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By Howard Slater

There has been intense discussion of the notion of 'immaterial labour' recently. Initially proposed by Maurizio Lazzarato and famously deployed by Hardt and Negri to describe the liberatory potential of mental and/or affective labour in an 'informatised' mode of production, the immaterial labour thesis implies that new technology is producing non-capitalist labour relations within capitalism. One serious challenger to this view is the American academic Moïshe Postone who sees labour as inherently linked to domination. Here, Howard Slater offers a reader's report on Postone's magnum opus and draws on its complex challenge to 'traditional Marxism' to analyse the relations of production and agency of the immaterial worker

And she gave away the secrets of her past,
And said Iâve lost control again,
And of a voice that told her when and where to act,
She said Iâve lost control again
- Ian Curtis

In *Time, Labour & Social Domination* Moïshe Postone discusses labour by following Marx's analysis of the commodity as split between exchange value and use value. For Marx, this leads to a 'double character of labour' in capitalism: labour as a directly productive activity, a useful labour creating particular products (concrete labour) and labour as a 'socially mediating activity', a 'means' of labour uniting disparate labours (abstract labour). The former seems to encapsulate the current tenor of discussions of immaterial labour; immaterial labour as a concrete practice that seeks legitimation as a productive activity. The latter, abstract labour, operating for Postone 'in lieu of overt social relations', is not only, for him, the key to value as 'objectified social mediation', but figures commodity-determined labour as that which constitutes social mediation: 'a social means of acquiring the products of others'. For Postone, this labour creates a fabric of society almost as a by-product: 'no one consumes what one produces, but one's own labour... functions as the necessary means of obtaining the products of others. In serving as such a means, labour and its products in effect pre-empt that function on the part of manifest social relations.'

If a certain independence could accrue to concrete labour practices (artisanal, etc.), a certain 'autonomy' of use value, then these are more and more placed in this fabricated framework of dependence (in the goods/services of others) as the labour process is recomposed and the means and materials of production are more and more tightly 'enclosed'. Labouring activity, by means of its 'abstract' character, by means of being press-ganged by 'necessity', is, beside-itself, also productive of these very dependences; objective social mediations. Postone:

A characteristic of capitalism is that its essential social relations are social in a peculiar manner. They exist not as overt interpersonal relationships but as a quasi-independent set of structures that are opposed to individuals, a sphere of impersonal 'objective' necessity and 'objective dependence'.

This is tantamount, as Postone later states, to our maintenance of relations-of-production as non-conscious social determinations (*dispositifs*) [Here and throughout the text the author makes use of the Foucauldian or Deleuzian concept of *dispositif*, described later in the text as 'abstract operative rules']. Or, as Rubin states of value, it is tantamount to 'the transformation of social labour into a property of the products of labour i.e. commodities' (p.121).

So, labour as a form of capital, a commodity, interacts with other commodity forms and thereby, in the process of producing particular products (concrete labour), also constitutes (abstract labour) sets of structures throughout society that operate as an 'impersonal power': from the institutions of work and welfare to the institutions of culture. Postone: 'labour in capitalism is not mediated by social relations but, rather, constitutes itself as a social mediation. If in traditional societies, social relations impart meaning and significance to labour, in capitalism labour imparts an 'objective' character to itself and social relations.'

The impersonal power of relations-of-production, the objectivity of self-interest as a stand-in for overtly 'interpersonal' and socially sensuous relations, has it that labour is experienced as an 'abstract compulsion', a means to exchange labour for money for goods and services, and whilst this is close to the notion of *dispositif* as, say, 'abstract operative rules', it sheds light on how rules such as work procedures and terms and conditions can be characterised as instaurating a 'personal independence in the framework of a system of dependence' (p.123).

Using Postone's articulation of abstract labour, then, we could come to say that immaterial labour is a moment in the wider becoming of labour as the materialisation of abstract labour, the work on mediating activity that befits general management work as much as that of immaterial labour. Postone states that in real subsumption 'abstract labour begins to quantify and shape concrete labour in its image; the abstract domination of value begins to be materialised in the labour process itself'. One could suggest that the growing absurdity of a work that measures itself, a productive activity that measures its own productivity by means of arbitrary targets, invigilation, monitoring and statisticalisation of all types, is one where 'objectification' is interpolated into the labouring subject: self-management not of the enterprise, but of a now explicit mediational activity (labour) that is made increasingly concrete, 'productive' not only of value but of an attendant subjectivity. Postone: 'in this sense, objectivity can be seen as the non-overtly social 'meaning' that arises historically when objectifying social activity reflexively determines itself socially'. We may not all be bourgeois, but we are all increasingly managers of the animate and inanimate.

As a form of co-operation labour is also a management of relations-of-production. It is management in many ways. The manager is the one reputed to have the overview, who can objectify his/her staff in terms of productivity and 'behaviour'. When Postone adds the truism that under real subsumption 'the person' has become a means, we can add, in duly objectified language, that, as a means, the worker has become a management personage. This was where the discussion of immaterial labour in my text 'Baktu68' ended up: under real subsumption, marked by productive-circulation, forms of capital, commodities all, are in overseen interaction. The objectified relations that are worked-upon are relations that are forms of mediation. Productive activity increasingly concerns the reproduction of the relations-of-production that maintain abstract labour in its disciplinary function 'a block not only to living labour but also to the immanence of new social relations.[1] Such work is a work of domination (of other objects, be they people or goods). To manage is to make pliable for domination, to maintain relations of production despite their antagonism-inducing contradictoriness. Postone: 'Labour in capitalism gives rise to a social structure that dominates it. This form of self-generated reflexive domination is alienation.'

It becomes easier to see, then, why there was such a rush to embrace immaterial labour. Not only would it create the semblance of an independent sphere of labour, a potentially autonomous zone of living labour thrown up by the flotsam of one more recomposition, but it would also be hoped to resuscitate a labour theory of value that, by using Postone's double character of labour, seems to hinge, in the case of immaterial labour, on the measurement of concrete labour practices to the neglect of abstract labour. The labour theory of value, Postone seems, rightly or wrongly, to be saying, is one that occludes value as an objective social mediation: this displaces the analytic problem from one of the nature of social mediation in capitalism to one of the determination of exchange ratios. More: consequently value seems to be created by labour as productive activity — labour as it produces goods and material wealth — rather than by labour as a socially mediating activity. For Postone, following Marx closely, there is a distinction between wealth and value. For Postone, value is the capitalistic form of wealth and, it seems, his oblique criticisms of the labour theory of value are directed at: (i) an appraisal of wealth as social wealth — albeit alienated as capital in its present form; (ii) a move away from the fetishisation of labour as transhistorical — an unchanging physiological constant, an essence; (iii) a move away from value towards transvaluation and disequilibrium, i.e. upholding the labour theory of value appears to uphold value per se, i.e. recent attempts to valorise informatics and, soon, affect.

Are, then, discussions on the immeasurableness of value aligned with what Rubin calls the qualitative aspect of value (the social form of labour)? Are they informed by the socially mediating activity of abstract labour? Whereas formally this may have led to a calculation based on a working day of concrete labour, is it now, under real subsumption, a matter, with abstract labour shaping concrete labour in its image, of value appearing immeasurable because whilst there is a means of measuring concrete labour (working day) there is no means of measuring an ongoing and ubiquitous mediation unless it is taken as managerial labour (measured in terms of the amount of staff under management, i.e. measured in terms of relation, the efficacy of mediation — a disciplinary value)? Would such a managerial labour be seen as productive, and thereby appropriate to include under the labour theory of value, in the first place? Moreover, what does it mean for the labour theory of value when, as is the case with immaterial labour, portions of the economy are given over to work on dematerialised objects such as relation? Is it a matter of an increasing commodification, objectification, of relation, so that relation as an entity, interconnections as entities, can become focal point for a managerial and reproductive labouring activity?

If for Rubin the law of value is the law of equilibrium of the commodity economy (p.67), then does an immeasurableness of value, the impossibility of quantifying manifold mediations, signal a crisis of disequilibrium for capitalism; a crisis that is staved-off by the resuscitation and overdetermination of increasingly contentless forms of capital such as the commodity and labour? This would account for design-fetishism as well as a work that works on itself. However, disequilibrium is good for business (c.f. 100 local wars) and the main factor that tempers the labour theory of value, i.e. expanding work time beyond the working day, is one such disequilibrium that finds a renewed level of equilibrium: the magnitude of value, the socially necessary labour time, that which unites abstract labour and concrete labour and the distributive plurality of labours everywhere, is maybe no longer uniformly measurable, but it still falls back on abstract time (a temporal norm) as a means of measure. In this light, disparate working hours would give capital scope for the current vertiginous disparity of global wage rates which itself would be the cause of further hierarchies and further opportunities for managerial labour.

However, we begin to be wary of a labour theory of value and the becomings of labour that amend and effect it, in that whilst these seem to ensure the working class subject as antagonistic, they likewise cling to a notion of exploitation that seems to meet its remedial effect in a more fair distribution, i.e. within the confines of state legislation/intervention. This is Postone's bugbear with the traditional left

as one that attends to distributional palliatives (not always successful) that are in alignment with reformism and seductively impractical variants of social democracy. For Postone the problem is one that goes deeper and it becomes difficult to express it when we bear in mind both the global neo-con retrenchment and its precarisation of the welfare-model and the leftist attraction to spectacular exploitation as a rhetorical propagandising device. This problem could be expressed as the double character of exploitation, one that takes into account the simultaneous exploitation of both concrete and abstract labour which amounts to a painful self-exploitation under the abstract domination of value.

Abstract time, as the key component of the magnitude of value, becomes itself a form of abstract generality that determines the pace and possibilities of life. Postone:

As a result of the general social mediation, labour time expenditure is transformed into a temporal norm that not only is abstracted from, but also stands above and determines, individual action. Just as labour is transformed from an action of individuals to the alienated general principle of the totality under which the individuals are subsumed, time expenditure is transformed from a result of activity into a normative measure for activity.

This tyranny of time that seems to effect its own discipline could be the main way in which exploitation is experienced as unbearable by labour in the domain of high organic composition (real subsumption). It may not even be possible to call this exploitation, as may have been possible under formal domination, as working for a living now contains a personally-felt element of abstract compulsion to it. What's more, as concrete labour becomes overdetermined by abstract labour, as work tasks are intensively fragmented into gesturally and performatively machinic routines, there often appears to be very little use value to the labour we do. The quotient of living labour diminishes, making an activity of concrete labour socially useless outside the sector of its direct employment.

So, the double character of exploitation is creative of what Postone calls the alienated social constitution effected by labour. Whereas it was more possible to unite the individuals Postone mentions into a class that could share the effects of exploitation and bolster themselves with the possibilities of the use value of their labour (living labour) it becomes increasingly problematic to organise the self-exploited under the terms of obsessive compulsive disorder. Furthermore there is an innate suspicion of alienated social structures (government, local administration, etc) that causes an evacuation of the cul-de-sacs of social representation, abstract social structures (p.30), that are organised by the dictates of value: socially mediating and concurrent with abstract time. This can lead us to offer that under the dictatorship of value those practices that are not directly involved in commodity production (including immaterial labour and political work) are still productive of value in that they are disciplinary mediations that are still subject-to and constitutive-of abstract time. From the limited opening hours of a councillor's surgery to the provision of voluntary care in a hospice there is, in a society of production-relations, a participation in the redetermination of socially necessary labour time (p.288). In other words such practices as immaterial labour and general managerialism may not be seen as concrete labour, but they participate in valorisation by means of their being simultaneously abstract labour.[2]

Whether immaterial labour is productive or not is, in Postone's paradigm, besides the point, as the reciprocal determination between abstract and concrete labour, between abstract time and productive activity effects a reconstitution of value and redetermination of social productivity (p.347). This dialectical dynamic is what, after Marx, Postone refers to as the treadmill effect: increased productivity results neither in a corresponding increase in social wealth nor in a corresponding decrease in labour time, but in the constitution of a new base level of productivity (p.347). This has

wide ramifications and goes some way to explaining the way that society seems to be moving forward whilst it remains static. An abundance is produced, but this is neither the aim nor measure of wealth in capitalist society. Here, abstract time itself becomes experienced as concrete: value is reconstituted as a perpetual present, even though it is moved historically in time (p.346). This moving stasis, this dynamic immobility, the repetition of tasks, is the reproduction of the relations of production; the reproduction of the wide-ranging effects of the forms of necessity associated with value. Not least among these is the schizophrenizing social formation of independence in a framework of objective dependence (p.125) which has the further ramification of individuals in this society being, as Matthew Hyland expresses it, 'commanded to assume responsibility' for their 'own' condition.

Another of these necessities is the reproduction of wage labour (as the remote-command of value). Postone contends that this is creative of not only abstract compulsions and alienated social structures, but it also acts upon the form of concrete labour itself: 'considered abstractly and on a total social level, the effect of increased productivity on direct human labour' is to render that labour more uniform and simple and to intensify its expenditure (p.347). Whilst this hints at a decline in the use-value of labour from the perspective of the workers themselves (and an increased ease of management), it is also a matter of abstract labour shaping and subsuming concrete labour, creating a self-managed doubling of tasks, an enterprise-centric mind set, a sense of guilty responsabilisation to colleagues, and, at worse, an overdetermined identification in labour as a vocation, a means of self-image. This aspect of intensity has been brushed aside by Rubin who said Marx considered that the 'intensity of labour has only a supplementary and subordinate role' (p.157). This can be contrasted to the plaintive and obscure cry of Asger Jorn: 'but an hour of human work as the basis of value leads to the elimination of intensity as a variable in human labour'.

The immaterial labourer may be the figure that stands-in for this intensive variable. As an artist Jorn may well have made this statement with a mind to artistic labour as a 'passionate focalising'. For immaterial labour, with its accrued dimensions of affect, care work, knowledge work and service, this passionate engagement becomes a 'use value' that is seen by its proselytizers as a potentially autonomous subject of revolution. However, as a 'use value' that is structured by the objectifications of value, the work of immaterial labour could just as well be a means to objectify the 'passionate focalising', to make 'clients' into objects subject to 'abstract time' (appointment slots); to ensure that mediation be maintained as alienating. Immaterial labour as the management of alienation. There is a danger, then, that immaterial labour can bolster the 'bourgeois ideology of labour' in that through it, to echo Postone, the form of value is not superseded, but reconstituted and there becomes a new productive norm and comportmental expectation from concrete labour: 'passionate focalising', 'due care', commitment and vocation (all reputedly management qualities) become in-built into wage-labour requirements as 'behaviours': 'how staff are expected to behave in order to perform well at work'. Intensity is made measurable by being subsumed within 'an hour of human work'. Here antagonism turns into agonism.[3]

However, the intensity of labour, the making quantitative of a qualitative dynamic of concrete labour, another means by which 'the concrete dimension of labour is "appropriated" ' by its abstract dimension' (p.350), is a variable in human labour in that, outside of increases in productivity, it is impossible to measure the effects of intensity other than as ejection from wage labour, its increasing precariousness (a border-hop from a waiting room at the Job Centre). In this way it is measured in terms of days lost through sickness, through the recent statistic of 15% of the workforce being depressed.[4] In other words, as managed and managing objects of the process of value, rather than as social individuals contributing to social wealth and well being, the wage labourer is dominated not just by a workload but by an abstract time; not just by relations-of-production but by an intensification of the 'mediating function of labour in capitalism' that leads to greater distances between people and the

imposition of borders and their concomitant toll-gates. The intensity of labour (a qualitative specificity), then, leads to increases in productivity that come to be constituted in alienated form (quantified generality), as powers separate from the producers: 'For Marx, capitalist production is characterised by an enormous expansion in social productive powers and knowledge that are constituted within a framework determined by value, and hence, exist in alienated form as capital' (p.355).

The way beyond capital, then, does not, for Postone, lie with a working class he sees, provocatively, as the 'materialised form of both the forces and relations of production' (p.355) and as 'the structural source of its own domination', but lies in an appropriation of the 'socially general productive powers' hereto constituted historically as capital. This seems to mean that, for Postone, there has to be an acceptance of alienation as the outcome of productive labour practices rather than productive labour having its essence as a 'property' alienated from it. Alienation, once accepted, becomes the starting point. Postone: 'Alienation is the process of the objectification of abstract labour. It does not entail the externalisation of a pre-existing human essence; rather it entails the coming into being of human powers in alienated form' (EW162). In this way Postone is close to Marx's statement that there would have to be a move beyond the stage of 'self-reference in alienation', a move that would allow people to 'control what they had constituted socially in alienated form' (EW162). This would involve the re-articulation of *dispositifs* through the formation of new social relations; relations brought under human control, qualitatively specific, non-directed relations not subject to 'abstract time' that artists such as Jorn endeavoured to bring about by means of cultural revolution (c.f. 'construction of situations' and the Surrealists' 'fortuitous encounter').

Postone's offer to embrace alienation, so to speak, leads to a shift that is highly contentious for the majority of the left. Namely, it implies that, under real subsumption the wage labourer is the object of the process of production and, contrary to workerist theory, is no longer the driving force (subject) but is rather, using a term Marx employs to describe value, the 'transmission belt' of the process. As the commodity 'labour power', subjected to abstract time, the wage labourer is a form of capital, an object amidst objects in a setting of a perpetual present. For Postone (as for the Negri of *Marx Beyond Marx* and Jacques Camatte), it is capital that is the subject: 'overcoming alienation involves the abolition of the self-grounding, self-moving Subject (capital) and of the form of labour that constitutes and is constituted by structures of alienation' (p.224). This may account for why, under such structures, Marx could refer to the wage-labourer as a 'mere worker' and as an 'average individual' and why, in 'Excerpts from James Mill', Marx says of commodity-determined labour that it is made manifest as 'my self-loss and my impotence' (EW 178). A self-loss and an impotence in relation to the intensification of productive activity (concrete labour) and in relation to the intensification of social mediation (abstract labour).

Is living labour, then, subject to the ever-diminishing returns of a 'use value' that grows more and more divided, fragmented; that becomes the site of 'empty work' and a mirror reflecting en masse a depleting self-image? The tempting phrase of Marx's that 'living labour = not value' could be increasingly tempered by considerations that Postone puts forward, following Marx, that the 'abolition of value must allow for a form of production based directly on the appropriation of historical time' (p.363). For Postone this would mean, as for Camatte, that communism could entail the resurrection of dead labour. Postone: 'dead labour, to use Marx's term, is no longer the objectification of living labour alone; it has become the objectification of historical time' (p.356). What is known as 'general intellect' could be seen as just this 'dead labour': socially general productive forces developed over time as not only machines, but as softwares, know-hows, 'abstract operative rules' etc., that are not only objectified in structures and divergent forms but circulate by means of relation. Accumulated and wielded under the value form as capital, created-by yet constituted as a power over labour and as another form of objective mediation, Postone, as with Marx, sees that the confrontation with alienation is as much a matter of 'embracing the entire wealth of previous development' as it is of freeing living

labour to create anew.

For Postone, that the 'production of material wealth increasingly becomes a function of the objectification of historical time' (p.339) has, as one of its ramifications, the creation of another disequilibria of the magnitude of value. If 'abstract time' as the measure of value is contained in the present, then objectified historical time, as a factor in production, contains an immeasurable millennial element that could be said to make labour itself increasingly superfluous. Postone: 'Instead of a social form structured by the present, by abstract labour time, there can be a social form based upon the full utilisation of a history alienated no longer' (p.377). Rather than 'living labour' as a factor of production we may be able to speak, instead, of a 'living history' as a productive component; or as Marx stated in his letter to Ruge: 'it will become plain that mankind will not begin any new work, but will consciously bring about the completion of its old work' (EW209). In this way, by utilising the potential of objectified historical time that has been accumulated in alienated form, valorisation could become less dependent on labour time to the degree that the form of wealth, the form of social wealth, could be that which is 'measured' by 'disposable time' (Marx quoted by Postone, 378). Asger Jorn similarly contended: 'If there is any truth in the Marxist labour theory of value, it is not in labour, but in labour time, in other words, time. Value must be time not work'. Could the embracing of alienation, made urgent by the intensifications of real subsumption, entail the resuscitation of living labour?

That, despite increasing computerisation and 'mass intellectuality', it is not the case that 'disposable time' becomes the form of wealth and that an 'estranged mode of existence' instaurated by value continues to schizophrenise us, is a result of the production of subjectivity (or as Jason Read says 'the real subsumption of subjectivity by capital'); a production which Marx intuits as capital's '*real development of the individual*' and which allows capital to continually suspend its barrier. Rather than go into the 'war at the membrane', as I call it in my 'Baktu68', it is interesting to be more conjecturally critical of a left that valorises such forms of labour as immaterial labour and whose hackles would rise at the thought of embracing alienation. When Marx spoke of 'the act of superseding as an objective movement which re-absorbs alienation into itself' and of this being 'the estranged insight into the real objectification of man' (EW395), we can offer that the preparatory laboratory in which this took place practically was a cultural one and not that of the workers movement: if we think of writers like Kafka and Burroughs, directors like Pasolini and Godard, conceptual musicians such as John Cage and noise-merchants such as Merzbow and Mattin etc, we can see how this interrogation of our 'estranged mode of existence' takes on an increasingly revolutionary dynamic in a climate of real subsumption. Such a climate, in which value is dependent upon an abstract time that affects all (c.f. apportioned times for leisure activities *and* proportionalised products of leisure), and in which schizophrenisation becomes the mode of production of subjectivity, means that antagonism, passing through the psyche as felt-contradiction, becomes more and more agonistic and diminishes the organised working class as a revolutionary 'source of inspiration' [5].

'Overcoming the abstract forms of social mediation constituted by the value form of social mediation' (p.375) should just as much be a leftist concern as that of the liberation of labour that seems to have been most forcefully expressed around immaterial labour. That Marx himself stressed the importance of this 'overcoming' by means of the creation of social relations is not without interest: 'individuals cannot gain mastery over their own social interconnections before they have created them' (G161). If we think, rather than of the fine arts, but of cultural movements, collective assemblages of enunciation, such as Surrealism, Alex Trocchi's Project Sigma, the early SI, the anti-psychiatry of Laing and Cooper, Reggae, Punk, Free Software etc, then we can see how this materialisation of immanent social relations brought under the participants conscious control, was a main underlying motivation for the avant-garde movements as 'organisations'. For Postone, as for most of these movements, mediation *per se* is not rejected wholesale, but what is sought is its transformation into 'a non-objective' form of social mediation 'no longer shaped by value's imperative' (p.361).

Marx's insistence upon the making conscious of relation may hint at the value dimension of abstract labour as that which is materialising relation. If mediation and relation are components of value under real subsumption, the appropriation of the concrete dimension of labour by its abstract dimension, then the avant-garde experiments in organisation (the mediation between species beings as Marx offers in 'James Mill'), become not an extraneous mode of action, but a practice that directly confronts the mode of production of value as it is shaped by the double character of labour. These practices seek both to resuscitate living labour (concrete labour) and also to re-mediate social relations (abstract labour) in such a way that they confront abstract time by instituting their own forms of temporality. We only need think of the situationist *dérive*, the immeasurable dimensions of Proust's book, and the potentially endless thematic of field recordings to touch the tip of the iceberg here. What is more, if we take the Situationist relation to Surrealism, or Pasolini's relation to the classics we can see how, by means of a synchronically-inflected free indirect discourse, there is a direct appropriation of historical time, a time objectified into cultural product as dead labour and divorced from use value by the canon. Such a resuscitation of living labour as an abreactive activity of de-individualisation effected by the process of opening up a relation to objectified time and the mode of being of objects then establishes new modes of co-operation that, having embraced alienation, are qualitatively immeasurable. Asger Jorn, speaking as the sole practitioner of the aesthetic-science of situology, describes what a recast living labour productive of new social relations could consist of: the creation of variabilities within a unity, and the search for unity among the variations.

However, without this counter-cultural element, Postone collapses the desire to form non-objective social mediation into a vague political public sphere (362), that, in the terms of his own thesis, must surely be a sphere where capital is still Subject: society in general in its alienated form (376). If Postone begins to look increasingly constrictive it may be the result of the lens of traditional leftism that cannot embrace alienation in the manner of those cultural revolutionaries that deal with the estranged insight into the real objectification of man, a real objectification that makes of the wage-labourer at work and in leisure, a form of capital that actively constitutes abstract social structures. Postone: social domination in capitalism does not, at its most fundamental level, consist in domination of people by other people, but in the domination of people by abstract social structures that people themselves constitute (p.30). Here Postone articulates the problem of *dispositifs*, the abstract operative rules that take in a whole social-gamut from work procedures and modes of narration to codified emotion and defence-mechanisms, and which, as continually produced forms-of-power, thereby become crucial for the production of subjectivity. One of the insights to be gleaned from embracing alienation, from confronting our alienated powers, is then, that we produce what Althusser calls the society effect. Jason Read describes this as being produced through actions [that are..] not recognised as something produced or historical (p.71). Rather than this society effect, this, in Postone's terms non-conscious social determination, being seen from a leftist standpoint of personal responsibility, a moralistic injunction of being commanded to assume responsibility, it points to some crucial contingencies that could amount to agonistic fissures.

These contingencies hinge around another potential point of contention with Postone that is indirectly posed by Jason Read: Can the entirety of social relations in capital be derived from the commodity form? (p.74). This piece has proceeded as a ventriloquising of Postone and has thereby adopted a free indirect discourse, one that in learning from and with Postone, has, as it goes on, spoken of immanent social relations in connection to the counter-culture. These immanent relations must then be in dialectical tension with the production-relations that maintain the value form. Whilst such a tension rescues culture from its apolitical closet and thereby implies that power is itself an (intimate) relation between people and not something that can be won from taking over abstract social structures, it cannot deny that money, as the abstract equivalent of manifold exchanges, and that which gives rise to the double character of labour, is a strong determinant in social relations being expressions of abstract necessity. However, and I am getting onto weaker ground here, any mode of

production is not an homogeneous entity but a heterogeneity that is held together by the value form (what Lyotard calls a *âtension regulatorâ*). What this leads to, and what Jason Read has expressed in an article on Deleuze & Guattari, is that part of this heterogeneity is the simultaneous presence of different modes of production in the same formation.[6] If, as Marx has it, real subsumption is a tendency, then, formal subsumption still persists. Likewise, as Althusser maintains, primitive accumulation still persists, as does, for Kafka (!), the Asiatic Mode of Production i.e. slavery (c.f. *The Great Wall Of China*). If we bring Freud into this then we can offer that kinship relations persist too; relations buried deep in the psyche of a species to be remade.

In this light we may be able to answer Read's question (or let him help us answer his own question!) by saying that certain forms of relation persist from a time before the commodity form and the manufacture of commodities. This would make Postone's demarcation between pre-capitalist formations and capitalist formations too rigid, indeed it may make them a conceptual barrier that does not exist in a history of transmental seepage; a history brought to us in written and visual capsules, in cultural forms that exert an, at times, disturbing influence (Mohammed, Sophocles and de Sade). The point to put forward, to put forward by means of appropriating the alienated object of academic books, is that, as Althusser helps Read say: *âevery mode of production conceals its own contingencyâ*. There is a threat posed that entails the production and reproduction of stability (value form) by means of the production of the subject, a commanded individualisation that has, for Postone, a direct link to valorisation: *âthe value of a commodity is an individuated moment of the objectified general social mediationâ* (p.180). This is consistent with an increasing monitoring of the social sphere, with nothing being left to subjective chance; and consistent with the intensification of mediation with nothing being left to objective chance. Aspects of managementism formerly known as immaterial labour?

The persistence of historical formations, the contingency established by the heterogeneous components of the mode of production (that can suicide themselves in the many varieties of *âcivil warâ*), is one that can be exacerbated by a *âhistory alienated no longerâ*, a history that is appropriated as *âliving historyâ*, a conscious objectification which could act as an indeterminate variable enabling the resuscitation of *âliving labourâ* as a practice of objective chance and fortuitous encounter with personified objects (phantasy) and non-organic life (desire in matter). One crucial element of the counter-cultural avant-garde, itself ripe for detournement rather than display, is that its practice of appropriation is one that is sensually inflected. This sensuous element to *âmaking consciousâ*, the poetic dynamic of being affected and making affectible, has a traumatic effect in that the process of *âreabsorbing alienationâ* can reveal the extent of the *âreal objectification of manâ*. At another turn, as with Pasolini's *Oedipus Rex* or countless poems set in the distant past, the *âliving historyâ* of the Oedipus complex is eroticised in an assemblage that seems to flesh-out Marx's phrase that *âthe cultivation of the five senses is the work of all previous historyâ* (EW353). In appropriating *âliving historyâ*, in poetically forming it as such, we de-individualise, become dispersed in a *âmorphology of timeâ* (Jorn), inclusive of our own micro-histories, and as Marx offers, we develop the capabilities of the species as metamorphosing.

Such a development, then, has already, as the *âopen creationâ* of the counter-culture, made immanent a *ânewâ* mode of production and a concomitant dynamic of a mode of production of subjectivity. What is opened is an explicit relation to history as a productive force and an autotraumatic relation to the subject as a historical product, made and moulded as a form of capital by multiple *dispositifs*. The abstraction of concrete labour and our auto-alienating production of *âabstract social structuresâ*, become, then, another grounding for a revolution aimed not so much at reappropriating alien property (antagonism), but overcoming *âself-lossâ* and *âimpotenceâ* (agonism) that are attendant to the abstract compulsion that the value form makes experienceable. It is these latter facets of social life that, according to the statistic cited earlier, are bringing people to the borderline of generalised compulsive

disorders, that are schizophrenising them with the internalisation of socially-formed contradictions. This very real agonistic contingency seems, sometimes, amidst the unmanageable stress of enforced vocation, to be more of a threat to valorisation than the behavioural patterns of the workers movement; its antagonism could breakdown and breakout anywhere. This agonistic aspect, partially taking place at the increasingly sensualised and absorbent border of conscious thought, could forge social relations, not as a product of nature but of history (Marx), that could become the combative and therapeutic organs of a war at the membrane. Such relations, as avant-garde practices have profiled, require, above all, time, an immeasurable temporality, a plateau phase, an infinite time for the formation of finite groups; groups that initially form, as David Cooper has said, to trace what the person does with what is done to him. What he makes of what he is made of. The embracing of alienation by means of the traumatic abreaction of our capitalist selves; a becoming foreign. The transvaluation of the vault of fears that is value.

Foreward

We maybe should begin to speak of the species-being as that which is in constant metamorphosis, and not as that which is arrived-at or started-from. As Marx suggests, the species-being is not an essence, but a becoming: life-producing life. Communisation is this becoming; a becoming that requires a temporality other than that of abstract time and forms of mediation other than those of an homogenising abstract compulsion that instaurate relations as fraternity-terror (the organisational form of value). If communisation is the process that aims for the abolition of value and its manifold forms, then this entails the transvaluation of values; a transvaluation as a morphology of time amidst an ensemble of relations that are not just the valorising capacity of relations of co-operation, but fully qualitative relations between species-beings⁷. This morphology of time, of which Jorn speaks, could be the infinite duration in which our own life-histories are sensually appropriated in the process of an appropriation of living history as a productive force. Such a living history is not a determinism but a retroactive temporal direction that Jean Laplanche, translating Freud's *Nachträglichkeit*, calls afterwordness. The repercussions of the past are never played out in a finally inaudible echo, but continue to sound out with the ubiquitous contingency of enigmas that, once heard, are provocative of the drive to become, to produce life by means of a modification and a transformation of the instincts. The two dynamics of history as the history of a life-time and the history of a species constitute a morphology, a mobile intersection, an agonism. The metamorphosis of the species-being, as the formation of instincts, is propelled by the enigmas in our lives as those that interact with the gradually revealed enigmas of the species (living history). Becoming, we can never know ourselves, our value to others, nor know history as a fact.

new species-being

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Footnotes

[1] For Jason Read abstract labour, the 'equalisation and normalisation' of concrete labour, its standardisation, takes on a disciplinary function. See Jason Read, *The Micropolitics of Capital*, p76.

[2] Housework, that bugbear of the traditional left, when seen as the management of relation and as a reproductive and disciplinary labour, seems similarly to be a concrete materialisation of abstract labour.

[3] Jason Read, reading through Foucault has agonism mean 'the multiplicity of conflictual relations.' *Ibid*, p89.

[4] According to a *Guardian* article around 15% of the population suffers from depression or anxiety. Lord Layard, an advisor to the Government on mental health issues states: 'there are now more than 1 million mentally ill people receiving incapacity benefits - more than the total number of unemployed people receiving unemployment benefits.' The sick certificate supersedes the labour voucher!

[5] A reason for this lies in the intensity of labour, an intensity that blocks living labour capacity - or put another way, blocks the use-value of living labour as a use value deployable by the worker i.e. the intensity of the labour process blocks self-valorisation?.

[6] See Jason Read 'A Universal History Of Contingency' (*Borderlands* ejournal, 2003).

[7] In this connection Marcuse has spoken of an 'enlarged order of libidinal relations'.