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"The Outside Can't Go Outside"

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Why has there been such a lot of interest in "surplus value"? I want to look at this term and how it has been inserted into contemporary art theory in the period following the credit crisis of 2007-8. What I focus on here is the notion that, as has been suggested, art's value is to be located in unpaid mental, educational and communicational labour, which can be gradually accrued and then exploited according to the logic of Karl Marx's central thesis of exploitation: surplus value. For the art world at that time it seemed necessary to define value and to seek its source. However in this process a lot of conclusions got rushed to and mistakes were made.

Some of these mistakes about what constitutes surplus value were anticipated by Marx himself, when he sarcastically wrote: "A criminal produces crimes... The criminal breaks the monotony and everyday security of bourgeois life. In this way he keeps it from stagnation, and gives rise to that uneasy tension and agility without which the spur of competition would get blunted. Thus he gives stimulus to the productive forces."¹ Marx is obviously mocking the notion of the criminal spurring these forces – in reality, he does not stimulate them.

One aspect of my series "The Opening" was to question what kind of value could be found in a painting, especially one that had been made in front of an audience at the exhibition's opening reception. After the whole series of shows I published a book of the same title.²

In this book you can find photos of the openings themselves and of myself painting the paintings. There is also a long text by Caroline Busta which explains what happened at each event and discusses what some of the references and ideas were based on and could imply. In its furthest reaching analysis it proposes the idea which I want to touch on here. She speaks of the people who came to the openings as "voluntarily instrumentalizing themselves as Carpenter's objects, allowing the artist to codify, or even exploit, their social interactions as sites of value production."³

In her analysis of the London show subtitled "Intrinsic Value", she continues: "Carpenter always suggested that The Opening would be a party. He then transparently exploited those who showed up, cultivating their unpaid surplus 'labor' so that his paintings might be said to have value – a value that would cost him nothing, and from which he would profit."⁴

In my press release for the London show, I mention this same possibility in a list of options for how the artworks which were made there could be seen as having "intrinsic value": "The guarantee of the biography of the artist? The power of the gallery? Price fixing or oligarchy? Energy stolen from the bohemians who decorate the room? Or something intrinsic to a work which evidently could be anything?"⁵ (This last because the work was painted, seemingly randomly, at the event).

So in my own book, with "*Energy stolen from the bohemians who decorate the room?*" I am setting out a possible case for this reading of the work: that there is a potential to extract "surplus value" from social relations.

These themes are taken up elsewhere by both Diedrich Diederichsen and Isabelle Graw. They are not limited to these authors however, and I think they have some wider currency in art debates recently. In Diedrich Diederichsen's short book *On (Surplus) Value in Art* from 2008 he makes some fairly extensive claims for this process. He is talking about artist-entrepreneurs who "...create *Mehrwert* [German for surplus value] to the extent that, as self-employed cultural workers, they are able to take unpaid extra time and often informal extra knowledge away from other daily activities – some of which are economic and essential for survival – and invest them in the conception, development, and production of artworks."⁶

Later he goes on to say: "...the artistic commodity not only contains the abstraction of the artist's living labor, together with all the labor previously invested in art school, nightlife, and Bohemian existence. It also contains the additional, non-artistic living labor of the artist's employees and assistants as well as that of subsidiary firms such as printer, foundries, etc. In addition, however, it further – and above all – contains the spiritual management of all these subordinate types of labor by a director, a person in charge... [who] performs intellectual labor, and a steadily growing amount of such labor, which cannot be described in detail but acquires a metaphysical index..."⁷

But in fact management is not wage labour. The manager of a corporation is a stand-in for Capital, even if she is not the owner herself. She *appears* to obtain, as Diederichsen implies, "...the profit of enterprise not as an owner, but rather as a particular type of worker – a worker responsible for the supervision and administration of the labor process."⁸ This is an illusion: to say that this person performs labour for capital is a tautology, since she is performing the role of *capital*. The artist herself performs more as a guide and a helper for capitalist bureaucracy in general and is not acting on behalf of a corporation's shareholders. But in both cases the "manager" is neither a waged labourer nor value-producing. But this notion of performing, or standing in for capital, rather than being an actual entrepreneur risking your own money, is useful.

Another German theorist, Isabelle Graw, with whom I am often associated, in her 2012 text *The Value of the Art Commodity* proposes that a post-Fordist, networked economy "...now also exploits affects, contacts and communications, which it has discovered as potential sources of additional

surplus value... and surplus value in the form of unpaid labor is also being produced when people like you and me mingle at openings, communicating and disseminating information."⁹ So she definitely contributes to the idea that this communication is actual surplus value.

However, Graw's position is more complicated: "'The Opening' series is also market-reflexive not only in the way it takes into account the transformation of the art world into a culture industry modeled on the fashion industry, but also because it demonstrates the structural relationship between luxury goods and art as commodity."¹⁰ And if art is a luxury good, it does not produce surplus value, but is a reward gained from the wages of the manager and is an extraction from surplus value produced elsewhere. So why the need to find social surplus value in a product that is acknowledged to not contain any?

My own statements in the text *The Tail That Wags the Dog* – written in LA in early 2008 for a talk at Art Center – makes similar claims while also doubting them. It is relevant for me to mention this text here because to some extent it set out the intellectual terrain on which "The Opening" series took place; and equally this text has perhaps since then been seen as a marker for what my work is about. And that is partly why I have now returned to the topic of surplus value. Anyway, from *The Tail That Wags the Dog*:

"Knowledge is not value and critique is not class struggle – but they can still be expropriated. Value can be eked out from the very critique of capital itself. And once this has happened, *fresh surplus-value is in fact created*... All cultural producers are critics, all are involved with marketing information and are thereby involved with the politics of knowledge. Information is the institution. If we – we are all critics – are the institution, then institutional critique is of ourselves and our role as value suppliers at the margins of a huge cultural industry."¹¹

So I too made grand claims for the creation of surplus value at that time. Nevertheless, in this text are very serious doubts as to where, how, and whether this extraction of surplus value happens. Firstly that:

"Art is a luxury good, so it is not creating value in the Marxist sense, i.e. not extorting the surplus-value from workers which feeds the productive cycle. It does not add much in other words."¹²

Secondly, I also rename this surplus value "primitive accumulation," and like Isabelle Graw in the above quoted text, point out that it may well be some other capitalist, perhaps in a slightly different sector, rather than the artist or information producer themselves, who would profit. I would not now follow the primitive accumulation line of inquiry, but this process of allocation to someone else is even more important.

I also stated in 2008: "I have to admit this thought process has made me acknowledge that I do not really grasp the issues here, which has been genuinely quite unsettling."¹³ I now believe that I can place this unsettled feeling which in fact has persisted for several years. It comes from holding on

to two totally contradictory positions. On the one side that knowledge produces surplus value in art, on the other that art is non-productive labour and contains no surplus value.

So as long as there is something at stake in Marxism, there is something at stake in the concept of surplus value, and that is why I am returning to it. Even for Antonio Negri it is "the ridge of the *Grundrisse*".¹⁴ Surplus value's limit, the reason why it cannot contain elements such as nightlife and criminality, is the same limit that makes capitalism tend toward recurrent crisis.

Marx proposes that only productive labour, not any other labour, produces surplus value. In *Theories of Surplus Value* (the proposed as Volume IV of *Capital*) he states: "Only labour which is directly transformed into capital is productive."¹⁵ Within the capitalist mode of production, surplus value, defined as the portion of the working day which is not recompensed to the worker but expropriated by the capitalist, is the only source of value. Productive labour occurs when capital is not *spent* but *advanced* for valorization in the process of production. This where a wage labourer is directly employed by a capitalist. He goes on to elaborate that "production of surplus value [is] to be clearly distinguished from its transfer...".¹⁶ This transfer process I will argue is what characterises the actual role of cultural production. Whereas some processes attached to the commodity are productive, others are not: "...a distinction must be made between the costs of the productive activities that increase the use value and value of the product and thus a continuation of the production process during circulation and pure costs of circulation that do not add to the use value and therefore not to the value of the product...".¹⁷

It is worth noting his warning that productive labour is not the same as useful production: "...only bourgeois narrow-mindedness... can confuse the question of what is productive labour from the standpoint of capital with the question of what is productive in general."¹⁸ There is nothing worthy about productive labour, it is not an expression of use but exchange. It is a highly destructive limit and "productive work" was a Nazi concept.¹⁹ Art, knowledge, communication, and fun can be "productive", but within this current mode of production, we do not define what is productive. It is defined by capital. The only thing that is productive for capital is its own self-valorisation, its own realisation as capital, by directly employing wage-labourers to work for more hours than they are paid for (and, though this is not stressed in *Theories of Surplus Value*, ultimately only in those sectors that *reproduce* the productive part of the economy, which I return to later on). All surplus value, and all of the capitalists' profit, comes from their unpaid labour. "The distinction from other kinds of labor is... of the greatest importance, since this distinction expresses precisely the form of the labor on which the whole capitalist mode of production and capital itself is based."²⁰

It is not these "other kinds of labour" that lend value to the capitalist commodity. It is direct investment in machines, materials, and labour by the capitalist, with only the human labour producing the surplus value. Other forms of so-called surplus value are not capable of this transformation since they are not exchanged directly for capital, and do not return directly to the

capitalist as profit. Only the wage labourer is within the capitalist cycle. Not his schoolteacher, his old friend, or someone attending one of my openings. "The actual process of appropriation takes place only in the actual production process,"²¹ in whatever virtual or material realm this is located.

Further to this: "... the mere exchange of money for labour does not make the latter productive labour, and on the other hand the content of this labour at first makes no difference."²² And an example from the education sector: "If I buy the service of a teacher... then these costs of education, just as the costs of my maintenance, belong to the costs of production of my labour-power. But the particular utility of this service alters nothing in the economic relation; it is not a relation in which I transform money into capital, or by which the... teacher, transforms me into his capitalist..."²³

Even if the teacher is employed by a capitalist in a for-profit school and is therefore a wage labourer, the knowledge transfer is a non-productive transaction and its content is irrelevant. But beyond this, the surplus value itself expropriated by the school's owner is only a deduction from total costs of circulation. This may increase surplus value elsewhere: he is at least a waged labourer. The teacher's situation explains the position of the art worker, whether assistant or museum guard: "The fact that unproductive laborers perform surplus *labor* and are therefore also exploited does not contribute to surplus *value*, though the exploitation of the unproductive laborers diminishes the deduction from surplus value."²⁴ The wages of unproductive labourers are paid by the surplus value of productive labourers, and so is everything else.

The self-employed knowledge worker, meanwhile, appears to be a producer of surplus value but is closer to being a management advisor or a feudal knight.

Clearly there are vast amounts of liquidity sloshing around the world, but the transfer of surplus value around the circulation system, however intricately developed, is still to be clearly distinguished from its creation. As Marx says: "It is clear enough that the mass of money capital which the money dealers operate with is the circulating money capital of the merchants and industrialists, and that the operations the money dealers perform are simply the operations of the merchants and industrialists mediated by the former. It is equally clear that their profit is simply a deduction from surplus value, since they are dealing with only values already realized."²⁵ And here we must locate the activities of the art market, dealing with transfers and deductions from value, not production of value. Even if the artwork itself contains a certain "value", this value becomes a deduction when considered as part of the social relation of capitalist valorisation.

As well as this, there is a difference between capital, and revenue, which then buys some other labour "...productive labour is only that which is exchanged against capital; never labour which is exchanged with revenue as such."²⁶ In the art world, the collector pays out of their savings account, out of past revenue. They lose their hard-earned money. As Graw suggested, they are buying luxury goods.

Despite society's seeming complexity it is not non-productive labour that structures, but productive labour. "The price at which the unproductive worker works is set by the productive worker."²⁷ It is surplus value as a whole which drives the economy and this emerges from the productive sphere. The entire edifice of pointless luxury and art must be tightly related to the limits to capitalist wealth creation and the fact that productive sector wages need to be held down to the costs of reproduction of labour power. How this might affect the non-productive and cultural (contemporary art) spheres? Here I start to see an alternate explanation for the functioning of the knowledge, social and internet based economy. It is the very failure of communicational sectors such as the art world to expropriate productive labour which produces the need for them as exchange and management slave drones.

In this reversion to Marx's own categories I'm going against an already well-established challenge which has been made to this view of productive labour. One good example is Antonio Negri:

"... the definition of productive labour... is a *heavily reductive definition* in the literal form it assumes... it is invalidated by an objectivist, atomised and fetishist consideration of the theory of value..."²⁸

I respond to this by saying that the form it assumes might have to change but the content does not, otherwise we risk depoliticising the Marxist project, which is exactly where Negri's discourse lead to in his later work with Michael Hardt. There is a natural tendency to assume that Marx must be outdated, and that his law of value is as antiquated as the 18th Century Physiocrats' view that all wealth came from the land. But the immaterial as such is not a fundamentally new type of labour productive of surplus value. Both mental and immaterial labour are just as productive as physical or material labour in Marx.

These arguments have already been challenged to different ends by Maurizio Lazzarato: "It seems to me that my friends in cognitive capitalism are mistaken when they make "knowledge" the origin of valorization and exploitation... it is but one mechanism, one type of activity, one site of power relations..."²⁹ It could quite reasonably be suggested that Marx's idea of a "general intellect," from which the social as surplus value is ultimately derived, was more of a hope against the odds of an emerging communist reality than a description of his capitalist present.³⁰ But this emerging communism is still separated from us by a giant, ever-widening chasm. The reality has been way more stubborn than Marx might have imagined. Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen probably reflected the views of many contemporary Marxists when he recently wrote: "No doubt a spreading out of valorisation has occurred in the last three decades, and yes, it has become more collective, but it does not take place automatically in the social body."³¹

This conclusion is posed here against the tendency set out in recent years by me, Caroline Busta, Diedrich Diederichsen, Isabelle Graw and others. Yet this is only a course correction within what is actually an advanced debate. In

Isabelle Graw's excellent book "High Price" I am mentioned as an artist who is "market reflexive".³² Market reflexivity is a development of institutional critique which takes capitalism as an immanent given with no outside, and is a position, if I understand it correctly, that I support and am attempting to expand a little in this talk.

Reading Marx has been a starting point. One key was realising that it was Adam Smith himself, not Marx, who defined productive labour (in its mature form, not in the reductive definition of material/immaterial labour that Smith later lapsed into, and Marx is still often incorrectly assumed to uphold). This information is found in *Theories of Surplus Value*.

It is in this book that Marx speaks about "...*vendible commodities*, such as books, paintings, in a word, all artistic products which are distinct from the artistic performance...". These commodities represent a "...*transitional form to capitalist production*...", where, in his more specific example "...artistic producers..." work as sub-contracted "hacks", "...for the collective trading capital of the book-trade..." but external to the "capitalist mode of production proper." And "The fact that the exploitation of labor is at its highest precisely in these transitional forms in no way alters the case."³³ Yet despite this we artists do not of course exit capitalism and must still be market reflexive and critical Marxists: "...all spheres of material production – the production of material wealth – are (formally or really) subordinated to the logic of capitalist production."³⁴ Knowledge speaks for someone else: "In a social order dominated by capitalist production, even the non-capitalist producer is dominated by capitalist ways of thinking."³⁵

In *The Tail That Wags the Dog*, written before the credit crisis took its more dramatic effect, I guessed that the crash would not destroy the art market but create a desire for "intrinsic value" in the form of knowledge and critique. The crash did not destroy the art business, though it did gouge out the middle of it, leaving heightened speculation in both the emerging artist and in the "intrinsic"/high value market. It also did create a hunger for knowledge. However this is not a surplus value created by discourse. It is the absence of inherent surplus value which gives communication technologies such as Facebook the appearance of value creation. It is the knowledge of who to gamble on, an "...art purged of history as an ideal object of reinvestment...".³⁶ This might be ultimately bullshit but it must be got right – it does depend a little bit on criticality and more knowledge than ever before. But it is not value itself, nor does it supply the truth, it is instrumentalised knowledge. So this is the "knowledge economy": not quite as thrilling as was promised. Increments of profit are here no longer increments of art's own surplus value, but increments of the influence of power nodes of the cultural sector, a world of "advisors", grouped tangentially, almost randomly around distant productive labour. So the question becomes how to supply this kind of information.

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The above thoughts were set out at the end of 2013 for a talk at USC Roski in LA. I was wrestling with this issue because it seemed like an unmoveable blockage at the time. But looking at it again a year and a half later the mood has changed and it is almost hard to remember why I and others were so convinced that the social sphere produced this surplus value. Perhaps we hoped the art was somehow worthy of the kind of prices attached to it! More seriously maybe it was a plea to save knowledge production; "look what they are doing with our anger – turning it into the substance of value." I now disagree with such a transubstantiation but support the idea that anger is turned to other ends.

I gradually began to realise that the knowledge or communication worker is not a producer of surplus value, but a "slave drone" assigning information about how to allocate resources to maximise surplus value. Her primary role is therefore as capitalist controller, and this is the argument on which the rest of this talk rests. This is the logical end point of defining knowledge as surplus value.

Marx said of capitalist control: "...in form it is purely despotic."³⁷ And as with the relative autonomy of the cultural worker, so with the post-Fordist workplace in general: "...the consequences of this autonomy for employees are usually just as destructive as the old despotic forms, except that this destruction is now self-organised."³⁸ Writers at e-flux or DIS, for example, far from producing cultural capital misunderstood as actual value, produce a "surplus value" that is in fact *control value* to structure authoritarian capitalism.

I have given this the name "control value" in a sketchy way to refer to a notional "value" given to sorting information. This assignation process works in many ways. It could create role models for subservience to capital, or mentor industries around which productive or non-productive wage labour can happen at the margins by pushing creative technology toward the market. Or it could be about dropping casual tips for speculative investments to keep capital ticking over as it awaits further productive use. Criminals, police, lawyers, artists, academics, bohemians, and so on, may prepare the ground for the exploitation of human labour by unwitting research into more specialised, socialised and efficient public or private circulation, enabling more rapid turnover and reducing deductions from surplus value without ever coming into contact with it. Or this may simply be about enabling physical repression by security services, finding the lines of least resistance for such entities through the averaging mechanisms of networks.

The control value assigner does in a sense work with value and there is no visible difference between this value and surplus value, just a key theoretical difference. Control value is not value, but because it is in relation to value we can sympathise that the line separating them has become blurred. And this is not to say that these DIS self-curators are particularly effective at assigning value, they are probably in most cases feeble in the extreme and their actual intentions anyway disappear into thin air.

It sounds depressing but this cultural worker is the lieutenant of a control regime. As soon as non-capitalist or anti-capitalist material is simplistically laid out within a totalised capitalist world, there is a structural necessity for control to be its only functioning register. When it is known that the intellectual, in the production of knowledge, produces no surplus value, but is this junior officer, then you can see what responsibility she has to persist in redefining what knowledge is. And this new distinction, the use of knowledge, can only be made in the light of this problem, that the knowledge is control.

Lo! Strangely quickly a secondary problematic opens up. Because cognitive capital is not value, but a mechanism of control, it then becomes necessary to start to define the parameters of that control regime. We are now on a different axis whereby capital is not an inclusive, greedy kind of whole, but a negative and more strictly limited totality. Now we are scrabbling about on the side of a cliff trying to seek purchase; and at this point, because collectively-produced knowledge is not recuperable as value but only as evil side effect, the thought process necessarily turns to how anything other than capitalist value can relate to value. Any further action in such a regime would rely upon the definition of this relation.

Capitalism can be described as a limit: that only productive labour operating in a violently circumscribed systemic totality is able to increase value. This *law of value* flattens the nature of reality. For the purposes of elaborating my hypothesis that seeming social surplus value is actually authoritarian control, I here counterpose this flat plane of "value" to the only thing that I can imagine being outside it – a mere dream, an imaginary, or to put it in slightly more substantial terms, a "trance". So, value counterposed to trance. This idea of trance derived from William Blake is the location of revolutionary desires. There is no outside of value, only a virtual trance-like status: for instance what we have traditionally called the left imaginary, the non- or anti-capitalist. It has no formal or effective existence at all. The trance non-outside is non-productive and does not directly signify for value. For capital it only ultimately exists in terms of how it can assign value: control is all that emerges.

The politics of the trance is a common endeavour, in the sense of being a "proletarian" endeavour. It is made by the collective worker; it is not bourgeois error, or there would be no distinction to be made between value and trance. The trance *is* "other", the problem is that it is not there. Paradoxically, to prevent this "outside" becoming just a decorative capitalist fantasy like a video game – and thus an assignable space – one has to *refuse* it its status as reality rather than reinforcing it. This is not the trance of surrealism, or of psychoanalysis, where what is imaginary is considered equally real; but one simultaneously more full and empty. It is totally non-existent, and yet because it negatively relates in a structural way to capitalist existence is also more important than these older definitions, and in that sense perhaps even more substantial.

Capital creates a virtual border, and beyond it lies an imaginary that is non-capitalist in a formal way but also functions for capital. The "outside" is not proposed here as a physical location; there is an outside inside the body in

the same imaginary way, but it would be more appropriate to call it a line of control within. As we are disciplined we are slammed into the real of labour – an outside which is manifested inwardly. Writers and artists often pretend that inside of the body will form a horizon of resistance or look for ways of applying cyber-technical fixes like democracy by Google implant. What I see on this line is a conditioned gulf, a petty-bourgeois obstruction, rather than a space of hope. This dividing line gets stronger as it spirals in.

The proposed structure is of "trance x value", with the "x" signifying a virtual border between them. This structure is not random, it allows us to start to answer the question immediately thrown up by the conundrum of "control value"; of *where* then to articulate without assigning control.

The articulation of these two opposing poles is mainly prompted by their misuse, where the "x" between them is like a car crash. Any instantaneous, uncontrolled lurch between value and trance could be called a "crash". This metaphor is posed so as to suggest the control value when, for example, the cultural producer's left projects instantly and disastrously assign resources for the circulation of capital, leaving behind a wreck of what was intended. So this way round – and there equally could be a crash from value to trance – it is the process of crashing back to value/existence that is the problem. While it is still pure trance the outside does not assign value. But all immediate, unmediated transfers of information crash; they create a kind of "friction", the massive heat generated by various negative assignment affects of an overly enthusiastic politics. Friction can be the trance straightforwardly translated and used in the value sector, sold or bureaucratized by value. This abusive translation/assignment process is fascistic.

As soon as the crash between trance and value is spoken about then one starts to look for alternatives. Is there a trance non-translation which is non-fascistic? The freedom that can happen within the dream landscape of trance is only articulable through a specific negativity, a negative narrative. A positive or straightforward binary narrative would be control value. For example the narratives offered by most networks on and offline are tantamount to bullying, as networks allocate control by default. Furthermore in a context of control value the trance cannot allow a re-introducing of contents, a dropping in of solutions, or analytical exceptions – no dream posed simply as surrealist dream. We are all by now half aware that the call of the "outside" is a call of capital. To stop re-enacting this catch 22 it is necessary to excavate the crash.

It is a bit far fetched but maybe the solution to this crash could be some kind of "uncrashing". A crash happens in a flash and can only be reviewed later: we look inside the crashing car, in ultra slow motion. What would happen during such an "uncrashing" is a transfer of information in reverse. In specialist car repair shops serious crash damage can be pulled out by a hydraulic ram at incredibly slow speed, so long as the ram is pulling from the same point and in the precise opposite direction as the initial impact. In this case the car could be conceived of as being able to be reassembled like Lego, with sections of bodywork and chassis that just bolt together. It does not

matter if this process does not exist in any particular case. Inside the "x" is now an imaginary time and a constructed real, a compossible relativism on the face of a totality. Time runs forwards and backwards in this black mirror of the outside. An example of this is the "flash crash" on the US stock market of 6th May 2010. Huge losses happened within milliseconds, with just the machines buying and selling. This event was considered so serious that it has been analysed over several years: slowed down a million times to see what happened *inside the flash crash*.

If, historically, this immediate transfer of information is a car crash, then, as thought experiment, does one pull out the damage to rebuild an apparently new car? Or alternatively replace the whole idea of having a car with something else, a kind of mute placeholder for its previous function? These two options might be effectively the same. In both cases, instead of instant transfer between value and trance there would have to be considered and self-conscious movements up and down the levels of the "reality" through which they crashed. So eventually no repair and no replacement, but rather make a diagram of this articulation of arbitrations. And here we are inching away from the art world toward suggestions for an immanent political practice.

To specify these things more precisely it is worth checking out Fernando Zalamea's book *Synthetic Philosophy of Contemporary Mathematics*. He examines the philosophical implications of mathematical theory from the last few decades. A convenient notation for some of the mathematical models which Zalamea explores is *transit*, and one that is helpful in looking deeper at the model "trance x value" and how you would more successfully move from one realm to the other avoiding friction. He talks about "...sophisticated technical transits...",³⁹ "...a complex intermediary hierarchy that forcibly structures both the genetic transits (going up) and the specific observations (going down)."⁴⁰ Loosely speaking, according to our problem we could translate this as recognition of the control function and an ability to step into the crash and track its movements.

Zalamea looks at the mathematician Alexander Grothendieck, who examines "hidden germs of structuration."⁴¹ These "...structures appear in the phenomenological spectrum of the world, and so they are discovered – but these are discoveries that can only be made by inventing, in an almost synchronic dialectic, adequate *representations* of the structures in question." As we move between discovery and representation, here compared to the relation between trance and value, each side can only appear on the other side via a stand-in. It only appears in the trance once it has been notated in value: there is no trance possible without some kind of hyperabstract meta-value placeholder standing in value and thus casting a shadow on the imaginary side. And as we have seen, trance only appears if it is not "used" by value. Both must be pre-presented on the other side to appear at all. Both sides are necessary, in a temporary yet unified intermediary which transcends them.

Zalamea talks about "*ascent and descent*,"⁴² by which he means pure theoretical model interacting with experimental actualisations, in both

directions. This slipping between levels also allows one "...to collate the particular within wider relational universes... [using] strange combinatorial invariants...".⁴³ In such a transit a negative spectrum is collated: a new and artificial spectrum to deal with the relation between the particular instance and the whole.⁴⁴ None of this would work without specificity: "At no point is generalization carried out without adequate particularizations in mind...".⁴⁵

The invariant is a pattern of double images whereby an abstract capacity for transit is mapped out. And only then could one start to speak of what is really happening "out there" without falling into the mystifications of value: "...a genetic entity *combines* its implicit definability within a horizon of possibility with its explicit concretization, so as to project its abstract capacity for transit onto the concrete panorama of impositions that it encounters (in the hierarchies of the actual)."⁴⁶ The transition between levels precedes here the local conditions of value, or of trance: "...questions concerning an absolute 'what' or 'where'... in a word of 'ideas' or in a 'real' physical world, for example... are poorly posed questions."⁴⁷ There is no actual location between theory and application, only what Zalamea refers to as "processes of transit," consisting of defined groups of structures which correlate to other groups. These objects within webs are themselves webs: "webs of contradistinction."⁴⁸

This is similar to Marx's method. However there is also a key difference here to a Marxist approach. This mathematical universe leaves aside the violent effects of exchange. Zalamea is published by Sequence/Urbanomic, and some of the speculative philosophers in this milieu believe that a "relational canopy"⁴⁹ is spread over the world. But for Marxists this relational net is a value net. Contemporary mathematical theory has so far been used most successfully by the financial industry. Accelerationists celebrate this and want to work directly with mathematics to get out of capitalist contradiction.⁵⁰ I would suggest that is impossible and am attempting to distort this philosophy.

Robert Pfaller's Lacanian approach offers some other tools for trying to uncrash trance x value in his book *On the Pleasure Principle in Culture*. In Pfaller's structure of perversion, there is also an "x": "here comes everything which is directed against x, there comes x."⁵¹ There is always a doubling in psychoanalysis so this is a good analogy: "...something new must appear on this side of the boundary. On the one hand, this new thing must appear in the 'counter' position, and act as a defence against that which has been substituted. On the other hand, this something new... must now be connected with what was substituted."⁵² What is this connection? "This feature [or connection] is the threshold that separates the substitute from what is being substituted – or symbolizes their separation. Everything that appears in front of the threshold is assumed to be the substitute; everything that lies behind it is taken to be what is substituted."⁵³

There is not exactly a structure in-between, but a threshold. From a political perspective, where nothing can be achieved in the value realm, because it is

a capitalist totality, and nothing can be achieved in the trance realm, because it does not exist except as control, this is potentially powerful. It allows for a kind of agency through deviation or perversion: "If symbolic spaces have been delineated by a threshold, *perversion* can arbitrarily move objects and acts that are ascribed to these spaces back and forth. The forbidden acts and objects remain possible and accessible to perverts as long as they are located only in the space where they are not forbidden. Thresholds here prove to be thresholds that facilitate something. While places are fixed through thresholds, *objects and acts* can be brought into motion by *displacement*."⁵⁴

In this sense threshold making: "...is infinitely more real than any other reality".⁵⁵ What has seemed unsolvable since the triumph of neo-liberalism and the failure of anti-globalist/ Occupy models is here given a suggestion or trace of a solution. A kind of motion in value or trance is weirdly possible so long as it is initiated, in a coded way, only on the opposite plane; the separation is encoded in symbol. Significant, because the possibility of substitute registers is a new way of defining political "action".

William Lawvere, a mathematician who tried to reformalise Grothendieck's theories, also uses such a displacement, a "play of skeletons". Through what he calls a "descending functor" – let's call it a model working as catalyst – "...in two linked movements of oscillation... two *skeletal* counterpoints appear (in 'positive' and 'negative')... the category is *set free* by this back-and-forth... the skeletons (positive and negative), together with the descending functor, form a 'unity and identity of opposites,' in which what appears as contradictorally fused on one *level* can be separated and distinguished on another."⁵⁶ As with Pfaller, this model is an indetermination that allows a movement: so long as something appears on the other level, it can have an effect. Dancing skeletons create mirror images of other skeletons to unlock doors; the movements are the unlocking. And without this mirroring you would not even know what was on each side, because you can only see one side through the other side's hieroglyph of it: "The processes of weaving, the progressive freeing of objects, the contraposition of opposite skeletons allows us to stand at a distance, decant the objects, and look on with *other eyes*."⁵⁷ To see from both sides, to see "...an extensive spectrum of the intermediate...", to see exchange relations at work.⁵⁸

All this sounds needlessly complex, but it is actually about making simplifications, referred to here as "robust skeletons",⁵⁹ which are "...*invariant* skeletons persisting through functional weavings."⁶⁰ This transit model is not necessarily complex. "The emergence of *simple ideas* after very *lengthy experimentations* and the transit through mental objects which represent *intermediate steps*..."⁶¹ Nothing can be articulated without this transit through mental objects, in a parallel to levels of abstraction found in Marx. The necessity of this process is only made more apparent by the fact that we are now in a permanent digital archive: everything is stuck together, recordable, related together in a cascade of control tiers. To work on this by intersecting averages to find another average could be described as forming *archetypes*; finding "...structural forms of transit... leads to the recognition of a series of archetypes... in the depths of the mathematical continuum, from which many

other partial forms, deriving from the archetype, are extracted through representational 'cuts'.⁶² Once the archetype or threshold is in place it is possible to decode the relevant connections made in various local contexts, those beyond their superficial relevance.

Yet these are only invariants, not permanent structures anchored in any ground: "An 'internal' accumulation of neighborhoods can indicate an orientation without having to invoke an 'external' entity that would represent a supposed 'end point'..."⁶³ This resistance to ground is close to the critical left communist, or Communitisation, tradition. But the lack of an end point does not exhaust the depth of the archetype: "...if there is not an absolute 'truth', external to the network, there nevertheless exist multiple gradations of *relevance* of correctness, approximation and illumination *inside* the network."⁶⁴ And inside this space obstructions help find new paths to second order networks. Instead of erroneous approximations being made, errors are laid out, as they vibrate on each side of this *danse macabre*.

Though mathematics and physics have often been challenged for piling up unverifiable theories, for me the very absurdity of these ideas makes them quite useable. In this space the invention of a language precedes the need to produce a model, which itself precedes the need to do things: "...we are thus confronted with archetypal *synthetico-geometrical* structures that are discovered through the invention of analytico-logical languages."⁶⁵ A bizarre new geometry starts to form: "...a *proto-geometry* [which] *necessarily precedes a logic*."⁶⁶

There is an urgency about finding bridges to these proto-geometries. After the loss of an outside everything goes into starker definition. No pre-capitalist worlds are possible, only a post-capitalist second order. We can relate this to Marx: in capitalist valorisation, abstract labour is realised in crystal form. "As crystals of this social substance, which is common to them all, they are... commodity values."⁶⁷ This is because they are new entities, totally divorced by exchange from their origin in a specific work practice. This abstract crystal does not automatically contain Negri's potential of the multitude, but requires a lot of work to put it in motion through an equally abstract crystal archetype.

In the various strands of the far left there has been an long-standing debate opposing spontaneity to organisation. An example of organisation is the Leninist party, of spontaneity, a sudden mass strike; and this stale debate is somewhat related to the even staler duo of theory vs. practice. But inescapably this contradiction comes up as soon as you start to think about revolution.

On the trance level, spontaneity is organisation. And in the tradition of Rosa Luxemburg they are the same: spontaneity will itself produce a new communist organisation. While that is fundamentally true it has seemed a dead end as an explanation of how to understand the process. Organisational memory becomes control, both in terms of past organisational structure being used to assign control value, and in the sense that any and all new organisational content quickly tends to become an obstruction to revolutionary

movement. On the other hand free spontaneity itself is equally short-termist, You can't say it is only a trance, the trance cannot be presented as trance, only as value. You also can't define exactly what comes from the trance as this would make it frictional control. But in my proposed hypothesis spontaneity could result in an organisation that endures.

One way I suggest is through the specificity found on both sides of trance x value. In modeling, "...agents should attempt to diagnose only situation-specific problems... try to gather non-local information but only to the extent that it can be exploited locally."⁶⁸ What is global in value can mirror the local in trance, and vice versa: a non-localised trance skeleton mirrors a specific on the plane of capital. One can now justify the use of generalisation by a specificity and vice versa. This balance avoids a specific usage becoming instantly reversed into its control function (as when a new political organisation is colonised by more "experienced" actors), because the global element that would reverse it is prefigured. Even basic decisions are "...a metaphorical counterpoint between the articulated and the simple...".⁶⁹

A second path would be what the slightly over-positivistic assemblage theorist Manuel DeLanda has called *genetic drift* in evolving systems, by which he means "...a series of changes that are neutral in fitness... [to the task at hand and so] ...invisible to selection pressures."⁷⁰ The solution is not pre-given as a solution, it happens because it is not meant to be one. A certain kind of machine (perhaps one like class struggle that auto-erases its past forms) drifts into the right configuration and there is a sudden ping-ponging of freedom on two registers. A functional archetype emerges from a situation of chaos. But what is important is that because of the way it emerged the only information needed to reproduce this organisation is the map of connections between levels, not in any sense the persons or the content it refers to in that particular case; "...all that is stored is a configuration of connection strengths... that given the right situation, can recreate the original pattern of activity... a set of properties that give an assemblage... the capacity to produce the prototype."⁷¹ This prototype of connection strengths undermines the binary of spontaneity and organisation. So long as the content is separated from the organisational structure the prototypical combination should be not threatened with instant defeat. Indeed the averaging of contents and hence ability to overcome obstructions was once a guide for the connection to establish and so can be again. The content is now abandoned except as example of connection, an "...internalization of the external diagram."⁷² This sufficiently reflects and transforms the initially depressing condition that value can only register control, and not contents: here contents become typical, and as such are a guide for organisation.

However the pairing of mathematical model and its relation to actuality is not, if I am being honest, that comparable to the pairing "trance x value". These latter are not "levels" but diametric opposites, and shifting into these categories is only a metaphor, because value is a totality and trance does not

exist. Trance is more a like a projection than a theoretical assemblage, and the economic exchange relation named value is not a tangible reality or verifiable subject. However this borne in mind I feel that these two different dualities can be brought in proximity to each other, because when related they offer solutions.

But by elaborating a dialectical procedure like "transit" derived from science I have put myself dangerously close to supporting speculative realism. To be very clear what I mean, I would add the following reservations to my experimental use of this information.

There is as little point doing pure philosophy in the political situation we face as there is doing pure art. Nevertheless full credit to the speculative realists for ending philosophy in an attempt to recreate it. There is a necessity for their artificial paradises, themselves a distant subset of class struggle, to make themselves into examples of things like themselves for the benefit of another level of artifice, which itself is put into motion by class struggle. As Andrew Cole recently wrote: "To adopt such a philosophy, no questions asked, is fantasy...", but this is still useable information: "...to identify such philosophy as the metaphysics of capitalism is *theory*...".⁷³

For Quentin Meillassoux, in *After Finitude* the non-contradictory is turned into the aleatory, allowing this contingency to become "anti-correlationist" fact; the contingent itself becomes a new absolute. But Meillassoux's removal of contradiction is Heideggeresque in the worst sense when he speaks of "... a world that gives itself to us as indifferent, in being what it is, to whether it is given or not."⁷⁴ A new absolute is formed and a task has definitely taken place: the useful task of redefining philosophical contradiction by removing dead post-structuralist pseudo-contradictions. Meillassoux in a sense gets this non-contradictory contingency ready for a process of transit. Chiming in with Zalamea's use of mathematics he alludes to "...the series of alephs, or the series of transfinite cardinals."⁷⁵ This conservative philosophy provides clues for a theoretical preparation of archetypes for the next wave of insurrection, or thereby is its pre-effectuation. We can agree with him when he says "...the most powerful conception of the incalculable and unpredictable event is provided by a thinking that *continues to be* mathematical – rather than one which is artistic, poetic, or religious,"⁷⁶ avoiding art's scary attachment to hope, subjective transformation, and other outmoded formations.

But I disagree with Meillassoux. Against speculative realism I think that contradiction comes back, because class war has never gone away. Speculative realism implies that the law of value has somehow ended, but actually it is very much still a given fact. Meillassoux legitimates a misuse of the trance on both a political and cultural level. His conclusions give a bogus infinity and thus certainty back to bourgeois managers and the State. I would also argue that this kind of math-absolutism, because it lacks a political contextualisation process, encourages post human career strategies such as data-mining, idea theft and next level curating.

And despite proximities, Fernando Zalamea's "...correlative archael structures..."⁷⁷ seem to have little to do with Meillassoux's anti-correlationism, or with Graham Harman's objects. Their speculative realist entities produce the opposite ontological shift to the one that they wanted. By claiming to find "objects" they created objects which were clearly not objects. And after this false insistence on objects, objects can never become objects again, they will be so even less than before. Instead, in the bad infinity of capitalist conflict the scrambled "objects" are scrabbling on the cliff face of the limit of surplus value.

Michael Heinrich's 2003 book on Marx has taken me a next step beyond this speculative dead end, because rather than refetishising such objects he fleshes out an extra level of social abstraction, as described in *Capital* Volume III.⁷⁸ This allows more confidence about where to draw lines.

In *Capital* Volume I Marx famously set out a first layer of abstraction whereby exchange-value voids the use-value of commodities: "...not the satisfaction of wants, but the *valorization of capital* is the *immediate* goal of production."⁷⁹ All human relationships are mediated by exchange. The previously mentioned *crystals of abstract labour* are realised *only in exchange*, and they are cut off from their source.

This already abstracted relation hovers within another abstracted relation in Volume III: the law of value functions across the whole economy in reproducing the capitalist system. Capitalism is a unity of production and circulation as it mediates the process of social reproduction, and this totality forms the norm around which the local exchange mediations occur. It is Capital that is the subject of this process; the various flows of money – into both production and other investments – all balance each other like water finding its level. For Michael Heinrich, "Exchange does not produce value, but rather mediates this relation *to the total labor of society*."⁸⁰ This implies that each commodity exchange actually exchanges with their average value system-wide. When seen more broadly, there is no causal connection between how much surplus value capitalists can extract from their own workers and the amount of profit they make. The rate of profit reaches an average, it is same for every capitalist in every branch of production. "Due to the competition between capitalists, the increasing supply in the branches with initially high rates of profit will on the one hand lead to decreasing sales prices and ultimately declining profit rates, whereas on the other hand the declining supply in the branches with initially low rates of profit leads to a rise in prices and ultimately increasing rates of profit. The different rates of profit equalize into an *average* or *general* rate of profit."⁸¹

It goes against common sense, and it is not the best known part of Marx's theory, but without taking into account this second level of exchange only a highly distorted image is possible.

This goes for surplus value as well: there is no local measure of surplus value; "...a general rate of profit means nothing other than a redistribution of the total social surplus value." The particular instance of local surplus value is just as

insignificant as use-value is for capital: "...in fact average profit is also dependent upon surplus value: not the surplus value of the *individual* unit of capital, but rather from the surplus value produced in the economy as a whole...".⁸²

Neither the individual firm's profit nor how much unpaid labour is exploited from particular groups of workers make any difference at all. The *rate* of profit and the *rate* of surplus value are already set for every capitalist and every worker. Even producers in less capitalistically developed sectors operate within the context of the most advanced production and through the centralisation of exchange they act entirely according to its logic. Furthermore it is not the case that local exchange relations are being brought into wider abstract exchange, as a chronological reading of *Capital* might imply, but that really subsumed bodies are already at play all over: "...exchange is not merely the socialization of commodity producers, but the association of *capitalist* commodity producers."⁸³ If we start from an already internalised condition it is easier to see that that local instances of surplus value extraction were never that significant. Instead what Marx defines as the *general prices of production* relate to a *general rate of surplus value* which pre-shapes social relationships in productive, non-productive (and reproductive) labour. The rate of surplus value is a division and averaging of exploitation. The surplus value itself is only measured at the level of total social capital.

The content of an individual action can no longer be distinguished from its social form. The knowledge worker as unintentional manager serves to allocate value for the whole economy and her local effort of mediation is swept away: "...exchange is determined by the relationship of an individual capital to the total social capital."⁸⁴ In this two pronged alienation it is not just that one's own communication is used to assign local values, it is that it is already a crystal of control value in relation to a tightly delimited totality. This does not mean that tiny bits of non-productive labour become value; it means that tiny bits of atomised control are *ordering* pre-crystallised surplus value. Not recognising this change of levels has eviscerated the ability to effect anything. It is impossible to posit what a single action even is unless we are already on the general level; but this level is not accessible just by saying it is general, but through an active geometry of transit. "Only after capital is depicted as the unity of production and circulation are we at the point where we can deal with the fundamental properties of empirically existing individual capitals."⁸⁵

Circulation, "communication", finance, and so on, are not outside this process: both production and circulation are subject to the same hardened law of value: "Circulation time and working time cut across each other's paths and both *appear* to determine surplus value in the same way."⁸⁶ They do not in fact both produce value, but circulation *appears* to do so, and in value terms, that is *all* it ever does.

Because of this we must hold on even tighter to the difference between productive and non-productive labour, even as capital does its utmost to mystify their roles, inasmuch as both appear to create value. This is because

the crucial limit that I mentioned in the first part of the talk, that surplus value emerges only from productive labour is not less but even more determining once we consider the unity of production and circulation in the self-reproduction of the capitalist system. The cycles of value creation cannot just multiply willy-nilly; when one takes a step back to consider their reproduction, the rate at which this can occur is determined by wages.

Labour itself is the only significant commodity for the valorisation of value, but strictly in relation to the cost of its own reproduction: "the value of any commodity – and thus also of the commodities which capital consists of – is determined not by the necessary labour-time that it itself contains, but by the socially necessary labour-time required for its reproduction."⁸⁷ That is, system reproduction is only possible according to a strict limit on wage levels – to the minimum it takes to keep the worker alive and her lifeworld intact. "The restriction of the value of labor-power to the costs of reproduction is a functional necessity of capitalism..."⁸⁸ because if the worker were paid any more she would accrue other property and not be forced to submit to sell her only property, labour.

Each time one speaks about surplus value, and therefore profit, one is actually talking about a very limited possibility of profit in relation to wages, because that is the only source of buying power. Since the rate of surplus value is in this way limited by the ability of society to reproduce itself, capitalist society has an inherent tendency to crisis: "the possibility of interruption and therefore of crisis is inherent to the mediation of the social circulation of matter through money."⁸⁹

But this does not mean we are in a terminal situation. These crises may get worse and working conditions may too, but credit crises are "value revolutions" and perform a useful service. Before a crisis there is an overproduction of commodities and overaccumulation of capital. Wages are not sufficient to constitute final demand. So "...a potentially unlimited production confronts a limited consumption..." and a capitalist crisis ensues.⁹⁰ Production now stagnates, invested capital is wiped out, and wages decline. This period of cleansing returns to profit those corporations who have survived. Many have bought production facilities at fire sale prices, but more importantly they are now legitimised to use any means to rebuild further profits, as we have seen in the recent austerity period.

When it comes to creating this crisis, finance and credit are often seen as the culprit. But despite being a preposterous encumbrance to support a disgusting system, there is a need for finance here. Money has to be put aside to speed circulation. "The existence of the credit system makes it possible... for the total social capital to accumulate more than just the profits of the previous period."⁹¹ Besides, all that money "invested" is only awaiting further productive activity as it can retain no long term value outside of valorisation, and it exists only in relation to it. The growth of credit is not in itself a sign of capitalist instability.

The loss of jobs due to automation is also not necessarily a cause of long term decline. As Marx says "machinery is no more an economic category than the ox which draws the plough... the way in which machinery is utilized is totally distinct from the machinery itself."⁹² Likewise computers and robots do not do away with wage labour. There is no particular scale for capital: the lower proportion of workers used in any particular operation is easily countered by a proportionally rising total volume of production. Surplus value can also rise as profits fall, or fall as they rise, through changes in inputs of capital, meaning despite less labour, still more profits.⁹³ According to Michael Heinrich's research (inspired by the New Marx Reading of Hans-Georg Backhaus), there is no long term tendency for the rate of profit to fall, as Marx himself had prophesied: "...The fact that increasingly less labor must be expended in the process of producing a single commodity, is not regarded in *Capital* as a tendency toward collapse but as the foundation for the production of relative surplus value."⁹⁴ The only fundamental *addition* to value comes through relative surplus value, or the reduction, through productivity, of the prices of the commodities needed by the worker for her life, and thus a reduction in wages and an indirect increase in the rate of surplus value. In other words a productivity gain enables an expansion of valorisation globally, which might easily outweigh the loss of waged labour in that particular sector.

In this sense this final underlying abstraction of the limited nature of reproduction, and the role of relative surplus value, is also a wake up call. Against many on the left it is theoretically and practically vital to grasp that capitalism does not implode due to crisis, debt, or unemployment. "Marx speaks of 'barriers' of the capitalist mode of production, but not in the sense of a temporal end."⁹⁵ Actually the system persists with increasingly unpleasant intensity. There is an overall limit to value, yet this limited totality is not subject to inherent self-destruction.

To criticise this theory of the collapse of capitalism "...means in no way to defend capitalism. Such a critic just aims to fight against capitalism without illusions that rest on badly founded theories."⁹⁶ If you started with less misguided, rather more coldly calculated theories, you could perhaps go beyond a reliance on a basically capitalist revolutionary practice. Crisis leads to action leads to crisis, so if you are just changing things within capital then don't bother: better to sit around being lazy until there is something worth doing. What is missing is not militancy but Marxist theory.⁹⁷

Because this tightly delimited totality expropriates value according to system-wide averages, it is also a global control relation. It is a structural given that people operate against their good intentions when they operate "outside"; and this crystallises into control, and must be because it already is, and can only be, as it emerges into the law of value considered as the reproduction of surplus value. This necessity and destruction drops us into a far more sinister universe than when the cultural worker's cognitive capital was presumed to be appropriated. The plausible and often heard idea that there remain "others" who are "outside" is less true than ever; these others are precisely suffering *within* capital, and they are actually not just suffering, they are obliterated.

Once you reach this weird point in thinking there is no alternative to re-theorising theory and practice in a wider frame – discounting for a second the possibility that such thoughts are Debordian resignation. Another trajectory must step in, perhaps even more traditionally Marxist in the sense that it refuses easy solutions of any kind. This trajectory could be a constitutive model of exchange that diagrams semi-fixed relationships, not one that is simply the sum of a set of transactions. First current structural relation, then specific control transaction in every case. And since each action is already a control transaction within this wider abstraction, then a further transaction, transit, a further displacement of control, must be necessary for it to in any way even index the intention it had to begin with.

In the course of developing such a strategy things go very slowly; for Marx "...developments of such magnitude twenty years are [no] more than a day - though later on days may come again in which twenty years are embodied."⁹⁸ What is implied here is that when the shit hits the fan, when the revolution starts, a very rapid change awaits because of this endless preparation.

From the other end of thinking, Martin Heidegger's way out of this double bind was "...not to think something else... to think the same thing, but otherwise."⁹⁹ Faced with the urge to act in the now while the crisis is hot, he seems to suggest entering into deeper time, the time of the slow motion uncrashing video. Heidegger called for an undetermined and timeless anticipation. "Through his resolute openness, man does not only live *in* time, he lives time itself; he experiences its unavailable truth."¹⁰⁰ This is about not being placed wrongly, being in a state of vigilance for the instant of responsibility, for the revolutionary moment: "If man tries by means of chronological computations or content-oriented characterizations to define the inaccessible event, which suddenly bursts onto the scene, the event on which his life is based, he then eliminates that which should determine his life..."¹⁰¹

This kind of radical thinking "...excludes anticipation and every appropriation."¹⁰² This is an anticipation for which the word anticipation is too strong. It cannot be represented in value, this is a wordless speech, a trance world.

Yet Heidegger fails to understand the value plane at all, and as such is unable to emplace any equivalent on it. This is a rightist manifestation of the danger of left essentialism, and of course some of Heidegger's concepts such as "authentic existence" and "pure decision"¹⁰³ take this false crossing or one-sidedness to its furthest extreme, into a philosophical "Vernichtung" (extermination). A party member, he was also an active Nazi theorist and was a professor up to 1945. Heidegger later tried to distance himself from this but "...he did not break with Nazism... he continued to feed on it in an occult way, like a fire smouldering beneath the ashes."¹⁰⁴

Heidegger is said to have experienced a "Kehre", a "turn", in the late 1940s. This "Kehre" pointed out an "other beginning" prior to all Greek Philosophy. But in his 2005 book Emmanuel Faye finds evidence for the fact that, in the 30s, Nazism was this new start, an escape from Western metaphysics into German racial identity. After the war Heidegger claimed that it was Nazism that was the end point of metaphysics, and his turn was conveniently made to seem like an anti-Nazi change of heart. But "...'the other beginning' is already present, and it is essentially a Nazi theme...".¹⁰⁵

This is interesting because the "other beginning" had an enormous impact on the intellectuals of the cold war: Derrida and Deleuze, Paul de Man, Althusser, Foucault, and Sartre. Heidegger's philosophy is a far-right mistranslation of the post-human element in Marx, with a direct effect on post-structuralism. A few years after this "Kehre" an opening was created in the anti-communist left which led to the philosophical foundations of contemporary art. All that is poorly-defined in art of the past fifty years is that in false "Kehre", a spark lit from Derrida's accommodation with Heidegger's Nazi substrates.

Contemporary artists are drones. There is no hope in curated politics, in connectivity, or in critique in and of itself. The problem with an exceptional artist like John Knight is that because he is an exception, the last bastion of institutional critique, this is a guidance system *for the market*. It is not that the critical message of institutional critique is any kind of problem, in fact the content that it has is irrelevant – it is that this element, whether critique or not, marks itself as an outside. Finally, anything at all that is not value itself will indirectly assign value. In a similar fashion to Heidegger's "call which still calls, whatever it says,"¹⁰⁶ anything that does not concern itself with money is potentially fascism. Heidegger made a philosophy out of Nazism; these days we have a corrupted "art theory" of authoritarian capital. In dated pseudo-outsidings we find the core of art's use by oligarchic groups for control of the ideological sphere. Tentatively I would even say that, through these misunderstandings, *contemporary art is the manipulation of politics by capital* – contemporary art's abuse of the anti-capitalist can easily go hand in hand with a PR offensive advocating the militarisation of public space.¹⁰⁷

In this sense the speculative realist rejection of post-structuralist pseudo-contradiction is extremely useful for clearing the way to arguments more adequate to the movements of today, via the deeper abstraction of a Marxist theory of contradiction.

For example anti-Semitism itself is only comprehensible through *Capital* Volume III. As mentioned earlier, it is a myth that credit is the enemy of the "real economy", in fact both rent and interest are reliant upon surplus value. In Marx, "...interest is only an expression of the valorization of capital, the exploitation of labor-power.... [but] this antagonism is no longer visible, because capital is interest-bearing as property, outside of the production process."¹⁰⁸ This invisibility of the role of surplus value creates the illusion that it is the evil bankers or by extension Jewish conspirators that are to blame.

But even more ironically, Heidegger the anti-Semite derived the seemingly absolute originality of his work to an existing Jewish tradition of thought, which

was "...probably transmitted to him without his ever saying anything about it, perhaps without his ever knowing anything about it."¹⁰⁹ His ideas of awaiting a call are already present in the interpretations of the Talmud and Midrash. Marlène Zarader calls this "Hebraic Time... the site in which all of time is destined to me in the modality of unity."¹¹⁰ She discovers "...*the already historical character of what Heidegger presented as the pre-originary.*"¹¹¹

In this "already-historical" we see a trace of another kind of quasi-psychoanalytic displacement. If we are claiming a revolutionary space for it, then it might be worth considering the history of this supposed anticipation beyond anticipation, in this case the old Jewish interpretations. In order to make trance into a text, to contextualise trance to the point where it is not trance any more but a perceptible affect, it would be necessary to find the barcode of the outside, the historical itself as "other" to trance, through its functional weavings with value. To unspool a reading of the genesis of, and therefore the non-violent use of trance, to trace trance as anticipation "...within history, not on its margins...".¹¹²

Maurizio Lazzarato sees a similar dialectic, in debt. For him debt is the appropriation of the future by capital. Life becomes the paying back of time: "...money as capital preempts the future."¹¹³ So, as for Zarader, anticipation is already something like a "pre-anticipation". Helped by a definition of value which explains its grinding inevitability, it might be interesting to find a relation to an *anticipated* anticipation. As long as we are in capitalism we do know the future, and this could be an advantage.

Implied in all this is that there some subject following these contradictions, someone to decode capitalism. Who is this revolutionary subject? Well, for Friedrich Engels "...the emancipation of the working class must be achieved by the working class itself."¹¹⁴

However there is a problem in assuming that the working class does this, as this category is problematic in its traditional form. Working class movements, movements at the point of production, are significant. But it is a trap to allow working class consciousness to guide one's perceptions because it does not relate to current economic exploitation but a defunct class-consciousness embedded in capital. Strikes, wildcat strikes, even general strikes, are not wider revolutionary phenomena. The idea that the strike is "outside" is already capitalist. Organised labour contains a desire to make concessions: "the rationality of their behavior is always a sort of rationality *within the framework set by commodity production.*"¹¹⁵ The State guarantees the reproduction of labour, welfare measures "...safeguard the existence of workers in a manner consistent with capitalism, namely as *wage-laborers.*"¹¹⁶

Despite these problems, still "it was believed that one could discover the 'revolutionary subject' by means of an analytical determination of the proletariat."¹¹⁷ The temptation was that this worker-subject could actually

explain to us how to act by a sort of inner truth of work. However labour is not a given quality with an intrinsic value but a specific valorising "...*application* of labor-power."¹¹⁸ The worker does not embody the future through her work: as was already noted by Karl Korsch in the 1920s this is a wider definitional process: "...*intellectual* struggle in the ideological field cannot be replaced or eliminated by the social movement of the proletariat alone, or by its social and political movements combined."¹¹⁹ Another "revolutionary subject" is needed. For a start it is necessary lose the work/non-work separation, following on from the abstract nature of labour itself. Despite the centrality of wage labour in the creation of value, the worker has a relation not just to work itself, but to a value relation which is shared by "... all forms of social consciousness...".¹²⁰

Of course this move could once have been described as reformist by communists, for whom there is a continuous sense of guilt that one is not dealing directly with the "real" struggle happening in the workplace, or the street. And this talk does feel a bit like the *immanent* discourse typical of a bourgeois critique, which always stops short of class struggle. But this accusation of reformism may come from the same "outside" that polices capital – it itself could be the *rappel à l'ordre* – and thereby actually *deny* the very self-critical element that Marx found in the proletariat. A wider proletariat, or collective worker, will self-critically define itself as "revolutionary subject", one in an interrogative mode about the class basis of its class formation, a group inwardly re-classifying itself through struggle. Marx anyway called for not the equalisation of classes but abolition of classes.¹²¹

I would not support workerist class-consciousness for these reasons, but would propose looking at the reconstitution of class struggle. Class struggle is the structuring element of history. Financial bubbles are formed through class struggle, as is the suffering they accompany: "the poverty of the masses is 'planned'...".¹²² Marx defined revolutionary action as action "...arising out of the class struggle itself...", and this holds true.¹²³ This includes theoretical practice, which does not escape class struggle, it *is* class struggle, it emerges from it and permeates it. This struggle forms the entire escarpment of ideology and meaning; it is the "x" through which theoretician and proletarian weave a web of functors, located on the inner mobius strip of capitalist versus communist control, between spontaneity and organisation. It finds expression in the workplace, but it is also traced through human flesh.

Marx, by staying *within* capital, and *within* value, sustains a state of pure trance. Operating in trance is finding models of transit inside value itself, leaving the form in a trance state by changing all of the contents as the level flips. Emplacing codes on this register is "action". The revolution cannot appear as revolution unless it is pre-emplaced as value distortion. Here theory and practice arbitrate and mediate each other and neither has a priority. There is no difference here between abstraction effects and reality effects.

But what are usually offered are suicidally hasty "quasi-Marxist" positions which do not do any of this. After the even more suicidal failures that he experienced in the early twentieth century, Karl Korsch suggested an "...*application of the materialist conception of history to the materialist*

conception of history itself."¹²⁴ This means applying the materialist method to any such near-Marxism whose shallow economic critique throws an authoritarian shadow.

Whilst theoretical work can become as much a material form of control as State sanctioned workerism, it can also be a re-ordering of control. If in a first order exchange intention is voided into control function, then, logically, capital can leverage that control into a second layer of abstraction, a *rate of control value* by moving each local element to another quantum location, and assigning levels of assignment in a kind of "credit system" of controllers. There are some possibilities here, because by atomising control value, and by spreading itself this thin, capitalism can reveal its control techniques at times of stress, and this creates opportunities to get control back under control by using this control to influence control value. For example, by constantly sexing up the image of revolution – for profit – while similar events brew in real life, *Hunger Games* shows how worn capitalism's "shock absorbers" have become.¹²⁵

I think it's OK to start to use politics again, allowing some outside contents in, but now only against themselves. Pseudo-contents can more effectively displace control than an empty space, which only connotes capitalist value. This would be a new content added that absurdises and scrambles into hieroglyphs the underlying intent. This satire made of deceptively similar material works like a diversion – beyond simple imitation, appropriation, parody, or dated irony as weak negation. There is nothing wrong with using false conclusions for correct purposes, as long as this is clearly marked with an indelible trace: "...a peculiar inscription doubles the erasure."¹²⁶ Conditions evacuated from use-value create a responsibility to not say what you mean. Instead there is a diversionary and non-explanatory escalation of fake allegorical critiques which "... can be 'glued together,'"¹²⁷ to cross over between the planes, the mark on the value plane being bizarre enough to remap the trance.

This is an *artificial* approach to the outside, seeking the most advanced forms, as there is anyway no way back to earlier ways of thinking. Out of this artificial politics comes another anger which can self-generate despite the failure of capitalism to collapse. This might appear a bit compromised and "business", but any more direct ethical articulation than this must be recognised as control: the real use-values themselves only exist in a parallel universe. There are no ethics outside the artificial control of control, and there is something even more artificial about using the *natural* to make a plastic ethics: "...in the philosophy of advanced mathematics, the imbrication of fragments of both realism and idealism is not only possible but *necessary*..."¹²⁸ Fragments of former values are re-issued, and posed naturalness appears when the new threshold has been indisputably established. An example might be an emulated analogue world, a non-quantum island, where the left *is* on the left. This perverted Solaris reality fragment can be set adrift using "extremely subtle calculations..."¹²⁹

Beyond this are the emptying, simplifying, and generalising properties of cynicism. Techniques even more manipulative than the enemy's could be a means of establishing a collective decision making process or consensus. In fact, what seems right wing, like a self-consciously evil organising within the trance or clumsy exaggeration of value, can be much more effective than honesty. This cynicism is better than a slow accretion of failed rebellions into accidental cynicism. In a book published in 2015 Peter Pomerantsev, a dubious neo-con journalist, writes about the Russian activist of today who is both "...valiant protester and Machiavellian playing one clan off against the other," a kind of cynical manager in the service of revolution.¹³⁰ I am not suggesting anyone should celebrate this example, but with this kind of knowledge a far more effective contact with and use of existing left and other organisations could be initiated.

At the risk of directly saying what I mean, I suggest that the new revolutionary subject might be *new groups*, forming inside existing groups. Despite the fact that the late 00s affinity group as such may be discredited, it seems logical that groups are still the model; new alliances whether of individuals or theoretical models: "...groups – and their associated geometries – thus help us classify the deep forms of logic...",¹³¹ "...whether on the level of their logical representations, tied to well defined archetypes of proof, or on the level of their structural correlations, tied to great spectra of regularity/singularity in domains of transit/obstruction."¹³² Group formation itself is the definitional process of political action. Old groups become reactionary as soon as the new groups emerge, yet the old group still tries to reassert itself within the new. Since this is the case, group formation, and the network breaking that goes along with it, *is itself* action: burst the bubble, get rid of fake agreement, bring down the group immediately, in the name of solidarity: "...the 'solidarity' of the proletariat is everywhere realised in different party groupings which carry on life and death feuds with each other...".¹³³ If "The revolution must be made with solidarity...",¹³⁴ then a non-accommodative solidarity is the *negation* of solidarity: these splits are the discovery of the new group in the old group. Marx, contrary to recent Accelerationist calls for unity, encouraged splits.¹³⁵ He also regarded himself and Engels as the group – in fact they were alone and invented their own language: "We had received our appointment as representatives of the proletarian party from nobody *but ourselves*."¹³⁶ This is not theory versus practice as it is has now become; it is more like the simultaneous, interwoven and continuous group construction at the time of the First International. From group formation as action you can work out the connections between actors in neighbouring groups, locating parallel struggles – maps of common groups, maps of types of groups – or groups that imply another kind of group, whether legitimised or not, and form meta groups against control networks, in a re-ordering of class struggle.

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