

### Coming Way Far-Away from Would-Be Ecomonics : The Outsidedness of Logics : The Production of Subjectivity : From the Transindividual to the Commons

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**Coming Way Far-Away From Would-Be Economics :  
The Outsidedness of Logics**

**Nagahara Research Project**

# Coming Way Far-Away From Would-Be Economics: The Outsidedness of Logics

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## Introduction & Acknowledgements

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なお、収録した論文の引用および転載は禁止する。

The current conjuncture is marked by a fundamental impasse in terms of how to engage the question of politics. This is in part due to the fact that the various figures through which one engages with politics, the citizen, worker, or militant, have become exhausted of their meaning; the citizen has been replaced by the interest group, the worker by the investor in his or her own human capital, and the militant by the terrorist. As Alain Badiou writes:

This political subject has gone under various names. He used to be referred to as a ‘citizen,’ certainly not in the sense of the elector or town councilor, but in the sense of the Jacobin of 1793. He used to be called ‘professional revolutionary.’ He used to be called ‘grassroots militant.’ We seem to be living in a time when his name is suspended, a time when we must find a new name for him.<sup>20</sup>

Rather than work in the direction that Badiou supposes, finding a new name for the political subject, I would like to focus in this essay on the “production of subjectivity.” The “production of subjectivity,” the way which he which human beings are constituted as subjects, through structures of language and power, such a philosophical perspective is often seen as tantamount to a denial of political agency altogether, to the assertion that everything is an effect of power, that agency and action cannot exist. What I would like to propose is that far from being a theoretical dead end for politics the production of subjectivity is the condition for its renewal. It is only by examining the way in which subjectivity is produced that it is possible to understand how subjectivity might be produced otherwise, ultimately transforming itself, turning a passive condition into an active process. The connection between work and politics that lies at the root of the Marxist project remains as valid as ever, but production needs to be expanded beyond the factory floor to include the production of subjectivity.

As a philosophical perspective, or line of inquiry, “the production of subjectivity” is fundamentally disorientating, primarily because it forces us to treat something considered to be originary as produced, the cause and origin of actions as an effect of prior productions. The perspective cuts through the established binaries of philosophical thought, mingling effects with causes, material conditions with interior states, and objects with subjects. As an initial gesture of orientation I proposes that the production of subjectivity can at least be provisionally defined along two axes: that of base and superstructure and that of structure and subject. Rather than understand the work of Marx through the oft-cited figure of base and superstructure, in which the production of things and the reproduction of subjectivity are each given their place and degree of effectivity according to a hierarchical structure, it is perhaps more interesting to view his work through the intersection of a mode of production and a mode of subjection. This assertion gets its textual support through the multiple places where Marx addresses the prehistory of capitalism, the breakdown of feudalism and previous modes of production. It is not enough for capitalism to constitute itself economically, to exploit the flows of wealth and labor, but it must constitute itself subjectively as well, develop the desires and habits necessary for it to perpetuate itself.<sup>21</sup> As Marx writes: “The advance of capitalist production develops a working class which by education[*Erziehung*], tradition, and habit[*Gewohnheit*] looks upon the requirements of that mode of production as self evident natural laws.”<sup>22</sup> Thus the production of

<sup>20</sup> Alain Badiou *Metapolitics*. Trans. J. Barker (New York: Verso, 2005) pg. 102.

<sup>21</sup> Both of these axes are developed at greater length in my *The Micro-Politics of Capital: Marx and the Prehistory of Capitalism* (Albany: SUNY, 2003).

<sup>22</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume I*. trans. Ben Fowkes. (New York: Penguin,

subjectivity demands that two facets of social reality, that of the constitution of ideas and desires and that of the production of things, must be thought of not as hierarchically structured with respect to each other, but fully immanent, taking place at the same time, and within the same sites. This is not to say, however, that the “production of subjectivity” is a pure subjection; subjectivity is not simply an effect of the economic structure, without its own specific causality and effects, effects that are even antagonistic to the demands of the economic structure. This combination of subjection and subjectivity can be understood by focusing on the two senses of the phrase, “the production of subjectivity,” as the simultaneous non-identity of the manner in which subjectivity is *produced* and the manner in which subjectivity is *productive*, not just in terms of value or wealth, but its general capacity to produce effects. The subject is at one and the same time an effect of the structure and in excess of its place. This can be seen to make-up the antagonistic logic of Marx’s *Capital*, from the discussion of the labor process to the struggle over the working day, at each step the subjects that capital produces, through training, education, and habit, produce a surplus of subjectivity, of desires and needs, that struggle against the very site of their constitution. As Marx famously wrote, “Men make history but they do not make it just as they please.” Finally, I should say, in a point that will be returned to, that there is admittedly an ambiguity with respect to the temporality, and historicity of this assertion regarding the simultaneous identity and non-identity of the mode of production and the production of subjectivity; as a concept it can be traced through all of Marx’s writings, appearing most strongly in the periods where the epochal transformations (from pre-capitalism to capitalism are addressed), but, as a problem, its particular provocation stems from the current conjuncture, from attempts to grasp the present according to the reality of real subsumption, in which it becomes increasingly difficult to draw the dividing line between culture and economy.

### ***From Gattungswesen to Transindividuality***

I have recapped these two aspects somewhat briefly only to introduce two other problems introduced by the production of subjectivity: namely, the relation of the individual to society and political subjectification. It is in relation to these problems that we see the difficulty of this orientation, its challenge to the existing ways of thinking, and its promise, its capacity to reorient thought. These two problems, that of a social ontology and politics, would at first glance appear to be not only distinct but distant from each other: the first being speculative and the second practical. However, they are inseparable, linked by the difficulty of imagining and envisioning forms of collectivity: a task that requires the creation of new modes of thought and the destruction of an individualistic ontology. (The burden of this individualist ontology has weighed down theories of the production and constitution of subjectivity: imagining the production of subjectivity as an individualistic project of aesthetic self-fashioning or ironic distance from the conditions of production). Starting from the production of subjectivity means that first the subject, the individual, must be seen as produced, as an effect, thus the individual cannot be privileged as a given, as the irreducible basis of ontology, epistemology, and politics. Furthermore maintaining both senses of the genitive, that is the simultaneous non-identity of the way in which subjectivity is productive and produced, means that the subject can also not simply be seen simply as an effect of society. Thus, the two ways of understanding the relation between the individual and society, either starting from individuals as a given and understanding society as nothing more than the sum total of individuals, or, starting from society and seeing individuals as nothing more than effects of a larger structure, are barred from the outset. As Etienne Balibar has argued, these two conceptions, which could be named individualism and holism (or organicism), constitute much of the thought of the problem of society and the individual in western philosophy.<sup>23</sup> Thus, the political problem and the

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1977) pg. 899

<sup>23</sup>

Etienne Balibar, *Spinoza: From Individuality to Transindividuality* (Rijnsburg: Eburon, 1997) pg. 6

ontological problem prove to be if not the same at least similar; in each case it is a matter of thinking beyond the opposition of the individual and society, of moving beyond these starting points to grasp the productive nexus from which both individualities and collectivities emerge.

Marx's thought occasionally attempts to break with both of these options. I say occasionally because despite the fact that we could argue that Marx's implied social ontology is consistently opposed to both a methodological individualism and a holism of the organic or functionalist variety, Marx only explicitly argues against these perspectives in those occasional moments where he reflects on his fundamental philosophical orientation. While Marx's most sustained criticism was mobilized against the idea of the atomistic individual, that formed the basis of the "Robinsonades" of political economy, he also argued that presentations of the collective, such as spirit, the state, or even the population, were abstractions if considered apart from their constituent relations and divisions.<sup>24</sup> At the core of Marx's critique of political economy, from the early texts on alienation to *Capital*, is the idea that capital exploits not just individuals, but the generic and pre-individual conditions of subjectivity, what Marx referred to as species-being [*Gattungswesen*]. However, for reasons that more historical than philosophical, Marx considered this generic essence to be first and foremost one of labor, and labor understood specifically as the production of things through the work of the body and hands. Labor is the common, in part because it encompasses the biological basis of subjectivity, a sphere of material need constituting a biological individual prior to social or psychic individuation. Labor is not simply an anthropological constant, defining man's metabolic relation with nature however, it encompasses skills, tools, and knowledge that are the products of history and social relations. Labor is mankind's inescapable relation with nature and its constitution of a second nature. Labor constitutes and is constituted by habits, practices, and operational schema that traverse individuals, making up a social relation and a shared reservoir of knowledge. Marx's clearest statement regarding capitalism's exploitation of the collective conditions of subjectivity is in the chapter in *Capital* on cooperation. As Marx argues, when a large number of people are assemble in one place, such as a factory, the sum total of their productive activity exceeds that of the work of the same number of isolated individuals. As Marx writes, "When the worker co-operates in a planned way with others, he strips off the fetters of his individuality, and develops the capabilities of this species."<sup>25</sup> Exploitation is not of the individual, the alienation of what is proper to the individual, but is the appropriation of that which is improper, and only exists in relation.

Despite the fact that Marx places this exploitation of the collective conditions of subjectivity at the center of *Capital*, he does not theoretically develop its conditions. Marx is in many respects quite nominalist regarding the cause of this social surplus; the reason why a group working together is necessarily greater than the sum of its parts.

As Marx writes:

Whether the combined working day, in a given case, acquires this increased productivity because it heightens the mechanical force of labor, or extends its sphere of action over a greater space, or contracts the field of production relatively to the scale of production, or at the critical moment sets large masses of labor to work, or excited rivalry between individuals and raises their animal spirits, or impresses on the similar operations carried on by a number of men the stamp of continuity and many-sidedness, or performs different operations simultaneously, or economizes the means of production by use in common...whichever of these is the cause of the increase, the special productive power of the combined working day, is under all circumstances, the social productive power of labor, or the productive power of social

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<sup>24</sup> Both of these points can be found in the "1857 Introduction" published in the *Grundrisse*.

<sup>25</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital* pg. 447.

labor. This power arises from cooperation itself. When the worker co-operates in a planned way with others, he strips off the fetters of his individuality, and develops the capabilities of this species [*Gattungsvermögen*].<sup>26</sup>

Marx enumerates all of the possible causes, from animal spirits to mass conformity, remaining equally open and equally indifferent to the various causes of cooperation. For Marx it is enough to say that man is a social animal, and leave it at that. Which is not to say that Marx remains completely silent as to the basis of collective existence. In his more speculative or theoretical moments, Marx also refers to the inorganic body as the basis of subjectivity. In the first instance this inorganic body is nature itself, with which man is in constant metabolic interaction. but it also encompasses everything that serves as the precondition of production, tools, social relations, everything that appears to a new generation as given rather than produced. Thus the inorganic body is situated at the point of indistinction between nature and history.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, these conditions are not just physical in the form of tools and natural conditions but encompass the mental preconditions of production as well. Language is, as Marx reminds us, first and foremost a social product. Thus, if an irreducible mental component accompanies all labor, separating “the worst architect from the best of bees,” this mental component is irreducibly collective as well, composed of shared knowledge embodied in habits and practices.<sup>28</sup>

In different, but related ways, Balibar and Paolo Virno have suggested the term transindividuality, to grasp what Marx designates with the figure of the “inorganic body.” The term is drawn from the work of Gilbert Simondon, who interrogates the privilege that western thought has ascribed to the principle of individuation.<sup>29</sup> For Simondon individuation has to be grasped as a process, in which the individual is neither the ultimate end nor absolute beginning, but a continual effect of an activity. There are multiple and successive individuations, physical, biological, psychic, and collective, each resolving the problems posed by the others, and transforming the fundamental terms of the relation. At the basis of Simondon’s understanding is a fundamental fact of existence, that Marx indicates (and Virno underscores): the very things that form the core and basis of our individuality, our subjectivity, sensations, language, and habits, by definition cannot be unique to us as individuals.<sup>30</sup> These elements can only be described as pre-individual, as the preconditions of subjectivity. In some sense they do not even exist, at least as individual things, instead they make up a metastable condition, a flux of possibilities. Virno, following Simondon, outlines three different level of pre-individual singularities; the sensations and drives that make up the biological basis of subjectivity, language which constitutes its psychic and collective relations, and the productive relations, which constitute the historical articulation of the preindividual.<sup>31</sup> The clearest example of what is at stake in designating these different activities and relations as preindividual can be seen by looking at the specific example of language. Language is irreducibly transindividual, there is, it is often said, no such thing as a private language, but it is also fundamentally preindividual, language is not made up of individual things, words, but of differential relations.<sup>32</sup> Language exists only as a system of differences, as a metastable state, that is the precondition for any articulation, for any individual statement or utterances. Thus in general preindividual

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid. pg. 447

<sup>27</sup> Franck Fischbach, *La production des hommes Marx avec Spinoza* (Paris: PUF, 2005) pg. 56

<sup>28</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital* pg. 284

<sup>29</sup> Gilbert Simondon, *L’individuation* pg. 23.

<sup>30</sup> Paolo Virno, “The Multitude and the Principle of Individuation” *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 24 2 (2003) 137.

<sup>31</sup> Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude: For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life*. Trans. I. Bertoletti, J. Cascaito, and A. Casson (New York: Semiotexte, 2004) Pg. 77.

<sup>32</sup> Paolo Virno, *Multitude: Between Innovation and Negation* (New York: Semiotexte, 2008) pg. 50



singularities exist as a differentially articulated set of relations, or possible relations. These preconditions are not simply the raw material of subjectivity, they are not completely transformed into a subject, but persist as unresolved potential along with the subject.<sup>33</sup> There is always more to us than our putative identity as individuals, and it is only because of this that anything like collectivity, like social relations are possible. A completely autonomous and self-contained individual could not enter any relations.<sup>34</sup>

Society is not something standing apart from the individual, they are not two separate entities, for which the relation is always a fundamental problem. For Simondon transindividuality is not something that stands above the individual, rather it is nothing other than articulation of the individual. Individuals are individuals of the collective, of particular social relations and structures, just as collectives are nothing other than a reflection of the individuals that constitute them. Transindividuality is not the relation between two constituted terms, between the individual and society, but is a relation of relations, encompassing the individual's relation to itself, the process of its psychic individuation, as well as the relation amongst individuals, and the relation between different collectivities. Transindividuality is in many respects an articulation of the pre-individual, as the habits, language, affects, and perceptions form the basis of a shared culture. The individual, the subject, has to be understood as the intersection of the pre-individual and transindividual, of the singular and the common.<sup>35</sup> The production of subjectivity, and its corollary concepts such as transindividuality and preindividual, entails not just a rethinking of that antinomy of the individual and the collective, but a new ontology and logic of thinking about the subject. The subject is a "social individual," not just in the sense that he or she lives within society, but in the sense that individuality can only be articulated, can only be produced, within society.<sup>36</sup>

### ***From Transindividuality to the Common***

he transformation of capital can be viewed as an increasing incorporation or subsumption of the production of subjectivity into capital, in terms of both the preindividual conditions and transindividual relations. Capital begins with formal subsumption, with labor power, which is initially taken as is, according to its traditional structure of technological and social development, but as capitalism develops it transforms this basic relation, separating the organic link between knowledge and work. In place of the organically developed habits, which connect the work of the hand with that of the head, capitalism interjects the combined knowledge of society, externalized in machines. At this point capital no longer simply exploits labor, extracting its surplus, but fundamentally alters its technical and social conditions as it subsumes all of society. Subsumption in this case crosses both sides of market relations, encompassing labor, which comes to involve the work of language, the mind, and the affects, but also the commodity form. If sensations, language, and habits or knowledge constitute the pre-individual backdrop of subjectivity, then it has to be acknowledged that much of what we sense, discuss, and do, comes to us in the form of commodities. It is from this perspective that we can grasp the ontological dimension of the first sentence of *Capital*, by inverting it: whatever appears does so as a commodity. This transformation of what appears has effects on subjectivity, as Marx reminds us, production not only creates an object for the subject, but a subject for the

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<sup>33</sup> In Simondon's terminology the term "subject" is used to refer to the coexistence of the individual with pre-individual singularities and transindividual conditions. Simondon, *L'individuation* pg. 310.

<sup>34</sup> Gilbert Simondon, *L'individuation* pg. 298

<sup>35</sup> Paolo Virno, "Reading Gilbert Simondon," *Radical Philosophy* 136 (March/April 2006) pg. 35.

<sup>36</sup> "In this transformation [the worker] is neither the direct human labor he himself performs, not the time during which he works, but rather the appropriation of his own general productive power, his understanding of nature and his mastery over it by virtue of his presence as a social body — it is in a word, the development of the social individual which appears as the great foundation-stone of production and of wealth." Karl Marx, *Grundrisse. Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, Trans. Martin Nicolaus, (New York: Penguin, 1973) pg. 705.

object.<sup>37</sup> Under commodity production, the production of private property, this entails a massive reduction of the sense of an object: “Private property has made us so stupid and one-sided that an object is only ours when we have it...”.<sup>38</sup> The real subsumption of subjectivity by capital is articulated by two different productions of subjectivity, each defined by different economic sectors: in terms of production, there is a movement away from work as a solitary enterprise, the labor of a craftsman, to work that engages the knowledge and desire of humanity in general, while at the same time, on the side of consumption, there is a reduction of the world to what can be possessed, owned, viewed in the comfort of one’s home—a massive privatization of desire. Real subsumption is an increased exploitation of the transindividual and commodification of the preindividual. This division between production and consumption defines to some extent the paradox of social existence under contemporary capitalism: never have human beings been more social in their existence, but more individualized, privatized, in the apprehension of their existence. On the one hand, the simplest action from making a meal to writing an essay engages the labor of individuals around the world, materialized in commodities, habits, and machines, while on the other, everything, every social relation can be purchased as a commodity. In the *Grundrisse* Marx offers perhaps the most succinct definition of the paradox of the individual/collective in the early stages of capitalism.

As he writes,

“Only in the eighteenth century, in 'civil society', do the various forms of social connectedness confront the individual as a mere means towards his private purposes, as external necessity. But the epoch which produces this standpoint, that of the isolated individual, is also precisely that of the hitherto most developed social (from this standpoint, general) relations.”<sup>39</sup>

Both tendencies have only increased since the eighteenth century, as we have become simultaneously more connected and disconnected. The materialization of collective intelligence in machines produces new effects of isolation — “individualizing social actors in their separate automobiles and in front of separate video screens.”<sup>40</sup> Transindividual relations, the cooperation of multiple minds, bodies, and machines produce individuated and isolated perceptions.

From this thumbnail description of the current conjuncture it is possible to specify what is meant by the politics of the production of subjectivity. Politics bears directly on the preindividual and transindividual conditions of subjectivity, it is a matter of their distribution, presentation, and articulation. These conditions make up what could be called “the commons”; provided that the common is understood not simply as a passive given, a natural condition, as in the classic example of the pastoral commons, but as something that is both produced by subjectivity and productive of subjectivity.<sup>41</sup> As we have seen in capitalism the common is divided, split between labor, which is reified in machines and structures, and consumption, which reduces it to a private object that is passively consumed. The political task must in some sense be one of the actualization or manifestation of the common. The problem is how to make the common, the transindividual and preindividual conditions of subjectivity, something other than the inchoate backdrop of experience, to make it something actively grasped, so that subjects can transform their conditions rather than simply be formed by them. To butcher a

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<sup>37</sup> Karl Marx, *Grundrisse* pg. 92.

<sup>38</sup> Karl Marx, *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. Dirk Struik, trans. (New York: International, 1964) pg. 139

<sup>39</sup> Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*. pg. 223.

<sup>40</sup> Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, (Cambridge: Harvard, 2000) pg. 322.

<sup>41</sup> Antonio Negri, “Kairos, Alma Venus, Multitudo,” in *Time for Revolution*. Trans M. Mandarini. (New York: Continuum, 2003) pg. 215.

phrase, it is necessary to think transindividuality as subject, rather than as substance. It is a matter of bringing the background, the plurality underlying language, sensation, and knowledge, into the foreground: transforming a passive condition into an actual production. The politics of the production of subjectivity is a question of the relation between a subject and the conditions of its production.

It is possible to interpret this political project as a matter of constituting a collective form of subjectivity against an individualized and isolated existence. This is often the tenor that this struggle takes in Marx; it is a struggle of the two productions of subjectivity. The market, or consumption, which produces not only a world as property, but individuals as possessors or consumers, whose relations are governed according to the fictions of "freedom, equality, and Bentham," and the factory, which produces and exploits a transindividual collectivity. While Marx's general argument against "egoistic" man of civil society captures something essential about the social ontology underlying political economy and liberal political thought, it lapses into the interminable binary of the individual versus society. Which is to say that it makes it appear as if one could simply choose "individuality" or "collectivity" as an ethical value of individualism or solidarity. However, things are not that simple. It is not enough to oppose the collective to the individual, as the good to the bad form of subjectification. First, because as I have argued, ontologically, the individual, the subject, is nothing other than a modification of pre-individual conditions and transindividual relations. The social individual is not opposed to collectivity, but is its internal condition. There is a second more complex objection to such an opposition: equating the transindividual with the collective assumes that the former can be represented. Marx's early criticism of the state in *The German Ideology* articulated a gap between the conditions productive of subjectivity and the representation of those conditions. The state is an "illusory communal life" based upon real ties of flesh and blood, language, and the division of labor.<sup>42</sup> This rift between the conditions that are productive of subjectivity and the representation of those conditions is grounded on the connection between transindividuality and subjectivity. The relations that make up transindividuality are nothing more than preindividual conditions in a metastable state, a flux that is simultaneously productive and produced. (For example we could say that "a language" as much as it is the condition for any articulation, any style, it is simultaneously being transformed by the various jargons and slang.) Any representation of the transindividual, any representation of the collective, is a closure of this productive flux, taking a momentary and incomplete product as not only a goal but as a cause.<sup>43</sup>

If the transindividual cannot be represented, how can it be actualized? Answering such a question entails not only dispensing with the unstated connection between politics and representation, but also refining the very vocabulary we use to discuss social relations and their materialization in objects and structures. Virno argues that Simondon's ontology makes possible a redefinition of the fundamental, but often vague and undefined, Marxist concepts of alienation, reification, and fetishization.

As Virno argues:

Reification is what I call the process through which preindividual reality becomes an external thing, a *res* that appears as a manifest phenomenon, a set of public institutions. By alienation I understand the situation in which the preindividual remains an internal component of the subject but one that the subject is unable to command. The preindividual reality that remains implicit, like a presupposition that conditions us but that we are unable to grasp is alienated.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Karl Marx, *The German Ideology*. Trans. C.J. Arthur (New York: International, 1970) pg. 53

<sup>43</sup> Gilbert Simondon, *L'individuation à la lumière des notions de forme et d'information* pg. 295.

<sup>44</sup> Paolo Virno, "Reading Simondon" pg. 38.

Virno's argument is in part based on a revalorization of reification, reification is the externalization of the preindividual, its articulation into a series of things, structures, and machines. The central point is that the "thing" in this case bears with it the relation and it is public, or at least potentially so, and thus exposed to the possibility of transformation and rearticulation. Virno's fundamental example, or provocation, remains the "general intellect," Marx's term for the collective knowledge that is at once internalized in machines and dissipated across social space in the form of knowledges, habits, and ways of acting.<sup>45</sup> In this instance the social dimension is inescapable and cannot be eradicated. This is fundamentally distinct from fetishization in which the qualities and attributes of social existence are attributed to a thing, echoing Marx's classic formula in the social relation between men takes the form of a relation between things. "Fetishism means assigning to something — for example to money — characteristics that belong to the human mind (sociality, capacity for abstraction and communication, etc.)."<sup>46</sup> Thus, Virno returns the fetish to Marx's earliest arguments about money, in which "money is the alienated ability of mankind."<sup>47</sup> Whatever quality or attribute I may lack, intelligence, attractiveness, strength, etc., can be purchased. Money scrambles the preindividual singularities, the fundamental elements of subjectivity, transforming them into things that can be purchased. Marx's assertion of the "ontological" power of money intersects with Simondon's notion of ontogenesis. It is thus no accident that Marx's essay on the power of money in bourgeois society ends with a discussion of the individual: the world of money is juxtaposed to that of the irreplaceable individual, in which social qualities can only be exchanged for their similar qualities—if you want to be loved you must be capable of love, and so on. "Every one of your relations to man and to nature must be a *specific expression*, corresponding to the object of your will, of your *real individual life*."<sup>48</sup>

Returning to the paradox of modern existence addressed above, the socialized isolation, or what I referred to as the simultaneous exploitation of the transindividual and commodification of the preindividual, it is possible to argue that this relation constitutes a new sort of alienation, provided that by alienation we follow Virno in transforming our understanding of what this term means. Alienation, at least in the way that it has been understood as a generic watchword of various versions of Hegelian-Marxism, has been understood as a loss of self, a loss of subjectivity to the object. As such, the concept often uncritically reproduces the very individualistic ontology that Marx's writing is mobilized against. However, as we have already indicated, it is not clear that Marx necessarily understood the concept in this way; alienation is not just loss of object, and control of activity, it is also alienation from species-being [*Gattungswesen*] from mankind's universal nature, what could be referred to as the preindividual and transindividual components of subjectivity. As Virno argues, alienation is a separation from the conditions of the production of subjectivity; it is not a loss of what is most unique and personal but a loss of connection to what is most generic and shared. Franck Fischbach has argued, through a reading of Spinoza and Marx, the conventional definition of alienation needs to be turned on its head; alienation is not a loss of the subject, of subjectivity, but of objectivity, of a connection to the world. "To be alienated is the fact of being reduced to a subjective state, distinct and separate from the totality of the objective world..."<sup>49</sup> The commodification of the preindividual is such an alienation due to the fact that the basic components of our subjectivity, language, habits, perceptions, come to us in a prepackaged form, as things which can only be passively consumed. The milieu of our existence, preindividual and transindividual, becomes something we are passively subjected to, something consumed, not something that we can act on or transform, a condition that cannot be conditioned.

If alienation best describes the commodification of the preindividual, or vice versa,

<sup>45</sup> Paolo Virno, *Multitude: Between Innovation and Negation*. (New York: Semiotexte, 2008) pg. 41.

<sup>46</sup> Paolo Virno, "Reading Simondon" pg. 40.

<sup>47</sup> Karl Marx, *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. pg. 104.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 105.

<sup>49</sup> Franck Fischbach, *La production des hommes* pg. 96.

then what could best describe the exploitation of the transindividual? Answering this question is difficult because it cuts through the distinction that Virno makes between fetishism and reification as two ways of presenting the transindividual. Fetishism and reification both deal with the relationship between sociality and things, things that are not opposed to subjectivity, to the constitution of the individual, but its condition. With the fetish the thing stands in for the relation, while in reification the thing is the relation. Virno's generalization of the problem of fetishization makes it possible to return to Marx's critique of the state, which is primarily a critique of the representation of collectivity, of sociality itself, through a seemingly extraneous detour: Deleuze and Guattari's reworking of Marx's critique of capital. Deleuze and Guattari, in their inventive reading of Marx, have generalized this critique of the state into an examination of the way in which every society represents its historical conditions. In every mode of production, in every production of subjectivity, there is a unproductive element, a representation of the social order itself, what Deleuze and Guattari call a full body, that appropriates the social forces of production. It is an effect that appears as a cause.

As Deleuze and Guattari write:

...the forms of social production, like those of desiring production, involve an unengendered non-productive attitude, an element of anti-production coupled with the process, a full body that functions as a *socius*. This socius may be the body of the earth, that of the tyrant, or capital. This is the body that Marx is referring to when he says that it is not the product of labour, but rather appears as its natural or divine presuppositions. In fact, it does not restrict itself merely to opposing productive forces in and of themselves. It falls back on [*il se rabat sur*] all production, constituting a surface over which the forces and agents of production are distributed, thereby appropriating for itself all surplus production and arrogating to itself both the whole and the parts of the process, which now seem to emanate from it as a quasi-cause.<sup>50</sup>

Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the socius expands upon Marx's concept of the inorganic body; in each case it is a matter of the preconditions of production, the material, intellectual, and social conditions that appear as given. What Deleuze and Guattari underscore, however, is that this full body *appears* as given, the socius is a representation of the conditions of production. The historically produced conditions of production, the technical and social conditions, including the political structure, appear as something given rather than produced, as divine preconditions. This full body constitutes a particular representation of community, based on a condition of belonging: the lines of filiation or descent that determine a clan; custom and tradition that defines a culture; or language and birth that constitutes a nation. Society itself exists as a fetish, or rather it is fetishized to the extent that what is produced, the despot, etc., appears to be the cause of production, rather than its effect. As Deleuze writes, "The natural object of social consciousness or common sense with regard to the recognition of value is the fetish."<sup>51</sup>

In this series of full bodies capital functions as something of an exception. As Marx argues in the *Grundrisse*, capitalism is fundamentally different from all previous modes of production because in it production is not subordinated to the reproduction of a particular mode of existence. Whereas in the previous modes of production, production, the creation of wealth, was always subordinated to reproduction, to the maintenance of particular structures of authority, particular forms of subjectivity, in capital wealth is subordinated only to itself, to the production of more wealth. As Marx writes: "In bourgeois economics-and in the epoch of production to which it corresponds-this complete working-out of the human content appears as

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<sup>50</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* trans. R. Hurley, M. Seem and H. R. Lane, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1983). pg. 10.

<sup>51</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*. Trans. Paul Patton. (New York: Columbia, 1994) pg. 208.

a complete emptying out, this universal objectification as total alienation, and the tearing down of all limited, one-sided aims as sacrifice of the human end-in-itself to an entirely external end.”<sup>52</sup> To place this back in the terms of Virno, the fetish is no longer a particular full body, a particular condition of social belonging, but it becomes an abstract object, money, or capital itself. As we have seen money is nothing other than the alienation of human potential; it is everything human beings can do, everything human beings can desire, represented in the form of an object, a universal equivalent that is nothing other than the materialization of this abstract power itself. There is thus a connection between fetishization and alienation, between the separation from the constitutive conditions, and their projection onto an object. As Marx writes, “All the powers of labor project themselves as powers of capital, just as all the value-forms of the commodity do as forms of money.”<sup>53</sup> This tendency increases with the real subsumption of society, the more production is distributed across society, the more it appears as if capital itself is productive.

In order to understand capital it is necessary to retreat to the misty realm of fetishism, but it is also necessary to understand how capital fundamentally transforms this relation—there is a fundamental difference between the fetishization of the despot and the fetishization of commodities. In the first instance the object in question represents the productive powers of society, the despot stands as a precondition of the labors of society, while in the second the object does not so much represent these powers, giving them a concrete instance, a full body, as it operates through them. Money does not represent anything, or rather what it represents is only pure abstract potential, social power in the abstract, it is the capacity to buy anything, to become anything, a social power. Deleuze and Guattari express this difference, between the representational and functional full body, as being between code and axioms. Codes set up a relation between actions and desires, actions and perceptions, “relations between flows,” in Deleuze and Guattari’s terms. To draw on the social ontology that we have been developing here, we could say that codes are a particular articulation of the preindividual conditions for subjectivity, a particular organization of the transindividual. What is essential is that these codes in attaching themselves to a particular full body ascribe a particular meaning to these practices, situating them within a religion, a nation, a culture, a way of life. Codes can be thought of as tradition, or prescriptions and rules bearing on the production and distribution of goods, prestige, and desire. As such they are inseparable from a particular relation to the past—a relation of repetition. This is fundamentally distinct from axioms that are quantitative rather than qualitative; in capitalism a thing, a practice, a desire, does not mean anything, or a rather its meaning is subordinated to the fundamental question as to how much money can be made. As Deleuze and Guattari write: “*your capital or your labour capacity*, the rest is not important...”<sup>54</sup> Axioms do not repeat or venerate the past, but are fundamentally flexible, it is always possible to add new axioms to the system, to open more markets. In each case, the productive powers of mankind, the transindividual is fetishized, transformed into the attribute of an object. However, there is a fundamental difference, the pre-capitalist object, the full body subject to the domination of a code, is more restrictive, tying the transindividual to a particular condition of belonging, a tradition, a tribe, a nation, while the capital is fundamentally open, the productive power of social relations appears, but appears as the attribute of an object, of money or capital.

Deleuze and Guattari’s understanding of codes and axioms (and the relational social ontology they imply) brings us close to Marx’s fundamental dialectical point with respect to capitalism: that in capitalism the fundamentally productive power of mankind, of transindividuality, comes close to appearing as such. Capital strips away the illusions that

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<sup>52</sup> Karl Marx, *Grundrisse* pg. 488

<sup>53</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital* pg. 756.

<sup>54</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* pg. 251.

masked exploitation under religious or political guises. As Marx famously wrote in *The Communist Manifesto*:

Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real condition of life and his relations with his kind.<sup>55</sup>

Capital, in its ceaseless revolutionizing of the conditions of production, exposes the produced nature of sociality as such. In Alain Badiou's terminology, capital constitutes a desacralization of the social bond.<sup>56</sup> But Deleuze and Guattari add to this process something that Marx did not grasp in his identification of capitalism with ceaseless modernization: the production of new territories, new islands and representations of belonging. What once existed as code, as an object of collective belief and evaluation, as a full body, is reborn as a private object. The religions, cultures, and practices of the world are reborn as private objects of consumption: all the world's cultures and all the world's beliefs can be enjoyed in privacy of one's own home, Buddhism, Native American Spirituality, etc., As Deleuze and Guattari argue capitalism is "a motley painting of everything that has ever been believed."<sup>57</sup> These private beliefs are made possible by the fact that subjectivity is produced not through the codes of culture, but through the commodity, which is by definition cut off from and conceals its constitutive conditions, masking the labor in its production. Once they are separated from their different codes, and cultures, there is no contradiction between the different cultures, beliefs, values and ideals occupying the same space of the market. As Peter Sloterdijk illustrates the materialization of this indifference:

The best prep school for *Capital*—would it not consist in watching television several hours a day, looking through several newspapers and magazines the remaining hours, and continuously listening to the radio? ...We live in a world that brings things into false equations, produces false sameness of form and false sameness of values (pseudoequivalences) between everything and everyone, and thereby also achieves an intellectual disintegration and indifference in which people lose the ability to distinguish correct from false, important from unimportant, productive from destructive—because they are used to taking the one for the other.<sup>58</sup>

The world becomes a private affair, to be consumed in the privacy of one's home. Transindividuality is fetishized, made to appear in the form of the abstract and indifferent quantities of money, which transform it into an impersonal force, while simultaneously being commodified into a proliferating series of private objects.

From this perspective we can grasp the full extent of the third of Virno's redefinitions, reification. Transindividuality is reified when it becomes a public thing. Virno's example of this is as we have seen Marx's concept of the "general intellect," the collective powers of intelligence, distributed across the machines and subjects of social space, which contemporary production

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<sup>55</sup> Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* in *The Marx/Engels Reader*. Ed. R. Norton (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978) pg. 476.

<sup>56</sup> Alain Badiou, *Manifesto for Philosophy*. trans. N. Madarasz. (New York: SUNY, 1992) pg.56.

<sup>57</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* pg. 34.

<sup>58</sup> Peter Sloterdijk, *Critique of Cynical Reason*. Trans. M. Eldred (Minneapolis: Minnesota, 1988) pg. 314.

depends upon. Like money, or capital, “the general intellect” embodies the collective powers of society, but it does so in a fundamentally different way, rather than being displaced onto an object, such as money. With the general intellect the collective powers of society are displaced on a series of objects and relations, the machines and habits that make up the productive relations of society. As Virno argues one of the defining characteristics of the general intellect is that the rules and norms which govern collective life are constantly being rewritten and transformed, new codes, new knowledges, new styles, etc., exposing the contingency and artificiality of public existence. This contingency cuts both ways. First, it disengages transindividuality from a fixed object, from a repetition of the past, it becomes a pure differential force. This force only appears through money, or the market, constituting a “publicness without a public sphere.” The market is entirely public, providing the structures that make up collective existence, but it is so in such a way that they cannot be touched, cannot be acted upon; its laws operate as if they were self-evident natural laws. Second, and in an opposed manner, it unmoors human activity from any norm, from any criteria. As much as money can be denounced as a fetish, as an alienation of human activity and powers, as a real abstraction it still imposes an equivalent on the disparate activities and practices, equal must be exchanged for equal. As the general intellect moves to the front of the production process, and the contingency and groundlessness of rules and operating procedures is dominant, the standard of equality disappears. This gives rise to a fundamentally ambivalent situation.

As Virno writes:

When the fundamental abilities of the human being (thought, language, self-reflection, the capacity for learning) come to the forefront, the situation can take on a disquieting and oppressive appearance; or it can even give way to a *non-governmental* public sphere, far from the myths and rituals of sovereignty.<sup>59</sup>

There is a possibility of a resurgence of personal forms of dependence, as individuals sell their talents, perceptions, knowledge, and subjectivity (including preindividual singularities) rather than just labor power, then all of the individual, and not just the capacity to labor, is subject to domination. The work of real subsumption, work that utilizes capacities to think create and interact, is not isolated in time or space, making exploitation coextensive with existence. Exploitation is no longer organized around the abstract entities of labor and money, but encompasses all of existence. At the same time the collective production of norms of knowledge and action makes possible a new politics, one that liberates the collective from the various full bodies that attempt to represent it, what Virno calls a nongovernmental public sphere but what has historically been known as “the common.” The reification of transindividuality, its physical instantiation in practices, machines, and habits, makes possible a new understanding of collectivity, not as an amorphous mass to be represented, but as a multitude that acts and cannot be separated from its acting.

The political question is not a matter of looking for “the subject” capable of transforming the existing political conditions, something that could play the role of the proletariat, the gravedigger of the existing society. Rather, in turning our attention to the production of subjectivity, to the pre-individual conditions and transindividual relations that constitute subjectivity, it is possible to recognize the subjections that make up the present, the fetishization of mankind’s abstract transformative potential in the form of money, and the alienation of subjectivity in the commodities that make up our daily existence. Moreover, it is also possible to see in the present conditions of the production of subjectivity lines of liberation, namely the possibility of a public that is no longer constituted around a fetishized full body, of the nation, the state, but is open to its own innovation and productive transformation.

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Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude*, Pg. 40.



## 1. The principle of individuation in Simondon and subjectivation in Lacan

According to Simondon, the process of individuation has two moments. First, it is “the pre-individual conditions” out of which the individuality has to emerge. Second, it is the “transindividual” relationship that creates an inter-human relation. The former should not be completely transformed into a subject, but always remains as residual. The latter is the condition for the articulation of the individuality.

This process of individuation in Simondon is similar in structure to the graph of desire in Lacan.<sup>60</sup>

$S \rightarrow S'$ : the signifier’s chain vector

$\Delta \rightarrow \$$ : the subject’s intention vector

Triangle ( $\Delta$ ): The pre-linguistic, pre-symbolic mythical subject (which will vanish in the succeeding graphs)

Barred S ( $\$$ ): the divided, split subject

This graph of desire, called elementary cell, can be interpreted as the subjectivation. The horizontal line represents the diachronic signifier’s chain; the horseshoe-shaped line represents the vector of the subject’s intentionality, each of which has direction. This indicates that discourse ( $S \rightarrow S'$ ) and the production of the subject (Triangle  $\rightarrow$  Barred S) are always in motion.

Triangle  $\rightarrow$  Barred S vector can be regarded as the individual that steps out of the pre-individual through the individuation, because both the individual and the subject have some common features. They are produced retroactively, and are not constituted completely. In each case, the process of the subjectivation and the individuation comes first, and the state of the subject and the individual is produced backward.

On the other hand, it seems reasonable to suppose that the  $S \rightarrow S'$  vector should be discussed along with the transindividual. The  $S \rightarrow S'$  diachronic signifier’s vector is quilted or anchored in *le point de capiton*, interpreted as the Other, which is located at the right intersection of the vectors. It permits the signified which is located at the intersection on the left. The symbolic order is structured through these processes. Therefore this vector has the intersubjective and unstable feature.<sup>61</sup>

It will follow from what has been said that the theory of the individuation is the procedure of the discursive analysis just like the graph of desire. This insight leads to a controversial point: in the individuation theory, there is no instance of the Real. The Real makes the symbolic order inconsistent, and there is the leftover that cannot be integrated into symbolic order. This difference is reflected in some statements, for example, it is said that “any representation of the transindividual, any representation of the collective, is a closure of this [transindividual] productive flux.” When we take the instance of the Real into account, this statement should be said that any representation conceals the *impossibility* of a closure of this productive flux. It may be that the production of subjectivity needs to take the Real into consideration.

<sup>60</sup> See Lacan’s *Ecrits*: “The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious,” and also see Žižek’s *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, Chapter 3.

<sup>61</sup> Note that the floating signifier cannot be closed or fixed tightly and perfectly, it can be only quilted or tacked partially.

## 2. The lack of formal subsumption by capital

The real subsumption is articulated as two phases. One is an exploitation of the transindividuality in the phase of production, and the other is a commodification of the pre-individual in the phase of consumption.

But it is doubtful whether this articulation is accurate. In my opinion, the commodification is more closely related to the formal subsumption than to the real one. Briefly speaking, the formal subsumption is about the integration of non-capitalist mode of production (or, a capitalist outside) through the commodification of labor-power.<sup>62</sup> It is to be noted that the activities of the worker, whether before or after the formal subsumption, might be exactly the same. The difference between before and after the formal subsumption is that the labor-power is commodified and exchanged in the labor market.

As much as the idea of the pre-individual is accepted, it must be said that “commodification of the pre-individual” is not the real subsumption but the formal one. Similarly, the statement that “consumption is individual” should be modified. More precisely, not consumption but circulation should be individual.

These small adjustments may lead to a large disputation: if we admit the existence of the formal subsumption in the modern world, we also admit the existence of the outside of capital. Is there still outside left in this world under the age of globalization? I'd like to leave this question open.

## 3. Whose subjectivity? —The subjectivity of capital and the task of politics

In several passages of *Capital*, Marx says that capital is Subject: For example, in the chapter IV “The General Formula for Capital,” Marx regarded capital as “an automatic subject,” “the subject of a process,” the “dominating subject.” This means that people are not the subjects of capitalist production but capital. And more importantly, capital can handle the production of subjectivity. Transindividuality of capital(s) is interpreted as “the language of commodities” in the market, in short, the price mechanism. The condition of pre-individual is interpreted as money, commodities and labor. In this case, individuation is related to the transformation of money into capital. But capital should not be completely transformed into a subject, but always remains as residual. Why?

We almost reach the core of the subjectivity of capital. That residual can be considered as the labor-power.<sup>63</sup> This residual makes the subjectivity of capital inconsistent even if “it is integral to the definition of capital.” The labor power is, therefore, the outside of capital although it is internalized. Commodification of labor-power is an attempt to suture what is ultimately unsutureable.

This paradoxical logic can be explained by the Lacanian terminology: “\$ <> a”. The barred S indicates the subjectivity of capital, and *objet petit a* (object little-a) denotes the labor-power as commodity. It is a hard core which resists commodification, and it is present only in a series of effects.

It is worth emphasizing two points here. First, labor-power is recognized as object

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<sup>62</sup> On the other hand, the real subsumption is about intensification of the specifically capitalist mode of production. The formal subsumption can grasp any production mode even if that is not specifically capitalistic. In other words, it is the form of capital (or, circulation) that involves any contents (or, production).

<sup>63</sup> I agree to the statement that the poverty “is a general ontological scandal” because it relates to “the loss of a connection to the world.” Poverty and labor-power is not the same, but their effects are similar.

from the perspective of capital. Therefore the politics of the production of subjectivity should focus attention on the problem of object. Second, even if the labor-power is object, it is not a capitalistic order-taker. Rather, it makes capitalism antagonistic. Antagonism prevents a closure of the capitalism. But capital tries to suture this unsuturability. In this sense, commodification of labor-power by capital is not a normal activity to obtain an achievable universality. It is rather the obsessional drive of capital to conceal the failure of capturing the totality. I may have to say that economics is inseparable from the commodification of labor-power.