

THE PASSION OF COMMUNISM

Italian Invariance in the 1970s

Do not *all* uprisings, without exception, have their roots in *the wretched isolation of men from the community [Gemeinwesen]*? Does not *every* uprising necessarily presuppose isolation? Would the Revolution of 1789 have occurred without the wretched isolation of the French citizens from the community? It was intended precisely to abolish this isolation.

But the *community [Gemeinwesen]* from which the worker is *isolated* is a community of quite different reality and scope than the *political* community. The community from which *his own labour* separates him is *life* itself, physical and mental life, human morality [*Sittlichkeit*], human activity, human enjoyment, *human* being. *Human being* is the *true community [Gemeinwesen]* of mankind. [...]

A social revolution takes the standpoint of the *whole* because—even if it were to occur in only *one* factory district—it represents man's protest against a dehumanized life, because it starts out from the *standpoint* of a *separate real individual*, because the *community [Gemeinwesen]*, against whose separation from himself the individual reacts, is man's *true* community, *human* being.¹

1. Marx, 'Critical Notes on the Article: "The King of Prussia and Social Reform. By a Prussian"' *Vorwärts!* no. 63 August 1844. (MECW 3): 204–205, translation adapted.

INTRODUCTION

While Jacques Camatte has received recognition from the English-speaking world, few have commented on members of the larger circle who contributed to or developed the ideas of the journal *Invariance*, individuals such as Giorgio Cesarano, Gianni Carchia, Furio di Paola, and Carsten Juhl. This tradition, given the name “radical critique” by Cesarano, had its greatest impact in Italy in the period from 1968 through 1974, during which its adherents populated groups like Comotismo, Ludd, and Councilist Organisation. After Cesarano’s suicide and the self-dissolution of these factions, the tradition’s influence waned until the next wave of struggles were brought to an end in the late 70s. Then a period of reflection opened; balance-sheets were drawn, and “[Cesarano’s] works (especially *Apocalypse and Revolution* and *Survival Manual*) were read by many comrades, especially the young”.² In the later period, Antonio Negri wrote polemics against this “pessimistic” thought, while for others like Mario Mieli and Gianni Carchia, the *Invariance* analysis grounded their own investigations.³ It is this context that is most relevant to contemporary debates in the English language, in which a relatively homogeneous narrative dominates the last century of developments in Italian political thought, progressing neatly from Gramsci through Operaismo to Autonomia and finally the post-workerist theorists popularised during the anti-globalisation movement.

Crucial to examining this largely post-Bordigist and post-Situationist tradition is that it marks a distinct communist opposition both to insurrectionary militancy and workerism in Italy. While the former was rejected as a sacrificial ideology, the latter was criticised for positing the existence of a proletarian subject position — however sociologically updated as the “mass worker” or “multitude” — that could affirm its own constitutive project. For the post-*Invariance* tradition, on the contrary, the present contained “nothing human that could be stably posed... as an

2. Furio di Paola, ‘Dopo la dialettica’ in *Aut Aut* 165 (1978).

3. Camatte’s earliest writings from the 1960s were first published in Bordigist journals and, in addition to the single Italian edition of *Invariance* in 1968, his texts were often translated and re-published in Italy throughout the 1970s. Mieli’s recently retranslated *Elements of a Gay Critique* begins: ‘Contemporary gay movements have emerged in those countries in which capital has come to its real domination’, followed by a two page footnote explaining Camatte’s analysis thereof. With respect to Carchia, see the translated text ‘Glosses on Humanism’ below. Journals such as *Agaragar* and *L’erba voglio* initially continued the

alternative to capital”.⁴ Operaismo, on their analysis, failed to “pose that minimum Marxist objective: the negation of the proletariat”, and to understand the present historical task as “the negation of all the organised structures that restrict being to the cage of professions and economy”.⁵ Similarly, the radical acts of the young Metropolitan Indians⁶ and Autonomia did not signal the emergence of new subject positions, but were rather themselves the signs of a crisis of subjectivity and of a desire for communism that could only be satisfied by humanity’s destitution of a historically contingent form, capital.⁷ This Italian development of Camatte’s thought goes against what are perhaps the three central points of his English-language reception: (1) that he became an anarcho-primitivist advocate of the pre-capitalist community, (2) that he advocates for a withdrawal from capitalist relations, and (3) that he is an abstract humanist.⁸ Rather than offering a systematic reading of Camatte’s work that would aim to absolve him of these three readings, I examine how his work enabled the thinking of communisation as the destitution of capital’s form, developed an ethical but non-quietist understanding of the pro-revolutionary milieu in its relation to the real movement and, finally, offered a non-humanist concept of dehumanisation.

In this, Camatte and, to a greater extent, Cesarano take a longer look at the history of domination in a manner that is closer to the history of a civilisation comparable to Adorno and Horkheimer’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. This was not an abstract exercise, but a way of grasping, largely through their reading of texts by Marx such as the “Urtext of the Critique of Political Economy” and the *Grundrisse*, the specific historical process through which a very particular form had become autonomous. The aim of such an investigation was not to reject all technology and vestiges of modernity — “a total rejection of the historical product...

tradition in the early 70s, while later it was reviews such as *Insurrezione*, *Puzz* and especially *Maelstrom* that continued to work through its implications.

4. Jacques Camatte, ‘La révolte des étudiants Italiens: un autre moment de la crise de la représentation’ in *Invariance* Series III nos. 5-6 (1980).

5. *Ibid.*

6. The Metropolitan Indians were an offshoot of Autonomia that emerged in 1975, marked by an emphasis on large street confrontations. The name was inspired by the slogan ‘let’s leave the reservation’, by which was meant modern metropolitan existence.

7. Those who confuse Camatte’s life choices today for a position on what might be necessary for revolution overlook the resolute critique of activism on the part of the Bordigists: ‘I preserve intact my mentality: the men do not count, they do not represent anything, cannot have any influence; the facts determine the new situations. And when the situations are ripe, then the men emerge... I am very happy to live far from ridiculous and petty episodes of the so-called militant politics, from →

total retreat⁹—but to clarify precisely what the potential death of capital might mean through what we could today call the destitution of its essential forms. The overall argumentation of Camatte’s work throughout the 70s is thus neither a form of primitivism, which would seek to return to pre-modern communal forms, nor accelerationism, which would seek to overcome capitalism through a deepening of its contradiction-in-process, but precisely an anti-utopian theory that aims to restore the historical process from that reproductive fixed-point we call capitalism—a process that would develop, from fragmented potentials that exist today, the work of “millions of human beings who have laboured in obscurity for millennia... the immense process of becoming of millions of forces that are crystallised at any given moment”.¹⁰

It is with respect to the latter point that Camatte developed his concept of the *Gemeinwesen*, which must not be understood as the pre-modern community or even a new universal community of humanity. This concept should be grappled with as a response to his problematisation of humanity’s historical life and what it might mean that it had become blocked. In this, Camatte can be understood on a plane of consistency with the investigations of Walter Benjamin, Aby Warburg, Gilbert Simondon, and Andre Leroi-Gourhan. The only coherence to such a constellation—these non-humanists who nonetheless spent so much of their lives in the archives of humanity—would be the struggle to understand what it means for mankind to unfold its historical life given that its intellectual and practical capacities are not biological givens but discovered in whatever trans-generational medium contains and transmits the vital remnants of the past—whether images, utterances, technical forms or otherwise. They all understood that the avant-garde affirmation of the machine, indeed of modernity as such, could be compatible with the demand that

the mean chronicle, from the events day after day. Nothing of all that interests me’—Bordiga quoted in Arturo Peregalli and Sandro Saggiaro, *Amadeo Bordiga: La sconfitta e gli anni oscuri* (Edizioni Colibri 1998).

8. Point (1) is present in texts such as Tim Barker, ‘The Bleak Left’ *N+1* no. 28 (June 2017), (2) has been debated by Ray Brassier, ‘Wandering Abstraction’ in *Mute* (February 2014), and (3) has been argued by Theorie Communiste in François Danel, *Rupture dans la théorie de la révolution* (Senonevero 2003).

9. See Robin Mackay and Armen Avanessian, ‘Introduction’ in *The Accelerationist Reader* (Urbanomic, 2014). Even in the 1970s, Camatte concluded that, after the destruction of capital and labour as the material community, it will be possible to ‘take in charge the automated ensemble—the new inorganic being of man—that appears for the moment as capital’. Jacques Camatte, ‘Caractères du mouvement ouvrier français’ in *Invariance* Series II no. 10 (April 1971). Even in the case of Cesarano, who places a greater emphasis on a *longue durée* anthropology of machine domination, the final line

progress and modernisation be brought to a halt.¹¹ Situated between a confidence that “not even the dead are safe” and that “only a redeemed humanity obtains the fullness of its past”,¹² Camatte and Cesarano argued that the species, in its works and desires, had become really dominated, subjected to an inhuman spectacle by that imperative towards valorisation whose name is capital. For the circle surrounding *Invariance* came up against the following paradox that remains our own: the law of value dominates life yet somehow our dehumanised species must effect a rupture with the particular mediations of capital in order to reclaim its integral past and “surrender itself joyously to the true divisions and neverending confrontations of historical life”.¹³ To this end, it remains fruitful today to revisit Camatte and Cesarano’s *Gemeinwesen*.

AN OPERATION OF THE SPECIES, NOT THE PRO-REVOLUTIONARY

I read of a Rain-King in Africa to whom the people pray for rain when the rainy period comes. But surely that means they do not believe that he can make it rain, otherwise they would do it when the land is “a parched and arid desert.” [...] Or again: toward morning, when the sun is about to rise, rites of daybreak are celebrated by the people, but not during the night, when they simply burn lamps.¹⁴

Italian Invariance and the SI

In Italy, the reception of *Invariance* went hand-in-hand with the slow reception of the Situationists and council communism in the early 1970s. Even though the Situationist International was both founded and dissolved in Italy, Debord’s *Society of the Spectacle* in

of *Apocalypse and Revolution* (translated below) calls for the ‘irreversible “domestication” of the machine, in all its possible manners of appearing’.

10. Jacques Camatte, *Bordiga et la passion du communisme* (Spartacus 1974).

11. Fyodorov argued that all of humanity should unite in rejecting progress by directing its attention towards the past through the common task of resurrecting the dead. This led, through Bogdonov and Tsiolkovsky, to the foundation of Russian Cosmism and the first practical results in astronautics. See Tsiolkovsky’s ‘Investigations of Outer Space by Rocket Devices’. ‘Progress is precisely the form of life in which the human race may come to taste the greatest sum of suffering while striving for the greatest sum of enjoyment... Although stagnation is death and regression no paradise, progress is truly hell, the truly human task is to save the victims of progress, to lead them out of hell’ Nikolai Fyodorov, *What Was Man Created For?* (Honeyglen 1990), 51.

12. Walter Benjamin, ‘On the Concept of History’ in *Selected Writings 4* (Harvard 2006), 390.

its entirety did not exist in a readable Italian translation until the late 70s.¹⁵ Thus Vaneigem's qualitative "art of living" and Debord's concept of the spectacle were initially received by readers such as Giorgio Cesarano and other young militants already under the influence of Camatte's largely Bordigist writings.¹⁶

Such theorists and the groups that they founded, like Comontismo discussed below, attempted to develop the concept of *Gemeinwesen*, which, following Camatte, they developed in terms of its dual sense as a particular community, on the one hand, and its more literal and potentially universal sense of common [*Gemein*] being [*wesen*] on the other.¹⁷ This concept, related to but distinct from that of species-being, or *Gattungswesen*, was to provide a unity to the Marxian corpus, explaining (1) the condition of possibility of alienation, (2) the definition of the classless society, and (3) the antinomies of that non-class, the only possible subject of communisation, that in negating itself would negate all classes. Camatte attempted to understand systematically what Negri dismissed as the "literary" asymmetry of Marx's work: that Marx developed a "theory of the subjectivity of capital, while... he did not develop a theory of the subjectivity of the working class".¹⁸ For Camatte, the structural unity of Marx's work was not antagonism but rather, as discussed below, capital's accession to the material community, on the one hand, and the classless society, on the other, thought by him through the universality of the *Gemeinwesen*. Marx's work was understood to move from the description of communism to the accomplishment of capital's real domination, from his early assertion that "Human being is the true *Gemeinwesen* of man" (1844 *Manuscripts*) to his later understanding that "Capital has become *human being*" (*Grundrisse*).

In Italy, then, the confusion of the spectacle with either a conspiracy or the mass media was avoided;

13. Guy Debord, *Preface to the Fourth Italian Edition of the Society of the Spectacle* (Chronos 1979), 24.

14. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Occasions* (Hackett 1993), 137.

15. And only after its ultimate translator 'found those responsible for this excess in their offices... hit them and... literally spat in their faces, for such is naturally the way good translators act when they meet bad ones'. See the Preface to the fourth Italian Edition of *The Society of the Spectacle*.

16. The first and only Italian issue of the SI journal was published in July 1969. It contained a translation of 'The Proletariat as Subject and Representation' from *Society of the Spectacle*.

17. The word can be traced to an 18th century German translation of the Latin *Res publica*, a term whose own history moves from the public thing held in common to the Roman state, understood as that institution which manages the public interest. See 'Gemeinwesen' in Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (Trier 2004).

Debord's analysis could be understood and, indeed, developed through Camatte's account of real subsumption as the alienation of the species from the *Gemeinwesen*.¹⁹ While Debord, as evidenced in an important letter from 1986, followed the development of these groups closely — and believed that, rather than the Italian SI, it was they who "did the most in Italy to import the spirit of [the French] May and notably among the workers" — he was a quick critic of "the theory of [the Italian group] 'Comontismo'" with its "aberrant tactical slogan of making oneself 'teppa' (equivalent of 'underworld' or 'bad guy')".²⁰ He summarises the group's trajectory through a dark joke based on a telling mistranslation: in a French appeal for solidarity with Italian political prisoners, the line "the most beautiful [that is, proletarian] youth die in jail" becomes "others [that is, pro-revolutionaries] spend *their youth* in prison", whereby a traditional description of capital's domination becomes an elegy for the wasted youth of the pro-revolutionary minority.²¹

Ludd, OC, Comontismo

Both Ludd and the Councilist Organization (OC) were formed and dissolved during the same brief interval between 1969 and 1971. Beginning with the SI journal's termination and the state-linked Piazza Fontana bombing in Milan, this period emerges at the end of the cycle of struggles paradigmatically linked to the Parisian May. Through an ironic inversion, it was the Ludd group that principally existed as a theoretical organ weighed down by "cultural baggage", while, through the contingencies of extended stays in jail, the innocuously named but heavily persecuted Councilist Organization (OC) developed an everyday practice and understanding of criminality.²² Looking towards the growth of populations excluded from the production process, the OC came to understand "the

18. Antonio Negri, *Marx Beyond Marx* (Autonome- dia 1984), 93. In an essay from 1981 Negri explicitly calls out the 'pessimistic' understanding of subsumption in 'catastrophic terms that one can even find in Marx', where subsumption is the 'social domination of capital as the disappearance of antagonism' and thus the 'harakiri of *Operismo*'. Antonio Negri, *Macchina Tempo* (Feltrinelli 1982), 164.

19. As Carchia affirms, explicitly linking the notion of real domination to that of spectacle, "The supersession of the physical instance of production, despite the persistence of the instance of value as the regulative law of social exchange has led — through the force of this antinomy — to [capital's] total domination of society as appearance' (Gianni Carchia, *La legittimazione dell'arte*).

20. Guy Debord, Letter to Semprun on March 28, 1986.

21. *Ibid.*

22. Comontismo, 'Note di preistoria contemporanea' in *Comontismo 1* (May, 1972), 9-10.

reality of the new forms of expression of the modern proletariat" in "the reality of a criminal and subversive practice of the everyday", but largely expressed itself in terms of councilist ideology. Ludd, on the other hand, was a national space for discussion, with membership across Turin, Genoa, Rome, Milan, and Trento, and with a prominent publishing house La Vecchia Talpa [the old mole], most notable for its critique of councilist ideology.²³

Active between 1972 and 1973, Comontismo represented the short-lived synthesis of Ludd's critique of councilism with the OC's analysis of the "modern proletariat's new forms of expression... in the criminal subversion of the everyday".²⁴ From their reading of *Invariance*, they posited the "sense of communism" as the "realisation of the *Gemeinwesen*", which was a "human essence that cannot be understood in an eschatological, metaphysical, or moral sense, but as the natural and social ground in opposition to the reified world of commodities in which all the alienated human senses have lost their capacity to sense that which is to come".²⁵ As discussed below, this is broadly consistent with Camatte's understanding thereof, which draws more thoroughly on philosophical discussions of humanity's participation in a common substance than it does on a sociological definition of the particular community.

Yet the name of the group already contains its ownmost antinomy: it is the "translation of *Gemeinwesen*, Com-ontos, of being". On the one hand, Comontismo was the "community of intent and action" constituted by "individuals that... place themselves outside of this society and against its mechanisms".²⁶ They were "qualitative and conscious individuals" with a "mode of life" such that "every partiality, every separation... tends dialectically to resolve itself".²⁷ On the other hand, Comontismo was "the most complete expression of the nascent 'human class' (historical heir to the revolutionary proletariat), negator of capital" that must "live, extend, radicalise and concretely organise the negative that the world of capital has inside itself". A particular group, then, that "finds its own finality in the realised community of human being, thus in the world of the qualitative,

23. For a more complete historical account of this period, see Miguel Amoros's account of the Italian Situationists alongside Francesco Santini's *Apocalypse and Survival*.

24. Comontismo, 'Note di preistoria contemporanea', 10.

25. Comontismo, 'Pre-eliminari sul Comontismo' (Genoa 1972).

26. Ibid.

27. Comontismo, 'Note di preistoria contemporanea'.

of what is authentic and properly liveable for man" that "will be the actualisation of the real human community". Comontismo itself was understood to be nothing but the "real movement that suppresses existing conditions" that would bring "the destruction of the fictitious community of capital and of the installation of the total community" through the "re-appropriation" of the *Gemeinwesen*.²⁸

Critique of the Racket and Civil War

Cesarano himself came to express one of the most powerful critiques of this tendency. He grasped that the Comontisti insurrectionaries, despite their rejection of councilism as a hypostasised form and their theoretical understanding of the contemporary conjuncture, remained stuck in a routine of the "nostalgic repetition of insurrectional creativity".²⁹ The Comontisti ideology of "teppism" was but "the obsolete style of the political militant" as there is not "any comportment or line of conduct that can be defined as revolutionary in itself... such a pure stylisation of conflictuality is like the 'realisation of a work of art'".³⁰ Following Vaneigem's *Treatise on Living for the Younger Generations*, Cesarano emphasised the ethical imperative to reject any neo-christian figure of the pro-revolutionary founded upon sacrifice and militancy. He sought to distinguish the spectacular civil war of the militant from the revolt of the "proletarian body of the species", evidenced by the very real and escalating manifestations of negativity at the time.³¹

By this, Cesarano did not mean to critique the intentions of the Comontisti, whose actions would otherwise appear inseparable from the more generalised insurrectionary situation that had developed only a year prior during the so-called Italian "Hot Autumn" of 1969. On the contrary, he attempted to articulate a third path for the pro-revolutionary between militancy and quietism: the real movement is not to be found in the proliferation of forms of revolt already identified in the past, but located in the potential self-transcendence of every "form of politics which arises from even minimal conflict with the 'concrete' given".³² The Comontisti's illegalism "drown[ed their] own project of being in a simple and

28. Comontismo, 'Per la ultima internazionale'.

29. Giorgio Cesarano, *Apocalypse and Revolution*, §125. See translation below.

30. Ibid, §121.

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid.

caricatural disobedience to the normative as such”.³³ Cesarano thus sought to conceive of a path towards revolt that passed first of all through the capitalised individual’s damaged subjectivity and the struggle for their needs and indeed happiness, a matter developed more rigorously in his final book *Survival Handbook*, which draws heavily on Lacan and the anti-psychiatric tradition.³⁴ Cesarano critiqued the Comontisti for blocking the emergence of the “true struggle” by presenting their own acts as exemplary, perpetrating the “infamous spectacle of civil war” that “continues to usurp the places, the modalities and time of revolution”.³⁵ The revolutionary process, argued Cesarano, “can never again take the exclusive traits of the civil war”, but rather must find the sense of a “disaggregation actively pursued”, only conceivable if in fact these impulses find expression at the level of the species.³⁶

According to Cesarano, then, what is crucial is not the auto-affirmation of a particular institution or party as standing in for the negative of the world, but the revolt of the species as remainder to the process of capitalist subsumption. Comontismo, a paradoxical “criminal gang—historical party—human community”, was the result of an exclusionary gang-form well-defined through its own criteria of militancy, posing as the human community at war with the inhuman who stood apart. Through the valorisation of criminality as such, they remained incapable of offering a critique of those subjectivities emerging from social disintegration—themselves above all—and thus functioned as a sort of Operaismo in negative.

THE SPECIES, THE COMMON, AND REAL DOMINATION

Expression is a hypothesis, an interpretation that comes to be justified by the primigenial mechanism of memory. Its product is conditioned by the persistence of and by its community with the extra-representational immediacy of something that “was” first and that will be again

33. Ibid, §127.

34. Indeed, while Cesarano himself still conceived the primacy of a more active struggle, it is no surprise to see how such a position could lead the pro-revolutionary group to conceive of its function as closer to group analysis than militancy, and why his work was influential among Italian feminists, see especially Lea Melandri and her journal *L'erba voglio*.

35. Giorgio Cesarano, *Cronaca di un ballo mascherato* (Varani 1983).

36. Giorgio Cesarano, *Lampi di Critica Radicale* (Mimesis 2005).

afterwards—even if in another form... Expression is the universal interpretive principle. Memory conserves something and manifests it: it is appropriate to call this the expression of something that was first.³⁷

37. Giorgio Colli, *Filosofia dell'espressione* (Adelphi Edizioni 1969), 21.

Gattungswesen and the Species

As *Invariance* stressed, the affirmation of the human that is necessary to the communist line is not a matter of hypostasising any past, present, or future community, but rather of standing in a particular continuity with the entire history of humanity while recognising a very real and ongoing *dehumanisation*. In this way, *Invariance* enabled a theoretical shift away from the too psychological and humanist discourse of alienation: rather than a purported reconciliation with a lost human essence, they advocated for the development of the species’ innumerable possibilities and forms of living—its *countless possible natures*.³⁸ This was to try and find another ground for the political, as the potentially antagonistic struggle over manners of living that would neither culminate in a clash of civilisations, nor a unified cosmopolitan society. This development is located in the way that Camatte, and Cesarano after him, attempted to think the relation between the species and the *Gemeinwesen*.

Invariance’s position must be distinguished from humanism as the presupposition of a fixed human essence, of a determinate figure of man etched in the sand, whether ahistorical or to be realised at history’s end. Humanism, the triumph of *Humanitas*, has never been concerned with reversing a very real *decadence of the human*. It is rather the belief in humanity as a self-sufficient species composed of individual *persons*, who hold on to thinking as their most prized possession since birth. The history of humanism is inseparable from that of society and capital alike. It follows that *longue durée* in the West from the ancient political communities through the Roman *societas generis humani* to the French *société civile*. From

38. The imperative to think from the vantage point of the species is in large part derived from the influence of Amadeo Bordiga, for whom it was not just the narrow confines of Italian civil society that mattered—the specificity of the Russian experience was as important as the history of decolonial struggles, which were as important as the most ancient ethnological record. ‘Communism is a *world view*’, said Bordiga to that provincial humanist Gramsci, ‘Marx deals with the relation between man and the earth. For us, man is the Species; for bourgeois gentlemen, man is the individual’. Amadeo Bordiga, ‘Specie umana e crosta terrestre’ *Il Programma Comunista* no. 6 (1952).

“living well” atop the slaves, to the spread of (Roman) citizenship against the barbarians, to the achieved universality of rights and the market with its own inhuman remainder relegated to slums and refugee camps. With each step one finds, on the one hand, the contingent history of those impersonal forces that, expropriating all particular communities, progressively produce that depoliticised population which will, in modern times, become dominated by the law of value; and, on the other, the exterminating logic of humanism’s biopolitical racism eradicating an outside that it refuses to recognise. It is within these successive definitions of humanity’s determinate essence, and the sequence of groups or national communities that have established themselves as the embodiment thereof, that we see how a determinate human essence has always been constituted alongside a genocidal division between *Homo humanus* and *Homo barbarus*.³⁹

In this long history, a logical problem of the totality mixes with a political reality of domination. For a paradox poses itself in thinking the possible unity of the human species which is neither defined by any particular essence nor as anything like a united community. Where the state and the market present at once the expropriation of particular communities and their reunification at a juridical level, Camatte and especially Cesarano instead attempt to think the ontological problem of a non-exclusive unity to the species. To explain this point — “the paradox that radical critique deepens and sets off from” — Cesarano cites a passage from Theodor Adorno which defines humanity as “that which excludes absolutely nothing”, for:

If humanity were a totality that no longer held within it any limiting principle, then it would also be free of the coercion that subjects all its members to such a principle and thereby would no longer be a totality... only with the decomposition of the principle of totality that establishes limits... would there be humanity and not its deceptive image.⁴⁰

39. In Camatte’s words: “there is a movement of unification, of reunification through the will to integrate all... but by exclusion, destruction of the others... This was manifested, for example, in the formation of the vast Persian empires, of the Syrians, the Greeks, the Romans, Chinese... but also the Nazi reich. Each time that such an empire was formed, there was the production of a definition of what the human should be (and therefore an elimination). Humans have ‘not known their possibilities’ and ‘remained sick in their ghettos that they claim to be human groups, to be humanity, defined by those distinguishing properties that allow them to exclude others’. Jacques Camatte, ‘Marx et le *Gemeinwesen*’ in *Invariance* Series III nos. 5-6 (1980). See translation below.

Humanity, for Camatte and Cesarano, is a collection without presupposition or condition of belonging, without spatial or temporal borders, that, cutting across all past and given social forms into the future, involves no possible exclusion of the modalities that human existence might take. In this way they sought to understand both the struggle of humanity against a particular historical form that has been globalised (“it is all of humanity perceived through time that is hostile to capital”⁴¹) and what the historical life of this species could be as its own constant “autopoetic” self-overcoming.⁴²

Yet, if the species is neither united by a determinate essence nor any particular social form, what non-religious or utopian sense could this common or generic being of the species possibly have? “Invariance varies”, Camatte claims, but “only as the affirmation of the human community’s becoming”.⁴³ The fabled invariance is affirmed as the *Gemeinwesen* which cannot be a “human nature” or a transhistorical anthropological invariant but rather the “corpus in which the diverse human generations can rediscover one another in perceiving their difference... the common being of humans in their becoming [and] a form that this common being can take”.⁴⁴

***Gemeinwesen* and the Common**

As the above quote indicates, *Gemeinwesen* is an ontological notion. In English, it is this dimension of Camatte’s works that has been lost in translation. Camatte’s reasoning remains unintelligible if, as seen in most English-language commentaries and indeed translations, *Gemeinwesen* is understood as a particular community.⁴⁵ For Camatte, communism is not the revindication of the human being, but rather of human *being*. For, according to him, particular communities “cannot simply live as a collection of human

40. Giorgio Cesarano, *Manuale di sopravvivenza*, 227. The quote is from Theodor Adorno, ‘Progress’ in *Can One Live after Auschwitz?* (Stanford 2003), 128f.

41. Jacques Camatte, ‘Errance de l’humanité’, in *Invariance* Series II no. 3 (1973).

42. Cesarano, *Manuale di sopravvivenza*, 227.

43. Jacques Camatte, ‘Vers le communauté humain’ in *Invariance* Series III No. 3 (June 1978).

44. Ibid. The relation between common and species being (*Gemein-* and *Gattungswesen*) may be clarified by considering the etymological roots of the Latin *species*, derived from Greek *eidōs*. ‘Special [or species] being is the being that is common or generic and this is something like the image or the face of humanity’. Giorgio Agamben, ‘Special being’ in *Profanations* (MIT 2005).

45. While ‘*Gemeinwesen*’ is left untranslated as a technical term in the French original and Italian translations of Camatte’s work, English-language translators have substituted ‘community’. This makes it impossible →

beings”,⁴⁶ there must be a pre-individual and impersonal common movement or substance. Particular communities, then, would exist as singular ways of individuating this substance. Camatte understands the pre-individual *Gemeinwesen* precisely as that medium in which particular communities past, present, and future unfold and communicate themselves, through their linguistic and technical production—or, at the limit, even conflict. The *Gemeinwesen* is nothing less than the generic mode of existence of human potential: the manner in which forms, paradigms and technical means of living persist—Marx’s “book of human powers”.⁴⁷ In the *Gemeinwesen*, “all the varied productions of the past—art, philosophy, science—are fragments. Elements of the vast despoliation of human beings as well as attempts to remedy it”.⁴⁸

In the history of philosophy, Camatte’s problem is most comprehensible in terms of the post-Averroësian tradition, which attempts to think the manner in which human thought takes place not as a matter of individual cognition, but rather through contact with a common intellect.⁴⁹ Camatte, drawing upon Bordiga and the seminal French anthropologist of technology André Leroi-Gourhan,⁵⁰ understands one of Marx’s essential insights to be what the latter calls “universal work” or “the universal character of every human being’s thought”.⁵¹ It is the “social brain” that is our own as much as that of the “species”, as “the summation of all the beings that encircle us and that preceded us”.⁵² Bordiga’s “Content of the Communist Program” affirmed the centrality of this line to Marxism:

In Marxism, production does not only conserve the single human animal but is a circuit for its reproduction. [...] Every brain does not pulse only with the sensations of its own life, but also those of its progenitors... [so] does everyone think also with the brain of the other,

to determine where Camatte is in fact employing the everyday French ‘communauté’ and where he is developing his own concept. For instance the title of his principal work, *Capital et Gemeinwesen*, appears in English as *Capital and Community*.

46. Camatte, ‘Marx and the *Gemeinwesen*’.

47. Indeed, Camatte’s argument is structurally similar to Gilbert Simondon’s account of the historical emergence of the ‘technical universe’, of how it became a separate and alienated sphere—technology—that, through the logic of progress, excluded past results from human use.

48. Camatte, ‘Errance de l’humanité’.

49. See Ernst Bloch, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Left* (Columbia University Press 2019).

50. André Leroi-Gourhan was a seminal French anthropologist of the 20th century, who developed an empirically rigorous account of anthropogenesis (see his *Gesture and Speech*) and of humanity’s technical capacities. It is this anthropological tendency of Camatte’s thought that Cesarano in particular develops.

living together. [...] For us, true materialists, there is a collective brain, and the social human will be a development, unknown to the old generations, of the social brain. That one thinks with the heads of others is a positive fact, both ancient and contemporary.⁵³

For both thinkers, history is not to be understood as a process that progressively “swallows past possibilities”⁵⁴, but as an electrical field and site of tensions, a result of “the work of millions who have laboured in obscurity of millennia... the immense process of becoming of millions of forces”.⁵⁵ Even if, in Bordiga’s own words, today the “historical ‘field’ is a cesspool” where “person-molecules” pretend to be the subject of history, the truly historical will “fly all along its line of force”.⁵⁶ That line (and the notion of the *Gemeinwesen*) points towards a world in which the dead labour of the past would not dominate the present, which is not to suggest that praxis would be *sui generis* but always an unworking of what once was.

Here we glimpse the full sense of what it means that, on the one hand, the “human being... only is by superseding the given to which it can never be reduced”, and, on the other, that the *Gemeinwesen*, is “non-human”—that the human to be affirmed, the human that is the locus of the communist project, *has no nature*.⁵⁷ That is, the human is precisely located in this multiplicity of possible relations to, and forms of, its non-human exterior (the common), and not defined by an innate possession or faculty, such as its “rationality” or “creativity”.⁵⁸ Here we begin to see, on Camatte’s reasoning, the sense in which this dimension of historicity could be blocked by modern forms of domination—where capital could insert itself in separating human praxis from its works—just as much as how the pre-supposed communities of the past, regarding themselves as eternal, could mask the emergence of this dimension in its fullness.

51. Camatte, ‘Marx and the *Gemeinwesen*’.

52. Ibid.

53. Amadeo Bordiga, ‘The Original Content of the Communist Program’ *Il Programma Comunista* nos. 21 and 22 (1958).

54. Camatte, ‘Errance de l’humanité’.

55. Camatte, *Bordiga et la passion pour le communisme*.

56. Ibid.

57. Camatte, ‘Errance de l’humanité’.

58. I thus disagree with Brassier’s claim in ‘Wandering Abstraction’ that Camatte ‘hypostatizes a set of human expressive capacities that persist not only independently of capitalism but of every form of social organisation’. By defining the human in terms of its relation to the non-human corpus of the *Gemeinwesen* Marx precisely avoids this problem. Nonetheless, it is certainly the case that Gianni Carchia, translated below, is more consistent on this point.

Camatte argues that the accession of humanity to the *Gemeinwesen* with the end of class society must be distinct from the pre-capitalist plurality of social substances or “anthropomorphised property” analysed by Marx in his *Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*. Rather, it signals the end of the epochal dissemination of presupposed or reified ways of living, in reference to that “closure of prehistory” discussed by Marx.⁵⁹ The *Gemeinwesen* is neither a future global society nor a return to the pre-modern community, but rather the common substance that allows for the development of a sense of the political that would be non-identical to the illusions of bourgeois democracy. Here, once again, we find that the more we explore the concept of the *Gemeinwesen*, the more we understand the very real possibility – and, of course, *reality* – of dehumanisation, and the terrible difficulty of grasping the nature of that operation that could destitute the material ground of separation.

Domination and the Biological Revolution

We have seen how the concept of the *Gemeinwesen* was understood by Camatte as a relation between the universality of the species and the common, rather than as a valorisation of the pre-modern community. We now turn towards the manner in which this concept shifted Marxist discussions of subjection and revolt, primarily examining his turn away from the notion of the real or formal subsumption of the production process towards that of capital’s formal or real *domination*.

For Camatte, the concept of real domination emphasises a dimension of Marx’s thought that had been lost in the then new translations of texts such as “Results of the Immediate Process of Production” and the *Grundrisse*.⁶⁰ The German concept *Subsumtion*, especially as developed in Marx’s unpublished drafts and notebooks, has two components: the submission of the particular and the domination of the concept. In French and Italian, however, the term was initially

59. Marx ‘Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*’ (MECW 29), 263f.

60. The *Grundrisse* and the ‘Results of the Immediate Process of Production’ appeared in French and Italian in 1968 and 1969 respectively. Much of Camatte’s work throughout the 1960s was intended as an intervention in the reception of these works and indeed as criticism of their translations, especially those by his former Bordigist comrade Roger Dangeville. When Gianni Carchia and the other Italian translators of Camatte’s *Capital et Gemeinwesen* attempted to recover the appropriate citations from Marx they ‘arrived at the conclusion, for which we assume responsibility, that the

translated as the “submission” of labour to capital,⁶¹ placing the emphasis on the working class’ action rather than its domination by capital. As Camatte concludes, “we have always preferred to use the expression of real or formal domination (while understanding that that implies the submission of the proletariat) because the principal, dominant, subject is in fact capital. It isn’t for nothing that Marx wrote *Capital* and not *Proletariat*.”⁶² More importantly, Camatte sought to emphasise that the relation of subsumption is not just either an act of domination or submission, but a process by which capital “includes” or “appropriates to itself” the life process of the species as its own substance – and thus something on the order of an anthropological transformation.⁶³

The *Invariance* circle looked across the Marxian corpus to understand the development and eventual real domination of capital as the unity and completion of two movements: “the *expropriation of communities*, creating the proletariat” and “the *autonomisation of value*.”⁶⁴ Fundamental to such a reading is the chapter on pre-capitalist social forms in the *Grundrisse* which recounts “how [human] activity was externalised, autonomized and made into an oppressive power which dissolved communities... [and developed] classes.”⁶⁵ That humanity lives in relation to a *material community*, then, and not to either a *Gemeinwesen* or a plurality of particular communities, signifies that it has been totally reduced to living in relation to a form embodied in “the dead, crystallised element, the work of millions of human beings exteriorised in the form of fixed capital that founds the community.”⁶⁶ *Individuals*, argues Marx in the “Urtext”, have “given themselves reified being through their products” for whom “their *Gemeinwesen* itself appears as an external thing”, so that “on the one hand, [they are] not subsumed under any naturally evolved community and, on the other, they are not consciously communal individuals

translations by Bruno Maffi, Roger Dangeville, Mario Tronti, Galvano Della Volpe, Enzo Grillo, M.L. Boggeri, were politically motivated’ (Jacques Camatte, *Il capitale totale* (Dedalo libri 1976), 6). This resulted in a 1977 dual-language translation of the *Urtext* by Carchia with an important introduction by Camatte, ‘Marx and the *Gemeinwesen*’, that is translated below. Karl Marx, *Urtext: frammento del testo originario di ‘Per la critica dell’economia politica’* (Savona 1977).

61. Karl Marx, *Un chapitre inédit du Capital* (Paris 1971), translated by Roger Dangeville.

62. Jacques Camatte, ‘La phénomène de la valeur’ *Invariance* Series IV No. 5 (1986).

63. Camatte, *Capital et Gemeinwesen*, 113.

64. Jacques Camatte, ‘Bordiga et la révolution russe’ *Invariance* Series II No. 4 (1974).

65. Camatte, *Capital et Gemeinwesen*.

66. Camatte, ‘Marx and the *Gemeinwesen*’.

subsuming the *Gemeinwesen* under themselves”.⁶⁷ In these key texts for Camatte—the “Urtext” and “Results of the Immediate Process of Production” as well as “Forms which Precede Capitalist Production”—we are able to look upon the historical production of the population as that living, vital material, certainly not liberated as social labour, but rather organised and managed, inscribed into the process of social reproduction and denied any but the most desperate capacities to resist.

Within Marx’s own categories, this transition is tied to the passage from the primacy of absolute surplus value, generated through the direct extension of the working day, to that of relative surplus value, extracted through the devaluation of labour power by “revolution[ising] out and out the technical processes of labour and the composition of society”.⁶⁸ From education to the state, there is a movement to “replac[e] all the preexisting social and natural presuppositions with its own particular forms of organisation which mediate the submission of the whole of physical and social life to its real needs of valorisation”.⁶⁹ In this way, the transition is linked to humanity’s increased dependence on the capitalist production process, both in terms of the production of necessary goods and the provision of work. The development of capitalism towards the stage of its real domination coincides with the production of a depoliticised population as a brute matter only present to be consumed by fixed capital for its reproduction. As Marx argued, “production does not simply produce man as a commodity, the human commodity, man in the role of commodity; it produces him in keeping with this role as a mentally and physically dehumanised being... Its product is the self-conscious and self-acting [human] commodity”.⁷⁰ Workers thereby become “capitalised” and consider themselves as capital that must bear fruit—*Homo oeconomicus*. We find after universal proletarianisation not a collective or socialised worker qua revolutionary subject, but a human being who “is despoiled and tends to be reduced to its *biological dimension*”.⁷¹

It is this element of Camatte’s work that contributed towards the most interesting aspects of his reception in Italy, especially as present

67. Marx, ‘The Original Text of A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy’ (MECW 29), 465.

68. Marx, *Capital Volume 1* (MECW 35), 511.

69. Jacques Camatte, ‘Transition’ in *Invariance* Series I no. 8 (1969).

70. Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* (MECW 3), 284.

71. Camatte, ‘Transition’.

in the work of Giorgio Cesarano. Indeed, *Apocalypse and Revolution* can be considered as a systematisation of Camatte’s writings of the time that deepens the anthropological dimension through a theory of anthropogenesis. *The Survival Handbook*, on the other hand, is a more original work that, drawing on Lacan and the anti-psychiatric tradition as much as on Adorno, attempts to think in a more decisive manner the “economy of interiority” and how “human beings who have internalised capital adapt to its life process”.⁷² By turning to the latest results of psychoanalysis and empirical anthropology, Cesarano represents one attempt to move beyond the consciousness and representation-based theory of alienation one can still find in Camatte.

At the same time, drawing upon concepts derived from the pages of *Invariance* as much as his own experience, Cesarano developed a clear understanding of contemporary forms of revolt, which no longer appeared restricted to the traditional workplace. Even if there has been a mutation of the species, a universal proletarianisation that has defined the human as worker, this subsumption into capital can never be completed and there remains a heterogeneous mass: the “necessary pollution” that is the “corporality of the species... irreducible to the people of capital”.⁷³ Fundamental to Cesarano’s analysis is the ever-increasing devaluation through which, alongside surplus capital, surplus populations are produced as excluded from the production process and thus from capital’s new humanity. In a 1971 pamphlet “1970: Danzica and Stettino as Detroit”, Cesarano located the paradigmatic experience of 1968 not in the Parisian student-worker strikes of that year, but in the riots following the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. that took place across the United States—understood as the most mature site of capital’s real domination where the exclusionary process is most visible, “manifested in racial and national factors”.⁷⁴

For Cesarano, the species, in the course of its everyday survival, finds that capital’s fictitious *Gemeinwesen* can only be individualised in one manner, and that this “cannot comfort human beings and give them energy to support their situation, except for a suicidal energy”.⁷⁵ The manifestations of this energy are to be found in various forms of seemingly mad and

72. Camatte, ‘Marx and the *Gemeinwesen*’.

73. Cesarano, *Lampi di critica radicale*.

74. Giorgio Cesarano, *Danzica e Stettino come Detroit* (Genoa 1971).

75. Camatte, ‘Marx and the *Gemeinwesen*’.

gratuitous violence that are the only human forms that can be given to the concrete destruction of humanity. Hence the increasingly desperate character they take whereby, against capitalist totalisation — “the survival of death in the non-life of all” — the real movement responds with “the organic totalisation of its own radical revolt against the death of all” at a level that “*all the bodies of the species know instinctively*”.⁷⁶ As Cesarano develops in his unfinished major work:

76. Cesarano, *Apocalypse and Revolution*.

Every time a ‘crazy’ man launches a violent protest against the prison in which he is held and declares that what exists does not exist or is false, the imagination is at work. This ‘every time’ is becoming ‘always’. In the increasing rates of crime, neurosis and insanity, in the increasingly more frequent collective explosions of ‘unmotivated’ rage, in insubordination... in the insidious absenteeism, we see an intermediate stage on the road that the imagination is taking... that will put an end to the capitalist utopia, to pre-history, and allow the commencement of history as an equilibrium of existence and being.⁷⁷

77. Giorgio Cesarano, *Critica dell’utopia capitale* (Colibri Edizioni 1993).

Cesarano was here able to develop a non-romantic understanding of the “biological revolution” that, against the Comontisti, certainly had no need for propagation or apology by pro-revolutionaries, who had succumbed to “the alibi of the ‘necessity of the struggle’”.⁷⁸ Rather, the struggles carried out by this heterogeneous remainder to subsumption, where “resistance” to any particular identity becomes a universal “fact of the species”, are meant to dispel the anguish of every present figure and social identity, every predication — *especially that of the militant*. Such acts and the enthusiasm increasingly found for them constitute the sublime sign of this seemingly universal and almost *biological* rejection of capital’s organisation of life — and thus of the utopian dimension of capital’s own development projects.

78. Ibid.

WHAT REMAINS

I have attempted to give a theoretical introduction to the *Invariance* circle’s contributions throughout the 1970s with an emphasis on their Italian reception. The latter problematisation of the contemporary conjuncture became the basis for the most critical positions in post-1977 Italy, in the period of reflection that opened after the eradication — whether by violence, imprisonment, penitentiism, or heroin — of the movements. This post-Bordigist perspective was important in such a context, not as an expression of communist melancholy, but in order to produce a space of critique from which it might be possible to rethink the political. This is most evident in Furio di Paola’s important article from 1978, “Dopo la dialettica”, which traces a line from Camatte, Cesarano and the tradition of “radical critique” through to then contemporary feminist practices. The latter groups, such as those surrounding Lea Melandri’s journal *L’erba voglio*, sought, through the critique of individual and group subjectivity, to dissipate “the old phantoms of the ‘political’ that continue to operate as the mystical paralysis of a social body that subsists only through the effective interventions of the technologies of capital’s domination”.⁷⁹

Fundamental is everything that is not said: all that was left to subsequent generations, especially our own. Crucially, three lines of inquiry remain open: (1) how to render concrete the ontological ground of capital’s real domination in the relation between subjectivity and the dialectical movement of history — *subjectivation*; (2) what, if any, is the place of the pro-revolutionary after the collapse of militancy, the party, and gauchism alike — that is, *does a specifically political vocation remain?*; and finally, (3) following Bordiga’s own “original content of the communist program”, what does it mean to destitute those particular historical forms, from property to money, that constitute us as capitalised individuals separated from the common?⁸⁰ How one answers these questions

79. Furio di Paola, ‘Dopo la dialettica’ in *Aut Aut* 165 (1978).

80. The concept of destitution may be traced to a translation of Walter Benjamin’s key concept of ‘Entsetzung’ in his ‘Critique of Violence’, wherein it crucially serves to articulate the subjectless suspension or destitution of law and the state as such, rather than a particular configuration thereof. While the concept has taken on a different meaning in contemporary French and Italian thinking, it is perhaps the most precise term to indicate the challenge, central to communisation theory, of deposing a form (such as law, the state, value, etc.), rather than a particular political order. Its use in this sense would follow Bordiga’s rejection of the term abolition (a ‘volitional act ... good for anarchists’). See Bordiga, ‘The Original Content of the Communist Program’.

determines how contemporary strands of communisation might be distinguished. It determines, as well, how one might avoid melancholic resignation in the face of the community of capital—as much as any impatient substitution for the unrealised human community, or hypo-statisation of apparent revolutionary processes.

—Cooper

“TRANSITION”

Jacques Camatte, *Revue Invariance* (1969)

The starting point for the critique of the existing society of capital has to be the restatement of the concepts of *formal* and *real domination* as the historical phases of capitalist development. All other periodisations of the process of the autonomisation of value, such as competitive, monopoly, state monopoly, bureaucratic etc. capitalism, leave the field of the theory of the proletariat, that is, the critique of political economy, to begin with the vocabulary of the practice of social-democracy or “Leninist” ideology, codified by Stalinism.

All this phraseology with which one pretends to explain “new” phenomena really only mystifies the passage of value to its complete autonomy, that is, the objectification of the abstract quantity in process in the concrete community.

Capital, as a social mode of production, accomplishes its real domination when it succeeds in replacing all the pre-existing social and natural presuppositions with its own particular *forms of organisation* which mediate the submission of the whole of physical and social life to its real needs of valorisation. The essence of the *Gemeinschaft* of capital is organisation.

Politics, as an instrument for mediating the despotism and capital, disappears in the phase of the real domination of capital. After having been fully used in the period of formal domination, it can be disposed of when capital, as total being, comes to organise rigidly the life and experience of its subordinates. The state, as the rigid and authoritarian manager of the expansion of the equivalent forms in social relation (“*Urtext*”), becomes an elastic instrument in the business sphere. Consequently, the state, or directly, “politics”, are less than ever the subject of

the economy and so “bosses” of capital. Today, more than ever, capital finds its own real strength in the inertia of the process which produces and reproduces its specific needs of valorization as human needs in general.

(The defeat of the May ’68 movement in France was the clearest manifestation of this “occult power of capital”.)

The economy reduces politics (the old art of organizing) to a pure and simple epiphenomenon of its own real process. It lets it survive as the museum of horrors such as parliament with all its farces, or else in the rancorous undergrowth of the small “extra-parliamentary” rackets, which are all identical regarding their formal or informal organisation, but compete obscenely with their “strategic” chatter.

The destiny of the other instruments of mediation or of ideology seems to be the same. They still enjoyed a certain apparent autonomy (philosophy, art, etc.) during the period of formal domination, as remainders of the previous epochs. All apparent distinction between ideology and the social mode of production is destroyed and, today, value that has achieved autonomy is its own ideology.

Just as the passage from absolute to relative surplus-value has, capital (its movement constantly tending to total expropriation) has divided all the social and technical connections of the work process that existed beforehand in order then to reunify them as intellectual powers of capital’s own valorisation; so today, in the passage of capital to an overall social power, aiding in the disintegration of the entire social fabric and all its mental connections with the past and their re-composition in a delirious unity, *organised* by the ever accelerating cycles of the

metamorphoses of capital, everything is reduced to degraded ingredients of the extra-ordinary synthesis of value that is self-valorising.

The real domination of capital therefore means that not only the tempo of life and the mental capacity of the proletariat are expropriated, but that circulation time now prevails over production time (on a spatial level). The society of capital creates an “unproductive” population on a large scale, i.e. it creates its own “life” in function of its own need: to fix them then in the sphere of circulation and the metamorphoses of accumulated surplus-value.

The cycle closes with an identity: all men’s time is *socially necessary time* for creation and circulation — realization of surplus-value. Everything can be measured by the hands of a clock.

“Time is everything, man is nothing; he is, at the most, time’s carcass” (Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy*). The abstract quantity in process (value) constitutes itself as the social mode of production and of life (material community).

The theories of the workers’ movement have grasped this social process merely to mystify it. To give just one example: absolute subordination of the state and its insertion as a *particular* moment of the valorization process becomes the exact opposite, that is, a “state capitalism”, so capital can become not a social mode of production and of life, but a bureaucratic, democratic etc. *mode of management*.

Once they have arrived at this point of view, they have to make the revolution no longer the overthrow of one “existence” and the affirmation of another, but a political-statist process with the “organisation” of it as the key problem or, more, the panacea that resolves everything. Here again the degraded conception of the revolution no longer as a world relation of power between the proletariat and capital, but immediately as a question of “forms” or

“models” of organization — the passage is very short.

One cannot otherwise explain the preponderance of the categories mentioned above in the workers’ movement (state, bureaucratic capitalism etc.), which merely bracket the real being of capital so as to affirm the centrality of one of its epiphenomena theorised as the supreme phase, last phase etc.

On the contrary, one must remain on the ground of the critique of political economy (the critique of the existence of capital and the affirmation of communism) to understand the totality of social life in the period of its reduction to a *means* of the process of development of the autonomised productive forces.

The society of capital, in fact, appears superficially to be divided into fields that are apparently opposed and thus gives rise to the separate descriptions of them (sociology, economics, psychology etc.). The existence of all these “fields of research” only explains in mystifying the unified *absolute* value-created reality, the modern *sacrum*, characteristic of a process which goes from the decomposition of a pre-existing organic reality to the fixation of diverse elements which are then recomposed and put into use only by the growing social inertia, created by the opaque and despotic movement of the productive forces, forces which grow out of themselves and which necessitate the representation of the true movement of cohesion of the whole social totality.

That is why all “critical theory” wishing to found itself on raising up one or other “sector” ends up reducing itself to having neither subject nor object.

No subject to the extent that value as an abstract object in a material being (*Grundrisse*) avoids all immediate determination. One must say about this imperceptibility of the real tendencies of capital in the epoch of its absolute domination,

that the most obvious and dazzling manifestations of fetishism and mystification of the social relations created by its development is afforded us by the concept accepted by all the “innovating” theories, critical or apologetic, of “industrial society” and its appendix: “consumer society”.

This concept, an expression of a mystification perpetrated by capital in social relations, becomes possible insofar as the valorisation (thus the life needs of capital) increasingly dominates the labour process. Marx defined the labour process as the organic exchange between man and nature, purposeful activity turned to the creation of use values.

Capital tends to present its own general needs as exclusively and immediately identical to those of humanity to the extent that it creates an increasing identity between these two processes. In fact, given the real domination of its own existence, this mystification seems to be

“PROLETARIAT AND GEMEINWESEN”

Jacques Camatte, *Revue Invariance* (1968)

The publication of “On the Jewish Question” and of “For a Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right” responds not only to a necessity of fact. Indeed, one cannot find these texts at present, yet there is also a profound theoretical need for them: the critique of democracy and its definitive supersession by the proletariat — communism.

Nonetheless, if the antidemocratic aspect of these texts has often been highlighted, the essential question, that of the *Gemeinwesen* (community), has never been raised. Now, in “On the Jewish Question” as in “Critical Gloss in the Margins”, Marx considers this question, showing that the separation of the human

based rationally on the movement when *sociability*, *conviviality*, customs, language, desires, or needs, in a word, the social being of humans, have become nothing other than the valorisation requirement of capital, internal components of its own enlarged reproduction.

If capital dominates everything to the point of being able to identify itself with the social being, it seems, on this basis, to disappear.

This is the most glaring fetishism ever produced by exchange value in the history of its own autonomisation. A “neutral” category can arise from this, like that of industrial society. Thus all possible distinction between abstract labour which valorises capital (the proletariat) or which enables the total existence of its being (the middle classes) and “useful” human activity as it unfolded in pre-capitalist epochs can disappear (and in fact does disappear).

from its *Gemeinwesen* makes revolution inevitable — this is possible, as will later be made clear, only in response to an economic crisis that weakens the force of repression of the dominant class and provides the necessary energy to the oppressed class to attempt the insurrectional assault. Moreover, we find the affirmation that only human being is the true *Gemeinwesen* (community) of man. Now, who in this society could represent this *Gemeinwesen*? What is the class that in this society can claim the human title? It is the proletariat. This response given in “For the Critique of the Hegelian Philosophy of Right (Introduction)” shows at what point there exists a profound unity

between all of these texts. There is a unity because:

“The question of the community is the central question of the proletarian movement. In a synthetic mode, this can be presented as:

- a. Primitive human community
- b. Destruction of this through the development of two movements, that of value and that of the expropriation of human beings
- c. Formation of the material community with the fusion of two separate preceding movements: capital-value in process
- d. Scientific communism, the human community rediscovered, that integrates all of the acquisitions of the previous periods”

On the other hand, Marx shows that bourgeois society derived from a social revolution with a political soul destroys politics. This would seem to be a contradiction if one doesn't recall that the essential in capitalist society is to find the political means to dominate humans become slaves to capital. Politics is no longer the question of the relation of human beings amongst themselves, but uniquely the relation of humans with the material community, that is with capital of which the state is the representation.

To capital which has become the material oppressor of humans, one can only oppose the proletariat in as much as it—when constituted as a class—is what struggles for the triumph of a finally found human being: the social man of communist society.

Philosophy was the research into this being, it was the interpretation, continual accommodation to the exigencies of a being where it felt the necessity and the alienated given of this world. With the emergence of the proletariat, this theoretical research is resolved in practice. The proletariat realises philosophy in superseding it.

Radical emancipation was the only emancipation possible in Germany; yet it was the revolution on high that triumphed here. But Germany is still sick from this victory, this victory that made it participate on a social stage above that which it possessed in itself: communism.

Radical emancipation was also the solution for Russian society. The Russians were the theoretical contemporaries of the modern peoples; the Russian proletariat was the theoretical contemporary of the European workers' movement but it could not become its real contemporary unless, in the West, the proletariat had become itself the effective contemporary of what has long been veiled by society: communism.

The book of the Russian revolution was written before its history. Unfortunately, the Russian proletariat accomplished the romantic task of realising capitalism that the bourgeois class, at least in Russia, could not.

After this detour, as was also the case in China and various countries that gained their independence after the second world war, there reappears more powerfully the necessity of a radical revolution, of a revolution with a human title. Human society cannot survive unless it is transformed into a human *Gemeinwesen* (community). The proletariat has no romantic tasks to complete, but only its human work [*son oeuvre humaine, to ergon tou anthropou*].

“MARX AND GEMEINWESEN”

Jacques Camatte, *Revue Invariance* (1977)

It is in the *Urtext of the Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1858) and in the *Grundrisse*, Marx's unfinished works and drafts, where the most is possible, where the system is open. It is a moment that stands in essential connection with the so-called philosophical works of his youth. This is not to suggest that Marx subsequently abandoned all contact with philosophy, on the contrary: the first book of *Capital* is fully comprehensible only if one knows, at least, what Aristotle wrote about form and matter in his *Metaphysics* as well as Hegel's logic. There is also of course an undeniable Spinozian resonance to be found in many pages of *Capital*. In the *Urtext*, Marx is attached to a young Hegel, a Hegel who he could not have known; this Marx who deeply investigated the *Gemeinwesen*, especially the Greek one, and that, beyond Hegel, he subterraneously connected to individuals such as Joachim da Fiore, Nicholas de Cusa, etc.

Autonomisation of exchange value, community, relation between the state and the general equivalent, definition of capital as value in process—these are the essential points confronted in the *Urtext*. They are not particular to it, of course, because they can also be found in the *Grundrisse* and *Capital*. However, in this text the study is more synthetic and the various elements are tackled simultaneously; they are salient, especially with respect to autonomisation and community. In the first volume of *Capital*, the exposition is more analytical.

Overall on the subject of the community, in the works published during his lifetime, Marx reasons as follows: the destruction of the old community due to the autonomisation of exchange value also

leads to the autonomisation of its various constituent elements (the individual, politics, religion, the state), which constitutes the starting point for a vast movement whose development the bourgeoisie profits off of. Yet, for Marx, it does not appear that the latter can in fact found another community. This question is addressed even less with respect to capital. Only the proletariat can, by destroying the latter—the last moment of the movement—becoming of value, of class society—found a new community, the human community.

However, in posthumous works such as the *Urtext* and the *Grundrisse* (and taking into account as well all those that are not yet published) we find that Marx poses the possibility that a community could be formed either through gold or capital. This is the fundamental interest of these texts. With them, one can demonstrate that gold is unable to provide the foundation for a community and the accession, on the contrary, of capital to the material community.

Thus, in Marx's complete works, there is a juxtaposition between, on the one hand, the individualisation of that movement through which capital constitutes itself as the material community and, on the other, an affirmation of the impossibility thereof, linked to a mad hope that the proletariat will, in time, rebel and destroy the capitalist mode of production (CMP). Yet, capital's community exists; this implies an abandonment of any classist theory and the understanding that an immense historical phase is over.

Marx's work on community has been left to the side. In Germany, theorists such as Weber and Tönnies do not refer at all to the various works we have just mentioned. In noting this we do not propose to

recompose a new Marx, but simply to note the extent to which reflection on community is a fundamental axis of all his work.

To understand the significance of this Marxian approach to social becoming, we must link the *Urtext* to the *Grundrisse* chapter "Die Formen, die der kapitalistischen Produktion vorgehen [The forms that precede capitalist production]." In this text, Marx studies the different historical periods that preceded capital's development, starting from the forms of community; an immense work, as attested by the various studies and notebooks that have been preserved on ethnology and the prehistoric period. Here again, it is not a question of wanting to organise differently what has been given to us, trying to place one chapter in relation to another. One must simply consider the various approaches of this study and grasp, despite what is lacking, in the direction that Marx indicated in his own reflexive effort. It is then that we realise that the *Urtext* is a privileged point of articulation for such an understanding.

The question then arises of how Marx could have presented the missing chapter on the state, one of the six that the *Critique of Political Economy* was meant to contain. It seems that, as with capital, Marx became aware of the difficulty of treating it in isolation, since the state can only be conceived from the community and, moreover, the future of the state blends intimately with that of value; at two historical moments it tends to constitute itself as a community: with gold, where it does not succeed, and with capital, where it does.

The question of the state is not posed in the same terms in his political works. As a result, two discourses coexist: 1. Exchange value achieves autonomy and through this movement creates the community, towards which end it subjugates the state; 2. The state is a product of the

class struggle: the ruling class erects the state in order to dominate the opposing class of society.

In the *Urtext*, there is a tendency towards a synthesis of these two discourses. However, Marx does not really confront the time and place of the birth of classes. This would have led him to relativize his schema of social evolution even more than he did during his discussion with the Russian populists. Classes are only manifested in the West because only there do we find the autonomisation of the individual. However, the state phenomenon is not peculiar to it. This is where the Marxian analysis is inadequate. In "Die Formen ..." Marx intuits certain realities when he approached the Inca society as a state within a communist society, but he does not sufficiently emphasise that the state is an abstraction of the community, that it is more or less autonomous, separated from the ancient social body linked to nature.

Research subsequent to Marx has sometimes revealed and especially specified the existence of states not yet separated from the community and nature. Thus, among the Sumerians, as Thorkild Jacobsen has shown, one finds "the cosmos as a state". The organisation of the cosmos dictates that of the community, defining hierarchy and therefore the state. It is a moment when the separation between interiority and exteriority has not yet been accomplished, is not yet over. *A posteriori*, we can say that it is a given type of community which implied such a relation to the cosmos that attributed to it a determining function, but it is also clear that such reasoning, in truth, is absolutely not valid for the moment when men and women of that community lived. For them, there was a communitarian whole.

Men and women had not yet abandoned the old representation-conception of the world of peoples who were not sedentary. The separation of all that they

form from the piece of land where they live had not yet come to be. We therefore cannot speak of state, class, religion, art, etc in such a case. It is we who, according to what has happened in recent centuries, abstract such elements in these communities.

With different determinations, we find a similar absence of separation in ancient Egypt. The state, however, had to some degree become autonomous.

In the case of China this separation was sketched, but was not in fact effected. What the Europeans called Emperor was in fact the "son of heaven" who received his mandate from the latter. Natural events could sometimes indicate that his mandate had been removed, which well conveys the particular relationship of this "emperor" to the cosmos and his function within it. In particular, by guaranteeing social order, he simultaneously guarantees a fundamental achievement: the separation of man from animality. When disorder reigns, there is a return to the latter. Thus the emperor governs the relationship between the cosmos and the social milieu.

Various other examples could be cited as special cases that cannot be unilinearly available because the process of autonomisation did not operate identically in the distinct communities. The study of African and Amerindian societies reveals all the possibilities. In *Society Against the State*, Pierre Clastres has highlighted the mechanisms there that prevented the autonomisation of power, hierarchy, state.

It is in Greece that we find separation and autonomisation, as well as where we find the state, individuals, and classes at the same time as separation from "mythical" thought, the birth of science, logic and, we will come back to it more in other works, therapeutics. The state is still a sensible expression of the ancient *Gemeinwesen*; the movement of value has not yet reached too great a development.

With the Roman Empire comes the need for a state that must dominate, be above, and control a host of communities, hence the attempt to resolve the issue through the dissolution of all communities in Romanity, with the concordant loss of diversity (a phenomenon already attempted with the Greeks, the Hellenisation of the barbarians). Christianity played a big role here. It is it that will realise the homogenisation or destruction, indeed the domestication, of human groups, after putting force in check; this is what happened to the Sardinians, for example.

During the Renaissance, the state emerged more clearly as the general equivalent state (see Marx in the *Urtext*), accelerating the passage from the verticality of value's movement to its horizontality. The end was no longer a god and therefore a temple but, as a result of the disappearance of sacred hoarding, value came to move in all horizontal directions; there was therefore the need for an element of regulation and control.

With the development of bourgeois society the class struggle became decisive, if only because the protagonists of the drama no longer reasoned according to a community or, if you will, they did so reduced to the limits of a class. It is at this moment when classes became really decisive, operational. We will have the various revolutions that, from the 16th century to the present day, mark the stages of the establishment of the CMP and, now, the community of capital. The state is considered an "artifice", an institution necessary to unite the various social elements; hence its importance, its possible autonomisation and the fact that it can become stronger than society (Marx). Now its importance is still considerable but it tends to be absorbed in the community of capital.

I have indicated elsewhere the movement through which the material

community is formed and its fundamental characteristics; material community because it is the dead, crystallised element, the work of millions of human beings exteriorised in the form of that fixed capital which founds the community. This is the essential moment in which capital replaces its presuppositions with its conditions of development, that of its accession to the community, but that still does not tell us everything about the community of capital. I have demonstrated elsewhere the important role played by circulating capital in the latter's realisation. However, it could not have been established, let alone reproduced, if the mentality of men and women had not been modified so that it corresponded to the new requirements of that form of life determined by capital. At first, class ideologies allow the different actors to represent with more or less adequacy their role in the life process of capital, even when they oppose it (as in the case of the limits to the working day), subsequently it becomes the movement of capital itself—capital posing as representation—that grounds the representations of human beings and guides them in their praxis. At this level, wanting to define what comes first and what second is to debate the chicken and the egg. What is undeniable is the seemingly indestructible force of representation. The becoming of what is in place appears eternal.

The irony is that it is precisely at this moment that historical materialism triumphs, posing as an adequate representation of the capitalist world, which is itself at a very distant stage from the one that engendered it!

The realisation of the community of capital and the end of the historical phase that began with the rise of exchange value is reflected in the appearance of new disciplines: systems theory (Bertalanffy), general semantics (Korzybski), "complexity theory" (Morin) and in the importance

of certain terms: structure, totality, organisation, system, code, etc. Hence the preponderance of semiotics: we must know the meaning of a system, that of its different parts; we must perceive its signifiers where man has no more meaning.

A world losing more and more of its references, its constraints ("everything is possible"; it should be noted in this connection that there is a certain contradiction between an evanescence of the central state as point of reference, seat of the general equivalent, and the need for a more or less centralised law enforcement agency) imposes the requirement of a science of information's meaning. Everything has been externalised, autonomized: men and women have before themselves the community of their own despoilment. It takes a code to understand what is happening and this code is the reduction of communication. It is no longer possible to speak in terms of antipathy or sympathy; beings are neutral particles of information recording and reference to this information. The ancient faith that was so important in earlier times has been replaced by credit, which is faith in a system in which man is still a reference, and then by inflation, which is the faith of capital in itself. Its acceptance brings humanity to an increasingly absurd life. Every human being will be nothing but an existent "thrown" into the community of capital and set in motion by its becoming. It is no longer a question of reasoning in terms of the mode of production in order to face current reality. There is no longer a capitalist mode of production, but the community of capital in which the state is ever more immersed.

More generally it can be said that there is a definite mode of production when production really becomes a problem because of material, technical and social difficulties. Capital produces everything, even what appears to be

outside the sphere of industrial production, and reduces human beings to the same situation of dependence on itself. It is accomplished alienation. Human beings have become totally different or, what amounts to the same thing, slaves have accepted the power of their master to such an extent that they have become its simulacra. In doing so, any dialectic of the concepts of productive forces and relations of production, as discussed by Marx in his 1857 Introduction, is over; on the other hand, production is no longer simply production for production's sake: it is now production for the reproduction of capital. It finds a subject and thereby loses its character as object.

"All the concepts of the dialectic that we have reached do not imply that production, distribution, exchange and consumption are identical, but that they constitute the members of a totality" (Introduction, 1857).

Especially those that were centred and articulated around human activity: labour-leisure, labour time-free time, value-surplus value; and even those that have freed themselves from it (profit-loss, etc.) have lost any operability. It is obviously the couple shortage-wealth, underpinned by the concept of need, that most clearly vanishes. When human beings are torn from their community, the realities that founded the concepts of need, scarcity, working time, etc. still arise, but to the extent that a community has been rebuilt where all the elements that had individualised, autonomised, have been resorbed as no more than the moments of articulation of the community of capital's becoming. These are the determinations of human behaviour once men and women have been detached from their community.

More generally, it signals the end of political economy, especially if one refers to Marx's affirmation that: "Real economy—savings—consists in saving

working time..." (*Grundrisse*). Yet, capital has captured duration and human time.

Economy in the sense of saving is only possible when time is autonomous and is counted; besides, Marx insists in *Capital* on the relation between the measurement of time and the development of the economy or the development of fixed capital; to economise, to save, can lead to a situation in which the individual will even save his life, once he has taken out life insurance and bought himself a tomb. This is a grotesque manner of indicating a reality: the economy is the dissimulation of our life.

For Marx, the economy of labour time is ultimately the essential point and almost determines human evolution. However, as he himself shows, it is only with the development of capital in the fifteenth century that this imperative really appears, engendering a secular struggle between capitalists and workers that will reach its paroxysm in England in the nineteenth century with the struggle for the limit of the working day—a real civil war that lasted 50 years (Marx). In other countries, it occurred later, yet carried out in other forms. The result is the structuring of the community of capital, the subjection of human beings to quantified time and the acceptance of fulfilling one's life in a rigid framework. We have arrived at capital's organisation of time and it is from there that the latter can produce the programming of all moments of human life. It is debited in time slots during which we must perform certain functions, certain vital processes. Better, there is now in virtue of this division a production which is appropriate to all the men and women crucified on these quanta of time: for the youth with its many subdivisions, for the adults, the elderly, for the dead (thanatology, for capital death is the absolute capitalisation of time, it is the homogeneous time that includes no opposition).

Capital is the accumulation of time; it reabsorbs it, absorbs it (one can have both modalities) and, as a result, it is posed for eternity. Marx addresses this question of eternity on the formal side. He speaks of *Unvergänglichkeit* expressing the idea of something imperishable, as well as the idea that we cannot move on to something else.

Eternity—the duration of value in its capital form—is only posited by production itself which is twofold: “reproduction as a commodity, reproduction as money and unity of these two processes of reproduction” (*Grundrisse*).

Developed from the point of view of substance, the eternity of capital also implies the evanescence of men, which is to say their weak durability as well as their insignificance. Capital takes time, what for Marx is the very element of human development, away from man. It creates a void in which time is abolished; the human loses an important reference; she can no longer recognise herself, perceive herself. It is congealed time that she faces.

This marks the end of economics as the science of wealth, whether understood as the accumulation of use values or the accumulation/hoarding of exchange value (money, capital). But it has been shown that with capital, it is no longer use values that are essential for man, but the movement of valorisation-capitalisation within which any difference between use value and exchange value has been abolished. The search for wealth has become the search for a privileged position within capital's life process in order to benefit from its material community.

This search for wealth was coupled with the fight against scarcity, but it really starts with the autonomisation of exchange value. “Primitive communities” did not know it, just as they did not know the obsessive fear of free time. The present lack would concern life itself, the greater

and greater deprivation of human beings... when they realise it, which is to say when they question capital's diktat, otherwise the latter seems to immediately fulfil them or at least it will in a not too distant future.

Economics as a science of trade also vanishes. I have shown elsewhere how capital tends to go beyond exchange and succeeds (*Grundrisse*). There is no more exchange but only attribution. Significantly, modern economists speak of economic flows.

There is another ground of the economy that loses its operability: the division of labor. This has often been compared between different modes of production. Yet, with capital it becomes a simple differentiation between capital's moments, a relation between the means of production and means of consumption. Finally, economics in the sense of management (as Xenophon already employed it), both private and public, also disappears; because management involves a managing subject and an object to manage. This is valid as long as men still have a force of intervention, but it is the rationality of capital that is now essential. Those who want to manage must simply recognise capital's movement. Insofar as they want to intervene, they can only temporarily upset the movement. They do not manage anymore, they record.

Some wanted to extend the categories of political economy to areas that were previously foreign to it, hence all the theories on libidinal economy (Lyotard) or desiring machines, where desire replaces need (Deleuze-Guattari). But how, from the moment when one grasps the incapacity of Marxist theory (its aporia, according to the new theoreticians) to understand new social phenomena, can one transpose the former into psychology, for example, and build a global theory on such a foundation? One can make a similar reproach to the authors of *Apocalypse*

and *Revolution* when they speak of an “economy of interiority”.

Insofar as a concept tends to invade domains which are originally foreign to it, it means the extension of the phenomenon that it represents and the loss of strict limits, of those rigid determinations which made it possible to characterise and define it. Economics comes to mean the organisation of something, of a whole or functional process; it indicates the mode according to which propositions are organised, of affirmations to establish a certain sense. Consider this sentence by Fresquet: “This is the economy of the gospel: Jesus freed man from his sin. Humanity has been redeemed by his love” (“Meaning and defence of sin”, in *Le Monde*, 6.3.1976).

Economics as a science of organisation of a certain geographical area tends to be supplanted by ecology given the problems of pollution and the scarcity of raw materials (but there is no shortage of human beings and thus always the possibility of ersatz!). The field of the economy expands until it no longer has a real consistency, the concept is diluted more and more. Land is envisioned as a total ecosystem that capital must exploit to an ever lesser extent through the intermediary of man.

One finds a very good expression in the definition that some economists give to economic science (one no longer speaks of political economy): the science of adaptation. This conception incorporates the old categories: wealth, exchange, price, utility, etc. It also allows him to give an account of “human nature”. The human being has an “infinite need” which stumbles on the “finitude of creation” (H. Guitton in his article “Economic Science” in the *Encyclopedia Universalis*), thus needs are innumerable while the means to satisfy them are limited; on the other hand, they may not be at the right time and in

the right place. However, economic development has increased availability, which raises at all levels the problem of knowing how to choose products, means of production, etc. The economic act would then be the very act of choosing. Hence the importance of calculation which replaces that simple judgment that was linked to the concept of value; and this act of choosing of course implies the adaptation of human beings to the economic system. Knowing how to choose is knowing how to adapt. Is this not simultaneously the creed of all futurists: we must adapt to the shock of the future which is that of capital escaping from any constraint, any reference, developing on its own account and striking full force the slower way of life of the species that engendered it?

We find here a convergence with ecology, which can be simply defined as the science of the conditions of existence and of interactions between living beings and environmental conditions—which is to say ecology is fundamentally a science of the adaptation of the individual and the species to its milieu. Economics is the science of adaptation to a specific environment, that of capital.

Political economy was the science of capital developing into its totality. In order to account for this, it not only inventoried the purely economic phenomena concerning exchange value, utility, capital, etc, but it more or less explicitly described how men internalise phenomena, becoming ever more compatible with... as a result of those clashes and struggles that made them abandon their ancient conceptions. With the realisation of the material community capital comes to exist as a world. The only thing left to do is to study how human beings who have internalised capital adapt to its life process: this is the task of economics.

Economics represented reflection on the phenomena that developed after

the autonomisation of exchange value and thus an attempt to intervene within them in order to reconcile them with the social relations already in place; it has always been more or less imbued with humanist ideals.

With the introduction of the capitalist mode of production, social movement and economic movement converge. The struggle of the proletariat within this mode of production has made it possible to structure this unity-unification. From then on, economics can no longer be anything but capital's discourse which, in acceding to the material community, renders the whole content of political economy obsolete.

Economics translates a certain behaviour by a part of the species that existed upon the earth. At the moment when this science loses its reality, it signifies that this behaviour tends towards its own abolition: it multiplies indefinitely (there is a drop in the birth rate in all the most capitalised countries), posing itself as ever more different from the rest of the living world, considering the earth as an object of exploitation, abandoning itself to technology and the exaltation of the productive forces, to progress.

One path of the species' evolution has been fully traveled. It follows that the self-perception of the behaviour that has been adopted as well as that reflection on it must end. Thus it is the end of philosophy which was, among other things, reflection on values, on value; it was a theoretical behaviour which created a hierarchy of the world of beings and things according to the exteriority-interiority dichotomy.

For Marx, economics was the science that allowed us to describe how "primitive communities" had been destroyed, to reveal the determinism of the evolution of different human societies, to explain the revolutions and, to the extent

that it was a critique of political economy, to individualise the contradictions of the CMP, which would lead to the proletarian revolution that would constitute the emancipation-liberation of a whole class of men and humanity itself. Yet, as we have seen, the dynamics of emancipation-liberation are those of capital. It is the great revolutionary and all the revolutions have benefited it. The series of revolutions is thus finished and concludes with the realisation of the community of capital. Human becoming can no longer be linked to revolution.

Thus ends the movement of externalisation-autonomisation and liberation-emancipation, which we have here analysed starting from the dissolution of "primitive communities" in the West. So, too, is the master-slave dialectic abolished, that representation of this movement, through the disappearance of classes. Even the movement of alienation disappears since, in the community of capital, one finds the juxtaposition of the being that has been stripped bare with that of which he has been alienated, the two reunited but as separate realities. Religion itself loses its function because it no longer serves to connect beings, a matter left to capital as representation. The latter, by more and more destroying human roots, destroys the memory of what religion preserved and that preserved it. All religions of salvation are based on remembrance. And how, indeed, can there be alienation when there is no memory of another state? The absurd limit of capital's movement is a human community without man, thereby exacerbating the automatic subject that Marx, after Ure and Owen, spoke of in *Capital*.

Consequently, the historical study of the development of the species over time since its emergence makes it possible to preserve or to recover a memory of a different state, certainly not to restore

such a past state, but to show that the eternalisation of capital has been realised only to the extent that our memory has been abolished. Without memory, there can be no human community.

One would think that the transition from one community to another, if it poses practical problems and causes multiple rifts, can at least be grasped and understood by men and women. Yet, and this is an essential contribution of the *Urtext*, Marx shows the extent to which the movement of exchange value that dissolves the old communities and tends to pose itself as a community distorts its own comprehension by human beings. What they believe to be determinant are in fact their relationships with one another, or the institutions they have set up on the basis of economic relations that they have not understood. Marx reveals the extent of this false historical consciousness. Thus the French bourgeois thought to limit or equalise wealth and did not realise that through their intervention they removed all obstacles to its free development in the form of capital.

In *The Holy Family*, Marx had already approached this "illusion" without giving it its real economic foundation.

This illusion manifested itself tragically when Saint-Just, on the day of his execution, pointed to a copy of the rights of man in the Conciergerie and declared: "I am the one who made that." This document rightly proclaimed the right of a man who is no longer the man of the ancient *Gemeinwesen* (community), any more than current industrial and economic relations could be those of ancient society.

They did not perceive that the externalised activity of men reached a proper autonomy over which they had no control. This false bourgeois conscience founds representative, parliamentary democracy: the belief that with institutions one can constitute the nation (a new community

that will grasp all economic and social processes); it also founded fascism (the Nazis wanted the *Volksgemeinschaft*, the community of the people!) which is itself a movement that, by its action, enabled the community of capital to establish itself.

With respect to political democracy, it is certainly true that it had the merit of limiting any overflowing of violence. Indeed—and this is the important argument that all the current Democrats and all those who, horrified by Nazism and Stalinism, consider it to be a lesser evil—it should be noted that in the countries where the old communities crumbled and where democracy could not be established, where there was no rule and no institution to curb the social phenomenon, there was no brake on violence. What was human, something that had been defined by the community that had collapsed, and where could one find a point of reference? Thus a host of atrocities were committed in the USSR as a result of the impossibility of establishing a parliamentary democracy and as a result of the failure of the world proletarian revolution. It was this violent outburst that was feared by various Russian revolutionaries, from Dostoevsky—which made him hate the revolution as Berdiaev reminds us on several occasions, especially in his book devoted to the author—to Lenin himself since, according to Victor Serge, he feared the generalised breakup of the class struggle which might happen following the example of the Czechoslovakian mutiny (see Year I of the Revolution).

The same horrors were repeated with folkloric variants in Asia, Latin America, and Africa. In African countries, the trauma of the destruction of community is even deeper; the clash with the world of capital is in itself a generator of madness, in the sense of an absolute loss of reference and acute impossibility of being in a community.

This does not mean that Western Democracies have not committed any internal violence, no torture, no crime... certainly not. But they first operated outside Europe, in countries where they were not “hindered” by democratic laws. That is why the war of 1914–1918 and above all fascism that brought to Europe the methods that had been reserved for other countries sign the death sentence of political democracy.

The ever-widening disappearance of all ideals and all democratic rules meant that, in a decaying world, especially when the community of capital is refused, there is no longer any obstacle to violence. Hence the repeated and vain invocation of a return to political democracy and the various proposals for tinkering with and reinvigorating it. As if, after the tremendous bankruptcy of 1914 and 1933, it could be a bulwark against the tide of violence that swelled and began to sweep over the world... especially because it had only been an accommodation since its origin.

We find the same false consciousness among the French socialists: “From this follows the error of those socialists, especially the French socialists, who wanted to prove that socialism was the realisation of bourgeois ideas [...] and who tried to demonstrate that exchange value [...] was a system of socialism, freedom and equality for all; but which would have been falsified by money, capital, etc.” (*Ur-text*). The socialist world movement has had the same end as political democracy. This was all the more inevitable as it often came to be its true realisation.

But does not Marx himself ultimately consider that the development of the productive forces (neutral given) is distorted by the movement of capital? Is there not a false historical consciousness in wanting to found communism on the basis of a development of the very productive forces that allowed for the establishment of capital? Hence, of course,

in order to go against this derangement of the productive forces, the need for an intervention that will make it possible to regenerate its course, to clean up and heal it! Simultaneously, communism would be the true consciousness of the movement of production in action for millennia that had only been waiting for a favourable moment to manifest itself.

The same mistake is found in the thought that communism could develop on the basis of the reduction of the working day. In doing so, one still maintained a presupposition of capital (the quantification of time) and sought to use what capital had brought about; which is to say, that with the development of the productive forces a phenomenon was under way, but capital prevented its full development and even distorted it. Hence the need for an intervention of which I have already spoken. False consciousness is caught in the trap of immediate phenomenon linked to a will to intervene in order to make this phenomenon work in the direction of human interests. The human community cannot be built on time only, it is possible only through a constructed unity of humanity-nature that encompasses space and time.

Finally, when Marx wrote that no social form disappears until it has exhausted all the possibilities it contains (see *Preface to the Contribution of Political Economy*, 1859), he created fertile ground for the engendering of illusions. This includes the belief that there is a decadence of capital from the moment that a certain number of possibilities, which Marx recognised from the start, were achieved and that an intervention—that of the proletariat—is always predictable in a never-distant future. In reality if there is a decadence it is that of humanity!

False consciousness and recuperation are closely linked. The second being like the reduction of the first. If there is

recuperation it is due to an erroneous consciousness. Individuals consider a certain phenomenon to be effectively antagonistic to capital; yet, it later turns out to realise what it should have destroyed. And there we meet in another way capital’s anthropomorphosis. It is thanks to inadequate representations of the real movement, due to false consciousness, that capital continues to achieve its domination. It could be thought that this movement would continue only until that moment when capital would finally absorb a foreign substance and thereby explode or exhaust itself. This might be true for various institutions, which thus makes them inadequate and inoperative such that at the least shock they collapse (and revolution really was that moment when everything collapsed and where everyone escaped from the various institutions, roles, etc.), but capital seizes everything and, by anthropomorphising itself, only increases in potential because at the limit it can appear human. Similarly, one could think that this movement of recuperation could be the cause of an imbalance which would introduce a flaw in the community of capital. However, a serious danger accompanies this possibility: the total loss, the complete externalisation and thus the realised emptiness of human beings, resulting in a community without men.

All the more, one cannot come onto capital’s ground, forcing its becoming, as Baudrillard thinks: “the challenge that capital launches in its delirium, shamelessly liquidating the law of profit, surplus value, productive ends, structures of power, and still finding at the end of its process the profound immorality (but also seduction) of primitive rituals of destruction, such a challenge must be met with an even higher bid.” To rise to the challenge would be to abandon oneself to the complete escape of capital, so as

not to find ourselves again: the realisation of madness. In this passage, Baudrillard strikingly indicates the movement of inflation.

It is at the moment of the destruction of a community in place that false consciousness comes out most clearly; it is then that unbridled searches are made for its reconstitution in whatever more or less fantastic form. Some try to do this by partaking of the same, throwing themselves into a frenzied sexuality, others by indulging in mysticism, drugs, or music (the phenomenon of pop music).

In the second and third centuries of our era, an immense distress took hold of many men and women, following the collapse of the ancient cities (polis) in which they held recognised and concrete roles. There followed a collapse of the cosmopolitanism that the Roman Empire had engendered but which it could not realise, due to the extraordinary tensions that traversed it and the ignoble relations that then reigned. Hence the Gnostics and Manichaeans posed the problem not only of an exit from the world constituted by the Roman Empire, but of the cosmos. Among the Greeks, human society and cosmos were still in continuity, among the Romans this survived in a schematic fashion, hence the Gnostic theme of the evil cosmos.

The “Gnostic” path followed after—as RM Grant asserts in his *Gnosticism and Early Christianity*—the failure of the Jewish people’s attempts at self-liberation (Jesus Christ himself was understood as a failed emancipator), such that the prophets would be understood to announce the moment of liberation. It arises, in fact, as a result of the collapse of all apocalyptic hopes.

Much closer to us, the war of 1914–1918 was experienced as an apocalypse that had not been prophesied. Hence the fascination it exerted, at least in the

early days, on a great number of minds, especially in Germany where it tended to persist until the advent of Nazism (which had a deeply religious character), and we cannot say exactly to what extent it does not impregnate the whole era of the latter's domination. It was experienced as the manifestation of a lesser evil, like the final resolution of certain tensions that could no longer be tolerated and also experienced as a laceration from which another way could be seen.

Nowadays, in a palpable, fascinating, and tragic way, the failure of Marx's apocalyptic prophecy imposes itself on us all—the promised emancipation of humanity through the proletarian assault on the citadels of capital—whether because it collapsed, or did not show up for its historical rendezvous. The same is true of Bordiga's which, reordering Marx's prediction through the integration of the fate of all peoples of colour and set in motion by the tremors of the two world wars, predicted an apocalypse-revolution for our present years. The collapse of the communist revolution is the end of the community-party and the party-community.

On this basis we can better understand the vast confusion of our times linked to the loss of reference, the total permissiveness and the end of the communities born with the bourgeois revolution, nations, and their states. There is certainly a higher unity—the UN—but, just as under the Roman Empire, all cosmopolitanism is unachievable, since the very idea of a cosmos has been lost. Internationalism, in the nineteenth and especially during the mid-twentieth century, played the role of ancient and eighteenth century cosmopolitanism. In all three cases, one is effectively dealing with moments defined by the disintegration of particular communities. If proletarian internationalism has failed this is due in large part to the fact that it was unable to encompass diversity,

infested as it was with Eurocentrism and undermined by a badly disguised and chauvinistic nationalism. It is therefore logical if, once again in the West, the fashion of Orientalism prevails and we find echoes of the themes and practices put forth by the Gnostics and the various religious currents from the beginning of our era.

This moment we are experiencing is the end-exhaustion of a whole evolution of human beings. The pre-Gnostic period knew a movement in which the sacred and profane were connected and it was in virtue of these two elements that men and women revolted. With the triumph of Christianity, there is a secularisation and separation of the sacred from the profane: "render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's". This secularisation-profanation is responsible for the bourgeois revolutionary movement, first of all with the Reformation, then with the various revolutions until 1789 that carried out precisely such a profanation. On this plane, the proletarian movement does not constitute any discontinuity; the "sacred" element is definitively set aside and it is only posited that human beings must create another community. The impossibility of a "profane" movement to ensure the liberation of human beings reinforced the idea that the "salvation" of humanity could only be ensured by religious, sacred movements. Yet what have all the reactionary currents that have tried to preserve such a sacred element done, but participate in the tragedy of the development in course, by every time making a pact with the power in place? The solution is therefore neither on the side of the sacred nor on the side of the profane. The human community is outside of this world.

One can place the question of the community in relation to the problem of

knowing what is decisive in the evolution of human beings. Indeed, at the moment it is a "marginalist" theory that tends to prevail. It is to be those on the margins who will invent new behaviours and gradually impose them on the rest of the community. Like the economic theory of the same name, it favours certain elements: here, the elite! It demonstrates even more clearly the cut interpreted by the theory of the party-mass relationship. In both cases, there is a non-contemporaneity of human beings living at a given moment. The upheavals that affect the community can only be perceived by certain elements. Such privileged people would share their concerns with the others. Such a theorisation is the recognition of the destruction of any *Gemeinwesen* because here one only finds particularised beings in relation to one another and arranged side-by-side. However, insofar as the *Gemeinwesen* dimension persists even a little bit in human beings, they can really coexist even if their threshold of perception of phenomena is different.

Finally, to conclude on this aspect of the community as human group, let us point out that there are two determining modalities of the relationship between the individual and the community in the world: that of the West, where the individual has become independent, as has the state; and that of the East, where the community is despotic and the individual does not achieve autonomy. There are variants in Africa and in both Americas. However, now, with the accession of capital to the material community we find a convergence between West and East. The first has effected an intermediary movement in order to arrive at an identical, but much more powerful result. Thus it transforms, by replacing it, the ancient Asian despotic community.

We cannot be content to oppose community to the individual and to the

state as a solution to the current evils. Communism is not a simple affirmation of the community; it can no longer be characterised by common or collective property because this would be to preserve the presuppositions of capital itself: ownership and separation (to the extent that various socialist theorists advocated for an egalitarian distribution). In a word, it should not be considered in opposition to anything, because it is a question of exiting from any dialectic that would sooner or later bring back antagonism as a repressed moment. What is at stake is the being of men and women and their relationship to the totality of the living world implanted on our planet, which we could no longer conceive as appropriation, as Marx thought, but only as enjoyment.

Just as the human whole should no longer be divided in order to become a community, so the individual must no longer be divided in order to become individuality, thus we find an end of the cut between state-individuals, party-mass, spirit (brain)-body. To get out of this world one has to acquire a body tending towards a community, and thus to not lock oneself into an individual phenomenon, but to rediscover the dimension of the *Gemeinwesen*.

It is here that we find the fundamental theme of Marx's philosophical works: to explain the relationship between the individual and society and how to abolish their antagonism. More than a social being, man is a being who has the dimension of the *Gemeinwesen*, that is to say that every human being carries in herself, subjectivated, the *Gemeinwesen*. This is expressed in a very reductive way when we affirm the universal character of the thought of every human being.

Capital has realised its community not only as a social tie but also in the dimension of the *Gemeinwesen* because what constitutes the foundation

of thought and conduct (ethics), etc., is capital, thanks to its having become a representation exclusive of all others.

In the community of capital, humans are united by means of technology, the famous mass-media which are all the more necessary as human beings become more numerous. They do not manage to properly coexist, to become contemporaries, because they have been enclosed in their social, national, etc. limits.

All the elements that constitute the fundamental determination of the *Gemeinwesen* have been destroyed: so-called parapsychological potentialities such as telepathy as well as various types of languages such as that of the body; meanwhile, verbal language has become more and more impoverished, as it loses its universal dimension and is reduced to a code that reflects the community of capital.

Unitary communities as an integral community cannot live simply as a collection of human beings. It is necessary that between all there is a common thread, common substance, because they realise the human being and this is accessible only if each being realises in herself the *Gemeinwesen* being an irreducible element and simultaneously the mode that to the community to be realised in her, the mode she has to perceive in all its duration. This is where the difficulty that has emerged over thousands of years arises: men and women who do not know who they are, do not know what they can do, have locked themselves up in ghettos that they say are human groups, humanities, defined by distinctions that allowed others to be excluded. Thus, for the ancient Egyptians, foreigners were not human. They could be sacrificed to the gods. They were strangers because they did not live like them, determined that they were by another geography, another history, because they had developed other possibilities. Accession to the community

therefore implies a knowledge-recognition of all others, their acceptance in their diversity. Not an intellectual or spiritual gnosis but a total gnosis; knowledge must grasp the whole of being through the reunification of each being.

It is not a question of making evil disappear! The human species has also developed the possibilities of evil, often the most hideous and vilest that can be justified by any historical eschatology. Concretely this means that we cannot accept those who kill, torture, want to dominate others, etc. This refusal of the "path of evil" cannot be attained until the moment when, as Marx said in a terminology still imbued with economy: the greatest wealth for man is his fellow man.

The *Gemeinwesen* dimension can also be seen in what he called universal work, the social brain (an expression taken up by Bordiga), a social brain theorised in another form by Leroi-Gourhan in *Le geste et la parole*. We think with our own brain but also with that of the species as a summation of all the beings that surround us and have preceded us. This is why Bordiga's concept of the species is another statement of the *Gemeinwesen*.

Finally, the manner in which we are present in the world asserts itself in a kind of consciousness of being an individuality of the species and in the species. With an accession to the community, human beings will have finally found their world. Indeed, against other species that have an immediate relation between being and the world because they have a portion of the globe that is imparted to them (the famous ecological niche), man has none. Since the mutation that has thrown the biped that is to become man out of the forest, this being has been anxiously searching for a world in which she can be sure of her existence, of her reality. At the end of millennia, this quest must end by finally realising what it is in diversity of

species and in its connection to the living world; thus she will find her place in the continuum of life.

I say that the quest must end, and not that it will end because there is not a rigorous determinism that would lead to such an end, which would in fact justify the intermediate movement between the immediate community and the human community to come. No, history as a set of experiences lived by men and women can only be a fact; we can explain various futures, for example that of capital in a deterministic way, but we cannot infer a more global determinism that would concern us all, that of our realisation, finally, as human beings. When any human phenomenon occurs, it is *a posteriori* possible to find in previous events a determinism that led towards it implacably. Yet that would negate the various possibilities that have emerged and the fact that the species, currently insane, will have made the jump only in a constrained and forced manner. It is not said that this will be true; human disappearance in various forms can also be seen in the not distant future. That's why there is a must-be.

Various philosophers of history, and Marx in particular, have been reproached for having an eschatological and soteriological conception of history (the proletariat is the saviour that saves itself not as the proletariat but by becoming humanity); correlatively we can add that for the latter the "social cosmos" had a meaning (Engels added his "philosophy of nature" which was an attempt to give meaning to the cosmos in its totality). On the other hand, nowadays the "social cosmos" is considered as neutral, it does not have in itself any meaning, any sense, for example

that of becoming communism. Hence the loss of perspective and all certainty—a loss of history that cannot be compensated for by the perception of a soteriological fact buried in the social cosmos. In reality, there is only one meaning that can be individualised from the despotic community of capital: a becoming towards absurdity, to the destruction of humanity. This cannot comfort human beings and give them energy to support their situation, if not a suicidal energy. Hence the injunction: we must abandon this community and everything that it presupposes. It's the refusal of a millenary wandering.

Since the 1960s the community of capital has become increasingly intolerable to a large number of men and women, mostly young people. There has been a huge uprising of youth that is looking for the human community. It was accompanied by a host of phenomena that cannot be considered here, but which testify to breaks that are often fragmentary, but breaks with the community of capital all the same. These phenomena manifest a new sensibility that is able to perceive different alienations or injustices that had been carefully camouflaged by the various political rackets. This movement is now masked by a certain revitalisation of politics, but it is maturing in depth. Men and women must realise to what extent they can only tend to found the human community by breaking completely with the dynamics of this world and with the revolution / counter-revolution dialectic; from then on, we will break the lock that prevents creativity and inhibits the creation of a new way of life. The fear that plagues us will be abolished and we will enter our future.

EXCERPTS FROM "APOCALYPSE AND REVOLUTION"

Giorgio Cesarano, *Edizioni Dedalo* (1973)

I. Mortal Leap

"In a word: the revolution made progress, forged ahead, not by its immediate tragicomic achievements but, on the contrary, by the creation of a powerful, united counterrevolution, but the creation of an opponent in combat with whom the party of overthrow ripened into a really revolutionary party."

—K. Marx, *The Class Struggle in France from 1848 to 1850*

1.

In the last possible form of its "political" expression, the radical dialectic has already defined contemporary capital's conditions of existence as those in which capital, taken beyond its formal modes of domination thanks to the counter-revolution, presently realises, over the entire planet as over the species and the whole life of every human, the modalities of an integral colonisation of the existent. This we denote in terms of its "real domination".

"Capital, as a social mode of production, realises its real domination when it comes to replace all the social or natural presuppositions that existed before it, with its own specific forms of organisation, which mediate the submission of all physical and social life to its own needs. The essence of the *Gemeinschaft* of capital is therefore realised as organisation. In the phase of real domination, politics, as an instrument for the mediation of capital's despotism, disappears. After having used it extensively in its formal phase of domination, capital can liquidate politics when it comes, as total being [*essere totale*], to rigidly organise the life and experience of its subordinates. The rigid and

authoritarian status of the expansion of the form of equivalence in social relations (*Urtext*) becomes an elastic instrument of mediation in the sphere of business. As a consequence, the state and even 'politics' are less than ever the subject of the economy and therefore less and less capital's 'masters'. Today more than ever, capital finds its real strength in the inertia of the process that produces and reproduces its specific needs of valorisation as generally human needs" (Camatte, "Transitions").

2.

The transition process from the modes of capital's formal domination to the modes of its real domination has been entirely mediated, both in "liberal" capitalist countries and in "state" capitalist countries, by the counter-revolution. The latter has assumed this as its specific task and has totalised every "political" sense of it, definitively integrating politics with capital's modes of survival, thanks to which it is dominant. By recuperating and distorting the genuinely revolutionary drives expressed by the real movement during the first twenty years of the twentieth century, the counter-revolution objectively functioned as the mechanism of self-regulation that allowed the capitalist system to survive its own crises. It favoured and promoted the dislocation of fundamental contradictions inherent in the modes and relations of production, from the originally elementary level of productive organisation, to ever more complex and increasingly total levels. Presently, the economy dominates as much over every form of "life" organised on the planet, as over every survival of the forms in which organic life, reduced to mere "brute matter" of extractive nature or mere propellant of the social

machine, has been forced to reproduce itself as a mystified "life", the "natural" energy of the species.

3.

With the analyses of Marx and Engels, the radical dialectic inexorably defined the contradictions inherent in the modes and relations of production, indicating how capital's process of quantitative valorisation, with the irreversible growth of dead labour's domination over living labour, would have inevitably led capital—pushed, as a result of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, towards a forced increase of production—to a reckoning with its foundational limitation: having as the limit to its organic development those same productive forces that are at the root of its own organic process.

4.

In other words, capital nourishes in itself *ab initio* the logical vice—and the natural limit—of being a mode of production of the social machine which, while basing its own dynamics in process on the integration of the organic energies of the species to itself, is condemned to irreversibly fuel the increasingly autonomous growth of the machine itself. At the same time, it increasingly reduces the part of organic life integrated into the process, as the part of organic life integrated in the process is converted into an increasing accumulation of dead labour, thus the former is added, made machine, to the machine, contributing as much to its autonomisation as to its quantitative prevalence. "The increase of the productive force of labour and the greatest possible negation of necessary labour is the necessary tendency of capital, as we have seen. The transformation of the means of labour into machinery is the realisation of this tendency. In machinery, objectified labour appears as the force that dominates living labour, not only by

appropriating it, but in the real production process itself; the relation of capital as value which appropriates value-creating activity is, in fixed capital existing as machinery, posited at the same time as the relation of the use value of capital to the use value of labour power; further, the value objectified in machinery appears as a presupposition against which the value-creating power of the individual labour capacity is an infinitesimal, vanishing magnitude" (Marx, *Grundrisse*).

5.

The law of value shows that profit can only come from surplus value and at the same time that surplus value can only be extracted from living labour. The organic composition of capital would short circuit its own process of valorisation in relatively short time if the process was concretely created within an immobile level of organisation, given once and for all, both quantitatively and qualitatively invariant. Yet the history of the last one hundred and fifty years shows that capital-being is not at all what it could appear to economists—and their vulgar critics—in the first decades of its development process: the essence of the will to organise civil society separated from the overall substance of civil society; the economic-political pressure exerted by an élite of entrepreneurial power, simply engaged in a struggle for supremacy—*bellum omnium contra omnes*—as much against the past modes of organisation of the society of labour, as, within itself, of the most ingenious and the most daring (the fastest to transform and to transform themselves) against the most torpid and conservative. On the one hand, this economic-political struggle produced evidence of capital's foundational contradictions, at a level of emergence not yet mediated and rationalised; on the other, as capital's capacity to articulate itself in an increasingly organised system,

increasingly homogeneous in its substantial modes of reproduction at higher levels of valorisation, so the real essence of capital has come increasingly to overlap with, until completely coinciding with, the species' global modes of evolution. Ever more and more, capital has integrated the real essence of the organisation of survival to all its levels of manifest activity.

6.

Capital's dominant modes of development—the laws of its procession—are today legible in terms of general systems theory (but torn from the scientist's philistine "neutrality"). Capital functions as an open system that has as its limit, due to the specific contradictions inherent in its development, a tendency to close (to become autonomous, with the alternative that follows: collapse or realise a "cyclic-static" economy, "steady state"), expelling from itself its own source of organic energy, human energy, and therefore founding the premises of its self-destruction. Yet in its history, this tendency has until now been accompanied by a capacity to evade its critical point of collapse by mediating its organic combination with its "naturing" energy at a higher level of integration, there where the process has been able to find new spaces for development—without yet having managed to expel such fundamental contradictions from itself. Thus far, it has only been possible to postpone the critical point of irreversible collapse through increasingly larger spatial and ever more meagre temporal dislocations. The history of capital shows how the process has been able to grow and become autonomous thanks to an automatism typical of self-regulating systems capable of expanding past, through integration and positive feedback, a situation that is virtually closed, virtually blocked by a critical limit, towards a superior structure

that is virtually open—without, however, eliminating its tendency to closure or its critical limit, postponing collapse until that point of saturation when it would have reached the limit of any further practicable transcendence: the point at which the material contradiction and its very source of energy are confronted with such a limit.

Given the terms of such a contradiction-in-process, the collision between, on the one hand, the growth of development and devaluation and, on the other hand, the expansion of surplus populations and generalised proletarianisation, would have long ago led capital to an irreversible collapse if it had not from time to time taken, when confronted with the immanence of its final crisis, a "qualitative leap". Precisely the latter has allowed capital to elude such crises, granting the system the possibility of transcending its immediate limit in order to accede, through mediation, to a higher level of organisation, relocating its developmental thrust as much as its inherent contradictions towards a "new" spatio-temporal dimension where the limit of the crisis will re-emerge, conveniently postponed.

7.

Capital's development cannot be read as the story of a self-identical process' "horizontal" expansion (like wildfire). Rather, it is the escalation of a specific and particular society's mode of being—that of "industrial society", born of the bourgeois revolution—from its lowest degree, as an economic-political struggle let loose between classes, to its maximum degree (measurable both in the quantitative terms of its planetary expansion and the qualitative terms of its "way of life"), as the global management of the species' fate—whether capital's problematic equilibrium with the biosphere's chances of survival or the equally unlikely balance of its own way of surviving *as the human species*

with the real substance of humanity as a species. Capital has therefore been able to continue to develop—although it has never ceased to drag along the contradictions that have undermined it since its origin—thanks to a double historical availability of spaces: both territorial, economic-political in a strict sense, and existential, the political economy of life in a broad sense. Nothing better demonstrates the history of capitalist political economy's planetary colonisation, as nothing else could demonstrate the history of the economic-political colonisation of human life, than the gradual process of capitalist valorisation that has continued to make ever more broad, profound and generalised acquisitions of new levels in the organisation of the existent; in which it has introduced, with increasing acceleration, both the modes and relations of value's production—as well as the unavoidable and unresolved contradictions that inhere in valorisation. The final period we are experiencing is the period in which, having completed this teleological work to colonise as much of the territorial system as the "human system", having filled any possible residual space, having exhausted the field of "qualitative leaps" practicable in the direction of productive development expressed in terms of exponential growth, capital has come to strike against its insurmountable limits—without any further dimension of transcendence toward higher levels of organisation. At this point, the inertial force of its own growth process is the critical limit against which it must struggle. A reversal is required: a sudden shift from a mode of development that is best expressed in terms of exponential growth to a zero-growth equilibrium.

This is what the cybernetic scientists from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)—and not only them—have just confessed, with all the false "detachment" and simulated "neutral

objectivity" that characterises false scientific conscience; they add nothing new, in regards to substance, to what the radical dialectic foretold, with Marx and Engels, over a century ago: capital's inevitable course, as a mode of economic-political production, towards an irreversible self-destructive crisis.

8.

Radical dialectics must not be content to find the cybernetic confirmation of its own foresight in the MIT scientists' report. The false detachment and the simulated neutral objectivity with which they arrange the gag of the "specialist" and present, with their hand on their heart and the face of Buster Keaton, to a capital already disposed to contract an account of its errors—this could only mislead those beautiful souls immediately predisposed, by affinity of false conscience, to any new falsity. Precisely because radical critique has always known the concrete ground of the inevitable showdown, it knows how to render an instant account of all fictions, unmask actors and *mise en scène*, and while reaffirming its natural competency—natural in as much as it is has been lived—in the state of things, denounces the reign of fiction for what it really is: that of the state, now that the state is understood as the autonomous domination of the economy over the realm of appearances. Dressed in the immaculate white coat of science, the MIT authors recite the part of conscientious scholars, resolved to no longer keep silent over burning truths, whatever the cost, and to show that they have cast off any service to the dominant ideologies in order to finally serve the naked truth: they speak as if in the confessional. Yet this coat has such a worn texture that it is immediately transparent as the old livery of the master sorcerer, the same of every extermination and of every extortion, of Auschwitz (salary of bone) as

of Hiroshima (the demographic solution); of bacteriological and defoliating assaults in war (the disinfestation of life) as of the therapeutically necrotized neurotic peace (the need to live as a mental illness). If the economy's reign seems to dispose itself to self-criticism, then it is time to believe that it is not the realm of the economy that has had its time, but criticism that has entered, as a regulatory mechanism, into the service of the economy. In the robotic hands of the robot-scientists, the critique of political economy is transmitted into self-critical economics: should radical thought then leave its hide to the taxidermist?

9.

More than ever, it is now necessary to remember with Marx that capital's valorisation process is one with the development process of both the means of production and of productive forces (a contradiction that is mediated only at the price of an ever-wider and ever-deeper colonisation of ever "new" quantitative and qualitative spaces). Further, if the proletariat is the natural antagonist of capital, it is determined by its own developmental dynamic from which it is essentially inseparable, whether as active or reserve labour power or as a reservoir of exclusion, until it comes to deny itself as a class and to overturn, by negating every class, the autonomous power of the economy over life. Yet the time in which capital exercised its domination in the exclusive sphere of political economy, the time of its formal domination, has come to an end, as have the conditions of disorganic and territorially fragmentary development that capital, transcending the limits of its first crises, has left behind (1914–1945).

Thanks to a mechanism of interaction and feedback that is significant in quite another sense than that outlined by the MIT authors, capital has been

able to guarantee itself, by mediating its contradictions through a homogenisation of world markets and the liquidation of a good part of the young proletariat during the two wars, a much stronger and more widespread power to integrate the natural human community (*Gemeinwesen*); indeed, it has managed to establish itself as the hegemonic mode—the only one concretely practiced—of producing and reproducing the natural human community on the planet. As the valorisation process has as its exclusive object the autonomous survival of value beyond the limits of its crises, it integrates into itself, into the organic composition of value, the survival of the species as a crisis in the life process. It is in this phase of the integration of capital-being with the being of the species (a formal integration, as we will see later, but one that is pragmatically operative) that the counter-revolution comes into play, as a mechanism of self-regulation in the direct service of capitalist rationalisation.

10.

Two intersecting but distinct series of mediations must be distinguished in the transition phase from the formal domination to the real domination of capital. In the first exclusively economic-political structure of capital (formal domination) there could not be a counter-revolution: the proletariat as a class incubated in itself the development of a thrust that directly negated, and that was therefore immediately revolutionary, the material conditions of its very existence. The proletariat as a mass, together with an elite of intellectual deserters from the dominant bourgeoisie (but not, as will be seen, of its enlightenment culture), concurred to develop a class consciousness destined to express through insurrection the rejection of the frontal exploitation of labour-power produced and treated as

a commodity, and to protest the frontal exclusion of the proletariat from the enjoyment of wealth, of which it was itself the conscious producer. It was in this stage that the proletariat lived its forced estrangement from a world of "values" (wealth as freedom from need, equality as the division of opulence, brotherhood as emancipation from the misery that generates hatred) that were themselves handed down from the bourgeois revolution, and that appear to have been realised, that is, enjoyed, by the sole dominant class, as the intolerable price of its own labour. The subject of valorisation (the proletariat) is represented to itself as excluded from the enjoyment of values: without criticising them, it claims them, proposing itself as the historical force destined to gather its inheritance, universalising it. It is at this stage that politics has already clouded the gaze of radical dialectics, hiding the millennial truth of the identity between culture and modes of oppression, denying the right / duty to recognise that culture's valorisation process is not the "heritage" of the human race. Rather, it is the most ancient, the most ancestral, "genetic" mode of production of the human community as a social machine, in which organic life is enslaved to the preservation and development of inorganic value: it is the very metal in whose timbre the voice of power vibrates, this power to which life is subjected in the "rational" effort to supply oneself as energy. The historical task of the radical dialectic, that of liberating the species from work, can only be fulfilled on the day when it is clear in everyone's mind what is already clear in the (negated) organic body of all: the necessity of the destruction of ideology's domination, the necessary liberation from the first and most unnatural of works: the sacrifice of free organic expression to the language of having to be slaves, the capture of "natural" reason in the service of alienated

"rationality", the sale of living sense to the process of eternalising dead sense.

11.

It is in this same phase that the radical dialectic, hostage to political "rationality", represented the revolutionary proletariat as a formal party: no longer the historical party, but rather the historicised party of the abolition of classes. The point of view of the totality, which allowed Marx and Engels to grasp in its real essence the valorisation process as the negation in process of life as a natural good, is already, in the hand-to-hand struggle of political rationality with the reason of the state (the state, under capital, is always the state of things, its reason always an armed body), the point of view of the totality broken into fragments of particular spheres. If one approaches such spheres by enlarging the specific details of the struggles in course, if one gains in political optics a levantine competence of tactics, they pay for this ever closer intimacy with the ways of the enemy by losing the distancing dimension of strategy, the total competence of the stakes. The more that the spontaneous intelligence of the rejection of every condition that introduces death into life bends to the needs of survival, even of the survival to fight, the more it is transformed into the spontaneous intelligence of the enemy. Tactics are always the "reasonable" face of the counter-revolution.

12.

The Russian revolutionary explosion, while apparently projecting onto the planetary scene the triumphant (and for the bourgeoisie terrifying) spectacle of a proletariat who had come to embody its liberated subjectivity, soon put on stage, *realiter*, in the now merely fictitious forms of the revolution in power, the recuperative and substantially restorative mediation of the powerful counter-revolution. Hunted

bloodily from below, essentially capitalist modes and relations of production fall bloodily over the deluded (but not all) heads of the revolutionary proletariat, reintroduced by decree from above. The pretext—and it is here that the dazzling power of the scientific “rationality” that mediates capital appears for the first time—is that of the need to conquer, through a long process of so-called socialist “transition”, the material bases for the realisation of communism. This is not the place to perpetuate the semi-secular anti-leninist polemic, nor does it make sense to ask ourselves once again what the feasible alternatives might be: the revolutionary struggle always lives the present as the battleground between a future project linked to the fate of the species and the sum of its past defeats, which have influence only in that they indicate the traps into which the species can no longer fall. Instead, this is the place to attest how this lesson of realism was learned and made its own by international capital, to its exclusive and automatic advantage: a lesson that allowed it not to fear applying force to this world, capable of destroying its essence, until it could successfully appear as the material mode of production of every human community. Capital learned from its crises to dispose of its past in order to revive its modes of production at higher, more integral, more totalising levels of organisation. It learned to mask its own faculty of transcription by covering it with formal, spectacular transformations. It learned above all to flow as a necessary water under any flag, to take as much the form as the substance of a basic and neutral way of being, so similar to life and nature as to be able to clothe itself in appearances. Mediated through clashes in which the maximum possible amount of proletarian blood ran, capital learned to transform itself into ways of being less specific than a class and increasingly

intrinsic to a people, thus overcoming a first degree (a first level or threshold of limits) of its connatural contradictions.

13.

From that moment on, the proletariat no longer exclusively represented, in the eyes of capital, labor-power to be produced and treated like a commodity, but rather it began to appear to capital as its own people to come—no longer in the form and substance of brute matter, a mere propellant to keep alive as long as it gives strength. Rather, in form, it became the living matter of capital’s own body (social body, discrete assistant of the social brain, embodied by capital made science); in substance, the natural propellant of a process of autonomisation in which the more “naturally” capital separates itself as if from a slag, the more it shows itself capable of integrating the species profoundly and in a capillary manner into the mechanisms of the valorising machine. The process of emancipating capital from the first critical level of its development (the first level of closure of the system within its limits, with the consequent inevitable “en masse”) then passes through the fictitious emancipation of its natural antagonist, the fictitious emancipation of the proletariat enlisted in the self-responsible subjectivity of the labour process. From that moment, while capital sees in the proletariat its future people—and perceives for itself the chance to mediate its own contradictions by integrating into its “spirit”, into its own surreptitiously socialised subjectivity, the very body of the species made its own body—the proletariat dazzled by the counterrevolution sees its own future in the development of capital, transforms its intolerance into a new patience, presenting itself the historical task of carrying out at its own expense, but voluntarily, the material bases for the realisation of a neo-christian capitalism: “socialist”.

14.

The fictitious and spectacular contrast between the two blocks, East and West—in both of them, through different formal realisations, capitalist development and counter-revolution are embodied by the same dazzled subject—has for decades polarised, while followed by flowing proletarian blood, the completely ideological imagination of revolutionary “thought”, holding back theory in a grotesque fight to enlist militants under different banners of the same process. The counter-revolution mimics all the clichés of dialectics, degraded to a comedy of errors. Meanwhile, the unsatisfied need to really live and the efforts of “virtuous” labour simmers under the ashes, in the bodies of a proletariat defeated more than just in their minds (or estranged or drugged by politics), ready to explode in a vital fire as, after eighty years of latency, in the first events of 1968.

But integration has been so deep, the chain so firm, that those who appear with torches in their hand are not those who, inserted and included, obtain through their brutalised hours a salary that allow them to continue the “work of living”: as always, the defectors of the dominant “spirit” move first along with those excluded from the assembly line, voluntary escapees and the forcibly proscribed. In Paris, as everywhere in Europe, students, misfits, hippies and punks; in the USA, the same together with the “race” of the excluded, the blacks of the ghettos, the ex-slaves “redeemed” from collector of cotton to collector of trash. Starting from a rejection of the horror of non-life, these two qualities of distinct “competences” soon fraternise, both driven by being external to the hardest heart of the process: voyeurs from above, these students of social engineering (in all the faculties they are taught the skill of directing beings made to be directed); voyeurs from below, those excluded from this waste society,

which consumes them. On the one hand, the “imagination” revolts before it is co-opted; on the other, a denuded vitality revolts after having been humiliated.

15.

On the one hand, politics takes onto itself the role of mediator of the process, questioning everything except the foundations that support it, working to preserve both the suicidal development of production as well as the model of life that is the real product here; on the other hand, the strategic (“scientific”) lucidity of capital sees more clearly in front of it the threshold of a new limit that only a mortal leap will allow it to overcome. The ever closer limit of its own planetary expansion obliges capital to invent a new world, just as it is about to “finish” this world. Wars, guerrillas, national liberation campaigns, electoral brawls for the election (or capital execution) of this or that super-star—all equally fungible and functional—overlap on the screens of the glass oracles, in those fragments that mix together at the same level this weekend’s massacres, whether those of the Indians or those due to DDT; parades displaying the new quality of life, debates on this quality of life, psychodramas on the loss of this quality. In the service of a politics that swaps the critique of everything with the victory of the Nothing, fictitious and real gears, unrecognisable from one another, drag into their mechanisms, together with the bodies of an ever more abundant proletariat, the shredded image of living a real struggle, the fated illusion of fighting for a matter of life or death, while death gains ground inadvertently in everyone’s daily survival.

16.

To the increasingly accelerated clashes against its classical contradictions, capital responds elastically by miming the cries of its people, claiming for itself the causes

of this growing despair, but inverted into a voice of promise and immanent hope. In its formal domination, capital took the proud and ferocious traits of a class that had conquered power through revolution: the bourgeoisie, when it was still alive, was not ashamed to defend its rightful privileges as it could appreciate them—even just a little bit—as the good of the earth and the taste for life, and therefore defended them without questioning itself, offering itself, despite the economic-political struggles, an image in which wealth justified the price of poverty. The transition to real domination, however, leads capital to produce a politics—the new image through which it smuggles itself—that is as much more elastic and co-opting as it is more formally disposed to question, to problematise. Yet the problems of the day, in the apparent forms of an openness to the demands and needs of the people, are always capital’s problems. The people are increasingly capital in person: the people who have the vote, the people who represent themselves, the people who have the “privilege” of the word, assume without realising it the role of a puppet that speaks with the voice and covers the hands of its ventriloquist.

17. Quantity is the exclusive reign of valorisation, which consists in this: in the production of apparent qualities upstream of which always lies a given quantity of labour. Since capital limited itself to praising the quality of its commodities, the necessary time has passed in order to capture all forms of life in the commodity form, so that today we can discuss a “quality of life”—where behind every produced “life” lies a given quantity of labour, of devalorised life. This is anthropomorphic capital’s new conquest: having colonised every trait of social coexistence for value, it must reassemble beyond the explosive

threshold of its organic vices in the organic composition of capital-life; to transcribe itself from the intoxicated kingdom of commodity-waste in exteriority to the realm of survival in inwardness, all the more degraded the more it is buried and raised to a new area of the market. A macabre archaeology is called to resurrect, in the living dead, the Phoenician soul of the adventurous businessmen; but under the constellations of the flood, the dead souls cannot but trade relics: the death of desire is the general equivalent that informs all the mints of the depressive “personality”. Let the dead valorise their “life”.

VIII. Real Dialectics

“If one were only an Indian, instantly alert, and on a racing horse, leaning against the wind, kept on quivering jerkily over the quivering ground, until one shed one’s spurs, for there needed no spurs, threw away the reins, for there needed no reins, and hardly saw that the land before one was smoothly shorn heath when horse’s neck and head would be already gone.”

— F. Kafka, “The Wish to be an Indian”

119. The point of view of radical dialectics sublates politics through the same movement in which, defining the latter to be the exclusive instrument of the counter-revolution, it definitively separates itself from it.

120. If the radical dialectic has no “what is to be done” to sell on the competitive market of “alternative” ideologies, if it cannot slip into any theoretical precipitate without being disqualified as dialectics and as a qualitative point of view, it is because it knows the “concrete” as the dominant utopia’s *Champ de Mars*: it is here that

every act, realising itself in the context of organised unreality, leaves its position on the field and witnesses its own funeral glorification. But it is from here that the radical biological thrust, denying any validity—any authentic reality—to its fictitious realisations, shows itself its ability to endure beyond, to go beyond, and finally to establish itself beyond the counter-revolution. The affirmation of the biological revolution, or of qualitative subjectivity at the level of the species, can only be found where the counter-revolutionary utopia has burned all its stocks of false aims, all of its representations.

121. There is no behaviour or line of conduct that can define itself to be, as such, revolutionary. As soon as it is established as a mere stylisation of conflictuality, and therefore becomes a “work of art”, every behaviour, every line of conduct is to be placed in order of the incident as its particular accident.

122. The real movement is not a metaphysical entity, the panther of revolution lurking in an ineffable latency, but rather the very force with which revolutionary subjectivity continually exceeds (in a continuity that can only be grasped at the level of its

generalisation and of the universal) the forms of fictitious realisation, in which the organisation of non-essence [*inescenza*], that concrete pseudo-continuum, involves it without capturing but the ideological dregs, with or without the “dead” bodies of the dazzled.

123. In this sense, every form of politics which arises from even minimal conflict with the “concrete” given has in itself, inseparable from its destiny as counter-revolutionary recuperation and frustration in the fictitious, a potential push towards its own overcoming; that is, in the direction of the real movement understood as a dialectical process that guides essence to manifest itself as such beyond its partial negations.

124. From counter-revolutionary liberation movements such as those for nations, sexuality, women, students, homosexuals, ethnic minorities, drug addicts, workers, children, animals, employees and nature, can come, as in fact a day does not pass in which there does not arise, the hard-won awareness of the real stakes: the liberation of the species from ideology, the necessary overcoming of every separation, the conquest of the point of view of the totality.*

* Trans: The essential dialectic of 122 through 124 must be emphasised. Here, Cesarano critiques the limitations of existing ‘partial’ struggles at the same time as he places them as the only site of contestation. Rather than condemning them, he wants to emphasise their partiality. In *Chronicles of a Masked Ball*, this point is expressed as follows: ‘It is not a matter of *stripping* the *living* meaning from struggles that still remain prisoners of separation, but rather, by liberating them from their slavery to *dead* meaning, of

discovering what underlies them but cannot be expressed by them in its entirety and totality. The real movement is not the revolutionary army staked out and ready to pounce in ineffable latency; rather it is the living articulation, contained in the contradictions of the existing world and the deception of fictive struggles, of the eruption that transcends them without being destroyed by them, an eruption that is renewed and reinforced beyond the traps set up to capture it and hijack it.’

125.

Ultimately, the ideology of hooliganism [*teppismo*] and crime, if it actually exceeds the obsolete stylistic elements of militant politics, effects a recuperation on revolutionary subjectivity, convincing it that "criminal" and generically illegal behaviour are expressed at the level of individual choices, and instantly discharges any positive tension. As soon as one is satisfied with being the habitual transgressor of every norm, the "criminal" drowns his own project of being in a simple and caricatural disobedience to the normative as such, which therefore becomes, quite simply, the norm in negative: having in place of being. The compulsion to repetition is the miserably maniacal trait that degrades to routine, to nostalgic repetition, the actual insurrectional creativity of the coup.

126.

None of "being's options" listed above, and indeed none at all, escapes the design of what has been called a "mortal leap": every possible comportment has already been catalogued and filed in the cybernetic offices or the image production centres. If this is certain, the failure of neo-Enlightenment rationality is even more certain, the disaster of the capitalist utopia is even more certain, the one that has been summarised as the attempt to make political economy disappear by realising it in the "life" of each and of all: political economy, first-born inheritor of religious alienation.

127.

What will be revealed in the years to come as the manifest insolvency of capitalist utopia, in the apocalyptic and tragicomic spectacle of its landslide, which will shake every residual illusion from anyone who has not lost their capacity to understand in

the meantime. But the bankruptcy of this utopia—this dominant *hic et nunc*—does not in itself mean the immediate triumph of qualitative and liberated corporality. Precisely because anthropomorphised capital, through self-criticism, valorises the fictitious capital of its own becoming (an anticipated future in the economic-political utopias that capital-being subjects to the desperate project to ensure the survival of every subjectivity, in credit of life), devalorisation internally negates every particular utopia, "sublated" before being able to overcome itself as utopia, that is, before it could realise itself. And precisely as the being of the fictitious, capital, at the last stage of the autonomisation of dematerialised value, is not realised in particular utopias but rather in forms of its own general becoming (of its own utopia in process), forms that cannot be realised as substance due to the rapidity of the very process: the dynamic of the fictitious. It is in this process, and in the increasingly explosive contradiction between the domination of forms and the overcoming, in form, of their own substance, that qualitative subjectivity, the corporal substance of the species, sees its own revolutionary task fulfilled, its concrete destiny: that of realising the dialectic, pressing, with the will of the essence that clamours to be, the increasingly accelerated ruin of representations. The subjectivity of the species will separate itself only in the last ruins of political utopia. Before recognising itself as the subject of the biological revolution, the proletarian body of the species will have to free itself from all the hypotheses that communist ideologues throw on its future as the realisation of the human end, that *Gemeinschaft* in harmony with ecological codes, the latest and most coherent metamorphosis of fictitious capital into "invisibility", the mimesis of liberated life.

128.

The supreme consistency of the fictitious is that of showing itself, finally, to be perfect representation and therefore as the organisation of perfectly unreal appearances: that of ending in its definitive separation from the concrete, in its own sensitive disappearance (the fictitious is the essence of every religion). But only by manifesting itself as a substance imperious to the fictitious, therefore only by affirming itself as a subjectivity consubstantial to the organic movement of nature

"PROVOCATION"

Giorgio Cesarano, *Puzz* (1974)

The political squads of the police and the parties always want to know who we are. Since, on the contrary, we only recognise ourselves in the critique that clarifies what we are not and what we do not want; since we speak the language of those who live contradiction and non-identity; since we exist as a plural subject only on the condition of collectively experimenting our contradiction in process in the very form of its realization, at the same time as these forms are subjected to every sort of recuperation; the effort at identifying us according to a logic well-tested through two centuries of counterrevolution backfires laughably and ignobly on those who would like to imprison us in a formula, so as to deliver us that much more easily to the prison walls. "Provocateur" is the term that appears indistinguishably in the infectious prose of the regime's press, which forms a chorus with and thus unites in the same trench "democratic" journalism and the "militant" press. We accept the term, turning it on its head.

If "provocateurs" signifies men and women that do not accept the misery of

[*naturante*], to its global corporeality in process, can the species definitively emancipate itself from the domination of prosthesis, free itself from the fictitious and its religions. The biological revolution consists in the definitive inversion of the relationship that has seen, since prehistory, the corporeality of the species subject to the domination of the social machine; in the liberation of organic subjectivity; and in the irreversible "domestication" of the machine, in all its possible manners of appearing.

the political game; if it signifies informal nuclei that slip away from any schema of hierarchical rackets; if it names experiences irreducible to the precepts of "revolutionary" theory crushed by history and appropriated by the counterrevolution; if it distinguishes those who cannot put up with the interiorization of capital and who struggle against every form of self-valorisation; if it qualifies the development of a theory and a practice that refuse to be constituted as separate spheres of individual and collective life; if "provocateur" signifies all of this, today we are provocateurs! We are the provocateurs of that process of demystification that forces the police, politicians of the regime and leaders of the fictitious opposition's rackets, to unmask their substantial identity. Thus are they united against us publicly, employing the same techniques of snitching, terror, slander, using the same language and the same logic, resorting to the same wretchedness and the same trivial lies. We are the provocateurs of that process of sublation that induces sincere revolutionaries to break with their past and to

participate in the historical heights and radical tensions of the time. Who get out from the bottlenecks and of all the archaic and restrictive ideologies, in order to fuse themselves with that tendency towards the point of view of the totality that, alone, leads the critique of the actual forms of

capitalist domination to recognise the synthesis of every alienation fragmented and particular, the summa and the point of explosion of every past oppression that has already been overcome. We are and will be until the end, in sum, the provocateurs of the revolutionary process.

“GLOSSES ON HUMANISM”

Gianni Carchia, *L'erba voglio* (1977)

From the origin of bourgeois society and across the entire course of its existence, the emphasis on the human has been the price paid for the development and the autonomisation of exchange value, as well as the progressive reification of human relations. The more that capitalist dehumanisation—the ‘organic composition’ of society and individuals—has developed, so the more one begins to discover as the referent of whatever ideology—against the artificial, the fictitious and the despotic—the natural, genuine, and human. But if, according to bourgeois apologetics, the invariance of human nature was the obvious guarantee of the system of planetary exploitation, it was a fatal misunderstanding thereof that induced the proletarian movement to exalt, against capital and the injustices of the relations of production, labor and the mere development of productive forces, understood as the general equivalent of the subject and emancipated man. The same reprimand and warning that Marx offered in his *Critique of the Gotha Programme* was insufficient—in virtue of the tenacious roots of the alternative theory that, while critical, was naturalist and positive—to illustrate to the proletariat the fact that, as is so clearly written in the critique of political economy, capital and labor are poles of a single relationship and must be accepted or rejected en bloc, not

through the exaltation of one or the other. While Hegel defined and glorified the development of the essence of capitalist society as a process in which substance becomes subject, his immediate adversaries, materialists and existentialists, looked to find the true and authentic subject in the ruin of capital’s ‘automatism’. This subject, illuminated by the Hegelian dialectic, would have developed through the process of alienation and, in the end, become again, sometimes mythically, substance, human nature, only no longer counterfeit and disfigured. The human is here understood as something subterranean, a substratum temporarily lost and rediscovered in the exteriorisation of every immediate, living relation, but destined, after the pain of alienation, after the odyssey of history as ‘prehistory’ or as ‘fallen’ ‘exteriority’, to reemerge and to triumph. From here one finds the blind abandon, as certain as it is desperate, to the force of objective reason, to progress, to history. The theory that revindicates the human, in the face of its alienation and capitalisation, could carry out such an affirmation, however, only by ignoring that such corruption, far from being in contrast to any historically revealed human essence, was neither more nor less than the result of its exaltation, the extension of its natural traits, exterminating and death bearing.

It is for this reason that, once grasped down to their foundation, the humanist and anti-humanist attitudes are not, in fact, alternatives, but immediately identical. If, by whatever bitter irony, the Stalinist rapprochement of the hazy idealism expressed by both Lukács in *History and Class Consciousness* and by radical communism is true, it is because in these dangerously idealist results, you do not find the impatience of the revolutionary gesture, but an insistence on the alienation and the obscurity of the human as the cardinal point of the critique of capitalism, a common point then—the critique of fetishism and a call for the ‘lived’—to phenomenology and existentialism. Nothing is more paradoxical than the call for a supersession of alienation pursued through the return to a human subject, to make such a subject—if it were possible—more proprietary as if it were not the case that, as with anti-humanism, the final union of capitalism and barbarism wasn’t inscribed in mechanisms of generalised self-preservation, in that universally human that cancels and exterminates all that which does not reflect it. Today, finally, it has certainly become clear that the humanist referent even in its most radical variants, is nothing but the expression, albeit turned on its head, of the ‘anthropomorphosis of capital’, of the ‘death of man’. Yet the anti-humanism theorised by dominant thought, above all through structuralism—which would like, with a profound albeit involuntary irony, to replace philosophy with the ‘human sciences’—is in fact, as the ‘mimesis of death’, always directed towards the triumph of self-preservation and the subject: humanism in disguise. Neither is it comforting that here the problem of a change in thought is always expressed—as in the case of the problems of ‘decision’, ‘choice’, and ‘will’—in ultimately subjective terms. To really think in a non-humanist manner does not

mean, anyway, to think in anti-humanist terms, always despotic, arbitrary, violent: in a word, humanist. One cannot get out from the dialectic, from the evil of such a brutal history, by simply changing the sign, ‘turning it on its head’: each determinate overturning is but another confirmation. To take one’s distance from the human, from the history of the possessive subject in which unreconciled nature is preserved unrecognised does not mean to give in to, identifying oneself with the aggressor, the dehumanisation in course, to the objectivity of a linear destiny that in hindsight is seen to have been pursued by impersonal subjects.

The critique of ideology, the confrontation between reality and its ideal premises, as well as the unmasking of false consciousness and false reconciliation are today—even in the extreme form assumed by ‘critical theory’—vain in face of late-capitalist society’s absolute integration of the yearning for true appearances and the human. Culture, critique, democracy—all only have sense outside of domination and reification. But if this integration has also demonstrated that the return to significance, fullness, use value—in a word, the human—is the alibi of barbarism and that it cannot be invoked without bad conscience, the consequence to be drawn from all of this is not any abandon to the truth of the facts, to an inhuman survival. The non-human, that which remains outside of the dialectic and of the false alternative between humanism and anti-humanism, that is perhaps the utopia of thought: something that is neither in the affirmation nor the violent death of the human and appearances, but rather in their suspense and dispersal. What could be the profile of a thought that was nourished on the non-human, on the trace of that which no longer exists or does not yet exist, of the no longer, not yet human, of that which in the human is not so cruelly

subjective and natural? While its prophecy—as a limit, inquietude, promise—fed all of idealism, from the doctrine of the intelligible in Kant to the self-consciousness of absolute spirit in Hegel, even to the reign of liberty in Marx, here it still only serves the function of reparations, compensation, reintegration. Established through the pain of appearance, self-recognition, history, the non-human did not seem to ever really be free, in idealism, from its guilty and evil roots: its fulfilment had all of the characteristics, only with an inverted sign, of its odyssey.

The non-human, the radically different, would be in contrast, perhaps, a moment of opening in the gesture of taking leave from the idealist dynamic, a goodbye to the exaltation of the human carried through to the point of explosion. It would be the renunciation of the substitution of the dead god with a human that, in losing the meaning of its identity, begins to overflow according to a consuming impulse as it empties and annexes every limit, every transcendence, every infinite. It would be the refutation of the subject of

rights, of needs, of production—thus the disposition to give oneself to that which is repressed and imprisoned within and outside of oneself, welcoming it in itself and thereby taking away all of its malignant, immediate urgency. It would be—as difference—that line where the impure mix of subject and object, characteristic of the realised dialectic at its end, is dissolved, separated. Thus the non-human would be neither fallen into the movement of history, nor the immobility of myth: rather it would be history's arrest; neither the extension of the subject, nor merely its annihilation: rather its fracture; neither the exaltation of consciousness nor the formless silence of the unconscious: rather irreducible voice. To disintegrate identity, to dismantle the totality: neither because its fragments—asymmetrical and formless forced to 'go outside themselves'—have returned as contradictions, momentary engines of the destiny of the world, nor because they have been abandoned to their own blind drift, easy targets once again for the judgment of the dialectic. Rather, because they are sustained in their own non-identity.

LETTER TO *LOTTA CONTINUA*

Marisa Fiumano, *Lotta Continua* (1978)

Assigned part; ineluctable destiny. To everyone their sex and their role. But can we not at least expose the theatricality, laugh at the farce? The political scene (there is no more correct way to say this!) is packed with actors and each believes that they coincide with their script, as if the mask exhausted the subject.

My political project is to exit the habits of the scene or to know at least that I am reciting and what, and to encounter those who are acting or who desire to act otherwise. Recognizing one's own phantasms is the measure with which I believe one should measure humanity.