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The World of Principle, or Pure Capitalism: Exteriority and Suspension in Uno Kôzô

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Abstract

The analysis undertaken by Uno Kôzô on the question of the (im)possibility or “*nihil* of reason” (*muri*) characterizing the commodification of labor power operates as a theoretical pivot which exposes two exteriorities, two suspensions. On the one hand, this moment discloses the theoretical physics of contamination between the logic of capital as a *putatively* closed circle and the history of capitalism as a developmental process. On the other hand, the fact that this (im)possibility is always “passing through” or “traversing” the gap of logic and history reveals another exteriority in the form of the *apparatuses* that allow or permit this “traversal,” a suspension that ruptures the *apparently* smooth cycle of exchange. The leap or inversion-reversal of capital past its developmental boundaries, and the leap of the commodity into the form of money within exchange, are two moments that are coextensive on a planar surface, implied or interlocking within each other. What seals together these moments is the volatile and hazardous undercurrent of capitalist dynamics that operates under the name of “the agrarian question.” In turn, this historical pivot leads us back into the unstable logical core of capital. Placing Uno’s theoretical innovations into divergent lexical and genealogical sequences, we will attempt to re-read and re-write his theoretical work as a *critique* of political economy by means of the dynamics that inhere in this (im)possibility.

Keywords: Uno Kozo, Marx, Labor power, Primitive accumulation, Feudalism, Capitalism, Commodification

JEL Classification: B51

An economic science inspired by *Capital* does not necessarily lead us (*ne conduit pas nécessairement*) to its utilization as a revolutionary power, and history seems to require help from something other than a predicative dialectic. The fact is that science, if one looks at it closely, has no memory. Once constituted, it forgets the circuitous path by which it came into being (*elle oublie les péripéties dont elle est née*). (J. Lacan 1966, p. 349-50).

Uno Kôzô’s theoretical work utilizes the thought-experiment of a conceptually purified capitalism, in which capital’s *logical* tendency to finally reify itself is allowed to cyclically oscillate in theory, generating shards of insight into capital’s inner drive. In this sense, capital’s logical operation constitutes *a world* unto itself: Uno calls this “the world of principle” (*genriteki sekai*). Although this schematic of three levels of analysis – principle, or pure capitalism; stage-theoretical analysis of capitalist development; and conjunctural analysis of the immediate situation – seems at

first to exclude the historical from the “world of principle,” in fact, Uno’s work presupposes that this logical “world” is not a pure circle, but a *torus*, a structure that constantly folds onto itself.

The torus is distinguished from a simple circle insofar as its exterior and its interior are coextensive, a planar field that folds or envelopes itself, continually opening and closing itself “inside out.” That is, the surface of the outside *suspends* or *interrupts* the pure interiority of the surface of the inside, but then extends itself or folds itself into its opposite. The analysis of “pure capitalism” shows us that while we can determine the specifically logical drive of capital’s interior motion, the *logical interior* itself is always paradoxically dependent on and coextensive with the *historical exterior* for its own conditions of interiority. This paradox is expressed as the (im)possibility, the “*nihil* of reason,” or *muri* of the commodification of labor power, the *Ur-Akt* or *arché* of capital’s logic. In this sense, the scientific experiment called the “world of principle,” in which capital’s drive is concretized and fully expressed, depends on the historical accident in the form of the so-called “primitive accumulation” or transition from feudalism to capitalism. In other words, when Uno argues, for example, that logically the circuit of commodities and money is interrupted by the *consumption process* and not by the production process, he is pointing out the paradox that the *historicity* of social relations is always-already suspending the pure and smooth circulation process.

These ontological gaps in capital’s motion on a logical level therefore can only be worked out or schematized by means of the analysis of the *agrarian question*: thus Uno’s analysis of the historical emergence of capitalism provides the linkage between his methodological experiment called “pure capitalism” and his theoretical innovation called “the (im)possibility of the commodification of labor power.” That is, these two moments are welded together by the question of *transversal, passage, passing, the conduit, the transition*. The transition between feudalism and capitalism expresses not only a historical moment, but also a logical one: although capitalist social relations *should* be strictly impossible, they have *passed into* a smooth cycle in which the ontological gap or (im)possibility does not function solely as an *obstacle*, but is instead incessantly-repetitively traversed *without ever being resolved*. We must therefore expose the mechanisms by which this contamination between the smooth cycle of theory and the “savage exterior” of history is continuously erased.

In other words, we will remind ourselves here of the *critique* of political economy: we will investigate the genesis of how it is that science “forgets the circuitous path by which it came into being.” Political economy forms itself as a circle, as a cycle devoted to its own systematicity. But this systematicity, once established, obliterates its own memory of its conditions of production. The key to this problem is *the agrarian question*. In turn, it is by opening up this “circuitous path” that economics seeks to conceal, that we can also restore Uno’s theoretical work to the status of a *critique of economics* itself, rather than simply an alternative and competing “system.” His schematization of the levels of analysis of political-economic inquiry should not be read as a means to “rescue” or “save” the supposed “rationality” of the “respectable” and “decent” system of *Nationalökonomie*,¹ but rather the opposite: the analytic of “pure capitalism” in fact exposes us to the inherent irrationality of social science itself. Uno’s work in this sense constitutes a crucial step in the *critique of political economy*.

1. The Agrarian Question: Historical Boundaries of Capital’s Logic

On a worldwide level, analysis of Uno’s work has almost always agreed on its supposedly

¹ See here “Zur logischen Misere der Nationalökonomie” in Backhaus 1997.

“formalist” character – that is, he is widely considered an esoteric, purely theoretical, excessively formalistic and scholastic figure in the Marxian analysis of value, but we ought to dislocate, displace, and disrupt this reading. Uno rather makes a kind of *wager* on the possibility of a certain excessive formalism as the only means available to us to “express” the abstraction of the circuit-process of capital, but he is always undercutting the purity of this circuit by drawing our attention to this one phrase that concentrates within it the density of politics. This is what Uno referred to as the “mantra” of *Capital* (*Shihonron no ‘nembutsu’*): the “(im)possibility” or “*nihil* of reason” of the commodification of labor power (*rôdôryoku shohinka no ‘muri’*). What he means by this simply, is that the starting-point of the systematic logic of political economy must always “presuppose” (*voraussetzen*) something purely irrational as the ground of the rationality of the historical process, which will then be “retrojected” back onto the moment of origin in order to once again “presuppose” it *as rational*. But this excessive moment that grounds the circuit of accumulation cannot exactly be accounted for itself. We must detour into it. Rather than being merely symptomatic concepts of Uno’s so-called ‘hyper-theoreticism’, not only Uno’s methodology of three levels of analysis, but also his emphasis on this “(im)possibility” (*muri*), are concepts that are produced out of a direct sublation of the political experience of *the debate on Japanese capitalism*.

In fact, it might be polemically argued that Uno’s greatest contribution to Marxist theoretical research was to restore the specifically *theoretical* content of ‘the national question’ to its essential role as the pivot or lever of the volatile articulation between the logic of capital and the history of capitalism. In this sense, his analysis of the ‘late-developing countries’ is not merely devoted to the clarification of the origin and maintenance of Japanese capitalism; rather, it furnishes us with a general set of clues towards a rethinking of the position of the form of the nation-state itself within the analysis of capital’s dynamics. In other words, Uno himself is an artist of forcing, of *forçage*: a “partisan and artisan” in Althusser’s terms. What is at stake in Uno’s development of the schematic of “three levels of analysis” cannot simply be sorted out by arguing that he proposes a neat and clean separation of logic, history, and politics. Rather, this schema is itself a theoretical apparatus that allows us to expose precisely the opposite: the contamination and political ruptures that characterize the putatively “smooth” circuit of capital, intended to be indifferent to the machinations of the immediate historical world.

But we cannot approach this question “head on” or “frontally,” instead taking a “circuitous” path towards its explication: the problem of the concept of a “pure capitalism” does not begin on the level of method in a “pure” sense, but in the historical investigation of *the agrarian question*. “In tandem with my work on Marx’s *Capital*,” Uno states, “the research I undertook on the agrarian question constitutes precisely the foundation or ground of the methodological system of three levels of analysis that I continued to develop in the postwar period” (Uno 1974d, p. 4). This research that Uno undertook was a direct result of the history of the debate on Japanese capitalism, that is, a direct result of his *transversal* or *diagonal* intervention into this debate.² He reconsiders the common wisdom of the transition to capitalism by focusing on the process of disintegration of the form of the rural village in Japan. In doing so, he emphasizes a complex parallax between what he calls “feudality” and “modernity.” That is, he does not argue that the transition to capitalism occurs in the form of a decisive rupture or comprehensive break. Rather, he emphasizes that this “feudality” constituted not an impediment that had to be overcome, but rather precisely the enabling condition for capitalism’s emergence and development. In re-reading Marx’s analysis of the transition, Uno points out that what appears to be the raw violence of the outside, mobilized to

² For reasons of space, I cannot extensively discuss here Uno’s relation to the debate on a theoretical level, but I touch on this problem in Walker 2011a.

dissolve the old relations and pave the way for a new order, is in fact already a violence of the *inside*:

The rural village structure, which had formed the social basis of the *ancien régime* was thus seemingly dismantled through violence, yet at the same time, *this was also in fact an expression of the planned balancing and harmonization of capitalist production*. The pastures, expanded to accommodate the goal of wool exports, offered raw materials to the domestic wool industry, and the peasantry, expelled from the land in precisely the same process, became the laboring proletariat, the force which spurred on the capitalist industrialization of the wool and other medieval industries, which were at that point still being managed and administered on the level of simple handicrafts. *Thus the emerging proletariat was itself used as a powerful force of pressure in order to forcibly subordinate the existing artisans to capital* (Uno 1974f, p. 24-25, my italics).

Thus, this process of the creation of relations that would furnish the logical interior of capital's historical appearance in the form of the social system called *capitalism* is always-already in a temporal sequence that is "out of joint," that has at its core a basic paradox. If the transition from feudalism to capitalism is the production of the wage-earning proletariat, stripped of everything but its labor power, from the "raw material" of the peasantry, the question remains how such a process could be effected without a schematic of relations that is itself already established. In other words, the *schema* of capital must necessarily pre-exist its historical appearance, yet simultaneously, capital's very narrative of its appearance relies on the "story" of its "birth," therefore also relying on the exterior of this story, something that could begin or initiate the story that is not included in the story as such. It is in this sense that the outside must always be the erased or recoded *lever* or pivot according to which the schematic division of inside and outside could be established, maintained, and cyclically returned back to the origin, so that the raw outside or accident could appear as the *necessary historical precondition* for the "logical" developmental narrative to emerge. Thus "capitalist development constitutes the expanded reproduction of these relations, but the emergence of this developmental cycle itself had to newly create these relations whether by force or not" (Uno 1974f, p. 25).

In turn, this "new creation" of relations, which expresses the fundamental contamination between the logic and the history of capital, must be *dis-placed* (we will return to this decisive term later in this essay), recoded, and reordered by means of new *mechanisms* or apparatuses that could *conduct* this process through its encounters with its own logical irrationality, in such a way as to appear wholly rational. Therefore, "policies of commerce, finance, colonization and so forth were able to accelerate the process of separation between the means of production and productive labor through commodity-economic methods. Of course, these policies were at the outset carried out through exceptionally blatant and directly violent means (*kiwamete rokotsu naru shibashiba chokusetsuteiki ni bôryokuteiki naru shudan*), but gradually took on indirect and disguised forms (*kansetsuteiki naru inpei saretaru keitai*), and increasingly become densely imbued with certain national characteristics (*kokuminteki seishitsu*), before eventually becoming unnecessary as such" (Uno 1974f, p. 26). Yet this relation of inside and outside, the paradoxical reliance or "leaning on" the stratum of history while arrogating itself as a logic, is never fully made "unnecessary." Rather, what allows this reliance to appear unnecessary, not conjoined by any requirements, is the ceaseless formation of apparatuses through which the relations, which are always subject to the logical slippage (in Althusser's sense of *décalage*) of their origin, could be posited and re-posited as necessary and progressive steps in the pure inside. But "even in the liberal era, which attempted to

eliminate to the greatest extent possible any form of extra-economic coercion, the limitations to labor time must have been set by means of the law, and thus could not completely be entrusted, in the laissez-faire sense, to purely economic relations” (Uno 1974j, p. 66-67).

In turn this problem leads us directly back to the agrarian question. This is precisely because, “when capitalist methods of production are employed in agriculture, land ownership must also come under the general domination of the law of value (*kachi hōsoku*) However, although land is a crucial means of production, it is not capital. [...] Land itself can be differentiated thus, precisely because from capital’s viewpoint *it is something given from the outside*, so to speak. In order for it to be subordinated to capital’s demand for the law of value, land must be separated from property and management from the outset, and a form of property corresponding to capitalist methods of production must be established. In other words, while capitalist methods of production attempt to economically realize these demands even in relation to landed property, it is never something rational (*gōriteki na mono*) for these capitalist methods of production themselves: rather, it is a concession or compromise (*jōho*) made between capital and an exclusive or monopolized form of possession. Capital makes this compromise through a specific or peculiar *mechanism* (*tokushu na kikō*) on the level of the law of value.” (Uno 1974j, 67-68, my italics). We will return shortly to this concept of “mechanism” or “apparatus” (*kikō*), but for the time being, let us simply note its crucial place in this problem. Because the analysis of capital as a logic always leads us back to its origins as a social relation capable of ordering an entire form of society, we are always returning to the problem posed by what lies outside of it. What we are then confronted by is not only capital’s drive to enclose all existing relations so as to be commensurable with its project, but rather and more importantly, capital’s drive to overwrite, to recode, to *semiotically reorder* these relations and forms so that they can be historically rerouted back to the cyclical origin and once more *logically derived* as if they constituted merely the prehistory of the necessary unfolding of capitalist development. In this way, capital not only encloses the outside while relying on it, more specifically it *forces* the outside to invert or reverse itself into the inside, it “folds” the historical exterior “inside out” so that it can function as the putatively logical interior.

On a historical level, Uno’s analysis demarcates how in a certain set of circumstances, we encounter the “economically given social period” *as if* it were a type of specificity whose character is eternal. That is, capital is a social relation which always “gives itself” as if it were endless, as if it were grounded in the putatively “natural” elements it needs to legitimate itself. But in fact, the formation of these supposedly natural and ancient elements is part and parcel of how capital emerges onto the world stage through the enclosure into specific difference of a field of pure heterogeneities. This is why if we attribute some “eternal form” to a given specific “late-developing” capitalist situation in terms of “extra-economic coercion,” it becomes impossible to clarify its material bases and historical trajectory. This is of course, not to “deny the existence of extra-economic coercion in the sense of the existence of forms of power which operate outside the sphere of economy.” Rather, it is an attempt to “clarify the foundations of such a function of power” and its specificity. But it is never the case “that this thing that functions outside the economy can be considered feudal, or that it can be conflated with the feudal social system” (Uno 1974e, p. 64-65) as a mark of backwardness.

Uno’s theoretical explication of the question of extra-economic coercion within the analysis of the agrarian question is an intervention against the image of two sides, two “shores” of history: the “accomplished fact” of modernity on one and the “backwards” “stagnant” form of feudalism on the other. This image expresses the mistaken notion that capitalist rationality, the logical unfolding of relations as posited by capital itself, is a pure circle over against which is posed the raw and savage outside of history, that it is an “inside” which *axiomatically* excludes the “out-

side.” But this image cannot be rigorously sustained in an analysis of capital, because everything that capital will “retroject” back onto its own functioning in order to appear cyclical and harmonious, must always experience a “first return to origins” in order to be reproduced.

Uno’s analysis of the agrarian question in Japanese capitalist development continually reminds us that the paradox of inside and outside that obtains in the volatile amalgam of logic and history in the form of capital in general, is always forming and creating *apparatuses* that will allow it to continue its motion through the erasure of these gaps. Thus, “rather than its industrial form, so-called finance capital became the most important mechanism for the establishment of capitalism in the late-developing countries and this new form of capital created a new political centrality in the form of the nation-state, through the concentration of the capitalist forces of each individual nation. Nationalism centered on the state (*kokkashugi*) had to be reinforced with a new content. Although there was an extremely important political significance to the dissolution of the rural village itself within a wider process of social division and dissolution, this process of dissolution could not be allowed to take place everywhere, it had to be somehow held back or impeded. The nearly impossible economic problem for the nation-state of unifying agriculture and industry under capitalism in the state-form nevertheless became an absolutely essential political task” (Uno 1974f, p. 39). Capital must operate so as to both push forward or *set in motion* and simultaneously to *arrest* or *seize up* the spasmodic form of its deterritorialization of the earth. It must, in this sense, *stop* the very process that it itself must undertake. This is precisely why Uno locates something essential for capital’s dynamics in the *production of the nation-state*. That is, the nation-state must be produced, managed, and maintained, in order for the process of the dissolution of the village to be *arrested* before it spins out of control. The nation-state, in this sense, is what *holds back* capital’s axiomatic deterritorialization of itself. It is a “coding” or “valuing” that allows for the management of a set of dynamics that inherently cannot be managed, that is inherently undermining itself. Yet the form of the nation-state also serves as the apparatus by which the dissolution of the village can be undertaken in the first place: in the form of separation, division, and enclosure, it installs the circular legitimation mechanism of landed property, whose image is derived from the state as the ultimate image of the landlord.

The debate on Japanese capitalism, and therefore on the nature and location of the agrarian question in theory, leads Uno to a seemingly paradoxical conclusion: that the so-called “feudal remnants” were not in fact “remnants” of feudalism in the strong sense, that is, *obstacles* or *blocks* on capital’s local deployment, but rather precisely the opposite: “The problem cannot be understood from the perspective that these forms were fundamentally something feudal, something that remained or survived within Japanese capitalism, but rather must be posed in terms of *how* Japanese capitalist development *managed* or *administered* the functioning of these feudal relations” (Uno and Tôhata 1960, p. 32n.1). In other words, we see here something exceptionally important in Uno’s *historical* understanding that will exert a certain theoretical pressure on the *logical* form of capital’s functioning: the role of the *mechanisms* or *apparatuses* that would allow for the development of this paradoxical relation in which what *should be* an obstacle instead functions to buttress, to nurture, to support or aid. This is exactly how Uno will repeatedly disclose to us capital’s essential dementia, a dementia that *should* arrest or obstruct its function, and yet through the formation and maintenance of these *apparatuses*, capital will be able to overcome its own demented logic *without resolving the “nihil of reason” that characterizes its inner drive*. Already then, we see the historical contamination according to which the theoretical structure is formed.

2. Two Limits: Purity and Exteriority

But the revolution is thoroughgoing. It is still traveling through purgatory. It does its work methodically. By December 2, 1851, it had completed half of its preparatory work; now it is completing the other half. *It first completed the parliamentary power (die parlamentarische Gewalt) in order to be able to overthrow it.* Now that it has achieved this, it completes the executive power, *reduces it to its purest expression, isolates it, sets it up against itself as the sole target, in order to concentrate all its forces of destruction against it (reduziert sie auf ihren reinsten Ausdruck, isoliert sie, stellt sie sich als einzigen Vorwurf gegenüber, um alle ihre Kräfte der Zerstörung gegen sie zu konzentrieren).* And when it has accomplished this second half of its preliminary work, Europe will leap from its seat and exult: Well burrowed, old mole!

(Marx 1979, p. 185; Marx 1962b, p. 196).

What is interesting and powerful in Marx's work is neither his particular form of critique, nor his politics, nor his economic analyses as such. The theoretical center of Marx instead is something called "the critique of political economy." In other words, it is a critique, a critical analysis. It is also something political: that is, its theoretical object is political, but its aims are also political. It concerns this discursive object called "the economy," or rather, the concrete expression of the relations buttressing a capitalist commodity-economic society in the historical process of the world. But it is not simply one of these things: it is an analytical and theoretical strategy that passes through and encompasses all these moments, a diagonal line of analysis that is transversal to the discourses it moves through. In my view, we can also take a theoretical clue from the work of Alain Badiou, and call it a strategy of force, or forcing. What does this mean?

It is not something entirely different from Engels' famous analysis of "The Role of Force in History," that is, it is not something entirely separate from the question of violence. It is a violent strategy, but not in the common-sensical use of this term "violence." Rather, force (*force*, *Kraft* but also *Zwang*, coercion, "forcing open") here means the rapid and dramatic dislocation of the analytical object from its usual phenomenal conditions in order to generate a theoretical effect. In other words, it is a theoretical strategy operating within theory itself. Forcing means: the exposure of the theoretical object to its theoretical outside, not a substantial outside, but an outside that is internal to the thing it is estranged from, the thing that includes it in its "count" of itself, but which can only be foreign from its conditions or situation of emergence. The "outside" that is implied, therefore, in the question of force or forcing, is not an "absolute" outside, because such a thing can never exist. Why can such an "absolute outside" not exist? When we encounter a theoretical object, and approach it in the battlefield of theory, we nevertheless grasp its outside (that which cannot strictly speaking be entirely contained within the object) as *within* the economy (*oikonomia*) of the object itself. If it is the "outside to *something*," then it is not conceivable without the circulation-space of this something, the object itself. In other words, when we speak of an outside there is no way to avoid speaking of an inside. Yet, we cannot speak of something for which there is no outside at all. A theoretical object, which is the bracketed product of the total physical and spiritual deployment of an act of abstraction from the social field, always exists within an *economy*. The economy is what envelops and wraps itself around the object, giving it its object-ness. That is, the givenness of the theoretical object is only given insofar as it lies within a field, zone, or

plane in which its object-ness can circulate and legitimate itself as an object. But this legitimation, or the object's capacity to draw its own borders, to enclose itself as an object, demonstrates that whenever a line is drawn, two zones are created. These two zones were previously contiguous. Yet when the border of the object is drawn, an "in" and an "out" appear. But the object's object-ness prevents us from approaching the "out" directly. We only have access to the enclosed object, whose limits are drawn in order to render it theorizable within the theoretical field. Therefore, the "outside" is neither strictly speaking "external" nor is it "unrelated" to the object. Rather, we can say that a theoretical object's "inside" connotes what is *full* in the economy, while its "outside" connotes what is *absent* or *void* within the *oikonomia*.

Marx's critique of political economy is always involved at the level of method with tracing a line around a phenomenal object, not in order to clarify its fullness or plentitude, but in order to *force* this object to disclose what is absent in its presentation of itself. Spivak perfectly explicates this point, by arguing that "Marx's project is to create *the force* that will make appear the massive confrontation between capital and its complicit other (its *Gegen-satz*, its counterposition, literally contradiction) – socialized labor" (Spivak 1993, p. 108, my emphasis). In order to explicate this methodological point let us play close attention to a famous passage of *Capital*, volume 1, in which Marx argues as follows:

The consumption of labour-power is at one and the same time the production of commodities and of surplus-value. The consumption of labour-power is completed, as in the case of every other commodity, outside the limits of the market or of the sphere of circulation. Accompanied by Mr. Moneybags and by the possessor of labour-power, we therefore take leave for a time of this noisy sphere, where everything takes place on the surface and in view of all men, and follow them both into the hidden abode of production, on whose threshold there stares us in the face "No admittance except on business." Here we shall see, not only how capital produces, but how capital is produced. We shall at last *force* the secret of profit-making (Marx, *C* 1, p. 185-6).

In the German original, this last sentence states, "Das Geheimnis der Plusmacherei muß sich endlich enthüllen" (Marx, *K* 1, p. 189),³ "The secret of profit-making (literally: "surplus-making") must at last be revealed." This "muß" therefore contains an essential methodological point that we should pay close attention to. In the so-called "Lachâtre" version of the first volume of *Capital*, the only translation entirely revised by Marx, this last sentence closely parallels the German original: "La fabrication de la plus value, ce grand secret de la société moderne, va enfin se dévoiler" (Marx 1872, p. 75). Interestingly however, in Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling's English version of *Capital* (overseen by Engels), this passage is somewhat "overtranslated," but precisely in this "overtranslation," something decisive emerges in the translation of this final phrase: "*We shall at last force the secret of profit-making*" (Marx, *C* 1, p.186).

In this sense of "force," which seals together the self-disclosure of capital with the active "forcing" of theory, we see Marx's method revealed clearly: to not merely investigate the social

³ We should note the strange sexual economy of Marx's use of the verb "enthüllen" (to reveal, to uncover), literally to "un-sheath" (*Hülle*, "sheath"). Freud extensively utilizes this term in the sense of "uncovering" the repressed sexual psychic life of the hysteric, a term which resonates with the sense of revealing the sordid sexual practices hidden behind a façade. In this sense we should recall that this passage occurs precisely to alert us to the generative-renewing role of the "use" of labor power in capital's dynamics, itself a "scandalous," paradoxical, and yet constitutive moment that Marx's work is intended to "disclose." I owe thanks to Yutaka Nagahara for discussions on this point. We should also note that this term is central to Marx's own description of his project of *critique*: "to lay bare the economic law of motion of modern society" ("das ökonomische Bewegungsgesetz der modernen Gesellschaft zu enthüllen") (Marx, *C* 1, p. 10; Marx, *K* 1, p. 15).

role of capital, but to theoretically *force* capital to reveal its own secrets, to engage in a theoretical experiment through which capitalism itself discloses its own essence. Hence, here Marx takes us from capital's apparently smooth surface, where "freedom" – freely agreed contracts, equality in exchange, each selling and buying his or her own property for his or her own gain – seems to be everywhere, into capital's depths, where force or coercion (*Zwang*) forms the violent undercurrent of capture that grounds these supposed "freedoms." In other words, the use of the word "force" here shows us a doubled point. On the one hand, Marx's method itself "forces open" the seemingly closed self-concealing/self-disclosing systematic circuit of capitalist accumulation, which "hides in plain view." On the other hand, when we follow this method, and "force open" the "secrets of profit-making," we discover an undercurrent of force as well.

Let us return to Uno's work, and particularly his theoretical microscope or diagnostic apparatus called the "three levels of theoretical analysis." This tool, which furnishes the logical form of analysis or experimental scenario that we are attempting to utilize, is a schematic, but more specifically a *schema* in the Kantian sense – a procedural rule or intervening determination which is not simply an "image." In other words, this schema is not simply "applied" to an object. This theory of three levels of analysis is not simply "applied" to an object called "capitalism" that is encountered in sensation in order to record what happens as a result. Rather, it is a weapon or device that is forcefully inserted or shoved into the situation that bears the name "capital." By ramming this weapon into capital's smooth self-definition, Uno attempts to see how capital behaves when it is forced to disclose its essence, by being purified or determined in accordance with a schema that disables capital's own techniques of insinuation. By differentiating between three levels or geological strata of political economy — principle or pure theory (*genriron*), the stadial historical development of capital (*dankairon*), and the conjunctural analysis of the immediate situation (*genjō bunseki*) — Uno is aiming at something fundamental for our discussion of "force." How does capital think about its own operation? How can politics be conceived in relation to capital's own self-movement? If capital's self-movement is a contained and endlessly spinning circuit, how can we account for its outside, the externalities on which it paradoxically relies for its own pseudo-wholeness? In order to deal with these basic questions, Uno utilizes this tripartite weapon in order to illuminate the gaps or ruptures between the levels at which theory operates. However, he is not concerned with merely producing a result *in theory*. Rather, he practices the art of dislocation – he utilizes the gaps of theory's own self-definition to force a result *in history*. In other words, Uno's methodological innovations and re-codings of Marx's work do not only function as a re-systematization of so-called "political economy" – despite his own insistence on the separation of politics from the work of theory, Uno's theoretical arsenal discloses the *politicality of theory*, and in doing so, simultaneously opens up the historical possibilities of politics.

Uno intervenes in theory to show that capitalism can be systematized as a pure circuit: he calls this internal dream or fantasy of capital "the world of principle, or pure capitalism" (*genriteki sekai* = *junsui shihonshugi*), in other words, it is an experimental world that has been purged of its worldness, a pure spinning circuit that exists only as a schematic systematization.⁴ Strictly speaking, this "world of principle" does not exist as such. In fact, "the reality of capitalism is that it never perfectly completes this systematization (*taikeika*). But capitalist development itself, until a more or less fixed instant, is always located within the directionality of systematic perfection (*kanseika*)" (Uno

⁴ Let me note that I do not take up here the many critical reappraisals of Uno's understanding of this "pure capitalism." Among a vast number of sources, see for example Iwata 1967, Mita 1968, Satō 1971, Kaneko 1974, and an overview in Furihata, ed 1979. The question of "pure capitalism" is here utilized simply as a lexical clue to the elucidation of the *politicality* of theory itself. I would like to take another opportunity elsewhere to revisit the world-history of the reception of Uno's concept from the viewpoint of the theory of crisis.

1974g, p. 11). What is the purpose of such a thought-experiment? First and foremost, it is an intervention. The intervention operates by introducing into a given scenario something that is strictly speaking absent. An intervention proceeds by forcing a situation to confront or admit its own void, those elements whose exclusion or absence structures the interior of the situation, but which do not exist within it as such. In other words, an intervention brings the outside, or what cannot be entirely included on the level of an element, into the interior in order to force a result. By positing this world of principle, Uno allows us to schematize not only the gaps in history that appear by comparison, but also the gaps of the supposedly perfect circle of capital's self-movement.

As a technique, this positing operates as an "anticipating hypothesis for the generic being of a truth, a forcing. Forcing is the powerful fiction of a completed truth. Starting with such a fiction, new pieces of knowledge can be forced, without even verifying this knowledge" (Badiou 2001, p. 252). Occasionally, critics of Uno's work point out that this "pure capitalism" does not exist, that capitalism is never "pure" but always contaminated by the historical and institutional levels of development in the social formation and so on. But this criticism misses completely the theoretical technique that Uno utilizes, what Badiou has referred to above as a "forcing." The point here is precisely that Uno does not need to "prove" the existence of something called "pure capitalism," nor does he need to "verify" it as a piece of knowledge. Rather, by wagering on this "completed fiction," that is, by utilizing it as a lever through which to "force" new knowledges, Uno can force capital to disclose not only its weaknesses, but also its own self-image, its dream of a perfect world wherein it meets no obstacles or boundaries. In other words, he uses this technique to demonstrate that capital can never be without its originary historical contamination. Uno's wagers on this "completed fiction" in order to force the disclosure of new operations of knowledge, new segments and sequences of thought. This logic of force or presupposition is precisely why Uno pays such close attention to Marx's use of the verb *setzen* (positing, placing, supposing, deploying, putting, etc). What does it mean that capital "pre-posit" or "pre-supposes" (*voraussetzen*) the elements of its own operation, whose existence it then uses in order to legitimate itself? This is precisely the foundation of capital's "occult quality" (*die okkulte Qualität*) through which it self-expands as value, adding value to itself (*Selbstverwertung*) (Marx, K1, p. 169; C1, p. 165).

Althusser, for instance, frequently identified this paradoxical logic of capital, in which the "elements precede the forms," and these forms then extend themselves on the basis of the elements, as if the elements were productions of the forms. But because theory also operates in terms of the characteristics of its theoretical object, this problem of "setzen" is also one that operates at the level of method, the "positing" of this absent thing called "pure capitalism," this void that allows us to "force" knowledge of the conjuncture. As Uno points out, "we ought to compare this purely capitalist society to an experimental device or apparatus (*jikken sôchi*), in the sense employed by the natural sciences. It is not something we can simply exclude as a 'disruptive element' by means of a specific determinate viewpoint. It is rather the 'spiritual concrete' or 'concrete in the mind' (*geistig Konkretes*)⁵ capable of corresponding to the developmental tendency of capitalist society" (Uno 1974g, p. 18). What is this experimental apparatus or laboratory tool? It is obvious that "in the analysis of economic forms, neither microscopes nor chemical reagents are of use. The force of abstraction must replace both (*Die Abstraktionskraft muß beide ersetzen*)" (Marx, K 1, p. 12; C 1, p. 8). In order to understand the theoretical physics of this *Abstraktionskraft* as a diagnostic device, we should also overcode or overtranslate this term that Uno uses to describe the experimental apparatus of "pure capitalism," what Marx called a "geistiges Konkretes." In other words, it is not only a "spiritual" (*geistiges*) concrete, it is also a "ghostly" (*geistiges*) concrete, a

⁵ Although it is not specifically cited, Uno is referencing this term in Marx 1983a, p. 35; Marx 1986, p. 38.

haunting figure that inhabits a world it cannot truly be within. The ghost is precisely the figure of the absence that haunts all presence, the figure that in-habits a situation while constantly forcing that situation to confront its absence, or that which cannot find a place or body within the interior, but can only trace the exterior from the inside. “Pure capitalism” as a “ghostly concrete” structures capitalism itself, the historical lived capitalism that we experience in life practice. Pure capitalism has no body, it is un-in-habited/un-in-habitable, it has no incarnation, but it is paradoxically the most concrete thing that structures capital’s historical expansion: it is capital’s drive (*Trieb*). The drive is strictly absent from immediacy – it is not the same thing as biological instinct (*Instinkt*).⁶ But the absent drive is also what demonstrates capital’s finitude, its pseudo-immortality. As a “ghostly concrete,” capital is precisely the massive agglomeration of the living dead, a specter or wraith that concatenates into one ghostly absence/presence the totality of living labor. In other words, “although a purely capitalist society can never be concretely realized, the fact that at a certain stage of development it begins to develop in this pure direction by means of its own forces (*jiryoku*), and the fact that its underside or reverse (*ura*) expresses a historical process in which this development is reversed, forcing capitalism to anticipate its own termination (*shūmatsu*), simultaneously forces the theoretical systematization of this process towards its own completion or perfection” (Uno 1974g, p. 19). This absence that conditions the worldly presentation of capital, this specter called the “world of principle, or pure capitalism,” is constantly appearing as a silhouette, as a vanishing point or something like the perspectival point in a three-dimensional diagram. It is strictly absent from the scene, but organizes the situation in its own image. By utilizing this perspectival point Uno forces the commodity economy to disclose where its weakness lies: “From the outset, labor power, which cannot be a product of the commodity economy itself, is passing through an “impossibility” or “excess” which commodifies it (*shōhinka suru muri o tōshite iru*) just like all other general products. The basis which enables this “passing through” is given to a certain extent (*tōshi uru kiso o ichiō wa ataerareru*). In other words, as something that is in essence historically limited, the commodity economy never concretely commodifies the entirety of the social, but rather can be theoretically systematized as something which develops towards this direction” (Uno 1974g, p. 12). Uno theoretically systematizes a purely capitalist society as a “completed fiction.” That is, it is a fiction and therefore necessarily incomplete, but it is a self-contained fiction that *completes itself* in theory. It bears a close resemblance to the fundamental theoretical stance of the phenomenological method: “To let what shows itself be seen from itself, just as it shows itself to itself” (*Das was sich zeigt, so wie es sich von ihm selbst her zeigt, von ihm selbst her sehen lassen*) (Heidegger 1967, p. 34).

This fiction of a purely capitalist society allows pieces of knowledge to be forced into existence, precisely because this purely capitalist society expresses the tendential movement or directionality of commodification. Commodification is never a limited phenomenon: rather, every act of commodification contains within it the overall directionality of absolute commodification. This is, for instance, precisely why Deleuze and Guattari argue that philosophy’s role is directly politi-

⁶ This use of the term “drive” should be clarified. “Drive” or *Trieb* can be understood here in Freud’s sense, as a force of pulsion that pushes something towards an object of satisfaction; it should not be confused with simple instinct (*Instinkt*). When we apply this term to capital, it expresses the crucial point that capital is a social relation in which the commodity economy is the only social principle. Therefore, the reproduction of capitalist society itself, the total reproduction of the society as a whole, must always pass through or be mediated by the form of the commodity. Capitalism therefore is always “driving” towards a pure commodity economy, one in which all social relations are purely commodified, although it never completely accomplishes this goal – in fact, it cannot accomplish this goal, because it requires something outside of its own circuit: labor power. Nevertheless, even if capitalism is never perfectly systematized according to its own ideal schematics, even if it can never reach its object of satisfaction (pure capitalism), capital possesses at all times a drive or directionality *towards* this systematicity.

cal, not because one can make political judgments in theory, and then simply “apply” them to the political realm, but because philosophy itself is an experimental battlefield in which the relative deterritorializations that comprise the level of history can be “purified” or made absolute. In this way, the relative deterritorializations of the historical process can be generalized as a world in which absolute deterritorialization has been accomplished. This produces a situation of the “the axiomatic deterritorialization of the world” or the “final phase of the transition from exo-colonization, capital’s annihilation of its own outside through its expansion across the earth, to endo-colonization, that is, the torsional invagination of capital’s movement of accumulation into its own interior, encompassing land and human beings themselves” (Nagahara 2002, p. 187).⁷ In other words, this world of principle or pure capitalism is not a world in which there is a particularly savage capitalism; rather, this experimental world is totally divested of all obstacles to capital’s own self-movement and self-definition: “Not clean war with zero deaths, but pure war with zero births” (Virilio 2000, p. 145). This experimental world can then be utilized in order to understand the tendential movements and operations of the historical world. As such, this practice of “forcing” on the basis of a completed fiction is itself directly political, precisely because it is a dislocation of the object across the levels of being: a political result in history is forced on the basis of a positing on the level of theory. The site of politicality that Uno identifies in this “positing,” the set of questions contained in Marx’s use of the term *setzen*, revolve around the commodity: “political economy can grasp the concrete relations that form a given society through the commodity, because these relations are ‘presupposed’ (*voraussetzen*) within the interior of the commodity form itself. Capital’s theoretical system thus comes to be completed (*kanketsu*) by positing (*setzen*) within its own development itself the concrete relations which are ‘pre-posed’ (*voraussetzen*) as its point of departure (*shuppatsuten*)” (Uno 1974g, p. 17). He follows this decisive point by identifying the double structure of referral between the theoretical object and the politicality of theory by pointing out the haunting of the inside by the outside:

A commodity economy always possesses this (im)possibility or “*nihil* of reason” (*muri*) insofar as it manages the relations among human beings as relations among things, but it is paradoxically the fact that this (im)possibility itself (*muri*) has developed as a form capable of ordering the totality of society that in turn renders possible our own theoretical systematization of its motion (Uno 1974g, p. 19).

This impossibility therefore, is the site around which we can understand the relation of political economy to politics itself. Because of the contingency or undecidability of the commodification of labor power, capital must reroute or recode this contingency as necessity, it must reorder the internal sequencing of elements of the purely contingent or fortuitous encounter so that these elements connote or come to disclose a necessity, an exigency. By filling the holes and ruptures in its austere motion, capital draws our attention to this impossibility for the first time. By mobilizing labor power in its ostensibly ‘pure’ circuit, capital tries to utilize this “phantasmic semblance that fills the irreducible ontological gap” (Žižek 1999, p. 238), but in doing so, it also exposes the politicality of its own so-called economic necessity. Resistance, the proletarian capacity to revolt against the system which produced it, is only capable of discovering itself as a resistance precisely because of the way in which capital tries to fold this resistance back into itself. In other words, the proletariat discovers that it has “nothing to lose but its chains” only through the experience of being divorced from the land in the process of primitive accumulation and forcibly reconstituted as

⁷ On the terms *exo-colonialisation* and *endo-colonialisation*, see Virilio 1975.

the owner of a single thing: labor power which can be commodified. Through the insertion of this labor power commodity, the foundational input for capital's operation, the elementary form of resistance insinuates itself *within* the interior (capital's logic), and capital, in confronting the fact that it cannot itself produce this labor power commodity, is forced to plug up its own gaps with the material of this resistance. Thus the proletarian outside discovers for itself the openings for the project of communism only, paradoxically, by being exposed to the weaknesses and limitations of capital from the inside: it is not a pure absence, but an "indiscernible" element that structures the exchange between interior and exterior. Capital computes the "random order" of events precisely "as if" they constituted a necessary, natural, and self-legitimizing sequence, and then folds this set of effects *post-festum* back into its own function in order to ground itself. This "as if" (*als ob*) of capital, in which the hazardous potential of chance is smoothed over in the form of the accumulation cycle is why Uno constantly emphasizes that capital is always something that appears "as if" it is a perfect cyclical self-contained object in motion. But it is precisely this "as if" that gives us a clue to the correlation between the outside in political economy and the outside of politics itself, this structure of forcing in which we encounter not only the potentiality of the "critique of political economy" but also the possibilities of the intervention.

The "revolution," in other words, does not immediately eliminate those things that it would overcome, it rather "reduces" them to their "purest expressions" (*ihren reinsten Ausdruck*), it raises them to the level of "principle" in order to overthrow them. Thus the analysis of "pure capitalism," rather than a depoliticized evasion of the concrete, is a theoretical *practice*, a practical and active measure taken to "reduce" the logic inherent in capitalism's everyday dynamics to "its purest expression," not simply in order to imagine the *scientificity* of this contaminated cycle, but precisely in order to allow it to "complete" itself "in order to be able to overthrow it." This mechanism that Marx identifies with the revolution "traveling through purgatory," is thus this strange amalgam whereby the immediate situation can only be apprehended by means of the "force of abstraction," which in turn "inverts" or "reverses" itself into the most concrete elements. Already here, we are dealing with a question of "translation," a question of the relationship of the logic of capital to the logical motion of theory itself: "Was it not the awareness of this very problematic which forced Marx to 'translate' economic concepts into other concepts which were to be 'more' than merely economic? And is it not the case that any translation of Marx's concepts, which in truth would amount to a re-translation, would hide the very problem, which led to the development of a critical theory of economic categories in the first place? The problem is that intelligible, and yet in some sense 'incomprehensible', concepts prove to be only *apparently-intelligible*, which means precisely that they are *unintelligible* concepts" (Backhaus 1992, 56). We will see how this "apparent intelligibility" that covers over or overcodes the fundamental unintelligibility of political economy stems from the dense overlapping or contamination between logic and history, a contamination that is mirrored or expressed in an interlocking manner with the political physics of theory itself.

3. The Axiomatic Traversal of the Limit

In precisely the sense that the goal of the psychoanalytic scenario is the "traversal of the fantasy," the goal of the *critique* of political economy is the traversal of the fantasy of systematicity that political economy seeks to discover in capital's axiomatic operation, a set of laws of motion that political economy *attempts to mirror in its own theoretical physics*. But what this "traversal" consists in must be extensively clarified. Here we will take another clue from Uno's work and develop it in a specific theoretical direction: the question of *traversal, passing (through), conduc-*

tion, the *conduit*, and the apparatuses that enable it. Uno writes:

Through the law of population, capitalism comes into possession of *mechanisms or apparatuses which allow the (im)possibility of the commodification of labor power to pass through* (*'muri' wo tôsu kikô*). This is precisely the point on which capitalism historically forms itself into a determinate form of society, and further, is what makes it independent in pure-economic terms. Like land, this is a so-called given for capitalism, one that is given from its exterior, but unlike land it can be reproduced, and by means of this reproduction becomes capable of responding to the demands of capital put forward through the specific phenomenon of capitalism called crisis (Uno 1974, p. 426-427).

Capitalism itself does not produce labor power, but rather produces assemblages or mechanisms (*kikô*) that “transmit” or “allow through” (*tôsu*) the effect of the (im)possibility, this folding back into itself. We know that because of the inherent incompleteness that inevitably-recurrently emerges whenever capital’s logic attempts to display itself as a perfect circle, this logic *should not* work, and yet it works perfectly well in capitalist society. This irrational moment or fundamental absence of reason that characterizes economic “rationality” itself presents us with a paradox, but equally poses for us a corollary theoretical problem. If capital’s logical cycle experiences some fundamental gap or rupture insofar as it can never operate without recourse to the “savage outside” that *should be* strictly excluded from the systematic inside, how does this logical movement *pass through* or *traverse* this gap, so that the cycle might appear whole? In fact, here we are confronted with a crucial conceptual innovation: capitalism as a historical society, a determinate form of social relations, is not distinguished simply by the form of the wage, the development of the productive forces and so forth, but rather by its capacity, as a “determinate form of society,” to produce, maintain, and utilize these “apparatuses” for the *traversal* of the (im)possibility.

The strict methodological difference between the logic of capital – its “principles” – and the history of capitalism – its stadial development – experiences a contamination or cross-fertilization precisely in the relations of force drawn by Uno around the “*muri*” of the commodification of labor power. This (im)possibility in effect shows us that the capture of the “extimate” energy of human labor in effect installs in capitalist society a compulsion to repeat the original-irrational moment of capture by which capitalist society locates its *arché*, but also which can never emerge in the historical world. In this way, the impossibility of the origin must be repeated as the (im)possibility of commodification by means of what Uno called these “apparatuses for the traversing of the (im)possibility” above. It is only in the clarification of these “apparatuses” or “mechanisms” that we can clarify the political problem incarnated in this volatile amalgam of logic and history that is capitalist society. This question therefore moves us quickly to a theoretical formulation of the relation between the methodological level of the critique of political economy and the set of problems posed in the form of the agrarian question. Moreover, it is when we inquire into this question of *how* and *by what means* this “passing through” or traversal can be accomplished that another fundamental problem for Marxist theoretical inquiry returns to us with a sudden and dramatic force: the so-called “national question.” But where does this theoretical structure have its origin in Uno’s work? It shows us again the essential role of the agrarian question in “revealing,” “disclosing,” or “uncovering” these apparatuses that work precisely to ensure that an essentially *defective* logic⁸ will nevertheless “work correctly” on the level of history.

⁸ On this point, see Yutaka Nagahara’s essay in this same issue, and particularly his analysis of the “defective circle” that must be repeatedly traced by means of the form of the *commencement*.

Uno draws our attention not to the “feudal system” as such but to the “feudality” (*hōkensei*) of the rural village, in a specific and ideational form, what he called its “thought, sentiment, and custom” (see Uno 1974e). What he means by drawing our attention to this stratum of “feeling” or “affect” is to emphasize that the form of the apparatus that allows this (im)possibility of the commodification of labor power to push its motion forward, to proceed without foundering on its own slippages, appears variously in the form of the nation-state, in form of local customs, in the form of “thought,” forms of connection, forms of encounter, forms of emotion, and so forth. This in turn stems from Uno’s *transversal* relation to the debate on Japanese capitalism: rather than taking any of the typical positions – the arguments that Japanese capitalism was permanently crippled by emerging from a feudal basis directly into a militarist form of industrial capital, or that seemingly feudal relations in the countryside were mere remnants withering away under capital’s homogenizing influence – Uno instead, through this concept of the apparatus of traversal (although he had not yet “formally” used this phrase), makes a much different point.

Instead, he argues, the apparent existence of feudal relations in the countryside was not an indication that the actual full-blown feudal system remained on a partial basis, or that these relations were merely atrophied “remnants,” but rather it indicated something much more complex: feudal relations or feudal “sentiments” were “*maintained precisely as a sacrifice that enabled Japanese capitalism to develop without resolving the problems it itself posited*” (Uno 1974e, p. 55). Let us note here that this paradoxical structure is exactly what he later referred to as an “apparatus for the traversal of the (im)possibility” (*‘muri’ wo tōsu kikō*). In other words, this structure, which Uno first locates in the problem of clarifying the question of the “survivals of feudalism” or “feudal remnants,” is not a question of “uneven development” or other rather obvious features of capitalist development on a world scale, it is instead a question in which the inner logic of theory overlaps with the logic that inheres in capital *as a social relation*, and exposes its basic contamination, which it nevertheless attempts to erase. That is, what we see here is the fundamental logical problem of how something that should function as an obstacle can be evaded without resolving the basis on which the obstacle emerged in the first place. To put it in different terms, the basic theoretical problem that Uno derives from the agrarian question, and which then functions later in his work as a kind of pivot or lever around which to expose capital’s particular dementia, is this logic of the *traversal*, “passing,” “passing through,” the “conduit,” and so forth. In other words, the question is not simply one of capital’s (im)possibility, its fundamental “*nihi*l of reason,” rather the question is why the social relation called capital functions smoothly in an apparently rational and elegant circle *despite the fact that it should not function at all*, that its underlying *nihi*l should expose this circle as a crippled and impossible circuit.

But how does this “traversal” itself function for capital? It functions as a “folding,” a “pleating,” a “turning inside out.” In other words, it is not simply a “crossing over” or “leap.” When we think of a leap, we imagine that there are two clear sides, two distinct fields, and that one passes from one side to the other. But capital’s two leaps (the leap of the exchange process and the leap between one social basis or mode of production and another) never occur in such a neat fashion. Rather the leap is an *ideational* moment that “passes through,” that is “conducted” through the situation by means of the apparatus, the device or mechanism. Or, more fundamentally, the “leap” or “inversion” is precisely what *creates* the two sides. By inverting, reversing, leaping, or “passing through,” a planar surface or single topological field in extension is retroactively split into two, made to appear double, so that there becomes “this side” and “that side,” so that the historical process appears to be grounded on a set of uneven substances that pre-exist the moment when they are revealed. But prior to the moment of *traversal*, when a boundary or limit emerges that must be “passed through,” the boundary or limit would merely be located as one moment of a single planar

horizon, not something that marks the gap between two sides. Thus what forms the gap, or what transforms the limit into a true break or abyss, is precisely the movement of passage, the traversal of the limit within the planar field. This passage transforms the limit into a *gradient* or “threshold of intensity” (*seuil d’intensité*) (see Deleuze & Guattari 1980, p. 71) after which point it continues to function in an ideational sense as the mark or breach between two surfaces, intersected now by a different field or exterior that *suspends* the previous extensive arrangement.

Capital thus names the social scenario according to which this planar surface’s limits are transformed into gaps, a social system of *the axiomatic traversal of the limit*, wherein the limit itself is incessantly-recurrently being *inverted* or *dis-placed* as a gradient or “threshold.” The intensity of this threshold is contained precisely in the fact that it is the *locus* or site of the “passing” of the (im)possibility, the moment wherein the (im)possibility is traversed and thereby “retrojected” as a gap or breach. Once again, this logic is a paradoxical system intimately (or more accurately “extimately”) linked to exteriority – not the substantial outside or the fantasy of an elsewhere, but the exteriority that characterizes the forms emerging under capitalism as *verrückt*, that is, both “demented” and “dis-placed,” or more centrally for our analysis “de-ranged,” that is, both “deranged” and “displaced” from a given “range” into another. It is this “displacement” or “dislocation” (both in the sense of an unexpected localization of phenomena and a “fault-line” or “crack”) in the tectonics of capitalism’s territorial expression, located not just in the form of the *state*, but in the state’s specific technology called “the nation,” that furnishes one of the central moments around which Uno expands and opens up the “political physics” of capital’s so-called “logic.”

When Marx specifically mentions that the form of value is itself continuously-recurrently expressed and concentrated “in dieser verrückten Form” (Marx C1, p. 87; K1, p. 90), he alerts us to something essential in this word “verrückt” or “Verrücktheit” (“insanity” but also “dis-placement”). In other words, it indicates “a mode of existence of social practice caught up in an ‘ongoing process’ of ‘inversion’” (Backhaus 1992, p. 60). Here, in order to understand the particular “de-rangement” of capital that is concentrated in what Uno refers to as these “apparatuses for the traversal of the (im)possibility,” we ought to cross-read the emphasis on the centrality of the value-form as the ground of the specific *scientificity of critique* of Marxist theoretical research, and the program of “taking Marx from behind” undertaken by Deleuze and Guattari. Although their aesthetic and gestural modes of analysis diverge, they both locate the essence of the dynamics of capital in the “deranged forms” within which the form of value emerges (Backhaus) and the specific “dementia” that emerges across every social surface intersected by capital (Deleuze and Guattari). In fact, we should pay strict attention again to the double sense of this term “verrückt” as both “deranged” and “de-ranged,” that is, not only insane but also *transversal*, diagonal, moving across fields in “displacement,” whereby the expected arrangement of phenomena is punctuated, suspended, or interrupted by a schematic of arrangement (or de-rangement) that “ranges” divergently, placing unforeseen combinations into another order. This “Verrücktheit” of capital is exactly why Deleuze and Guattari emphasize that the schizophrenic is one “without epistemological guarantees,” one who follows a different arrangement of reality, “which encourages or allows one to *dis-place oneself* from one field to another” (*qui l’entraîne à se déplacer d’un plan à un autre*) (Deleuze 2002, 328).

Both of these analyses of the “verrückt” (deranged) and “ver-rückt” (de-ranged) characteristics that inform the slippages or gaps between capital’s logic and the historical development of capitalist society find their ultimate expression in Uno’s analysis of the *muri*, the (im)possibility or “*nihi*l of reason” that is nevertheless always “passing through.” In fact, we should recall that in the (im)possible origin of capital in the moment of the English enclosures, the secondary effect of the

formation of the owner of the labor power commodity is to simultaneously create or formally produce the *vagabond*. In this sense, it is no accident that the formation of the modern “lumpenproletariat,” whose origin is found in the “beggars, robbers, and vagabonds” (*Bettler, Räuber, Vagabunden*) produced as a side-effect of the production of the *vogelfreie Proletariat* in the process of the so-called primitive accumulation,⁹ concerns the entire question of “range,” “ranging” and “de-ranging.” The lumpenproletariat is the purest expression of “feudal remnants” not in the sense that it is something “backwards” or “out of time,” but rather that it expresses the present concretization of the process of primitive accumulation or the transition *as a surface effect*, that is, it does not “repeat” this moment but keeps this moment circulating on the surface. What above all characterizes the later lumpenproletariat and early “vagabond” is precisely that they “range across fields” (Deleuze & Guattari), that they “wander about” (hence the legal declaration: “Eine herumwandernde und bettelnde Person wird für einen Landstreicher und Vagabunden erklärt” (“Any one *wandering about* and begging is declared a rogue and a vagabond”)) [Marx, *K I*, p. 764]). In other words, the “de-rangement” of capital’s logic, its “deranged forms,” are produced as a result of the contamination between the (im)possible origin of capital and the (im)possibility of the commodification of labor power, a volatile amalgam held together and yet retained as a gap by the traversal itself:

Obviously the processes of the emergence of capitalism, its maturation, and especially its decline, all appear as processes specific to each individual country. Generally speaking, it can be said that the processes experienced by countries that have seen the development of capitalism earlier will basically be repeated as an identical process in countries experiencing a late transition to capitalism. *This expresses to us the fact that the principles of political economy, or the logic that inheres in capital, is only realized or achieved by passing through the historical process (genri ga rekishiteki katei wo tôshite kantetsu shite iru koto)*, revealing its various phases precisely through the temporal period of the transition to capitalism (Uno 1974c, p. 141).

Here is where the inner *topology* of the logic and the outer *cartography* of history are linked, sealed, interlocked as surfaces on the *torus* of capital. But why is this theoretical direction so crucial? What is the exigency for the analysis of this contamination, this operation of the traversal?

Uno gives us another clue: “this is precisely because I think that unless we purify the theory of principle latent in *Capital* to the extent that it can be utilized in the analysis of imperialism, and in relation to questions such as that of Japanese capitalism, it will be impossible to avoid lapsing into formalism, and a realization of effective cooperation between economics and research in other areas of social science and cultural knowledge will be impossible. It is this theoretical process that will open new paths for the settling of the theory of the principles of political economy itself” (Uno, K. 1974i, p. 144).

4. Topologies of the Critique of Political Economy: Torsion and Inversion

The maximum of Marxism = (Umschlag)
(Lenin 1971, p. 451)

⁹ Although it is the most important moment of this contamination of logic and history in the smooth and demented cycle of political economy, I cannot deal extensively with the question of the so-called primitive accumulation in the present essay, but I attempt a broad reading of this concept in Walker 2011b.

Having arrived at the problem of the traversal of the *nihil* of reason that paradoxically characterizes capital's arrogated "rationality," let us return to the following statement of Lacan, quoted in the epigraph: "the fact is that science, if one looks at it closely, has no memory. Once constituted, it forgets the circuitous path by which it came into being (*elle oublie les péripéties dont elle est née*)" (J. Lacan 1966, p. 349-50). Here, we need to pay close attention to the term *péripéties* – the "circumstances," "adventures," the "incidents" or "events," the "twists and turns" of the plot, so to speak. But this seemingly unimportant or cursory term in Lacan's statement turns out to be nothing less than the pivotal term around which the putatively "scientific" circle of capital's logic operates. *Peripeteia* in classical Greek narrative analysis refers to the sudden or dramatic change in circumstances, a *reversal*, an instantaneous and unexpected "plot twist." In other words, it connotes the tragic, comic, or absurd moment when an expected set of relations or phenomena is suddenly revealed to have transformed into its inverse, when a set of circumstances has somewhat *folded inside out*. The pretensions to "science" of economics, as a pure cyclical set of laws of motion mirroring the exchange process, must always violently "forget" the contingencies of the historical process in order to imagine itself as a rationality, as a pure logic. That is, once constituted, the "science" of political economy "forces" itself to ignore or elide the fact that it came into being by imitating in its theoretical structure the "deranged" nature of capital itself, which pretends to be a pure interiority while constantly having recourse to the historical process in order to retain and reproduce its dynamism. In this sense, the critique of political economy consists in the *restoration* or "re-remembering" of these *péripéties* that "science" would seek to exclude from its image of itself, to take these "secret" undercurrents and rather than erase them, instead raise them up to the level of the "world of principle" itself.

A very specific term in Marx's work functions in the style of this *peripeteia*, a term that links together the deranged logic of capital with the pretensions to "rationality" of the "dismal science" of economics. This term is also at first glance something cursory or unremarkable, the term *Umschlag*. In Marx's work, this term is used in two divergent senses: on the one hand, it simply means the "turnover" of capital, that is, the process through which capital is advanced and subsequently returns; on the other hand, this term is utilized in the *Grundrisse* manuscripts to indicate the movement of "inversion" or "reversal" whereby, through "a peculiar logic, the right of property is dialectically inverted (*dialektisch umschlägt*), so that on the side of capital it becomes the right to an alien product, or the right of property over alien labour, the right to appropriate alien labour without an equivalent, and, on the side of labour capacity [*Arbeitsvermögens*], it becomes the duty to relate to one's own labour or to one's own product as to *alien property*" (Marx 1986, p. 386-7; Marx 1983a, 370-371). He continues:

The 'inversion' or 'reversal' [*Umschlag*] therefore comes about because the ultimate stage of free exchange is the exchange of labour capacity [*Arbeitsvermögens*] as a commodity, as value, for a commodity, for value; because it is given in exchange as objectified labour, while its use value, by contrast, consists of living labour, i.e. of the positing of exchange value. This 'inversion' or 'reversal' [*Umschlag*] arises from the fact that the use value of labour capacity, as value, is itself the value-creating element; the substance of value, and the value-increasing substance. In this exchange, then, the worker receives the equivalent of the labour time objectified in him, and gives his value-creating, value-increasing living labour time. He sells himself as an effect. He is absorbed and incarnated into the body of capital [*wird er absorbiert vom und inkarniert in das Kapital*] as a cause [*Ursache*], as activity [*Tätigkeit*]. Thus the exchange turns into its opposite, and the laws of private property — liberty, equality, property — property in one's own

labour, and free disposition over it — turn into the worker's propertylessness and the dispossession of his labour [*Eigentumslosigkeit des Arbeiters und Entäußerung seiner Arbeit*], [i.e.] the fact that he relates to it as alien property and vice versa (Marx 1987, p. 64; Marx 1983a, p. 575).

This *Umschlag*, in other words, is a *topological* description of the traversal of the (im)possibility, a description of *how* something that appears as a limit is recreated, recoded, and re-deployed as a *gradient* of intensity for capital's functioning. This *Umschlag*, also simply the term for an "envelope," literally "envelopes" the outside by turning it "inside out," torsionally folding it in on itself, so that what should operate as a gap can be dialectically "leaped," but also burrowed into, emptied out, transformed from an *apparent* depth into a volatile surface. It is no accident that the exchange process, the process of the buying and selling of labor power is not something punctuated by limits as such: these limits or gaps between seller and buyer are torsionally inverted or penetrated into only in order to recalibrate themselves as one smooth surface on which will occur "der flüssige Umschlag von Verkauf und Kauf" ('the fluid "reversal" or "inversion" of sale and purchase') (Marx *KI*, p. 144; Marx *CI* p. 140). In fact, although we typically describe capital's motion as a "circuit process" and therefore as a circle, what is actually happening is *not a circle at all*. It is a topological *folding* and *unfolding*, through which the interior surface and the exterior surface can be interlocked in a planar field, it appears therefore as a *torus*: "Capital appears as this dynamic unity (*prozessierende Einheit*) of production and circulation, a unity which can be considered both as the totality (*Ganze*) of its production process and as the particular process through which capital goes during a *single* turnover (*bestimmter Verlauf e i n e s Umschlags des Kapitals*), a *single* movement returning to itself (*e i n e r in sich selbst zurückkehrenden Bewegung*)" (Marx 1983a, p. 520; Marx 1987, p. 8). That is, *capital itself* is, in essence, this *Umschlag*, this inversion or torsion on itself, which names the cyclical course by which it goes through a single motion of its torsional pattern, its "circuit process" (*Kreislaufprozess*), not merely in a flat circle, but in a topological opening out onto and simultaneous folding into itself. But, and this again is why capitalism is so purely demented, deranged, and de-ranged, capital is only capable of expressing itself as the logic towards which it is compelled in a *single* cycle. Once the cycle ends, this torsional movement of inversion finds that, in order to repeat itself, it must traverse the historical outside, it must appeal to the "apparatuses" for the traversal of this (im)possibility that lies at the boundary or edge of every circuit-process, every cycle of exchange in capitalist society, the hole at the center of the torus. Therefore, capital's compulsion to repeat always undermines its own attempt to appear as a logic, precisely because this logic is only able to legitimate itself in the form of a single circuit. This is exactly what Marx identifies in the question of "turnover," this moment of inversion/turnover that traces the outline of the maximal limit of capital's ability to grasp its outside *as if* it were a pure moment of the inside: "the production process itself is posited as determined by exchange, so that the social relation and the dependence on this relation (*die gesellschaftliche Beziehung und Abhängigkeit von dieser Beziehung*) in immediate production is posited not merely as a material moment, but as an *economic* moment, a determination of form (*Formbestimmung*)." This moment that should be impossible, the presentation of the social relation *as if* it were a derivation from the exchange process, in which social relationality is simply determined as the exchange of things, in this sense also expresses "the maximum of circulation (*Das Maximum der Zirkulation*), the limit (*die Grenze*) of the renewal of the production process through it" (Marx 1983a, p. 528; Marx 1987, p. 16).

It is in turn this "torsion" or inversion that reminds us to torsionally invert this de-ranged logic back upon "economics," back upon the simple mirroring of capital's quasi-logic as a "ratio-

nal” explanatory mechanism. It is in fact this *Umschlag* that economics, following capital’s own model faithfully, generally conceals or covers over. That is, when confronted with a “sudden inversion” (*plötzliche Umschlagen*), something that appears as the glimmer of the irrational outside within the putatively rational inside, the “agents of circulation” (*die Zirkulationsagenten*), or perhaps “economic fantasists,” become overawed by “the impenetrable mystery surrounding their own relations” (*dem undurchdringlichen Geheimnis ihrer eignen Verhältnisse*) (Marx 1987, p. 378-9; Marx 1983a, p. 365). This is not only because the confrontation with the traversal of the (im)possibility exposes the insanity of the image of capitalist society as a mere enlargement of the supposedly smooth and rational exchange process, it is also because Marx’s critique, and Uno’s development and recoding of this critique, is aimed not at capital’s logic itself, but at *the discourse of political economy*. It is not itself “an” economics. It is a critical explosion of the way in which political economy “buys into” capital’s own fantasy, its dream-like attempt to arrogate itself as a logic. Thus “the economic is in this sense the object itself of Marx’s ‘critique’: it is a representation (at once necessary and illusory) of real social relations. Basically it is only the fact of this *representation* that the economists abstractly explicate, which is inevitably already shared *practically* by the owners-exchangers (*propriétaires-échangistes*) of commodities, that the ‘economic’ relations appear as such, in an apparent natural autonomy. The representation is implicated in the very form of the *manifestation* of social relations. This is precisely what enables producers-exchangers to *recognize themselves* in the image that the economists present of them. The ‘representation’ of the economic is thus for Marx essential to the economic itself, to its real functioning and therefore to its conceptual definition” (Balibar 1974, p. 213).

Marx himself reminds us that the scientificity of critique should never be confused with the pretension to “scientific rationality,” but rather indicates an entirely different modality of analysis: “the weak points (*die Mängel*) of the abstract materialism of natural science, from which the historical process is excluded, are at once evident from the abstract and ideological conceptions (*Vorstellungen*) of its spokesmen, whenever they venture out beyond their own speciality” (Marx *CI*, p. 375-6n2; Marx *KI*, p. 393n.89). In other words, the scientificity implied in Uno’s analysis is not something of this type, precisely because, as we have seen, Uno fundamentally argues that the scientificity of capital is in fact *always* traversed or bisected by the historical process, that it is always contaminated with the effects of this traversal. This is why he alerts us to the fact that “the term ‘scientific’ in ‘scientific socialism’ is not something merely impressed on us by *Capital*: rather we ourselves must seek this ‘scientificity’ that Marx sought” (Uno 1975, p. 41). By drawing our attention to the fact that the scientificity specific to capital always appears in the “de-ranged form” of something that must both exclude the historical process and simultaneously come into existence only as a result of it, Uno in essence exposes not only the absence of reason that characterizes capital’s narrative of itself, he also indirectly exposes us to the profound irrationality of the putatively “rational science” of political economy itself.

In fact, the commodity itself, as the point of departure for the theoretical system of political economy – even if only grasped as an abstract concept stemming from the analysis of the actual situation of a society that has not completely transitioned to capitalism – is what establishes the general basis of the commodification of labor power in tandem with the simplification and genericization of labor through capitalism’s development itself; through this process, it accelerates in the direction of the realization of a purely capitalist society, and further, displays itself in a sense as an independent commodity society established through the force of its own development. As a result, political economy can grasp the concrete relations that form a given society through the commodity, because

these relations are “presupposed” (*voraussetzen*) within the interior of the commodity form itself. The theoretical system thus comes to be completed by positing (*setzen*) within its own development itself the concrete relations which are “preposited” (*voraussetzen*) as its point of departure. (Uno 1974g, p. 17).

Thus, we see precisely how, in Uno’s terms, the systematic and demented structure of capital also furnishes the theoretical architecture of the system of political economy. That is, because political economy itself relies on the same “deranged forms” as capital itself but “de-ranges” them into its motion, the same “forgetting” of the “circuitous path by which it was born,” the critical restoration of these *pérípéties* that are desperately erased from the inside serves to *politically* undermine the entire expression of political economy itself. In other words, Uno’s focus on the paradox of the absolute *nihil* of reason that is always passing through the most apparently rational moment, the exchange process, exposes and uncovers political economy’s deranged mode of operation, the way in which the “agents of circulation” actively forget their own “mystery.”

This “enveloping” function or *Umschlag* serves as the “maximum” point of the circulation process, in which this systematicity is both disclosed and exposed as demented, and ultimately is folded “inside out” or inverted into another instance. In turn, this *Umschlag*, which furnishes the pivotal point of the theoretical and systematic process of thought-experimentation, also serves in Lenin’s strange note as the “maximum” of Marxism itself. This must remind us therefore of the essential homology between the “maximum of Marxism” and the “maximum of circulation,” the fact that the possibility of the transformation of critique into political motion is a process in which the true “principle” of capitalist society, its “de-ranged” and “demented” nature, is *politically* raised to the level of principle so that its final de-ranging can occur. In this sense, when Uno reminds us that the smooth and elegant logic of capital’s interior is only ever set in motion by means of its traversals of the historical outside in the volatile instance of the agrarian question, he also reminds us that what is at stake in the analysis of capital, in its theoretical modelling, is never simply the description or mirroring of this quasi-logic. Political economy often attempts to discover the “rational kernel” in this logic: yet “the *critique* of political economy is not the mere description of this existing fact, but the analysis of its genesis” (Backhaus 1980, 104). When we confront the de-ranged origin and reproduction of capital’s logical functioning, we are also confronting the political physics and boundaries of our own theoretical representations of these phenomena, representations that are implicated already in the inner laws of capital’s movement, in its demented forms of presupposition (*Voraussetzung*). In turn, it is precisely through the recurrent and endless analysis of the *genesis* of this dementia that we are constantly reminded of the volatile force, both dangerous and precious, of the historical outside, the space wherein the political capacity to implode capital’s circuit-process remains an ever-present undercurrent of all social existence.

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