to the former level would be, for us, a repetition of the past. (Camatte, 1972)

Both of us scoff at being popular. Among other things our disgust at any personality cult is evidence of this. I have never permitted anyone to make publicity out of the numerous testimonials of admiration with which they've overwhelmed me in various countries.... When Engels and I first joined the secret society of communists, we did it on the condition *sine qua non* that they repeal all statutes that would be favorable to a cult of authority. [Marx to Blos—10.11.1877, *MEW*. 34, p. 308].

It is possible to avoid the dirt in bourgeois intercourse or in its trade? Dirt is its natural element.... The honest infamy or the infamous honesty of the solvent morality appear to me not a bit superior to the unrespectable infamy which neither the first Christian communities nor the Jacobin club, nor our own deceased League could free themselves of entirely. In bourgeois intercourse, however, you get used to the fact that you lose your sense of respectable infamy or of infamous respectability [Marx to Freiligrath—29.02.1860, *MEW*. 30, p. 492].

The establishment of capital within material existence and therefore within the social community is accompanied by the disappearance of the traditional personal capitalist, the relative, and sometimes absolute, diminution of the proletariat, and the growth of new middle classes. Each human community, no matter how small, is conditioned by the mode of existence of the material community. The present mode of existence derives from the fact that capital is able to valorize itself, therefore exist and develop, only if a particle of it, at the same time that it becomes autonomous, confronts the social ensemble and places itself in relation to the total socialized equivalent, capital. It needs this confrontation (competition, rivalry); it exists only by differentiation. From this point, a social fabric forms based on the competition of rival “organizations” (rackets).

It reproduces a new financial aristocracy, a new variety of parasites in the shape of promoters, speculators and simply nominal directors; a whole system of swindling and cheating by means of corporation promotion, stock issuance, and stock speculation. It is private production

without the control of private property [*Capital* (International Publishers), Vol. III, p. 438].

Expropriation extends here from the direct producers to the smaller and the medium-sized capitalists themselves. It is the point of departure for the capitalist mode of production; its accomplishment is the goal of this production. In the last instance it aims at the expropriation of the means of production from all individuals. With the development of social production, the means of production ceases to be means of private production and products of private production, and can thereafter be only means of production in the hands of associated producers, i.e. the latter's social property, much as they are their social products. However, this expropriation appears within the capitalist system in a contradictory form, as appropriation of social property by a few; credit lends the latter more and more the aspect of pure adventurers [Ibid., pp. 439–440].

As home of the production process (the creation of value), the business enterprise restrains the movement of capital, fixes it at a particular location. It therefore must overcome this stabilization, lose this fixed character. So the propertyless enterprise arises, which still allows for a mystified yield form of surplus value. Here the constant capital is equal to zero, so only a small advance of capital is necessary to get the "business" rolling. Finally, there are even fictitious enterprises, thanks to which the most unchecked speculation develops.

Today, capital constantly appears in the form of an "organization." Behind this word—synonymous, in

the glorious days of labor conflicts, with brotherhood in an open struggle, but now merely a hypocritical fiction about *common interest* among businessmen, administrators, technicians, unskilled workers, robots and watchdogs—behind the inexpressive and anti-mnemonic trademarks of the companies, behind the terms “elements of production” and “stimulation of national revenue,” capital still fulfills its old repulsive function; a function far more unworthy than that of the entrepreneur who personally contributed his intelligence, courage and true pioneering spirit at the dawn of bourgeois society.

The *organization* is not only the modern depersonalized capitalist, but also the capitalist without capital because it doesn't need any....

The business organization has its own plan. It doesn't establish a reliable business firm with assets but a “corporate front” with a fictitious capital.* If anything is paid in advance, it is merely to gain the sympathy of the government agencies which examine bids, proposals, and contracts.

This reveals the falseness of the stupid doctrine that the state or party bureaucracy constitutes a new ruling class which screws proletarians and capitalists alike, a ridiculous hypothesis, easily rejected from a Marxist viewpoint. Today the “specialist” is a beast of prey, the bureaucrat a miserable bootlicker.

The organization differs from the worker commune (a libertarian illusion which cannot be found

* “Fictitious” is from *finto* in the original Italian, which does not correspond to the term “fictitious” in *Capital* but is close to it [translator's note].

within any defined boundaries) in that, in each form, rather than equality of performance in a common work, there is a hierarchy of functions and benefits. It can't be otherwise when the firm has autonomy in the market and must present a profitable balance sheet.

Recent reports from Russia concerning the regional decentralization and enlarged independence of particular concerns show that the trend is towards an explosive extension of the *contract system*, by which the state hires itself out to organizations in all sectors of the economy, organizations which are actual business gangs, with a changing and elusive personnel composition. This is similar to the various greedy forms which characterize the modern construction industry in all contemporary capitalist systems [A. Bordiga, "The Economic and Social Structure in Russia Today" in *il programma comunista*, no. 7, 1957. Edition de L'oubli 1975, pp. 230–31].

Not only does the state hire itself out to gangs, but it becomes a gang (racket) itself. Nevertheless, it still plays the role of mediator.

Absolute monarchy (which itself is already a product of the growing bourgeois wealth and develops to a point where it becomes incompatible with the old feudal relations) necessitates in a determinate way a general power that affirms itself through egalitarian forms. The absolute monarchy must be able to exercise this power on all points of the periphery; it needs this power as the material lever of the general equivalent; of the wealth that becomes increasingly effective and powerful in its forms and increasingly inde-

pendent from all special, local, natural, individual relations [K. Marx, *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie* (Europäische Verlagsanstalt, Frankfurt) p. 873].

The state appeared in its pure form, with the power of the general equivalent, at the time of the growth of the law of value in the period of simple commodity production. In the phase of formal domination of capital, when capital had not yet dominated the law of value, the state was a mediator between capital and [i] both remained of prior modes of production and the proletariat itself. The credit system was still undeveloped and had not yet given rise, on a large scale, to fictitious capital. Capital still needed a rigid gold standard. With the passage to real domination, capital created its own general equivalent, which couldn't be as rigid as it had been in the period of simple circulation. The state itself had to lose its rigidity and become a gang mediating between different gangs and between the total capital and particular capitals.

We can see the same sort of transformation in the political sphere. The central committee of a party or the center of any sort of regroupment plays the same role as the state. Democratic centralism only managed to mimic the parliamentary form characteristic of formal domination. And organic centralism, affirmed merely in a negative fashion, as refusal of democracy and its form (subjugation of the minority to the majority, votes, congresses, etc.) actually just gets trapped again in the more modern forms. This results in the mystique of organization (as with fascism). This was how the PCI (International Communist Party) evolved into a gang.

The proletariat having been destroyed, this tendency of

[i] unclear in original copy of translation.

capital encounters no real opposition in society and so can produce itself all the more efficiently. The proletariat's real essence has been denied and it exists only as an object of capital. Similarly, the theory of the proletariat, marxism, has been destroyed, Kautsky first revising it and then Bernstein liquidating it. This occurred in a definitive manner, for no assault of the proletariat has succeeded since then in reestablishing marxism. This is only another way of saying that capital has succeeded in establishing its real domination. To accomplish this, capital had to absorb the movement that negates it, the proletariat, and establish a unity in which the proletariat is merely an object of capital. This unity can be destroyed only by a crisis, such as those described by Marx. It follows that all forms of working-class political organization have disappeared. In their place, gangs confront one another in an obscene competition, veritable rackets rivaling each other in what they peddle but identical in their essence.

The existence of the gangs derives therefore from the tendency of capital to absorb its contradictions, from its movement of negation and from its reproduction in a fictitious form. Capital denies, or tends to deny, the basic principles on which it erects itself; but, in reality, it revives them under a fictitious form. The gang is a clear expression of this duality:

the boss who commands = caricature of
the traditional individual (and his clique)

the collective form = caricature of com-
munity based on common interests

The movement of negation is thus reabsorbed in the gang, which is the realization of appearance. The gang also fulfills another requirement of capital: it replaces all natural or human

presuppositions with presuppositions determined by capital.

In its external relations, the political gang tends to mask the existence of the clique, since it must seduce in order to recruit. It adorns itself in a veil of modesty so as to increase its power. When the gang appeals to external elements through journals, reviews, and leaflets, it thinks that it has to speak on the level of the mass in order to be understood. It talks about the immediate because it wants to mediate. Considering everyone outside the gang an imbecile, it feels obliged to publish banalities and bullshit so as to successfully seduce them. In the end, it seduces itself by its own bullshit and it is thereby absorbed by the surrounding milieu. However, another gang will take its place, and its first theoretical wailings will consist of attributing every misdeed and mistake to those who have preceded it, looking in this way for a new language so as to begin again the grand practice of seduction; in order to seduce, it has to appear to be different from the others.

Once within the gang (or any type of business) the individual is tied to it by all the psychological dependencies of capitalist society. If he shows any capacities they are exploited immediately without the individual having had a chance to master the "theory" that he has accepted. In exchange, he is given a position in the ruling clique, he is made a petty leader. If he fails to show capacities, an exchange takes place all the same; between his admission to the gang and his duty to diffuse its position. Even in those groups that want to escape the social givens, the gang mechanism nevertheless tends to prevail because of the different degrees of theoretical development among the members who make up the grouping. The inability to confront theoretical questions independently leads the individual to take refuge behind the authority of another member, who becomes, objectively, a leader, or behind the group entity, which becomes a gang. In his relations with peo-

ple outside the group the individual uses his membership to exclude others and to differentiate himself from them, if only—in the final analysis—so as to guard himself against recognition of his own theoretical weaknesses. To belong in order to exclude, that is the internal dynamic of the gang; which is founded on an opposition, admitted or not, between the exterior and the interior of the group. Even an informal group deteriorates into a political racket, the classic case of theory becoming ideology.

The desire to belong to a gang comes from the wish to be identified with a group that embodies a certain degree of prestige, theoretical prestige for intellectuals and organizational prestige for so-called practical men. Commercial logic also enters into “theoretical” formation. With a growing mass of ideological commodity-capital to realize, it becomes necessary to create a deep motivation so people will buy commodities. For this the best motivation is: learn more, read more, in order to be above, in order to be different from the mass. Prestige and exclusion are the signs of competition in all its forms; and so also among these gangs, which must vaunt their originality, their prestige, in order to attract notice. This is why the cult of the organization and the glorification of the peculiarities of the gang develop. From that point on, it’s no longer a question of defending a “theory,” but of preserving an organizational tradition (cf. the PCI and its idolatry of the Italian left).**

** Amadeo Bordiga and the theoreticians close to him were known as the Italian communist left. More precisely, “the Italian left” refers to the Italian left-communist tradition: the left opposition in the Italian Socialist Party (1910/12, 1921), the direction of the Communist Party of Italy (1921-24), the left opposition in the Communist Party of Italy (1924-26), the left-communist fraction in Belgium and France (*Bilan* and *Prometeo*: 1926-43), the reconstruction of Italian left communism (*Battaglia Comunista*, *Prometeo* 1944-52), and the International

Theory is also often acquired for use in political maneuvering, for example, for supporting one's attempt to gain a leadership position or for justifying the removal of a current leader.

The interior-exterior opposition and the gang structure develop the spirit of competition to the maximum. Given the differences of theoretical knowledge among the members, the acquisition of theory becomes, in effect, an element of political natural selection, a euphemism for division of labor. While one is, on the one hand, theorizing about existing society, on the other, within the group, under the pretext of negating it, an unbridled emulation is introduced that ends up in a hierarchization even more extreme than in society-at-large; especially as the interior-exterior opposition is reproduced internally in the division between the center of the gang and the mass of militants.

The political gang attains its perfection in those groups that claim to want to supersede existing social forms (forms such as the cult of the individual, of the leader, and of democracy). In practice, anonymity—understood simply as anti-individualism—means unbridled exploitation of the gang members to the profit of the direction clique, which gains prestige from everything the gang produces. And organic centralism becomes the practice of hypocrisy, since the double-dealing that one finds in those groups that lay claim to democratic centralism occurs anyway, in spite of the denial that it's going on.

What maintains an apparent unity in the bosom of the gang is the threat of exclusion. Those who do not respect the norms are rejected with calumny; and even if they quit, the effect is the same. This threat also serves as psychological blackmail for those who remain. This same process appears in different ways in different types of gangs.

Communist Party (*il programma comunista*: 1952-70; Bordiga died in 1970). [Translator's note]

In the business gang, modern form of the enterprise, the individual is kicked out and finds himself in the streets.

In the youth gang, the individual is beaten up or killed. Here, where we find revolt in its raw form, delinquency; the lone individual is weak, lacks protection, and so is forced to join a gang.

In the political gang, the individual is rejected with calumny, which is nothing but the sublimation of assassination. The calumny justifies his exclusion, or is used to force him to leave "of his own free will."

In reality, of course, the different methods cross from one type of gang to another. There are murders linked to business deals just as there are settlements of account that result in murder.

Thus, capitalism is the triumph of the organization, and the form the organization takes is the gang. This is the triumph of fascism. In the United States the racket is found at all levels of society. It's the same in USSR. The theory of hierarchical bureaucratic capitalism, in the formal sense, is an absurdity, since the gang is an informal organism.

An alternative at the theoretical level is the exaltation of discipline, the demand for the purity of the militant (cf. the group "Rivoluzione comunista," which broke with the PCI in 1964 on the question of the creation of a true elite of militants who would do nothing but bring back to life the positions of "ultrabolshevism" that Lukacs saw as the alternative to the opportunist mass party, which the German Communist Party had become in the space of two years (cf. "Towards a Methodology of the Problem of Organization" in *History and Class Consciousness*). This is like saying that on the level of sexual life the alternative to the decay of values is asceticism. Besides, in abstracting itself from reality, this view creates a gulf between theory and practice.

All this expresses the growing separation of the individual

from the human community, poverty in Marx's sense. The formation of the gang is the constitution of an illusory community. In the case of the youth gang, it is the result of fixation on the elementary instinct of revolt in its immediate form. The political gang, on the contrary, wants to hold up its illusory community as a model for the whole society. This is utopian behavior without any real base. The utopians hoped that through emulation all humanity would eventually be included in the communities they created but these communities were all absorbed by capital. So this line from the inaugural address of the First International is more valid than ever: "The emancipation of the workers must be the task of the workers themselves."

At the present time the proletariat either prefigures communist society and realizes communist theory or it remains part of existing society. The May movement was the beginning of this prefiguration. It follows from what has been said that the proletariat can in no way recognize itself in any organization since it already suffers them in other forms. The May movement clearly demonstrates this.

With the proletariat broken, its immediate form of existence is the process of capital itself. The workers' parties in Marx's time were produced by the immediate movement of the proletariat of that period. Their fate was to play the bourgeois parliamentary game. Today, now that the apparent community-in-the-sky of politic constituted by parliaments and their parties has been effaced by capital's development, the "organizations" that claim to be proletarian are simply gangs or cliques which, through the mediation of the state, play the same role as all the other groups that are directly in the service of capital. This is the groupuscule phase. In Marx's time the supersession of the sects was to be found in the unity of the workers' movement. Today, the parties, these groupuscules, manifest not merely a lack of unity but the absence of class struggle. They argue over

the remains of the proletariat. They theorize about the proletariat in the immediate reality and oppose themselves to its movement. In this sense they realize the stabilization requirements of capital. The proletariat, therefore, instead of having to supersede them, needs to destroy them.

The critique of capital ought to be, therefore, a critique of the racket in all its forms, of capital as social organism; capital becomes the real life of the individual and his mode of being with others (cf. on this subject: Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man* and Galbraith, *The New Industrial State*). The theory which criticizes the racket cannot reproduce it. The consequence of this is refusal of all group life; it's either this or the illusion of community. On this subject, we can take up again Engels's critique given at the congress of Sonvillers. What he said at the time about the International applies today to a group. It can be summed up as follows: In Marx's time the proletariat couldn't go as far as negating itself—in the sense that during the course of the revolution it had to set itself up as the dominant class: 1848, 1871, 1917. There was a definitive separation between the formal party and the historic party. Today the party can only be the historic party. Any formal movement is the reproduction of this society, and the proletariat is essentially *outside of it*. A group can in no way pretend to realize community without taking the place of the proletariat, which alone can do it. Such an attempt introduces a distortion that engenders theoretical ambiguity and practical hypocrisy. It is not enough to develop the critique of capital, nor even to affirm that there are no organizational links; it's necessary to avoid reproducing the gang structure, since it is the spontaneous product of the society. This ought to be the basis of the critique of the Italian left and of our mode of existence since the break with the PCI.

The revolutionary must not identify himself with a group

but recognize himself in a theory that does not depend on a group or on a review, because it is the expression of an existing class struggle. This is actually the correct sense in which anonymity is posed rather than as the negation of the individual (which capitalist society itself brings about). Accord, therefore, is around a work that is in process and needs to be developed. This is why theoretical knowledge and the desire for theoretical development are absolutely necessary if the professor-student relation—another form of the mind-matter, leader-mass contradiction—is not to be repeated and revive the practice of following. Moreover, the desire for theoretical development must realize itself in an autonomous and personal fashion and not by way of a group that sets itself up as a kind of diaphragm between the individual and the theory.

It is necessary to return to Marx's attitude toward all groups in order to understand why the break with the gang practice ought to be made:

—refuse to reconstitute a group, even an informal one (cf. The Marx-Engels correspondence, various works on the revolution of 1848, and pamphlets such as "The Great Men of Exile," 1852).

—maintain a network of personal contacts with people having realized (or in the process of doing so) the highest degree of theoretical knowledge: antifollowerism, antipedagogy; the party in its historical sense is not a school.¹

¹ To talk of reassuming again an attitude adopted by Marx at a certain moment of his revolutionary activity resulted from a profound failure to understand that the phase of capital's formal domination has been completed. Marx had to take a position only valid for that period. Furthermore, his theoretical position on the subject of the party is not as rigid as the letter indicates here. What is even less acceptable in

Marx's activity was always that of revealing the real movement that leads to communism and of defending the gains of the proletariat in its struggle against capital. Hence, Marx's position in 1871 in revealing the "impossible action"

the above assertions is that they could lead to a new theory of consciousness coming from the outside by way of an elitist theory of the development of the revolutionary movement.

The refusal of all organization is not a simple antiorganizational position. To leave it at that would be to again manifest a desire for originality, to try to set oneself up as different and thereby reach a position from which to attract people. From there the movement of racketization would begin all over ain.

Our position on the dissolution of groups derives from the study of the becoming of the capitalist mode of production on one hand, and our characterization of the May movement on the other. We are deeply convinced that the revolutionary phenomenon is in motion and that, as always, consciousness follows action. This means that in the vast movement of rebellion against capital, revolutionaries are going to adopt a definite behavior—which will not be acquired all at once—compatible with the decisive and determinative struggle against *capital*.

We can preview the content of such an "organization." It will combine the aspiration to human community and to individual affirmation, which is the distinguishing feature of the current revolutionary phase. It will aim toward the reconciliation of man with nature, the communist revolution being also a revolt of nature (i.e., against capital; moreover, it is only through a new relation with nature) that we will be able to survive, and avert the second of the two alternatives we face today: communism or the destruction of the human species.

In order to better understand this becoming organizational, so as to facilitate it without inhibiting whatever it may be, it is important to reject all old forms and to enter, without *a priori* principles, the vast movement of our liberation, which develops on a world scale. It is necessary to eliminate anything that could be an obstacle to the revo-

of the Paris Commune or declaring that the First International was not the child of either a theory or a sect. It is necessary to do the same now. Those who wish to enter in liaison with the work set forth in this review in order to develop it and ensure a more detailed, precise, and lucid exposition, ought to direct their relations along the lines indicated above in the discussion of Marx's work. Failing to do this, they will relapse into the gang practice.

It follows from this that it is also necessary to develop a critique of the Italian communist left's conception of "program." That this notion of "communist program" has never been sufficiently clarified is demonstrated by the fact that, at a certain point, the Martov-Lenin debate resurfaced at the heart of the left. The polemic was already the result of the fact that Marx's conception of revolutionary theory had been destroyed, and it reflected a complete separation between the concepts of theory and practice. For the proletariat, in Marx's sense, the class struggle is simultaneously production and radicalization of consciousness. The critique of capital expresses a consciousness already produced by the class struggle and anticipates its future. For Marx and Engels, proletarian movement = theory = communism.

Mr. Heinzen imagines communism to be a certain *doctrine* which springs from a definite theoretical principle as its *nucleus* and draws further consequences from it. Mr. Heinzen is very wrong.

lutionary movement. In given circumstances and in the course of specific actions, the revolutionary current will be structured and will structure itself not only passively, spontaneously, but by always directing the effort toward how to realize the true *Gemeinwesen* (human essence) and the social man, which implies the reconciliation of men with nature (Camatte, 1972).

Communism is not a doctrine but a *movement* springing from facts rather than principles. Communists presuppose not such and such a philosophy but all past history and, above all, its actual and effective results in the civilized countries.... In so far as communism is a theory, it is the theoretical expression of the situation of the proletariat in its struggle and the theoretical summary of the conditions of the liberation of the proletariat [F. Engels, "The communists and Karl Heinzen" Article 2, *MEW* 4, pp. 321–322].

Actually, the problem of consciousness coming from the outside did not exist for Marx. There wasn't any question of the development of militants, of activism or of academicism. Likewise, the problematic of the self-education of the masses, in the sense of the council communists (false disciples of R. Luxemburg and authentic disciples of pedagogic reformism) did not arise for Marx. R. Luxemburg's theory of the class movement, which from the start of the struggle finds within itself the conditions for its radicalization, is closest to Marx's position (cf. her position on the "creativity of the masses," beyond its immediate existence).

This shows the necessity of superseding the bourgeois form of perceiving and conceiving social reality and taking up again, as Marx did, Hegel's demonstration of the mediate character of any form of immediacy. For it is characteristic of "scientific" thought to accept the immediate fact as the real object of knowledge without perceiving and conceiving the mediation that underlies it. It is on the basis of such gnoseology that in capitalist society social appearance becomes reality and vice-versa. The real being of the proletariat is hidden and the class is perceived in its apparent form of life. This is what gives to the problem of consciousness coming from the out-

side and the fact that when the proletariat manifests its true being (1905–1917), everyone is left stupefied, dumbfounded.

The Italian communist left, in spite of its more acute capacities in the domain of the theory of the proletariat, did not in 1950 make a definitive break with its past (1919–1926). Its critique of trotskyism, of council communism, etc., did not achieve the integral restoration of Marx's notions of the party and of the proletariat. Because of this, its official position and its real essence oscillated between a conception of program as a "marxist school" and a trotskyist-brand petty activism. This second aspect became dominant after 1960 due to the fact that a clique of gangsters totally foreign to the theory and to the proletariat took possession of the "school," thanks above all to its continuing ambiguity on some problems of vital importance: the union question and the notion of "vanguard of proletariat," which was actually rejected in acts and in official discussion but which persisted in the official canon of the party. It was then that the Martov-Lenin debate on the question of organization was resurrected, which demonstrated that this current was definitely dead, and led to its third-class funeral during May '68.

It should be noted that since we left the PCI we have tried to remove the ambiguity discussed by our doing our best to reveal the positive aspects of the left. This only resulted in our cultivating the left and becoming its most extreme expression (cf. the articles of *Invariance*). And this led us to fall back into a group practice. Although we considered our group "informal," it carried with it the inevitable tendency of substituting itself for the proletariat. It is no longer a question of arguing about accommodation in the heart of the left but of recognizing that if there has been accommodation, it is because even from the start the theory wasn't integrally a theory of the proletariat. Thus it is no longer adequate to say that the creation

of the party in 1943 was premature; it's necessary to say that it was an absurdity. Accordingly, it's necessary to break with our past and return to Marx's position.

This letter has been written not so much as a definitive and exhaustive treatment of the theme discussed; it is intended as a break with the "whole" group past. The signatures that follow are intended to emphasize this break and do not indicate that we have dropped our previous position on the subject of anonymity.

Jacques Camatte

Gianni Collu

Translated by Edizioni International,

Savona, Italy

THE WANDERING OF HUMANITY

I.

THE WANDERING OF HUMANITY REPRESSIVE CONSCIOUSNESS COMMUNISM

1. Despotism of Capital

When capital achieves real domination over society, it becomes a material community, overcoming value and the law of value, which survive only as something “overcome.” Capital accomplishes this in two ways: 1) the quantity of labor included in the product-capital diminishes enormously (devalorization); 2) the exchange relation tends increasingly to disappear, first from the wage relation, then from all economic transactions. Capital, which originally depended on the wage relation, becomes a despot. When there is value it is assigned by capital.

Capital is capital in process. It acquired this attribute with the rise of fictive capital, when the opposition valorization/devalorization still had meaning, when capital had not yet really overcome the law of value.

Capital in process is capital in constant movement; it capitalizes everything, assimilates everything, and makes it its own substance. Having become autonomous, it is “reified form” in movement. It becomes intangible. It revitalizes its being—that vast metabolism which absorbs ancient exchanges

or reduces them to exchanges of a biological type—by despoiling all human beings in their varied activities, however fragmented these may be (this is why capital pushes human beings to engage in the most diverse activities). It is humanity that is exploited. More than ever the expression “exploitation of man by man” becomes repulsive.

In its perfected state, capital is representation. Its rise to this state is due to its anthropomorphization, namely to its capitalization of human beings,¹ and to its supersession of the old general equivalent, gold. Capital needs an ideal representation, since a representation with substance inhibits its process. Gold, if it is not totally demonetized, can no longer play the role of standard. Capitalized human activity becomes the standard of capital, until even this dependence on value and its law begin to disappear completely. This presupposes the integration of human beings in the process of capital and the integration of capital in the minds of human beings.

Capital becomes representation through the following historical movement: exchange value becomes autonomous, human beings are expropriated, human activity is reduced to labor, and labor is reduced to abstract labor. This takes place when capital rises on the foundation of the law of value. Capital becomes autonomous by domesticating the human being. After analyzing-dissecting-fragmenting the human being, capital reconstructs the human being as a function of its process. The rupture of the body from the mind made possible the transformation of the mind into a computer which can be programmed by the laws of capital. Precisely because of their mental capacities, human beings are not only enslaved, but turned into willing slaves of capital. What seems like the

¹ This does not exclude an opposite movement: capital forces human beings to be human.

greatest paradox is that capital itself reintroduces subjectivity, which had been eliminated at the time of the rise of exchange value. All human activity is exploited by capital. We can rephrase Marx's statement, "Labor, by adding a new value to the old one, at the same time maintains and eternizes [capital]"² to say: all human activity "eternizes" capital.

Capital as representation overcomes the old contradiction between monopoly and competition. Every quantum of capital tends to become a totality; competition operates between the various capitals, each of which tends to become the totality. Production and circulation are unified; the ancient opposition between use value and exchange value loses its *raison d'être*. Besides, consumption is the utilization of not only material products but mostly representations that increasingly structure human beings as beings of capital and revitalize capital as the general representation. Prices no longer have the function they had in the period of formal domination of capital, when they were representations of value; they become mere indices or signs of representations of capital. Free goods are not impossible. Capital could assign a specific quantity of its products to each programmed individual; this quantity might depend on the required activity imposed on this individual. Such a despotism would be more powerful than the present one. Human beings would wish they had the money that had "given" them free access to the diversity of products.

During its development capital always tended to negate classes. This has finally been accomplished through the universalization of wage labor and the formation—as a transitional stage—of what is called the universal class, a mere collection of proletarianized men and women, a collection of slaves of capital. Capital achieved complete domination by mystifying the

² Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, London: Pelican, 1973, p. 365.

demands of the classical proletariat, by dominating the proletariat as productive laborer. But by achieving domination through the mediation of labor, capital brought about the disappearance of classes, since the capitalist as a person was simultaneously eliminated.³ The State becomes society when the wage relation is transformed into a relation of constraint, into a statist relation. At the same time the State becomes an enterprise or racket that mediates between the different gangs of capital.

Bourgeois society has been destroyed and we have the despotism of capital. Class conflicts are replaced by struggles between the gangs-organizations which are the varied modes of being of capital. As a result of the domination of representation, all organizations that want to oppose capital are engulfed by it; they are consumed by phagocytes.

It is the real end of democracy. One can no longer hold that there is a class which *represents* future humanity, and *a fortiori* there is no party, no group; there can be no delegation of power. Advertising crassly reflects the fact that capital is representation, that it survives because it is representation in the mind of each human being (internalizing what was externalized). Advertising is the discourse of capital:⁴ everything is possible, all norms have disappeared. Advertising organizes the subversion of the present for the sake of an apparently different future.

We now face the problem of letting the average American feel moral when he flirts, when he spends,

³ Here we see a convergence with the Asiatic mode of production, where classes could never become autonomous; in the capitalist mode of production they are absorbed.

⁴ See the book of D. Verres, *Le discours du capitalisme*, Ed. L'Herne. Interesting material will also be found in the works of Baudrillard: *Le système des objets* and *Pour une critique de l'économie politique du signe*, Ed. Gallimard.

even when he buys a second or third car. One of the basic problems of this prosperity is to give people sanction and justification to enjoy it, to show them that making their lives a pleasure is moral and not immoral. This permission given to the consumer to freely enjoy life, this demonstration that he has a right to surround himself with products that enrich his existence and give him pleasure, should be one of the main themes of all advertising and of every project designed to increase sales.⁵

The disintegration of consciousness that can be seen in manifestations like the women's liberation movement, the gay liberation movement and antipsychiatry (which are only possible after the work of Freud, Reich, and the feminist movement at the beginning of this century) is not part of the simultaneous emergence of revolutionary consciousness, but only reflects the end of bourgeois society based on value, on a fixed standard which affected all levels of human life. The disintegration began when the general equivalent conflicted with circulation. If the former general equivalent gave way, it was lost. The State had to force all subjects to respect a normalcy based on a standard which established the values of society. The law of value imprisoned human beings, forcing them into stereotypes, into fixed modes of being. The highest development of morality appeared in Kant's categorical imperative. By engulfing the general equivalent, by becoming its own representation, capital removed the prohibitions and rigid schemas. At that point human beings are fixed to its movement, which can take off from the normal or abnormal, moral or immoral human being.

⁵ Dichter, cited by Baudrillard in *Le système des objets*, pp. 218–219.

The finite, limited human being, the individual of bourgeois society, is disappearing. People are passionately calling for the liberated human being, a being who is at once a social being and a *Gemeinwesen*. But at present it is capital that is recomposing man, giving him form and matter; communal being comes in the form of collective worker, individuality in the form of consumer of capital. Since capital is indefinite it allows the human being to have access to a state beyond the finite in an infinite becoming of appropriation which is never realized, renewing at every instant the illusion of total blossoming.

The human being in the image of capital ceases to consider any event definitive, but as an instant in an infinite process. Enjoyment is allowed but is never possible. Man becomes a sensual and passive voyeur, capital a sensual and suprasensual being. Human life ceases to be a process and becomes linear. Aspired by the process of capital, man can no longer be "himself." This aspiration evacuates him, creating a vacuum which he must continually satisfy with representations (capital). More generally, capital in process secures its domination by making every process linear. Thus it breaks the movement of nature, and this leads to the destruction of nature. But if this destruction might endanger its own process, capital adapts itself to nature (by antipollution, for example).

The nonliving becomes autonomous—and triumphs. Death in life: Hegel had intuited it, Nietzsche described it, Rainer Maria Rilke sang about it, Freud almost institutionalized it (the death instinct), Dada exhibited it as buffoon art, and the "fascists" exalted it: "Long live death." The U.S. feminist movement has individualized it: "The male likes death—it excites him sexually and, already dead inside, he wants to die."⁶

⁶ Valerie Solanas, *The SCUM Manifesto* (The Society for Cutting Up Men), New York: Olympia Press, 1970.

The autonomy of form affects all aspects of life dominated by capital. Knowledge is valid only if it is formalized, if it is emptied of content. Absolute knowledge is tautology realized; it is dead form deployed over all knowledge. Science is its systemization; epistemology is its redundancy.

In the era of its real domination, capital has run away (as the cyberneticians put it), it has escaped.⁷ It is no longer controlled by human beings. (Human beings in the form of proletarians might, at least passively, represent a barrier to capital.) It is no longer limited by nature. Some production processes carried out over periods of time lead to clashes with natural barriers: increase in the number of human beings, destruction

⁷ We analyzed the autonomization of capital in *Le VIe chapitre inédit du Capital et l'oeuvre économique de Marx* (1966), particularly in the notes added in 1972.

In a future article we will analyze this subject more thoroughly by showing that Marx had raised the problem without recognizing it in its totality, and by analyzing the capitalist mode of production of today. This will also lead us to define labor and its role in the development of humanity. G. Brulé already began such an analysis in his article in *Invariance* No. 2, Série II: "Le travail, le travail productif et les mythes de la classe ouvrière et de la classe moyenne." (Labor, productive labor and the myths of the working class and the middle class).

In general we can only say that the concept of labor is reductive: it encompasses only one part of human activity. But the call for its abolition is a call for the destruction of this remainder of activity, which is a utopian demand of capital. The project of communism inserts itself into the context of human life, activity being no more than a modality of expression. Love, meditation, day-dreaming, play, and other manifestations of human beings are placed outside the field of life when we trap ourselves within the concept of labor. Marx defined labor as an activity that transforms nature or matter for one or another purpose, but the concept of nature can no longer be accept-

of nature, pollution. But these barriers cannot be theoretically regarded as barriers which capital cannot supersede. At present there are three possible courses for the capitalist mode of production (in addition to the destruction of humanity—a hypothesis that cannot be ignored):

—complete autonomy of capital: a mechanistic utopia where human beings become simple accessories of an automated system, though still retaining an executive role;

—mutation of the human being, or rather a change of the species: production of a perfectly programmable being which has lost all the characteristics of the species *Homo sapiens*. This would not require an automatized system, since this perfect human being would be made to do whatever is required;

ed as it is. In the period of domination of capital, the human being is no longer in contact with nature (especially during work). Between nature and the individual lies capital. Capital becomes nature.

On the other hand, in his so-called philosophical works, Marx clearly refers to all human activity and asserts that communism cannot be reduced to the liberation of labor. This position does not completely disappear from the rest of Marx's works, and survives alongside the "revolutionary reformist" conception expressed in *Capital*. For the marxists the problem is subsequently simplified: they exalt labor, pure and simple. In Trotsky's work, for example, there is no longer a trace of Marx's complex analysis, but rather a display of the language of domestication, the language of capital: "The entire history of humanity is a history of the organization and education of social man for labor, with a view to obtain from him greater productivity" (*Terrorism and Communism* [French ed.: Paris: Ed. 10/18, 1963, p. 218]).

—generalized lunacy: in the place of human beings, and on the basis of their present limitations, capital realizes everything they desire (normal or abnormal), but human beings cannot find themselves and enjoyment continually lies in the future. The human being is carried off in the runaway of capital, and keeps it going.⁸

The result is ultimately the same: the evolution of the human being is frozen, sooner in one case than in another. These possibilities are abstract limits; in reality they tend to unfold simultaneously and in a contradictory manner. To continue on its indefinite course, capital is forced to call on the activity of human beings, to exalt their creativity. And to secure its permanence, capital has to act quickly. It runs into barriers of time and space that are linked to the decrease of natural resources (which cannot all be replaced by synthetic substitutes) and the mad increase of human population (which causes the disappearance of numerous forms of life).

It becomes clear that raising the banner of labor or its abolition remains on the terrain of capital, within the framework of its evolution. Even the movement toward unlimited generalization of desire is isomorphic to the indefinite movement of capital.

The capitalist mode of production is not decadent and cannot be decadent. Bourgeois society disintegrated, to be sure, but this did not lead to communism. At most we can say that communism was affirmed in opposition to bourgeois society, but not in opposition to capital. The runaway of capital was not perceived; in fact this runaway was realized only with

⁸This possibility is described and exalted in *Future Shock* by Alvin Toffler.

the rise of the fascist, Nazi, popular front movements, the New Deal, etc., movements which are transitions from formal to real domination. It was thought that communism was emerging from the socialization of human activity and thus from the destruction of private property, while in fact capital was emerging as a material community.

2. GROWTH OF PRODUCTIVE FORCES; DOMESTICATION OF HUMAN BEINGS

The capitalist mode of production becomes decadent only with the outbreak of effective revolution against capital. As of now, human beings have been decaying for a century, they have been domesticated by capital. This domestication is the source of the proletariat's inability to liberate humanity. Productive forces continue to grow, but these are forces of capital. "Capitalist production develops technique and the combination of the social production process only by simultaneously using up the two sources from which all wealth springs: the land and the laborer."⁹

It makes no sense to proclaim that humanity's productive forces have stopped growing, that the capitalist mode of production has begun to decay. Such views reveal the inability of many theoreticians to recognize the runaway of capital and thus to understand communism and the communist revolution. Paradoxically, Marx analyzed the decomposition of bourgeois society and the conditions for the development of the capitalist mode of production: a society where productive forces could develop freely. What he presented as the project of communism was realized by capital. Marx

⁹ Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I [*Le Capital*, L. 1, t. 2, p. 182.]

elaborated a dialectic of the development of productive forces.¹⁰ He held that human emancipation depended on their fullest expansion. Communist revolution—therefore the end of the capitalist mode of production—was to take place when this mode of production was no longer “large enough” to contain the productive forces. But Marx is trapped in an ambiguity. He thinks that the human being is a barrier to capital, and that capital destroys the human being as a fetter to its development as productive power. Marx also suggests that capital can escape from the human barrier. He is led to postulate a self-negation of capital. This self-negation takes the form of crises, which he perceived either as moments when capital is restructured (a regeneration carried out by the destruction of products inhibiting the process: another reason why capitalism must disappear), or as the actual moment when capital is destroyed.

In other words, while providing the elements necessary for understanding the real domination of capital over society, Marx did not develop the concept; he did not recognize the runaway of capital. For Marx, gold remained a barrier to capital, the contradiction between valorization and devalorization remained in force, and the plunder and estrangement of proletarians remained an obstacle to the evolution of capital.

¹⁰ This requires a detailed study that would include the analysis of labor. In the article that follows we begin this study: it presents the first conclusions we've reached. In particular we want to analyze the stage of this decadence of humanity, how it is expressed, etc. In addition we want to show the intimate connection between the movement of value and the dialectic of the productive forces. The end of the movement of value and of capital is the end of a mode of representation and destroys its autonomy. The Marxian dialectic will be completely overcome.

In the development of productive forces there comes a stage when productive forces and means of intercourse are brought into being, which, under the existing relationships, only cause mischief, and are no longer productive but destructive forces (machinery and money)... [*Before continuing the citation, we should mention the retardation of those who proclaim that capital now develops only destructive forces. It turns out that for Marx, in 1847 capital is destruction; he continued to hold this view.*] ...and connected with this a class is called forth, which has to bear all the burdens of society without enjoying its advantages, which, ousted from society, is forced into the most decided antagonism to all other classes; a class which forms the majority of all members of society, and from which emanates the consciousness of the necessity of a fundamental revolution, the communist consciousness, which may, of course, arise among the other classes too through the contemplation of the situation of this class.¹¹

The proletariat is the great hope of Marx and of the revolutionaries of his epoch. This is the class whose struggle for emancipation will liberate all humanity. Marx's work is at once an analysis of the capitalist mode of production and of the proletariat's role within it. This is why the theory of value and the theory of the proletariat are connected, though not directly:

The above application of the Ricardian theory, that the entire social product belongs to the workers as

¹¹ Engels, Marx, *The German Ideology*, (Moscow, 1964, p. 85).

their product, because they are the sole real producers, leads directly to communism. But, as Marx indicates too in the above-quoted passage, formally it is economically incorrect, for it is simply an application of morality to economics. According to the laws of bourgeois economics, the greatest part of the product does not belong to the workers who have produced it. If we now say: that is unjust, that ought not to be so, then that has nothing immediately to do with economics. We are merely saying that this economic fact is in contradiction to our sense of morality. Marx, therefore, never based his communist demands upon this, but upon the inevitable collapse of the capitalist mode of production which is daily taking place before our eyes to an ever greater degree....¹²

Marx did not develop a philosophy of exploitation, as Bordiga often recalled. How will the capitalist mode of production be destroyed, and what does the "ruin" consist of? (Engels, in 1884, provided arguments for those who today speak of the decadence of capitalism.) This is not specified. After Marx the proletariat was retained as the class necessary for the final destruction, the definitive abolition of capitalism, and it was taken for granted that the proletariat would be forced to do this.

Bernstein grasped this aspect of Marx's theory, and applied himself to demonstrating that there were no contradictions pushing toward dissolution.¹³ But this led Bernstein to become an apologist for the old bourgeois society that capital

¹² Engels, "Preface" to *The Poverty of Philosophy* by Marx, New York: 1963, p. 11.

¹³ See particularly "The Movement of Income in Modern Society"

was about to destroy, especially after 1913; consequently his work does not in any way clarify the present situation.

Marx left us material with which to overcome the theory of value, and also material necessary for overcoming the theory of the proletariat. The two theories are related, and justify each other. In the *Grundrisse*, Marx praises the capitalist mode of production, which he considers revolutionary. What is not stated explicitly is that the proletariat has this attribute to the extent that it carries out the internal laws of capitalism. The proletariat is present in the analysis. Marx postulates that the proletariat's misery will necessarily push it to revolt, to destroy the capitalist mode of production and thus to liberate whatever is progressive in this mode of production, namely the tendency to expand productive forces.

In *Capital* the proletariat is no longer treated as the class that represents the dissolution of society, as negation at work. The class in question here is the working class, a class which is more or less integrated in society, which is engaged in revolutionary reformism: struggle for wage increases, struggle against heavy work imposed on women and children, struggle for the shortening of the working day.

At the end of the first volume, Marx explains the dynamic that leads to the expropriation of the expropriators, to the increase of misery¹⁴ that will force the proletariat to rise against capital.¹⁵

In the third volume, and also in the *Critique of the Gotha*

and "Crises and Possibilities of Adaptation" in *Presuppositions of Socialism and the Tasks of Social Democracy*, Rowohlt Verlag, pp. 73ff.

¹⁴ Here we should be careful, as Bordiga justly observed, not to reduce this to an economic concept.

¹⁵ Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, New York: Random House, pp. 835–837.

Program, Marx does not describe a real discontinuity between capitalism and communism. Productive forces continue to grow. The discontinuity lies in the fact that the goal of production is inverted (after the revolution; i.e., the discontinuity is temporal). The goal ceases to be wealth, but human beings. However, if there is no real discontinuity between capitalism and communism, human beings must be wilfully transformed; how else could the goal be inverted? This is Marx's revolutionary reformism in its greatest amplitude. The dictatorship of the proletariat, the transitional phase (in the *Grundrisse* it is the capitalist mode of production that constitutes this transitional phase: this is obviously extremely relevant to the way we define communism today) is a period of reforms, the most important being the shortening of the working day and use of the labor voucher. What we should note here, though we cannot insist on it, is the connection between reformism and dictatorship.

The proletariat seems to be needed to guide the development of productive forces away from the pole of value toward the pole of humanity. It may happen that the proletariat is integrated by capital, but—and this is abused by various marxists—crises destroy the proletariat's reserves and reinstate it into its revolutionary role. Then the insurrection against capital is possible again.

Thus Marx's work seems largely to be the authentic consciousness of the capitalist mode of production. The bourgeoisie, and the capitalists who followed, were able to express only a false consciousness with the help of their various theories. Furthermore, the capitalist mode of production has realized Marx's proletarian project. By remaining on a narrowly marxist terrain, the proletariat and its theoreticians were outflanked by the followers of capital. Capital, having achieved real domination, ratifies the validity of Marx's work in its reduced form (as historical materialism). While German prole-

tarians at the beginning of this century thought their actions were destroying the capitalist mode of production, they failed to see they were only trying to manage it themselves. False consciousness took hold of the proletariat.

Historical materialism is a glorification of the wandering in which humanity has been engaged for more than a century: growth of productive forces as the condition *sine qua non* for liberation. But by definition all quantitative growth takes place in the sphere of the indefinite, the false infinite. Who will measure the "size" of the productive forces to determine whether or not the great day has come? For Marx there was a double and contradictory movement: growth of productive forces and immiseration of proletarians; this was to lead to a revolutionary collision. Put differently, there was a contradiction between socialization of production and private appropriation.

The moment when the productive forces were to reach the level required for the transformation of the mode of production was to be the moment when the crisis of capitalism began. This crisis was to expose the narrowness of this mode of production and its inability to hold new productive forces, and thus make visible the antagonism between the productive forces and the capitalist forms of production. But capital has run away; it has absorbed crises and it has successfully provided a social reserve for the proletarians. Many have nothing left to do but to run on ahead: some say the productive forces are not developed enough, others say they have stopped growing. Both reduce the whole problem either to organizing the vanguard, the party, or resorting to activities designed to raise consciousness.

Development in the context of wandering is development in the context of mystification. Marx considered mystification the result of a reversed relation: capital, the product of the worker's activity, appears to be the creator. The mystification is rooted in real events; it is reality in process that mystifies.

Something is mystified even through a struggle of the proletariat against capital; the generalized mystification is the triumph of capital. But if, as a consequence of its anthropomorphization, this reality produced by mystification is now the sole reality, then the question has to be put differently. 1) Since the mystification is stable and real, there is no point in waiting for a demystification which would only expose the truth of the previous situation. 2) Because of capital's runaway, the mystification appears as reality, and thus the mystification is engulfed and rendered inoperative. We have the despotism of capital.

The assertion that the mystification is still operative would mean that human beings are able to engage in real relations and are continually mystified. In fact the mystification was operative once and became reality. It refers to a historical stage completed in the past. This does not eliminate the importance of understanding and studying it so as to understand the movement that leads to the present stage of the capitalist mode of production and to be aware of the real actors through the ages.

Both the mystifying-mystified reality as well as the previously mystified reality have to be destroyed. The mystification is only "visible" if one breaks (without illusions about the limitations of this break) with the representations of capital. Marx's work is very important for this break. But it contains a major flaw: it fails to explain the whole magnitude of the mystification because it does not recognize the runaway of capital.

Earlier, revolution was possible as soon as the mystification was exposed; the revolutionary process was its destruction. Today the human being has been engulfed, not only in the determination of class where he was trapped for centuries, but as a biological being. It is a totality that has to be destroyed. Demystification is no longer enough. The revolt of human beings threatened in the immediacy of their daily lives

goes beyond demystification. The problem is to create other lives. This problem lies simultaneously outside the ancient discourse of the workers' movement and its old practice, and outside the critique that considers this movement a simple ideology (and considers the human being an ideological precipitate).

3. REPRESSIVE CONSCIOUSNESS

Mystification does not only affect capitalist society but also affects the theory of capitalism. Marxist theory elevated to the rank of proletarian consciousness is a new form of consciousness: repressive consciousness. We will describe some of its characteristics, leaving aside the problem of determining whether or not all forms of consciousness throughout history are repressive.

The object of repressive consciousness is the goal which it thinks it controls. Since there is a gap between this goal and immediate reality, this consciousness becomes theological and refines the differences between the minimum or immediate program and the maximum, future, or mediate program. But the longer the path to its realization, the more consciousness makes itself the goal and reifies itself in an organization which comes to incarnate the goal.

The project of this consciousness is to frame reality with its concept. This is the source of all the sophisms about the divergence between objective and subjective elements. It exists but it cannot be. And precisely because of its inability to be, it has to negate and scorn whatever is trying to emerge, to be.

In other words, it exists but it needs certain events to be real. Since it is a product of the past, it is refuted by every current event. Thus it can only exist as a polemic with reality. It refutes everything. It can survive only by freezing, by becoming increasingly totalitarian. In order to operate it has to be

organized: thus the mystique of the party, of councils, and of other coagulations of despotic consciousness.

All direct action that does not recognize this consciousness (and every political racket pretends to embody the true consciousness) is condemned by it. Condemnation is followed by justification: impatience of those who revolt, lack of maturity, provocation by the dominant class. The picture is completed by litanies on the petit-bourgeois character of the eternal anarchists and the utopianism of intellectuals or young people. Struggles are not real unless they revive class consciousness; some go so far as to wish for war, so that this consciousness will at last be produced.

Theory has turned into repressive consciousness. The proletariat has become a myth, not in terms of its existence, but in terms of its revolutionary role as the class that was to liberate all humanity and thus resolve all socioeconomic contradictions. In reality it exists in all countries characterized by the formal domination of capital, where this proletariat still constitutes the majority of the population; in countries characterized by the real domination of capital one still finds a large number of men and women in conditions of nineteenth-century proletarians. But the activity of every party and every group is organized around the myth. The myth is their source. Everything begins with the appearance of this class, which is defined as the only revolutionary class in history, or at least as the most revolutionary. Whatever happened before is ordered as a function of the rise of this class, and earlier events are secondary in relation to those lived or created by the proletariat. It even defines conduct. Whoever is proletarian is saved; one who is not must expiate the defect of nonproletarian birth by various practices, going so far as to serve terms in factories. A group achieves revolutionary existence only at the moment when it is able to exhibit one or several "authentic" proletarians. The presence of

the man with callused hands is the guarantee, the certificate of revolutionary authenticity. The content of the program defended by the group, its theory, even its actions, cease to be important; all that matters is the presence or absence of the "proletarian." The myth maintains and revives the antagonism between intellectual and manual. Many councilists make a cult of anti-intellectualism, which serves them as a substitute for theory and justification. They can pronounce any idiocy; they'll be saved; they're proletarians.

Just as it is thought by many that one who leaves the party thereby ceases to be revolutionary, so it is considered impossible to be revolutionary without claiming one's proletarian position, without taking on the virtues thought to be proletarian. The counterrevolution ends at the mythical frontiers that separate the proletariat from the rest of the social body. Any action is justified in the name of the proletarian movement. One does not act because of a need to act, because of hatred for capital, but because the proletariat has to recover its class base. Action and thought are unveiled by intermediaries.

This is how, especially after 1945, the proletariat as revolutionary class outlived itself: through its myth.

A historical study of proletarian revolutionary movements would shed light on the limited character of this class. Marx himself clearly exposed its reformist character. Fundamentally, from 1848, when it demanded the right to work, to 1917–1923, when it demanded full employment and self-management by workers' unions, the proletariat rebelled solely within the interior of the capitalist system. This seems to conflict with Marx's statements in his "Critical Notes on the Article 'The King of Prussia and Social Reform.' By a Prussian":

But at this moment the proletariat really manifested itself as a class without reserves, as a total negation.

It was forced to create a profound rupture which makes possible an understanding of what communist revolution and therefore communism can be.¹⁶

Marx was right; but the capitalist mode of production, in order to survive, was forced to annihilate the negation which undermined it. The proletariat that is outside of society, as Marx and Engels say in *The German Ideology*, is increasingly integrated into society; it is integrated to the extent that it struggles for survival, for reinforcement; the more it organizes itself, the more it becomes reformist. It succeeds, with the German Socialist Party, in forming a countersociety that is finally absorbed by the society of capital, and the negating movement of the proletariat is over.¹⁷

Didn't Kautsky, Bernstein, and Lenin simply recognize the reality of the workers' movement when they declared that it was necessary to unite it with the socialist movement: "The workers' movement and socialism are in no way identical by nature" (Kautsky)?

Doesn't Lenin's discredited statement that the proletariat, left to itself, can only attain trade-union consciousness, describe the truth about the class bound to capital? It can be criticized only from the standpoint of the distinction, made by Marx in *The Poverty of Philosophy*, between class as object of capital and class as subject. Without a revolutionary upheaval the proletariat cannot become a subject. The process through which it was to become a subject implied an outside, external consciousness, which at a given moment would become incar-

¹⁶ Marx, *Early Writings*, London: Pelican, 1974, pp. 401–420.

¹⁷ Which proves that it was impossible to hold on to a "classist" discourse and behavior while maintaining the basic "aclassist" thesis of the necessity of the proletariat's self-negation.

nated in the proletariat. This consciousness coming from the outside is the most reified, the most estranged form of repressive consciousness! Consequently, the point is not to rehash the debate and return to Marx, but to recognize that the cycle of the proletarian class is now over, first of all because its goals have been realized, secondly because it is no longer the determinant in the global context. We have reached the end of the historical cycle during which humanity (especially the part situated in the West) moved within class societies. Capital has realized the negation of classes—by means of mystification, since it retains the conflicts and collisions that characterize the existence of classes. The reality is the despotism of capital. It is capital we must now face, not the past.

Almost all social democrats were aware of the divorce between the real, reformist movement of the working class and the socialist goal. Bernstein proclaimed that it was necessary to adapt once and for all, clearly and straightforwardly, not hypocritically (like the majority of the socialists) by making revolutionary proclamations in order to hide compromises.¹⁸ At the same time, it became increasingly problematic to define and delimit the proletarian class. This problem became so acute that by the beginning of this century almost all revolutionaries were trying to define the proletariat in terms of consciousness: Luxemburg, Pannekoek directly, Lenin, Trotsky indirectly through the party, etc. The Russian revolu-

¹⁸ On this subject, see the book by H. Mueller published in 1892, *Der Klassenkampf in der Deutschen Sozialdemokratie*, Verlags-kooperative Heidelberg-Frankfurt-Hanover-Berlin, 1969. This book clearly shows the duality-duplicity of men like Bebel, who expressed themselves as “rightists” in parliament and as “leftists” at workers’ meetings, who told one audience it would be very long before the principles of socialism could be realized, while telling another that social-

tion merely increased the urgency of specifying the proletarian class; this is the context of Korsch's attempts, and especially of Lukacs' *History and Class Consciousness*. Later on Bordiga held that the class should be defined in terms of the mode of production that it builds. Thus it can be a class for itself only from the moment when its actions move toward this goal, only to the extent that it recognizes its program (which describes this mode of production). For Bordiga, it exists when the party exists, because the program can only be carried by the party. "We still need an object, the party, to envision the communist society."¹⁹ But to the extent that men and women are able to move on their own toward communism, as is evident among young people today, it becomes obvious that this object, the party, is not needed.

In sum, for party as well as council advocates, the problem of action would largely be reduced to finding a direct or indirect means for making the proletariat receptive to its own consciousness—since in this view the proletariat is itself only through its consciousness of itself.

4. COMMUNISM

Revolutionary reformism—the project of creating socialism on the foundation of capitalism and in continuity with the capitalist mode of production—disintegrated between 1913 and 1945. It is the end of what turned out to be an illusion: the illusion of being able to direct the development of the productive forces in a direction that differed from the one they had taken

ism was around the corner. This book is also interesting because it contains positions that were later to be taken up by the KAPD (German Communist Workers' Party).

¹⁹ Bordiga at meeting in Milan, 1960.

in reality. We can actually agree with Marx's view that after 1848 communism was possible precisely because the irruption of the capitalist mode of production had broken all social and natural barriers and made free development possible. But the mentality, the representations of people were such that they could neither conceive nor perceive such a future. They were too dependent on the millenarian movement of value, or they were too debilitated by the limitations of the perverted remains of their ancient communities, to be able to set out on a new path to reach another community. Even Marx and Engels ultimately considered capitalism a necessary moment, and thought that all human beings everywhere would inevitably come to experience it. Only the revolts of the Russian populists, and their desire to avoid the capitalist road, made Marx understand his error. But this recognition was insufficient. From the middle of the nineteenth century, with the justification provided by marxist theory (the theory of the proletariat), all humanity set out to wander: to develop productive forces.

If we can no longer accept Marx's theoretical analysis of the role of the productive forces, we can nevertheless agree with him after a detour. Capital enslaves humanity in the very name of humanity because it is anthropomorphized. This is nothing other than the reign of death. Human beings are dominated by their past being, while they contemplate it. It is a process that continually starts over again. Capital penetrates thought, consciousness, and thus destroys human beings such as they have been produced by centuries of class society. Their loss of substance is the loss of their former being, which capital has pumped out of them. Since this process is almost over, capital is now turning from its attack against the past dimension of humanity to an attack against its future dimension: it must now conquer imagination. The human being is thus despoiled and tends to be reduced to the biological dimension.

The phenomenon reaches the roots. In other words, the development of productive forces appears to have been necessary for the destruction of old schemas, modes of thought, archaic representations that limited human beings (this destruction is now being analyzed by philosophers like Foucault). Threatened in their purely biological existence, human beings are beginning to rise against capital. It is at this point that everything can be reconquered by generalized creation. But this becoming is not simple, unilinear. Capital can still profit from the creativity of human beings, regenerating and resubstantializing itself by plundering their imaginations. The importance and profundity of the struggle can be grasped in the face of the alternative: communism or destruction of the human species. And it should not be forgotten that during the wandering various revolutionary movements looked for an exit and various possibilities were blocked; they can now manifest themselves.²⁰

We have to stop wandering and destroy the repressive consciousness that inhibits the emergence of communism. To do this we have to stop perceiving communism as a prolonga-

²⁰ Absolute irreversibility is not a fact of history. Possibilities that appeared thousands or hundreds of years ago were not abolished for all time. History is not a Moloch that swallows possibilities condemning the human future to an inevitable and irremediable despoliation. In that case history would be no more than a justification for what happened. Many would like to reduce history to this, making it the worst of despots.

Hegel's philosophy with its dialectic of supersession (*Aufhebung*), of movement which abolishes and preserves at one and the same time, was an attempt to salvage what human beings had produced in earlier epochs. Hegel was troubled by the problems of loss of reality of the multiplicity of manifestations and possibles, etc. Thus he attached enormous importance to memory (see particularly the chapter "Absolute Knowledge" in the *Phenomenology of Mind*).

tion of the capitalist mode of production, and stop thinking it is enough to suppress exchange value and make use value triumphant. This dichotomy no longer signifies anything. Use value is tied to value even if it revolves around the principle of utility instead of productivity; related to the direct domination of human beings, it is inseparable from private property.

Communism is not a new mode of production²¹; it is the affirmation of a new community. It is a question of being, of life, if only because there is a fundamental displacement: from

By contrast, the movement of capital abolishes the memory of its previous stages (by mystification and magic) as well as the stages of humanity, and presents itself, as it is, at its highest level of development—the “reified (or ossified) form” (See Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*, [Moscow: 1971], Vol. III, chapter on “Revenue and its Sources. Vulgar Political Economy.”)

²¹ The concept of mode of production is in reality valid only for the capitalist mode of production, just as the concept of class is in reality operative only in bourgeois society. The concept of production in Marx’s work is quite rich in attributes. It becomes impoverished when we move from the *1844 Manuscripts* and *The German Ideology* to *Capital*. It is closely related to the concept of nature and also to a certain conception of the human being. In other words, we have a much more complex “given” when we can examine it only in relation to the existence of initial communist communities and their dissolution. The separation of the human being from the community (*Gemeinwesen*) is a despoliation. The human being as worker has lost a mound of attributes that formed a whole when he was related to his community.

The process of expropriation of human beings is real. Those who do not understand this do not understand what capital is. Man has been reduced to an inexpressive being; he has lost his senses, and his activity has been reduced to quantified labor. Man turned into abstract being longs for music that still preserves the ancestral sensu-

generated activity to the living being who produced it. Until now men and women have been alienated by this production. They will not gain mastery over production, but will create new relations among themselves that will determine an entirely different activity.

Nor is communism a new society.²² Society grows out of the subjugation of some ethnic groups by others, or out of the formation of classes. Society is the network of social relations

ality (thus the vogue of jazz and South American music). The reduced human being now has only one element relating him to the external world: sexuality, which fills the void of the senses. It is precisely this that explains the pansexuality, or more exactly the pansexualization of being that Freud interpreted as an invariant characteristic of human beings, whereas it is the result of their mutilation. What is the subconscious if not the affective-sensual life of the human being repressed by capital? The human being has to be domesticated, shaped to a rationality that he must internalize—the rationality of the process of production of capital. Once this domestication is achieved, the human being is dispossessed of this repressed sensual life, which becomes an object of knowledge, of science; it becomes capitalizable. The unconscious, becoming an object of commerce, is thinly sliced and retailed in the market of knowledge. The unconscious did not always exist, and it exists now only as a component in the discourse of capital; this is also true of human perversions.

Reduced to perfect inexpressivity, the human being increasingly becomes comparable point by point to the elementary particle studied by nuclear physics, where one can find the principles of the psychology of the capitalized human being who is moved by the field of capital.

²² It is also unsound to speak of primitive society. We will substantiate this by making a new analysis of primitive communities. If it is true that Marx's work does not deal adequately with the existence, development and dissolution of primitive communities, it is not true that Marx is absolutely wrong because of Europocentrism or the spirit

that quickly become despotic intermediaries. Man in society is man enslaved by society.

Communism puts an end to castes, classes, and the division of labor (onto which was grafted the movement of value, which in turn animates and exalts this division). Communism is first of all union. It is not domination of nature but reconciliation, and thus regeneration of nature: human beings no longer treat nature simply as an object for their development, as a useful thing, but as a subject (not in the philosophic sense) not separate from them if only because nature is in them. The naturalization of man and the humanization of nature (Marx) are realized; the dialectic of subject and object ends.

What follows is the destruction of urbanization and the formation of a multitude of communities distributed over the earth. This implies the suppression of monoculture, another form of division of labor, and a complete transformation of the transportation system: transportation will diminish considerably. Only a communal (communitarian) mode of life can allow the human being to rule his reproduction, to limit the (at present mad) growth of population without resorting to despicable practices (such as destroying men and women).

The domination of one group over another, the society of classes, originates in the sedentarization of the human being. We still live with the myths generated at the time of this fixa-

of enlightenment, namely that his work suffers from the same shortcomings as bourgeois theory. The majority of those who hold this view have not understood the question of community in Marx's work and have reduced his work to a simple historical materialism.

What Marx's work lacks is a detailed analysis of the way "the economy" appears in primitive communities and provokes their disintegration.

We should add that it is becoming increasingly misleading to speak of capitalist society. We will return to this.

tion somewhere in our mother-earth: myths of the homeland, the foreigner; myths that limit the vision of the world, that mutilate. It is obvious that the reaction cannot be a return to a nomadism of a type practiced by our distant ancestors who were gatherers. Men and women will acquire a new mode of being beyond nomadism and sedentarism. Sedentary lives compounded by corporeal inactivity are the root cause of almost all the somatic and psychological illnesses of present-day human beings. An active and unfixated life will cure all these problems without medicine or psychiatry.

The passage to communism implies a transformation of technique. Technology is not a neutral thing; it is determined by the mode of production. In the West, more than elsewhere, the various modes of production increasingly separated human beings from technology, which was originally no more than a modality of human being. The call for a convenient technology is a call for a technology that is again a prolongation of the human being and not an autonomous thing at the service of an oppressive being.²³

Human beings in communism cannot be defined as simple users; this would be communism conceived as a terrestrial par-

²³ In primitive communities human beings rule technology. Technology starts to become autonomous in ancient Western society, and this was feared by the ancients. Technology forces man to copy nature, even if later he can find a procedure not found in nature; thus he is subjected to a compulsory procedure, a how-to-do, a sort of natural order. He seems to lose the capacity to create freely. (On this subject, see the comments of J.P. Vernant in *Mythe et pensée chez les grecs*, Ed. Maspéro.) When human beings no longer fear technology, they simultaneously become reconciled with art, which had been disparaged at the end of slave society. This took place at the time of the Renaissance, when philosophers defined man as a being who makes himself (See Cassirer, *Individual and Cosmos in Renaissance*

adise where people dispose of what there is with such immediacy that human beings are indistinguishable from nature (man, as Hegel said in this context, would be an animal). Human beings are creators, producers, users. The entire process is reconstituted at a higher level, and for every individual. In relations between individuals, the other is no longer considered in terms of utility; behavior in terms of utility ends. The sexes are reconciled while retaining their differences; they lose the differences and rigid oppositions produced by millennia of antagonism.

These few characteristics should adequately clarify how the movement of ascent to the human community can be conceived.

We are all slaves of capital. Liberation begins with the refusal to perceive oneself in terms of the categories of capital, namely as proletarian, as member of the new middle class, as capitalist, etc. Thus we also stop perceiving the other—in his movement toward liberation—in terms of those same categories. At this point the movement of recognition of human

Philosophy). But the development of technology did not lead man toward nature; on the contrary, it led to the expropriation of man and the destruction of nature. The human being increasingly loses the faculty of creativity. In this sense, the fear of the ancients was justified.

From the philosophers of the Renaissance, through Descartes and Hegel, to Marx, the human being is defined in relation to technology (man is a tool-maker: Franklin) and to production. To go beyond Marx, it is necessary to reexamine the “human phenomenon” from the disintegration of primitive communities until today and to rethink the works of philosophers and economists from Aristotle to Marx in order to understand more clearly how human beings perceived themselves in a period when value and then capital dominated, and in order to understand how, now that we have come to the end of the phenomenon value, we can conceive humanity, and thus communism.

beings can begin. This is obviously only the beginning of the liberation movement, and is continually threatened with failure. Refusing to take this into account denies the power of capital. What has to be perceived is a dynamic. We are slaves; our goal is not to become masters, even without slaves, but to abolish the entire dialectic of master and slave. This goal cannot be realized by the establishment of communities which, always isolated, are never an obstacle to capital, can easily be surrounded by capital, and are no more than deviations in relation to its norm (deviations that make that norm visible for what it is). Nor can the goal be reached by the cultivation of one's individual being, in which one would finally find the real human being. In reality these approaches should be connected. Perceiving oneself as a human being unshackled by any attributes already removes the dog collar imposed by class society. The desire for community is absolutely necessary. The reaffirmation of individuality (especially in its temporal aspect) is a rejection of domestication. But this is inadequate even as a first element of rebellion; the human being is an individuality and a *Gemeinwesen*. The reduction of the human being to his present inexpressive state could take place only because of the removal of *Gemeinwesen*, of the possibility for each individual to absorb the universal, to embrace the entirety of human relations within the entirety of time. The varied religions, philosophies, and theories are mere substitutes for this essential component of human being. Since communism is the death of sameness, of repetition, human beings will emerge in all their diversity; *Gemeinwesen* will be affirmed by each. This implies that as of now we reject the despotism of a religion, a philosophy, a theory.

The refusal to be trapped by a theory is not a rejection of all theoretical reflection. It is just the opposite. But this refusal does postulate that the theoretical act is insufficient. Theory

can call for the reconciliation of senses and brain but it remains within the boundaries of this separation. What must be affirmed is the whole of life, the entirety of its manifestations, the whole unified being. It may still be necessary to proceed with the help of Marx's insights, for example, but it becomes increasingly imbecile to proclaim oneself a marxist. Furthermore, like repressive consciousness, theory can become a simple alibi for inaction. At the start, the refusal to act might be perfectly justifiable. Nevertheless, separation from reality often leads to failure to perceive new phenomena that shape it. At that point theory, instead of helping establish contact with reality, becomes an agent of separation, of removal, and in the end is transformed into a protrusion, an ejection from the world. Waiting is particularly difficult for those who do not want to recognize that others can arrive at theory without us, our group, or our party as intermediaries. Theory, like consciousness, demands objectification to such an extent that even an individual who rejects political rackets can elevate theory to the status of a racket. In a subject posing as revolutionary, theory is a despotism: everyone should recognize this.

After the domination of the body by the mind for more than two millennia, it is obvious that theory is still a manifestation of this domination.

It is the whole of life that becomes determining. All the varied productions of the past—art, philosophy, science—are fragments. They are elements of the vast despoliation of human beings as well as attempts to remedy it. But the point is no longer to realize art or philosophy; capital has already done this in its way; the point is to conquer and create another world: a world where all the biological potentialities of the species can finally develop. In this vast movement, it is futile to want to present oneself as the repository of truth. First of all

truth, like value, needs a measure, a standard, a general equivalent, a norm, hence a *State*. Secondly, truth is never more than one truth. The historical inflation of this concept parallels the ever more thorough destruction of human beings. Nothing less can be proposed than another life where the gestures, the words, the imaginations, and all the feelings of human beings will no longer be chained, where senses and brain will unite—only this union can eliminate all the fixations of madness. It is obvious that all this can only be conquered by the destruction of the capitalist mode of production. It is all of humanity perceived through time that is hostile to capital. Human beings will have to undergo a profound revolutionization to be able to oppose capital; the actions of this movement are accompanied by the production of revolutionaries.

The emergence of revolution in all the domains of our lives leads some people to overemphasize the places where they felt this emergence.

Revolution does not emerge from one or another part of our being—from body, space, or time. Our revolution as a project to reestablish community was necessary from the moment when ancient communities were destroyed. The reduction of communist revolution to an uprising that was to resolve the contradictions posed by the capitalist mode of production was pernicious. Revolution has to resolve all the old contradictions created by the class societies absorbed by capital, all the contradictions between relatively primitive communities and the movement of exchange value currently being absorbed by the movement of capital (in Asia and especially in Africa). Beyond this, the revolutionary movement is the revolution of nature, accession to thought, and mastery of being with the possibility of using the prefrontal centers of the brain, which are thought to relate to the imagination. Revolution has a biological and therefore cosmic

dimension, considering our universe limited (to the solar system); cosmic also in the meaning of the ancient philosophers and mystics. This means that revolution is not only the object of the passion of our epoch, but also that of millions of human beings, starting with our ancient ancestors who rebelled against the movement of exchange value, which they saw as a fatality, passing through Marx and Bordiga, who, in their dimension as prophets, witnessed this inextinguishable passion to found a new community, a human community. Wanting to situate the revolution is like wanting to fix its height. Saint-Just said that revolution could not stop until happiness was realized, thus showing the falsity of wanting to judge men in terms of the purely historical material facts of a given epoch. The human being is never a pure being-there. He can only be by superseding and he cannot be only that which has to be superseded (Nietzsche). Structurally and biologically man is a supersession because he is an overpowerful being. In other words, human beings are explorers of the possible and are not content with the immediately realizable, especially if it is imposed on them. They lose this passion, this thirst for creation—for what is the search for the possible if not invention?—when they are debased, estranged, cut off from their *Gemeinwesen* and therefore mutilated, reduced to simple individuals. It is only with the real domination of the capitalist mode of production that the human being is completely evacuated.

All the revolutions of the species are revolutions that try to go beyond the present moment, beyond what is permitted by the development of productive forces (Bordiga). This reach beyond the possible is what constitutes the continuity among the human generations, just as the perspective of communism conceived as the destruction of classes, exchange, and value constitutes the continuity among the varied revolutionaries;

this is what, following Marx, we call the historical party.²⁴

The struggle against reduction of the amplitude of the revolution is already a revolutionary struggle. The reader should not be astonished if to support this amplitude we refer to authors classically tagged religious, mystical, etc. What matters is the reappropriation of *Gemeinwesen* (and past beings are part of it), which can only be done after the unification of the species, and this unification can only be conceived by grasping the aspiration, desire, passion, and will for community expressed through the ages. The human being can simultaneously be a *Gemeinwesen* only if humanity lives in community. As soon as fragmentation appears, the need to recompose a unity emerges. In the West this unity had a mediate and coercive form: the individual was defined by the State; knowledge was a means for hierarchization and for justification of the established order; the vicious circle of practice-theory emerged.

Communist revolution is complete revolution. Biological, sexual, social, economic revolutions are no more than partial attributes; the predominance of one is a mutilation of revolution, which can only be by being all.

Communist revolution can be conceived only if it is grasped through the history and paleontology of human beings as well as all other living beings. By grasping this we become aware that, if this revolution has long been necessary, it can now be realized. Earlier it was possible but not unavoidable. There were still other "human" paths in that they still allowed a human development; specifically, they allowed the externalization of human powers. Now almost everything has been externalized and plundered by capital, which describes the

²⁴ "Origine et fonction de la forme parti" (1961), published in *Invariance*, No. 1, Série 1.

only path other than communist revolution: the total negation of human beings. Therefore we must understand our world; we must understand the despotism of capital and the movement of rebellion breaking out against it. This act of understanding which is taking place not only intellectually but also sensually (the rebellion is to a large extent bodily rebellion) can only be reached by rejecting the wandering and the repressive consciousness.

II.

DECLINE OF THE CAPITALIST MODE OF PRODUCTION OR DECLINE OF HUMANITY?

It has often been thought and written that communism would blossom after the destruction of the capitalist mode of production, which would be undermined by such contradictions that its end would be inevitable. But numerous events of this century have unfortunately brought other possibilities into view: the return to "barbarism," as analyzed by R. Luxemburg and the entire left wing of the German workers' movement, by Adorno and the Frankfurt School; the destruction of the human species, as is evident to each and all today; finally, a state of stagnation in which the capitalist mode of production survives by adapting itself to a degenerated humanity which lacks the power to destroy it. In order to understand the failure of a future that was thought inevitable, we must take into account the domestication of human beings implemented by all class societies and mainly by capital, and we must analyze the autonomization of capital.

We do not intend to treat these historical deviations exhaustively in a few pages. By commenting on a passage in Marx's *Grundrisse* we can show that it is possible to under-

stand the autonomization of capital on the basis of Marx's work, and we can also see the contradictions in marxist thought and its inability to solve the problem. The passage is from the chapter on the process of circulation. To understand it, we should keep in mind what Marx had said shortly before this passage:

Circulation time thus appears as a barrier to the productivity of labour = an increase in necessary labour time = a decrease in surplus labour time = a decrease in surplus value = an obstruction, a barrier to the self-realization process [Selbstverwertungsprozess] of capital.¹

Here Marx makes an extremely important digression:

There appears here the universalizing tendency of capital, which distinguishes it from all previous stages of production, and thus becomes the presupposition of a new mode of production, which is founded not on the development of the forces of production for the purpose of reproducing or at most expanding a given condition, but where the free, unobstructed, progressive and universal development of the forces of production is itself the presupposition of society and hence of its reproduction; where advance beyond the point of departure is the only presupposition.²

What makes capital a barrier is not stated here, whereas its revolutionary, positive aspect is emphasized (this aspect is

¹ Marx, *Grundrisse*, London: Pelican, 1973, p. 539.

² *Ibid.*, p. 540

emphasized on many other pages of the *Grundrisse*, and of *Capital*): the tendency toward universal development of the forces of production. However, and this is what interests us here, capital cannot realize this; it will be the task of another, superior mode of production. The future of society here takes the form of an indefinite, cumulative movement.

This tendency—which capital possesses, but which at the same time, since capital is a limited form of production, contradicts it and hence drives it towards dissolution—distinguishes capital from all earlier modes of production, and at the same time contains this element, that capital is posited as a mere point of transition.³

Hence capital is driven toward dissolution by this contradiction. It is a pity that Marx did not here mention what he understands by “limited form of production,” since this keeps us from “seeing” clearly what he means by contradiction in this specific case. This conditions the understanding of the statement that the capitalist mode of production is a transitory form of production. Even without an explanation of the contradiction, we can understand it as follows: the capitalist mode of production is not eternal—Marx’s polemical argument against the bourgeois ideologues. This is the content of his main statements. But another argument is embedded in the preceding one: the capitalist mode of production is revolutionary and makes possible the passage to another, superior social form where human beings will no longer be dominated by the sphere of necessity (the sphere of the production of material life) and where alienation will cease to exist.

³ Ibid.

Today, after the blossoming of marxism as a theory of development, another part of this sentence appears basic: there is a continuum between the two periods. What is a transition if not the opposite of a break? This continuum consists of the development of the forces of production. From which follows the shameful but real relationship: Marx—Lenin—Stalin! But this is not our topic. Our aim is to determine what constitutes the productive forces and for whom they exist, according to Marx in the *Grundrisse*. “All previous forms of society—or, what is the same, of the forces of social production—founded on the development of wealth.”⁴

Wealth resides in the productive forces and in the results of their action. There is a contradiction here which, according to Marx, characterizes the totality of human history: wealth is necessary and therefore sought, but it destroys societies. Societies must therefore oppose its development. This is not the case in the capitalist mode of production (it thus destroys all other social formations), which exalts the productive forces, but for whom?

Those thinkers of antiquity who were possessed of consciousness therefore directly denounced wealth as the dissolution of the community [*Gemeinwesen*]. The feudal system, for its part, founded on urban industry, trade, modern agriculture (even as a result of individual inventions like gunpowder and the printing press). With the development of wealth—and hence also new powers and expanded intercourse on the part of individuals—the economic conditions on which the community [*Gemeinwesen*] rested were dissolved, along with the political relations of the

⁴ Ibid.

various constituents of the community which corresponded to those conditions: religion, in which it was viewed in idealized form (and both [religion and political relations] rested in turn on a given relation to nature, into which all productive force resolves itself); the character, outlook, etc. of the individuals. The *development of science alone*—i.e. the most solid form of wealth, both its product and its producer—was sufficient to dissolve these communities. But the *development of science*, this ideal and at the same time practical wealth, is only one aspect, one form in which the *development of the human productive forces*, i.e. of wealth, appears. Considered *ideally*, the dissolution of a given form of consciousness sufficed to kill a whole epoch. In reality, this barrier to consciousness corresponds to a *definite degree of development of the forces of material production* and hence of wealth. True, there was not only a development on the old basis, but also a *development of this basis itself*.⁵

For Marx, the productive forces are human (from the human being) and they are for the human being, for the individual. Science as a productive force (thus also wealth, as was already shown in the *1844 Manuscripts* and in *The German Ideology*) is determined by the development of these forces and corresponds to the appearance of a large number of externalizations, a greater possibility to appropriate nature. Even if it takes an ambiguous form, the blossoming of the human being is possible; it is the moment when, in the development of the dominant class, individuals can find a model of a fuller

⁵ Ibid., pp. 540–541.

life. For Marx, the capitalist mode of production, by pushing the development of productive forces, makes possible a liberating autonomization of the individual. This is its most important revolutionary aspect.

The highest development of this *basis* itself (the flower into which it transforms itself; but it is always *this* basis, *this* plant as flower; hence wilting after the flowering and as a consequence of the flowering) is the point at which it is itself worked out, developed, into the form in which it is compatible with the *highest development of the forces of production*, hence also the richest development of the individuals. As soon as this point is reached, the further development appears as decay, and the new development begins from a new basis.⁶

There is decay because the development of individuals is blocked. It is not possible to use this sentence to support the theory of the decline of the capitalist mode of production⁷ since it would have to be stated that the decline started, not at the beginning of this century, but minimally in the middle of the previous century; or else it would have to be shown that the decline of individuals is simultaneously the decline of capital, which contradicts what can be observed; Marx himself repeatedly explained that the development of capital was accompanied by the destruction of human beings and of nature.

When did the development of productive forces accompany the development of individuals in different societies? When

⁶ Ibid., p. 541.

⁷ As is done by Victor in *Révolution Internationale* No. 7, série 1, p. 4 of the article "Volontarisme et confusion."

was the capitalist mode of production revolutionary for itself and for human beings? Do the productive forces advance continually, in spite of moments when individuals decay? Marx said: "...the further development appears as decay..." Do the productive forces stagnate; does the capitalist mode of production decay?⁸

The remainder of Marx's digression confirms that the decay refers to human beings. Individuals blossom when the productive forces allow them to develop, when the evolution of one parallels the evolution of the other. By means of a comparison with the precapitalist period, Marx shows that capital is not hostile to wealth but, on the contrary, takes up its production. Thus it takes up the development of productive forces. Previously the development of human beings, of their community, was opposed to the development of wealth; now there is something like symbiosis between them. For this to happen, a certain mutation was necessary: capital had to destroy the limited character of the individual; this is another aspect of its revolutionary character.

We saw earlier that property in the conditions of production was posited as identical with a limited, definite form of the community [*Gemeinwesen*]; hence of the individual with the characteristics—limited characteristics and limited development of his productive forces—required to form such a community [*Gemeinwesen*]. This presupposition was itself in turn

⁸ Various authors have spoken of stagnation and declining production between the two world wars. Bordiga always rejected the theory of the decline of the capitalist mode of production as a gradualist deformation of Marx's theory (see "Le renversement de la praxis dans la théorie marxiste," in *Invariance* No. 4, série 1).

the result of a limited historic stage of the development of the productive forces, of wealth as well as the mode of creating it. The purpose of the community [*Gemeinwesen*], of the individual—as well as the condition of production—is the reproduction of *these specific conditions of production* and of the individuals, both singly and in their social groupings and relations—as living carriers of these conditions. Capital posits the *production of wealth* itself and hence the universal development of the productive forces, the constant overthrow of its prevailing presuppositions, as the presupposition of its reproduction. Value excludes no use value; i.e. includes no particular kind of consumption etc., of intercourse etc. as absolute condition; and likewise every degree of the development of the social forces of production, of intercourse, of knowledge etc. appears to it only as a barrier which it strives to overpower.⁹

This passage has momentous consequences. There is no reference to the proletariat; it is the revolutionary role of capital to overthrow the prevailing presuppositions. Marx had already said this, in a more striking manner:

It is destructive towards all of this, and constantly revolutionizes it, tearing down all the barriers which hem in the development of the forces of production, the expansion of needs, the all-sided development of production, and the exploitation and exchange of natural and mental forces.¹⁰

⁹ Marx, *Grundrisse*, p. 541.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

We are forced to take a new approach toward the manner in which Marx situated the proletarian class in the context of the continual upheaval carried out by the capitalist mode of production. What is immediately evident is that the capitalist mode of production is revolutionary in relation to the destruction of ancient social relations, and that the proletariat is defined as revolutionary in relation to capital. But it is at this point that the problem begins: capitalism is revolutionary because it develops the productive forces; the proletariat cannot be revolutionary if, after its revolution, it develops or allows a different development of the productive forces. How can we tangibly distinguish the revolutionary role of one from that of the other? How can we justify the destruction of the capitalist mode of production by the proletariat? This cannot be done in a narrowly economic context. Marx never faced this problem because he was absolutely certain that the proletarians would rise against capital. But we have to confront this problem if we are going to emerge from the impasse created by our acceptance of the theory according to which the production relations come into conflict with the development of the productive forces (forces that were postulated to exist for the human being, since if this were not the case, why would human beings rebel?) If the productive forces do not exist for human beings but for capital, and if they conflict with production relations, then this means that these relations do not provide the proper structure to the capitalist mode of production, and therefore there can be revolution that is not for human beings (for example, the general phenomenon that is called fascism). Consequently capital escapes. In the passage we are examining, Marx makes a remarkable statement about the domination of capital: "Its own presupposition—value—is posited as product, not as a loftier presupposition

hovering over production.”¹¹

Capital dominates value. Since labor is the substance of value, it follows that capital dominates human beings. Marx refers only indirectly to the presupposition which is also a product: wage labor, namely the existence of a labor force that makes valorization possible:

The barrier to *capital* is that this entire development proceeds in a contradictory way, and that the working-out of the productive forces, of general wealth etc., knowledge etc., appears in such a way that the working individual *alienates* himself [*sich entäussert*]; relates to the conditions brought out of him by his labor as those not of his *own* but of an *alien wealth* and of his own poverty.¹²

How can this be a limit for capital? One might suppose that underconsumption by the workers causes crises, and the final crisis. This is one possibility; at least it appears that way at certain times. Marx always refused to ground a theory of crises on this point, but this did not keep him from mentioning this underconsumption. For Marx capital has a barrier because it despoils the working individual. We should keep in mind that he is arguing against apologists for capital and wants to show that the capitalist mode of production is not eternal and does not achieve human emancipation. Yet in the course of his analysis he points to the possibility for capital to escape from human conditions. We perceive that it is not the productive forces that become autonomous, but capital, since at a given moment the productive forces become “a barrier which it

¹¹ Ibid., p. 541

¹² Ibid.

strives to overpower.” This takes place as follows: the productive forces are no longer productive forces of human beings but of capital; they are for capital.¹³

The despoliation (alienation) of the working individual cannot be a barrier for capital, unless Marx means barrier in the sense of a weakness; such a weakness would make capitalism inferior to other modes of production, particularly if we contrast this weakness to the enormous development of productive forces which it impels. In Marx’s work there is an ambiguity about the subject to which the productive forces refer: are they for the human being or for capital? This ambiguity grounds two interpretations of Marx. The ethical interpretation (see especially Rubel) emphasizes the extent to which Marx denounces the destruction of the human being by capital, and vigorously insists that the capitalist mode of production can only be a transitory stage. The interpretation of Althusser and his school holds that Marx does not succeed in eliminating the human being from his economic analyses, which reflects his inability to abandon ideological discourse, from which follows Althusser’s problem of correctly locating the epistemological break.

It is possible to get out of this ambiguity. If capital succeeds in overcoming this barrier, it achieves full autonomy. This is why Marx postulates that capital must abolish itself; this abolition follows from the fact that it cannot develop the productive forces for human beings while it makes possible a universal, varied development that can only be realized by a superior mode of production. This contains a contradiction:

¹³ This is what Marx shows when he analyzes fixed capital in the *Grundrisse*, and also in Book I of *Capital* where he analyzes the transformation of the work process into a process of production of capital (see also *Un chapitre inédit du Capital*, Paris: Ed. 10/18, 1971).

capital escapes from the grasp of human beings, but it must perish because it cannot develop human productive forces. This also contradicts Marx's analysis of the destruction of human beings by capital. How can destroyed human beings rebel? We can, if we avoid these contradictions, consider Marx a prophet of the decline of capital, but then we will not be able to understand his work or the present situation. The end of Marx's digression clarifies these contradictions.

But this antithetical form is itself fleeting, and produces the real conditions of its own suspension. The result is: the tendentially and potentially general development of the forces of production—of wealth as such—as a basis; likewise, the universality of intercourse, hence the world market as a basis. The basis as the possibility of the universal development of the individual, and the real development of the individuals from this basis as a constant suspension of its *barrier*, which is recognized as a barrier, not taken for a *sacred limit*. Not an ideal or imagined universality of the individual, but the universality of his real and ideal relations. Hence also the grasping of his own history as a *process*, and the recognition of nature (equally present as practical power over nature) as his real body. The process of development itself posited and known as the presupposition of the same. For this, however, necessary above all that the full development of the forces of production has become the *condition of production*; and not that specific *conditions of production* are posited as a limit to the development of the productive forces.¹⁴

¹⁴ Marx, *Grundrisse*, pp. 541–542.

If this process is to concern individuals, capital has to be destroyed and the productive forces have to be for human beings. In the article, "La KAPD et le mouvement prolétarien,"¹⁵ we referred to this passage to indicate that the human being is a possibility, giving a foundation to the statement: the revolution must be human. This is in no way a discourse on the human being conceived as invariant in every attribute, a conception that would merely be a restatement of the immutability of human nature. But we have to point out that this is still insufficient, since the development of productive forces which, according to Marx, will take place in a superior mode of production, is precisely the same development presently carried out by capital. The limit of Marx is that he conceived communism as a new mode of production where productive forces blossom. These forces are undoubtedly important, but their existence at a certain level does not adequately define communism.

For Marx, capital overcomes its contradictions by engulfing them and by mystifying reality. It can only apparently overcome its narrow base, its limited nature, which resides in the exchange of capital-money against labor force. Capital must inevitably come into conflict with this presupposition; thus Marx speaks of the opposition between private appropriation and socialization of production. Private appropriation of what? Of surplus value, which presupposes the proletariat, and thus the wage relation. But the entire development of capital (and Marx's own explanations are a precious aid in understanding it) makes the mystification effective, making capital independent of human beings, thus enabling it to avoid the conflict with its presupposition. One might say that the conflict nevertheless persists, as a result of

¹⁵*Invariance*, Série 11, No. 1.

the total process: socialization. This is true. But the socialization of production and of human activity, the universal development of the productive forces and thus the destruction of the limited character of the human being—all this was only a *possible* ground for communism; it did not pose communism automatically. Furthermore, the action of capital tends constantly to destroy communism, or at least to inhibit its emergence and realization. To transform this possible ground into reality, human intervention is necessary. But Marx himself showed that capitalist production integrates the proletariat. How could the destruction of human beings and of nature fail to have repercussions on the ability of human beings to resist capital and, *a fortiori*, to rebel?

Some will think we are attributing to Marx a position that is convenient to us. We will cite an extraordinary passage:

What precisely distinguishes capital from the master-servant relation is that the *worker* confronts [capital] as consumer and possessor of exchange values, and that in the form of the *possessor of money*, in the form of money he becomes a simple center of circulation—one of its infinitely many centers, in which his specificity as worker is extinguished.¹⁶

One of the modalities of the reabsorption of the revolutionary power of the proletariat has been to perfect its character as consumer, thus catching it in the mesh of capital. The proletariat ceases to be the class that negates; after the formation of the working class it dissolves into the social body. Marx anticipates the poets of the “consumer society” and, as in other instances, he explains a phenomenon that is observed only later

¹⁶ Marx, *Grundrisse*, pp. 420–421.

and then falsely, if only in terms of the name given to it.

The preceding observations do not lead to a fatalistic conception (this time negative), such as: whatever we do, there's no way out; it's too late; or any other mindless defeatism that would generate a sickening patch-work reformism. First we have to draw the lesson. Capital has run away from human and natural barriers; human beings have been domesticated: this is their decadence. The revolutionary solution cannot be found in the context of a dialectic of productive forces where the individual would be an element of the contradiction. Present-day scientific analyses of capital proclaim a complete disregard for human beings who, for some, are nothing but a residue without consistency. This means that the discourse of science is the discourse of capital, or that science is possible only after the destruction of human beings; it is a discourse on the pathology of the human being. Thus it is insane to ground the hope of liberation on science. The position is all the more insane where, as with Althusser, it cannot make its own break, liquidate its "archeology," since it remains faithful to a proletariat—a proletariat that in this conception is merely an object of capital, an element of the structure. But this inefficient, destroyed human being is the individual produced by class societies. And on this we agree: the human being is dead. The only possibility for another human being to appear is our struggle against our domestication, our emergence from it. Humanism and scientism (and the followers of "ethical science" *à la* Monod are the most absolute slaves of capital) are two expressions of the domestication of humanity. All those who nurse the illusion of the decadence of capital revive ancient humanist conceptions or give birth to new scientific myths. They remain impermeable to the revolutionary phenomenon running through our world.

Until now all sides have argued as if human beings remained unchanged in different class societies and under the domination of capital. This is why the role of the social context was emphasized (man, who was fundamentally good, was seen to be modified positively or negatively by the social context) by the materialist philosophers of the eighteenth century, while marxists emphasized the role of an environment conditioned by the development of productive forces. Change was not denied, and after Marx it was repeated that history was a continual transformation of human nature. Nevertheless it was held explicitly or implicitly that an irreducible element continued to allow human beings to revolt against the oppression of capital. And capitalism itself was described in a Manichean manner: on one side the positive pole, the proletariat, the liberating class; on the other the negative pole, capital. Capital was affirmed as necessary and as having revolutionized the life of human beings, but it was described as an absolute evil in relation to the good, the proletariat. The phenomenon which emerges today does not in the least destroy the negative evaluation of capital, but forces us to generalize it to the class that was once antagonistic to it and carried within itself all the positive elements of human development and today of humanity itself. This phenomenon is the recomposition of a community and of human beings by capital, reflecting human community like a mirror. The theory of the looking glass could only arise when the human being became a tautology, a reflection of capital. Within the world of the despotism of capital (this is how society appears as of today), neither a good nor an evil can be distinguished. Everything can be condemned. Negating forces can only arise outside of capital. Since capital has absorbed all the old contradictions, the revolutionary movement has to reject the entire product of the development of class societies. This is

the crux of its struggle against domestication, against the decadence of the human species. This is the essential moment of the process of formation of revolutionaries, absolutely necessary for the production of revolution.

Jacques Camatte

May, 1973

Translated by Fredy Perlman and Friends

AGAINST DOMESTICATION

The time we are now living through is without doubt the most critical period capitalist society has ever known. All the features that we associate with the classic crisis now exist as a permanent state of affairs, though production itself has not been affected, except to a limited extent in certain countries. Social relations and traditional consciousness are decomposing all around us, while at the same time each institution in society proceeds to ensure its survival by recuperating the movement that opposes it. (An obvious example here is the Catholic Church, which has lost count of all the “modernizations” it has embraced). One would think that the violence and torture which is now endemic everywhere would have people mobilized and up in arms against it, but instead it continues to flourish on a world scale. Indeed, the situation today makes the “barbarism” of the Nazis seem in comparison rather unprofessional, quite archaic in fact. All the conditions would seem to be ripe; there should be revolution. Why then is there such restraint? What is to stop people from transforming all these crises and disasters, which are themselves the result of the latest mutation of capital, into a catastrophe for capital itself?

The explanation for this is to be found in the domestication of humanity, which comes about when capital constitutes itself as a human community. The process starts out with the fragmentation and destruction of human beings, and the final out-

come is that capital is anthropomorphized. The domestication of humanity is closely bound up with another phenomenon that has intensified even further the passivity of human beings: capital has in effect “escaped.” Economic processes are out of control and those who are in a position to influence them now realize that in the face of this they are powerless: they have been completely outmaneuvered. At the global level, capital’s escape is evident in the monetary crisis;¹ overpopulation, pollution, and the exhaustion of natural resources. The domestication of humanity and escape of capital are concepts that can explain the mentality and activity of those who claim to be revolutionaries and believe that they can intervene to hasten the onset of revolution: the fact is that they are playing roles that are a part of the old world. The revolution always eludes them and when there is any kind of upheaval they see it as something external to them, which they have to chase after in order to be acknowledged as “revolutionaries.”

For a considerable time, human beings have, strictly speaking, been outstripped by the movement of capital, which they are no longer able to control. This explains why some people think that the only solution is flight into the past, as with the fashionable preoccupation with mysticism, zen, yoga, and tantraism in the U.S.A. Others would rather take refuge in the old myths that reject the total and all-pervading tyranny of sci-

¹ What we call the monetary crisis involves more than just determining the price of gold or redefining its role: nor is it merely a question of establishing a new general equivalent (a new standard altogether), or setting fixed parities among national currencies, or integrating the economies of the East into the money markets (capital as totality—Marx). The monetary crisis is about the role of capital in its money form, or, more precisely, the superseding of the money form itself, just as there has been a supersession of the commodity form.

ence and technology. (Often this is all combined with the use of some drug that gives the illusion of the rapid arrival of a world different from the horror we are now living through.)² On the other hand, there are people who say that only science and technology can be relied upon to provide the answers—which would explain why certain women in the feminist movement are able to envisage their emancipation through parthenogenesis or by the production of babies in incubators.³ There are others who believe they can fight against violence by putting forward remedies against aggressiveness, and so on. These people all subscribe, in a general way, to the proposition that each problem presupposes its own particular scientific solution. They are therefore essentially passive, since they take the view

² Worse than the “heartless world” Marx speaks of in *The Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*.

³ The presupposition underlying such an absurd demand is the supposed biological inferiority of women, which is a scientific illusion. Science has discovered a defect in women and decrees that it is up to science to remedy it. If men are no longer needed (because of parthenogenesis) and if women aren’t needed either (since embryos and even ovaries may be developed in vials), then we are left with the question of whether there is any need for the human species after all. Has it not become redundant? These people seem to believe in solving everything by mutilation. Why not do away with pain by eliminating the organs of sensitivity? Social and human problems cannot be solved by science and technology. Their only effect when used is to render humanity even more superfluous.

Obviously, no one can make a judgment about the feminist movement as a whole just by reference to that aspect now being discussed. The feminist movement is of great importance in the struggle against capital, and it is a subject we hope to take up in the future. In its critique of capitalist society and the traditional revolutionary movement, it has made a remarkable contribution.

that the human being is a simple object to be manipulated. They are also completely unequipped to create new interhuman relationships (which is something they have in common with the adversaries of science); they are unable to see that a scientific solution is a capitalist solution, because it eliminates humans and lays open the prospect of a totally controlled society.⁴

We now come to the category of people who feel that they have to “do something”: they are now having to realize that their understanding of the situation is totally inadequate, and their efforts to conceal this fact only makes their powerlessness more obvious. The “silent majority,” who make up the rest, are permeated with the belief that it is pointless to do anything, because they simply have no perspective. Their silence is not consent pure and simple, but rather evidence of their incapacity to intervene in any way. The proof of this is that when they are mobilized, it is never for something but against it. Their particular passivity is therefore negative.

It is important to note that the two groups referred to above—the activists and the silent majority—cannot be catalogued simply as left and right: the old political dichotomy no longer operates here. The confusion that this raises is nevertheless important in relation to the attitude taken toward science, since in the past it was people on the left who were very committed to science, whereas now it is being condemned by the New Left (in the United States for example). The left-right dichotomy lives on, however, among the old regroupments, the parties of the left and right, and all the rackets of the past, but these oppositions have all ceased to matter: in one way or

⁴ In the original French the author frequently uses the expressions “men,” “man,” or “mankind,” as well as “humans,” or “human beings.” Where the false generic “man,” etc. does occur it has been changed, even though this must involve a distortion of what was originally intended [Translator’s note].

another they each defend capital equally. The most active of all are the various communist parties because they defend capital by espousing exactly the same scientific forms and rational structures that capital uses to maintain itself.

All the movements of the left and right are functionally the same inasmuch as they all participate in a larger, more general movement toward the destruction of the human species. Whether people stay confined within certain obsolete strategies and forms, or whether they submit to the mechanisms of technology—either way the result is the same. Historically, the categories of left and right seem to emerge as a duality at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the capitalist mode of production was beginning to exert its real domination over the process of production, and was becoming a true social force. Thus certain people like Carlyle found themselves in opposition to the apologists of capital,⁵ but it was left to Marx to go further:

⁵ This struggle of people against capital has only ever been seen through the narrow focus of class. The only way to be regarded as a real adversary of capital has been to actively identify oneself with the proletariat: all else is romantic, petit bourgeois, etc.... But the very act of reasoning in classist terms means that any particular class is confined within the limits of class analysis. This is particularly important when one considers that the working class has as its mission the elimination of all classes. It also avoids the question of how that class will bring about its own autodestruction, since this classist analysis prevents any lessons being drawn from the tragic intellectual fate of those people who set themselves in opposition to capital without even recognizing or identifying their enemy (as with Bergson, for example). Today, when the whole classist approach has been deprived of any solid base, it may be worthwhile to reconsider movements of the right and their thinking. The right is a movement of opposition to capital that seeks to restore a moment that is firmly rooted in the past. Hence in order to eliminate class conflict, the excesses of capitalist individualism, speculation, and so on, the

he affirmed the necessity of developing productive forces (and therefore science and technology as well), and at the same time denounced their negative effects on people in the immediate sit-

Action Française and the Nouvelle Action Française (NAF) envisage a community that can only be guaranteed, according to them, by a system of monarchy. (See particularly the chapter on capitalism in *Les Dossiers de l'Action Française*).

It seems that every current or group that opposes capital is nonetheless obliged to focus always on the human as the basis of everything. It takes diverse forms, but it has a profoundly consistent basis and is surprisingly uniform wherever human populations are found. Thus by seeking to restore (and install) the *Volksgemeinschaft*, even the Nazis represent an attempt to create such a community (cf. also their ideology of the *Urmensch*, the "original man"). We believe that the phenomenon of Nazism is widely misunderstood: it is seen by many people only as a demonic expression of totalitarianism. But the Nazis in Germany had reintroduced an old theme originally theorized by German sociologists like Tönnies and Max Weber. And so in response, we find the Frankfurt school, and most notably Adorno, dealing in empty and sterile concepts of "democracy," due to their incapacity to understand the phenomenon of Nazism. They have been unable to grasp Marx's great insight, which was that he posed the necessity of reforming the community, and that he recognized that this reformation must involve the whole of humanity.

The problems are there for everybody: they are serious, and they urgently require solutions. People try to work them out from diverse political angles. However, it is not these problems that determine what is revolutionary or counterrevolutionary, but the solutions put forward (i.e., are they effective or not?). And here the racketeer's mentality descends upon us once again: each gang of the left or the right carves out its own intellectual territory; anyone straying into one or the other of these territories is automatically branded as a member of the relevant controlling gang. Thus we have reification: the object is determinant, the subject passive.

uation. But he thought that all this would eventually lead to a contradiction such that the development of productive forces would no longer be possible without the destruction of the capitalist mode of production. Thereafter these forces would be directed by people themselves, and alienation would cease to exist. But this was to presuppose that capital would not be able to become truly autonomous, that it could not escape from the constraints of the social and economic base on which it is built: the law of value, the exchange of capital and labor power, the rigorous general equivalent (gold), and so on.

By simply having interiorized the social base on which it is built, capital has become autonomous, from which point it has then been able to make its escape. The headlong plunge of its development over a number of years has now let loose grave dangers for humanity and for the whole of nature. Not even the keen-witted experts and the droning old bores can remain aloof any longer from the dangers that now confront us. To a certain degree, they are even obliged to join in the company of those who talk in terms of an apocalyptic future. The apocalypse is fashionable because our world is nearing its end, a world in which human beings, in spite of all the evidence of their weakness and degradation, had always remained the norm, the reference point of the world. But having been presented with the fact that God is dead, we now hear the proclamation of the death of the human being. Both God and humans yield in turn to science, which is at once the goddess and servant of capital: science presents itself in today's world as the study of mechanisms of adaptation that will assimilate human beings and nature into the structure of capital's productive activity. All the signs indicate that it is those who are least destroyed as people, and particularly young people, who now find themselves unable to accept this onslaught of adaptation and domestication; hence they are impelled to refuse the system.

The process of domestication is sometimes brought about violently, as happens with primitive accumulation; more often it proceeds insidiously because revolutionaries continue to think according to assumptions that are implicit in capital and the development of productive forces, and all of them share in exalting the one divinity, science. Hence domestication and repressive consciousness have left our minds fossilized more or less to the point of senility; our actions have become rigidified and our thoughts stereotyped. We have been the soulless, frozen masses fixated on the past, believing all the time that we were gazing ahead into the future. But at the time of May/June '68, a new life erupted and the movement of growth toward communism was taken up again. No new theory was produced, nor did any new modes of action appear. The important fact was that the struggle had a new aim. It had nothing to do with politics, ideology, science, or even social science (the latter having been totally discredited). Rather, it was a specific and vital need asserted against this society and independently of it: to end the passivity imposed by capital, to rediscover communication between people and to unleash free creativity and unrestrained imagination in a movement of human becoming.

The Mythology of the Proletariat

With the advent of May/June '68 everything changed—and everything has kept on changing ever since. This is why it is not possible to understand the lycée insurrection of 1973 (discussed below) and its possible potential except in relation to this earlier movement.

According to our analysis of it, the activity of May / June '68 was clear evidence that revolution had positively reemerged, signifying the beginning of a new revolutionary cycle. But our argument here proceeded according to a classist

analysis: thus we went on to declare that the May movement would result in the proletariat being recalled to its class base. More than this, we found in the events of that period confirmation of our belief that the revolution would follow a course of development along lines laid down by Marx. But in point of fact, the first classes to rise up in 1968 were the social strata closest to the established society, made up of people whose objective interests were closely aligned with those of the state. The oppressed classes followed on later, and it was they who radically resolved the contradictions that the other social strata wanted only to reform. Now the course of development followed by the English and French revolutions provided the underlying substance from which Marx's thought was molded. Thus in the case of the French revolution, the nobility intervened in the situation in the very early stages, this being the famous nobles' revolt, which took place some years before 1789, which picked up and aided the struggle of the bourgeoisie (at the same time preparing the way for enlightened despotism). There then followed the bourgeois strata less tied to the state, which formed, as Kautsky remarked, a kind of intelligentsia. Only then, with the failure of reform, the internal collapse of the system, and the fall of the monarchy, were the peasants and artisans drawn in (the fourth estate, the future proletariat), and it was they who created the final decisive break and ensured that there would be no turning back. Without them, the revolution, inasmuch as it involved a change in the mode of production, would have taken much longer. In Russia there was a similar pattern of development. The suggestion here is that those who are most oppressed and have the greatest objective interest in rebelling—and who form, according to some, the true revolutionary class—can only in fact bring themselves into movement during a period when there has already been a rupture at the core of society, and the state has been considerably

weakened. Out of the turmoil there begins to emerge a new perspective, if only through the realization that life is not going to continue as before, that it has become necessary to find some other way. This process is one of those elements that gives every revolution a character that is not strictly classist. It will be more accentuated in the case of the communist revolution, because it won't be the activity of one class only, but of humanity rising up against capital.

At the center of what we at one time ventured to call the universal class, or more simply humanity (for both are now the slaves of capital), there are social strata that exist in very close affinity with capital, (i.e., the new middle classes and the students) who are rebelling against the system. They see themselves as distinct strata in society to the extent that they claim to be able to detonate a movement that will revolutionize the proletariat and set it in motion—but this is just a caricature of revolution, dragged out for the occasion dressed up in all its old regalia, awkwardly going through the same old motions.

The classist analysis that we adopted originally could never do more than interpret real events. The same shortcoming affected the participants of May '68 and made it possible for them to perceive themselves according to the old schemas. It is becoming increasingly obvious that these active participants were men and women who were personally and very intimately involved in the life and functioning of capital, and more especially were having to justify and maintain its representation,⁶ who then went into revolt against it. But their revolt is completely recuperable as long as it moves on the worn-out road of class struggle, which aspires to awaken the proletariat and make it accomplish its mission.

⁶We are speaking here of technicians, intellectuals, politicians, and economists, like the members of the Club of Rome, Mansholt, Dumont, Laborit, etc.

Here we meet a clear impasse. The role of the proletariat has been to destroy the capitalist mode of production in order to liberate the productive forces imprisoned within it: communism was to begin only after this action was accomplished. But far from imprisoning the productive forces, capitalism raises them to new heights, because they exist for the benefit of capital, not humanity. The proletariat, therefore, is superfluous. The reversal referred to just now, whereby the productive forces are liberated by capital, rather than by the proletariat, which has been made possible thanks to the development of science, is a development in parallel with the domestication of human beings. Their domestication is their acceptance of the development of capital as theorized by marxism, which is itself the arch-defender of the growth of productive forces. In the course of this development, the proletariat as producer of surplus-value has been denied even this function by the generalization of wage labor and the destruction of any possible distinction between productive and unproductive work. The once-revered proletariat has now become the strongest upholder of the capitalist mode of production. What does the proletariat want? And those who speak in the name of the proletariat and happily venerate its name—what do they want? If it is full employment and self-management, this would only ensure the permanent continuity of the capitalist mode of production since it has now become humanized. The left all believe that the process of production, being rationality in action, only needs to be made to function for human needs. But this rationality is capital itself.

The mythology of the proletariat accounts for how the “populism” of May '68, as we called it, became “proletarianism.” People started to say: “We must go to the proletariat, revive its fighting spirit, summon up its capacities for

self-sacrifice, and then it can kick out the evil bosses and follow the other 'proletarians' down the road to revolution."

May '68 ushered in a period of great scorn and confusion. People were scornful of themselves because they weren't "proletarian," and they scorned each other for the same reason, whereas they were all confused about the proletariat, the class that had always been considered potentially revolutionary. There is no other way to explain the impasse encountered by the movement that formed itself in opposition to the established society. This impasse did not, however, become clear all at once, because in the enthusiasm that followed May '68 the movement of opposition took on a certain life of its own, and the essential questions were allowed to remain on the sidelines. But not only this, the shock of May '68 caused a revival and a reemergence of the currents of the worker's movement that had up to then been held in great disdain by the established parties and consigned to oblivion: the council movement in all its variants, the old German Communist Workers Party (KAPD), the ideas of individuals like Lukacs and Korsch, and so on. This resurrection of the past was a sign that people had not grasped directly the reality of the situation, and that the situation itself was unable to engender new forms of struggle and other theoretical approaches. Nevertheless, to intellectually retrace that path already so well traveled is even still a form of revolt, because it won't bow to the tyranny of what has simply "happened." It can, moreover, be a starting point in finding out about the origins of the wandering of humanity, and a first step in confronting humanity's fate, which is to have been excluded from its own human context and condemned to the productivist sewer.

We were speaking earlier of an "impasse." As an image it is not as suggestive as we would like, but it is nevertheless the heart of the matter. It is like a wall that stands in front of all

the different groups of this vast current in society, and this wall is the proletariat and its representation.⁷ Militants go

⁷ Human beings are not constantly immersed in nature: existence is not always at one with essence, nor being with consciousness, and so on. This separation brings into being the need for representation. Once time is perceived as irreversible, the subject of the past is seen as distinct from the subject of the present, and thus memory begins to assume a determining role. It is here that representation interposes itself in order to provide a mediation. From such an understanding, the way is open to a reexamination of philosophy and science, a task that will have to be undertaken someday. Perhaps some readers may have been drawn to similar ideas (which are actually different because they leave aside the importance of representation in social contexts) in the work of Cardan and the social-imaginary, the situationists and the spectacle, and in the area of scholarship, Foucault's analysis of representation in the sixteenth century (which we took up in a study of the democratic mystification). We would like to clarify our own position on this: we employ the term "representation" in the same way as Marx did (*Vorstellung*) in order to indicate, for example, that value must be represented in a price. In "À propos du capital" (*Invariance* ser. III, no. 1), we discussed very briefly the way capital becomes representation, which then becomes autonomous, and how it can then only exist through being accepted and recognized by everyone as real. This is why people have now had to interiorize the representation of capital.

This whole question of representation is a very important one. From the moment when human beings and nature no longer exist together in an immediate unity (leaving aside for the moment the question of whether an "immediate unity" could ever have been possible), representation becomes necessary. Representation is the human appropriation of reality and our means of communication, and in this sense it can never be abolished: human beings cannot exist in an undifferentiated union with nature. The point is that representation must not be allowed to become autonomous, another expression of alienation.

from one group to another, and as they do so they “change” ideology, dragging with them each time the same load of intransigence and sectarianism. A few of them manage extremely large trajectories, going from leninism to situationism, to rediscover neobolshevism and then passing to councilism. They all come up against this wall and are thrown back further in some cases than in others. The wall is an effective barrier against any possible theoretical and practical combination. (In Germany you can even come across antiauthoritarian trotskysts, Korschist trotskysts, etc.)

Admittedly, within these groups, just as with certain individuals, there are aspects that are far from negative, since a certain number of things have been properly understood; but even this understanding is deformed by the jack-of-all-trades mentality which is the spiritual complement of coming together in a groupuscule.

In previous articles⁸ it has been clearly shown that it is not possible to find the key to the representation of the proletariat without first calling into question the marxist conception of the development of the productive forces, the law of value, and so on. Yet the proletariat is made into a fetish, and because it raises such strong ethical and practical implications, it is still the one element that weighs most heavily on the consciousness of revolutionaries. But once this fetish is challenged and seen for what it is, then the whole theoretical/ideological edifice just collapses in confusion. And yet there still seems to be this unspoken assumption that each individual must be attached to a

⁸ See the chapter “Growth of Productive Forces: Domestication of Human Beings” in Camatte: *The Wandering of Humanity* (Detroit, 1975). That work also contains a more detailed discussion of other matters raised in the present article, e.g., the marxist theory of the proletariat, repressive consciousness, etc. [Translator’s note].

group and be identified as a part of it in order to have the security and strength to face the enemy. There is the fear of being alone—accompanied nonetheless by a genuine realization that it is necessary to join together to destroy capitalism—but there is also the fear of individuality,⁹ an inability to confront in an autonomous way the fundamental questions of our period. It is another manifestation of the domestication of human beings suffering from the disease of dependency.

The Lycée Movement, Paris, 1973

Following on this, the real importance of the lycée movement (Spring, 1973) can be better appreciated. It brought into clear perspective something that had only been seen in outline in May '68: the critique of repressive consciousness.

⁹ This point was made clear by Norman O. Brown in *Eros and Thanatos*. The fear of individuality cannot by itself adequately explain the profound phenomenon whereby human beings are pressed into a mold, obliged to identify themselves as a certain type of being, and forced to submerge themselves within a group. People are afraid of themselves because they don't know themselves. Hence there is this need for a norm in order to be able to ward off the "excesses" that can afflict the social order as well as the individual heart. It would seem that the organizations within society are too fragile to allow the free development of human potentialities. With the capitalist mode of production everything is possible as an element of capitalization, but what is possible is all the time only what is permitted; this means that the individual is reduced to a modality of being that is either normal or abnormal; the totality meanwhile exists only within the discourse of capital, where it remains perverted and beyond reach.

The fear of individuality comes through very clearly in most of the utopias that depict the triumph of a despotic and egalitarian rationality.

Repressive consciousness originated with marxism insofar as the latter is a concrete formula for the future of the human species: proletarian revolution was supposed to come about when the development of the productive forces allowed it. This legalistic and repressive consciousness operates by explaining away popular uprisings, branding them as premature, petit bourgeois, the work of irresponsible elements, etc. It is a consciousness that goes to the roots of reification, because it can only be organized consciousness, taking the form of parties, unions, and groupuscules. Each of them organizes repression against those who are not organized, or who are not organized according to their particular methods. The difference between these organizations is measured by the amount of repression they are prepared to exercise.

Now the critique of repressive consciousness does not attack the myth of the proletariat directly by arguing over it, but rather more indirectly, by ignoring it and treating it with derision. The young people on this occasion didn't fall into the trap of looking to workerist organizations in order to form a unified front in the style of May '68. But politicians of all kinds went after them trying to get them "involved": the PCF, PS, PSU, CGT, CFDT¹⁰ and the rest went chasing after high school kids trying

¹⁰ The abbreviations refer to the Communist Party, the Socialist Party, the United Socialist Party and the two big labor confederations: CGT (Communist) and the CFDT ("independent" left). The agitation in the lycées emerged openly on 22 March when 30,000 young people demonstrated in Paris against the Debré law, which provided for 15 months' military service (previously two years) for all 18-year-olds, but with no deferment beyond the age of 21. During the first part of April there were more large demonstrations in Paris (one of them numbering 100,000 according to *The Times*, 10 April '73) and in many other cities in France and also Strasbourg. Strike Committees were formed in the lycées and

to persuade them that they were all somehow under the same banner. When the students broke away from the unitary demonstrations, as they very often did, out came the political masquerade obscenely offering itself for sale: the veteran political hacks and the hardened old temptresses of the PCF and the CGT, discovering five years after May '68 the political importance of youth, marching along demanding deferment for everyone, while the students looked on and jeered. It seemed almost as though the young people had been spirited off and their places taken by their elders!

More ridicule was in store for the politicians of every variety who affirmed once again during these events the primacy of the proletariat, declaring that the critical revolutionary moment was to be occasioned by a strike of skilled workers. This is because they can't conceive of revolution unless it appears dressed in overalls. Skilled workers do not threaten the capitalist system; the capitalist mode of production has long since accepted rises in wages, and as for working conditions, capital is well qualified to improve them. Thus the abolition of assembly line work is a well-recognized necessity in some bosses' circles.

The lycée movement belittled the institutions of society and their defenders. Those who wanted (albeit reluctantly) to bring themselves down to the level of "our valiant youngsters"

general assemblies were set up. These were often controlled by political militants (usually belonging to the trotskyist organizations, La Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire and L'Alliance Marxiste: the young Communists stayed with the existing student organizations), and these leaders succeeded, against some considerable opposition, in forging contacts with the trade unions, which had earlier issued long declarations of support for the striking lycéens. This led to the "unitary" demonstrations of 9 April where leaders of the CGT etc. marched at the head of the columns [Translator's note].

behaved ridiculously—after all, recuperation has to pay its price. On the other hand, those who wanted to counter the movement from within and didn't succeed, just proceeded to despise it, and in this manner they brought down a similar ridicule on themselves. But then it was the turn of the men of government: out they came, bleating about how we've already got deputies and a parliament and that we should make use of them to sort out the problems that remain unsolved. The young people acted as though none of this existed. Once again, as in May '68, there was no communication, no understanding between the two sides ("We're not closed to arguments, but really I don't know what it is they want" —Fontanet, the Education Minister). They fondly imagine that young people want to discuss with them and present opposing arguments. This is a revolution of life itself,¹¹ a search for another way of living. Dialogue should be concerned only with the plans and ideas for realizing this desire. No dialogue can take place between the social order and those who are to overthrow it. If dialogue is still seen as a possibility, then this would be an indication that the movement is faltering. Underlying all this is a profoundly important phenomenon: all human life, from the very beginning of its development within capitalist society, has undergone an impoverishment. More than this, capitalist society is death organized with all the appear-

¹¹ In 1964 Cardan saw that youth insurrections were very important, but he viewed them as something exterior that had to be made use of. This is the tribute that ideology pays to the old idea of consciousness coming from outside:

"The revolutionary movement will be able to give a positive direction to today's enormous youth revolt. If it can discover that new and true language which the youth is looking for, it can turn their revolt into a ferment of social transformation, and show them another activity for their struggle against the world which they now refuse." *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, No. 35, p. 35.

ances of life. Here it is not a question of death as the extinction of life, but death-in-life, death with all the substance and power of life. The human being is dead and is no more than a ritual of capital. Young people still have the strength to refuse this death; they are able to rebel against domestication. They demand to live. But to those great numbers of smugly complacent people, who live on empty dreams and fantasies, this demand, this passionate need, just seems irrational, or, at best, a paradise that is by definition inaccessible.

Youth remains a serious problem for capital because it is a part of society that is still undomesticated. The lycée students demonstrated not only against military service and the army, but also, and just as much, against the school, the university, and the family. Schools function as the organization of the passivity of the soul, and this is true even when active and libertarian methods are used; the liberation of the school would be the liberation of oppression. In the name of history, science, and philosophy, each individual is sent down a corridor of passivity, into a world surrounded by walls. Knowledge and theory are just so many insurmountable barriers that prevent one individual from recognizing other individuals, making dialogue between them impossible. Discourse must proceed along certain channels, but that's all. And then at the end of the pipeline, there is the army, which is a factory for domestication; it organizes people into a general will to kill others, structuring the dichotomy already imprinted in their minds by the secular morality of "my nation" and "other people," all of whom are potential enemies. People are trained and educated to know how to justify the unjustifiable—the killing of men and women.

We do not deny that this agitation before Easter had largely reformist tendencies. The reformist aspects were what attracted recuperation, but that is not what interests us here because it tells us nothing about the real movement of struggle of the

species against capital. As with May '68, this movement was superficial (though only a more radical agitation from beneath could have raised it to the surface in the first place), and it will open the door to an improved restructuring of the despotism of capital, enabling it better to realize its own "modernization."

The Despotism of Capital

Schools and universities are structures that are too rigid for the global process of capital, and the same thing holds true for the army.¹² The rapid decline of knowledge and the develop-

¹² On the subject of the army, we would insist that those arguments that attempt to distinguish between the volunteer, professional army and the conscript or national army are a fraud, an absurd blackmail. If you end military service, you are still left with a professional army, a praetorian guard, and the possibility of a fascist revival. (Certain leftist groups "intervened" during the agitation in 1973 demanding democratic and popular control of the national army [translator's note]). In practice, the present system in France is a mixture: a professional army that educates and trains the intake who then go to make up the national army. And where did this national army, much vaunted by Jaurès come from?—the *union sacrée* of 1914, the sacred slaughter that is venerated to this day. There is a book called *l'Armée Nouvelle* (10/18) that demonstrates the extent to which "fascism" had no need to invent a fresh theory in this area, since one had already been provided by the social democratic International. Jaurès wanted to reconcile army and nation, (which is exactly what Hitler wanted and managed to achieve.) The reconciliation was accomplished in 1914 when the brave Frenchmen gaily set out for the slaughter. How different it all was from Jaurès' cult of *la patrie*. "It was rooted in the very foundations of human life, and even, if we can put it this way, in people's physiology" (*l'Armée Nouvelle*, p. 268). And in Germany, at about the same time, Bebel was thinking along similar lines.

ment of mass media have destroyed the old school system. Teachers and professors are, from the point of view of capital, useless beings who will tend to be eliminated in favor of programmed lessons and teaching machines. (In just the same way, capital tends to eliminate the bureaucracy because it inhibits the transmission of information that is the very basis of capital's mobility.) It is ironic then that many people who argue for the necessity of life turn out to be readily convinced by solutions that entrust teaching to machines and thus eliminate human life. As a general rule, it may be said that all who embrace "modernization" are in fact provoking their own condemnation as individuals with a certain function in this society; they are demanding their own dispossession. But even those others who preach about the need to return to the rigid and authoritarian climate that prevailed before 1968 will not fare any better, because in order for their plans to succeed, they still have to depend on capital, and either way, left or right, capital profits equally.

Capital imposes its despotism on human beings by means of objects and things that are invested with new modes of being appropriate to capital's new requirements. It implies a world of things that are in rapid motion, constantly changing and differentiating themselves (a process that is clearly not unrelated to a feeling of meaninglessness). These qualities inevitably conflict with traditional social relations and previous ways of life, including previous ways of thinking. It is things that are the real subjects. They impose their own rhythm of life and ensure that people are confined to the level of their own single existences. But because objects and things are themselves governed and controlled by the movement of capital, there is always the possibility that this rising new oppression could actually set in motion an insurrectional movement against the society of capital itself. And yet capital in its turn is able to profit from subversion in order to consolidate itself, as it did during the early

years of this century. The revolt of the proletariat, confined as it was to the terrain of the factory and emphasizing the ordering of production, was a factor that actually aided capital in its movement toward real domination. The end result was the elimination of strata that were unnecessary for the progress of capital, the triumph of full employment, the abandonment of laissez-faire liberalism, and so on.

We are not suggesting that revolution should rise directly out of the conflict we were speaking of just now, nor are we saying that the instigators of it will be men and women who are ordinarily very conservative. The point we want to emphasize is this: capital must come to dominate all human beings, and in order to do this it can no longer depend entirely for its support on the old social strata that are in turn coming under threat themselves. This is a tendency that Franz Borkenau understood very precisely:

In this tremendous contrast with previous revolutions, one fact is reflected. Before these latter years, counter-revolution usually depended on the support of reactionary powers which were technically and intellectually inferior to the forces of revolution. This has changed with the advent of fascism. Now, every revolution is likely to meet the attack of the most modern, most efficient, most ruthless machinery yet in existence. It means that the age of revolutions free to evolve according to their own laws is over.¹³

We have got to remember that capital, as it constantly overthrows traditional patterns of life, is itself revolution. This should lead us to think again about the nature of revolution, and to realize that capital is able to take control of social forces in

¹³ Cited in Noam Chomsky: *American Power and the New Mandarins* (Pelican, 1969), p. 247.

order to overthrow the established order in insurrections directed against the very society that it already dominates.¹⁴ Never before have vision and understanding been more vitally necessary; every separate revolt now becomes a further stimulus for the movement of capital. But people have been robbed of their ability to think in a theoretical way and to perceive reality as part of the outcome of an historical process—this has happened as a result of the process of domestication. And in a similar way, this capacity for theoretical thought has been prevented from ever taking root in the material development of our planet and in us as a species due to the existence of a split between the mind and the body, and the old division between physical and intellectual work (which automated systems are now in the process of surmounting to capital's benefit).

Revolution can no longer be taken to mean just the destruction of all that is old and conservative, because capital has accomplished this itself. Rather it will appear as a return to something (a revolution in the mathematical sense of the term), a return to community, though not in any form that has existed previously. Revolution will make itself felt in the destruction of all that is most "modern" and "progressive" (because science is capital). Another of its manifestations will involve the reappropriation of all those aspects and qualities of life that have still managed to affirm that which is human. In attempting to grasp

¹⁴ The Asiatic mode of production experienced quite a number of very extensive insurrectional movements that effectively regenerated it. According to a number of historians, some revolts were even raised up by the state itself. Mao's great cultural revolution is only a replay of such revolts. These facts confirm the thesis we have advanced many times before about the convergence between the Asiatic mode of production, where classes could never become autonomous, and the capitalist mode, where they are absorbed.

what this tendency means, we cannot be aided by any of the old dualistic, manichean categories. (It is the same tendency that in the past had held back the valorization process in its movement toward a situation of complete autonomy.) If the triumph of communism is to bring about the creation of humanity, then it requires that this creation be possible, it must be a desire that has been there all the time, for centuries. Yet here again nothing is easy, obvious, free from doubts, and indeed one could have legitimate doubts about what it means to be human after the experience of colonialism and Nazism, and then a second colonialism that strives to maintain itself in spite of revolts in the oppressed countries (notorious massacres and tortures having been committed by the British in Kenya, the French in Algeria, and the Americans in Vietnam), and in the face of the brutal and deep-rooted violence that everywhere continues to rage unchecked. Indeed, could it be that humanity is too lost and sunk in its infernal wandering to save itself?

The Question of Violence

The movement that developed among the lycée students was an assertion of the communist revolution in its human dimension. The students took up the question of violence (though perhaps not in its full scope) in their refusal of the army, refusal of military service, and refusal of the universal right to kill. By contrast, the groupuscles of the left and extreme left, but not the anarchists, preach about the necessity of learning to kill because they think they can make death "rebound" on capital. But none of them (and this is particularly true of the most extreme elements) ever take into account the fact that they are suggesting the necessity of destroying human beings in order to accomplish this revolution. How can you celebrate a revolution with a rifle butt? To accept the army for one reason, whatever it

may be, is to strengthen the oppressive structure at every level. Any kind of argument on this subject serves only to reinstate the despotism of repressive consciousness, according to which people must repress the desire to not kill because killing will be required of them at some stage in the future. (And indeed some people are known to actually rejoice in this prospect). Repressive consciousness forces me to be inhuman under the pretext that on a day decreed by some theoretical destiny, I will at last metamorphosize into a human being.

[The various left and extreme left currents] try to ensure that there is no convergence between the “bourgeois” desire to see military service abolished and the libertarian pacifism which underlies conscientious objection, something that is always more or less latent among the young.

(T. Pfister, *Le Monde*, 27/Mar/73)

Violence is a fact of life in present-day society; the question now is how that violence can be destroyed. Revolution unleashes violence, but it has to be under our control and direction; it cannot be allowed to operate blindly, and it certainly cannot be glorified and widened in its field of action. Statements like this may sound reasonable enough, but they aren't particularly helpful unless we go on to consider more precisely the actual nature of violence, which is determined in the first instance by its object: thus violence directed against the capitalist system should be praised and encouraged, but not violence against people. But the capitalist system is represented by people, and it is these people who will often be overtaken by violence. This is where the question of the limitation of violence becomes relevant; if it is not raised, we are still living according to the prescriptions of capital. Granted that capital's despotism is maintained through generalized violence against people, it is also a

fact that it can only achieve this domination over people by first putting them in opposition to one another and then allotting them different roles. When conflicts occur, each side then represents the other as nonhuman (which is how the Americans saw the Vietnamese). If human beings are to be destroyed, they must first be despoiled of their humanity. And so if, during the revolutionary struggle people choose to proceed according to this view, are they not simply imitating the methods used by the capitalists, and thus furthering the destruction of human beings?

So we might ask what the leftists are playing at when they theorize about the destruction of the dominant class (rather than what supports it), or of the cops (“the only good cop is a dead one”)? One can make the equation $CRS = SS^{15}$ on the level of a slogan, because that accurately represents the reality of the two roles, but it does not justify the destruction of the people involved—for two reasons. First, it effectively rules out the possibility of undermining the police force. When the police feel they are reduced to the status of subhumans, they themselves go into a kind of revolt against the young people in order to affirm a humanity that is denied to them, and in so doing they are therefore not simply playing the part of killing/repression machines. Second, every riot cop and every other kind of cop is still a person. Each one is a person with a definite role like everyone else. It is dangerous to delegate all inhumanity to one part of the social whole, and all humanity to another. There

¹⁵ The CRS are the paramilitary riot police. In May 1979 a new variation on the old slogan appeared when the trotskysts of the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR) joined forces with the stalinists and the CRS in the violent repression directed against the “autonomes” during the demonstrations in Paris by the steel workers from Longwy and Denain: $LCR = CRS$, or $LCRS$ [Translator’s note].

is no question here of preaching nonviolence,¹⁶ but rather of defining precisely what violence must be exercised and to what purpose. In this connection, the following points should make the position clearer: first, all stereotypes and functions must be revealed for what they are—roles imposed on us by capital; second, we must reject the theory that postulates that all those individuals who defend capital should simply be destroyed; third, we cannot make exceptions on the ground that certain people are not free, that it is “the system” which produces both cops and revolutionaries alike. If this were correct, the logical conclusion would be either a position of nonviolence, or a situation where human beings become reduced to automatons, which would then justify every kind of violence against them. If right from the outset certain people are denied all possibility of humanity, how can they subsequently be expected to emerge as real human beings? So it is as human beings that they must be confronted. Now, though, the majority of people think in terms of the radical solution provided by class society—i.e., repress your opponents—even in this form the revolution would assert itself according to its true nature, namely, that it is human. When the conflict comes, as it inevitably will, there should be no attempt to reduce the various individuals who defend capital to the level of “bestial” or mechanical adversaries; they have to be put in the context of their humanity, for humanity is what they too know they are a part of and are potentially able to find again. In this sense the conflict takes on intellectual and spiritual dimensions. The representations that justify an individual person’s defense of capital must be revealed and demystified; people in this situation must become

¹⁶ Nonviolence is itself just an insidious, hypocritical form of violence, a sign of certain people’s inability to stand up for themselves as human beings.

aware of contradiction, and doubts should arise in their minds.

Terrorism also has to be viewed in this perspective. It is not sufficient just to denounce it as abhorrent. Those who accept terrorism have capitulated before the power of capital. Terrorism is concerned with more than just the destruction of some people: it is also an appeal to death in order to raise up a hypothetical revolt. That aspect should be fairly noted, without condemnation or approval, but it must be rejected as a plan of action.

Terrorism implies that the "wall" (the proletariat and its representation) is an impassable and indestructible barrier. Terrorism has admitted defeat, and all the recent examples of it are sufficient proof of this.

We must recognize that the crushing domination of capital affects everyone without exception. Particular groupings cannot be designated as "the elect," exempt from and unmarked by capital's despotism. The revolutionary struggle is a human struggle, and it must recognize in every person the possibility of humanity. Amid the conflict with the racketeers in their groupuscles, the "capitalists" and the police in all their forms, each individual must be violent with him/herself in order to reject, as outside themselves, the domestication of capital and all its comfortable, self-validating "explanations."

The Terrain of Struggle

None of this can take on its full meaning unless there is a simultaneous refusal of all obsolete forms of struggle. Like the May '68 movement but more so, the lycée movement emphasized very clearly that staying within the old forms of struggle inevitably leads to certain defeat. It is now becoming generally accepted that demonstrations, marches, spectacles, and shows don't lead anywhere. Waving banners, putting up posters, handing out leaflets, attacking the police are all activities that

perpetuate a certain ritual—a ritual wherein the police are always cast in the role of invincible subjugators. The methods of struggle therefore must be put through a thorough analysis because they present an obstacle to the creation of new modes of action. And for this to be effective, there has to be a refusal of the old terrain of struggle—both in the workplace and in the streets. As long as revolutionary struggle is conducted not on its own ground but on the terrain of capital, there can be no significant breakthrough, no qualitative revolutionary leap. This is where we must concentrate our attention; it is a question that has to be faced now if revolution is not to stagnate and destroy itself, a setback that could take years to recover from. If we are to successfully abandon the old centers of struggle, it will require a simultaneous movement toward the creation of new modes of life. What's the point of occupying the factories—like car factories for example—where production must be stopped anyway? The cry goes up: "Occupy the factories and manage them ourselves!" So all the prisoners of the system are supposed to take over their prisons and begin the self-management of their own imprisonment. A new social form is not founded on the old, and only rarely in the past do we find civilizations superimposed on one another. The bourgeoisie triumphed because it staged the battle on its own terrain, which is the cities. But in our present situation this can only be helpful to the emergence of communism that is neither a new society nor a new mode of production. Today humanity can launch its battle against capital not in the city, nor in the countryside, but outside of both:¹⁷ hence the necessity for communist forms to

¹⁷The old opposition between city and country clearly no longer exists. Capital has urbanized the planet; Nature has become mineralized (made inorganic). We are now seeing new conflicts between urban centers and those parts of the countryside where a few peasants still remain. Urban centers demand more and more water, which means

appear that will be truly antagonistic to capital, and also rallying points for the forces of revolution. Since the advent of May '68, capital has been obliged to take account of the fact that revolution had presented itself again as a vital imperative, a necessity. In response, the counterrevolution was compelled to adapt and remodel itself (remembering that it has no existence except in relation to revolution). But however much it tries by its usual methods to limit the development of its adversary, it can never totally succeed, because revolution will always present itself as real, and therefore as *irrational*. This irrationality is its fundamental characteristic. Whatever is rational in relation to the established order can be absorbed and recuperated. If revolution operates on the same terrain as its adversary, it can always be halted. It cannot rise up; it is thwarted in its most passionate desire, which is to realize its own project and to accomplish it *on its own ground*.

The attaining of a human community must be the goal toward which revolution moves. The revolutionary movement must therefore reflect within itself the same purpose and aim. The methods provided by class society lead us away from this goal; by their very nature they are inhuman, and it is therefore not possible to use them. Thus it is absurd to want to penetrate the structures of the established order to make them function in

building numerous reservoirs at distances of fifty or even a hundred miles from the city. This leads to the destruction of good agricultural land as well as land for hunting and fishing; it also results in the peasants being deprived of water since all sources are drawn off to fill the reservoirs and channels. This conflict can affect the same person from two angles if he/she lives in the town and owns a second "house in the country." We can see now that the problem extends well beyond the question of the traditional peasantry; it now involves the global relationship of people to the natural world and a reconsideration of their actual mode of being.

the interests of the revolutionary movement. Those who operate in this way are laboring under the mystification that the historical project approaches its truth and its end in capital. That mystification which presents the human being as inessential, not determinant, and useless has to be exposed. In the capitalist system humans have in effect become superfluous, but to the extent that humanity has preserved an unbroken human consistency from its earliest origins, it cannot be said to have been destroyed as long as the idea of revolt remains alive, and provided also that young people are not totally immobilized by domestication. All is still possible. In every case, struggle tends to revive the human essence that is preserved in each individual; struggle takes us out of the trap of perceiving others only as their reified outward appearance. Even where an individual has attained a high degree of reification and been transformed into an organic automaton of capital, there is still the possibility that the whole construction could break apart. Here, we would do well to follow an old piece of advice from Marx: It's not enough to make the chains visible, they must become shameful. Each individual should experience a crisis. In conflicts with the police, the impulse should be not only to eliminate a repressive force that presents an obstacle to the communist movement but also to bring down the system, provoking in the minds of the police a sense of human resurgence.

This can never happen if the old methods of direct confrontation continue to be used; we have got to find new methods, such as treating all institutions with contempt and ridicule¹⁸ by leaving them trapped and isolated in their own

18 Which is how one would have to regard the actions of those American psychiatrists who voluntarily commit themselves to psychiatric clinics, thereby demonstrating that there is no system of knowledge capable of defining madness. (We might add that the production of actual madness is necessary to the existence of capital.)

concerns. It would be absurd to theorize and make generalizations about this. But we can be certain of one thing: it has proved effective in the past, and it will be again, but we must invent a host of other different modes of action. The essential point is to understand that the terrain and methods of struggle must be changed; this necessity has been understood in a limited and sometimes negative way by people who abandon everything and go on the roads, expressing their desire to leave the vicious circle of struggles that go on in the day-to-day world.

The leftists persist in their well-known cycle of provocation-repression-subversion, which is all supposed to bring about revolution at some precise time in the future. But this conception of revolution is totally inadmissible because it means sacrificing men and women in order to mobilize others. Communist revolution does not demand martyrs because it does not need to make any demands. The martyr becomes the bait that attracts the followers. What would then be the use of a revolution that uses death as a bait in this way?¹⁹ But then there is always someone who dies at just the right time (or the victim's demise may even be "facilitated"), and someone else goes around shaking the cadaver in order to attract the revolutionary flies.

Since the communist revolution is the triumph of life, it cannot in any way glorify death, or seek to exploit it, since this would be putting itself once more on the terrain of class society. There are some who would compare or substitute "those who fell in the revolution" with those who died in the service of capital: but it's all just the same old carnival of carrion!

Revolution is never presented as having the scope of a nec-

19 Death has become an essential element in people's coming to consciousness of themselves, but such consciousness is transmitted only with great difficulty. The passage from the exterior to the interior is too laborious, but fortunately the expedients and shortcuts are there.

essary and also a naturally occurring phenomenon, and this misunderstanding has serious consequences. It always seems that revolution depends strictly on some group or other radiating true consciousness. We are faced today with the following alternatives: either there is actual revolution—the whole process, from the formation of revolutionaries to the destruction of the capitalist mode of production—or there is destruction, under one form or another, of the human species. There is no other possibility. When revolution is unleashed there will be no need to justify what is happening; rather it will be a question of being powerful enough to avoid abuses and excesses. And this is possible only if individual men and women, before the revolutionary explosion, begin to be autonomous: since they don't need any leaders, they can gain mastery over their own revolt.

Obviously in the present circumstances people can only go so far in this direction; but the only way it has a chance of true realization is by rejecting that cannibalistic discourse which presents revolution as a settling of scores, as a physical extermination of one class or group of people by another. If communism really is a necessity for the human species, it has no need of such methods to impose itself.

In general, most revolutionaries doubt that revolution will ever come about, but in order to convince themselves that it will, they have to justify it to themselves in some way. This allows them to deal with the waiting, but it also masks the fact that most of the time manifestations of real revolution pass them by. To exorcise their doubt they resort to verbal violence (again a substitute) and are constantly engaged in desperate and obstinate proselytizing. The justification process works like this: as soon as they've made some recruits, this is taken as proof that the situation is favorable, and so the level of agitation must be stepped up, and so on and so on. According to this scheme of things, revolution means agitation, which means bringing conscious-

ness from outside. They haven't yet grasped the fact that revolution is accomplished precisely when there is no one left to defend the old order; revolution triumphs because there are no more adversaries. The point is that everything is going to be different afterward, which is where the problem of violence again becomes relevant. The necessity for communism is a necessity that extends to all people. During the ferment of revolution this is a truth that will become evident in a more or less confused way. It does not mean that people will somehow be rid of all the old rubbish of the previous society overnight. It means that those who will be making the revolution will be people of the right as well as the left; thus when the superstructural elements of the capitalist system are destroyed and the global process of production halted, the presuppositions of capital will remain intact, and the old forms of behavior and the old schemas will tend to reappear because it seems that each time humanity embarks on a new opportunity, a creation, it tends to wrap it up in the forms of the past and readapt it to the times. Certainly, the communist revolution will not develop in the same way as previous revolutions, but if its scope is limited to any degree, it will nonetheless still be part of the content of the postrevolutionary movement. The movement will tend to give new dimensions to the human community, reaffirming and strengthening what will have emerged during the course of revolution. It is at this stage, when things are difficult, that the old institutional forms can reappear, and some elements may want to reassert their privileges in a disguised form and try to make solutions prevail that favor them. Others might want to reintroduce self-management. They still will not have understood that communism is not a mode of production, but a new mode of being.

This is also the time when the old practice of categorizing everything, so characteristic of all rackets, must be eliminated once and for all. We have to understand that new things can

spring up draped in the mantle of the past; it would be a major error to consider only these superficial semblances of the past to the exclusion of everything else. It's not a question of seeing the postrevolutionary movement as the apotheosis of immediate reconciliation, when by some miracle the oppressiveness of the past will abolish itself. Granted that the new mode of being will generalize itself through effective struggle, the issue then becomes the modality of that struggle. Any sectarian or inquisitorial spirit is lethal to the revolution—which is all the more reason why the classical dictatorship is out of the question, since this would mean reestablishing a mode of being that is intrinsic to class society. The period of intermediate change cannot be transcended except through a diverse expression of liberation by multifarious human beings. This is the pressure that communism brings to bear. It is a pressure exerted by the great majority of human beings seeking to create the human community that will allow and enable them to remove all obstacles barring their way. This affirmation of life is what Marx had in mind when he said “if we assume man to be man, and his relation to the world to be a human one, then love can be exchanged only for love, trust for trust....” Violent clashes can only be exceptional.

Those who believe that what is required is a dictatorship have already conceded in their minds that human society will never be ready to grow toward communism. It is a long, painful, and difficult road to that extraordinary realization that the mystification no longer holds, that the wandering of humanity was leading to its own destruction, and that this was largely due to the fact that it had entrusted its destiny to the monstrous, autonomized system of capital.²⁰ Men and women will come to realize that they themselves are the determining elements, and that they

²⁰ A process described as “prosthesis” by Cesarano and Collu in *Apocalisse e Rivoluzione* (Dedalo, Bari, 1973). The book presents

do not have to abdicate their power to the machine, and alienate their being in the false belief that this will lead to happiness.

The moment this point is reached, it's all over, and going back will be impossible. The entire representation of capital will collapse like a house of cards. People whose minds are free from capital will be able to find themselves and their fellow creatures as well. From this time onward, the creation of a

itself as "a manifesto for biological revolution," and no resumé could do justice to its great richness of thought. (The authors also take up the question of representation and symbolism in social relations. See note 7). Here are two passages that give a small insight into their position:

The progressive thinkers who produced the MIT report (*Man's Impact on the Global Environment*, 1972) and also the propositions put forward by Mansholt all suggest that capital cannot survive unless it continually increases the volume of commodity production (the basis of its valorization process). But they are mistaken in this if their understanding of commodity is restricted to things. It doesn't matter whether the commodity form is a thing or "a person." In order for capital to continue its growth it requires only this: that within the process of circulation there must be a moment when one commodity of whatever kind assumes the task of exchanging itself for A in order to subsequently exchange itself with \bar{A} . In theory this is perfectly possible, provided that constant capital, instead of being invested mainly in projects to manufacture objects, is devoted to projects designed to create corporate people ("social services," "personnel services") [p. 82].

Fiction (*le fictif*) reaches its final peak of coherence when it is able to present itself as a complete representation, and hence as an organization of appearances which is completely unreal: ultimately it is able to separate itself definitively from the concrete, to such a degree that it disappears altogether. (Thus fiction is the essence of all reli-

human community can no longer be halted.

Ideology, science, art and the rest, through the entire range of institutions and organizations act together to instill the belief that human beings are inessential and powerless to act.²¹ More than this, they all enforce the idea that if we seem to have arrived at a particular stage of social evolution, it is because it could not have been otherwise from the very beginning when we first appropriated and developed technology. There is a certain fatality that surrounds technology: if we do not embrace it, we cannot progress. All we can do is remedy certain shortcomings, but we cannot escape the workings of the machine, which is this society itself. The trap has been closed, people have been immobilized, and the determining factor here is the representation of capital—it represents itself (i.e., capital) as a rational social process, which gives rise to the feeling that the system can no longer be perceived as oppressive. In order to explain any negative aspects, capital simply invokes categories designated as “outside of capital.”

The long habit of mind that has allowed human intelligence to be a host for the parasitical representation of capital has to be

gions). The human species will be able to emancipate itself definitively from prosthesis and free itself from fiction and religion only when it openly *recognizes itself* as subjectivity acting as an indissoluble part of the organic movement of nature in its global process. Biological revolution consists in reversing once and for all the relationship which has been a feature of all prehistory (i.e., all the period preceding the communist revolution), whereby the physical existence of the species is subordinated to the role of the social mechanism; it is the emancipation of organic subjectivity, the taming of the machine once and for all in whatever form it may appear [p. 153].

²¹ We are referring here not to the human being as an individual existing in a particular historical period, but as an invariant constant.

broken down. The mentality and behavior of the servant (whose master is capital) must be eradicated. This need is now all the more urgent as the old dialectic of master and slave is tending to disappear in the process whereby even the slave—the human being—is becoming redundant.

The Global Perspective

The struggle against domestication has to be understood at the global level, where important forces are also beginning to emerge. The *a priori* universal rationality of capitalism can be demystified only when we begin to seriously question the unilinear scheme of human evolution and also the notion that the capitalist mode of production has been progressive for all countries.

Those particular countries that according to the prophets of growth and the “economic miracle” are underdeveloped or on the road to development are really countries where the capitalist mode of production has failed to establish itself. In Asia, South America, and Africa there are millions of people who have not yet fully succumbed to the despotism of capital. Their resistance is usually negative in the sense that they are unable to pose for themselves another community. It is therefore essential to maintain a worldwide network of human debate that only the communist revolution can transform into a movement for the establishing of a new community. Moreover, during the revolutionary explosion this network or pole will have a determining influence in the work of destroying capital.

In those countries labeled as underdeveloped, the youth have risen up (in Ceylon, in Madagascar in 1972, and less strongly in Senegal, Tunisia, Zaire, etc....), and expressed in different ways the same need and necessity that is felt in the West. For over ten years the insurrection of youth has demonstrated that its fundamental characteristic is that of antidomestication. Without

wanting to prophesy any certain outcome, it is important to try to discern in this some kind of perspective. In May '68 we again took up Bordiga's forecast about a revival of the revolutionary movement around 1968, and revolution for the period 1975-1980. This is a "prediction" we remain attached to. Recent political/social and economic events confirm it, and the same conclusion is being arrived at by various writers. The capitalist mode of production finds itself in a crisis that is shaking it from its highest to its lowest levels. It is not a 1929-style crisis, though certain aspects of that crisis can reappear; rather it is a crisis of profound transformation. Capital must restructure itself in order to be able to slow down the destructive consequences of its global process of production. The whole debate about growth shows very clearly that this concern is real. The experts think they can simply draw attention to the movement of capital and proclaim that there must be slackening off, a slowing down. But capital in its turn can only break free from people's opposition by perfecting its domination over them at an ever higher level. It is a domination that extends to the horizon of our lives, but young people are rising up against it in a vast movement, and a growing number of older people are beginning to understand and support them.

The revolutionary resurgence is evident everywhere except in one enormous country, the USSR, which could quite easily end up playing an inhibiting role, putting a strong brake on the revolution (in which case our previous forecast would be consigned to the limbo of pious wish fulfillment). But events in Czechoslovakia and Poland and the constant strengthening of despotism in the Soviet republic are an indication (though a negative one) that subversion, of which we hear only faint echoes, is by no means absent there. Repression in the USSR needs to be more violent in order to prevent insurrection generalizing. On the other hand, the process of destalinization is tak-

ing on the same role (taking into account considerable historical differences) as the revolt of the nobles in 1825, which made way for the revolt of the intelligensia and subsequently gave strength to the whole populist movement. This idea leads us to think that there exists at the present moment subversion sufficient to go well beyond the democratic opposition expressed by the dissident academician Sakharov. Certain other historical constants must be kept in mind: for example, generalized revolutionary action appeared in its most radical form in France and Russia, while actually having its origins in other countries. The French revolution subsequently spread the bourgeois revolution throughout Europe. The Russian revolution generalized a double revolution—proletarian and bourgeois—which resulted in the final triumph of the capitalist revolution. The student revolt did not originate in France yet it was there that the revolt was felt most sharply; it was capable of shaking capitalist society, and the consequences of it are still being felt. There can be no revolutionary upheaval in the USSR while the consequences of 1917—the wave of anticolonial revolutions—are still to be played out. The most important of these has been the case of China, and now that the Chinese revolution has come to the end of its cycle, we will see in the USSR the beginning of a new revolutionary cycle.

The important historic shift between the French and the Russian revolutions is present also in the rise of the new revolutionary cycle. The despotism of capital today is more powerful than that which prevailed under the Czar, and there is also the fact that the holy alliance between the USSR and the U.S.A. has been shown to be more effective than the Anglo-Russian alliance of the nineteenth century. The outcome can be delayed but not halted: we can expect the “communitarian” dimension of revolution in the USSR to be clearer there than in the West, and that it will go forward with giant strides.

Revolution and the Future

During a period of total counterrevolution, Bordiga was able to withstand the disintegrating effect brought about by it because he retained a vision of the coming revolution, but more particularly because he shifted his focus of thinking concerning struggle. He did not look only to the past, which is just a dead weight in such a period, nor did he incline toward the present, dominated as it was by the established order, but toward the future.²²

Being thus attuned to the future enabled him to perceive the revolutionary movement as it actually was, and not according to its own characterizations. Since that time, the “future industry”²³ has come into its own and assumed an enormous scope. Capital enters this new field and begins to exploit it, which leads to a further expropriation of people, and a reinforcement of their domestication. This hold over the future is what distinguishes capital from all other modes of production. From its earliest origins capital’s relationship to the past or present has always been of less importance to it than its relationship to the future. Capital’s only lifeblood is in the exchange it conducts with labor power. Thus when surplus value is created, it is, in the immediate sense, only potential capital; it can become effective capital solely through an exchange against future labor. In other words, when surplus value is created in the present, it acquires reality only if labor power can appear to be

²² Bordiga once maintained that “we are the only ones to ground our action in the future.” In 1952 he wrote: “Our strength lies more in the science of the future than in that of the past or present” [“Explorateurs de l’avenir,” *Battaglia Comunista*, no. 6].

²³ “L’industrie du futur” (e.g., futurology, the technological revolution, marketing, resources planning, space exploration, etc.) [translator’s note].

ready and available in a future (a future that can only be hypothetical, and not necessarily very near). If therefore this future isn't there, then the present (or henceforth the past) is abolished: this is devalorization through total loss of substance. Clearly then capital's first undertaking must be to dominate the future in order to be assured of accomplishing its production process. (This conquest is managed by the credit system). Thus capital has effectively appropriated time, which it molds in its own image as quantitative time. However, present surplus value was realized and valorized through exchange against future labor, but now, with the development of the "future industry," present surplus value has itself become open to capitalization. This capitalization demands that time be programmed, and this need expresses itself in a scientific fashion in futurology. Henceforth, capital produces time.²⁴ From now on where may people situate their utopias and uchronias?

The established societies that existed in previous times dominated the present and to a lesser extent the past, while the revolutionary movement had for itself the future. Bourgeois revolutions and proletarian revolutions have had to guarantee progress, but this progress depended on the existence of a

²⁴ Capital is characterized not so much by the way it emphasizes quantity while denying quality, but rather by the fact that there exists a fundamental contradiction between the two, with the quantitative tending to overwhelm all aspects of quality. It is not a question of realizing the desire for quality by denying quantity (in the same way, one does not arrive at use value by suppressing exchange value) It will require a total mutation before all the logic of this domination can be swept away. For quality and quantity both exist in close affinity with measurement, and all are in turn linked to value. Measurement operates to an equal degree at the level of use value, as well as exchange value. In the former case, it is closely bound up with one type of domination: use values measure a particular person's social position, and are also a

future valorized in relation to a present and a past that is to be abolished. In each case, and to a degree that is more or less pronounced depending on which type of revolution is being considered, the past is presented as shrouded in darkness, while the future is all shining light. Capital has conquered the future. Capital has no fear of utopias, since it even tends to produce them. The future is a field for the production of profit. In order to generate the future, to bring it into being, people must now be conditioned as a function of a strictly preconceived process of production: this is programming brought to its highest point. Man, once characterized by Marx as "the carcass of time" is now *excluded* from time. This, together with the domination of the past, the present and the future, gives rise to a structural representation, where everything is reduced to a combinative of social relations, productive forces, or mythèmes, etc., arranged in such a way as to cohere as a totality. Structure, perfecting itself, eliminates history. But history is what people have made.

This leads to the understanding that revolution must not only engender another conception of time, but must also assimilate it to a new synthesis of space. Both will be created simultaneously as they emerge out of the new relationship between human beings and nature: reconciliation. We said before that all that is fragmented is grist to the mill of the counterrevolution. But revolution means more than reclaiming just the totality; it is the reintegration of all that was separate, a coming together of future being, individuality, and *Gemeinwesen*. This future being already exists as a total and

measure of the weight of oppression they bear. Use values impose their own despotism, which envelops the other despotism (exchange value), and now also that of capital. Marx, in his notes to J.S. Mill's work, denounced utilitarianism as a philosophy in which man is valued only in terms of his use, while exchange tends to autonomize itself.

passionately felt need; it expresses better than anything else the true revolutionary character of the May '68 movement and that of the lycée students in spring 1973.

Revolutionary struggle is struggle against domination as it appears in all times and places, and in all the different aspects of life. For five years this contestation has invaded every department of the life of capital. Revolution is now able to pose its true terrain of struggle, whose center is everywhere, but whose place is nowhere.²⁵ Its task in this sense is infinite: to destroy domestication and engender the infinite manifestation of the human being of the future. We have a feeling, which is founded on more than just optimism, that the next five years will see the beginning of revolution, and the destruction of the capitalist mode of production.²⁶

Translated by David Loneragan

²⁵ This is Blanqui's definition of infinity, which is itself a slight modification of Pascal's famous phrase. (The French is: "le centre est partout, la surface nulle part"—Translator's note)

²⁶ From our present point of view, this prediction seems to be wrong. But we should bear in mind that predictions can never be made with absolute accuracy; the overall process will generally tend to lag behind what we forecast will happen, and there is also the factor that every such prediction is an expression of a particular individual's own profound desire. And desire is always in a hurry; it doesn't know how to wait.

We should discuss the future realistically: i.e., in terms of the the end of the process of revolution, and from the standpoint that we must abandon this world. But it cannot be stated as simply as that; it starts fo look like equivocation. We ought to be able now to examine the forecast we made and what emerges from it. What is true about it is the fact that in 1978, the 'refusal' we have often spoken about is now more manifest, more definitely present than

it has been in the years preceding. This refusal, moreover, is heavy with consequences for capital's destruction.

“What we have said so far has been concerned with the permanent element of the perspective, but it doesn't clarify particularly the situation at the present, where we find that the concern is no longer with a struggle against capital as such. In 1973, one could already see that the destruction aimed at capital was indirect: it did not come from men and women forming a frontal opposition against it. If the system suffers from instability—the ‘crisis’ as the economists now call it—this doesn't of itself call capital into question, and the catastrophe is only just beginning to develop its premises (though the pace of events can accelerate quickly).

“One fundamental thing to emerge since 1978 is the fact that we are fast approaching the end of the cycle of capital. It is more intensive now, but also more extensive, and from either point of view this makes it easier for us to abandon capital. Taking up a position about something that is already achieved and finished is easy; it is much harder with something that is still in the process of formation and development.”

(From “La séparation nécessaire et l'immense refus,” 1979)

This is as clear as I was able to get it in January 1979 when that piece was written. In a more recent article (“l'Echo du Temps,” Feb. 1980) I try to describe more accurately how this “destruction” of the community of capital can come about. It is an attempt to take up the question of what I call capital's potential death, which is due to its movement of anthropomorphization and the capitalization of human beings.

As capital openly installs its community it realizes a project of the human species and at the same time exhausts its possibilities. Being real contemporaries of our period requires a clear realization of the potential death of capital, in order that we may subsequently embark on a new dynamic of life.

(Author's note, March 1980)

THIS WORLD WE MUST LEAVE

In order to locate the perspective outlined in *Against Domestication* and to delimit the world we have to leave, we have to state clearly now how its determinant, the development of the capitalist mode of production (CMP), appears. What is meant by the crisis of the CMP? How is the development-break with the CMP posed? These are questions that have to be answered. I shall only deal with some points in brief and certainly insufficiently, but necessarily so because that allows us to give a greater coherence than was previously published in this review. This also allows the location of “supersession” of Marx as was envisaged by several comrades writing in *Invariance* as well as those who have not been published there, but are on a convergent path. More especially since many do not even condescend to make an absent-minded glance in Marx’s direction after they have stated that he is surpassed. But, for me, it is not a question of the death of Marx, but of my life where Marx is always essential. It is not a question of superseding Marx in order to assert oneself, but in order to be in line with the dynamic of human life, which is tending to disengage itself from the empire of capital. I say that in thinking of Adorno’s remark in *Minima Moralia* on artists. All artists must at heart kill their predecessor in order to assert themselves (i.e., one must abandon the practice of killing a mythical father).

Autonomization and the Runaway of Capital

What was published in *Capital* and even the *Grundrisse* shows that Marx trips over interest-bearing capital and over the possibility of placing it in the totality. How can we explain the development toward totality by the mediation of interest-bearing capital and simultaneously explain the global reproduction based on *Capital* Volume II? It is important to locate the point Marx trips over so that we can better understand capital's runaway. Likewise, the relative "independence" of the study of land rent in relation to the rest of the work also signifies the impossibility for Marx to conceive of capital in its entire development. I raised this question in talking of the "terrestrialization" of capital's laws, so asserting that capital can be better explained on the basis of the theory of land rent than on the basis of the laws explained in Volumes II and III (everything about production price, equalization of the rate of profit, tendency for the rate of profit to fall). Marx, following Ricardo, was a marginalist, not from the aspect of the individual subject, but from the aspect of the social subject, because the marginality depends not on individual man, but on social and global demand. But then with Marx demand is not an extraeconomic thing, as one often tended to consider it, but an operating economic element. There is something there resembling the problem of use value and it is correct that the two questions are linked:

With the development of capitalist production, the scale of production is determined less and less by the direct demand for the product and more and more by the amount of capital available in the hand of the individual capitalist... [*Capital* Vol. II, Moscow 1956, p. 147].

In fact Marx asked the question of knowing to what extent use value is a purely economic phenomenon, (cf. *Grundrisse*).

The presuppositions for the autonomization of the form are:

1. Autonomization of the different products of capital—profit, interest, and land rent. From this there is a movement of the forms of surplus value and the question that poses itself is how to know how to link the different autonomized movements that are self-autonomizing so that it should not end up in the disaggregation of the totality.

2. The loss of substance, that is, the quantum of labor in each commodity capital tends to fall continuously (devalorization). Hence the contradiction between valorization and devalorization, which we have frequently analyzed.

3. Disappearance of exchange, which has to be related to the generalization of wage labor and the fact that workers are paid as other professional categories.

4. The fact that capital is circulating capital, which must always dominate circulation to continue existence.

We have already treated this question partially in the following manner:

(a) autonomization of capital on the basis of its own presuppositions (i.e., created by it).

(b) it surmounts the difficulties in (1) above through the development of fictitious capital (even for the question valorization/devalorization). Fictitious capital is partly considered as the connective tissue joining the different capitals.

(c) the total development of capital as a finished structure and, better still, material community, allows it to escape this fiction because this is accompanied by the phenomenon of anthropomorphosis.

I was led to introduce this concept of anthropomorphosis after reading Marx's *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's*

"*Philosophy of Law.*" In my 1962–63 commentaries for a study of democracy (this was sent to Bordiga in 1964, cf. *Invariance*, Series 1, no. 1, postface of 1974), I noted the following:

Concerning the entailment of estates in primogeniture two elements need stressing:

1) That which is enduring is the ancestral estate, the landed property. It is the lasting element in the relationship, the substance. The master of the entailed estate, the owner, is really a mere accident. The different generations represent anthropomorphized landed property. Landed property, as it were, continually inherits the first born of the House as the attribute fettered to it. Every first-born in the series of landed proprietors is the inheritance, the property of the inalienable estate, the predestined substance of its will and its activity. The subject is the thing and the predicate the human being. The will becomes the property of the property.

2) The political quality of the owner of the entailed estate is the political quality of his ancestral estate, a political quality inherent in this estate. Hence the political quality also appears here as the property of landed property, as a quality which directly belongs to the purely physical earth (nature) [Marx/Engels *Collected Works* Vol. III, Moscow 1975, p. 106].

The same thing occurs in capitalist society, only this time it is related to capital. The only difference is that capital abstracts man, i.e., it takes all his content, all his material nature; labor power, all human substance is capital. Starting from this, capital performs anthropomorphosis. It also does so in its links with civil society, the collection of humans, since it needs individuals to perform its dictatorship. These are the bureaucrats, the technocrats, etc. Man is abstract man defined by the constitution. Moreover, one should not forget capital has conquered all science, all human intellectual work, and it dominates the very

name of this amassed knowledge. In opposition to the man of feudal society, which was animal above all, man of bourgeois society is a pure spirit.

In Series I number 2, *The Unpublished "Sixth Chapter" of "Capital" and Marx's Economic Work* as well as in the theses on capital in Series I number 6, I treated this question of the autonomization of capital and also in later works, while Series II number 3^a contained only the statements on the runaway of capital. It is therefore best to take a step back to recenter this question and to exhaust it as far as possible.

We saw in Volume I (of *Capital*) that Marx defined capital as value in process and in Volume II he deals with capital-value (especially pp. 108–09). In Volume III and the *Grundrisse* he defined capital as the unity of the production and circulation processes (cf. *Theories of Surplus Value*, Vol. III, p. 492) that capital is this unity in process; finally he states that capital is capital in process. It is important to situate each moment of these essential determinations. More, one must have in mind that for Marx each moment of capital becomes more or less autonomized capital, that there can be a contradiction between individual and global capital. On the other hand, the movement of capital is presented as being the exteriorization of its internal relation, value, support of advanced capital, and surplus-value (cf. also to a certain extent the relation between necessary and surplus labor, but also fixed and circulating capital).

Some remarks to show this best:

It is extremely important to grasp [*fassen*] these aspects of circulating and fixated capital as specific characteristic forms of capital generally... [*Grundrisse*, Harmondsworth 1973. Here and later German words will be added to explain some phrases; also the translation will be altered where it is defective—Translator].

The whole of this passage is also the explanation of the particular moment of the total process of capital valorization, which includes the phase of devalorization, thus the total process of capital = unity of production and circulation, can be analyzed as being simultaneously valorization and devalorization, how capital surmounts this contradiction if not by exteriorization of it in a movement that posits fictitious capital, which thus tends to negate itself in an immediate manner to avoid objectifying itself (to avoid objectification), because that is alienation, thus devalorization. All objectification is negation, (i.e., devalorization):

As the subject predominant [*übergreifend*] over the different phases of this movement, as value sustaining and multiplying itself in it, as the subject of these metamorphoses proceeding in a circular course [*Zirkellauf*]*—*as a spiral, as an expanding circle*—*capital is circulating capital. Circulating capital is therefore initially not a particular form of capital, but rather capital itself, in a further development aspect, as subject of the movement just described, which it, itself, is as its own valorization process [*verwertungsprozess*]. In this respect, therefore, every capital is circulating capital. In simple circulation, circulation itself appears as the subject [...] Capital, however, exists as the subject of circulation; circulation is posited as its own life's course [*Lebenslauf*]. [...] Therefore, capital in each of its particular phases is the negation of itself as the subject [*seiner als Subjekt*] of all the various metamorphoses" [*Grundrisse*, p. 620].

Each metamorphosis of money capital, productive capital, and commodity capital gives it substance. Capital objectifies itself and takes on an objectified form, thus devalorizes and denies itself.

“As long as it remains in the production process it is not capable of circulating; and it is virtually devalorised [*entwertet*]” (ibid., p. 621).

On the other hand, one must take account of what precedes it. Marx explained that in alternating two capitals, productive and circulating, capital partially surmounts devalorization. Thus the study of circulation and the mode by which capital overcomes fixation emerges better.

It is then that credit, which allowed production to continue and then to overcome the phase of over- or underproduction, becomes the concrete form of the runaway of capital and its autonomization. Capital in the credit form is capital in process. “The independence of labour time is thereby negated, and the production process is itself posited as determined by exchange...” (ibid., p. 628).

Labor time having been negated, the law of value cannot act as before. That reverberates through the immediate production process.

In both cases, circulation time is of interest only insofar as it is the suspension [*Aufhebung*], the negation of alien labour time; either because it interrupts capital in the process of its appropriation; or because it forces it to consume a part of the created value, to consume it in order to accomplish the operations of circulation, i.e., to posit itself as capital [ibid., p. 634].

Capital thus dominates circulation and will have to do the same simultaneously with the social movement. Here Marx affords another determination of the anthropomorphosis in capital. He considered it as a being which would be a huge worker.

Capital itself as in process—hence, as accomplishing [*zurücklegend*] one turnover—is regarded as working capital, and the fruits, which it is supposed to yield, are calcu-

lated according to its working time—the total circulation time of one turnover. The mystification which thereby takes place lies in the nature of capital [ibid., p. 640].

We have recalled a section of Marx's work that is little known, on the subject of the autonomization of capital and circulation. The other aspect, concerning the production process, has often been demonstrated (cf. Series I number 2).

Let us recall that when one moves from surplus value to profit, capital really enters into relation with itself: capital is at once subject and object (cf. Hegel and *The Phenomenology of Mind*).¹ It doubles itself up in the relation to itself. Marx said, concerning interest-bearing capital, that one has a contentless and an aconceptual form [*begriffslose*] and, when he thus defines the form of interest-bearing capital, he reassumes the comparison with the automaton which he had made in the chapter "The General Formula for Capital" in Volume I. Marx wrote: "In M—C—M' an immediate link is still retained. In M—M' we have the incomprehensible form of capital, the most extreme inversion and materialisation of production relations" (*Theories of Surplus Value* Vol. III, p. 462).

He adds that it is an irrational expression showing the complete derangement [*Verrucktheit*] of capital (*Theories of Surplus Value* Vol. III, p. 456), but he adds: "It is therefore especially in this form that capital is imagined. It is capital *par excellence*" (ibid., p. 455).

¹ Lukacs said in *History and Class Consciousness* that the proletariat must become subject and object of history in acquiring class consciousness. He thus claimed for the proletariat what capital has realized, so showing that capital could very well develop from its value pole or its labor (proletarian) pole. Some years later Castoriadis, then Cardan, and later Potere Operaio took up the same theorization in another form and contributed by this to the discourse of capital.

We have only carried out one of Marx's researches, the essential elements from the whole of *Capital* used to show the essential elements, in stating that capital is merely representation. Let us recall what we simply noted in Series II number 3, p. 29b; that with interest-bearing capital all memory of the relation with the production process disappears, whereas it continues, however obscured, at the stage of profit-bearing capital (op. cit., pp. 454–55 and p. 487). Therefore there would be a sort of dissolution of capital.

In the final state [*Gestalt*] in which profit, assumed as something given, appears in capitalist production, the innumerable transformations and intervening stages through which it passes are obliterated and unrecognisable, and consequently the nature of capital is unrecognisable [ibid., p. 486].

Now profit must be presupposed so that interest-bearing capital can exist.

Having posed this, Marx thus acknowledges the reality of the capital automaton, but he saw its limits in its dependence on the production process. This passage from Chapter 24, "Externalisation of the Relations of Capital in the Form of Interest-Bearing Capital" of *Capital* Volume III well indicates his thought:

Now, the concept of capital as a fetish reaches its height in interest-bearing capital, being a conception which attributes to the accumulated product of labour, and at that in the fixed form of money, the inherent secret power, as an automaton, of creating surplus-value in geometrical progression, so that the accumulated product of labour, as the *Economist* thinks, has long discounted all the wealth of the world for all time as belonging to it and rightfully coming to it. The product of past labour, the past labour itself, is here pregnant in itself

with a portion of present or future [see *Theories of Surplus Value* Vol. III, p. 456, where Marx compared capital with a Moloch] living surplus labour. We know, however, that in reality the preservation, and to that extent also the reproduction of the value of products of past labour, is only the result of their contact with living labour; and secondly, that the domination of the products of past labour over living surplus labour lasts only as long as the relations of capital, which rests on those particular social relations in which past labour independently and overwhelmingly dominates over living labour [*Capital* Vol. III, p. 399].

Capital cannot liberate itself from the production process where human labor is determinant. That is what Marx states in saying that the limit of the rate of interest is not quantitative but qualitative because it depends on the rate of profit. Hence the polemic with Price, whom he reproaches for considering capital as an automaton, while he himself used this comparison. In the final analysis, this form of capital was profoundly irrational for Marx, it could not develop freely. Strangely enough, Marx here took the same position as Aristotle. Aristotle distinguished the economy, the art of acquiring wealth, from chrematistic, or the acquisition of money, as if the former were natural and the latter against nature (as Marx himself recalled in the note on Aristotle in *Capital* Vol. I, Swan Sonnenschein 1887, p. 143, fn. 1). Aristotle noted a certain irrationality, but it would only be so because it did not have a "determined boundary" and that it appeared to be a creation from nothing. All reflection on economic activity, conceived of in the larger sense, is crossed by this division between a natural activity, since it must allow people to regain products, as well as good management and mad activity, which has no end in itself, and which, from the start, poses itself as a runaway, the acquisition of wealth as such by commerce, usury, speculation, etc.

Prophets and philosophers have condemned the latter, the socialist reformers wanted to eliminate it because it perverted the free development of the law of value; either they could not conceive the autonomization of this activity, or they wanted to limit it. Marx himself thought that capital in the form of interest-bearing capital (i.e., its irrational form) could not gain autonomy because it definitely depended on the production process, even if, at the time of the manifestation of this form of capital, all remembrance of the link with the latter had disappeared. Nevertheless there was another essential element in Marx that distinguished him from the other theoreticians, which shows that injustice (i.e., exploitation) will continue as long as the law of value is respected, that is, that even inside the economy there was an act against nature and that it was there that the real basis of chrematistic was to be found. The expropriation of surplus value cannot be justified from a human point of view, this being Marx's leitmotiv: to show that the various authors were only opposing the results of the evil and not the evil itself, when it was in question. (They wanted, he said, capital without interest.) The common point between him and them is the belief that this form of capital could not achieve autonomy, that it could still be dominated by humans. But capital has succeeded in breaking with its dependence on the production process and thus on humans, not as the adversaries of Marx were able to conceive of it (such as Price), but because it has become representation.

And, as we have shown above, Marx reached it. He arrived here as far as noting this mode of capital's existence. In Series I number 2, I cited passages from the *Theories of Surplus Value* where Marx said that capital becomes a reified form that has swallowed the social relation and, thus, all remembrance of the production process has disappeared. Capital is henceforth what it was in its antediluvian form of merchant capital, which had a precarious existence (confiscation of goods, murder of usurers,

etc.). If interest-bearing capital is the highest form of capital, one is led to believe that this form tends to affirm itself very early, well before the CMP emerges. But in avoiding human activity it could not really develop itself because men remained marginal or even antagonistic. It must conquer in order to triumph and, from inside, shape the power of humanity to its requirements. Historical evidence shows that from the oldest antiquity (Sumer) and even in areas where the CMP penetrated later with great difficulty (China), there was the appearance of elements that could be called capitalist, but it would be absurd to talk of capitalism and capitalists. It is here that Marx's periodization into formal and real domination of capital is fundamental, but one immediately realizes that this periodization is not historically rigorous. The elements could emerge very early since the phenomenon of the autonomization of exchange value, and thus the genesis of capital, or, more exactly, its presupposition, can arise from the destruction of the communities. Capital was possible in the money form, but capital can only become effective under certain conditions, which we shall not deal with again. We want to underline another aspect of the question.

Given the unity science-capital operating inside the production process, then in circulation, the interest-bearing form of capital becomes socially rational and no longer irrational, as Marx had thought. He saw an alienation of capital there, as if it lost its progressive and civilizing aspects (which he frequently stressed) in taking this form.² Some *epigoni* stated that financial capital is the last form, parasitic form, of capital and begin to

2 Marx praises productive capital in all his work (i.e., the P—P' cycle) because the development of mechanism and science is linked to it, but he condemns interest-bearing capital, which is unjustifiable in any manner in the field of the development of the productive forces. It would seem to him that capital ceases to be progressive-progressing when interest-bearing capital tends to

theorize a decadence (one must note that again this could appear as such as far as financial capital could still exist for men, i.e., one still had to deal with small owners). But that is really the root of the theoretical inability to grasp this capital. One must not try to understand capital by means of one of its forms, but by means of its totality, its full structure, by means of its realized material community. Then it is possible to grasp how the arrival at a given form modifies the totality of capital. Concerning interest-bearing capital, its role is essential because it is with this form that capital, according to Marx, achieves totality. But he posed it with an essential modification, the moment that it creates its own representation, no more dependence on gold, more especially *vis-à-vis* all human representation, but also no more dependence on materiality such as expressed in the organic composition of capital. In fact, this representation only operates from when humans internalize capital and make capital their representation, the mediation between humans and whatever reality is capital, and this in its initial dynamic, expressed in the general formula of capital:— $C \rightarrow C + \Delta C$. To believe that the dogma of the creation from nothing would be generalized and thus profaned. In fact it would state the extreme interaction of humans, for all extra activity of one of us has to encounter the capitalizing effects of others. But what remains profoundly true in Marx's study is

dominate the total process of capital. The Nazis and many after them had a similar position: defense of productive capital and an attack on the so-called financial capital, usury, etc., inasmuch as this was international. Hence also the worship of the proletarian as productive worker. Thus they had realized the reformist part of Marx's work, not the whole work and especially not its revolutionary dimension. For him, the proletariat had to be suppressed along with the CMP so that there could be a real development of the productive forces for man.

that from then on all memory of human activity disappears. We are only the activity of capital.

The irrationality of yesterday is today's rationality. All that was human becomes irrational. To demand a life centered on man and woman, on the regeneration of nature, the reconciliation with it, only shows a dementia. The debate about pollution and the limits to development show this clearly.

Expressed otherwise, how can interest-bearing capital influence the whole of the process? If capital is more or less autonomized, how does the real process occur and the process originating in nothing? Speculation correctly shows that there is a discrepancy and shows that capital is not a representation for everyone. For there are two alternatives: either generalized speculation or domination of a representation, implying the programming of humans. At the moment we are in an intermediary period (monetary crisis and the gold problem are proof).

Will capital be able to keep together its different moments that tend to autonomize? It seems to undergo the same process as humans do, separation and division....

It is this particular moment of the life of capital that provokes an exacerbated flowering of the right since conflicts take place in the field of property, of this or that portion of capital, on the validity of such a speculation, on the means for realizing such a deal, etc. Cheats and decent men need rights based on capital's development. But cannot this development do without the relic of the human mode of life (it dominates in borrowing the elements from a society where men were determining)?

Finally, if capital totally liberates itself, what can it end up as if not the acceptance-representation we have in our heads? There is some sort of dissolution of capital, but also its greatest power, which poses the necessity of taking up all that capital can really be, all that men invest, consciously or not, in capitalist society. The ideas that they construct have a great impor-

tance and not only because they risk being tautologies in relation to reality itself. In fact, this dissolution of capital is also that of the species' internal "project," at least for a certain period, to reach autonomy, liberation, and even absolute liberty.³ But having removed all materiality and having subjected humans to its own being, can capital still survive? Is this not a progression into the absurd, but an impossible development? This is thus an end to capital, but also that of the species and thus nature. This must be posed first, before capital can achieve this complete autonomization. Put another way, one cannot and must not go to the end of this project.

Liberation-Emancipation: Doublet of Wandering

The various studies of capital that we have made, based on Marx, show that its development is the development of emancipation. It had to free itself from the old social relations and the old representations. Three elements are to be envisaged simultaneously: separation, autonomization, and abstraction.

Capital in its antediluvian form emerged by autonomizing itself from the circulation relation, this being found in the form that capi-

³ The power of this idea of autonomization, of gaining independence, must be sought for in the distant past of man. Did he not know a period where he would have been profoundly dominated and oppressed by surrounding circumstances?—or one must see it in the profound "runaway" of the desire to create. Man, it has been shown, is the animal that is the most destructive of nature. Its only specialization, some say, would be aggression allowing it to survive. However, the surviving ancient communities show an equilibrium between man and nature where the former does not regard himself as the dominator. That shows that it is fundamental to situate the moment when the representation autonomizes in man and when he separates from nature.

tal took in the mercantile epoch, the moment that Marx called in the *Grundrisse* the third function of money. "Capital comes initially from circulation, and, moreover, its point of departure is money.... It is at the same time the first concept of capital" (p. 253).

But, as Marx said in the *Unpublished Sixth Chapter of "Capital"* (appendix to *Capital*, Harmondsworth 1976, p. 1019), that could only be a formal domination because there was no domination of the production process. For a real emergence of capital there had to be separation of the worker from his means of production. This is also what Marx called the first concept of capital in *Capital* Vol. I. There is the starting point of the creation of the production process of capital and its real domination in production, then in society. This development has stages of different moments when capital has to overcome barriers and liberate and autonomize itself and, each time, there is a division, up to that studied by Marx, (it was not the last) between capitalists and capital. I shall not go through this again as it is dealt with in Series I number 2. What preoccupied me is noting what is the fundamental importance of the liberation—emancipation—separation. Capital liberates itself from man and nature, or, in other terms, men separate and liberate themselves from nature by means of capital. They throw off all animalism thanks to it (cf. Moscovici).^c Men become abstract and they are so in all their natural historical determinations (meaning that during history, i.e., time lived by men in their diversity, that they have lost their different determinations).

Two historical remarks here:

To what extent is this future not the *Verweltlichung* (secularization), the profanization-making worldly christian religion, which poses a liberating future in relation to nature, and a redemption? The critique of this religion would also be the critique of capital.

One could ascertain that the bourgeois liberation movement

is not really put at issue by the proletarian movement, that there is a continuity between the two.

Basically for Marx, the bourgeoisie would not be able to complete this movement (which is probably true) and otherwise he thought that the CMP (thus the bourgeoisie, because he always thought in class terms) would not be able to reconstitute a unity, a community. This class having a destructive role (here destruction = revolution), the role of the proletariat is to achieve this destruction in negating itself. Another human community could be produced from that and Marx gave outlines of it in the *Manuscripts of 1844* in the form of the aspiration for another human community, another human being. But we have seen that capital constituted a material community, so we have to start again from scratch, that is, we must consider the liberation-emancipation movement.

One could especially evidence the process of separation, which is effectively a movement of liberation, so long as this last point had not been seen. One must be separated from what chains us down. Against the "chains of slavery," the bourgeoisie proposed liberty, the development of the individual and democracy. Marx opposed this liberal society with the necessity of emancipation, liberation, that is, a movement that would be able to bring about a phenomenon beginning with separation and which, by itself, could be defined neither as good nor as bad; only its conclusion would definitely be able to couple it with a qualification.

They were on the ground of the bourgeois revolution. They had to finish it off, one had to accomplish what it could not bring about: the emancipation of the proletarians and thus that of humanity. Marx nevertheless posed that such an emancipation could only be a negation of the proletariat. The bourgeoisie had freed the productive forces as it had liberated the state and individuals. But such a liberation was not real because it was

only for a single class, the bourgeoisie, and besides, it only occurred in the political sphere and not in the totality.

The problematic is rediscovered when one asserts that the revolution consists solely of the liberation of communism, a prisoner inside the CMP. It would consist in destroying an oppressive form and thus liberating a content. So there would be an inversion of the phenomenon that we shall point out later, since here the revolutionaries would tend to act like the men of the right. Nevertheless there is some truth in this theorization. Capital indeed is a form that always inflates itself on an alien content (recuperation). The moment comes, as happens in all revolutions, when there is a rupture, and everything collapses. Any event can be determinant of the rupture. But this cannot be the point of departure for another mode of life except if men and women gain another representation, if they place themselves outside the old society. For in capital's case, the struggle can be recuperated after a longer or shorter period of troubles.

We do not have to set communism free since it implies an immense act of creation for its realization. The communist movement as an opposition, recuperated by capital, can provoke the necessary disequilibrium, but it cannot throw the dynamic of a new life into action. Moreover, this problematic tends to give credence to communism being possible only on the basis of the CMP. But the huge movement away from capital is only realizable if human beings rediscover the many potentialities in their past that they have been deprived of (thus remembering them).

Liberation is almost always presented as a form along with a loss of content. In fact the emancipating subject must disappear in its immediate being by maintaining the invariant fact, but, because the weight of the content, a separation between content—form and the liberation of the latter occurs, that is, autonomization (which poses itself, in germ, the dissolution-*Spatlung*,

thus schizophrenia). This is at the base of the following phenomenon: the left was for liberation⁴ and the right for the defense of the content, its maintenance. This is particularly clear with the various religions. They would only continue because they preserve something human, a substance from another epoch. Religion is perhaps only possible because the person lost itself.

One also understands there the ambiguity of the national and popular liberation movements, being simultaneously reactionary and revolutionary, according to the old conception. One can see that in the anticolonial movement and especially in some of the analyses of Franz Fanon on Algeria. But that is also true for the actions of the romantics and Hegel as well as for the partisans of folklore.

Thus the mechanism of alienation is not destroyed with liberation because it can be the opening into a still greater loss, a loss of all rootedness, the loss of any deep link with the past, with the land, etc....ending in emptiness, the loss of referents, without the possibility of foreseeing a new mode of existence.... For if only a liberation movement is sought, an indefinite is also posed and it is similar to the movement of enjoyment; on one hand one must place that in parallel with the liberation of work, its abolition. We have said that this is a capitalist slogan because it finally aims at making human beings superfluous: living capital with all its inorganic bodies created over the centuries. Likewise, we have said that one must also consider the

⁴ One can place the demand for liberation-emancipation in liaison with the discontinuous, while the demand of the content is in relation to the continuous. Now one poses the question of liberating oneself from the institutions, customs, and modes of being, or otherwise, there would be a problem of liberating oneself from the forms themselves. One should note, on this, the relation with pictorial art, which has to free itself from suggestions of nature, then from artistic forms themselves.

destruction of work. Put otherwise, we have stated that we must approach the question by means of other presuppositions. The movement, the dynamic of the realization of the human community, must place itself outside. To do this we must rethink the whole past movement:

1. Relation between the different human species before the triumph of *Homo sapiens*.

2. Relations between different human communities, their dissolution.

3. What occurs then?

4. What have we come to?

5. What have we lost? And also what could have occurred that was latent and was always inhibited.

6. It is insufficient to say that we must unite an emancipated form with a lost content, for there is also an act of creation. This is felt when one sees that the human species has been horribly destructive, violent, and aggressive and that a species in harmony with nature is needed.

Let us now return to Marx. The following citations are from *On the Jewish Question* (Marx/Engels *Collected Works* Vol. III, London 1975).

The limits of political emancipation are evident at once from the fact that the *state* can free itself from a restriction without man being *really* free from this restriction, that the state can be a *free state* without man being a *free man* [p. 152].

Man emancipates himself *politically* from religion by banishing it from the sphere of public law to that of private law. Religion is no longer the spirit of the state, in which man behaves—although in a limited way, in a particular form, and in a particular sphere—as a species-being, in community with other men. Religion has become the spirit of civil society, of the sphere of egoism, of *bellum omnium contra omnes*. It is no longer the essence of *community*, but

the essence of *difference*. It has become the expression of man's *separation* from his *community*, from himself, and from other men—as it was *originally*. It is only the abstract avowal of specific perversity, *private whimsy*, and arbitrariness. The endless fragmentation of religion in North America, for example, gives it even *externally* the form of a purely individual affair. It has been thrust among the multitude of private interests and ejected from the community as such. But one should be under no illusion about the limits of political emancipation. The division of the human being into a *public man* and a *private man*, the displacement of religion from the state into civil society, this is not a stage of political emancipation but its *completion*; this emancipation therefore neither abolishes the real religiousness of man, nor strives to do so [p. 155].

It is a pity that Marx did not define religiousness, but, besides, there is more, he had protestantism in mind. But catholicism persisted and it exists by maintaining a community. Certainly religion shows that the community was lost, but it is also religion that maintains and continues the given community spirit, especially with religions like christianity, islam, and judaism. In *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's "Philosophy of Law"* (*Collected Works* Vol. III) he said: "Religion is the self-consciousness and self-esteem of man who has either not yet found himself or has already lost himself again" (p. 175).

Marx shows well that religion is a feeling (more than a consciousness) of something I call lost, but it is also the formation of another community. Now, it can be an alternative to capital, limited certainly, but operative. It is true that in accomplishing its different modernizations (*aggiornamenti*) the church destroys itself, it tends to lose progressively the memory of what had been lost.

Political emancipation is at the same time the dissolution of the old society on which the state alienated from the people, the sovereign power, is based. Political revolution is a revolution of civil society [*On the Jewish Question*, op. cit., p. 165].

Only when the real, individual man reabsorbs in himself the abstract citizen, and as an individual human being has become a species being in his everyday life, in his particular work, and in his particular situation, only when man has recognised and organised his *forces propres* as social forces, and consequently no longer separates social power from himself in the shape of political power, only then will human emancipation have been accomplished [ibid., p. 168].

One could cite the passage where Marx said that man is not emancipated from religion, but that there has been an emancipation of religion, etc....

That is very much the node of the question since political emancipation ends in the formation on one side of the individual and, on the other, institutions; social emancipation finally pulverizes the individual (the emancipatory movement affects his own being; sexual emancipation is the autonomization of sex) and the formation of the material community of capital. Political emancipation creates bourgeois society, social emancipation creates the material community of capital, the despotism of it with full democracy and generalized slavery (a profound convergence here between the AMP and CMP).

One can also establish the limits to christianity in the western area. There has been emancipation, but the destruction of paganism and the enthrallment of the body, the beginning of the absurd binarity body/spirit, soul/matter, etc.... Destruction of communities. But also the limits of marxism.

There is the unification of the species in the historical as

well as the present spatial totality and this species can only operate through rethinking its role in the cosmos. This also is, certainly, a unification with christianity, also it was posed by marxism, but it had to be carried out through struggles between human factions. Thus one must get rid of the sort of project supporting both as the enlightenment (*Aufklärung*), one must pose at the same time the determinations conserved by the right and those founded on the left. But this is to be done without hiding the fundamental phenomenon; the movements of the right have wanted to conserve, but in order to maintain a domination. They have always maintained a human nature in spite of their inhumanity, while all the movements that one might claim to be left have come to strike against this terrible inhumanity. The right wing has always maintained a human dimension despite its lack of humanity, while all the so-called left movements crashed into this terrible inhumanity. The right wing maintained what could be human for some elites, which, by itself, denatures their human "project." This inhumanity is crystallized in discipline, state, and various institutions. Thus to reject the theory of the proletariat does not at all imply the denial of the revolutionary, human role, but delimited in space and time, of the proletarians who nobly rise up against capital's domination. But we do not propose a reconciliation that would come down to Bakunin's famous proposition of reconciling classes. We wish to expose the false consciousness as much on one side as on the other, the error of somehow shooting wide. One has to abolish the cult of the past as well as its iconoclasm to show that to smash despotism one tended not only to create another (cf. the despotism of equality), but above all, human determinations were destroyed.

Let us give a precise case, science developed by denying and rejecting magic and the different occult sciences, astrology, divining, palmistry, etc., without mentioning the sciences pre-

occupied with parapsychology, etc. It is impossible that the dynamic tending to communism, which is developing more and more, could really engage gear without one looking at those last sciences, that a new perspective arises there and from the confrontation with official science. This is only developed in eliminating the problems that are called false but which, paradoxically, it must combat now (e.g., study of telepathy and telekinesis in the USSR and U.S.A.).

Thanks to May-June 1968 and the subsequent movement, many people liberated themselves from militantism, the prolect, theory, the relation to society; thus the liberation of individuals (conception of their primacy), no more sacrifice, etc. But one had empty beings that bloated themselves on whatever, who were free from reference but incapable of asserting themselves and to draw on all the resources of life (of the domination of death) from the vast human and natural movement. Hence the negative aspects of the counterculture, especially concerning drugs. On this subject, it is interesting to note the liaison opposition between autonomization-inhibition and liberation-alienation.

For example, concerning love, one has the liberation of one function. In fact, the destruction of the family, which simultaneously implies the liberation of love as a uniting function, reunites humans either for procreation or to maintain a certain cohesion of the human milieu. At the same time, that gives rise to an illusion that an inhibition repression had been destroyed. Given that it is only of a function, young men and women who had beaten this decomposition could easily play their role as procreating citizens later.

Finally, liberation and autonomization are linked and are the movements of the reduction of human beings because they are fundamentally the loss of the *Gemeinwesen*. Marx had already shown that in *On the Jewish Question* because each time there

is the imprisonment of the human being in a piecemeal fashion and the loss of universal thought, which is a mere pale reflection of its dimension of the *Gemeinwesen*. One generally states an illusion of accessions to a participation—an activity to break passivity and dependence—without questioning as to what humans autonomize themselves, which is finally the autonomization function. Being will manage the free area, its being there determined by the function that is really posed as autonomized (self-management).

The illusion is very great with those who, in thinking that they have superseded Marx, say that the economy is no longer determinant, if it ever was, they add, that is, only the struggle counts, that man is always there in fact, present in the social and economic frame and in everyday acts and facts, etc., and that there would always be an immediate and continuous possibility of emancipation, which occurs with self-management. Now, participation is superfluous as the human being is *Gemeinwesen*; otherwise it would be to participate with oneself; the universal dimension enables him to cover the world. That is why all those who have overlooked the determination of the *Gemeinwesen* have always needed a general equivalent, a reference, stabilizer-coordinator, etc., for in each case they always have the business of the individuals, and they imply a state.

Emancipation, Crisis, and Critique

It is not enough to reject the perspective of emancipation-liberation. One has equally to question the concepts of crisis and critique. The crisis postulates a choice, a decision, and thus enforces itself because there is a difficult and unusual situation. This is true both for the CMP and for humans, without forgetting the interference between the two. So what choices are possible? One can already indicate that for the CMP there

is the question of the choice between material and immaterial (relation to zero growth) production, but this is, in fact, the problem of accession to absolute domination and the choices are only apparent. There is a rigorous determinism that leads to a certain realization, a determinism that can only be put in question again if humans become capable of breaking their domestication. The choice for men appears as the acceptance of its destructive multiplication of life or the domination = restriction of its inhuman quantitative multiplication, which would allow its continuance. To abandon a certain fear of death which forces it to look for life in the extension of life, multiplication and progression of life. Reproduction is a certain fear of death and man lives it in its extension and not in the intensity of living; that translates the uncertainty in the world as if the species was not yet sure of its existence on the planet. The intensity of living implies a reflection of life on itself, then there is enjoyment by the resorption of life inside the living subject and not delegated to another generation.

The concept of critique is linked to the crisis, the former allowing one to find the most favorable choice and, besides, there is a close link between the two. The critical situation (period) is a situation of crisis. Literary or artistic criticism comes into this case. On the other hand, critique in the philosophical sense enables one to found and autonomize a field of study, something, a form, which establishes the beginning of a process, for example with Kant, but also with Marx (concerning political economy). (What are the conditions for a real development of the productive forces?) Here the critique is the propaedeutic for science. But since we have to judge correctly, there is supporting all that the concept of value and a scale of values. Besides, one must make one choice triumph over the other possible ones and that generally happens against other men, hence critique engenders the polemic, all the more if the point is to frame one's

work on the critique of another's. An interesting example is Baudrillard's work. He works simultaneously like Kant and Marx in trying to establish a new field and acts like all polemicists, he has to kill his father, hence his *Contribution to the Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, which cannot be a supersession of Marx in any case (not even a start) because it does not question Marx's presuppositions at all.

When does the critique arise? Briefly, leaving out all classical literature, where there are rather recipes and precepts for writing and speaking well, one can say that it began with the rising bourgeoisie, at the dawn of the CMP. One can always define critique as a means of access to a science, a search for a method to do things well but mainly for a science that sets itself up on what is produced at the same time as delimiting this science. The critique grew in amplitude after the end of the eighteenth century, that is, after Kant, the philosopher who possibly the most posed (at any rate he was the first to do so) the conditions for science, its limits, etc. The route to science is certainly the critique. It is not wrong to see the critique and epistemology as neighbors, the Althusser school tries to set up a science of critique and to separate it, as they always put it, from ideology.

Thus the critique appeared from the start as a discipline that was there to dictate good taste and to maintain the rules of good usage, conventions... (relation between the critique and the state!)

From that one has wanted to know why an author produced this more than that, one has wanted to study his conditioning....

Before the critique was part of the whole (once the whole was philosophy) it was included in aesthetics (cf. Hegel). Later it was separated, now it must be subject to autonomization in becoming a science. The work of the marxists and the structuralists (at times there is little difference between them) is located there, to accomplish this reduction.

The critique has an undeniable link with competition and so

with publicity. Evidently with the inflation of words there emerges a need to choose, not by itself, but by the intermediary of a third, which is the mediator between me and the works and will lead me to the good works. It is interesting to look at censorship here, not at direct censorship, that is, with cutting out, one cuts in the body of the work, but that which finally cuts in the body of my being in cutting my potential link with certain works, because they are criticized, doubted, questioned; and discredit is a slope that is easier to descend than credit is to climb.

Publicity is the positivised externalization of the critique. It only gives favorable and positive judgments, valuing while implicitly devaluing all competitors. Human being is again dispossessed, skinned. Publicity has a great role on the level of all rackets.

All these elements allow us to found the rejection of the concepts of crisis and critique....

To return to the present crisis, seen as a crisis of society, crisis of the CMP, some say, of capital. We can accept a diagnosis, we live in a period ripe with overthrowals that have already made themselves felt. We can say that we live in a period similar to the '20s, a period when many thought that the revolution was already underway, that it was possible, indeed inevitable, while in fact their action allowed the creation of the material community of capital. They operated in the development of its real domination. Now it is a period when capital can come to dominate even more, the CMP really tends to surmount the difficulties left by the old institutions and old representations. Thus there is a tendency toward a unification, by means of multinationals and the UN, positively to found the community of capital, which will probably only realize itself in conflicts when the left and the ultraleft will think that they are working for the revolution whereas they will be mere toys of capital (e.g., struggles against the states, demand for free goods)....

Numerous misfirings are inevitable during this vast process which is already underway, creating the possibility for many interventions. But this can only be realized and have any chance of success as such if the old representations that hold down men are eliminated. It is only from that that there can be a flowering of communication between humans because they are no longer congealed in stereotypes, fixed modes of being. For, if it is evident that without a profound shakeup affecting the famous "material base," nothing is possible. It is also clear that without the total rejection of those representations, human beings will not be able to begin another dynamic. Besides, the revolution is only possible if the great majority of individuals begin to autonomize themselves from their material conditions (what is called gaining consciousness). From this viewpoint, the Dutch school, especially Pannekoek, had the merit of insisting on this necessary transformation during the revolution.

Before a powerful shock is produced, a union of revolutionaries must be about to be realized, there must be a manifestation of a new solidarity just as a new sensibility, but especially a new representation is needed. If not, the shock will merely give rise to a blind violence incapable of emerging in the affirmation of another mode of life.

Thus if one accepts the word "crisis" to describe the present situation, it is important to underline that what is important is not the crisis but the fact of knowing if men always approach it according to the same schemes. That does not mean that one must comply with the theory according to which one must above all change mentalities. One sees only too well that these are not changed by the intellectual or collective (partial, nontotal) interventions of whatever specialist in agitation. But it is clear that a given development of a determined society does not lead automatically to a revolutionary spirit. One must therefore grapple with the present crisis in its particularity and in the

modes that it is to be understood. The largest element of the crisis will be (it is already so feebly) a human behavior altogether different and nondomesticated (i.e., not asphyxiated by rationality). Now our world is dominated, conquered by historical materialism; progress is conceived of as the development of the productive forces. Even those who do not profess this theory are impregnated by it. For them it is like a minimum point of reference with reality, for them it would always be true in the material sphere, but on no account for the totality. One must then break with this rationality and with the world that it controls.

Crisis and Actors of the Drama

I shall not give the facts for, for want of a better term, crisis, in a phenomenological fashion. Henceforth the moment of breaking and instability inside the CMP, which Bordiga foresaw for 1975, is clear to all. Thus G. Barraclough wrote in the *New York Tribune*: "We live at the end of a fifty year long epoch, the epoch of neocapitalism. We are beginning a period of radical readjustments which will inevitably bring evil and suffering (...) There is no solution inside the system."

One can now await the violent clashes inside and between the various nations in a short time. A review of actors in this drama that is beginning imposes itself (outside capital itself, which I shall try to situate in a forthcoming article, what can be the moment of its great impasse and weakness).

We can immediately indicate the supporters of the CMP, the economists and politicians. Here, especially with the first, there is an inability to understand the crisis concomitant with the illusion of still being determinant. One can ask oneself the question of knowing if they will not rebel too, the rationality of capital commanding everything. This is especially true for engineers and managers. There are also the reformers of capital like

Mansholt, Attali, and the Club of Rome^d and, to a very different extent, Illich (Domenach to the extent that he takes up Illich's problematic). Besides, since he does not question the capitalist presuppositions, MacLuhan too.

Let us note the churches. Their role is particular. On one hand they have to oppose capital inasmuch as this destroys everything human. In that sense they are a human dimension because they tend to maintain something that is lost, even if it can only persist in the state of memory. On the other hand, they defend the representations in total opposition to the necessary future of the species, for example, the famous "go forth and multiply," (see the MIT critique).

It is the same with their ambiguous contradictions on the problem of life, and on the question of abortion. However, the aim is to try to reduce the human population. The currents issuing from marxism do not question at all the dynamic of the increase of the productive forces, CPs, SPs, various leftists.

The ecological movement and its often lamentable limits in this world, as in France (cf. the miserable end of Dumont during the electoral carnival). The positions of *La Gueule Ouverte*^e are often encouraging (most often on the level of information) but are limited because they do not really question capital's presuppositions. It is the same with the commune movement. It is important to analyze the positions of movements defending vegetarianism (e.g., *La Vie Claire*)^f in relation to that, or the movement of organic agriculture.

One does not develop illusions in them because they see only part of the problem and, most often, are enclosed in the mercantile mechanism, but they still express a certain resistance to capital's dynamic. To the extent that they can enable a certain number of humans to live more naturally (perhaps as the point of departure for questioning domestication), they can unleash a process that will largely supersede them, especially

when there is a questioning of official science, as with the members of the league against vaccinations. There are similar elements in the ecological communes believing in a soft technology and, one can note, the importance of the hippie and Yippie movements (which shows the importance of various movements of contestation of young people). Finally, the regionalists tend to bring out again certain important elements such as the defense of nature, organic agriculture (without speaking of a questioning of the central, despotic state), and, in seeking to define a human dimension perceived in the differences, the necessary diversity inside the species, they form a possible starting point for a more global questioning. But one must not forget their duality, their datedness above all.

There are the marginal groups (which have considerable internal differences) outside these currents, deviating from the present society, from the parasitic marginals up to the more or less ascetic marginals, a kind of twentieth-century Anchorite. On this subject the kinship between monarchism and marginality must be underlined. The institutionalized monkish movement was a means of recuperating marginality. There is a certain resemblance to the end of the Roman Empire. Also, with a certain asceticism there is a search for a new food, the renewal of the practice of fasting. Sometimes the movement is content to return to the sources, sometimes it explores new ways. There one gets to the root of the phenomenon, not at the negation of capital, which is insufficient, but more especially of that of the escape from its hold. In fact, the essential movements of the discontinuity of humanity are those where it has achieved a new sexuality (new sexual relations) and a new food with a certain conception of this food as a relation between men and women. This must be seen together with the fact that food and sexuality are profoundly linked and determine human behavior,

the behavior of humans in nature.⁵ There is a third element that one must consider: death. The dynamic to communism cannot be really set in motion without the participants acquiring a new representation—conception of death. There again is the parallel with the end of the ancient world; the opposition of the pagan and christian representation of death.

Thus we find the biological dimension to the revolution differently. Reproduction, nutrition, and death are all essential elements (somehow basic) of life. It is a question not only of the life of the human species, but of other species; limitation of human reproduction and of preying on other species. We must point out that capital can realize the dream of so called nonviolent man in a monstrous manner, taking into account the quasi-sacred character of all forms of life, replacing organic food by synthetic chemical food. From the moment when one feeds humans on pills, the question of killing animals is no longer posed, but such feeding is probably neither possible nor necessary (i.e., that the possibility here is introduced by a necessity) only following the destruction of living creatures, animal and vegetable.

What we have said so far has not been a critique but a simple statement of fact. It is not inside the various modes of being, for or against capital, that one will be able to find the true solution allowing us to inflect the crisis of the CMP into a revolutionary crisis. More especially as the crisis is not an exceptional movement during which a revolutionary possibility is finally

⁵ In articles in forthcoming issues of *Invariance* we shall analyze how oppression-domestication of human beings was affected and is still affected not only by means of sexuality, but also through food. We shall show through Makarius' work how taboos were firstly of food then sexual. There was a moment when food and sexuality were divided and the latter autonomized.

unveiled, because it can be fundamentally the moment when a greater subjugation of men and women to the CMP is effected.

We Must Leave This World

We must abandon this world dominated by capital, which has become a spectacle of beings and things. A spectacle in the sense that Pic de la Mirandole meant when he said that man was the spectacle of the world and its mirror as well.⁶ In fact man would have no special gift, all talents being distributed to all living creatures, man, who came last, would be left totally unprovided. Luckily God had pity on him and gave him some qualities of all the creatures and thus he became the spectacle of the world. In him all living creatures could somehow recognize themselves and see themselves act. As a result of the process of anthropomorphosis, capital becomes in turn a spectacle. It assimilates to itself and incorporates in itself all the qualities of men, all their activities, without ever being one of them, otherwise it would deny itself by substantialization, inhibition of its life process.

In accepting this representation of capital, men see a spectacle that is their mutilated redundancy because in general they only perceive one part. They have long since lost the meaning of totality.

One must reject the presuppositions of capital, which immerse in a distant past, to escape the grip of capital (moment of the dissolution of the primitive communities) and, simultaneously, one can supersede Marx's work, which is the finished expression of the arrival at totality, the accomplished structure

⁶ Besides, there is an undeniable link between spectacle and mirror.

The spectacle has to show humans what they are, or what they must be. It is a more or less distorting mirror of their immediate being.

of value, which, with its mutation of capital, has set itself up as the material community. One must envisage a new dynamic, for the CMP will not disappear following a frontal struggle of people against their present domination, but by a huge renunciation that implies the rejection of a path used for millennia. The CMP does not decay but has a downfall.

Jacques Camatte

August, 1974

Translated by David Brown

Notes added to the English translation

- a The two articles in this number referred to are available in English as *The Wandering of Humanity* (Trans. F. Perlman) Black and Red, P.O. Box 02374, Detroit, Michigan 48202, USA.
- b See the English translation cited above, p. 34, fn. 20.
- c Serge Moscovici, author of *Society Against Nature* and *Domesticated and Wild Men*, both in French by 10/18. Paris 1972 and 1974.
- d Sicco Mansholt, author of the EEC Mansholt Plan to reorganize agriculture in a capitalist manner without all the social consequences. Also wrote *The Crisis* (1974): Jacques Attali, author of *Political Models* (1972), *Anti-Economics* (1974), and (1975).
- e *La Gueule Ouverte* ("The gaping gob"), a magazine dealing with ecology, etc.
- f *La Vie Claire*: French organization and magazine against contamination of food, etc.

STATEMENTS AND CITATIONS

We have never explained why we dropped what served as a distinction,¹ not directly, since the problems were never posed in organizational terms, but indirectly. It was indicated what the theory was and we placed ourselves in the field of those who struggle for it in triumph. Thus we wrote “invariance of the theory of the proletariat” because it corresponded with our thought and because we had to say what “invariance” meant to us. Alone, this word could appear very obscure. It contained a delimiting statement, certainly, but which imputed to Marx a position perhaps beyond his thought: that the proletariat had a precise theory.

¹ *Invariance* of the theory of the proletariat:

- defended by the Communist League (*Communist Manifesto* 1848), in the IWMA (work of the London General Council directed by Marx), during the Commune, in the Second International, against its degeneration and failure (German socialist left, Bolsheviks, Italian socialist left: abstentionist fraction).
- triumphed in Russia in 1917 and internationally in Moscow in 1919: foundation of the Third International, Livorno in 1921, break with democracy.
- defended by the communist left against Moscow’s degeneration, against the Sacred Alliance in the resistance to fascism.
- which must be restored as well as the communist party, organ of the proletarian class, outside all democratism, careerism, individualism, against immediatism and all revisionist doubts of doctrine.
- the goal of *Invariance* is the re-creation of the communist party.

We also stated elsewhere that the theory referred to was classist, and nonclassist. It could not be attributed to the proletariat alone, more especially as it could only be realized by negating itself, which implies that the proletariat could really pose its negation and that its theory was the conscious exposé of it. This entails limiting the invariance of theory to very short moments. Thus the statement "invariance of the theory of the proletariat" entered into contradiction with other statements and articles in the journal. Nevertheless, its elimination will take its whole meaning while we have replied exhaustively to the question of what the proletariat really was and what it has become. For the remainder of the statements it is clear that despite our intentions that they have assumed the clear character of a distinction, a delimitation, and we said in *About Organization*² to what extent this is dangerous and insofar that it limits and poses racketism.

Thus this proclamation, a kind of declaration of historical principles, became quite insufficient then completely wrong. It had the merit of situating the point of departure of a reflection that was rapidly superseded.

Our basic concern when we began this publication was to state the continuity inside the discontinuity and reciprocally. That is why we repeated a certain number of quotations. Citing allowed us to say with whom we were in continuity and also to unveil the historical arc in which we thought that we operated. Thus we obviously chose what appeared compatible with our moment of struggle in the work of Marx and Bordiga. Simultaneously we invited the reader to order these works in terms of certain discontinuities we wished to bring out.

² *Invariance* Series 11, no.2.

The quotations of Bordiga from the *History of the Communist Left*³ aimed at restating his antidemocratism and our agreement with him on this capital point. Besides, it seems essential for us to bring out his antivoluntarism and the appreciation that the revolutionary phase had passed already in 1919. Nevertheless this antidemocratism and antiparlamentarianism are altogether insufficient today when we need to constitute a new human community and since capital has realized its own material community.

The quotations in the journal besides those in the articles are like windows through which the reader can directly enter the moving field of those who publish this journal. It is a theoretical shortcut that often illuminates in its silences more than many developments.

Thus this quotation from Bordiga signifies our desire to establish a work explaining the positive supersession of democracy. This has been partially realized and above all practically

³ “Salvatori was more voluntarist: it is certain that we have never been. Will cannot make revolutions, nor the party create them. It can and must favor them by its conscious action in opposing the false directions in time, toward which opportunism drags the noble crowd of proletarians in misleading their forces. The party let escape the opportunity afforded by history precisely because it knew that in canalizing the flood of proletarians toward the ballot boxes it could avoid the shock of revolutionary inundation. If the proletariat in liberating itself from democratic illusions had burnt its parliamentary boats behind it, the struggle would have ended very differently. The revolutionary party had the duty to attempt this great enterprise in throwing itself across the other. But revolutionary, the party was not.” (*Storia della sinistra comunista* Vol. I, p. 175)

by many people who have gone beyond this stage. We have therefore removed this quotation and another by Bordiga which is found at the end of the only issue of *Sul filo del tempo* (May 1953).⁴ There again it is a matter of taking a position in relation to reality and to Bordiga. It was essential to bring out his supersession of emulation, competition, of the individual—genius or not, the personality cult; putting forward the anonymity and the need to retreat from the current social ambiance. There was there too a beginning of the critique of racketism, but Bordiga's formulation let one believe that one had to pass through purgatory to be able to reach the beautiful accomplishment. There was the stink of the theory of the self-sacrificing militant even though he rejected it. Besides, the anonymity has been fully superseded. This is to what capital's development reduces us.

⁴“To follow the continuity of the contribution of our work, readers should not stop at changes in periodical titles due to episodes of a lower type. Our contributions are easily recognized by their indivisible systematic nature. As it is the attribute of the bourgeois world that all commodities bear their maker's name, all ideas are followed by their author's signature, every party is defined by its leader's name, it is clear that we are in our proletarian camp when the method of exposition is concerned with the objective relations of reality, never to stop on the stupid personal advice of contradictors, their commendation or censures in which the judgment is transferred from the content to the good or bad reputation of the exponent, with almost always unjust *matches* between light and heavy weights.

Work such as ours can only succeed by being hard and laborious and unaided by bourgeois publicity techniques, by the vile tendency to admire and adulate men” (*Sul filo del tempo*, 1953, p. 41).

Signing an article certainly is no liberation, for to name someone is to define and identify him. Naming and numbering human beings is the necessary means of domination in class society, of the state. We sign to give reference points and because we reject the dictatorship of the theory, which would be impersonal in which the various contributions of revolutionaries would be melted down, all difference between them being misunderstood, even rejected, in the name of coherence in the most profound version of this conception, in the name of "doctrinal monolithism." Thus every revolutionary would simply become the simple incarnation of theory. Bordiga's anonymity was directed against the cult of the great men and messiahs, against individualism and bourgeois personalism, which were seen as the pathogenic elements that had caused gangrene in the workers' movement. One had to eradicate the evil. This anonymity is linked to a certain guardianship of the theory, which had to be transmitted "intact" to future generations and in return this allowed revolutionaries to avoid being absorbed by the ruling ideology.

Anonymity could be useful during the period of counterrevolution, a blocked period when it could have seemed that nothing new was emerging. Its *raison d'être* disappears at once when the revolution unveils its new dimensions. One can no longer be content to defend a theory that has become consciousness of the past, repressive and sunk into wandering.

The revolution will be anonymous because it does not need clever leaders with the necessary counterpart of an ignorant mass, a mass for maneuver, organized or not in the party. It will be anonymous only in this negative sense because the communist revolution can only, in fact, develop if the mass of the people have broken with anonymity, that is, inexpressiveness, the loss of substance to which capital reduces us. The revolution with a human content implies that the slaves of capital break

with their slavery, of which anonymity is only one expression.

From *Invariance* Series I number 8 on we quoted a fragment of Engels' text of 1847, *The Communists and Karl Heinzen*.⁵ The letter of September 4th, 1969 published in series 11 number 2 (pp. 52–59, translated here as *About Organization*) sufficiently explains why we did so. Let us indicate briefly why it is no longer useful. Communism is, for us, also a millenarian aspiration, a myth, a hope, a faith, all these determinations, which were not produced simultaneously, are not incompatible; they express modes of being of the species and its development, as well as the many attempts at liberation. There was too close a link between communism and proletariat in Engels, which was conceivable in his time but inadmissible today. Finally, what was said on theory is still valid today. The communist movement showed itself again from 1968 in an ever stronger manner, but with new determinations. Thus one had to quote Engels' phrase as a taking of positions, now one has to live in this movement and also to understand it, thus to recognize its new characteristics.

⁵“Herr Heinzen imagines communism is a certain *doctrine* which proceeds from a definite theoretical principle as its *core* and draws further conclusions from that. Herr Heinzen is very much mistaken. Communism is not a doctrine but a *movement*; it proceeds not from principles but from *facts*. The Communists do not base themselves on this or that philosophy as their point of departure but on the whole course of previous history and specifically its actual results in the civilized countries at the present time.... Communism, insofar as it is a theory, is the theoretical expression of the position of the proletariat in this struggle and the theoretical summation of the conditions for the liberation of the proletariat” (*Collected Works* Vol. 6, pp. 303–04).

A quotation from Marx outlined well our pre-May 1968 perspective: "Perhaps the revolution will first become possible only after the completion of the counterrevolution" (Speech at the Cologne trial, February 1849).

Now we proclaimed that the revolution was emerging with May 1968. Our foresight in its hypothetical form, interposed with Marx, was realized. There was no longer any need to exhibit it. Before May we had to show how the counterrevolution went to completion. By attentively following its exhaustion, we have been able not to foresee *rigorously* the emergence of the revolution, but to be able to recognize it, even in its modernity.

We are now fully convinced that

this revolution is necessary, therefore, not only because the ruling class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because the class overthrowing it can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew [*The German Ideology*].

So far the revolution has only been the formation of revolutionaries, not the destruction of the present mode of life, which fully confirms what Marx wrote. However, he put forward the phenomenon in classist terms, which we can no longer accept. It is no longer a case of a class being revolutionary, but humanity as a whole. The state has become society and in the areas of capital's real domination it achieves the enclosure of society resulting in the domestication of men. It is against this domestication that humanity must revolt, thus attacking capital.

This expression well expressed our conception of the revolution. In particular it brought out our antivoluntarism, our lack of proselytism, and our deep conviction that the revolution is a

revolutionary process during which and when there was a break inside the society of capital, human beings acquired a consciousness of the overthrow in progress and the tasks to be accomplished. In other words, in this passage Marx immediately eliminated the problematic of consciousness coming from outside and of spontaneity. By definition the revolution cannot occur without a fracture through which, a new feeling, etc. all surge. The May movement and the later events all showed the need for a new way of life, a new life. That will be the concern of the next issues of *Invariance*.

The dropping of these quotes allows the reinforcement of the propensity to irony and facile polemics—there is nothing more variable than *Invariance*. We shall be the first to applaud this manifestation of subtlety and demonstration of the capacity to skim the surface. Because, in remaining there, it is not touching the essential, the theory we have posed as invariant is communism. We have realized that one cannot link this closely to the proletariat, that the proletariat is immersed in the whole social body and that henceforth the revolution cannot be made in a class's name that one would have to resuscitate, a class which only very rarely succeeds in posing communism in its absolute discontinuity with the CMP. What is invariant is the desire to rediscover the lost community, which will not be realized by the recreation of the past but as an act of creation. Simultaneously with this continuous movement, the necessary discontinuity without which communism cannot develop is asserted.

It is no longer a matter of making detours in order to be. Everything published in *Invariance* constitutes a presupposition to an affirmation that we wish to found and develop. It is unnecessary to deny this path, to paper it over, likewise simple refutation is sterile. Life is not reduced to polemics but is integration.

One has to avoid the proclamation of the dictatorship of a theory to follow the work undertaken, especially when it is the product of the reduction of an immense work and which can only be by excluding the contribution of a host of people who struggled for human emancipation. We integrate Marx's work (since he especially is concerned) but we do not pose a marxist theory nor our own theory. We affirm a certain theoretical behavior that presupposes a certain appropriation of given theories, of attitudes in society where we live, where people lived. Living is not submission but reinvention, creation!

April 1973

ECHOES OF THE PAST

So that we can properly understand the significance of each current of thought and each reflection that bears on the development of our species, it's necessary to "place" the phenomenon of capital and to outline the situation to which it has led. Accordingly, we shall now present a small synthesis of this, describing our present position.

Capital, considered as the phenomenon that overthrew feudal society in order to form capitalist society and the capitalist mode of production, appeared originally as an agrarian revolution: the separation of humans from their means of production, from the land. This was made possible by an increase in agricultural productivity creating a surplus population who were then constrained, directly or indirectly, to live in towns. Very often it was these people who sensed that an epoch was ending, and accordingly sought to live a new life, thus embarking on various large- and small-scale migrations. This then was the phase of liberalism and individualism: restrictions had to be abolished, the spirit of enterprise and the drive to accumulate had to be encouraged. Hence the role of the protestant ethic, which Marx noted long before Weber spoke of it. (The question still remains, however, as to why humans launched themselves on a course toward individual realization, and sought to salvage their loss by making practical gains, despairing, in a way, of heaven.)

The growth of surplus value was able to be represented by the accumulation of gold during the preceding phase of intense mercantilism. This was an essential phase in the development of capital, and it could allow us to date the beginnings of the capitalist mode of production in the fifteenth century. More important, however, is the question of what was happening with the growth of surplus value during the phase of capital's formal domination in the production process, which can also be termed the phase of the formal submission of labor to capital, characterized by the importance of absolute surplus value and labor power, and hence variable capital.

At the end of the eighteenth century there occurred an essential revolution, which had, as Marx noted, a tendency to renew itself, a fact that makes the industrial revolution definitive and unique, and all of its aftermath merely consequential (and this includes the self-styled postindustrial revolution, in which man is totally eliminated and representation predominates). The development of mechanism then paved the way for the production of relative surplus value, and laid the basis for the real submission of labor to capital, or the real domination of capital in the process of production.

Nevertheless capital cannot really develop unless it comes to dominate the society. It must pass from the phase of formal domination, which corresponds to bourgeois society, to the phase of real domination over society, where the community of capital blossoms into being. This starts to happen at the beginning of this century, and is now realized throughout the whole of the Western world.

The capitalist mode of production was born with two antagonistic classes, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, struggling together against the feudal mode of production, which they opposed either from a contemporary standpoint or with an eye to the future. As a result of this struggle, the process of the cap-

italization of society was speeded up. Capital, however, cannot dominate a noncapitalist society, and so instead of using the expression "the real domination of capital over society," which suggests that this is a transitory development anyway, it is important that we now speak of our period as the period of the community of capital.

The course of development of the capitalist mode of production, leading to the community of capital, was accompanied by the elimination of the two fundamental classes, and the formation of new middle classes. If capital rose to power by the efforts of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, then it has been the growth of these new middle classes which has acted to bring about the realization of the community of capital (cf. Nazism, Fascism, but also Gaullism, Francoism, Salazarism, Peronism, etc.).

The Presuppositions of Capital

Capital is therefore the endpoint of the phenomena of democratization, individualization, and massification, all of which had begun to emerge well before capital had become a determinant element in the society. This is why we often speak of the presuppositions of capital: in order for capital to be able to appear, these elements must be produced (though their historical rise doesn't necessarily imply their ultimate historical production).

These presuppositions are: production and autonomization of the individual, together with a related movement—production of private property; production of the state and its autonomization; production of exchange value, which can assume highly developed forms. These elements or presuppositions, which appeared at the time of the Greek polis, are bound up with a representation that justifies the rupture with nature and

with the community, the domination of men over animals and plants, and the domination of men over women.

In the ancient world there was a cycle that commenced with the Greek polis and ended with the fall of the Roman Empire. It was a cycle in which exchange value tended to autonomize itself, but there was also a tendency toward the autonomization of a world: Rome was a state that came to govern different communities, all of which tended to become Romanized. Here the state was a general equivalent, but it didn't attain complete autonomy, just as exchange value also failed to become completely autonomous. The most appropriate representation for this phase of capital was Christianity, which adopted unto itself the rule of Rome.

In this cycle, which came to an end in the fifth century A.D., one can point to certain phenomena that are very closely comparable to those that were operative in the development of capital at its earliest beginnings in the fifteenth century: expropriation, concentration, autonomization, etc. But given that labor power in the ancient world could never become a commodity, exchange value could not attain a sufficient degree of autonomy to provide a foundation for capital.

Clearly Christianity was able to accomplish its role as an appropriate representation within the Roman world only because it had been despoiled of its revolutionary dimension. Fundamentally this consisted of its struggle for the liberation of the slaves, to raise them into the ranks of human beings, and in order to bring this about, Christianity had to come into conflict with the Roman state.¹ This is what gave Christianity its ability to revirginize itself by returning to its primitive impetus. It

1 The second-century Latin writer Celsus produced a critique of Christianity that is vitally important even today, though it fails to fully confront its object since it overlooks this aspect of

explains as well why it was able to play a role in mobilizing the insurgent masses at the time when feudalism was disintegrating and the bourgeoisie was beginning to rise, and it further explains its present-day role in certain parts of the world where the capitalist mode of production has not yet arrived at the stage of real domination.

Christianity. The same holds true for the New Right's critique of Christianity.

In their case, the refusal of Christianity is quite probably a secondary issue. In fact, the New Right's opposition is essentially directed at marxism. Its followers believe that marxism demands an equality by leveling—which they reject. Thus they regard it as impossible to eliminate marxism without also eliminating its apparent presupposition, since Christianity was the first universal theory to preach such an equality. Hence in his book *Vu de Droite*, Alain de Benoist presents an analysis of Gerard Walter's *The Origin of Communism* (a superficial work, though interesting from the point of view of documentation). He points to the cult of the poor developed by various Christian groups, which established the equation poor = elect, just as the maoists in the '60s and '70s were to propose the equation proletarian = revolutionary (another echo from the past!). In certain cases this leads to making a cult out of weakness and degeneracy, and to a dressing up of stupidities as sovereign generalities.

De Benoist provides important materials for a critique of what Marx called the communism of envy, or alternatively, rebellion by resentment. Beings moved by envy cannot create another world; they can only alter the distribution of that which they covet (i.e., wealth). Nietzsche analyzed Christianity by reference to its relation to the poor, the disinherited, the downcast, and the weak, defining it as a religion of pity (*The Anti-Christ*). He was right. It was, after all, spoken of as the religion of slaves. He accuses the gospel of being “an insurrection of the lowly against the elevat-

Once the slaves have been freed and the proletariat exists secure in the community of capital, Christianity no longer has any base or any social foundation; it can only be a representation of capital; it is no more than an echo of the past. In order to survive, it must conduct itself almost entirely on the terrain of transcendence, of invariance. But in that sphere, it has to confront not only other representations that were contemporary or that have arisen since, but also the whole representation that

ed." More important still is his denunciation of the whole aberrant problem of fault and the practice of renunciation. And here again, if one obscures the dimension of the struggle against slavery, it makes any real critique of Christianity impossible, particularly when it is remembered that this aspect of the Christian religion emerged at a time when the hope of an immediate transformation had faded away. The religion of slaves is an adaptation to the world, just as marxism (as distinct from Marx's work) is another adaptation following the revolutionary failure (though this does not suffice to discredit the revolutionary project).

In the end, Nietzsche, in common with the New Right, Vaneigem, and others, underestimates the importance of the will to avoid the creation of inequalities, whether among the Jews originally or among the Christians. In both cases, there was a desperate attempt on the part of the community to check the mercantile mechanism that was undermining it. It was not necessarily being proposed that there had been an original and absolute equality of human beings, but what was being violently rejected was the dynamic that separates people by the most atrocious inequalities: the dynamic of exchange value. Thus it is not possible to ridicule Judaism and Christianity for having departed from the fundamental basis of their existence. But this can in no way be directed into a "restoration" of these religions, since they bear witness to an impasse, and an incapacity on the part of certain human groups to find another way other than that which would lead implacably to the genesis of capital.

humans have been more or less conscious of since their rupture with nature.

This has been their search for a foundation for who they are, nonimmediate beings who are not directly linked with reality, who are, in other words, transcendent.

It is not possible to speak of capitalism when describing the economies of the ancient world. This is particularly true of Greece, which did come to know of capitalist forms (what Marx called the antediluvian forms of capital—usury capital and commercial capital), but we view them as such only because they are recognizable in their developed forms in the structure that has been realized today in the community of capital.

During the middle ages the development of exchange value toward autonomy was slowed down considerably. It even tended to disappear, as men and women sought to establish communities that excluded it. They aimed also to halt the autonomization of power and the state. This project was a failure, however, since with the realization of feudalism a new state was able to establish itself. Exchange value was, however, banned for a certain period. It was able to resume its movement toward autonomization only by operating at the periphery, though it was helped along by the destruction of feudal relations, and in particular when it became possible to alienate land.²

Capitalist forms can be found just as readily in the East, for example in China, but this doesn't mean that capitalism operates there any more than it does in the case of feudalism. The

2 Cf. Camatte: *Capital et Gemeinwesen* (Ed. Spartacus).

One should bear in mind that this is an outline only. Important historical studies are required in order to define precisely how, when, and where this phenomenon came about. The same goes for all other assertions on the subject of capital. Ultimately we shall try to provide some foundation for this, as well as for our contention that the appearance of Christianity did not produce any

state exists, but it does not autonomize itself. The individual tends to be produced (and is produced at certain times perhaps), but the social ensemble, or more precisely the despotic community, tends in turn to block its emergence. Hence there is a certain ambiguity with Eastern representations: on the one hand individualization is negated, being viewed as a source of sorrow even; but on the other hand, there *is* also the will to realize it on the part of actual individuals, since it would lead toward another community where hierarchy would cease to exist, and there would be a refusal of the despotic community. In other words, there is an oscillation or an interplay between two fundamental themes: a hyperindividualization in reaction against the despotic community producing a total autonomization of the individual being, which finally swells out until it is the community, or its dissolution. Or, there is an aggravated assertion of the community in which everyone is diluted, so that it is often perceived as a kind of flux, an indeterminant becoming.

rupture, because the fundamental cycle was that which began in the sixth century B.C., and comes to an end in our own time.

Fernand Braudel in his book *Material Civilization, Economy and Capitalism from the 15th to the 18th Century* is able to provide a wealth of materials for his exposition of the phenomenon of capital; however, from the extracts of the book's conclusion, published in *Le Monde* (18/11/79), it appears that Braudel does not really encompass the historical limits of the phenomenon:

Throughout this work I have argued that a kind of "capitalism" has existed in outline since the dawn of history and that it develops and perpetuates itself during the following centuries.

The mistake is to imagine capitalism as developing through phases or successive leaps: commercial capitalism, industrial capitalism, finance capitalism.... There was of course continual progress from one phase to the other, but "true" capitalism began late, when it seized control over production. Before this, one ought to speak not of commercial capitalism, but of pre-capitalism.

The despotic community was realized in China from the third century B.C. onward, and was called into question several times, provoking various periods of turmoil.³ In the zone that lies between East and West (from Morocco to Persia) there are

In the part reprinted in *Le Monde*, no definition of capitalism appears, which makes it difficult to judge, but it certainly seems that he does not in any way reject the assertion that there is a period of commercial capitalism included within the different modes of production, and that it was tolerated precisely because the economic was not, in the precapitalist era, autonomized from the political, social, and religious spheres. However, the possibility of exchange value becoming autonomous has been there right from the beginning, and all of history up to the 16th century (in the West) is about the attempt to block this autonomization.

The fact that this blocking action may finally be eliminated is not explicable in purely economic terms, and hence the great difficulty of providing an exhaustive explanation of the rise of capital.

³We would add here that not all regions of China are the same and that not all of them were ripe for the imposition of the Asiatic mode of production, since certain of them were able to engender forms that threatened this mode of production and would have destroyed it had these been able to become autonomized. Thus one can find in China, the heartland of the Asiatic mode, a flourishing of economic forms that would later be developed in the West (as for example in the Song era). This explains why in studies of China it is not so much a question of why certain economic forms failed to appear, but rather why these forms failed to autonomize themselves; and above all, it explains why the two movements, that of the expropriation of humans and the autonomization of exchange value (which is the genesis of capital), never came together until the penetration of the West.

It is also worth mentioning here that the repeated regeneration of the Asiatic mode in China has been linked to the struggle against the nomads.

people who have known neither capitalism in its pure form, nor the true Asiatic mode of production—the despotic community. In fact, there was a tendency for the Asiatic mode to establish itself, but the states that it did found, especially in countries other than Turkey and Iran, were more or less reabsorbed by the earlier communities. (Ibn Khaldoun has made a remarkably good study of this.) One can understand then how this world, which had remained unconquered by Rome, could adopt Islam, a religion that postulated a return to the earlier community where the different mediations would be eliminated (cf. “La Séparation nécessaire et l’immense refus,” *Invariance*, 1979.) However, Islam does not represent a third type of representation, distinct from Christianity on the one side, and Hinduism and Buddhism on the other, because it is a variant of Judaism, a view that further serves to confirm the intermediate character of the Islamic zone.

What we have been saying about Christianity has not yet become applicable to Islam—but it will undergo the same process. Islam has an advantage in that it is a “transcendence” of a sort, less weighed down than Christianity as a representation of the world. Islam never had any contact with Roman rule, and even if, with Averroes and Avicenna, it encompassed Aristotelian thought, this did not become entrenched at all, due probably to the importance of mythical movements. And finally, because Islam never underwent reform, it has remained younger, closer to its sources, and thus better able to represent a community that it desires to restore. But given its presuppositions, Islam cannot, as we said before, be an alternative to the representation of capital, and nor can it become its own.

It is only when capital arrives at the stage of being a material community that it can begin to implant itself in all those countries where the community cannot otherwise be destroyed. For in these zones the conditions of production have been in contra-

diction with its presuppositions. On the other hand, historically the process of production in these countries resulted in the community becoming compatible with what was the presupposition of production (i.e., the more or less despotic community). This is why capital extends its domination throughout the world, though it should be remembered that this phenomenon is not inexorable, and that it is even possible that capital will not really succeed in establishing itself in different regions of the globe. In general terms then, we have a historical arc stretching from the more or less natural communities where humans were not separated from their conditions of production (where the process of separation, essential to the definition of capital, had not yet started) ending finally in the community of capital. The phenomenon of capital is included within this since it began, as far as the West is concerned, with the rise of the Greek polis, whereas for other parts of the globe it begins with the penetration of capital.

There is one other presupposition of capital that we have neglected to mention up to now because it is not unique to western society. This is the phenomenon of patriarchy, or the subjection of women to men (a condition that is equally fundamental in the process of individuation). It emerged at the end of the neolithic period and was realized first of all among pastoral peoples when private property also emerged for the first time.

The triumph of patriarchy, which is at the same time the autonomization of power inside the community, did not come about in a linear fashion; there were some great reversals. With the development of big game hunting in the late paleolithic, there was an initial tendency toward male predominance, but this was reabsorbed in the meso- and neolithic. It is highly probable that the community of that time no longer had the same characteristics as the earlier one where it wasn't possible to propose a power arrangement or a mode of being where

women could have had an effective predominance (where they did come to acquire it, it was within an already fragmented community), and still less was a matriarchy possible. On the other hand, with the development of animal husbandry in the neolithic, the appearance of private property, and the growth of population, there also occurred the rise to power of men, which probably led women to block this development by putting themselves on the same terrain—hence the appearance of matriarchy, which was a mistake—and would explain the often bloody character of certain communities ruled by women, such as the Amazons. However, even with the triumph of males, power and the state were still unable to impose themselves. It is quite probable that the destruction of the Mycenaean civilization on Crete can be put down to a rebellion against power. It required several more centuries of domestication before the state could finally manifest itself in the form of the Greek polis, but in the meantime, the individual had already been produced.

We are now at the endpoint of a historical arc, and it must be clear that patriarchy, at least in the West, comes to an end within the phenomenon of capital. As of now, we are beyond it. By this I mean that capitalism is not the final phase of patriarchy, since patriarchy is dissolved within it. Men have lost all their force and can no longer be determinant, whereas capital, having relied on men for its existence in the first place and having drained them of all substance, can now utilize the as yet untapped capacities of women, not in order to accord these capacities their proper “power,” but in order to revitalize itself. Hence the great danger of recuperation of the various feminist movements.

Let us now describe some of the directions that the development of capital has taken. As an intermediating movement, capital overpowers representation. The origin of capital was money and money became capital as a result of an increase in its value within the production process (i.e., surplus value). But surplus

value can only exist if it is represented (otherwise, it would just be tied to a given process and would be of no consequence). Hence capital moved to take over the general equivalent (i.e., money). But money has to be able to present itself as such, and also to differentiate itself. It has to be an undifferentiated totality where ΔK is not distinguishable from K , and also a differentiated totality where ΔK can present itself as different from K . Again, it must be able to particularize itself, while at the same time being organically linked to capital.

Capital as an intermediating movement overpowers representation on the more phenomenological plane as well. Rising capitalism at first needed three classes: land-owning proprietors, the bourgeoisie, and wage-earning proletarians. Then there were basically two: the bourgeoisie and proletarians. And ultimately a class of proletarians only (since this is the class producing surplus value). Capital triumphs over the society and installs its own community thanks to the new middle classes thrown up by its global production process, classes that are intermediate between the proletariat and capital and dedicated to the circulation of capital and its mediation.

The triumph of capital is the triumph of mediation and the loss of all immediateness for man, who cannot now experience what is immediate except through one of the mediations of capital. This is the source of many present-day illusions.

Capital as exchange value is mediation that has become autonomous; it became autonomous by becoming representation and this is how it has now "escaped." Exchange value was brought to this state through the various revolutions, which as much as anything else, were moments in its continuing liberation. Thus the cycle of revolutions is finished, and the moment of liberation can no longer be envisaged unless there is a conscious desire to avoid sinking back into our old wandering, where annihilation would overtake us.

In the community of capital, there are no longer classes, only generalized slavery, accompanied by the massification and homogenization of human beings and products; this is the final outcome of the democratic phenomenon. Nevertheless, if capital has succeeded in imposing itself thanks to democratic egalitarianism, it can now establish new hierarchies of inequality at various levels, so as to create differences of potential and thus check the entropy that is affecting the system.

The age-old project of human beings—that of dominating nature and differentiating themselves from animals—has been realized by capital. Capital has delivered the security that humans have sought after ever since they broke their links with nature and their *Gemeinwesen*. One might well ask whether this incessant searching is the reason why people have been willing to accept the most terrible infamies. Yet capital has now created a society that is without risks, without adventure, without passion. At the same time it engenders the stifling of creativity and even activity. Joseph Schumpeter has to some extent individualized this phenomenon by pointing out how the spirit of enterprise has tended to be lost as human beings are transformed into particles of capital.

The Potential Death of Capital

Having realized a human project, that of assuring security, capital comes to be fully anthropomorphized and at the same time nearer to its own potential death because, having desubstantialized everything, it simultaneously becomes charged with a substance that inhibits it. Capital desubstantializes by a process of bypassing: thus it bypasses the soil and produces food grown in a simple support system. It bypasses women and babies are produced *in vitro*. It sidesteps living beings and produces a chimerical life. It does away with matter so that it can

produce a material reality out of a combination of more or less evanescent particles. Obviously, this process is only beginning, but it is well within capital's basic determination, which is toward autonomized mediation and reflection that is without any real roots. Capital is a product of humans' activity that is now autonomous from them; it takes the form of an anthropomorphization, which is the realization, in a hyperpurposeful way (*hypertélique*), of a fundamental attribute of the species: reflection. From this derives the present-day triumph of abstraction and a type of spiritualism/dematerialization.⁴ The movement of capital must surmount all barriers standing in its way; its very existence depends precisely on these limits being there so that it can overcome them. Yet the limit of capital is human beings, but they are a limit that capital can surpass only by integrating them into itself. In this manner, capital poses its own potential death. Its actual death, however, will come about only through a process of abandonment: the abandonment of the whole phenomenon of capital, including its presuppositions and all that it has integrated.

From the moment that capital becomes autonomous and escapes, it is nothing more than representation. From this point on, it can reintroduce, by means of mediations, everything that it has previously bypassed. But in view of the enormous increase in human population, this has to involve such a leveling, such a degradation of human beings that capital is no longer able to regenerate itself. It can survive only on the effect of the impetus it has acquired over past centuries. Capital has encountered its true limit, whereas humanity on the other hand now confronts its own death.

Given the process of anthropomorphosis, it is clear that our

⁴ Out of this comes a certain convergence between scientific thought and Oriental thought (see note 17).

own death is also in question here, but this is not death as an absolute cessation but rather as an initiation into a new life. We are now living through a type of *bardo*;⁵ we are going to have to live through a spacetime full of horrible dangers, traps, illusions, and fascinations. But from the moment that we understand about the potential death of capital, and of the death within us of a millennium of wandering, nothing can prevent our development into the human community.

What we have been saying is also important in regard to the problems raised by humanity's rupture with the community and nature, which subsequently generated the dichotomies first of exterior/interior, and then of being self/being other. Originally, humans conceived of these two "beings" and the relation between them in terms of aid and commingling. All of life revolved around this: commingling with the stranger; with the other as woman, which is love; with the other as nonimmediate revelation beyond the senses, which is the sacred and its various hierophanies; and commingling with the other as the beyond, which is death, often considered as an initiation into the other life. Later, these relations increasingly came to be seen in terms of exchange, thus providing the basis for the movement of value. The relation with the other became a valorization. When exchange value and then capital itself become autonomous systems, they proceed to engulf everything, setting up other and different relations: thus human beings and cultures become homogenized; democratization becomes basically a combinative of desubstantialized beings; love is reduced to a sexual combinative; death is no longer seen as having any relation to the beyond, but rather as the simple cessation of the

⁵ The confused period after physical death and before actual entry into the afterlife, described in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* (tr. note).

function of one of the elements in the combinative (death democratized). Thus capital is fundamentally a profanation of the sacred. In other words, if something appears that would be able to challenge capital, and that could embody certain more or less irreducible potentialities, and would then have to commingle in order to make the flux of life possible, it gets drawn off into one of the operating elements of a combinative within one particular process of capitalization. Since the human being is the sole other of capital, and since capital is anthropomorphized, it means that there is no longer any "other." Hence the potential death of capital.⁶ In order to block this total tendency,

6 A variation on this: once humans had broken with the *Gemeinwesen*, the resulting fragmentation—which is a presupposition for the autonomization of culture—opened the way for the emergence of the other, and through this the basis of binarity as well.

But capital, which is the triumph of binary thought, goes beyond the other and strives to make itself an all-absorbing unity. Yet in doing this, it undermines its own basis, which is binarity, as it realizes more and more its own unity and its despotism.

Robert Jaulin has made a magnificent study of societies preoccupied with the self and those preoccupied with the other. (*Le Paix Blanche*, Ed. Le Seuil; *Gens de Soi, Gens de l'Autre*, Ed. 10/18). The argument of his work represents a vast difference from that put forward by the New Right.

"Space should be the site of our differences, the site and the means of multiple dialogues—whereas we are making it the site of an identity and a silence; we make it into a repetition of ourselves; we are stripped fleshless, artificialized fleeing into infinity." (*La Paix Blanche*)

"White conquest is the negation of the other or of the universe, the white death is our own death also." (*Idem*)

While Jaulin affirms diversity, he doesn't feel the need to insist on inequality, which means that he has gone beyond the sterile debate of equality/inequality. Aside from this, his discourse is made even more forceful in that he raises the question of the

capital has only one recourse: violence.⁷

During the later stages of this vast movement we have been describing, there has emerged what we originally called the biological dimension of the revolution, but which we now prefer to call the biological dimension of our development into the human community. Certainly men and women dispossessed of the qualities of action, language, rhythm, and imagination will want to reappropriate these things. But more broadly than this, it may be said that life in all its aspects has, through the agency of the human species, been brought to an impasse, an impasse produced by the hypertelity (“hyperpurposiveness”) of our thought, which is capital autonomizing/abstracting/desubstantializing, a process that is creating enormous dangers for the whole of the living world. But capital has to try to check this process, it has to find another way of realizing thought, which is the function of our species, not only for itself but for the whole of the living world. Yet thought cannot exist unless living beings continue in direct, immediate existence at various levels; it requires therefore the continued existence of all the forms of life.

So this is not simply a problem of culture, but one of nature—it means that autonomized culture has to be eliminated as a precondition for the accession of life to thought (which

West’s misdeeds toward other peoples, while at the same time pointing to the deadly homogenizing effect of Americanization. It is a cause for suspicion that many French people discover this loss of difference only now when their country is no longer in a position to carry out ethnocide (as it has done so often in the past), and when they themselves have become the victims, the “colonized” (often coupled with a nostalgia for their own past roles as colonizers.)

7 Cf. “La révolution intégrée” (*Invariance*, Ser. III, No. 4).

becomes possible only when the human species has finally put an end to its wandering). Thus the famous debate about the opposition of nature and culture, and the arguments about the primacy of the latter as the essential determination of the human species serve only to obscure the reality that still has to be confronted. These debates relate only to a tiny moment in the human phenomenon, wherein a being with the human pre-suppositions such as bipedal upright posture and manual ability, developed its brain, acquired language, tools, conceptual thought, and so became human—a process that has taken millions of years.

Movements in Opposition to Capital

In order to judge the worth of a theory that sets out to expound a noncapitalist way, as for example the New Right (*La Nouvelle Droite*) pretends to do, one has to consider not just the phenomenon of capital, but also the different movements that oppose it.

The opposition presented by these movements is not as clear and distinct as our presentation of them will suggest. In fact, these opponents of capital very often fail to recognize themselves for what they are. Thus the reactionary movement, which was very powerful and virulent at the beginning of the nineteenth century, conducted a struggle primarily against the bourgeoisie and then against it and the proletariat, with the latter progressively becoming the main enemy, and all this without ever recognizing that its enemy was capital; it stood opposed to everything that would allow capital to blossom.

This movement underwent numerous variations as and when the development of bourgeois society required it. Thus in spite of being very strongly skeptical of progress, it did come to accept science. On the other hand, it maintained its opposition

to democracy and its demand for an organic community, which seemed all the more necessary as the movement of capital was manifestly an expropriation affecting the society at various levels. Hence also the demand, among others, for roots, which was eventually to manifest itself in a cult of the earth and the Fatherland!

The proletarian movement was another opposition to capital, also on the basis of class and aiming to create a new community: communism. But it went further than this and it acquired fairly rapidly a knowledge of the reality of its adversary, which it saw as capital and not simply the bourgeoisie. It carried within it the necessity of bringing about the blossoming of individuality, while at the same time realizing the human community. The anarchists were particularly concerned with individuality, the marxists with community.

The vital elements in the proletarian movement were its international character and its perception of the unification of the species—which is why this concept had a real importance with people as different as Marx and Kropotkin. The proletarian movement thus went further than the bourgeois movement, which at its *apogée* during the French revolution had envisaged both the unification of the human race (a preoccupation that can be found in all manifestations of “humanism”), as well as the emancipation of the individual. The difference between the two movements is that the bourgeoisie thought it could attain its goal through the establishment of institutions that would have limited the development of capital, whereas the proletarian movement postulated that such a goal was unattainable as long as there were classes and the exploitation of one class by another. Thus it required the elimination of capital altogether.

But the proletarian movement unfortunately retained certain presuppositions of capital, in particular the dichotomy of interior/exterior; the vision of progress; the exaltation of science; the

necessity of distinguishing the human from the animal, with the latter being considered in every case inferior; the idea of the exploitation of nature, even if Marx had proposed a reconciliation with it. All this meant that the demand for a human community was kept within the limits of capital, and, because there was to be no draconian break with it, it was impossible to give a concrete vision of what the community could have been.

To make my argument easier to understand I intend to rely particularly on the viewpoint of Marx as well as my exposition in a forthcoming book called *Marx dans son éternité humaine* (if I can find a publisher!) which will enlarge upon the themes of an earlier work, *Marx au-delà de Marx*. Marx was a theoretician not only of the proletarian movement but also of the close of the historical phase that had begun with the Greek city, which was also the time at which the presuppositions of his thought were originally engendered. To declare that marxism has now fallen must imply therefore a rejection of the whole historical/ theoretical phenomenon that underlies it.

Marx explained how the movement of democratization/ massification and individuation had come to an end, and how these had involved a generalization to all people of certain attributes or privileges originally reserved for a few; how the hierarchies founded on human attributes had been eliminated and been replaced by ones founded on capital; and finally he showed that this phenomenon as a whole was truly a degradation of the species. Marx clearly demonstrated the totally limited character of democracy, and he accepted it only as a demand within the context of the struggle against feudalism. His fundamental concern was always for another community, and this is entirely consistent with his perspective that the capitalist mode of production was an altogether transitory phase in human history.

Marx elaborated the conditions under which science was produced, and the rules of "scientism," which involves the

elimination of humans in their role of doing and determining. This was the foundation too of structuralism, even though the school of thought currently bearing that name was propounded by people who thought they were being original and independent with respect to Marx's work (cf. 1857 *Intro. and Pref. to Crit. of Pol. Econ.*).

Marx's exposition of the genesis of value and his theory of the general equivalent (cf. *Capital* Bk I; *Contrib. to Crit. of Pol. Econ.*; *Grundrisse*) provides the key to explain not only the phenomenon of value and the genesis of capital, but also the formation of all values (often called ideas), such as justice, liberty, equality, etc. Thus thought is explained as being linked to definite forms of human behavior, and the human tendency to idealize is shown to have an equally concrete basis. This makes it possible then to understand the dynamic whereby each idea/ value/general equivalent can overwhelm the whole of reality and make it submit. And here we have the very essence of the dynamic of the political racket: everybody is required to make themselves equivalent to whatever the fundamental element is that characterizes the particular racket; this element determines whether one belongs or is excluded. Eventually it aims to expand outward until it becomes the whole community (either as ideas or as people).

Marx provided all the materials necessary in order to understand the real domination of capital over the society (though he only spoke of domination within the production process), the formation of the community of capital, and the escape of capital.

Starting in the nineteenth century, there was one movement of opposition to capital that conducted itself not on the terrain of class, but on the basis of a community: this was the case of Russia.⁸ It constituted the highest expression of the revolu-

⁸ In fact, this phenomenon was already in operation during the French revolution but it was masked by the phenomenon of class (cf. "Les caractères du mouvement ouvrier français" *Invariance*

tionary movement, because it raised the possibility of leaping over the phase of capitalism. The populists considered that this could be done, and Marx agreed. We have described already how events turned out in practice, and how this possibility was quashed (cf. Camatte: *Community and Communism in Russia*). Following the Russian revolution of 1917, the same perspective revealed itself afresh for the nonwhite peoples of the world. (Why it was not fully taken up by the proletarian movement is a subject we have taken up elsewhere). But after the 1939–45 war, when the revolutionary struggles for emancipation among these people could no longer be contained, the various communities both in Asia and Africa, in the 1960s, ignored the whole populist question and, as a general rule, the various liberation movements adopted a capitalist formula. As representations, the various Asiatic and African socialisms were compromises between thoroughgoing capitalism and a defense of national identity (though in reality, and whatever their intentions, they couldn't have been other than capitalist). There was no desire to leap over the capitalist phase. It is true that Julius Nyerere, for example, spoke of grafting socialism directly onto the African community, which implied that some sort of "socialism" actually already existed. For the populists, socialism would have come about as a result of western techniques being grafted onto the

Ser. I, No. 10. *Kropotkin: The Great Revolution*).

It is highly probable that the Vendéan revolt cannot at all be explained according to the bourgeois schema or even according to marxist traditional views (i.e., as a revolutionary movement in favor of the nobles). In fact, the Vendéans were having to defend the old community against the encroachments of the capitalist mode of production, which was politically in favor of Jacobin policy. Confirmation of this view is starting to emerge in studies devoted to this peasant movement.

Russian peasant community (*Obshchina*).⁹ In our period, at any rate, we are beyond this. It's no longer a question of grafting anything, even supposing that the community receiving the graft retained sufficient vitality. What is required now is a questioning of western techniques, unless we want to embark on another wandering. What we are left with now is the fact that the global human community can only exist on the basis of multiple and diverse communities, founded upon the specific historical and geographical foundations of each zone.

But here again, at the moment, what we have are only echoes of the past. When the proletarian movement, which also

⁹ It would seem that the Incas, in their schemes for the future community, also encountered the populist problematic.

In Bolivia, the supporters of the Mink'a movement (formed in 1969) believe that *ayllus* = village communities. In an article in *Le Monde* (21/4/79) entitled "The Indians no longer want to be spectators of their own history," they are reported as saying the following:

Our principle object is to educate and "bring to consciousness" the Indian people of Collasuyo. We have had enough of being eternally left behind and the spectators of own history. We want to become the principle actors again. It is time to recover our true history.... By reappropriating our ancestral values we will be able to affirm our own Indianness.

A member of another group, the T.K.R.M. (Tupac Katari Revolutionary Movement) states, also in *Le Monde*:

We want our own laws which will take account of our customs and our personality, so that we can link up with the socialism of our ancestors. The Bolivia of the white minority and the mestizos which oppresses us, is not ours. Our country is Collasuyo.

had as a goal the liberation of women, was halted, this rendered a separate women's movement necessary. The feminist movement, which really made itself felt after the last war, has had an undeniable importance because of its critique of the shortcomings of the classical revolutionary movement, showing the degree to which revolutionaries had become infested with notions of power and domination; it has unmasked all the subtle forms of phallocracy, the degenerate but still obnoxious offspring of patriarchy. Moreover, feminism also derived from a questioning of roles: it posed very clearly the question of what women are and what men are. Feminism has provoked an extremely salutary rupture within the prevailing representation.

The regionalist movement is also a product of the same fundamental causes: the failure of the workers' movement; the fact that the contradictions were, during the course of the historical movement, absorbed but not resolved; the search for identity and the refusal of homogenization. As well, one can hardly deny its importance in having questioned a whole and more or less monolithic tradition of domination—such as that of the Catholic church, for example, which suffocated all local cultures insofar as it revalorized paganism and professed the importance of the body, which is, in its own way, another manifestation of what we call the biological dimension of the revolution.

As the movement of opposition to capital gets progressively more fragmented and particularized, it tends to put its roots down into an older reality, seeking an identity in a more remote past, hoping thereby to recover a more abundant reality, a plenitude. In the case of the regionalists, they go back to the period of the Roman conquest, while the feminists look to neolithic times, the period of gynocracies, as Françoise d'Eaubonnes calls them, but this doesn't stop them from also making multiple incursions into the paleolithic in order to locate the begin-

ning of women's subjugation to men.¹⁰ On the other hand, this opposition movement, or rather certain of the people within it, tends to become radicalized and no longer satisfied with the simple reversal of power that the classical revolutionaries alone envisaged—that is, they are opposed not only to capital as it now is, but also to that which, at some time in the past, had destroyed their culture or inhibited their being. This does involve, however, a loss of universality. More profoundly, this shrinking of the *Gemeinwesen* means that communitarian dimension is experienced only very narrowly and exclusively. This is community as *Gemeinschaft*, the grouping together of people possessing a particular identity and having certain roots, which then become their domain of exclusive being, engendering apartness and exclusion of others. The famous phrase of Marx “The human being is the true *Gemeinwesen* of man” is a reality that can be grasped only when we also comprehend the totality of men and women and their becoming. If such movements triumph, capital would not at all be called into question and the human species would be placing itself at great risk.

The same holds true for other groups forming in rebellion against capital. They share the same roots (dissolution of the workers' movement, etc.), but they emphasize much more strongly “the biological dimension of the revolution” by their

¹⁰ Cf. *Les Femmes avant le Patriachat* (ed. Payot), an extremely interesting and stimulating book that definitely ought to be read. There is, however, one rather troublesome aspect about it: the implicit idea that men had usurped an essential feminine element.

Also on this subject, we should mention Edouard Borneman: *le Patriacat, origine et avenir de notre système social*, which we read in the German edition, because the French one seemed less complete. This book provides a mass of materials for understanding the different movements of the passage to patriarchy. We shall return to it later.

interest in rhythm, movement, etc., as with groups centered around music, and other communities we've already spoken of. A multitude of microcommunities is now growing up based on defending a modality of being that can either be opposed to capital or in complete compatibility with it. The species is being restructured in order that the despotic community of capital can be imposed and realized. This loss of substance, the disintegration of the individual, implies that another mode of being is in the process of being formed out of the liberated particles. Thus beyond the more or less stable "nuclear relationships," exclusive microcommunities form themselves, produce their own languages, and recreate a caricature caste system. They express a will to differentiate themselves in opposition to both capitalist homogenizing and the dilution of the species brought on by overpopulation. The individuals/slaves of the community of capital define themselves by their separateness from one or other microcommunity, which is something that can only aggravate the difficulties that humans have in communicating.

With these microcommunities, the roots are real and immediate; within others, there are people who have got to the stage of advocating oblivion, by their rejection of the past and the future, in order to put everything into the present, the here and now where everything is resolved—thus they favor certain modalities of being, such as the pursuit of unrestrained enjoyment, and the acquisition of the means that will bring it about more quickly or sidestep a process of real transformation (drugs). All this certainly shows an impatience that is admittedly necessary, but it is also a destruction of the fullness of the human-feminine being and a sign of people's incapacity to confront, without prosthesis, without therapeutic means, the problem of our development into another community.

As for the many religious sects, mostly of Oriental inspiration,

which have multiplied today, they too are expressions of opposition to capital. This is not a new thing in the West, since a similar phenomenon prevailed during the final period of the Roman Empire. This flowering of mysticism is in fact the complement of western hyperrationalism; it tends more and more to be integrated, particularly since the ideology of these sects is often a horrible *mélange* of individualism and communitarian despotism. Furthermore, these sects are fashionable in the left and ultraleft circles, where they have effected many conversions, which shows how far advanced is the disarray, the incapacity for thought.

All the forms of rebellion have been explored. All utopias have become impossible, particularly in view of the fact that capital now proposes a utopia of its own. There is no longer a space where human beings could once again realize a rebellion. And there can no longer be bandits or pirates constituting countersocieties.¹¹

¹¹ Piracy, even more than banditry, has had a utopian dimension. Both function as a safety valve for the society. The formation of a band of brigands in ancient China was of great importance as is shown in the novel *Shui-hu-zhuan* (*The Watermargin*).

The novel is more in the nature of a chronicle of the life of people who want to go outside a world that is sickly, austere, treacherous, dominated by trickery, money, etc. It is a utopia. All the outlaws are "goodies" who have to liquidate the "baddies." For this reason, they are pursued by the forces of justice. Being unable to live within the existing society, they go to the Liang mountains where they finally form themselves into a community.

The novel illuminates one of the despotic community's modes of regeneration. The outlaw community gathers together all the healthy characters, in contrast to the existing society, which is decayed and rotten. The emperor has only to grant a general amnesty in order to recuperate the community of "goodies," who then reconfer life on the degenerate organism, and again the cycle recommences.

The New Right

Having got to this point, we are now in a position to investigate the discourse of the New Right (*la Nouvelle Droite*). In doing this, we are not claiming that the New Right is of any great importance; rather it's because we have never properly analyzed representations of the right and what they imply for capital.

The May '68 movement reactivated all the fundamental themes that had been confronted in the 1920s by the avant-garde artists, philosophers, revolutionaries, etc. The discontinuity of May '68 found a representation in what was already to hand, a reechoing of ideas that had dominated their own earlier period. The current calling itself the New Right is a resuscitation of something that originally emerged more than fifty years ago.¹²

The people on the left in the '20s and '30s did not really want to take account of and analyze the ideas put forward by the Nazi movement and related currents, and this was in spite of the fact that many of their number were ultimately to suffer under Nazi repression. Generally speaking, there was no serious attempt to appreciate the originality or otherwise of what was coming. They analyzed it only in its immediate manifestations, and these usually tended to be in a reduced form. More

¹² As De Benoist himself fully realizes:

“Nor is it a coincidence that people’s continuing rediscovery of Marcuse, Adorno, Luxemburg and Reich only leads them to see that the essential ideas in contemporary debates had already been enunciated in the course of the 1920’s.

“Contemporary Europe begins to resemble a huge Weimar republic.” [*Le Figaro*, 30/8/78]

importantly, no one realized that a number of its pretensions had a real foundation. Nazism did have a claim to be revolutionary since it put an end to the old bourgeois society. People on the left justify themselves *a posteriori* by looking at what that movement led to and then declaring that Nazism has been definitively defeated and eliminated.

Today, when there has been a strong reemergence of these ideas, the people who espouse them are immediately disqualified and treated as Nazis. All debate, supposedly relished by democrats, is avoided. Any consideration of the existential reality of the people who reproduce and defend these ideas is feared because it would reveal that the questions raised by Nazism have not found satisfactory answers, even though that movement itself has been eliminated. Obviously, one should not forget that these ideas now operate on a new basis and within a new geosocial context. Today there are no more colonies. Peoples once taxed with infantilism, inability to govern themselves, and so on, have now been free of their masters for over twenty years and the predicted/hoped for catastrophes still haven't happened. The relationship between the sexes has been profoundly disrupted by the emergence or reemergence of the women's liberation movement in almost all countries. The notion of normality has been badly shaken by the eruption of the gay movement. And while the concentration camps in Germany have disappeared, the ones in the USSR are still there (the Gulag), which shows how difficult it is to be both racist and totalitarian—and which is why these ideas today take the form of a condemnation of egalitarianism and homogenization, and an affirmation of diversity, difference, necessity of elites, etc.

Now that the Old Right, which based its opposition to capital on a past that had totally disappeared, has either itself disappeared or been roped in as a manager of capital, who is now going to represent continuity, tradition, preservation? This role

falls to the New Right, which now has to defend science against attacks by various left currents, as it must defend also the presuppositions of capital, because capital is itself already a tradition—which could mean that already capital is no longer the fundamental element in the lives of men and women who are seeking for a way to break out. The New Right shows its false historical consciousness by opposing capital while preserving its foundations.

If Nazism was a movement that allowed the passage from the formal to the real domination of capital over society, then what can the rise of these ideas correspond to, ideas that bear some resemblance to those that inspired Nazism? More generally, what do they mean within the general ensemble of representations supporting or opposing capital?

Are they able to suggest an alternative? What relationship can these ideas have to the total cycle of capital?

To answer these questions, we want to look at the work of the best-known representative of the New Right—Alain de Benoist. In general terms, we can say straight away that his position states and defines a search for a noncapitalist way of development. Not only do his ideas have an affinity with positions held by the Nazi and pre-Nazi currents of the '20s and '30s, as others have already remarked (and via them with romanticism and the early nineteenth-century reactionary movement), but also, and this has not been noted, they have an affinity with the whole of the Russian movement that struggled against the westernization of Russia—slavophilism and panslavism.¹³

¹³ Andrzej Walicki: *The Slavophile Controversy: History of a Conservative Utopia in 19th Century Russia* (Oxford, 1975), p. 356:

Slavophile theology and the concept of “organic togetherness” (the doctrine of *sobornost*) postulated a supra-indi-

But because de Benoist has not made any analysis whatsoever of capital, and therefore can have no understanding of its presuppositions, his thought is totally immersed in the representation of capital. What is more, he seems absurdly

vidual collective consciousness which precluded the isolation of individual human beings and their "superfluosity."

The "superfluous men" were all the intellectuals who had been expropriated from their community and who no longer felt involved in any process of life. They went on to form the intelligentsia.

The slavophile theory of an integrated harmonious personality—a pre-individuation ideal—was the antithesis of the divided anxiety-ridden personality of the superfluous men; their philosophy of history represented an attempt to explain the chain of events which—in the West as well as in Russia—had produced rationalism, individualism, the disintegration of traditional communities and the alienation and "orphanization" of the individual that accompanied them.

Nazism proposed a community, the *Volksgemeinschaft*, to all the people uprooted and expropriated by the movement of capital when it was undergoing its mutation to the stage of real domination.

De Benoist's theory is a reflection of the disarray experienced by people who have arrived at individualization but who still long for the moment when they were immersed in a community (cf. for example, his partiality for a corps of the elite). The communitarian dimension is further and further degenerated.

As regards the German view, see Edmund Vermeil: *Doctrinaires de la Révolution Allemande*, p. 31.

We might recall here Thomas Mann's great dream of restoring the epoch of rising bourgeoisie (a kind of mercantile aristocracy), when there had been a great flourishing of art. We shall return to

unaware of the fact that some of his statements are in no way antagonistic to those of Marx. For example: "Man is not the master of his capacities, but he is master of how they are used. He is the demiurge of forms, *der Herr des Gestalten*," (*Vu de Droite*, Editions Copernic, p. 93). Yet for Marx, what is labor if not the capacity to create forms, the activity that allows forms to be realized? Forms are engendered by the act of production, which makes something appear, and gives form to something material. The concept of production here is not at all limited to the economic domain: it also signifies a process of formation, a genesis designed to strip away all the magic from the rising of living beings, from all things and from all historical formations, etc.

Alain de Benoist is aiming to produce a global representation and then to establish it as a means of shifting intellectual power toward the Right, so that society can be transformed. Moving on the same terrain as his adversary, de Benoist wants to erect a theory¹⁴ that will be able to eclipse marxism by employing a method often used by others making the same attempt, that is, relying on science in order to show that marxism is not scientific. To do this, he has recourse to the most up-to-date research in biology and physics. This he uses to help ground his nominalism, which is the lynchpin of his representation, allowing him to reject all theories that he considers to be universalist, and marxism in particular.

Because he is a nominalist, he is also allowed to be an antireductionist (a term that is very fashionable now among

¹⁴ There is, as we have already noted, a possible contradiction between the will to establish a theory and the adoption of a nominalist position vis-à-vis reality. We don't, however, want to go into that here; instead, we prefer to concentrate on the present-day significance of the nominalist revival.

critics of marxism), and this he presents as being the main characteristic of the New Right.

It is true that universalism is a way of bypassing the differences that exist, and de Benoist is right to refuse, as Marx does, to speak of man in himself. Thus, "there is no such thing as *man in himself*; there are only cultures with all their different characteristics" (*Les Idées à l'endroit*, p. 39). But he himself is a reductionist to the extent that he loses completely the dimension of *Gemeinwesen*. He has a particularist/particulate vision of the world. His philosophical equivalent would be an aggravated existentialism; his scientific counterpart is the modern theory in physics and biology that says that knowledge of the real can be acquired from the individualization of elementary particles based on a study of phenomena seeming to be irreducible among themselves. The theory rests on a questioning of the philosophical and scientific principle of the objectivity of the universe: knowledge of the universe cannot be separated from the subject that forms this knowledge. Another way of expressing this is to say that the knowledge we have of the world is a representation of it. At a deeper level, it is possible to see how this is related to the development of capital. Capital has in fact a dual evolution: on the one hand, it does in fact present itself as a community and a universal; but on the other hand, it *actually* exists only through particular capitals, suggesting that it may not be possible to speak of capital in general after all, and what we really have are single capitals firmly delineated in space and time. This duality, which is not inherent in capital but which is carried within it in an extreme form, provides the basis for the position of those who think in terms of invariants and universals (and who are preoccupied with the unity of man), but it is also the basis of the nominalists' position. Thus we have two valid but partial

representations each posing a separation within reality.¹⁵

Universalist thought does indeed tend to autonomize general equivalents, which are themselves products of abstraction and reduction,¹⁶ and mediations of capital. But nominalism on the other hand, because it denies that beings and things exist in a continuum, is thought that lacks all dimension of *Gemeinwesen*; it is thought that is isolated and highly individualistic, and it is this solitude that causes it also to be infinitely tragic. The tragic vision of the world, which according to de Benoist is the prerogative of western society, is something that

¹⁵ De Benoist is criticizing an ideology which is that of the bourgeoisie. Given that Marx retained elements such as the idea of progress and the necessity of the development of productive forces, it becomes possible for De Benoist to construct an amalgam.

On the other hand, we have often pointed out that universalist thought (e.g., as represented by the theoreticians of *L'unité de l'Homme* [Ed. Le Seuil]) is also the thought of capital; at the same time structuralism can be explained as the expression of the realization of the community of capital.

I would not want to deny in any way that the nominalist position contains an element of revolt, but there is no doubt that it remains within the capitalist problematic if only because it is included within that problematic, insofar as it is able to represent the opposition of one particular capital to the totality of capital.

Though he criticizes particular aspects of capital, De Benoist never questions the community of capital, for the simple reason that he doesn't even perceive its existence.

Historically, nominalism appears as a phenomenon of dissolution, as with scholasticism and the old rigid and dogmatic representation that once inhibited the flowering of individual thought—a necessary precondition for the development of the bourgeois phase of capitalism.

¹⁶ Cf. Marx: 1857 Intro. to *Contrib. to Crit. of Pol. Econ.*

he glorifies and insists upon. "If God is dead, if the world is a *chaos* in which only a voluntary action can make an organized cosmos, then man is indeed alone" (*Vu de Droite*, p. 90).

Present-day nominalism is actually a manifestation of the process of decomposition that is affecting the social body; it is also a manifestation of the impasse affecting science: science is no longer capable of providing a coherent representation of a totality without having its own presuppositions called into question.¹⁷ But at the same time, universalist thought can also

¹⁷ Recent debates, such as those at the convention at Córdoba (Oct '79) bear this out. The meeting was preoccupied with questions normally outside the scope of science: psychokinesis, vision from afar, transcendental meditation, etc.

A number of the scientists present had been influenced by Oriental thought, and they considered that present-day developments in science bear out their position. Hence Fritjof Capra believes that quantum theory confirms the Tao:

The world is no longer thought of as a machine made up of a multitude of separate objects, as it was according to Newtonian physics. It must be understood as a unified whole in which the parts are fundamentally interrelated among themselves; they can be understood only as models of a cosmic process (cf. *Le Monde* 24/1/0/79 "New Frontiers and Old Debates at Córdoba").

Clearly, the vision of a separate human being no longer having the dimension of the *Gemeinwesen* can only be the antithesis of the vision of the human being for whom the *Gemeinwesen* is an integral part of his/her being (as was the case for Lao Tse). But the world can no longer be considered according to the model of separation; it has to be considered under the form of totality. From this it follows that the human being must no longer be a separate being.

be an appropriate vehicle for setting up a conservative representation, as is the case with structuralism which poses the eternization of capital.

The nominalism of Alain de Benoist exists wholly within the orbit of capital's representation, because he has not made the slightest break with the mode of thought that he presupposes, thought that is binary, individualist, etc. What's more, his thought is not even radical, as the author himself admits. De Benoist brings out universals and invariants as and when he needs them to help him defend his ideas on race, justice, honor, etc. The only nominalist of any consequence in the modern

The essential point here seems to be that science is a representation determined by a given human behavior. It does not have the absolute universality that the scientists pretend it has and it is certainly not the only valid mode of knowledge of our species. At root, science was the expression of a dissociated whole, where the community could no longer be represented except by the state. Now that capital is progressively installing its despotic community, science can no longer be an adequate representation; from this derives the solution of Orientalism, which imports a communitarian dimension and which begins to manifest itself at every level of western society. This phenomenon was experienced at the end of the Roman Empire, during a period when a greater and more despotic community was beginning to form itself. Christianity was in part a product of this phenomenon.

This is an immense question, and we shall return to it at a future date. In the meantime, we would add the following: We have arrived at the point where two previously separated modes of thought must now converge, allowing the development of official science on the one hand, and the occult sciences on the other. The first occupies itself with necessity, with what is multiple, repeatable, reproducible in the realization of being. It has limits within which it operates. The process of knowledge implies a separation of subject and object. Science can progress but man is left

period was Stirner, who wrote *The Ego and Its Own*, and who said: "I have founded my cause on nothing."¹⁸

Nominalism has always flourished at critical moments in the evolution of philosophical and scientific thought. Marx himself was being a nominalist when he made the startling remark that

unchanged. There is neither soteriology ["doctrine of salvation"—tr.] nor anxiety.

The occult sciences, on the other hand, are preoccupied with what is unique, with what can happen only once, (which is beyond the sphere of chance) in the realization of being. They do not recognize limits (hence their excessiveness), but they can reimpose necessity by introducing an element of foundation. The process of knowledge implies a union of subject/object; hence the importance of the transformation of the conscious being through activities that aim at a particular transformation of material reality. The soteriological dimension has enormous scope, since it can sometimes actuate itself to save the divinity that is immersed in the material. Anxiety is important here, because it is concerned with accomplishing a creation that no one is sure will ever be able to happen.

¹⁸ These days, a contemporary writer such as E.M. Cioran seems to take nominalism to the extreme: "In itself, every idea is neutral, or should be.... When we refuse to admit the interchangeable character of ideas, blood flows" (*A Short History of Decay*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1975).

Any universalism is impossible here. The other side of this shows a loss of feeling and passion. Indifferentiation and indifference permit a combinative to install itself.

Cioran individualizes the racket: "It is enough for me to hear someone talk sincerely about ideals, about the future, about philosophy, to hear him say 'we' with a certain inflection of assurance, to hear him invoke 'others' and regard himself as their interpreter—for me to consider him my enemy."

This is really sinking into solitude!

there is no such thing as man in himself or justice in itself, but that human beings are determined by the mode of production in which they happen to find themselves. All of justice, he says, is tied to a given class (which evolves over time) and also to a state, etc.... This is the reason why it was so important for him to see history as the unveiling of the various magical mysteries that conceal differences.

In a similar way, it could be said of us that we are being nominalist by pointing to the phenomenon of the idea/racket.

One can recognize certainly that Marx then went against his own nominalism by making the proletariat into a universal abstract; but it was his followers who really produced that universal-operator. For Marx, the proletariat could only have a universal consciousness, able, that is, to hold forth the problems for the whole of the species. The proletariat was important because of its relationship to the *Gemeinwesen* that was to come: the human being. This is why when the human being has been eliminated the proletariat becomes an idea/racket, with a multitude of rackets being created in its name.

In regard to history, de Benoist says nothing that hasn't already been said by Marx and Hegel.

De Benoist declares: "History has no meaning: it has meaning only for those who accord a meaning to it. History is about man only to the extent that it is activated by him in the first instance" (*Les Idées à l'Endroit*, p. 38).

What does Marx say?

History does nothing, it "possesses *no* immense wealth," it "wages no battles." It is man, real, living man who does all that, who possesses and fights; "history" is not as it were, a person apart using man as a means of achieving its *own* aims; history is *nothing* but the activity of man pursuing his aims [*The Holy Family*].

De Benoist writes:

The question of whether one can or cannot “relive the past” has become a dead issue. The past, when understood for what it is, always lives on in the whole of the present; it is one of the *perspectives* which man uses to elaborate his projects and forge a destiny [*Les Idées à l'Endroit*, p. 38].

Yet this is precisely what Hegel demonstrated in his historical dynamic founded on the *Aufhebung*.¹⁹

¹⁹ What is fundamental in Hegel's thought is the idea that nothing can have happened in vain. In comparison to religious thinkers, who privilege two moments—the first, that of sin and catastrophe, and the last, that of redemption—Hegel is the thinker of the intermediary movement, which had previously been considered as secondary. He was unable to believe that what happens might be of no consequence and could be forgotten. He could not accept that those who made errors had to disappear, since they were the representatives of the false, which is also a moment of the true. It follows that in order that truth may be and may finally reveal itself, as Heidegger would say, all of the moments of truth must be maintained as present.

In this sense, therefore, Hegel was a thinker who irreversibly eliminated God from the historical process. It was an extreme profanation of the sacred, which Marx was to develop further.

However, this cognitive approach can in fact be the means of setting into place a generalized justification, which is also a conservative aspect of Hegelian thought. Then it must also be possible to perceive the discontinuities that eliminate certain givens. But is it necessary to forget totally? Here we run into a difficulty. For if one refuses linear time, and even quite simply time itself, one still has to find a way of integrating, in a permanent and dynamic way, the totality of that which has happened, is happening, and will happen.

Moreover, and in spite of what some people may think, Marx had no essential difficulty about the concept of the end of history, since it was to usher in an era of perpetual peace, where the human species would no longer have to struggle, because communism was beyond the dichotomy of war and peace; a whole historical phase is brought to a close with the communist revolution, beyond which a new human history begins.

In common with many theoreticians who find themselves on the Left, de Benoist rails against the linear view of history, he himself being a follower of the “spherical” conception. Nevertheless, certain of his statements amount to a view of history as indefinitely linear, while lacking in progress: “[Man] will survive as long as he continues, as a natural thing, to take up the challenges he hurls himself into.”

Here, the linearity of history, which follows from the invariance of human nature, is a dialectic of defiance. And so where does nominalism fit in here?

This statement, like others of his on the inevitability of power and the state, constitutes the very essence of the representation that capital confers on humans: everything is questionable; happiness is impossible; struggle, work, and pain are permanently necessary; the world is inhibited by a flaw that one can only work to minimize—except that the very act of doing so only empowers the dynamic whereby human beings give themselves over to a movement that is meaningless, inasmuch as its goal is forever unattainable.²⁰

²⁰ This comes about because of this invariant: struggle is perennial because history has no end, which in turn suggests that institutions are necessary and permanent (the state in particular), and that the established order must therefore persist. “The ‘superhumanist’ response consists of saying that man must transform himself in order to retake possession of the world that he has trans-

The nominalist position of de Benoist also leads him to refuse determinism (necessity) within the human and cultural domain: "We refuse all determinism whether 'spatial' or 'temporal.' It is here that we separate ourselves from any natural 'order'" (*Les Idées à l'Endroit*).

We intend to explain how this attitude stems basically from a will to do two things at once: to defend a tradition whose roots must be sought in a biological debasement, and at the same time to put forward something that is outside of liberalism and marxism—both of which require determinism. But first we should call attention to the fact that his statement ("We refuse *all determinism*") is incoherent: how can he justify his will to take intellectual power by saying that Marx came before Lenin, and still be able to say there is no determinism?

His mode of thought is quite obviously dichotomizing and binary:

Culture is also *everything which adds itself to nature*. Yet "nature" is *necessity*: it works upon all those who go outside of it. Whereas culture is chance; it depends on choices which are only potentially predetermined. To speak of culture is to speak of man, which means that the reality of existence is chance, and this is the only reality [*Vu de Droite*, p. 324].

So Nature is governed by a determinism, and man, who looks at nature from the perspective of chance, then longs to organize it so as to make it into a realm of order (= human determinism!).

formed" (*Vu de Droite*, p. 329).

Therefore we must adapt ourselves to the various degenerations of animal and vegetable species, to catastrophes, destruction, various kinds of pollution and the mineralization of nature.

Either there exists an *order* in the universe and the task of man is to conform to it (thus the establishment of public order would conform to the search for truth and the essence of politics would come down to morality) or, the universe is a *chaos* and man must undertake the task of giving it form [*Les Idées à l'Endroit*].

To use Hobbes' language: The state of nature is civil war. The world is a chaos [*Vu de Droite*, p. 91].

There is in reality another possibility: that the world *is* indeed a chaos and yet not a chaos. It's not a question of ordering or disciplining it, it's a matter of living it. It is curious that de Benoist, like so many others, is able to state on the one hand that only man is capable of conferring meaning (which is another way of providing security, as we mentioned earlier) but cannot, on the other hand, explain how this being could have been produced out of a meaningless world, if not by absolute chance—which he refuses to do. It may perhaps seem preferable to say that as the human species becomes cognizant of a given meaning this is then an expression of human thought and thus an affirmation of the life phenomenon. This reasoning, however, never gets beyond the binary opposition of meaning/meaninglessness. That the world shows forth different forms is one thing, it is another thing altogether to want to impose form on chaos—it is a presupposition of despotism, as well as being an expression of the need for security. And capital, let us not forget, is the great organizer of forms, it is an organizing.²¹

²¹ The question of chaos and the question of energy are as fundamental today as they were at the dawn of human reflection. We shall come back to this later.

Alain de Benoist's thinking is sometimes magical: culture appears as a given, originating with the rise of man. But where does it come from, and how is it formed? De Benoist does indeed say that "hominization is itself a rupture with nature" (*Vu de Droite*, p. 324), but he does not explain what the process of this rupture consists of, because man and culture are always thought of as inseparable.

Not only is man always the subject of nature, through his transformation of it and utilization of its resources, but it is through this activity that he constitutes himself as man. It could be said then that culture is the nature which, among other possibilities, man took upon himself, and thus made himself Man [*Idem*, p. 324].

Here culture is made to preexist human nature !

It seems that binary thought is unable to avoid falling into the trap of anthropocentrism (as is evident from the preceding quotations), which is what Alain de Benoist claims he wants to eliminate. Yet a Latin writer, Celsus (author of *The True Discourse*), whom de Benoist freely quotes, had already understood that culture is not a prerogative of man. "The visible world," he wrote, "has not been ordained just for man. All things are born and perish for the common good of the whole, through an incessant transformation of elements." He goes on to say that God does not favor man over the other animals and that we are not lords; he mentions the social behavior of ants and bees and points out that it was the ants who invented breeding and cultivation.²²

²² Quotations from Celsus are from Louis Rougier: *Celse contre les Chrétiens* (Ed. Copernic), p. 206.

There is no doubt that binary thought is linked to anthropocentrism, but it still remains necessary to define it precisely. It seems

His anthropocentrism is structural because chance is defined by him in relation to man—chance *is* choice—and it *is* from this standpoint that he then proceeds to define culture, also as choice. And only then, and by way of opposition to this, does he describe what nature *is*. Furthermore, he accepts as definitive the process of autonomization of man in relation to nature—as if it had no repercussions on the whole of life, and was separate from the ecological consequences that are now obvious to all. Yet the phenomenon of human culture is included in the total developmental process of nature (what defines humans is not so much culture but rather their autonomization), and what we are seeing today is a contradiction between the two. The human species' accession to thought concerns *all* species. Sooner or later the autonomization of our species will have to be stopped in order that the different forms of life can continue to exist: if we don't do this, men and women would, at least for this purpose, be immersed in nature.

Alain de Benoist's exposition contains a multitude of contradictions and superficialities. Exposing them here is not of great importance, since our aim is not to polemicize but rather to present what is affirmed as a body of doctrine and to see if it can really represent the development of capital or an alternative to it, as it aspires to do. As de Benoist himself says, we are in a good position to provide a foundation for that alternative because we have arrived at a singular moment, the end of the

plausible to think that it might also be linked to bilateral symmetry. Yet bilateral symmetry, which is one modality of life's being, and which is perhaps itself a reduction, may yet prove to have major advantages. We have spoken elsewhere of how art is an attempt by human beings to recover a radiating symmetry, and in so doing to set up communication with other forms of life. This radiating consciousness marks a complete escape from reductive anthropocentrism.

cycle that began with the neolithic. De Benoist thinks that human beings are capable of finding a solution, as they found one then, thanks to the placement of the tripartition of the Indo-Europeans. But again this reduces the scope of the problem, since the same problem is being faced by the Chinese, who were totally unaware of this tripartition (and a multitude of other peoples are in the same position). And besides, how did it happen that this tripartition was able to give birth to two different modes of evolution: that of the West, with the production of the individual, autonomization of the state and capital, and that of India, which engendered a communitarian despotism?

Alain de Benoist's solution to the grave problems we face today consists of wanting to return to ancestral social forms as models (though not a return, pure and simple, since he does desire a creation), which will permit a blossoming of human groups (he avoids speaking of races), and a flowering of cultures in all their diversity, together with social forms that will have need of hierarchies, power, a state, etc....

A representation such as this can have no future. It is of no use to capital since it cannot represent it in its entirety; nor is it able to suggest an alternative to it. I am well aware of the fact that false consciousness is able to make happen what it wants to happen, and that a theory may serve ends that are different from its avowed aim. Obviously, the contents of *Mein Kampf* (a deranged and superficial work, steeped in bad faith) reveal nothing of moment about what might be termed the representation necessary for the passage from the formal to the real domination of capital over the society. And yet, a "community of the people" was able to provide, in an immediate way, for the needs of all the dispossessed of Europe early in this century (and of course there exists today yet another kind of "community"!)

The representation of the New Right combines elements of the representation of capital as it exists today with elements of

representation produced by previous modes of production.

The New Right's fixation on the past is largely a measure of how far the notion of community has been reduced; it puts most of the emphasis on individuality, personality, and ethnic community (which is unavoidable, given the regionalist movement's concern with the necessity of communities where a certain mode of being, a difference can sustain itself). On the other hand, the total community of humans is something the New Right refuses, because it refuses to envision the species.

De Benoist speaks ironically of "speciety." Yet in my view, this is an essential acquirement that developed over the last two centuries, during which a consciousness of the species arose asserting its unity and the fact that it contained invariant elements. Moreover, this consciousness is in no way a demand for homogenization of the kind we see being realized today, and which is capital's way of unifying the species.

There are many people who are in fact aware of the phenomenon of species, and this is especially true of certain science fiction writers, whose exposition of it always stresses at the same time the vital necessity for diversity. The theme of identity, therefore, is often central to their work (cf. A.E. Van Vogt, Spinrad, Malaguti, Herbert, Ursula Le Guin, etc.). These writers are preoccupied with the perennization of the species in the cosmos, but for them this does not involve a domination vis-à-vis other living beings on the planet, as has been the case up to now, but rather a symbiosis and a harmony with other "conscious" species. We are seeing here also a supersession of anthropocentrism, a theme that has frequently preoccupied writers of science fiction.²³

²³ The affirmation of the unity of man involves the recognition that the other is also "man," and that in spite of gross differences, all participate in the same being, the same reality. Hence, killing and

A reduction of the spatial and temporal dimensions of the community only invites a return to what Nazism did: it is a dead end. Capital cannot be content with a restricted community, which is why Nazism wasn't able to prolong itself — Nazism was itself done away with not by democracy, but rather by capital's despotic community, which is based on the reduction of human beings to undifferentiated particles (which is how the democratic phenomenon comes to be reabsorbed).

We've said before we find the concept of the species limiting, both because its implications are too zoological, and also because it risks acceptance of the idea that men and women are merely "animal."

Also, to use the concept is to remain within the ambit of capital, within that mode that capital in its representation uses to individualize the unification of men and women, and within which all of us are treated as objects. But on the other hand, to reject the concept of species in favor of microcommunities (especially of the kind envisaged by Alain de Benoist) is not at all a denial of capital, because they can all be integrated, thus preventing men and women moving toward an understanding of the situation in which they find themselves today.

Even assuming the realization of the unity of men and women (through their having recovered a reality they have been despoiled of) and the elimination of capital, this would not signify the end of all struggle: human beings will not live their lives enclosed in a cocoon and anchored in "security," since in order to ensure their continued existence on this earth, they will always have to face situations that require struggle. One can

torture become impossible acts.

The same result may be arrived at by a defense of different and specific cultures—though there is a danger that this could lead to a shrinking of horizons.

imagine the possibility of glacial movements, upheavals caused by subterranean shifts that will cause earthquakes and volcanoes. Great energy will be necessary because that is what is required for life to survive in the cosmos.

Those who think that a terrestrial paradise could ensue after a revolution or a catastrophe are saying that the present situation should be replaced by its negative opposite—which is reductive, because it envisages the elimination of certain essential attributes of life, in the manner of those who think that one day there will be no more pain, that suffering will be abolished and so on.²⁴

One final note on this subject: the community is almost always envisaged as a prosthesis and hence as a therapeutic. A realized community is necessary so that men and women, who have been divided, can be reunified. Community is their means of doing this. It is not to be viewed as the spontaneous result of a union at planetary level (as the totality of the species), nor at the level of actual geographical zones (as a limited grouping of human beings). And the dimension of community is definitely not to be seen as being internal to the human being, though this is a necessary precondition for the founding of the human community.

Returning now to the question of culture (which is the principle axis of de Benoist's investigations), it is important to note that the problem really began to make itself felt under capitalism in its very early mercantilist and liberal phase, and that it was later taken up by both the reactionaries and the revolutionaries. Marx, for example, suggested and strove for their reconciliation. De Benoist, however, presents us with a theorization of the autonomous development of the human species as a cul-

²⁴ This is why we have always emphasized the grave dangers lurking within the formula "abolition of work."

tural fact—an attempt that is in perfect harmony with the representation of capital since this latter can only be the anthropomorphosis of an autonomized being.

However, de Benoist cannot dispense with nature altogether, because for him nature serves a purpose by allowing him to say that certain (to him) essential determinations are perennial, like private property for example, the roots of which lie in the territorial instinct, or the incessant struggles within human societies, which are seen as indications of man's killer nature and original aggressiveness. The problem about culture echoes that which besets nominalism: it is not the operation of chance.

The exaltation of culture and chance is intended as a reaffirmation of man's importance (man here is a universal), and as opposed to structuralism, which also postulates the primacy of culture. Yet in his desire to find a biological and scientific base for his theory of human diversity and inequality, de Benoist relies on sociobiology, which is a model of biological structuralism. The living being, the human being is of no importance; what matters is their genes, and how these interrelate.

He cites Richard Dawkins writing in *Le Figaro* (June 1979):

Genes multiply within enormous colonies (ourselves) in complete security,²⁵ isolated from the exterior world and manipulating it from a distance. These genes have created us, mind and body, and their preservation is the ultimate reason of our existence. We are their survival machines.

(This is a more sophisticated expression of the old formulation of Weismann on the soma and the germen.) But if genes—which, being particulars, are expressions of nominalism—do actually determine us, how does chance operate in our lives? How can we choose? Is chance contained as a possibility in a

²⁵ This is an anthropocentric "anxiety."

gene? True, de Benoist does have some reservations about this, and he makes some criticisms at the end of the article, but these relate to certain other exaggerated claims of sociobiology, and not at all to the present questions. He concludes:

Dawkins is right to make the point that man, contrary to the obstinate genes which "make use of him," is alone capable of foresight. This is the reason why "we alone on this earth are capable of rebelling against the tyranny of the egotistical replicators." The struggle of the future perhaps may come down to this: the revolt of the ephemeral prevoiyants against the blind immortals.

This invoking of science fiction leaves everything unanswered, for what is it that makes man see into the future and rebel? Is it certain genes? or other elements? or is this the operation of true chance?

The oscillation between nominalism, culture, and chance (which are very visibly favored) and universalism, nature, and determinism (which are left obscure) is related to the search for identity and roots. Identity is permanence; it shouldn't be troubled by any discontinuity; which is why it needs to be firmly anchored, because identity carries with it or at least implies the need for security.²⁶ De Benoist claims that the identity of western peoples is determined by their belonging to the Indo-European ethnic group, and that they have to recover this

²⁶ The New Right is not immune from the difficulty now facing all groups engaged in the search for an identity that can distinguish them—the will to establish a theory of the Right and the will to establish an identity are intimately related. In a future study, I want to go further into the concept of identity, which can be analyzed only in the context of related concepts, such as representation, value, etc.

group's tradition. Further, he seeks to justify (which is another aspect of identity) the value of this culture—ruled by landed property, the individual, the state, etc—which in their turn require some incontestable foundation, to be sought in the order of nature.²⁷

The Order of Nature

The order of nature plays an essential role in justifying violence and therefore also the internecine struggles within the species. Many theoreticians accept the thesis that man has been a killer from the very beginning. Hence if there is this killer instinct within the culture, then the aim of education must be to neutralize and inhibit it. The pleasure principle is no longer that of enjoying to the full (and not only sexually speaking), but that

²⁷ Even Robert Vacca wants to establish a tradition that has to be strong and new, one in which knowing must prevail over having — thus providing for real efficiency:

“The refusal of efficiency—in an overpopulated world—implies a decision to allow great masses of people to die” (*Manuale per una improbabile salvezza*, p. 52).

Having said this, Vacca then rejects any questioning of science and technology; he wants them developed to the maximum.

Because there exists, in his view, an inequality among people related to the possession of knowledge, he is thus unable to accept democracy in its present form, and proposes that instead of one man one vote there should be a different number of votes for each person (p. 128).

As is so often the case with people whom one could say are of the Right, the critique of democracy never gets beyond the framework of immediate operational efficiency.

of killing. As a consequence, social life becomes repression and sublimation, and love a diversion from the act of killing! At most, love is a general equivalent, a mediation; the lost immediacy was to be found again in Christian love,²⁸ which becomes

²⁸ It would seem that the view of love propounded by Mo Tau (5th century B.C.) has something of the same quality.

Irwin S. Berstein's studies of the ethology of primates shows the necessity of relativizing the importance of aggressiveness (cf. *La Recherche* No. 91, 1978):

Once again we see that the key characteristic of primates is their social nature. This is more important than their capacity for aggression.

For too long we have envisaged dominance in terms of aggressive capabilities and the show of physical superiority in single combats. From now on I think that the social nature of combat will have to be taken into account. Social alliances at the center of a troop are remarkably efficient at excluding intruders and lessening the forces tending toward dislocation of the troop.

When speaking of the social dimensions of animal life, it is very important to note what Kropotkin has to say on this in *Mutual Aid*. He maintains that because the territory of animal species has been reduced due to human pressures, animals have now become more "individualist." It is often said that the existence of primitive peoples is no longer possible because of contamination by other social forms; it is the same with the animals. One is studying beings who have been completely disturbed by our action.

As far as man is concerned, it is wrong to use the behavior of our ancestors or the social organization of baboons as models to explain ourselves, as Vernon Reynolds very justly points out in his book *The Biology of Human Action*. The book is particularly interesting for the way in which the author is able to show that the true dimension of human beings in their evolution is their capacity for

the means of reuniting what has been divided, abolishing inequalities and contradictions, uniting unlike things. Its character as a general equivalent is perfectly revealed by the way in which each particular love comes to be reflected in the love of God on which it is founded. Hence all loves are rendered compatible and operational.

The study of the ethnology of primates has led to the belief that there is an inherent human aggressiveness; yet this work has also revealed the importance of contact and touch among the members within primate groups. How can the two conclusions be reconciled?

The assumption that man is a killer and a carnivore also serves to justify another fact of culture: the enormous consumption of meat. In this case, it serves the ideological interests of the right as well as the left. Thus the extreme left group *Communisme ou Civilisation* declares that meat eating is the superior diet because it permits man to develop his brain. The

conceptual thought. It is this, rather than their aggressiveness, which Reynolds sees as having enabled our ancestors to resolve the problems posed by the "adaptation" to the environment of the open savannah.

We intend to enlarge upon this in a study of the phenomenon of the emergence of men and women; at the same time we also propose to expound, in the form of theses, the problem of violence. Here is a rough preliminary definition:

Violence appears or manifests itself when there has been a rupture within a process. Violence is what permits a rupture to happen, whether this be within the physical, cosmic, biological, or human spheres. Violence involves the open appearance of forces and the setting in train of energies of varying magnitudes. It involves the implication that this violence should be directed.

followers of this group are relying here on Marx and especially Engels's essay "The Role of Work in the Transformation From Monkey to Man," which is a veritable oration in favor of animal proteins.

They would have been better advised to consult the work of Oscar Maerth: *The Strange Origin of Man*. Maerth believes (as does the New Right) that the genesis of man is an entirely cultural fact: men became men by eating the brains of their fellow creatures. Since intelligence appears to be digestible, you can devour your neighbor who happens to be endowed with a more developed brain, and acquire his intelligence. And since women, it seems, were put to one side in this feast, it is possible thereby to explain their inferiority, as well as the inequality between races, and why certain of them are inferior and others superior.²⁹

The followers of *Communisme ou Civilisation* take an even stranger line when they accuse the capitalist mode of production of not satisfying man's carnivorous needs. For them, in effect, capitalism = vegetarianism because the consumption of meat is seen to be diminishing as a cereal-based diet becomes generally adopted.

This claim is quite vacuous, however, and in fact the contrary is true. Obviously the meat we consume today is no longer the innocent and simple fare such as was eaten by the men of the paleolithic. However, given the population explosion and the enormous waste involved in animal husbandry (since the same

²⁹ On the subject of the origin of the human species, Elaine Morgan's book *The Descent of Woman* makes stimulating and agreeable reading, because in it woman is reintegrated into the process of genesis; it is also interesting because it rests on an extremely astute theory that postulates a return to an aquatic environment.

amount of grain that goes to produce a certain quantity of meat can be used to nourish a greater number of people), it is highly probable that some sort of vegetarianism may come to be imposed on us by the community of capital. To all appearances we will have a solution like that of the neolithic, with the introduction of cereals into human diets. And here again we have an echo from the past, though a very distant and distorted one.

Even those who are not frenetic and extreme devotees of carnivorousness (like the group *Communisme ou Civilisation*) still take the view that man is omnivorous and therefore also a meat eater. In their impassioned plea for human omnivorism—which links man with pigs—they pass in silence over scholars like Cuvier, who in his *Lessons in Comparative Anatomy* (1801) said:

Comparative anatomy shows that in every respect man resembles the fructivorous [fruit eating] animals and not at all the carnivores.... Only by disguising dead flesh and making it more tender by culinary preparation can it be chewed and digested by man, for whom the sight of raw and bloody meat would otherwise provoke horror and disgust.

Both Buffon and Bichat make the same point, in relation that is, to people living before the development of industrial capitalism and the basic agrarian upheaval, and before the beginning of livestock production for profit (an activity that was grafted onto the corn trade).

So here then, as in all spheres, one invokes the scholars one has need of!³⁰

³⁰ Which is why I will now refer to a current which maintains that man is a frugivore and that all healing measures should be proscribed: this is the American Hygienist movement, which is mainly represented by Shelton. In France, the *Nouvelle Hygiène* move-

The study of the relationship between nature and culture is most of the time constrained by the problem of having to justify a representation. Nature is apprehended both as a general equivalent and as an operative. It has lost all its immediateness; it is no longer the realm of life. It is therefore important to appreciate the way in which the relationship of nature and culture is understood here, particularly in view of the fact that we are now living through the end-time of a culture, as various theorists like Lévi-Strauss have determined; we must understand that the present problem is how to stop the autonomization of culture. On the other hand, forming our perception of what the future human community will be requires an analysis of all our present-day modes of behavior and those that originally gave rise to them. Thus our behavior toward animals is to a large degree conditioned by animal husbandry, which took hold in the neolithic. It was out of this practice that there grew both the notion of private property and exchange value, and in particular

ment has been disseminating and defending its basic positions for several years now (cf. *Invariance* No. 1 Ser. III, pp. 14–15).

The movement itself is about rediscovering what are the fundamental biological givens of man and woman by means of raising cultural barriers. Scientific studies have shown that a great number of the solutions to difficulties posed by certain life phenomena lie in a return to a more natural behavior (i.e., they involve the elimination of cultural practices). This is the case with childbirth, which is now to be viewed from the point of view of the woman, as well as from that of the child (cf. the Leboyer method of natural childbirth). The same is true for the various psychological problems brought about by the lack of touching, something which is still psychogenetically important (cf. the extraordinary book by Ashley Montagu: *Touching*, which we shall take up later). All this raises the whole problem of the validity of human interventions (though without falling into a westernized Taoism!).

their ability to become autonomous. How then is it possible, in the light of this, to preserve this activity and presupposition of capital's development? What's more, animal husbandry provided the whole basis for the rise of patriarchy. The practice enabled man in effect not only to verify the reality of his role in procreation, but also to manipulate reproduction. Thereafter it became possible for him to alter his attitude toward women. I don't believe, as Françoise d'Eaubonnes does, that animal husbandry enabled men to realize that they had a role in reproduction, but rather that it allowed them to objectify a reality and manipulate it. In a way, animal husbandry was the beginning of the scientific viewpoint, which consists of treating the other (whether it be human being, animal, vegetable, thing) or even the self, as an object.³¹ This could be seen as consciousness (which is participation) transformed into knowledge (which is manipulation).

Clearly, then, stock raising has to be abandoned, and domesticated animals should be allowed to return, as far as they are able, to a state of nature. They are not indispensable to agriculture, contrary to the opinion of the followers of biodynamics. A cycle of elements can be realized that will regenerate the soil without recourse to manuring.

What has been said on the subject of animal husbandry applies equally to agriculture. Françoise d'Eaubonnes remarks that the desertification of large areas of the Middle East was the result of man's exploitation. But this was not solely the result of men having destroyed the ancient women's way of doing things, which had implied allowing

³¹This must of necessity have a considerable bearing on how the other is apprehended. One can understand, then, how in places where science has never developed, it is possible to have civilizations based on the other and not on the self.

the land to lie fallow, since the practices of ploughing and irrigation were in fact a more important cause of the exhaustion of the soils. The fact that we cultivate or grow plants has to be questioned, because a new bond with nature has to be found. It's not only a question of finishing with monoculture, which is the principle cause today of soil degradation and parasitism, but also of finding a way of producing our food that will not cause any more trouble or disequilibrium.

Animal husbandry has had yet another essential effect on humanity: humans have had a tendency to see themselves as a herd that they have to make prosper and grow. There *is* a continuity that runs from the biblical "Increase and multiply," to Adam Smith's conception that the fundamental element in the production process is man (i.e., what Marx called variable capital), to the aphorism of Stalin that "man is the most precious form of capital." This continuity, which is at the same time a false consciousness, rebounds on those who adopt it. The manipulation of things becomes the manipulation of people, the domination of nature becomes the manipulation of people (Adorno and Horkheimer). In other words, the scientific presuppositions established in the neolithic with the spread of animal husbandry went hand in hand with the development toward domestication (which we have examined at length elsewhere). And it shows up again in this vital contradiction: men always want to distinguish themselves from beasts, yet they constantly treat each other like animals. Thus artificial insemination, at first used with animals, now tends to be used for humans (resulting in a flourishing of sperm banks!).

Conclusion

Most of the theoretical debates as well as the various practical attempts to found another mode of life are, as we have said,

merely echoes from the past; whereas capital itself is not stagnating, but on the contrary is progressing more and more clearly toward the realization of the despotic community. It does this by reactualizing certain phenomena that were operative over fifty years ago. Thus it is with the case of inflation. The rise in the price of gold to \$800 an ounce (\$38 in 1968), and the oil price rise are the most spectacular manifestations of this. There are indeed certain parallels with the famous inflation under the Weimar republic in the 1920s³² (and not surprisingly, many of the theoretical debates are an echo of this past time). Inflation in the '20s played a fundamental role as an arm of disorganization within the working class; it provoked the destruction of the old bourgeois society and enabled the passage to the real domination of capital over the society, which became politically operative thanks to Nazism. In our time, inflation (understood by reference to various phenomena that we cannot analyze here) at the world level, tends to uproot structures, whether it be the old precapitalist social structures or those of bourgeois society, or in the case of the West, the archaic economic representations that are preventing the realization of the despotic community. At a deeper level, inflation leads to an uprooting of the human species, that is, it undermines all its representations of security established originally through the various institutions of society; thus the human species becomes obliged, in the final analysis, to entrust itself to the movement of capital.

Through inflation one can see in outline an alternative solution to the energy problem. In view of the high prices of oil and

³²The slide into protectionism is another manifestation of what was seen to happen in the '20s. Beyond its significance as a purely economic phenomenon, protectionism denotes a will to preserve identity that is under threat from the international movement of capital. This is how it operated with the Nazis.

gold it has become possible to finance research into the use of solar energy, geothermic energy, etc., or to invent another source of energy altogether. Paradoxically, this enormous inflation could hasten the introduction of free goods, in which case a generalized representation of exchange will have disappeared. Yet it will, at the same time, herald a yet more powerful despotism, because it will have been arrived at by two opposing routes: the free movement of inflation leading to a disappearance of prices, and the struggle against inflation implying strict controls over wages and prices. Clearly the first way could not produce this result straightaway because of the power of ancient representations and the actual inability of capital to control everything; in this case, therefore, the 'free goods' would be assigned to each one according to his/her function in the total process of capital.

At all events, today's inflation with its extraordinarily high lending and interest rates, necessitates a worldwide restructuring, particularly in view of the fact that the Islamic countries occupying that zone that is intermediate between East and West are being convulsed by a questioning of the capitalist dynamic—regardless of whether this is being proposed by the U.S.A. or the USSR.³³ We very much doubt that these countries will

³³ In order to resist the two forces of westernization (i.e., the penetration of capital), the people have gone back to Islam, which is the foundation and the cement of their community; it is also about to be given a new content:

Thus Islam has more the appearance of a social conception, a factor of national order and of evolution and the progress of peoples, than of a religion in the narrow sense of the word. This characteristic of Islam, which permeates all aspects of the society, has created a situation in which there is no place for any other philosophy — social, liberal, or modernist—which

be able to find a way other than capitalism, but it's not impossible that they may arrive at some variation of it; but nor again can we exclude the possibility that capitalism will become firmly entrenched *there*, thus generating a vast zone of instability.

It was not for nothing then that the USSR intervened in Afghanistan, quite apart from the fact that this was also a measure of internal significance, since Russia must have an eye to its own Islamic republics.

Further, events could hasten the appearance of a form of opposition to capital in Black Africa (where the capitalist process may have been slowed down but certainly not abolished) and this would be happening in an area even less able to accommodate capitalism than the Islamic countries. The vast populations of uprooted people in Africa may also be able to launch themselves on a movement to found an identity of their

could fit with either the conceptions of a party of the national bourgeoisie, or with the philosophy espoused by the local descendants of Marxism.

Both as a politic and as a civilization, Islam has actually surpassed its own teaching. This has come about because the concept of the Islamic Ummah (which is beyond civilizations, cultures, nations, societies, ethnic groups, and the peoples united under Islam) has now extended beyond all the civilizations and cultures which existed in these regions before the beginnings of Islam [Anouar Abde-Malek: "One of the Universal Civilizations" *Le Figaro* 18/1/80].

As regards the perception of westernization, whether this derives from the American or the Soviet side:

Westernization, of the East as well as the West, brings a relentless struggle between two systems, both of them tending to supplant each other—whereas the Iranian, Afghan, the Muslim-Arab and perhaps all third world peoples, see but two degrees of the same process of westernization which awaits

own, as happened during the cultural revolution in China in the '60s when the Russian model was virulently rejected in favor of a Chinese specificity. This phenomenon, which appeared frequently during the course of Chinese history with accompanying periods of xenophobia, could very well manifest itself again and engender yet another impulse toward destabilization.

What we are seeing today is a speeding-up movement, such as is highlighted by the process of inflation, together with the first beginnings of an alternative energy path. (All decisive moments in history have been accompanied by upheavals in the field of energy.) Any stabilization is impossible under this inflationary wave: people who oppose capital are finding it difficult to fall back on some position from which they would then be able to make a compromise between their own needs and the development of capital; it is something they are finding they can no longer ignore.

Thus we have a double phenomenon: the global ensemble is being restructured and peoples not yet really controlled by capital are being domesticated. As regards the latter, the various

them, two moments of the same tendency of the West to impose itself universally; *to deny the other*.

In this region socialism does not constitute an egalitarian response to capitalist exploitation, but on the contrary, a capitalist response to the absence of capitalism, a response to that which places itself outside of the Western economic, cultural and political universe [Salah Bechir: "Two Degrees of the Same Battle" *Le Monde*, 15/1/80].

This perception is part of the general maturing of understanding both of what the Russian revolution of 1917 was about, and also of the stage we are at today. It is a vital part of a new and rising representation that has nothing in common with our own, but which is a step forward.

local guerilla wars in Indochina, the Soviet intervention in Africa and Afghanistan, and the internal struggles in Iran all entail the suppression of the various communities that have raised opposition, often to the extent of totally eliminating them. The global, international community of capital is in fundamental agreement on this point: it means that the Soviet-American confrontations are nothing but political farces and an obvious covering over of their immediate divergent interests. These cannot lead to a third world war as certain revolutionaries think and as various journalists would have us believe.

The separation vis-à-vis the old representations is getting wider, along with the refusal of capital's becoming. However, in the West, this refusal is often expressed by a simple renouncement that borders on passivity, indicating a profound loss of energy among human beings. It is true that with 1980 must begin, as is being proclaimed in various quarters, the era of catastrophes. The fear of this is having a stifling effect on people, leading them to propose and then live out the attitude of "who cares?" that comes of resignation.³⁴

³⁴ The technique of diversion (*détournement*) realizes complementarity, thus permitting a tightening up of the combinative. It is thought that a connection is being broken, and hence that something is uprooted: "What is this knowledge, founded on the tacit assumption that one is never so badly served than by oneself..." (Vaneigem: *Le livre des plaisirs* [Ed. Encre, p. 13]).

From a diversion of a popular adage one can produce the symmetry of what was being propagated before. Nothing is subverted.

As a logical consequence of this, we can have a right-wing commentator like Gregory Pons writing in *Le Figaro* of 22/9/79:

The constant brake which market society applies, in confiscating life and perverting man's pleasures and desires, reveals a clear convergence between Vaneigem's *Le livre des plaisirs* and the

There are people who want to break or who are breaking with the dynamic of capital but whose thought is blocked because it is immersed in representations that are really no more than combinatives of unitary ideological elements issuing from out of the left or the right, often pale reflections of thought of the past.

We must flee from Time, we must create a life that is feminine and human—it is these imperative objectives that must guide us in this world heavy with catastrophes.

Jacques Camatte

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Translated by David Loneragan

new currents of thought such as that of Alain de Benoist, who bases a large part of his critique of contemporary ideas on the refusal of “market imperialism” between the two poles of intellectual sphere, sparks begin to crackle which could form a flux of energy [“The New Right: Nietzsche Buries Marcuse”].

Afterword on the Subject
of the Anthropomorphosis and the Escape of Capital

The anthropomorphosis of capital is remarkably evident in the work of the new economists, who base their thinking on the fact that man is rational and will seek his own greatest advantage (this proposition forms the basis of microeconomics, and according to liberals it can be verified in reality); if man is rational, then he must be rational in all the dimensions of his individual and social life. Economic science, the science of rational choices, infuses itself into all spheres of activity and ultimately into all disciplines; it is social science *par excellence*. And here one encounters again Adam Smith's original and unifying conception as expounded by him in *The Wealth of Nations* (1776). To make the point easier to understand, here is a picturesque example taken from the highly esteemed Chicago review *Journal of Political Economy* (February 1978): The article is called "A Theory of Extra-marital Affairs." In it, an analysis is made of the time spent with one's spouse and with one's lover, and the conclusion is reached that: "At the optimum, the marginal utility of time spent in the marriage is equal to the marginal utility of time spent in the affair ($df/dt_1 = df/dt_2$)." The decision to take a lover is analogous to the decision to commit a crime, although the degree of religious faith appears in the calculation!

On the subject of criminality as economic activity, Jenny writes:

Criminal activities are attractive to those individuals who see in them a particular element of risk, i.e. that of being

apprehended and punished (either by fine, imprisonment or execution). For the economist, the point of departure for the analysis is that the breaking of the law results from a choice on the part of the individual seeking to maximize his hope for utility or profit; thus the traditional economic calculations are applicable to participation in illegal activities [“l’Economie retrouvée” in *Problèmes Economiques* No. 1598, p. 28].

Marx had already taken up this question (though he addresses it from an objective viewpoint—the role of the criminal in the production process, and not from the subjective viewpoint of the criminal himself—the economic motivation for the crime), in order to make a scathing denunciation of the inhumanity of capitalist society. In *Capital and Gemeinwesen* (Ed. Spartacus, p. 131f.), we referred to the section in “Theories of Surplus Value” where this inhumanity is examined. We used this text to explain how it is that the middle classes cannot be said to be producers, and we went on to say that given the growth of what we called the new middle classes, there has been a generalization of what Marx put forward in his exposition (and which is now cynically flaunted by the new economists). Finally, we have explained in detail how this was an expression of the real domination of capital over the society, and how it has developed over time.

Rationality, which, as we saw earlier, is defined as the search for the greatest advantage, is the rationality of capital, which integrates the rationality of both value and exchange. The new economists prefer to speak of “economicity.” But what are they actually saying?

The birth of a child corresponds to an investment; it draws on immediate expenditures which are then able to procure future resources.

According to Jean Jacques Rosa, in a couple there is an economic exchange: the man brings in an income which is set against the domestic work carried out by the woman.... Politics is a market where promises are exchanged for votes [*Ibid.*, p. 29].

The theory of "human capital" was developed at Chicago. This method allows one to study the effectiveness of education, the functioning of the labour market, the distribution of wages etc. Naturally, Professor Becker has perfected the theory of the consumer and has attempted to show that the distinction between "true" and "false" needs is an artificial one; advertising in particular sees itself rehabilitated because it reduces costs [*Ibid.* No. 1615, p. 12].

The new economists represent a type of man that Mandeville had glimpsed at. In Marx's case, it evoked a nightmare for the marginalists (who are the theoreticians of the autonomization of capital), it is seen as fixed and well established: it is a type of man that has totally interiorized the dynamic of capital. This man cannot live alone; he needs a community, which is the market. The economists of the Renaissance had perceived this, and it was spoken of by Marx in the *Grundrisse*.

Pierre Rosanvallon makes the same observation:

This is simply an actualization of the economic utopia of the 17th century, which saw in the market the archetype of all social relations and the form of organization which would be sufficient for all of society. Curiously, this economic utopia was in decline by the 19th century with the development of capitalism. It seemed difficult to speak of universal harmony and the market as guaranteeing social equality and international peace, when in concrete terms, capitalism rested on exploitation and war [*Ibid.* No. 1615, p. 17].

Further on he insists that this provides “for a capitalism which is in crisis a fighting ideology, permitting it to break out of the defensive situation, culturally speaking, in which it finds itself today.”

But it’s not a question of a crisis or a defensive situation; what is needed is a clear and explicit affirmation (however inadequately expressed) of the real domination of capital.

Economicity, and the market community of which the individual is a member, are no more than images or superficial expressions of the reality of the community of capital. The same applies to the New Right’s concept of the “market society,” which is even more superficial:

Market society appears essentially as a society in which the values of the market have overthrown and corrupted the non-economic and non-commercial structures. These typically market criteria of behaviour and judgement also infiltrate certain non-commercial fields of the economy such as productive investment [Pierre Vial: *Pour une renaissance culturelle*, Ed. Copernic, p. 56].

If one compares the two conceptions—that of the new economists and that of the New Right—one becomes aware of the compromise that the latter is seeking to realize. But it is not possible to deflect the development of capital, which will impose itself regardless: only an abandonment of the whole dynamic can provoke its end.

Thus the immediate given of the New Right comes into better perspective. It was born in opposition to May ’68, which had demanded, in a confused way, a new mode of life. Not having grasped the profundity of this, the New Right sets itself up as a sort of “counterreform”; this is well explained in Vial’s book *Pour une renaissance culturelle*. It is an indication that

one can slow down a movement without being able to stop it. As an illustration of this it could be said that the May movement posed the questions for the planet as a whole, whereas the New Right envisages only Europe, for it can no longer base itself uniquely on France.

Our perception of the reality of today's world, which has been clouded by ancient representations, must become sharper. We must understand that we have arrived at an impasse, and that capital has escaped from human control. This does not exclude the onset of a deflationary situation, in the near or not too distant future (related particularly to the difficulty of reinjecting petrodollars into the productive mechanism); it is a circumstance that could engender troubles comparable to those of 1929.

We are living in a time when globally we could see any number of different developments.

One can agree with the New Right in the recognition of the importance of culture in the evolution of man, but this analysis does not exhaust the question, neither at the purely material level, nor on the spiritual plane. Thus time is indeed an invention of men to dominate women and to dominate the process of production and reproduction. It is possible to have—being man—another mode of behavior toward the other as woman, and toward the other as the world; this involves the possibility of no longer needing time (bearing in mind that the autonomization of the other is a historic fact). Out of this arises a multitude of modes of behavior that will be taken up at some time in the future.

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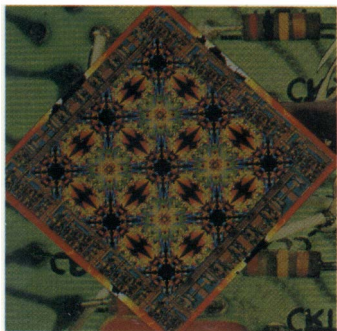
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“One has to avoid the proclamation of the dictatorship of a theory to follow the work undertaken,

especially when it is the product of the reduction of an immense labor and which can only be by excluding the contribution of a host of people who struggled for human emancipation. We integrate Marx's work (since he especially is concerned) but we do not pose a marxist theory nor our own theory. We affirm a certain theoretical behavior that presupposes a certain appropriation of given theories, of attitudes in society where we live, where people lived. Living is not submission, but reinvention, creation!”



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