

Capital and Technology: Marx and Heidegger

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1. An Unsettling Encounter

For readers of Heidegger it is striking that, during a career in thinking spanning more than fifty years, this thinker did not enter into any in-depth philosophical altercation with Marx. The passages in the *Letter on 'Humanism'* where he refers to Marxian alienation as well as other remarks by Heidegger such as in the late seminar protocols, are sparse. To my knowledge there are no passages in Heidegger's writings on Marx's late works that would indicate he had given thought to this principal thinker of socialism in his maturity. It would be very easy to explain this fact psychologically, sociologically and biographically by taking a look at Heidegger's life and times. At first sight it is understandable that for man like Heidegger from a conservative Catholic milieu, the thinker of capitalist class society who wanted to overcome it by means of an international communist movement would have been hard to stomach. This explanation would be plausible, but also facile and would explain nothing at all with regard to Heidegger as a thinker, i.e. with regard to those texts of Heidegger's that engage critically with the Western metaphysical heritage.

It would be almost as easy to maintain that for the question that moved Heidegger's thinking, i.e. the question of being, Marx is uninteresting or irrelevant. This assertion, of course, would have to be argued for and would lead to a closer disputation with the texts of both thinkers. It would be a matter of showing that in Marx's writings, Heidegger would not have been in his element, that is to say, that there was not any significant connection between the issues that come into the focus of questioning in Heidegger's thinking and the issues that engage Marx's thinking.

An alternative strategy would be to show that, from the perspective of Heidegger's thinking, Marx assumed a subordinate position, namely, as a metaphysician with an Hegelian heritage. If for Heidegger it is a matter of gaining a distance from metaphysics or of dismantling ontology, then it would at least be plausible that with the dismantling of the Hegelian ontology of spirit (assuming he had achieved this) Heidegger had, so to

speak, also hit a second bird, Marx, with the one stone. Marx would then stand on Hegelian ground which, with the dismantling of Hegelian metaphysics, would have been pulled from under his feet. But then it would be necessary to investigate to what extent Marx's inversion of the Hegelian dialectic, the famous setting-it-on-its-feet, did not make any essential difference with regard to locating Marx's text within metaphysics. In doing so, Heidegger's insight which he expresses with regard to Nietzsche's inversion of Platonism, that all inversion remains in the same, would apply, but its application must not be merely formal.

It would be possible, more or less for the sake of completeness, to close the gap in Heidegger's texts between Hegel and Nietzsche that bears the name 'Marx' with a monograph or some other learned treatise in the way scholars do such things. There is no doubt that Marx is an important thinker in the Western genealogy whose influence in the history of philosophy and the social sciences as well as in the history of politics has been enormous, so that the task of drawing the connecting lines between these two important thinkers, Heidegger and Marx, is unquestionably posed. It would thus not need any long justification to argue for why a work on the relationship between Marx and Heidegger should be written.

Viewed from the standpoint of the matter at issue, i.e. from the standpoint of the respective issues of Marxian and Heideggerian thinking, there is, at least for me, an unsettling point of contact, a locus of striking similarities between Marx's and Heidegger's texts which absolutely challenges us to delve into the issue. It is a kind of overlapping between Marx's late texts and those of Heidegger's with regard to their respective assessments of the modern epoch: the epoch of the bourgeois-capitalist form of society on the one hand, and the technical age on the other, as they reveal themselves respectively in the texts of each thinker, display remarkable resemblances, despite all their profound differences. It will be worthwhile comparing the language of the set-up (*Gestell*) with that of capital, and closely and persistently investigating both these languages (and the thoughts they express) in their relatedness as well as their essential difference. This will provide an important guiding thread for the present study.

According to Heidegger's own statements (which of course do not have to be taken as the final source of evidence), from 1937 on, at the time of writing the *Contributions to Philosophy - Of Propriation*, the word 'propriation' or 'enowning' assumes a position as principal word in his thinking. The essence of technology is also thought through in the 1940s under the aura of propriation. In an unusual text from the fifties, *Identity and Difference*, whose unusual status among Heidegger's writings has been noticed by Gianni Vattimo,¹ Heidegger talks of a twisting of the set-up into propriation, of the "sudden flash of propriation" within the set-up. In this text there is a sort of toggle relationship between the most extreme consummation of metaphysics and the twisting of metaphysics into propriation, a 'getting-over-metaphysics', in which humans would "lose" their determination of essence which metaphysics has "lent" them. Twisting or getting-over (*Verwindung*), as Vattimo's *pensiero débole* elaborates, must not be confused with overcoming (*Überwindung*). In the small difference of a prefix there lies a subtle but decisive difference between Heideggerian thinking of being and metaphysical thinking. Twisting as well as overcoming relate to Western history. Whereas overcoming lies close to the Hegelian and *a fortiori* the Marxian conception of history as coming to a higher stage that leaves the preceding stages behind, twisting or getting-over is supposed to initially indicate another type of thinking of history, namely, history as the history of being. "In the destiny of being there is never a mere sequence: now set-up, then world and thing, but in each case a passing-by and simultaneity of the early and the late."² But not only that: 'getting-over' signifies above all and *distancing in thinking* from Western ways of thinking that are lived as 'natural' and without alternative which would allow a 'twisting-free' from an all too close entwinement, and hence enable the historical world itself to shape

¹ G. Vattimo 'Nihilismus und Postmoderne in der Philosophie' in G. Vattimo *Das Ende der Moderne*, translated from the Italian and edited by R. Capurro, Philipp Reclam jun., Stuttgart 1990.

² M. Heidegger 'A Letter to a Young Student' (Hartmut Buchner) in *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Lectures and Articles) Neske Verlag, Pfullingen ⁵1985 p. 177.

up and show itself differently, in a different cast of being. The difference twisting/overcoming will provide a second guiding thread in the following.

2. Heidegger's Relationship to Marx

Heidegger engaged with Marx most extensively, if this disputation can at all be described as extensive, in his *Letter on 'Humanism'* (1946), at about the same time as he writes his texts on the essence of technology. The overarching problematic of the *Letter on 'Humanism'* is the home of the human essence (*Menschenwesen*, hereafter: human being) and the homelessness of human beings in our epoch. Humans will only become human, according to Heidegger, in a relationship to being founded by thinkers and poets; only through language as the “house of being” can human beings find their essence. In contrast to this conception of the humanity of humans, Heidegger cites for one, the Christian determination of human being as a “child of God”³ and for another, the Marxian determination of the human as a social being, a species-being with “natural needs” which should be “equally provided for” “in ‘society’” (*ibid.*). This early Marxian determination of human being is the first one cited by Heidegger in the *Letter on 'Humanism'*, presumably because he wrote the letter in reply to Jean Beaufret, who in turn had been unsettled and moved by Sartre's emphasis on Marxism as a humanism to question the validity of the title ‘humanism’ and to ask what humanism — at that time a still highly respected title — could have to do with Heidegger's thinking of being.

In his reply to Beaufret, Heidegger maintains that “Marx's humanism does not require any recourse to antiquity” (p. 318), a statement which, in view of Marx's proximity to Aristotle and especially to Aristotle's *Politics* must seem questionable. What does “recourse to antiquity” mean for Heidegger? When Marx determines the human as a social being, he is of course standing firmly in the Aristotelean tradition which couples the ζῶον πολιτικόν intimately with the ζῶον λόγον ἔχον (Pol. 1253a). The idea that the fulfilment of needs should constitute the τέλος of the πόλις is also a conception that goes back to Aristotle and

³ M. Heidegger *Brief über den 'Humanismus'* in: *Wegmarken* Klostermann, Frankfurt/M. 21978 p. 317.

Plato. With his determination of communist society as a society in which human needs are acknowledged and their satisfaction secured, Marx shows himself to be a thinker who pushes the determination of human being to the limit and to its consummation. The above-cited statement by Heidegger could perhaps be interpreted as saying that, in his determination of human being, Marx simply continues the ancient tradition without giving it any further twist, i.e. that he adopts this tradition without questioning it. In this case, however, Marx would indeed, in comparison with the Christian determination of human being, make recourse to antiquity by separating human being from the Christian god and falling back on the ancient ‘pagan’ determination of the human as needy. This recourse differs of course from the humanism of a “Winckelmann, Goethe and Schiller” (p.318), which in its return to antiquity conceives *humanitas* as *virtus* and παιδεία and thus leads to a renaissance of Hellenism. But perhaps Marx’s return to antiquity is all the more profound because it is unquestioning. When Heidegger singles out this Marxian determination of human being as need-having, it must still be clarified to what extent this emphasis neglects and possibly suppresses or distorts the view of other accentuations in Marxian discourse, particularly in the late writings.

Marx’s name crops up for a third and last time in the middle of the *Letter on ‘Humanism’* where Heidegger speaks of the “homelessness of modern humans” (p. 336) and the “overcoming of homelessness” (p. 335). The fact that at this point Heidegger talks of an “overcoming” (*Überwindung*) as distinct from a getting-over or twisting (*Verwindung*) must arouse our attention. The “desolation of the being of beings” (p. 335) is to be overcome in a homecoming of human being in which humans, released from subjectivity, become “shepherds of being” (p. 338). Later on we will come back to Heidegger’s understanding of overcoming and getting-over, especially since in some texts he distances himself from overcoming as a metaphysical figure. Because of his insight into the “alienation of humans” (p. 336) which, however, he purportedly “recognized on the basis of Hegel” (*ibid.*), Marx is praised by Heidegger because “by experiencing alienation, he reaches into an essential dimension of history” (*ibid.*). Only the experience of this

“essential dimension of history” can enable “a productive dialogue with Marxism” (*ibid.*). At this point, Heidegger seeks a nearness to Marx which however is strongly mediated by Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. (p. 337) Does Heidegger take this “productive dialogue” further or does he leave it to others to do so? Are the concise remarks on the pages in the *Letter on 'Humanism'* following this comment already to be taken as this “productive dialogue” and thus in a certain way as getting this dialogue over and done with, or at least as staking out the fundamental relation of the thinking of being to Marxism?

Heidegger points out that Marxist materialism is not to be understood as the vulgar assertion that “everything is only matter” (p. 337) but as a metaphysical determination “according to which all beings appear as the material for labour”. (p. 337) This modern (i.e. post-medieval) determination of the essence of labour, according to Heidegger, was “thought through beforehand [in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*] as the process of unconditional production setting itself up, that is, as the objectification of the real by human being experienced as subjectivity.” (*ibid.*) Did Marx simply adopt the determination of beings as the material of labour from Hegel? Is Marx's concept of alienation to be equated with an Hegelian conception or does it include a further significant twist? Does Marx's concept of alienation stay the same from the early writings through to the late writings? Does the concept of alienation play an important role in the late writings; does it play a role at all? Does the thinking of the young Marx irrevocably set the course with respect to fundamental questions concerning human being also for his later writings on the critique of political economy, or does his thinking go through essential modifications in the confrontation with the essence of capital? Does Marx stick to his humanist determination of human being; do humans remain “species-beings” for him in the writings on the critique of political economy? If the occasion for the *Letter* has a lot to do with the influence of Marxism in France after the Second World War, why does the word ‘capital’ not appear anywhere in the *Letter on 'Humanism'* given that this word, after all, is a principal word in Marxian thinking and *Capital* is Marx's opus magnum? Why does Heidegger's commentary restrict itself to needs and labour?

Althusser's intervention in France in the 1960s — which was directed not least of all against the humanist-existentialist Marxism of Sartre — in which he insisted on a break in Marx's thinking between the early writings (before 1845) — especially the *Economic-philosophical Manuscripts from 1844* — and the late writings (from 1857 onward), should make us prick up our ears and listen to hear whether Heidegger undertook an extremely restricted and therefore undifferentiated reading of Marxian texts in which Marx appears exclusively as humanist. Can the author of *Capital* also be understood as a humanist? What is the situation with regard to the *German Ideology*, written together with Engels in 1846, in which Marx settled accounts with Feuerbach's *humanist* philosophy? The late Marx no longer conceives of human being anthropologically as a species-being, but historically-materialistically as the bearer of definite historically given relations of production, as a being that produces its life under definite social relations. The term species-being disappears from the texts of the late Marx.

Admittedly, Heidegger is not wrong in discerning human being in Marx as a labouring, producing essence, but the labouring human does not have to be understood humanistically in the sense of the *Manuscripts from 1844* as an alienated natural being. The late Marx has a much more distanced, even ironical relationship to any affirmative positing of human being. “Let us, for a change, finally imagine an association of free people...” (*Capital* Vol. I; MEW23:92). Moreover, the late Marx does not criticize capitalism against the foil of a natural species-being — he does not lament any fall from some sort of natural state of grace — but with respect to a casting of human being which he conceives as being historically on the make in capitalism, and sees as an historical possibility, a possibility which, to be on the safe side, should not be restricted to Marx's own time.

It is significant at this point that Heidegger here, where he speaks of a productive dialogue with Marxism, immediately starts talking about the essence of technology as “unconditional production”: “The essence of materialism is concealed in the essence of technology.” (p. 337) Heidegger wants to locate, and indeed subsume Marxism underneath the

standpoint of his thinking of the essence of technology as a “destiny of the history of being”. The fact that in modernity all beings appear as the material for labour is to be traced back to technology and finally to τέχνη as a way in which “beings are revealed” (*ibid.*). In this way, Marxian materialism is to be given its well-considered metaphysical location. Marxism resonates further in the *Letter on ‘Humanism’* with the words “communism” (p. 337), “internationalism” (p. 337) and “collectivism” (p. 338) in which “an elementary experience” (p. 337), namely the experience of the way of revealing of modern technology in “unconditional production” “is world-historical” (*ibid.*). Marxism is however, according to Heidegger, caught within the metaphysics of subjectivity and even the unification and uniformization of humanity in an internationalism and collectivism would only mean the “unconditional self-assertion” of the “subjectivity of humanity as a totality” (p. 338). Insofar, the “essential homelessness of humanity” cannot even be experienced in Marxism, let alone overcome, for this would require a distancing experience from and a twisting-free from subjectivity that can only happen when humans come to experience themselves as the “ek-sisting counter-throw [ob-ject] of being” (p. 337) instead of as *animal rationale*. From the standpoint of their status as subject, humans become the “counter-throw”, the object of being: thrown by being into the “poverty of the shepherd” (p. 338). The shepherd is for Heidegger the appropriate contrasting image to the labouring, productive human.

In Heidegger's eyes, Marxism does embody an essential experience of the homelessness of human being in modernity as alienation, but it is not able to experience the true ground for this alienation in the desolation of beings in their being as such, but instead preoccupies itself with gigantomaniac historical castings of an international, collective subject. The points of contact between Marx's and Heidegger's thinking are concentrated, from Heidegger's standpoint, on the question concerning the “essence of technology” (p. 337), to which Marxism contributes insights into the totality of beings as material for labour and into “unconditional production, that is, objectification of the real by human being experienced as subjectivity” (p. 337). These insights, however,

are, according to Heidegger, essentially misrecognitions insofar as Marx does not experience the truth of being; the alienation of modern humanity is experienced — basically from an Hegelian standpoint, and this is the experience of an “essential dimension of history” (p.336) — but the experience remains captive to the metaphysics of subjectivity. The praise that “the Marxist view of history is superior to the rest of historiography” (p.336) is thus considerably diluted.

It is striking that Heidegger makes his assessment of Marxian thinking on the one hand on the basis of a — probably somewhat cursory — acquaintance with the early writings and, on the other, on the basis of the historico-political experiences of the socialist-communist movements which he himself lived through. The two pages in the *Letter on ‘Humanism’* on which he locates Marxism metaphysically seem far removed from initiating “a productive dialogue with Marxism”, but seem to be borne rather by an effort to wrap up this dialogue swiftly by means of the diagnosis ‘desolation of beings in their being’. Factually, Heidegger did not enter into this dialogue as a critical discourse even later on.

For this reason, it falls to us to ask whether Marx can be subsumed metaphysically completely beneath an Hegelian standpoint and whether in the experience of alienation Marx left behind other writings that penetrate more deeply into its essential grounds in such a way that other dimensions come to light that Heidegger did not have in view. Not only are Heidegger’s dealings with Marx very concise, without the extended written discourse which otherwise characterizes his disputations with thinkers in the Western tradition, but they reveal obvious enormous gaps insofar as only the topics of humans as labourers and of alienation are dealt with, and that only cursorily.

Since the *Letter on ‘Humanism’* discusses Marxism with regard to alienation and positions this motif before the Hegelian background of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, it does not seem unjustified to suppose that Heidegger mainly read the section on alienated labour in the 1844 *Economic-philosophical Manuscripts*. His formulations in the *Letter on ‘Humanism’* represent an extremely compressed selection from this section, whereby it would not be uninteresting to investigate how

Heidegger made his selection for a reading. The concept of alienation in Marx appears to merely provide Heidegger with a cue for his own understanding of alienation, which can be determined on the basis of the history of being and not at all Marxistically.

How does Marx think alienation in the *Economic-philosophical Manuscripts*? What does Heidegger filter out in the reading of this text? What does he emphasize?

Heidegger leads Marxian materialism back to Hegel: "The metaphysical essence of labour in modernity is thought through beforehand in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* as the self-organizing process of unconditional producing, that is objectification of the real by humans experienced as subjectivity." (p. 337) Hegel's idealism is supposed to have thought through the materialist determination of the essence of labour. But what does Marx accuse Hegel of in the *Economic-philosophical Manuscripts*? That he conceives alienation as the alienation of self-consciousness and not as the alienation of real people. At this time, Marx is still very strongly under Feuerbach's influence, from whom he takes leave philosophically only one year later — cf. the famous *Theses on Feuerbach* written down in 1845. Labour in Hegel is not the expenditure of real human essential forces but abstract spiritual-intellectual labour: "The only labour that Hegel knows about and recognizes is *abstract spiritual labour*." (MEW Erg. Bd.1 p. 574) The *Phenomenology* is a movement of self-consciousness; the externalization of self-consciousness in the objectivity of nature is overcome in knowledge, more precisely, in absolute knowledge no longer relative to, or dependent upon the world outside as simply given independently of knowing. "Knowledge is its [consciousness's] sole objective comportment." (*ibid.* p. 580) (The Heidegger of *Being and Time* would agree with this Marxian objection.) The otherness of the object outside itself is sublated in a knowledge that knows that it "is *by itself in its other-being as such*" (*ibid.* italics i.o. p. 580). Marx repeats this formulation four times within a few lines as if he wanted to underscore for himself how Hegel sublates the contradiction of the externality of the object in a movement of thinking spirit. Such a labour of spirited mind in the movement of sublation in thinking is still far

removed from defining “all beings as the material of labour” (LH p. 337) or “thinking through beforehand” labour as “unconditional producing” (*ibid.*). Rather, it is the case with Hegel that he thinks all beings as permeated by thinking spirit, as knowable in absolute knowledge and “sets human being = self-consciousness” (EPM p. 584). Reality is thus left by Hegel the way it is; all beings, whether it be law, religion, art, nature, are retracted into philosophy in an essentially Christian movement of reconciliation with outside reality as at one with spirited mind. Idealist philosophy is thus counterposed as an illusory overcoming of alienation, as an overcoming in pure thinking, to “true humanism” which Marx still proposes in the *Economic-philosophical Manuscripts*.

The critique of Hegelian dialectics constitutes only the final section of the *Economic-philosophical Manuscripts*. The first sections are headed by titles from political economy: wages, profit of capital, ground-rent. Only after these does the section, entitled by the editors of the Marx-Engels Werke: “Alienated Labour”, follow. How does Marx think alienation? In contrast to Hegel, it is not an alienation of self-consciousness but of the labouring labourer. The product of the labourers’ labour as well as the objective conditions of their producing stand over against them as alien. They are the alien property of an alien person: the capitalist. Private property, capital, landed property, money are some of the titles of these alien beings confronting the labourers. It is the class domination of the capitalists over the labourers which Marx ultimately attacks and which would be abolished in communism. With his comments in the *Letter on ‘Humanism’* Heidegger circumnavigates all these highly political rubrics, as if they were philosophically unworthy of discussion. His reference to communism is also made in a way that distances him from it: “One may assume various positions vis-à-vis the teachings of communism and their grounding...” (p. 337). It is not the alienness of object that is alien by virtue of its mere objectivity which would have to be overcome in a movement of sublating thinking, but the alienness of alien private property which would not have to strip off its objectivity at all but be transmuted into collective property.

Why is this difference that separates Marx from Hegel like a chasm irrelevant for Heidegger? Why does he regard it as superfluous to call capital, private property, money, etc. by their names? Why is the economic dimension consistently blotted out? At this point it is absolutely necessary to keep psychological explanations at bay. The first point to be kept in mind is that for Heidegger “the essence of materialism is concealed in the essence of technology” (p. 337) and that for the thinking of the essence of technology — a thinking that is located in the truth of being —, the economic dimension is irrelevant, perhaps too ‘ontic’. Not only is the economic dimension allegedly irrelevant, it is moreover invisible as phenomenality for the determination of the essence of technology in Heidegger’s thinking, indeed so much so, that Heidegger does not even see any reason to confront economic issues or to explicitly demarcate a distance from them.

In order to grasp the “process of unconditional producing” (p. 337), it is not certain whether the observation that “all beings appear as the material of labour” (*ibid.*) suffices. Since in capitalism, even labour becomes the object of capital and everything becomes a potential and factual object of its movement, it could turn out that all beings rather become the object of capital (which would already put the subjectivity of human being into question). Then it would be a matter of determining the essence of *capital*, which of course does not exclude that capital could be traced back to labour — to be sure, under a definite, particular determination, a definite, special “form-determinacy”. Such a question, however, could not be developed further on the level of a critical reading of the early Marx since in the *Economic-philosophical Manuscripts* and even in the *Theses on Feuerbach* and the *German Ideology* there is still not a trace of the concept of value to be found. Only the value concept — a concept of value which is not simply taken over from the political economy of an Adam Smith or a Ricardo, but which undergoes a fundamental deepening and transformation and grounding — will put Marx in the position to bring bourgeois-capitalist society to its concept.⁴

⁴ (14.07.2014) If you expect a critical engagement with the blatant lacunae in Heidegger’s treatment of Marx’s thinking from the rare later Heidegger-

In 1844 Marx can only state that capital is counterposed to the labourers as an alien power; he cannot yet grasp capital in its *uncanniness* (*Unheimlichkeit*; τὸ δέϊνον) — a concept better known from a Heideggerian context.

Different concepts of alienation are at play in Marx and Heidegger: For Marx, it is labour that is alienated because it is subjected to an alien power, capital, and which is supposed to be liberated from this power. For Heidegger, it is not labour subjugated to capital that is alienated and which is supposed to become free, self-determined labour, but labour itself, independently of its subjection to capital, is alienated as a free-for-all that, inspired by an absolute will to productive power, drags beings pro-ductively out into the open, oblivious to their being. “Humankind is not the master of beings. Humankind is the shepherd of being.” (p. 338) Humans are not supposed to become the genuine (collective) subject of their labour, but they are supposed to “step back” to become the ‘proper object’, the “counter-throw of being” (*ibid.*).

influenced authors who strive in their thinking to critically deepen the relationship between Heidegger and Marx — such as Kostas Axelos *Einführung in ein künftiges Denken: Über Marx und Heidegger* Niemeyer Verlag, Tübingen 1966 [English transl.: Kostas Axelos *On Marx and Heidegger: Introduction to the Thought of the Future* Kenneth Mills (transl.), Stuart Elden (ed.), Meson Press (<http://projects.digital-cultures.net/meson-press/>), Lüneburg 2014] and Ekkehard Fränztzki *Der mißverstandene Marx: Seine metaphysisch-ontologische Grundstellung* Neske Verlag, Pfullingen 1978 —, you will be disappointed. These authors fail to problematize with a single word Heidegger’s basic estimation and locating of Marx’s thinking coming from the *Economic-philosophical Manuscripts* and an Hegelian conceptual determination of labour. They do not pose any of the many questions put in this subsection — in particular, the question concerning *value* as fundamental phenomenon and concept of a society sociated by money and capital. They thus go along with Heidegger’s subsuming Marx’s thinking-through of capital under his own one-sided productivist determination of technique to the exclusion of phenomena of *estimating interplay*. Cf. also my critique of Heinz Dieter Kittsteiner *Mit Marx für Heidegger - Mit Heidegger für Marx* Fink Verlag, Munich 2004 (<http://www.arte-fact.org/ktstmxhd.html>).

3. The Historical Materialism of the *German Ideology*

In the period 1845-46, Marx and Engels settle accounts in the *German Ideology* with the idealism of the left-Hegelians and formulate for the first time the conception of history which will make them famous as the founders of Historical Materialism. What type of reading of this text is still possible today after the collapse of the Soviet Union following the events of 1989? After the collapse of 'real-existing socialism' in Europe it could easily appear as if Marx were 'refuted' for once and for all, depotentiated as a thinker who had something to contribute to European and nascent planetary history. It is certain that certain readings of Marx have been exhausted, certain ways of bending his texts to suit historical situations, to make them consonant with them in a more or less violent, or a more or less insightful way. The coupling of Marx's thinking with certain state powers, and especially its situation in the political domain with all its bone-headed prejudices that blot out thoughtfulness, have made access to a thought-ful dialogue with him infinitely more difficult and also put coarse distortions and simplifications into circulation. Thinking is then determined by political prejudices rather than the latter being made questionable by thinking. Without doubt.

It will take some effort to ease Marx out of the automatic, foregone entanglement with totalitarian social systems and mere leftist political convictions. Is Marx necessarily an authoritarian thinker? Is his way of thinking hopelessly outmoded, stifled with the stuffiness of the nineteenth century, so that it can only be boring to read him today? Is Marx purely the 'political thinker' of the exploitation of the working class by capital and its prospective historical liberation from such exploitation? Or does the collapse of Eastern European Socialism signify a possible liberation for Marx from a bracketing with politics so that he could be read from a greater, *philosophical* distance? The establishment of Marx's status as a 'critical social scientist' rather than as a philosophical thinker has made it impossible to remove the dumb polarizing lenses of left politics.

In formulating their Historical Materialist conception of history, Marx and Engels look back into history as well as into the future. The retrospective view is directed toward the main stages in Western history. Four forms of European society are roughly outlined: patriarchal tribes, the city of antiquity, feudalism, bourgeois society, the last of which is supposed to go through a transition to a communist society in the future. The starting-point for this movement of history through its great epochs is taken to be the life process “of real living individuals themselves” (MEW3:27). In this way, the idealist way of viewing is set “on its feet”: “Consciousness does not determine life, but life determines consciousness.” (*ibid.*) “Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious being, and the being of humans is their real life process.” (*ibid.* 26) The being of humans, their real life is taken as starting-point for viewing history. “What constitutes life above all is eating and drinking, having a place to live, clothes and several other things.” (*ibid.* 28) (The “several other things”, especially today, could easily prove to be interminable.) The approach possesses the plausibility of self-evidence (which can also be transferred to a crude socialist politics). What is needed “above all” for living should also serve as the basis and precondition for the theory of history. What constitutes life are needs. Bread, for instance. They impel humans to produce their lives. Neediness and producing are coupled in human being, which is grasped from the standpoint of *life* — as life process. Production and consumption are only opposite sides of the same coin. Human being is cast essentially as needy, producing being.

The founders of Historical Materialism repeat a time-honoured gesture of metaphysics when they grant humans a distinguishing feature, their *differentia specifica* vis-à-vis the animals: “They themselves start to *distinguish* themselves from animals as soon as they start *producing* their means of life.” (*ibid.* 21, first emphasis mine, ME) Humans are bringers-forth; through their activity, they guide means of life into presence; they are poietic beings, which is not only contingently a principal word in Aristotelean philosophy. It thus does not suffice to assert that humans produce their own lives; they are not simply needy

producers, if they are not to be equated with animals, for animals too are driven by ‘needs’ and ‘produce’ their way of living.

Later on in Marx as well, it will be no different with the determination of human being; the same metaphysical gesture will be repeated in *Capital*, at the start of the fifth chapter on the labour process:

What however *distinguishes* the worst builder from the best bee is that he has built the cell in his head before he builds it in wax. At the end of the labour process a result comes about that at its beginning already existed in the labourer’s imagination, that already existed ideally. (MEW23:193 emphasis mine, ME)

Here, a further — essential — determination of producing is addressed: Humans — even as labourers — are imaginative, “ideal” beings. They first *imagine* or *ideate* what is to be brought forth; they already *see* “ideally” what is to be produced, i.e. its ‘sight’. Humans have ideas, and that to such an extent that their producing is in the first place and essentially an imagining of sights, of ideas. And in general, in the context of considering language, Marx and Engels assert that, in contrast to animals, humans comport themselves in forms of intercourse *as* such: “animals do not ‘comport’ themselves toward anything and they do not ‘comport’ themselves at all. For animals, their relationships to others do not exist as relationships.” (MEW3:30) Humans experience their relationships *as* relationships which at another place — in Heidegger — has been designated as the “as-structure” (*Being and Time* § 32).

And in this point, Marx and Engels do not distinguish themselves very much, not essentially, from what Plato and Aristotle say metaphysically about producing: Humans see the ideas; they are exposed to the being of beings, and when producing, their τέχνη is oriented teleo-logically toward this ideated being of what is to be produced. When they invert German idealism, Marx and Engels therefore remain necessarily within the same, at the same pivotal point of a conception of producing which is of *Platonic* origin, or what is the same thing: Despite their materialist starting-point with the life process, they implicitly posit human being metaphysically as being exposed to the being of beings; beings *as* such are accessible to the human ψυχή (soul, psyche) in ideas; beings are open *as such* to human view. Even the idealism of a Plato proceeds from

material life insofar as the openness of the *As* has a completely banal origin in everyday producing. Historical Materialism perhaps reminds idealism (which is based on a certain interpretation of Platonic philosophy) of its modest origins in everyday, producing life, at the location whence it begins the ascent into the heights of the ideas. In truth, the ideas are close to home, woven into the fabric of quotidian human life.

Thus, when Marx and Engels postulate that being determines consciousness and try to tie this down to producing, a circle immediately arises, for the power of ideation itself, being able to see the ideal image of what is to be produced, is, as consciousness, an essential component of material producing itself. Practical dealings with material is always already ideal, ideating, a setting into an image and idea, the seeing of a sight, a ‘sight-seeing’. The attempt to demarcate a materialism from idealism by positing material, producing life as the basis for all ideating, for all ideologies, immediately proves itself to be infected by an idealism insofar as ‘being’ or ‘life’ always already includes a ‘consciousness’ or an ‘understanding of being’, i.e. a world ideated *as* such. The difference is not possible in a pure form; it cannot be carried through cleanly, but results in a circle. This circle does not have to be regarded as disturbing or as a refutation. It only has to be entered ‘properly’ — as Heidegger shows in *Being and Time*. Historical materialists who ‘think’ they deal with the naked ‘facts’ of history in social theorizing blindly overlook that any fact, no matter how brute, always presents itself *as* such, i.e. *as* an *idea* for human understanding.

Marx and Engels want to posit “real life” as the starting-point for a view of European history and, in doing so, to demarcate life from ideation and thinking, from ideologies which assume an *autonomous* form “in the language of politics, laws, morality, religion, metaphysics, etc. of a people” (MEW3:26). They emphasize on the contrary that “the production of ideas, imagination [Vorstellungen], consciousness is initially immediately interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of humans, language of real life.” (*ibid.*) This “language”, “direct secretion of their material comportment” (*ibid.*) is supposed to serve Marx and Engels as starting-point. If productive

activity cannot be *entirely* separated from imagination, then “imagination, thinking, the intellectual intercourse of humans” (*ibid.*) should at least remain restricted to the immediate domain of material life. The phenomena of quotidian, productive life are to be first brought into view, for only they provide a well-founded point of orientation for thinking. This ‘materialist’ starting-point could be understood as meaning that humans are always already in the world and do not first gain access to it through the filter of the imaginations/representations in consciousness, with the difference that Marx and Engels demarcate this being-in-the-world as “being” or “life” or the “real process of life” from “consciousness” and “ideology” (*ibid.*) and thus attempt to tear apart the inseparable unity of being and being-aware (consciousness, or better still: understanding of being) in being-in-the-world.

Marx and Engels thus start with “real living individuals” and view material life as a unity of “productive forces” and “forms of intercourse” (MEW3:38). They are especially interested in bourgeois society, but the materialist conception of history can be applied to all earlier forms of European society and even non-European forms of society, although Marx and Engels only comprehend these societies through an extension of insights which they have gained on the basis of European history. They want to use the analysis of material production as the basis for an explanation of phenomena of the “superstructure” (MEW13:8 and MEW3:36). They set about conceiving the analysis of the “mode of production” and

the form of intercourse associated with this mode of production and produced by it, that is bourgeois society at its various stages, as the basis of all of history and presenting it in its action as state as well as explaining the entire gamut of theoretical products and forms of consciousness, religion, philosophy, morality, etc. etc. from it and following their emergence from them, where of course, the matter can then be presented in its totality (and therefore also the interaction of these various facets on each other). (MEW3:37f).

With the reference to “interaction” (which Althusser, borrowing a psychoanalytic term, called “overdetermination”), Marx and Engels have stepped into the hermeneutic circle. At the same time, they want to “present” the “totality”. And they want to present the totality in its

historical brittleness, its revolutionability. Their view of earlier transitions from one form of society to another is supposed to make the transition from the bourgeois form of society to a communist society *today* visible and intelligible, whereby the today can be restricted neither to the nineteenth nor the twentieth century. The ‘motor’ for these transitions is always constituted by the contradiction between the productive forces and the “relations of production” (*On the Critique...* MEW13:9) which are still called “form of intercourse” in the *German Ideology*:

Thus, according to our view, all the collisions in history have their origin in the contradiction between the productive forces and the form of intercourse. (MEW3:73)

It is real people with their powers, abilities and other potentials which, together with the means of production, the technologies, constitute the productive forces of a society. In bourgeois society, however, these productive potentials come up against the “fetters” of the relations of private property within which people have intercourse and dealings with one another, so that these private property relations have to be abolished. Only much later, in *Capital* and other of his writings on the critique of political economy, will Marx come to conceive private property relations as the form of appearance on the “surface” of bourgeois society of deeper-lying *value-form* relations. In “large-scale industry”, there is said to be a “contradiction between the instrument of production and private property” (MEW3:66). This contradiction attains its dynamics from the confrontation with the ever-expanding and ever-deepening world market which confronts the individuals, the individual capitals, the countries and the states as an alien power and snatches everything away into its commercial happenings, into a network of mutual dependency. Marx and Engels emphasize a causal-historical process of immiseration which makes the life of proletarians “unbearable” (MEW3:60) so that they

have to appropriate the existing totality of productive forces, not only to achieve their self-activation but to be able to secure their existence at all. (MEW3:67)

For:

In the development of the productive forces there comes a stage at which forces of production and means of intercourse are called forth which only cause havoc under existing relations, which are no longer forces of production but forces of destruction (machinery and money). (MEW3:69 cf. 60)

For the individuals, the proletarians *in their neediness*, it is always a matter of the appropriation of alien powers, whether they be the productive forces or the world market. What is *outside their control* is supposed to be brought *under* the control of the in some way collectivized individuals. Contingency constitutes the counterpole to this control, which is embodied above all in the world market and money. “With money, every form of intercourse and intercourse itself is posited as contingent for the individuals.” (MEW3:66) The contingency of money is coupled with the contingency of private property in general, which is subject to the “illusion” “as if private property itself were based on purely private will, on the arbitrary disposition over things” (*ibid.* 63) so that the juridical illusion can arise that “for every code it is completely contingent that individuals enter into relations with one another, e.g. contracts” (*ibid.* 64), relations “which one can enter or not enter on a whim and whose content is based completely on the individual caprice of the contracting partners” (*ibid.*) Against the all-pervading contingency in bourgeois society, communist society posits a plan; there is talk of “naturally growing” (*naturwüchsig*) societies, including bourgeois society, which do not consciously, collectively control their processes. “Natural growth” is counterposed to conscious control; only in communist society will it become possible to eliminate the alienation of autonomous, natural, contingent states of affairs. In bourgeois society, society’s own social activity confronts it as “a reified power over us that grows out of our control, crosses our expectations, nullifies our calculations” (*ibid.* 33). Conscious control is supposed to make it possible that “our expectations” are fulfilled, that “our calculations” work out. The natural growth of society would thus be overcome, sublated into calculability and planable security of existence.

Natural growth can be understood as a translation of the Greek φύσις, whose opposite term is ποιησις. Bringing-oneself-forth is opposed to producing, bringing another being forth. Natural growth is encountered

in bourgeois society however not only as nature, but first and foremost and essentially as the alienated social activity of society itself. Nature as such, by contrast, has long since been brought under the control of humans and can be calculated precisely on the basis of natural scientific knowledge and technology; it has largely forfeited its uncanny power in the course of advancing modern technological developments that allow humans to intrude more and more deeply into nature. Ultimately, nature itself can be produced; what brings itself forth then can be brought forth according to plan. Bourgeois society as a totality, social life itself, on the contrary, is for Marx and Engels in *The German Ideology* perversely φύσις-like, it is more φύσις-like than nature itself. The world market is the modern self-upsurge, it is not poietic bringing-forth but a wild, opaque happening infected with contingency. This self-upsurge of the world market and the social process as a whole is supposed, however, in communism, to be transmuted into a consciously controlled bringing-forth. With this, the consummate historical perfection of human poietic comportment would be initiated. Here, for the moment, the issue is not whether this perfection is feasible, whether it could be realized in world history and how high its ‘price’ would be — even the consideration, whether society would gain in ‘freedom’ or lose it is a mode of calculating thinking — but rather, attention is focused here on fundamental concepts of metaphysics that allow such thoughts to be formulated with a self-evidence that addresses and appeals to the modern cast of human being.

Some of these fundamental concepts have already been named: φύσις, ποίησις, consciousness, nature (natural growth). These must be supplemented by necessity (ἀναγκάιον), contingency (συμβεβηκός), need (χρῆσις), force or potential (δύναμις), freedom (ἐλευθερία). They entertain intimate relations with each other. The question is how Marx casts human being, cast of course not simply in the sense of a ‘theory’ that has been thought-up, but as the writing-down of something sent by history that becomes gradually visible to a thinker’s mind. This casting circles about socialized human freedom as an historical possibility. When Marx and Engels talk about “fettters” having to be

thrown off in the transition to a communist society, this transition has to be understood as the realization of a higher freedom of human being, as the liberation of an enslaved element from chains. For Marx and Engels, humans are needy beings who produce what they need to live — production is simultaneously production of the preconditions for the satisfaction of needs. Human being cast as needy can be satisfied.

Production, however, is the expenditure of a force, the realization of a potential. Insofar as humans constitute the controlling starting-point for a movement that brings forth means of life, they are a power, a force (δύναμις), more precisely, a productive force. How powerful humans are as producers of course depends on which means of production are employed, which in turn determine the character and the productivity of the labour process. Humans are productive not simply in expending bodily force, but essentially in *knowing how* to produce. They know how to produce means of life, and the productivity of labour, the expenditure of their labour-power, depends decisively on productive know-how. Production is control of a process of bringing-forth made possible by technical knowledge. Humans as producers control and dominate a bringing-forth, they control the process of a being coming into presence. This means above all that humans are able to counteract contingency or hold it at bay, i.e. exclude what could deflect the production process from the τέλος (end) of the intended product. Human productive power is domination over the presence of unintended contingency by holding it off in absence. Contingency is what cuts across and mucks up what is intended, foreseen and planned. Production thus always implies also an overcoming of and domination over contingency, its negation by a will to productive power.

According to Marx and Engels, human freedom consists in humans developing the forces of production to satisfy their needs and in disposing freely — as (socially collectivized) subject, as underlying substratum — of these, their productive forces. Freedom is thus located in a controlled, planned being-able-to-produce. Everything that hinders the forces of production or prevents free disposition over them to this extent injures and impairs human freedom.

In the modern bourgeois epoch, as Marx and Engels rightly observe, the productive forces under the leadership of “large-scale industry” and the technological effects of the sciences have risen enormously, indeed immeasurably. They have increasingly become collective, organized, social forces. The increase in productive forces goes hand in hand with a progressive division of labour and with the development of world intercourse, in which the mutual dependency of the producers grows strongly, even to the point that production becomes a matter of a global economy in its mutual interrelationships and interdependencies. Humans as producers have progressed to become world producers, they have become the masters of immeasurable productive forces strewn over the globe and linked with each other in a network of production. Humans have become universal, world-encompassing producers and thus masters of the world. The individual cannot be viewed as producer, but only the total producer of world society, for only in this worldwide interlinking are humans today producers at all. What people need to cover their daily needs comes from *all* over the world, from the North Pole to the South Pole. And every producing activity is only possible — directly or indirectly — as activity for the intermeshed world market.

But, according to Marx and Engels, humans as world-producers today are not yet free; they do not yet freely dispose of the productive forces that have already been developed and already exist. Mastery over universal production is not yet complete because there is no underlying collective social subject that could exercise this free disposition. In the *German Ideology*, Marx and Engels detect this “fetter” on the productive forces in the form of private property. The individual producers are not socialized and sociated *as* producers but only *as* citizens of state, in the ‘superstructure’. Moreover, disposition over the productive forces is for the greatest part in the hand of the capitalists who, by apparently constituting the ruling starting-point for capital, are also the ruling starting-point for the production process. The greater part of the population is excluded from exercising control over the means of production. As a consequence of this, the labourers receive much less of the social product than the capitalists; the distribution of wealth is extremely unequal. So that people can become free, therefore, private

property must be abolished as a “form of intercourse”, as a “relation of production”, i.e. it must be sublated politically into directly social property. The proletariat is a universal class because it not only realizes its own freedom through a revolution, but also that of the capitalist class, which is also unfree in bourgeois society insofar as it is not a social subject that has control over the social productive forces *as social forces*. The productive forces of the world are splintered into millions of dissociated units strewn worldwide which are only associated with each other via the market and mediated by rivalrous competition. Instead of consciously sociated control, contingency holds sway over the products and thus over the productive forces themselves. The arbitrariness of the world market makes any planning of a subject null and void; subjects do not control production completely, even though it is without exception people (with the aid of ‘natural resources’) who produce specific commodities. The world market confronts humans as an alien power.

Social power, i.e. multiplied productive force, which arises through the synergy of various individuals as a result of the division of labour, appears to these individuals (because their working-together itself is not voluntary, but a natural growth) not as their own, unified power but as an alien, violent force standing outside them about which they do not know whence it is coming and whither it is going, that they thus can no longer control and that, on the contrary, now runs through an idiosyncratic series of phases and stages of development, independent of the willing and activities of people, indeed which even direct this willing and these activities. (MEW3:34)

This long, compressed and nested sentence brings an essential thought, a thought about the freedom of human being, into focus. The world market is presented here as a “natural” “violent force”, like a force of nature, which counters humans and which should be broken by humans. The naturalness, the φύσις contradicts the free willing of humans as poiets. A man-made, global φύσις confronts a splintered, parcellized, dissociated ποίησις. Because this φύσις is man-made, it can, according to the Marxian conception of history, also be sublated into a sociated, social ποίησις, but only with the historical sublation of the isolation of dissociated individual producing subjects into a communist society. In the *German Ideology* Marx and Engels underscore the division of labour

as an alien power which ties the individuals to a single, one-sided activity and thus prevents their all-round development and the cultivation of their productive forces. In later writings on the critique of political economy, Marx will no longer emphasize the division of labour and its sublation, but instead the abstract socialization in *value* or *exchange-value*, a concept which still does not play any role in the *German Ideology*.

The social fetters on the social productive forces must be eliminated and thrown off if humans are to become free as consciously sociated producers. Only then will the violent force of contingency and ‘natural growth’ be abolished and a total social subject of the productive forces step into its place. Only then will a realm of freedom be realized. The preconditions for this transition to a higher social form are, according to Marx and Engels at the time of writing the *German Ideology*, of two kinds: *first*, the formation of an overwhelming mass of propertyless individuals whose conditions of existence are “unbearable” (MEW3:34) and “contingent” (MEW3:77) and *second*, the development of the productive forces to such a degree that the satisfaction of needs of the earth’s entire population is guaranteed. With these preconditions it is the *satisfiable neediness* of human being which steps into the foreground as opposed to the free, socialized disposition over the productive forces, which now appears as a condition of the universal satisfaction of needs. What Marx and Engels envisage as communism forms a single structured whole that includes a posited historical casting of human being itself. With this positing, the future is also cast. The advent of the future is thought by Marx and Engels as the abolition of the bourgeois form of intercourse, as its sublation into a conscious sociation in which a collective subject forms its will in some all-encompassing political manner, and realizes it by means of highly developed, consciously organized and sociated productive forces. From a casting of human being, history arises; from the lot sent by history, a casting of human being comes about.

But it would be ahistorical to think that human being necessarily had to be posited for all time as a powerful, producing, needy, willing, subject-ive essence.

What have we gained by these elaborations of Marx and Engels' early writings? They serve to illumine the background against which Heidegger speaks about alienation, communism, Marxism and producing. It should have become even clearer that Heidegger and Marx talk about alienation in completely different ways. Heidegger blots out this background — the phenomenality of capitalist economy. For him, economy reduces to producing, production, the poietic, and that primarily as a mode of unconcealing. In the *Letter on 'Humanism'* does Heidegger not want to go into economic matters and in particular into the question of property? Does he simply want to steer clear of highly explosive political topics current in his own day? Do such matters not lie on the path of the question of being, the only question that moves him? Are the social relations of production for him themselves a 'superstructural phenomenon' viewed from the deeper-lying 'basis' of a 'fundamental ontology', i.e. are they a non-originary phenomenon? (It does not suffice, of course, to refer to the fact that Heidegger did not have 'enough time' to consider such topics, an explanation which completely evades the issue for thinking facing us.) If Heidegger makes do with laconic remarks and statements in referring explicitly to Marxism, we have to proceed indirectly and look at how Heidegger deals with economic issues in general. To this end it will be useful to reread the famous analysis of equipment in *Being and Time*.

4. Heidegger's Analysis of Production in *Being and Time*

In a certain sense, equipment forms a starting-point in *Being and Time* — it is the first kind of being subjected to an extended ontological analysis after the long expositions of the question of being and the task of a preparatory analysis of Dasein. Heidegger is concerned with the being of the beings initially encountered in the world as the first step in clarifying the structure of being-in-the-world. These initially encountered beings, practical things, are what is at-hand, whose at-handedness Heidegger endeavours to distinguish from mere presence-at-hand. Via equipment he grapples with the ontological determination of the worldliness of the world. Everyday manipulating, use and producing are put at the centre of analysis as ways of taking-care-of...

The analysis of equipment is headed *A. The Analysis of the Worldliness of the Surrounding World and Worldliness in General; § 15. The Being of Beings Encountered in the Surrounding World*. The being of what is first encountered is to be determined. These are the 'things' that the Greeks call πράγματα. Their being consists in "being-good-for..." (Um-zu...), (something or other) which comprises "serviceability, flexibility, applicability, handiness," (SZ:68) etc. Marx would call this use-value: things are useful in everyday dealings. For his part, Heidegger puts producing in the foreground: "...the work, what is to be produced in a specific situation, is what is primarily taken care of and therefore also what is primarily at hand." (SZ:69f) The relationship to equipment when manipulating, using and producing is always a relationship to a totality of equipment in a referential network (Verweisungszusammenhang) of utility (Nutzungszusammenhang). One piece of equipment refers to the next, and so on. What is striking is that Heidegger only talks of producing, of production and not of circulation, although they mutually depend on each other (as Marx expounds at length in the introduction to the *Grundrissen*). How is circulation to be understood as a mode of being? Above all in relation to a particular piece of equipment, a special being encountered within the world, does

something paradoxical become apparent when circulation is blanked out: Money is equipment that does not fit very well into the analysis of equipment. What is the being of money? If it is something at-hand, then its essence must lie in being-good-for.... For what can money be used, what is it good for? To buy things. Money is (good) for buying. Can buying be interpreted as a taking-care-of...? Buying is useful for, e.g. taking care of the supply of food; a supply of food is for meeting daily nutritional requirements. Meeting daily nutritional requirements is for the sake of maintaining Dasein's standard of living on a certain level, that is, for the sake of a possibility of its existence. (Cf. SZ:84) But buying is a very general taking-care-of..., if it remains a taking-care-of... at all, insofar as money is also good for buying to make more money by reselling. Money-making and especially making-more-money are useful for something special which cannot be traced back or tied back to a for-the-sake-of (Um-willen a possibility of Dasein's existence) easily and perhaps not at all.

Can money be produced? Can money take the position of the work, of what is primarily to be taken care of? If money cannot be produced, how can money be made? It has to be earned by selling something else, whether it be produced commodities, money capital, land or labour-power. Money is something at hand that cannot be something directly produced, but always mediated by some other taking-care-of... or another producing or an exchange. Its for-what (Wo-zu) is, moreover, universal insofar as it can be used everywhere for purchasing vendibles. A reference to the *entire* world of commodities is essentially inherent in money. The world of commodities for its part, however, does not form a totality of being-useful-for (Bewandtnisganzheit) in the Heideggerian sense because the members of the commodity world are universal, equally valid, without a special link between one commodity and the next; what a particular commodity is good-for in use may be quite definite, but factually it is sold in trade and becomes thereby — in money — abstractly universal. Its price tag is its *qualitative* equals sign (=) with every other commodity, independently of any context of use. The universality which is announced in the — actualized or potential —

price of a commodity, to distinguish it from an "equipment network" (Zeugzusammenhang SZ:75), can be called an *exchange-value network*.

As vendible and with regard to their vendibility, the commodity for its owner is only a means to get money. The owner is indifferent to its particular being-good-for.... Heidegger talks about the commodity form only casually in referring to the "dozen commodity" (today it would be more appropriate to speak of the thousand and million commodity, i.e. mass-produced commodity) to mark it off from products "in simple handicraft states of affairs" (SZ:70). He is only interested in demonstrating that the reference to others is not lacking in the mass commodity, but is only "indefinite": it "points to arbitrary persons, the average" (SZ:71). In the reference to others, only the use-value being is addressed, not its exchange-value being, which refers to money. So that the commodity can become something at hand for its user, it must first strip off its particular being and be recognized universally in money. It has to make the transcendental leap from particularity to the abstract universality of money (value-being) before it can withdraw again into a domestic at-handness for the end-user. Every commodity has to go through the eye of the needle of money in order to achieve a realization of its at-handness.

With being-good-for..., it seems to me that only half the being of the initially encountered "intra-worldly beings" is grasped, their being insofar as they refer to Dasein dissociated from most others in its private world, and not associated with all others via the market-mediation of money. Every thing is, however, a "value-laden thing" (SZ:68), not only in the sense addressed at this point by Heidegger, but in the completely prosaic sense that it has an exchange-value, a money value, a power to exchange. The referential structure of being-good-for... that culminates in a conceptual determination of a being-good-for... totality of the world, casts the world only on the basis of the use-value being of things encountered for Dasein. This casting of being on the basis of at-handness allows the Heidegger of *Being and Time* to anchor the world in a for-the-sake-of-Dasein. "The primary 'what-for' is a for-the-sake-of." (SZ:84).

for instance this thing at hand, which we therefore call a hammer, is useful for hammering, hammering is useful for fastening, fastening is useful for protection against bad weather, protection against bad weather is for the sake of Dasein's accommodation, that is, for the sake of a possibility of its being. (SZ:84)

If one considers the value-form of beings at-hand, the world can no longer be construed in this way, since the totality of useful-for presupposes the fiction of an at-handness that factually does not exist. Whatever is at hand is accessible to me in my dissociated, private world that is hardly the totality. Whatever is the property of others is not accessible to me and is therefore factually not a being at-hand for me even though it may show itself as something potentially at-hand. A mediation is required for a particular something to become factually at-hand for me and this mediation lies in the dimension of the value-being of things, i.e. that they are venal and show themselves as such to everyday understanding. Money is the universal means for making the mediation so that a being can step from the associated commodity-world into the dissociated, private circle of for-the-sake-of my Dasein. A dimension of exchange is thus introduced that posits a difference which goes through the being of beings, i.e. ontologically, like a tear or crack or fault line. It is a sundering of abstractly associated universality from dissociated particularity borne by each commodity as a unity of exchange-value and use-value.

The “referential disturbance” (Störung der Verweisung SZ:84) about which Heidegger speaks in the context of things being unusable, missing or refractory and in which the world makes itself noticeable, must be supplemented by this tear or crack of value-being in such a way that things double themselves in their self-revealing,⁵ i.e. they reveal

⁵ “Price-determinate commodity equipment has a double ontological structure as particularity and universality. It is the value-form reference from the particular-commodity to money-universality in the exchange relation of industrial commodities - whereby money represents the commodity world - that is constitutive for this doubling. ... The price tag is a sign whose indicativeness abstracts from the ‘what for’ of a serviceability and so cannot be grasped as a possible concretisation of the same. But this does not preclude price-determinate commodities being serviceable (etc.) ready-at-hand equipment.” Marnie Hanlon

themselves in their being — and are understood thus in their being — not only as being good-for... but also as being-for-the-having for such-and-such an amount of money. In this commodity-being, their (exchange-)value-being, things are disclosed as offered in exchange for money. Things at-hand can be lacking ontically (and thus the referential network may be disturbed) because there is a lack of the universal mediator of access to things, i.e. money, to make the mediation with what is lacking. And money, in turn, could be lacking at the moment or in the long term because one does not have anything to sell that would be useful for others. The reference is 'disturbed' perhaps not in Dasein's circumspensive view of the world, as if one did not know how things fit together, nor in a disturbed functionality, but factually in their accessibility, in the secured possibility of being able to put one's hands on the thing whereby its commodity-being or being-able-to-be-had-for-money lights up as such. The reference to others must therefore not only be understood on the basis of the usefulness of things (say, for an indefinite number of possible users), as indicated above, but just as much on the basis of the possibility and actuality of exchange, i.e. their venality, which in turn is mediated by money. So that what is at-hand can realize its being-good-for... for others, its value-being must first be practically recognized, validated, estimated in money and it must in a certain way be not useful for the seller. The seller must be able and willing to 'do without' it and therefore offer it for sale. Its being-good-for does not find any final point of return or recurrence in the seller, but rather the thing discloses itself primarily to the seller in its exchange-value-being, of being exchangeable, and thus as a use-value-for-others.

What does this state of affairs mean, more precisely, ontologically, i.e. in relation to the *being* of things? Not only are they useful for something in a totality of being-useful-for... which "is ultimately traced back to a what-for for which there is no being-useful-for..." (SZ:84), i.e. to a for-

the-sake of Dasein itself, but things also have a value *among themselves*; they are always already abstractly set equal to each other as value-things, i.e. as commodities, and opened up toward money. “Our masters are a matter of indifference to us; we are on sale for money.”⁶ The abstractness of this equalizing is based on blotting out the concrete what-for of things and therefore ultimately, to blotting out the for-the-sake of Dasein itself in favour of looking at their exchangeability for money. They are worth such-and-such (an amount of money). Things are not only equipment but also value and in their value-being they are on sale for an anonymous buyer, at the buyer’s disposal through the mediation of money. The being of things comprises not only their equipment-being (at-handness) but also their value-being (vendibility), their power to exchange for the universal equivalent, money. Things reveal themselves of themselves as equipment and at the same time as value-things, as commodities, i.e. as things that have a price and therefore are arbitrarily interchangeable with other things (albeit always in definite, quantitative price-determinate relations).

Heidegger’s equipment analysis offers the opportunity of articulating the use-value of things better, because ontologically more adequately. For Marx, use-value is always also — apart from its primary character as a product of useful labour — the natural form, a collection of physical properties as the attributes of a substrate. Insofar — but only insofar — Marx’s analysis of use-value is subject to the Heideggerian critique of the ontology of presence-at-hand (*Vorhandenheit*). Marx’s emphasis of the useful character of commodity-producing labour for practical living is sufficient, however, to make a link with Heidegger’s determination of equipment as being-good-for... compelling and natural. Conversely, Heidegger’s equipment-analysis proceeds as if Dasein were *singular* and not always already a *plurality* of many Dasein associated by definite social relations, to wit in this context, via the abstract associating of the exchange-values of commodities.

The value-being of things in exchange puts itself beyond their being as equipment, their serviceability, etc. as if it did not have any relation

⁶ Grimm Deutsches Wörterbuch (German Dictionary), Vol. 3 col. 1447.

with Dasein. As things of value, they are uncoupled from a for-the-sake-of-Dasein and lead their own lives among themselves on the market. Trade with products, i.e. the exchange of products for the sake of their usefulness may indeed be the intention of the actors, as if they did not have anything other than the useful at-handness of the products in mind, but the relation into which they put the products with each other, their market relation to each other, is ultimately an abstract-quantitative relation, and indeed so much so that trade can become autonomous and an end in itself. Marx calls this the inversion of the formula of simple commodity circulation into the general formula of capital, i.e. into the universal valorization of value, in which value itself becomes an automaton. The inversion is only possible because of the double nature of commodity things as being concretely useful things on the one hand and abstract quantities of value on the other. The practical equating of all useful things as commodities on the market is a practical abstracting that ends inevitably in mere price-quantity.

When people trade with each other, each person has their own interests in mind. For the dealer, the commodity is not a thing at-hand, but only a thing good for the customer whose needs are to be satisfied (or desires enticed). The dealer must be interested in what the commodity is good for insofar as it concerns the customer, so that he, the dealer, can make his money. The use-value side is never of no consequence; the things must always be good for something. But here it is a matter of allowing the phenomenon of things, i.e. their mode of being, to come fully to light. Heidegger underlines the at-handness of equipment as the way in which things are “discovered” in taking-care-of... It must therefore be of interest how things, i.e. the non-Dasein-like beings “initially encountered”, step into the openness of a discoveredness which boils down to how things in the openness are accessible to humans in their everyday actions.

Heidegger criticizes ontology, especially Cartesian ontology, for grasping things on the basis of their presence-at-hand, thus “skipping over” the more originary phenomenon of at-handness, which is rooted in everyday practice. He demonstrates how the “theoretical”, contemplative, “staring” grasp of things as beings present-at-hand, as

substances with properties represents a *derivative* mode of appearance of things as opposed to the immediate openness and obviousness of at-handness. He thus locates the originary being of things, and their truth or disclosedness, in everyday practice, in prosaic, active taking-care-of... Everyday life is a socio-historical location, the “place of history”, as Heidegger calls the πόλις elsewhere. How then are things accessible to Dasein’s circumspective view? We have already said it above: they are not only useful things, equipment, but also value-things, commodities. With this, a social dimension of being-with-others is addressed, without however shifting from an equally originary ‘ontological’ level. The social dimension is not stocked up on top of a more substantial or originary dimension, whether it be that of traditional ontology, or whether it be that of a Heideggerian ontology of equipment. The at-handness of things that Heidegger now posits as originary is just as much an historico-social dimension of things as their commodity-being or value-being. But how does this value-being appear in everyday life? As property. The value-being of things in their universality is of course a modern phenomenon that has only arisen along with the emergence of the capitalist economic mode, of bourgeois society. That things universally have a value, a price, presupposes a long historical development in which the abstractness of money relations and markets relations has asserted itself against other social relations and has become globally ubiquitous. This does not mean however that value-being is not an originary phenomenon, just as little as the comparison between crude, ancient technology and modern, sophisticated technology presupposes precisely a *sameness* of ontological structure. The ontological positing of things in their double nature begins already in early Western history. Exchange among people, including in particular the exchange of material goods besides all the other customary social interchanges, is a ubiquitous, elementary form of sociation. Value is merely a modern, highly developed and abstract form of appearance of property relations under which things are universally available for sale. The value-being of things is only given on the foundation of private property relations, which individuate and dissociate owners. In earlier societies — and here only Western forms of society are of interest — property relations were

different — something that does not concern us here — but at-handness and property were always equally open to sight, i.e. modes of an originary disclosure of things to practical human understanding. In particular, for the Greeks things were not only useful products but also commodities and this double nature was also taken up by the philosophical thinking of an Aristotle where it challenged thinking. To him the distinction between use-value and exchange-value originally can be attributed. An adequate ontological analysis of beings encountered “at first and for the most part” must therefore take this double determination of essence into consideration.

In the introduction to the *Grundrissen*, Marx emphasizes that production cannot be analyzed in isolation from distribution, exchange and consumption because all four together form the moments of a totality that mutually interact. Distribution is just another name for property relations; it determines how the productive forces of a society are distributed among its members. In particular, distribution determines factual access to the means of production, the land and the product. In the things encountered everyday, there is always a reference to others, and that not merely with regard to those who will use them, but with regard to their owners and possessors. Apart from at-handness, there is in one and the same thing the ‘belonging-ness’, the ‘propertied-ness’, if a neologism is permitted. Each thing belongs to someone, and even a thing that is lost or without an owner is only a deficient mode of belonging-ness. Belonging-ness is just as open to view as at-handness, and indeed in the same way as the latter, i.e. without being expressly thematized, implicitly. In taking-care-of... recourse is made to things at-hand with an implicit matter-of-factness that distinguishes between what one owns or at least possesses and what is owned or possessed by others. For the most part, these others are private individuals or entities, but public property, too, is covered by belonging-ness. Belonging-ness as a network of relations is co-discovered with the totality of being-useful-for of equipment, which allocates the various things to their respective owners or possessors. The world of property is open to view for the circumspective view of Dasein as a network of property relations.

By taking πράγματα as the starting-point for his analysis of things encountered in the world, Heidegger wants to put practical action and in particular, producing as practical modes of the disclosedness of world into the centre of attention. Practical action as the manipulation of things constitutes an essential component of being-in-the-world, so much so that Heidegger bases his first concept of world on it: the world is at first and for the most part a multi-layered network of references among equipment. But the world is at the same time and to the same extent a multi-layered network of property and exchange relations. Because producing is always already a social producing, it always takes place within definite property and exchange relations that Dasein has always already discovered *a priori* in dealing with its affairs. What consequences does this doubling of the essence of things into things at-hand and things belonging-to, that can only be brought into range as at-hand via exchange, have for Heidegger's analysis in *Being and Time*?

In the third chapter of the first section, Heidegger is at pains to clarify the worldliness of the world on the background of a determination of Dasein as being-in-the-world and he achieves this aim by building up a conceptual structure around the pair of concepts "being-useful-for" (Bewandtnis) and "significance" (Bedeutsamkeit), whereby the latter is interpreted in the context of a for-the-sake-of-Dasein.

In the familiarity with these relations, Dasein 'signifies' to itself, it gives itself its being and potential for being with respect to its being-in-the-world to its understanding in an originary way. (...) These relations are bracketed together among themselves as an originary totality; they are what they are as this significance, in which Dasein gives itself its being-in-the-world *a priori* to its understanding. (SZ:87)

In its being-in-the-world, Dasein is concerned with itself; its taking-care-of... is always already a taking-care-of-oneself. It understands the world from the viewpoint of its taking-care-of... as the significance of the world which is interpreted essentially as a network of things at-hand. Dasein thus has, in an ontologically originary sense, a pragmatic understanding of itself. There are two parts that have to be held apart and in relation to each other. Dasein's understanding of *world* is always an understanding of *self*, of course, not in a solipsistic or selfish sense,

but in the sense of a sense for what is at hand. "The totality of being-useful-for itself however is traced back ultimately to a what-for that has *no* further useful-for, [...] but a being whose being is determined as being-in-the-world..." (SZ:84, emphasis in the original) And because the worldliness of the world is grasped on the basis of at-handness, it is a world of pragmatic interrelations. Pragmatism and self-relation complement each other. Together they allow Dasein an understanding of the world in which for Dasein it can be a matter of its potential for being, its being-able-to..., its casting of itself *as* self. The self, practical action and understanding fit together in a determination of the openness of the world *for* Dasein. Dasein sees things in the light of acting, of dealing with things for the sake of its own existence.

If however things are grasped not only on the basis of being-good-for..., but in their belonging-to..., they assume traits of a repulsion and assignment which may throw Dasein back onto itself, for it is primarily only its *own* property assigned to itself that is accessible and practically at hand; only under certain circumstances can access be gained to alien property, namely, only with the agreement of its owner, say, on the basis of a contractual agreement, i.e. an exchange. The ownership and exchange relations which regulate access to things, so that they can also become factually at hand, are equally ordinary with pragmatic relations to things.

The double nature of things encountered daily can be interpreted provisionally as at-handness and belonging-ness. This double nature, however, is not thematized in *Being and Time*, i.e. the value-being of things is blotted out and is not brought to an ontological concept. Even when in *Being and Time* Heidegger comes to talk expressly of economics, the dimension of things being commodities does not come into view: "The everyday connection of equipment at hand, its historical emergence, employment, its factual role in Dasein is the subject of the science of the economy. Things at hand do not have to lose their character as equipment in order to become the 'subject' of a science" (SZ:361). If now, however, commodity-being is taken into account, things show themselves from another aspect, namely from the aspect of their unavailability, an unavailability based on private property, or in

other words, they reveal themselves in their restricted availability insofar as things, constantly at the beck and call of money, are available for sale. Because alien property belongs to someone else, this other person has control over it, and I do not; disposability is only mediated through being offered for sale. Here, as already sketched above, it is not a matter of a technical disturbance of the “referential network of utility”, but a social disturbance, a barrier inherent in the structure of being-together-with-others.

Unavailability as private property as such is a state of affairs that does not capture the essence of the value-being of things. Property has to be guided back to its essential grounding. To do this, something like a ‘value-form analysis’, i.e. a social ontology of value as abstract universal association of dissociated goods and income-sources, is required which can deepen the insight into the unavailability of things. As will become apparent below, in view of an even deeper insight into the essence of the gathering of the gainable called the *gainful game* or the *win* (*Gewinnst, Gewinn-Spiel*), this deepening of insight into exchange-value will not be the final fathoming. Insofar as value itself becomes a self-moving automaton, a movement made possible by the *reified* nature of value as a social, sociating relation, the unavailability of things loses the illusory appearance that it is simply a matter of the exclusive distribution of things as private property among social subjects which could be eliminated by elevating distribution to a conscious social distribution, i.e. collective social ownership. Therefore, let us once again turn to Marxian texts.

5. A Complementary View of Marx

No thematic reference to property relations as such can be found in *Being and Time*. Even the commodity form is mentioned only casually, at the point where Heidegger refers to the others who are co-present in the “multiple commodity” (lit. “dozen commodity” SZ:71) as average end-users (cf. above). In order to roughly measure the distance that separates the Heideggerian horizon from the Marxian one, a passage can be cited in which the young Marx goes into the relations between people in the exchange relation in some detail:

I have produced for myself and not for you, just as you have produced for yourself and not for me. The result of my production has in itself just as little relation to you as the result of your production has an immediate relation to me, i.e. our production is not production of humans for humans as humans, i.e. it is not *social* production. (MEW Erg. Bd. 1 p. 459)

Commodity exchange as a form of social mediation does not constitute a proper mode of (social) being-together for the young Marx (and presumably no less so for the late Marx, but not so plainly expressed). In commodity exchange, no mutual recognition of human being as needy takes place, but rather, each person sees in his or her own production only the equivalent of the other’s product which he or she desires. One person does not produce for the sake of the other’s needs, but in order to appropriate the other’s product.

In truth I produce *another* object, the object of your production, for which I intend to exchange this surplus [product ME], an exchange that I have already executed in thought. The *social* relation in which I stand towards you, my labour for your need is therefore also a mere illusion... (*ibid.* 460)

According to Marx, illusion and truth, improper and proper, inauthentic and authentic society are miles apart under bourgeois states of affairs. A type of production is now addressed that can no longer be understood as *ποίησις*, but as a pro-duction, i.e. a bringing-forth toward me, a bringing-about, that is executed in exchange and which is already imagined as a possibility by me imagining an exchange “that I have already executed in thought” which Marx wrongly describes also as a

production: “I produce *another* object, the object of your production”. The exchange-value being of things is always already revealed and opened up *a priori* to understanding, otherwise no idea of an exchange, and no exchange could come about. The exchange is imagined in thinking that sets up images or representations before it is ‘produced’, or rather, brought about. The imagined exchange cannot however be brought about in the same way as the carpenter imagines a table that is to be produced, i.e. ‘brought about’, for the craftsperson as such grasps (in the double sense) things solely from the aspect of their at-handness. The carpenter’s technical view is derived from knowledge about how to produce certain useful objects. This is not the case with exchange, which is a social process executed in the dimension of value-being that is open to understanding not as technical, but as commercial know-how, i.e. a knowledge of commodity turnover. The price-determinate value of a thing, however, despite all the techniques of advertising, cannot be technically produced under the guidance of a previously sighted view, but turns out as a factual value in the exchange relation on the ‘turnover-place’ (Umschlagplatz), the market. The imagined value refers to a moment of non-producibility and the withdrawal of things insofar as things constitute their quantitatively determinate value among themselves in the money-mediated exchange relation with each other on the market. As commodities, things hold themselves back thus forming their own world, the commodity world with value-interrelations among themselves. Their value-being is both governed and quantitatively regulated by the money-form, a being and a form which, in line with the double nature of commodities, is completely disjunct from the neediness of people and human being in its neediness. It is in value-being itself (and not in the exclusiveness of property relations), that the essential withdrawal holds sway. With these observations on value, however, we are anticipating the late Marx before having completed the review of the early Marx. Let us then return to the young Marx:

The only understandable language we speak to each other are our objects in their relationship to each other. We would not understand a human language, and it would remain without effect. [...] We are mutually alienated from human being to such an extent that the direct language of this essence appears to us as

a violation of human dignity, whereas the alienated language of reified values appears as justified, self-assured and self-recognizing human dignity. (*ibid.* 461)

The humanist Marx of the famous alienation theory presents himself in this way. It is a protest against inhuman, reified relations of sociation (*Vergesellschaftung*) in which the abstractness of private property negates the needy particularity of the individuals. Humans themselves do not have any value, but only their property. “Our *mutual* value is for us the *value* of our mutual objects. The human being himself is thus for us mutually *worthless*.” (*ibid.* 462) Human being itself goes unesteemed in mutual exchange-estimation of commodities. The commodity exchange relations deny human being cast as need-having; they are inhuman as long as and insofar as the human is posited as a needy-producing being. And this is the question with which we are now confronted: To what extent is such an historical casting of human being as a needy-producing being valid? Need and production are like opposite sides of a coin. The essential determination of production is the fulfilment of human need, and not, say, mere consumption or pleasure. For Marx, any divergence or worse: diremption of these opposite sides amounts to an alienation from genuinely social human being.

Against this diremption, Marx posits an historical casting of a true (in the sense authentic, genuine) society in which a true mutual recognition of needy human being gains ascendancy in social intercourse, in which even love is granted a secured position in the intercourse of everyday life. To produce for each other as humans would mean, among other things, “to have been a mediator for you between you and the species, [...] to know that I am affirmed in your thinking as well as your love.” (*ibid.* 462) A true society is for Marx the realization of being-for-each-other without the repelling, excluding limits of private property. It is a community, a locus of being taken up into and protected by species-being, an overcoming of the splintering into egocentric individuals. When Heidegger in the *Letter on ‘Humanism’* writes down a word such as ‘alienation’, he evokes at the same time the entire problematic of the young Marx, the problematic of true mutual recognition and estimation of subjects which is already announced in Hegel, albeit not in the form

of a critique of the form of society, i.e. its social ontology, since for Hegel bourgeois society does not represent a violation of human being. On the contrary, it is a realization of human freedom⁷ as particularity (if not singularity), which has to be elevated to a higher level and corrected in the state, not in such a way that it would be eliminated but rather realize the concept of freedom itself in accordance with reason. What, then, does it mean with respect to the critique of private property when Heidegger writes: “Because Marx, in experiencing alienation, reaches into an essential dimension of history...” (WM 336)?

The “essentiality of what is historical” lies for Heidegger in “being” (*ibid.*). Do the exchange relations that predominate in the bourgeois form of society entertain an essential relation with being? Are they a destiny sent by being? Is the value-being of things in its revealedness an historical destiny sent to human being? If τέχνη ποιητική and technology as historical ways of disclosing beings in their being are part of the Western history of being, why does not (exchange)-value-being as mode of disclosure equally belong to the same history in an originary way? If exchange-value, i.e. having-the-power-to-exchange-for..., represents an independent mode of (sociating) being equiprimordial with

⁷ Marx, too, recognizes that bourgeois society is the historical realization of freedom and equality: “Hence, if the economic form, exchange, posits the equality of subjects in all directions, then the content, the material, individual as well as factual, that drives to exchange is *freedom*. Equality and freedom are thus not only respected in exchange based on exchange-values, but exchange of exchange-values is also the productive, real basis of all *equality* and *freedom*. As pure ideas they are only idealized expressions of the same; as developed in juridical, political, social relations they are only this basis with another exponent.” (Wenn also die ökonomische Form, der Austausch, nach allen Seiten hin die Gleichheit der Subjekte setzt, so der Inhalt, der Stoff, individueller sowohl wie sachlicher, der zum Austausch treibt, die *Freiheit*. Gleichheit und Freiheit sind also nicht nur respektiert im Austausch, der auf Tauschwerten beruht, sondern der Austausch von Tauschwerten ist die produktive, reale Basis aller *Gleichheit* und *Freiheit*. Als reine Ideen sind sie bloß idealisierte Ausdrücke desselben; als entwickelt in juristischen, politischen, sozialen Beziehungen sind sie nur diese Basis in einer andren Potenz. Karl Marx *Grundrisse der Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie* Dietz, Berlin 1974 p. 156.)

being-good-for..., why does Heidegger start directly and exclusively with production, with (ποιητική) τέχνη? Why does he then push “unconditional production” (*ibid.* 337) into the foreground? Did he overlook, perhaps even push something aside, out of view? Or did he overlook something and push it aside in order to see even more deeply — into being itself? It is striking that Heidegger picks out only one moment of the fourfold totality of production, distribution, exchange and consumption constituting the material reproduction of society. By contrast, Marx toils away for years on end to bring exchange relations in bourgeois society to their concept (of value), a concept that will serve as the indispensable core concept for his social ontology of capitalism as a whole. As social practices, production and exchange have an equal weight for Marxian analysis, even though “in the final instance” production is supposed to be the decisive, determining moment.

Marx is the first thinker in the Western tradition after Aristotle to undertake the task of analyzing philosophically, metaphysically in detail the form of social intercourse we call exchange or trade. Exchange, the buying and selling of commodities, is a kind of everyday taking-care-of... which Heidegger, on the other hand, blots out of his equipment analysis. If Plato and Aristotle can be said to have gained their metaphysical conceptual structure on the basis of the paradigm of everyday ποίησις, of production, Heidegger continues this tradition unquestioningly insofar as he ties down intercourse with things primarily to a “work”. But Aristotle had also already made a start with the analysis of the value-form, as Marx remarks (MEW23:73f), an analysis that obviously does not resonate significantly with Heidegger. He not only retouches property relations out of the equipment analysis; he also excludes the practices of exchange which constitute the social form of intercourse, even though everyday handling of things in exchange truly deserves the name of acting/trading (Handlung/Handel) with πράγματα.

Even though in his late writings Marx no longer speaks so enthusiastically of true, genuine humans in a state of non-alienation, and with relentless persistence develops the concepts for penetrating more deeply into existing capitalism on the basis of the value concept, it

nevertheless remains detectable in what true human freedom consists for Marx, namely, in an “association of freely associated producers”. On the basis of the structure of value concepts developed for the critique of political economy, the alienation problematic of the early writings is transformed into the problematic of fetishism in the late writings, whereby a decisive shift of emphasis takes place in the critique. No longer do two individuals who mutually recognize or fail to recognize each other and who are separated by private property encounter one another, but rather, the autonomization of the products of human labour in the commodity and money forms comes more sharply into focus so that, as value, they assume an independent existence vis-à-vis humans as a whole. No longer is it humans who are alienated *from each other* by private property, but rather, humans as a whole in their social being-together are removed *from their own products* as value-things; in the value-form of sociation, social labour has conquered an autonomous, reified realm in which it leads its own life and follows its own self-movement.

This formulation of a shift of emphasis cannot be maintained, however, without further nuances insofar as even the early Marx does not neglect to speak of an autonomization of the products of labour vis-à-vis humans. In Marx’s excerpts from James Mills’ *Elements of Political Economy* (1844), for instance, there are passages that may be regarded as preliminary versions of a more detailed value-form analysis in *Capital*, where reference is even made to “equivalent” and “relative existence” with respect to private property (MEW Erg. 1:453) and also to money, in which “the complete domination of things over humans appears” (*ibid.* 455). The shift in emphasis from the early to the late Marx does not consist therefore in the introduction of a completely new motif but first of all, in the disappearance of talk about untrue, alienated, inhuman humanity and true recognition and secondly, in the much more profound and conceptually grounding elaboration of the dialectics of the value-form from the simple value-form to the money form in the later writings on the critique of political economy, in which the value concept becomes the express foundation of a systematically elaborated and connected ontological theory of the capitalist mode of production. This

value-form analytical theory allows Marx to unveil, decipher and fathom the fetishism that inheres in autonomized money (and the further-developed value-forms such as money-capital, interest-bearing capital, capitalized ground-rent) so that what appears as properties of things (essentially: money) is traced back to dissociated productive activity and its as-sociation in relations of mutual valuing. Reified social relations are uncovered and *thus* made fluid again in *thinking* with the intention of critical enlightenment. Can the value-being of commodities really be deciphered as the mystified form of social labour in such a way that there were an historical prospect⁸ of guiding fetishized products in the direction of transparently socialized products? Or does the value-being of commodities refer instead to a withdrawal of beings in their being from *any* producibility and conscious social control by socialized humans? These questions represent an interface between Marxian and Heideggerian thinking which come down to a question concerning value-being as an historical destiny of being, a question that will be taken up again up below. To anticipate: whereas Marx, starting with his casting of human being as needy and productive, tried to determine the value-being of commodities quantitatively by tying it back to the quantity of “socially necessary labour-time” in a commodity, the removal of this metaphysical positing of ground in labour implies that the value-being of commodities represents a groundless, non-manipulable magnitude which ‘shows up’ in the openness of being-together in a play of mutually estimating, valuing exchange.

What does this transformation of the alienation problematic from early to late Marxian thinking signify? It is no longer the mutual worthlessness of humans for each other as humans that is emphasized and appears as a violation of human being (in the late Marx, such emphatically humanistic passages cannot be found). Does private property (for the late Marx — and in general) represent a distortion of the true community — presupposing that the ‘true community’ is a

⁸ Of course, historical prospect does not mean here an empirical-historical potential, but an essential possibility of an historical casting that includes the question concerning human being itself.

tenable critical category? If at all, then not as such, but only derivatively, for it is reified value and not private property (and the associated mutual exclusion of possession of the products) that now stands at the centre of the (labour of) critique. Private property is only the mode of appearance of something more essential, more originary: it is a mode of appearance of value which, in the form of appearance of money, reigns over the commodity world like a king and puts its seal on the diremption of universal social from particular, dissociated interests. According to Marx, this king is to be disempowered in order to harmonize individual needs of life with a universal, collective, consciously controlled and organized being-in-the-world. Would genuine mutual recognition of humans result from this disempowerment? Would their essential neediness then gain full social recognition and satisfaction? Would a satisfied and therefore peaceful essencing of humankind thus come about?

In this casting of communism it is as if the opposed striving of humans against each other in competitive society had been overcome and a genuine being-for-each-other, a social solidarity and appreciative mutual estimation had stepped into its place. It is as if the resistance of the other had disappeared, at least insofar as private property inevitably brings forth opposed interests. The exclusivity of private property compels each individual to fend for him or herself, compels each individual to assert him or herself in the struggle for existence, whereas the mutual social recognition of neediness is supposed to eliminate this antagonistic opposition. In favour of an harmonious distribution of social wealth? Would the overcoming of the value-form and thus the 'just', conscious distribution of material goods really signify an elimination of social antagonism and the foundation for a realization of fraternity? Is such a vision compatible with an historical possibility for human being? Viewed from the standpoint of the value problematic, does the struggle for existence in competition represent an alienation of human being, a violation of its innermost essence or rather its realization? The answer depends on the historical casting of human being itself.

For it seems that the historical casting of humans as needy beings posits their essence as too 'low', too 'simple', too 'modest'. Are humans concerned essentially with their own needs, as seems to have been the case in part in 'real, existing socialism', or rather with their *desires*? Does not human being always already reach beyond itself, and especially beyond the horizon of so-called needs of life? Is this reaching beyond not already indicated by the well-known phenomenon of corruption in real, existing socialist bureaucracies? The concept of need includes a reference to a natural moment, to what humans absolutely need to live: something to eat, clothing and protection against bad weather. Even if, starting from these basic needs, further 'social' needs are stacked up on top in the course of 'democratic' disputation and conflict, such as the 'need' for education or for public transportation, the casting of human being on the basis of need and neediness remains in the dimension of moderation, of setting up a familiar, homely world. The suggestively 'natural' category of need is already questionable insofar as human needs are only such within the practices, customs, *usages* of social living. From such customary usages as "second nature" (Hegel) arise the corresponding needs, and not conversely. The 'need' to eat fried locusts, whale meat or pork, for instance, or to dab on certain fragrances or wear certain kinds of robes or head-dress exists only in such societies that customarily practise the corresponding culinary or cosmetic usages. And when certain usages are cultivated as signs of social status, i.e. of showing off who one is, the breach toward excessive human desire is already made.

Desire, in contrast to need, always includes an excessive, unbounding, disinhibiting element; it always overshoots what is moderate; it does not allow itself to be quenched by the satisfaction of needs and is to this extent voracious. Desire cannot be comprehended as stocked up on top of basic needs, as a kind of superstructure on the basis or foundation of more basic 'natural' needs, since the limits have always already been transcended in the desire of human being. For desire, need is nothing, secondary, unimportant. Desire casts humans out of their habitual, quotidian ruts in taking care of daily concerns, and gives them a drive, no matter what the cost.

With this, the motif of desire, of the uncanny unbounding of human being announces itself for the first time. It will occupy our attention further because it puts the Marxian casting of human being as need-having into question. At this point, with regard to Heidegger, I first want to address the significance of this topic for the equipment analysis. Namely, it is no accident that in the equipment analysis, Heidegger speaks of simple tools such as the hammer and the self-evident for-the-sake-of... of Dasein such as “protection against bad weather”, for these for-the-sake-of... can also be comprehended in the moderate framework of human neediness. Even though Heidegger develops a language in *Being and Time* that differs from that of metaphysics, Dasein’s taking-care-of... in everyday life is basically still a modest satisfaction of needs; its taking-care-of-itself is taking care of its needs. It is only for this reason that the equipment analysis and the use-value side of the Marxian commodity analysis so easily can be made consonant with each other. However, already in *Being and Time*, Heidegger signals very clearly a break with the casting of human being from the standpoint of need-satisfaction by declaring everyday taking-care-of... to be a mode of improperness, inauthenticity or ‘disownedness’ (by being). Even though the distinction between authenticity and inauthenticity is hard to pin down, it can nevertheless be understood as an indication that even early on, Heidegger is concerned with an excessive element, that is to say, with a transcendent, ek—static, self-casting essence of the human, with the uncanny, unhomely relation of the human being to being itself which, as in the fundamental, uncanny mood of anxiety, tears human beings out of their habitual quotidian lives.

This is a point where one could demonstrate that from the very beginning, Heidegger had gone far beyond Marx, that the question of being bursts the somewhat complacent, modest casting of human being as needy once and for all and unmask it as inadequate, as stiflingly conformist. But such an assessment would not take account of one major strand in the thinking of the late Marx, that is, above all, the value-form problematic which to the present day has not been duly appreciated. With respect to the latter, namely, it can be shown that a phenomenality of desire, of excess — probably against Marx’s own intentions, which

aimed at guiding and tying back excess to social labour, i.e. to a collective subjectivity — is unfolded and that with this, *even in Marx himself*, when read against the grain, such a simple picture of humans as needy beings yearning for mutually appreciative, consciously organized sociation can no longer be maintained without further ado.

The question remains, what the *critique* of political economy really signifies, what it really aims at. Can the critique of political economy be translated unproblematically into a practical critique of existing social relations, i.e. into a revolutionary, practical overcoming of a form of society, as formulated in the early Feuerbach theses? Even if this were Marx's self-understanding, it can still be asked whether the critique of political economy reveals another inner tendency and admits another type of 'violent' reading that point to getting-over and twisting capitalism instead of overcoming it. If humans as purely needy beings become questionable and a desiring, more uncanny essence comes to occupy the position of human being, can an authentic (needy) human essence and an inauthentic, (alienated) human essence then still be distinguished from each other? It still has to be investigated to what extent the conceptual pairs need-alienation on the one hand, and desire-fetishism on the other are counterposed respectively to each other. It can be shown, namely, that a desiring essence is already entangled with fetishism so deeply that it is no longer easy to gain a critical distance or an innocent ground of unalienated authenticity on which critique could pivot its leverage against an 'untrue' (covered-up) existing capitalist world.

6. Money and Desire

It certainly cannot be maintained that Marx already expressly assessed and posited humans as desiring beings. Nevertheless there are passages in Marx that remove humans — on the back of money and capital — to more excessive regions in which it no longer suffices to talk of a simple, needy soul.

According to the Marxian casting of communism, needs provide humans with their measure. The fulfilment of needs results in fulfilled human being. Social production is there to fulfil human needs. In this way, everything has its measure. Alienation only arises when the needs of the members of society are not fulfilled. Viewed in this way, Marx located freedom in the smoothly organized, social fulfilment of needs, in the realm of necessity that first has to be secured before a superfluous freedom can be lived out. The first priority is that social production and need gratification be brought into harmony with each other so that each person receives his or her portion of social wealth in proportion to need. This harmony is upset by the immoderate moment that capital sets in motion, for as valorization of value, capital knows no limits to its circuitous, self-augmenting, accumulating movements. Everywhere on the globe, capital starts making surplus-value out of value. Endlessly. The augmentation of value is, from Marx's viewpoint, a bad infinity: insatiable, voracious hunger for surplus-value that brutally sucks everything that is into the self-augmenting movement of valorization. These excessive, reified relations of production thus have to be abolished to allow humans with their modest needs to have a chance.

But already the relation to money in simple circulation, i.e. before the transition of money to capital, leaves room enough for desire, lust, obsession, since simple circulation itself requires the formation of a hoard. The miser now steps onto the stage, a character mask well-known from time immemorial. Thus not an inhuman figure, but a desiring being who is not alien, but close to our essence.

The movement of exchange-value as exchange-value, as an automaton, can only be that of surpassing its quantitative limit. By stepping beyond a quantitative

limit of the hoard, however, a new barrier is created which in turn has to be overcome. [...] Hoard formation thus does not have any immanent limit, no measure within itself, but is an endless process that finds in its result at any time a motive for its beginning. [...] Money is not just *one* object of the obsession with gaining wealth, it is *the* object of this obsession. [...] Miserliness holds on to the hoard by not allowing the money to become means of circulation, but rather the lust for gold maintains its money soul, its constant tension against circulation. (MEW13:109f)

And in a noteworthy footnote to this passage:

‘The origin of miserliness is located in money [...] gradually, a kind of madness flares up here, no longer miserliness, but the lust for gold.’ (Plinius *Historia naturalis*) (*ibid.*)

The limitlessness, the measurelessness of money already (as demonstrated in *On the Critique of Political Economy*) has its roots in simple circulation; it simply precedes the transformation into capital by a couple of steps, before money has gripped commerce and above all the production process and inverted them into pure, dynamic processes of value-augmentation. Since the beginnings of metaphysics, an important motif has been moderation, keeping to a measure, to the middle (μέσον). Aristotelean ethics is an ethics of the proper, moderate measure. The principal virtues for the Greeks, manliness and prudence, both represent barriers against immoderation, i.e. loss of measure (in fear and debauchery), so that human being maintains a firm stand. At the other extreme, lust and the loss of control were the most contemptible of all failings, i.e. estrangement from human being. With money, a topic that occupied Marx philosophically his whole life long, measurelessness and immoderation invade the scene. A “reified social relation” penetrates into the human soul and turns it into a “money soul”, a state of affairs which suggests that the distance between subject and object is uncomfortably small, that they are even entwined, coalesced with each other, since the object is able to contaminate the soul to such an extent. Money and commodity fetishism do not stay at a distance, but fascinate the soul, incite its desire, ignite a fire in it, which can only happen because human being is always already transposed into the dimension of value-being and addressed, affected and challenged by this dimension. Money itself as exchange-value is reified social power, so that the desire

for money is an expression *par excellence* of the human will to power. If, as Jean-Joseph Goux has argued⁹, there is a close homology between money and the phallus as the unnameable object of desire, it will no longer be so easy to ban money and commodity fetishism as alien, alienated objectivity into a safe distance from the human being. On the contrary, money penetrates beneath the soul's skin and is grafted onto it. One does not need however any (psychoanalytic) theory of the phallus to grasp the driving, obsessive power of money to capture the soul. The relation of the soul to money is a relation of human being to value-*being* and thus a relation to being itself. As something desired, money is not an object; it does *not* stand over against the human as subject, but is something revealed as valuable in its being, it sets people into motion — through the mediation of the movement of augmentation of value — in the striving for gain.

There are also parallel passages to the above-cited passage in the *Grundrisse* and *Capital*, although in the latter, the lack of measure is dealt with in the context of the transformation of money into capital. With money, obsession enters history; humans are overcome by an impelling urge. "Money is thus not only the object, but simultaneously the source of the obsession with wealth." (Gr.:133) It can only be such a source because it is disclosed to human being in its value-being, in its *power* to exchange for other venal values. Humans understand money *as* money, i.e. in its purely quantitative, abstract value-being as key to acquiring all else. The obsession with money overrides every need and is insofar, according to the Marxian casting of essence, already necessarily an alienation from essence:

Abstract obsession with enjoyment is realized by money in the determination in which it is the *material representative of wealth*; it realizes miserliness, insofar as it is merely the universal form of wealth vis-à-vis commodities as its particular substances. In order to keep it as such, miserliness has to sacrifice any relation to objects of particular needs, renounce, in order to satisfy the need of the lust for money as such. (Gr.:134)

⁹ Jean-Joseph Goux *Freud, Marx Ökonomie und Symbolik* Frankfurt/M. 1975.

The “need of the lust for money” is a remarkable expression indicating an infection of need by lust, thus making the difference between the two fuzzy. The lust for money is not a need, but desire, and can therefore never be satisfied. Through money, impelling urge frees itself from any potential anchor in need and become excessive. It is by not merely coincidental that in the transition from money to capital in *Capital*, Marx on the one hand brings the contrasting foil of need satisfaction into play and on the other, cites the Aristotelean measure with respect to the acquisition of money in order then to address value as underlying subject of an economy alienated from human being. According to Marx, true human being is located on the side of use-value as opposed to exchange-value, which of itself impels human being into excess and makes an *obsessive* being out of humans. So is money to be got rid of as “the root of all evil” in favour of a consciously organized sociation of use-values and use-value production for the stake of total social need-fulfilment? Would such a communist solution pacify human being?

Simple commodity circulation — selling in order to buy — serves as a means for a final purpose outside circulation, the appropriation of use-values, the satisfaction of needs. *As opposed to this*, the circulation of money as capital is an end in itself, for valorization of value only exists within this permanently renewing movement. The movement of capital is therefore measureless, excessive. (MEW23:167; emphasis mine ME)

At this point — it would have scarcely been possible to have chosen it more precisely — Marx inserts his footnote on Aristotle. It is long and ties the critique of political economy back to Aristotelean ethics in a very precise way for thinking. Fundamental for the assessment of capital as measureless and excessive is the distinction between means and final purpose. Just as Heidegger sees and emphasizes that technology can in no way be considered as simply a means (a telling homology), so Marx too sees that money in its being is not exhausted as a means, as being-good-for... In *On the Critique...*, which has already been cited, measurelessness, excess, lust and obsession are discussed in connection with the topic of hoard formation, presumably because this text, which was published earlier, breaks off after only the second chapter — before the transition to capital. In *Capital*, by contrast, under the heading of

hoard formation, the references to excess are not as emphatic, even though one can still read: “the impelling urge to build up a hoard is by its nature excessive, without measure. Qualitatively, or according to its form, money has no limit” (MEW23:147); the references to lust, etc. are shifted in the direction of the transition from money to capital. There, the valorization of value becomes “the sole driving motive” (MEW23:167) of the capitalist’s “operations”; only to this extent *is* he capitalist, “personified capital endowed with will and consciousness” (MEW23:168). Use-value serves once again as back-ground in order from there to make the leap into quasi-endlessness: “Use-value is thus never to be treated as the immediate aim of the capitalist. Nor the single profit/gain/win (*Gewinn*), but the restless movement of winning/gaining/profit-making (*Gewinnen*)” (*ibid.*) which moreover is addressed as an “unquenchable passion”, as “passionate pursuit of value”, as “absolute obsession with gaining wealth”. Does Marx simply take sides with the modest, needy proletariat against the excessive, obsessive capitalist class? Is a will to power in the shape of exchange-value as the object of desire foreign to workers’ being? In this context, Marx calls to mind the Aristotelean distinction between chrematistics (the art of acquiring wealth) and economics (the art of administering a household). The latter knows its limits, it “restricts itself to procuring the useful goods necessary for living and for the household or the state.” (MEW23:167) In this limitation, according to Aristotle, lies true wealth:

True wealth (ὁ ἀληθινὸς πλοῦτος) consists of such use-values; for the measure of this kind of property, sufficient for a good life, is not unlimited. There is however a second art of acquisition which is preferably and rightly called chrematistics as a consequence of which there seems to be no limit to wealth and property. (Art. Pol. I iii 1256b30ff, cited after MEW23:167)¹⁰

¹⁰ Cf. also e.g. ἔστι γὰρ ἕτερα ἢ χρηματιστικὴ καὶ ὁ πλοῦτος ὁ [20] κατὰ φύσιν, καὶ αὕτη μὲν οἰκονομικὴ, ἡ δὲ καπηλική, ποιητικὴ πλούτου οὐ πάντως ἀλλὰ διὰ χρημάτων μεταβολῆς καὶ δοκεῖ περὶ τὸ νόμισμα αὕτη εἶναι· τὸ γὰρ νόμισμα στοιχεῖον καὶ πέρας τῆς ἀλλαγῆς ἔστιν. καὶ ἄπειρος δὴ οὗτος ὁ πλοῦτος, ὁ ἀπὸ ταύτης τῆς χρηματιστικῆς. (“It is namely different, the art of making money, and wealth according to what comes

Aristotle employs the differences between the limit (πέρας; 1257b) and the unlimited (ἄπειρος; *ibid.*), the means and the final purpose (τέλος; *ibid.*), in order to conceptualize “true wealth”. The phrase “absolute amassing of wealth” is woven into this context; chrematistics does not have any end, finality (οὐκ ἔστι τοῦ τέλους πέρας; 1257b29).

διὸ τῆ μὲν φαίνεται ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι παντὸς πλούτου πέρας, ἐπὶ δὲ τῶν γινομένων ὀρώμεν συμβαῖνων τούναντίον· πάντες γὰρ εἰς ἄπειρον ἀΐξουσιν οἱ χρηματιζόμενοι τὸ νόμισμα. (1257b32-34)

It therefore seems to be necessary for all wealth to have limits; nevertheless we see the opposite happening: all those who are preoccupied with the acquisition of wealth strive to make money grow endlessly.

Capitalism must therefore also be viewed as an excessive overstepping of Aristotelean limits. Value as “automatic subject” (MEW23:169) represents an alienation and removal from the true basis of need and its satisfaction in moderation. This automaton, however, is able to arouse the capitalist’s passion — whereby anybody at all can put on the character mask of the capitalist — so that he succumbs to the “pursuit” of money, a pursuit that tears down every barrier of moderation and thus violates any Aristotelean ethics of adequate measure. Marx’s casting of human being as needy thus has an essentially Aristotelean origin and is rooted firmly in the metaphysical ethical tradition. Humans themselves, however, in their limitless obsessiveness, are not shown their limits so that they would have to curb themselves, but limitlessness is projected onto an anonymous, reified automaton, value, as the subject of valorization. A Feuerbachian projection, but this time not the anthropomorphic projection of religious ideas onto a god in heaven, but a projection of human obsessiveness and human desire onto

naturally, and this latter is the art of household management. The former is the art of trading, the art of making wealth not in every way, but through exchanging goods. And it seems this latter is about money; for money is the element and limit of exchange. And this wealth, the wealth from this money-making, is limitless.” *Pol.* 1257b20-25). Here the making of money “through exchanging goods” (διὰ χρημάτων μεταβολῆς) is explicit, thus employing the key term, μεταβολή, in its signification as ‘exchange’, not ‘change’.

a thing: money. But what if this thing belonged to our essence, if our souls were always already greedy money souls, immoderate and excessive ‘by nature’, if we human beings were ‘originarily’ animated and driven by a will to power? What if we were in our essence not moderately needy, but irrevocably desirous and that by virtue of the circumstance that the value-being of exchangeable things, and money in particular, is always already revealed to human being? In this case, at least, Marx’s formula for communism in his critique of the 1875 Gotha program would be untenable: “From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs!” (MEW19:21), for this formula presupposes that human beings are to be essentially grasped in their being on the basis of their abilities and needs. The seed of power in abilities is thereby overlooked.

In the Marxian casting of socialism, “labour-time serves simultaneously as the measure of the producer’s individual share of total labour and therefore also of the individually consumable portion of the common product” (MEW23:93). In socialism, since an individual’s labour-time is always finite and measurable, the measure is supposed to prevent the measureless excess of an unequal distribution of the social product under socialism, which is, however, the case under capitalism. The first measure for a socialist society would be the “necessary labour-time for society in general and each section of society (i.e. room for the development of the full productive forces of the individual, thus also of society)”. (Gr. 595) The “necessary labour-time” in turn will “have its measure in the needs of the social individual”. (Gr. 596) But this measure will be exceeded by far, since in a socialist society

the development of social productive forces will accelerate so quickly that, although now production is calculated on the wealth of all, the disposable time of all grows. For real wealth is the developed productive force of all individuals. It is then no longer labour-time, but disposable time which serves as the measure of wealth. (Gr. 596)

By positing freely disposable time as the measure of social wealth, basically a negative or inverse measure is posited, for “social disposable time” (Gr. 596) does not have any determinations other than that it is the “time of everybody free for their own development” (*ibid.*). This

measure is thus without measure, opening the gate for excessive desire. Under capitalism, by contrast, the superfluous time set free by increases in productivity serves only to make the capitalist wealthier, since it forms the basis for augmenting surplus-value production. The surplus flows back ceaselessly into the measureless maw of the valorization of value. And what is supposed to happen in socialism? To posit the measure of freely disposable time is an empty determination lacking an inner measure. Beyond needs, humans remain measureless, excessive beings animated by a will to power if only to have their abilities estimated, esteemed, rewarded, appreciated, a state of affairs to which Marx's casting of socialism provides no answer.

What are free humans supposed to do with their "disposable time", supposing that this excess time is not merely to be channeled into leisure-time activities? Whence are humans to take their measure, if not from the necessity of needs? By what is human being to be held in bounds when necessary labour-time as measure becomes smaller and smaller through measureless increases in productivity? Under capitalism, surplus labour-time is channeled back as accumulated capital into the endless circuit of self-valorizing value. Capital thus bloats itself endlessly and can be conceived of as the will to surplus-value, a reified will that overcomes humans like a destiny and draws them irresistibly under its spell. Socialism as the endless increase of the productive forces thus shows itself to be likewise without a measure, since the fulfilment of needs tendentially approaches zero. Where then do humans as needy beings remain? Do not new needs arise endlessly in relation to the increase of the productive forces, thus sliding in the direction of desire emerging from ever new, pleasurable social usages? Could there be a point at which society would cease to increase the productive forces further? Obviously not, as long as human being is determined as inhabiting the realm of freedom that starts beyond the realm of need.

Marx's thinking remains critique, i.e. it remains negatively determined by the opposition to capitalism and at the same time it gains its force from this opposition. Marx is concerned with the overcoming, abolition, destruction of fetters which capitalism puts on the development of the productive forces, so that the working class can come to enjoy the fruits

of this development. Positively, however, it remains unclarified in Marx, through what agency and to what reference-point the measurelessness of human being is to be made to submit, if, as we have seen, it cannot be maintained that human being is exhaustively determined by neediness. This is a deficit of Marxian thinking, that it remains a negative movement. On the one hand, it posits human being in labour: humans as labourers, as producers of their own social living conditions; on the other hand however, it equally casts a liberation of human being from a determination through labour by demanding that the development of the productive forces should benefit labouring humans by setting them free *from* labour. But what are humans supposed to do when they are not working? Whence could human being take its measure if production, the knowing, skilful guiding-forth of beings into the clearing of presence, were to become inapplicable as measure? Could human being's excessive measurelessness find an endless outlet in some kind of interchange?

The "money soul" is presumably a guiding channel for the excessive measurelessness of human being under capitalism. If human being is desirous and craving and not merely needy, thinking must have an answer to the measurelessness of human being through which it submits the latter into a binding structure. The limitlessness of capital represents one *response* to and mirroring of the measurelessness of human being; it does not make human being into an excessive, measureless essence, as Marxian and left critique would like to have it. Presumably, the endless movement of augmentation which bends desire around into an endless, senseless circling is not the only answer to the excessiveness of human being. Perhaps it is merely one metaphysical response that could still be twisted and somehow gotten over.

7. The Essence of Capital and the Essence of Technology

To come to terms with the title of this study, the questions concerning the essence of capital and its relationship to the essence of technology have to be posed.¹¹ In doing so, Marx's and Heidegger's respective thinking will touch each other most intimately. Each of these thinkers has answered one of the two questions concerning the essence of capital and the essence of technology, but in different languages. The task is thus posed as a kind of labour of conceptual translation.

7.0 The Set-up

The essence of technology is the set-up (Ge-Stell), “the gathering of setting-up that gathers of itself, in which everything that can be ordered to set up (alles Bestellbare) abides in its stand as standing reserve¹²”.¹³ Excised from the path of thinking in Heidegger — a task of thoughtful reading which is here presupposed — that leads to this formulation, it remains incomprehensible, mere jargon. How does Heidegger arrive at it? Using examples, he develops in texts such as ‘The Question Concerning Technology’ and ‘The Set-up’ a language of setting-up, such as in the following passage:

Setting-up sets up by order¹⁴. It challenges. If we consider it in its essence and not according to possible effects, however, ordered setting-up (Bestellen) does

¹¹ A first attempt of mine in this direction appeared in Italian under the title ‘Aspetti metafisici e post-metafisici dell’analisi della forma di valore’ in *L’Impegno della Ragione: Per Emilio Agazzi* Edizioni Unicopli 1994 pp. 121-134.

¹² Standing reserve (or stand of stock) can translate *Bestand*. Stand can be taken in the sense of a stand of trees or a crop, but more generally to refer to any stock or standing reserve of beings. A stock is on stand-by.

¹³ M. Heidegger, ‘Das Ge-Stell’, (The Set-up) published 1994 in *Gesamtausgabe* Vol. 79, here: GA Bd. 79:32.

¹⁴ ‘Setting up by order’ or ‘ordered setting up’ renders ‘Bestellen’ and is supposed to convey the multiple meanings of ordering as commanding, putting into order

not aim at booty and profit/gain/winnings (Gewinn), but always at what can be ordered to set up. ‘Always’ means here: *a / priori*, because essentially; ordered setting-up is only dragged forth from one being that can be set up in presence to the next, because ordered setting-up has from the outset torn everything present into total stand-by (Bestellbarkeit) for being set up by order and set it up in this total stand-by — no matter whether in an individual case the present being is specifically set up or not. This violent force of ordered setting-up that overtakes (überholt) everything, only draws the specific acts of ordered setting-up in its wake. The violent force of ordered setting-up makes it plausible that what is called ‘ordered setting-up’ here is no mere *human* act, even though humans belong to the performance (Vollzug) of ordered setting-up. (Das Ge-Stell GA79:29f)

Everything that exists can be set up in (especially scientific and technological) images and representations, and thus dragged foreknowingly into presence, otherwise, it does not exist. Human beings, too, only abide in the set-up as long as they perform the setting-up associated with the position into which they have been set. In spite of this, the chain of ordered setting-up, Heidegger claims,

comes to nothing, for ordered setting-up does not set up anything in presence that could have or could be allowed to have a presence for itself outside setting-up. What is ordered to set-up is always already and always only set up to set up in succession an other as its successor. The chain of ordered setting-up does not come to anything; rather, it only goes back into its circling. Only in this circling does what can be ordered to set up have its stand. (Das Ge-Stell GA79:28f)

The set-up gathers the circular movements of everything that can be ordered to set up, which everything becomes in the age of technology. The totality of beings has then become the standing reserve on stand-by. The language of the set-up reveals similarities to that of capital which suggest that certain figures of thought in Heidegger commingle with Marxian figures by virtue of having related phenomena before the mind’s eye.

According to Marx, the essence of capital is the endless, limitless valorization of value, an essence which sets itself up “behind the backs” of people, as Marx often puts it (e.g. Gr.:136, 156). Setting-up and

and ordering a commodity. Beings are ordered into position, they are put into the order of the set-up and they are ordered just like items in a mail order catalogue.

valorization are the respective essential actions of the respective essences, whereby action here cannot be thought in terms of human action, but as an historical destiny that prevails over and overwhelms everything by disclosing the totality of beings to human understanding within a specific epochal cast. To think valorization as attributed to destiny goes against the grain of Marxian thinking, of course, for which something destinal would have to be treated as a fetishism that could be dissolved by deciphering value and valorization as a “social product just like language” (MEW23:88), assuming that language is at all adequately conceived as a “social product”. Be that as it may, just as the essence of technology is nothing technical, the essence of capital is nothing economic; the valorization of value cannot be thought ultimately as an economic phenomenon, for it goes to the heart of human social being. Marx’s critique of political economy is not a theory of the capitalist economy with the appropriate specialized concepts; rather, it is a questioning and a presentation of the essence of capital, its social ontology, which — now expressed in Heidegger’s language — is not a human machination, but a constellation of being that shapes and determines an historical world. If the valorization of value expresses the essence of capital, then capital is gathered in the various modes of valorization. Everything that *is* reveals itself to be valorizable, i.e. as capable of being drawn into a circuit of valorization. This valorization (Verwertung) is not merely utilization (the usual meaning of Verwertung in German), but the augmentative movement of exchange-value. Value is neither money nor capital but the essence of valorizing, which makes everything that *is* appear as valorizable, as offering a possibility for gain through the movement of value through its value-forms. Value expresses itself quantitatively as well as qualitatively ‘at first and for the most part’ in the potential or realized exchange against money, but, despite the real appearance of reification, it cannot be identified with the thing ‘money’, whose essence itself must be conceived ontologically in terms of exchange-value. Nevertheless, the essence of capital expresses itself above all in money and its movement. The capitalist world gathers itself in money; in the thing ‘money’ and its movement as capital; the world worlds capitalistically, as soon as the movement of valorization of

everything achieves an absoluteness. Everything that *is* has a direct or indirect relation to money; the totality of beings passes through money. The value-forms developed throughout the course of *Capital*, including the wage, capital, fixed and circulating capital, ground-rent, interest-bearing capital, profit of enterprise, the revenue-form of value, etc., come to envelop the totality of beings in the capitalist world.

7.1 The Gainful Game

Parallel to the figure of thought of the set-up, the question arises, what the gathered gathering of valorization should be called. With this naming, the essence of modern capitalist society would also be named. Instead of tracing back value only to social labour in an abstractly universal form, as Marx does, labour itself now also has to be thought in tracing it back into its groundless ground in the infinite, violent movement of valorization, since labouring humans, too, are merely used by this essence that holds sway.

We call the gathered gathering of valorization that attains domination in the capitalist world in an essential sense the *gathering of the gainable*, the *gainful game* or, simply, the *win* (*Gewinnst*, *Gewinn-Spiel*). The gainful game is here neither profit nor winnings nor a purely economic magnitude, nor the successful result of a human struggle or human labour, but the gathering of the gainable, i.e. the gathering of all the risky opportunities for gain, which holds sway groundlessly as the essence of capitalism that opens itself up as a world to human being whilst appropriating human being to itself.

According to Grimm, “Winnings (*Gewinn*) are associated with winning (attaining something through struggle, labour).” With this definition, only a human action would be addressed. The gainful game as the essence of capital signifies more originarily and more uncannily the gathering of all modes of valorization (gaining, winning) in which humans too are dragged into and are (or can be) used by the circular movement of valorization (gaining, winning). The inconspicuous germ of the gainful movement of valorization is visible already in the simplest of exchange transactions in which one commodity product of labour has the potential, the *power to exchange* for another commodity product in

the interplay of exchanges, thus inaugurating *exchange-value*, whose augmentative circular movement provides the ontological concept of capital. Only from a human perspective does the gainful game appear as the way to a goal that is achieved by struggle and labour, for the gainful game asserts itself behind the backs and over the heads of competing, struggling human beings. The gainful game makes everything that *is* show itself as valorizable material. In this way, through lust for gain, it entices and ensnares human beings. Everything *is* only to the extent that gain can be had from it. Everything that does not allow itself to be drawn into the circuit of valorization, through which advanced capital can be augmented, *is* not (does not exist). Everything *is* only insofar as it is potentially profitable, i.e. insofar as a capital sum may generate winnings as offspring, or income (wages, ground-rent, interest, profit of enterprise) may be gained from this movement of capital. *All* are stakeholders and players in the gainful game, not just the capitalists. The gainful game challenges everything that is to step ‘winningly’, i.e. profitably, into the circuit of valorization and to contribute to the growth of capital. The gainful game thus sets everything into motion by sucking everything *a priori* (i.e. already in prevailing *preconceptions*) into the risk-taking calculus of valorization, of gaining and winning which includes, of course, the possibility of losing.

The essence of capital is thus not anything merely capitalist. It is neither the principal sum of money that is augmented, nor the ethos of a subject that is greedily or otherwise after monetary gain. It is neither money nor the lust for money, neither something objective nor subjective, but a calculating, ‘gainful’ mode of revealing everything that is in whose clearing everything shows itself as valorizable, i.e. as having the potential for winnings, so that humans are called on by the destiny of the gainful game and compelled to think in a thoroughly calculative, albeit incalculably risk-taking, manner that sets up everything in the ‘sight’ of possessing potential for gain. *The gainful game holds sway as a prevailing essence of historical truth (disclosure)*. The gainful essence of capital, since it is destiny, i.e. a way in which the world reveals itself to human understanding so totalizingly that *another way of thinking seems inconceivable*, cannot be tied down to any ‘thing’, even though

everything that can be valorized ultimately has a relation to money, i.e. a price. Marx speaks of value as a social relation, which suggests that it is constituted by sociated humans themselves, of course, without them knowing what they are doing, i.e. unconsciously. The concept of the gainful game, by contrast, goes beyond anything intended by humans in their social interplay, and even beyond the unintended consequences of such interplay to bring to light an historically destined mode of disclosure of beings *as* beings that from the outset promises gain and which provokes and induces the corresponding human actions and social structures and movements, i.e. the corresponding modes of being-together in potentially gainful, competitive interplay.

In Marx, the value relation remains in the economic and social dimension; it is first of all the money-mediated social relation of commodities to each other that covers up and distorts the mutual valuing of exercised labouring abilities. Capital as a social relation mediated by things provides the economy with its socio-ontological form and also constitutes the basis upon which a superstructure is erected. The other social instances — the state, the legal forms, morality, culture, ideologies, philosophy, etc. — are supposed to be thought proceeding from this basis and in a correspondence to it. According to this never executed program of Historical Materialism, a social whole is to be thought in this way: the bourgeois totality, that is, a structured totality of beings. Here, by contrast, a post-metaphysical attempt is being made to take capital and the valorization of value back to something more originary, namely back to an essencing of truth as the historical clearing in which everything that *is* is disclosed *as* what it is. In being enpropriated to the gainful game, everything that is promises gain, especially reified monetary gain; otherwise it *is* not, it is nothing, worthless. Everything that *is* must have a potential use for valorization, however indirectly, otherwise it *is* not. Use for humans is not the criterion, but above all use for a circuit of valorization, i.e. ultimately, for the gainful game which turns endlessly within itself, throwing off winnings. Even untouched nature can be valorized in the gainful game, say, as a recreational value for valorizable humans, who in turn are employed by a capitalist circuit of valorization as labourers and clerks

and managers. Valorization is here no longer, as in its Marxian guise, only the augmentation of money capital in a circuit, but is conceived more broadly as exploiting to achieve success, and as *winning and gaining in general*, achieved above all in earning the four kinds of monetary income. Such gaining and winning always has a monetary aspect, i.e. it can be expressed directly in cost-savings, profits, surpluses, wages, interest, ground-rent, profit of enterprise, bonuses and suchlike, or indirectly, say, when someone who attains notoriety, fame or celebrity status is, in turn, able to monetize that prominent social status. Thus, everything that *is* can be quantified and incorporated into calculations on the basis of which success or failure can be measured in money as universal measure of value. The gainful game entices and ensnares humans as players in a competitive struggle for winnings in the broadest sense, where they struggle with each other. In this way, the gainful game valorizes humans, not only setting them into motion, but above all keeping itself in a kind of apparently perpetual motion.

The value-form analyzed by Marx can be traced back to a more originary valorization in an open constellation of historical truth of being in which the totality of beings is opened up and seen, understood *a priori* from the standpoint of valorizability, i.e. of a potential contribution to winnings. “This locus [the information set-up, here translated as the gainful game] is a process or a ‘sphere of circulation’ (Marx) of *un-truth* from which designer, operator and interpreter can each draw benefit, but which evade a comprehensive attribution of meaning and total control”¹⁵ The reason for the non-originariness of the Marxian value-form analyses is that they mainly tease out the contradiction between private and social subjectivity that results in a reification of social relations and a crisis-prone process of social material reproduction without a conscious social subject with the historical aim of relating everything back to an underlying, consciously sociated subject. Marxian thinking does not take leave of the

¹⁵ Cf. on value-form analysis and information technology as capital R. Capurro *Leben im Informationszeitalter* Akademie Verlag, Berlin 1995 esp. Chapter 5, here p. 71, italics in the original passage.

metaphysics of modernity as a thinking of subjectivity, which assumes in Marx the particular guise of Feuerbachian anthropology in which all beings in their being are traced back to humankind and in particular to the labouring human being. The fetish character of the value-form signifies that the products of human labour have assumed an autonomy vis-à-vis subjectivity and evaded its control, and also that human beings themselves are taken in and mystified by this fetish-character. Subjectivity as the metaphysical environment in which Marxian thinking abides, however, is not originary, but in turn is grounded in an historical constellation of disclosive truth that appropriates human being to itself, deciding *as* what the totality of beings discloses itself in an epochal mode of thinking and understanding, without lying simply at the disposition of human actions. Marx wants to bring renegade objectivity, which is thought under the rubric of fetishism, back into a true, socialized subjectivity, in which humans are conscious subjects as freely associated producers, thus unravelling reified social relations. This is a prospect, however, that can no longer open up any future history, if today the leap beyond the gainful setting up of beings for the sake of humankind is called for historically.

If, therefore, we must take leave of the modern metaphysics of subjectivity in the form of (consciously sociated) labouring human being, this leave-taking does not affect solely the value concept that now can no longer be traced back *ultimately* to human labour as abstract value-substance. Not only is the labour theory of value untenable as a quantitative price theory; it is moreover based on certain metaphysical presuppositions of Feuerbachian anthropology which now must be gotten over. Accordingly, the value concept must now be thought with a relation not to human labour as a substance, but in the first place to the non-substantial, groundless interchange and interplay of estimation, validation, appreciation and esteeming of human powers and abilities. Everything that is opens itself to us as valuable — and therefore as worth desiring — in the broadest sense (which includes also what is worth-less, value-less). This value-being comprises not only being useful (being-good-for...), ultimately for the sake of Dasein, but also everything that reveals itself to human beings as valuable, estimable.

Money is the highest, crystalline embodiment of value-being as the tangible mediator in this dimension of value-being always already opened by being to human being, i.e. as the medium and universal means in the dimension of value for getting one's hands on what is valuable. Here it is left to one side whether what is valuable is a thing, a human service, a piece of nature (block of land, forest, stretch of water, etc.), (interest-bearing) money itself or, in an extended sense, public honours and offices, good reputation and social standing, etc. Everything is gathered into the gainful game that discloses all beings with regard to their value for being striven for and won, a particular guise of the will to power. Money itself as the representative of wealth in general is the universal key to what is valuable by means of exchange, and thus unadulterated reified social power. Expressed dynamically, the movement of money is capital that sets all beings into motion for the sake of winnings.

By contrast, Heidegger's thinking sees only the natural sciences — and perhaps the sciences as a whole — as the paradigm for unconcealing precalculative setting-up and, despite suggestive formulations, it is not receptive for the machinations of capital which snatches everything away into circuits of valorizing value drawing all into a striving for gain. Although in Heidegger economically tinged concepts such as ordering, production, success, stock, circuit and suchlike can be found, he wastes not a single word about the subsumption of things and humans, i.e. of the totality of beings, underneath the value-forms or the competitive compulsion to valorize economically. The horizon of his thinking may have widened through an intensive reading of the *Grundrisse* and *Kapital*. The set-up and the gainful game as historical constellations of disclosive truth are closely related and intertwined nevertheless. Heidegger's assertion, "ordered setting-up in no way aims at booty and profit/gain/winnings, but always at what can be ordered to set up"¹⁶ cannot be sustained as soon as setting-up is seen as intertwined with the gainful game as the "restless

¹⁶ M. Heidegger 'Das Ge-Stell' GA79:29.

movement of winning” to which Marx refers in a formulation for the circling, augmentative movement of capital (MEW23:168).

The affinity of essence of the set-up to the gainful game is indicated — of course without revealing its essence — above all in the fact that the sciences and capital are closely intermeshed and interdependent. This intermeshing of essences is revealed by appropriately conceptualizing not only the profitable increases in productivity only made possible through a close intermeshing of science and capital in the development of technology, but also the acceleration of time characteristic for our age, i.e. that everything has to be on stand-by to be called up immediately. For, the quantitative augmentation of value depends on how fast advanced capital moves through its circuit and returns to its starting-point in order to be advanced once again into a new circuit. As Marx analyzes in depth in the second volume of *Capital*, an acceleration of the turnover time of capital, this fundamental movement of capitalist economy, results in an increase of (annual) profit. The faster capital turns over, the more frequently it throws off profit in a given period. The shortening of the turnover time for the sake of gain is thus one driving force for the incessantly increasing speed of economic life, just as the possibility of decreasing the necessary size of capital required to keep a production process going induces a striving to reduce the stocks of means of production to a minimum, thus calling forth phenomena such as just-in-time production for which means of production are set on stand-by. The breathless movement of gainful economic life, the never-ending efforts to increase productivity, the acceleration of time and the ever more pressing tendency to set beings on stand-by for immediate availability are therefore essentially intertwined. Setting-up and gainful striving are essentially akin.

7.2 The Grasp

Both the set-up and the gainful game are rooted in the *grasp* (*Gegriff*) that gathers together all the modes of grasping uncovering of the totality of beings so that everything is set up on stand-by for the sake of gain, above all, income. The potential to be ordered into setting up and to be valorized intermesh in the *grasp*. The grasp as the gathering of all modes

of grasping brings together the set-up's uncovering and setting-up in precalculative knowing with the gainful game's incalculable, because risky, gambit for gain. The *grasp* is now proposed as the unified, shared name for the grasping (precalculatively comprehending) set-up and the grasping (grabbing) gainful game in their intimate affinity of essence. This affinity is not a self-sameness because thinking that sets up, above all in the garb of the modern sciences and technologies, *precalculates foreknowingly* how beings are to be set up with *certainty*, whereas the gainful game is *incalculable* and *uncertain* insofar as it relies essentially on how things (commodities, workers, capital, land, ...) are valued in the vicissitudes of ongoing social interplay. The *grasp* as the intermeshing of the set-up and the gainful game amounts to a *disclosure of the totality of beings that sets them up and strips them of their shelter not only to control them, but for the sake of striving riskily and measurelessly for gain.*

The grasp therefore grasps in two fundamentally different ways depending upon the domain of beings grasped at. The set-up, on the one hand, grasps foreknowingly at those beings whose movements can be precalculated and controlled, or rather, at all beings, *insofar* as their movements can be precalculated and controlled, which includes human beings conceived *as* things. The gainful game, on the other hand, grasps for gain in potentially gainful economic interplay; its domain is the social inhabited by human beings engaged in ongoing social interplay with one another. Because human beings as *free* are the starting-points of their own movements, the interplay among these free movements is groundless and therefore already in principle unpredictable and uncontrollable, despite the self-deluding efforts of the social sciences to bring social movements within the ambit of a certain, calculable scientific gaze. In particular, the economic social interplay is out for gain, above all as income. There are no guarantees that income can always be gained, nor is there certainty as to how much income will be earned in a coming period. The gainful game is essentially risky. But once income has been gained, the money-income in one's hands is a reified, crystallized *social power* that enables *secure* access to all that is venal. The quantitative price to be paid to buy something or to hire

someone or something may fluctuate and is therefore uncertain, but possessing money lends a certain, calculable social power to the possessor. Gain is to be gotten first and foremost through having individual powers and abilities, and their exercise, estimated and rewarded via market interplay, which therefore can be seen to be a *power play*, just as the other kinds of market interchanges among income-source owners are. These observations shed further light on the affinity and distinction, or the identity and difference, between the set-up and the gainful gain. In a way, they are *identical twins* buoyed and driven by a *will to power*: productive, controlling, precalculative power on the one hand, and reified social power on the other.

The set-up and the gainful game cast human being into grasping for the totality of beings, including themselves, which however does not mean that everything is set up in tune with human needs and wishes, for this is only an illusion. The illusion consists in the fact that what humans are is never a fixed point to which everything could be attuned (Heidegger says: “‘The human’ does not exist anywhere.”¹⁷), but rather, human being itself is co-cast historically out of the essences of the set-up and the gainful game in such a way that human beings themselves appear to human being as amenable to being set up and generate winnings. Enpropriated to the grasp, human beings too not only are sucked into the gainful game both as competing players and as an indispensable means to generating capital’s profit, but adopt a stance towards all beings, including themselves, according to which they are set up *a priori* for foreknowing, calculative manipulation (psychology, neuroscience,...); in the *grasp* human being itself is cast as *grasping* in this double sense. Whereas the set-up challenges forth and sets up in uncovering everything knowingly, scientifically, the clearing of the gainful game *entices* and *ensnares* with the prospect of gain. *Grasp, set-up* and *gainful game*, insofar as they affect human being, are also all ways of *thinking* and *understanding* the world in response to a casting of the being of beings that has descended upon humankind through the long movement of Western history.

¹⁷ *ibid.* GA79:30.

Drawn to the gainful game through a desire for gain, humans exist as *gainers* and *winners*. The winner of the gainful game is not a victor, but someone abandoned to the risky vieing for winnings in competitive struggle. In this broad sense of gainful game as an historical constellation *as* which the world shapes up, the winner can just as well be a loser. All are players in the gainful game. Entanglement in the restless valorization of value is experienced by humans as rivalry and struggle against others. Each individual human is challenged and enticed to be a winner in measuring him- or herself against others. Whether success or lack of it results from the struggle is decided by the valorization game, ultimately measured by the monetary income. The loser loses out in the struggle for income. Everyone nevertheless takes part of necessity in the game. Since the set-up and the gainful game have affine essences, the employee set in position and on stand-by to foreknowingly control movements of some kind or other is also a player in the gainful game and vice-versa. Everyone is snatched away into the competitive, potentially gainful struggle, everyone vies while circling in the ever more accelerating circuits of capital.

Not only is the successful player employed by the set-up, but also the underdog; not only is the winner a participant in the gainful game, but also the loser. They all belong to the standing reserve on stand-by for grasping valorization, even though people quite correctly think that they remain usufructuary subjects who profit from progress in science and technology, and from economic growth. Being correct, however, must be distinguished from being in the truth where the essence is in view. Therefore it would miss the point, for example, to morally denounce human greed and graspingness, insofar as the grasp is not a human construct, but a destinal way in which an historical world shapes up that itself grasps humans and which needs to be thought through as such in order, possibly, to gain distance from it. It would also evidence blind will to power to play out an optimistic faith in human inventiveness and progress against a gloomy philosophical worldview that denies humans' status as subjects underlying, and hence controlling, their own collective destiny.

The value-forms analyzed by Marx, starting with commodity, money, (productive, circulating and interest-bearing) capital, wages through ground-rent and interest to the revenue-form and the four fundamental incomes, cover the totality of beings: things, humans, earth and sea. There is hardly anything, not even the sky, that cannot be gainfully valorized, even in a narrow economic sense (e.g. air traffic corridors). The circuits that Heidegger describes in various texts are in truth, i.e. in their full disclosedness, circuits of capital, without his ever bringing this ontologically to light. Most importantly, the restless snatching away of everything into some circuit or other which he addresses can be concretized with reference to the intertwining of circuits of capital constituting in their totality the material reproduction of a capitalist economy. This intertwining is phenomenally visible already in everyday life, e.g. as the activity of huge, global stock companies networked with their suppliers and distributors. Because everything can be valorized under the promise of gain, capital penetrates into every ontic nook and cranny. Everything obtains a price in the circling of value as capital, if only indirectly. In particular, the sciences are seized on — directly or indirectly via state policy on science and technology — in their research activity as suppliers of technology, something that can only happen because both — capital and technology — hold sway in their affinity of essence with the gainful game. The deployment of science and technology in capitalist enterprise, namely, enhances the chances of gain against competing players, a phenomenon that Marx brought to its concept above all with ‘relative surplus-value production’, a concept presumably unknown to Heidegger.

The valorization of value is a metaphysical determination of capital which hits on the essence beneath the surface of private property relations and speaks out its truth. The Marxian critique of capitalism is only superficially a critique of private property insofar as the latter is still thought as in the hands of subjects of competition competing for income-gain. On the deepest level of essence it is even less a critique of class exploitation. We must finally take leave of such readings of Marx’s writings if they are still to be able to open up an historical future. The critique of political economy shows that all the subjects, including the

ruling class subjects, are, properly speaking, not subjects at all, but rather are dragged into the circling of valorization as players in the gainful game, so that all of them can and must be regarded as mere players wearing “character-masks”, as personifications of value-forms. All players, capitalists, workers and the rest, are under the spell of the gainful game, and the critique of capitalism that criticizes large, even obscene differences in income, remains superficial for it amounts to calling merely for a strong umpire, a state-subject, to regulate the gainful game. Marx himself remains dominated by metaphysical thinking insofar as he leaves human being located in subjectivity — albeit an alienated subjectivity with an historical prospect of becoming genuine, consciously sociated subjectivity. He purportedly puts Hegelian thinking onto its feet by giving priority to the practical activity of humans over thinking spirit. The human being as subject, i.e. as that which ultimately ‘underlies’, remains in the centre, and practice remains merely the other side of theory conceived as the power of the associated labouring subjects (including engineers, scientists, managers...) to set up theoretical representations to guide productive practice. This can be seen most clearly in the fact that Marx’s value concept has recourse to abstractly sociated labour as the substance of value, instead of thinking more originally the essence of valorization proceeding from the non-substantial gainful game that enpropriates human beings as grasping players to an historical constellation of being in its truth. The subject in the guise of the labourer still does not represent an originary category from which value could be thought, but rather, the labouring subjects themselves must still be desubjectified as employees deployed into position in the set-up and as players snatched up by the gainful game, i.e. as the property of appropriation in the historical form of the grasp in its setting-up for the sake of gain. The ‘photographic negative’ of the grasp lights up as the game in which the human players are out to estimate each other’s powers and abilities, and enjoy that esteem, whilst exercising these powers and abilities for each other’s benefit.

In Heidegger, by contrast, the critical gaze is fixated on thinking that calculates and sets up representations (*Vorstellungen*), i.e. on the modes of thinking that decide how beings are unconcealed as real through

imagined (vorgestellte) scientific models. This includes in the first place the modern sciences and technologies that cast the reality of everything real as measurability and calculability, and accordingly do research into a reality thus set up, uncovering beings and making them accessible to knowledgeable manipulation. In this way, all movement and change of whatever kind are to come under precalculable control. Heidegger wants to promote another type of thinking counterposed to thinking that sets up representations and calculates for the sake of control, whereas Marx is for a practical revolution of social relations in which a conscious (and still calculating, positing) sociation of production is to be set up, unobstructed by disturbances inherent in the crisis-ridden entangled movements of circuits of capital through which a capitalist economy must reproduce itself and expand, if at all. The two thinkers are thus in this regard historical worlds apart from each other. For this reason, Heidegger emphasizes in the *Letter on 'Humanism'* that thinking is the essential human praxis which plays a vital part in deciding *as* what the totality of beings will abide, that is, how human beings understand their world. By contrast, no political revolution *as such* can have any impact on a way of thinking which decides on the being of beings, since the former does not reach into the dimension of the latter, regarding itself as revolutionary practice as opposed to 'mere' 'intellectualist' theory. To think thinking as a praxis, and more specifically as an essential human praxis that casts a world in response to inklings as to how an historical world could shape up alternatively, represents a rupture with the metaphysical division and distinction between theory and practice which is relevant only for thinking that sets up (theoretical) images and representations for the sake of precalculated practical control of beings and their movements.

8. Heidegger's Response to the Challenging by the Set-up

How does Heidegger respond to the grasping, ordered setting-up of the set-up? A brief answer is: with the equanimity of letting-be or releasement, but he also responds with the casting of the fourfold. The original version of 'The Question Concerning Technology' is — under the title 'The Set-up' — one of four lectures that Heidegger held in the Bremen Club on 1 December 1949. "The titles were: The Thing. The Set-up. The Danger. The Turning."¹⁸ 'The Thing', published in 1954 in *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Lectures and Essays) with a few minor changes, deals with the lack of distance of everything under the domination of technology, which is to be contrasted with a possible nearness of the thing in the granting play of the world. The theme of the simply enfolding fourfold, which emerges for the first time in the *Contributions to Philosophy - From Enowning* in 1936/38, provides the alternative foil to the set-up. Heidegger speaks here of the "step back" from thinking that sets up representations (primarily scientific thinking that "annihilates" the thing as thing) into "thinking that thinks-of...". The path of thinking in the lecture which unfolds using the example of the jug made by a potter, culminates in the formulation:

Whatever becomes a thing is appropriated from the light, supple and precious ring of the mirror play of the world. Only when, presumably all of a sudden, world worlds as world, will the ring shine which the light, supple and precious ring of earth and sky, the divine and mortals rings into the light, precious ring in its simplicity.¹⁹

In the thinging of the thing, nearness could eventuate appropriately through which world could come close. Without the steps in thinking with lead to this formulation, it remains cryptic, of course. "Ring" and

¹⁸ Preliminary remark to *Die Technik und die Kehre* in the series *opuscula*, Neske Verlag Pfullingen ⁶1985.

¹⁹ M. Heidegger *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Lectures and Articles) Neske Verlag, Pfullingen ⁵1985 pp. 174f.

“*Gering*” are thought out of “our old German language” where they signify “supple, malleable, graceful, obedient, light” (*ibid.* p. 173) but also “fine and precious, as the word *Kleinod* (gem) says”.²⁰ “Light and small, however, are things also in their number, compared with the tremendous number of objects that are equally and indifferently interchangeable everywhere...”²¹ *ibid.* Heidegger names things here that constitute basically a peasant world:

the jug and the bench, the path and the plough, [...] the tree and the pond, the brook and the mountain, [...] heron and deer, horse and bull, [...] mirror and hair-clip, book and painting, crown and cross.” (*ibid.* p. 175)

Without any further elaboration, a simple world is outlined. “Crown and cross” refer surprisingly, as late as 1949, to royalty and the Christian church, powers of an historically exhausted world. If world always worlds historically, how can crown and cross in their thinging still make world world (assuming that they were ever able to do so)? Have they not become worldless, even in the sense of a metaphysical world? Modern apparatuses obviously do not belong to the simple world of things. The envisaged fourfold is a thoroughly modest little world in which things such as television set and computer, telephone and refrigerator connected to the internet, electric guitar and amplifier, hi-fi system and digital sound card have no place. Presumably only the technical world of the set-up worlds in and through such articles which can be called up arbitrarily and interchangeably at will. But when is a “book” (*ibid.*) a thing and not merely something produced by technology for a market? Where do the demarcation lines between things and set-up beings run? Why do there have to be such demarcation lines at all? Do a cello and a keyboard synthesizer stand on opposite sides of the divide? Presumably, a line of demarcation cannot be drawn in such a reified way. Could a step back be taken that would transform an “indifferent, interchangeable object” such as a television set into a thing? Why should something as

²⁰ M. Heidegger ‘Hölderlins Erde und Himmel’ (Hölderlin’s Earth and Sky) in *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung* (Elucidations of Hölderlin’s Poetry) Klostermann, Frankfurt/M. 1951 41971 p. 174.

²¹ ‘Das Ding’ (The Thing) *Vorträge und Aufsätze op. cit.* p. 175.

personal as a Personal Computer which is attuned completely individually to the user's needs, preferences and habits be an "indifferent, interchangeable object"? Could a digital music medium such as a CD become a thing by displacing thinking that sets up representations to thinking that thinks-of...? Or are televisions and digital music media irrevocably "indifferent, interchangeable" products and embodiments of distancelessness? Are they essentially incapable of allowing the world to while as the mirror-play of the fourfold? On what does the ability of a thing to thing depend? Presumably, it depends on a world allowing a thing to thing, just as conversely a thing allows a world to world, which once again refers to the historicity of world.

Heidegger's list of things suggests at first glance that he wants to turn the historical clock back to the village world of the peasant. Heidegger's insistence on a thinking rooted in the soil of the homeland — an insistence that pervades his writings right to the end — and his obvious, well-documented dislike for city life with his talk of the "hustle and bustle of large towns,... the desolateness of industrial zones"²², for instance, reinforce this impression. If the idea of turning historical time back is questionable and even absurd, then the light, supple, precious ring of world could perhaps still be saved as an oasis in the set-up, which of course would not be a response to technology capable of standing in history. The idea of the little, light, supple and precious ring is thus not very convincing according to such interpretations lying close to hand. Are there other, more convincing interpretations? Could any desolate place become a precious oasis? According to Heidegger himself, one thing should be impressed upon us here, namely: that in Western history to date there has never been any such thing as a thing. Only with the thinking of being which wrestles with metaphysical ways of thinking of the being of beings in order to twist free of them are preparations underway for an historical opening for the thinging of things and the worlding of world. Heidegger says this with unmistakable clarity:

²² M. Heidegger 'Gelassenheit' (Letting be) in *Gelassenheit* Neske Verlag, Pfullingen 1959 p. 15.

Things have gone, they have gone away — whither? What has been set up in their place? As things they are long gone and equally well they have never been *as things*. *As things* — their thingly essence has never come to light and been preserved. (Note on the Thing lecture 1949 in GA79:23)

If this insight is taken seriously, it becomes clear that the yearning for a ‘good’ old world of yesteryear in which simple things were still things is a pure illusion and has nothing at all to do with the attempt to think things *as things for the first time* in Western history.

Even technical devices must also be able to thing as thing if the reverse side of the set-up were to be suddenly released and allowed to be. This state of affairs is made unclear again in Heidegger by the circumstance that in some texts (written for a broader audience?) a lamentation is to be heard “that our age is threatened by a loss of rooted stand in the soil”,²³ thus creating the impression that it could be a matter of trying to save a village way of life, “that peaceable living of humans between earth and sky”.²⁴ Such an interpretation, however, would be, according to Heidegger, already a misinterpretation, since one kind of rooted stand in the soil cannot be compared with another:

If the old rooted stand in the soil is already passing, could not a new ground and soil be given back to humans...?²⁵

The technicization of the world cannot be stopped. Heidegger knows that (“For all of us, the institutions, apparatuses and machines of the technical world are indispensable today...”²⁶.) But he has a longing nevertheless for “a strong-rooted homeland in whose soil humans stand firmly, i.e. have a stand on the earth”,²⁷ instead of, like Nietzsche, going in search of the endless horizon of the ocean in order to risk travelling on this swaying medium.²⁸ In view of the technicization of the world,

²³ *ibid.* p. 16.

²⁴ *ibid.* p. 15.

²⁵ *ibid.* p. 21.

²⁶ *ibid.* p. 22.

²⁷ *ibid.* p. 15.

²⁸ “*On the horizon of infinity* — We have left land and have gone by ship! We have left the bridge behind us, — even more than that, we have broken up the land behind us! Now, little ship! Watch out! Beside you lies the ocean, that’s the truth,

does something like a computer network such as the internet also have to be capable of becoming a thing in which the world whiles? Could earth and sky while in the electromagnetic medium of the internet? According to Heidegger: no. Instead, he wants to keep technical things at arm's length by means of a stance that he calls "the simultaneous yes and no to the technical world"²⁹, i.e. "letting things be",³⁰ which arises by our "using technical objects, but at the same time, although using them properly, keeping free of them in such a way that we can let go of them at any moment",³¹ in other words "as something which does not touch us in our innermost and ownmost core".³² By virtue of this letting-be and an "openness for the secret"³³ which consists in "the sense of the technical world concealing itself",³⁴ a new rooted stand in the soil "within the technical world"³⁵ could arise which "one day could even be suitable for calling back the old, quickly disappearing rooted stand in the soil in an altered form".³⁶ From this, a bifurcation of things into technical apparatuses on the one hand, which one could keep at a distance, and soil-rooted things on the other, which can be allowed to

it does not always roar, and sometimes it lies there like silk and gold and daydreams of goodness. But there will be hours in which you will realize that it is infinite and that there is nothing more terrible than infinity. Oh, the poor bird that feels free and now flies against the walls of this cage! Woe to you if you become homesick for land, as if you had had more *freedom* there, — and there is no land anymore!" F. Nietzsche 124. *The Gay Science* in KSA Vol. 3 p. 480. In Nietzsche's casting of world there is "no longer any land!"

²⁹ *Gelassenheit*, *op. cit.* p. 23.

³⁰ *ibid.* "die Gelassenheit zu den Dingen"; "Gelassenheit" is often translated as "releasement" which signifies a liberation-from... This is only one aspect of *Gelassenheit*, namely: being set free from the set-up, being released from the grip of the grasp. Letting things be, by contrast, signifies an ethos and a way of comportment that humans can adopt.

³¹ *ibid.* p. 22.

³² *ibid.*

³³ *ibid.* p. 24

³⁴ *ibid.*

³⁵ *ibid.*

³⁶ *ibid.*

come closer and which belong to the old rooted stand in the soil of a peaceable, simple, “strong-rooted” way of life and perhaps can still be saved in their rooted stand or at least could be historically “given back as gifts”. Heidegger maintains further that such a bifurcation does not lead to “our relationship to the technical world ... becoming ambiguous and unsure” but on the contrary “simple and peaceful in a miraculous way.”³⁷

The fourfold is an historical casting which to all appearances envisages an embedding of a soil-rooted world nested within the technical world. “Letting things be” would keep useful, functional objects in their usefulness at a distance, whereas the thoughtful relation to other things would transform humans into mortals dwelling peaceably between sky and earth. Technical things, which allow an arbitrary lack of distance to hold sway, should not touch human being “in its innermost core” thus pulling and pushing it around. A (transformed) distinction between an inauthentic and an authentic way of living and between inauthentic and authentic things is thus maintained. We will come back to this after further Marxian thoughts have been woven into the text.

Since 1935, when Heidegger tried to grasp human being from its extremes, a lot has changed or been transformed. In 1935, reference is still made to the “uncanny” and the “violent action” of humans:

The most uncanny thing (the human) is what it is because it basically only carries on and looks after the home in order to break out of it and to allow that element to break in which overwhelms it. Being itself throws humans onto the track of this pull which compels them to surpass themselves as those who move out toward being in order to set it up in a work and thus to keep the totality of beings open. (EiM p. 125)

Is the “violent action” of humans only an inherent part of the first, Greek beginning, whereas in the turning into appropriation simple, shepherd-like human being would step forth? Are the rulers and statesmen to which the 1935 lectures refer no longer required? Today one would have to add the figure of the entrepreneur for it is the figure which, as property

³⁷ *ibid.* p. 23

appropriated by the gainful game, has the most creative role to play by bringing the various resources (workers, means of production, land) together under the discipline of the compulsion to valorize, thus directing a movement of valorization in its concreteness. The human "venture" (τόλμας) referred to in the chorus of Sophocles' *Antigone* (V.371) and interpreted in the 1935 lectures, fits the figure of the entrepreneur who, at his or her own risk, intervenes in economic life in a more or less radical way, comparable with the men "who ride out onto the furious tide in winter while the storm is blowing from the South".³⁸ Entrepreneurial action in the present epoch must also be understood as a response to the challenge of the set-up which is not to be taken in a solely pejorative sense. The challenging of the set-up and the enticement of the gainful game are the present day's translations of the uncanny challenge of the first beginning, and the entrepreneur, whether great or small, ventures out to take on the uncertain challenge of the gainful game in its setting-up of an enterprise to try his or her 'luck'. And the venture *is* a matter of luck insofar as the outcome of the enterprise can never be sure because of the essential contingency of the value-forms (cf. the next chapter).

Today, of course, it is almost obligatory among thoughtful, 'critical' people to belittle the role of the entrepreneurial capitalist or to make it seem more or less contemptuous by ascribing, on the one hand, the naked, selfish, asocial striving for gain to all the entrepreneur's actions and, on the other, by regarding the entrepreneur's creative products as mere seductive material for the limitless, trivial addiction to consumption on the part of the masses. But for a non-prejudiced view it is apparent that entrepreneurial action also represents a casting force in our world which opens up possibilities of existence not simply worthy of contempt. The paradoxical thing about capital is precisely that it is able to bring the individualist, "isolating" striving for gain into harmony with world-shaping, creative entrepreneurial actions on a greater or smaller scale. Whether as entrepreneur or lender of finance, the rich and super-

³⁸ From the first stanza of the chorus. Heidegger's translation *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (Introduction to Metaphysics EiM) p. 112.

rich, by making money out their money are potentially also in a position to allow numerous people to participate in more or less fulfilling and challenging tasks and projects. In other words: the striving for gain to the silent call of the gainful game does not mean that the people employed in the gainful game necessarily experience their employment as uncanny or exploitative. Rather, they may experience their work as fulfilling, despite or because of the prevailing oblivion to being, by virtue of exercising their powers and abilities not merely for their own financial reward, but demonstrably also for the benefit of others. It can therefore not be a matter of criticizing the fast life in the cogs of the gainful game as “false living” by way of cultural critique, but of seeing that in the *relentless totalization* of this way of existing human beings are exposed to it blindly and thoughtlessly, without a prospect of gaining an insight into a greater, open dimension arriving from afar.

Between 1935 and 1950, the mood in Heidegger’s thinking takes a fundamental turn, for there is an enormous difference between the demand: “Uncanniness as happening must be grounded for us originarily as being-here.” (EiM p. 121) — which is equivalent to continuing the first, uncanny, ‘entrepreneurial’, challenging beginning — and a waiting stance, in accordance with the casting of human being...

to be the one who waits, who waits for the essence of being by sheltering it in thinking. Only if humans wait for the truth of being as the shepherds of being can they expect an arrival of the destiny of being...³⁹

Does not the set-up as the essence of technology correspond to the first beginning as the first emergence of τέχνη ποιητική? Is not the set-up the consummation of the first beginning? Does the turning into the other beginning then mean turning away from the violent action of the first beginning, which was dominated by ποίησις, including the ποιητικὴ πλούτου (1257b8), the art of ‘making’ wealth about which Heidegger remains silent? Or does the turning not imply an unambiguous turning away from uncanny violence, but rather an ambiguous, twisting

³⁹ ‘Die Kehre’ in *Die Technik und die Kehre* op. cit. p. 41.

qualification of its “exclusive”⁴⁰, i.e. totalizing domination? Let us keep in view: the danger is “total thoughtlessness”,⁴¹ a wilful, stubborn blindness in how we understand ourselves and the world, and not something resembling a state of the world which is to be replaced by another, better state of affairs.

⁴⁰ ‘Gelassenheit’ *op. cit.* p. 23.

⁴¹ *ibid.* p. 25.

9. Marx's Response to Capital's Excessiveness

Marx's answer to capital's excessiveness is: socialization! According to Marx, the historical trend is for capital to abolish itself. The formation of stock companies already realizes "the abolition of capital as private property within the limits of the capitalist mode of production itself." (MEW25:452) But is the antagonism between private and social property originary? In Marxian thinking, it is so only to the extent that the valorization of value captures the essence of capital, and the dialectical value concept rests on the contradiction between dissociated labour and labour associated in a reified manner through money. The abolition of private property as the overcoming of capital is supposed to fulfil the longing for community and solidarity which impels Marxian thinking onward. The Marxian association of freely associated producers is a vision of the future as a collective subjectivity in a socialist or communist community in which social relations would become conscious, transparent, collectively controllable. "The shape of the social process of life, i.e. of the material process of production, only strips off its mystical, foggy veil as soon as it stand as the product of freely associated people under their conscious, planned control." (MEW23:94) Just like Hegelian dialectics, Marxian thinking is borne by a figure of reconciliation that promises the realization of a truth-ful (i.e. dwelling in complete disclosedness) earthly community.

It may be observed that Marx's vision of conscious, transparent, collectively controllable social production at least has the virtue that it prospectively overcomes the riskiness and uncertainty of capitalist economic life. Why then not accept an historical casting of human being as collective, controlling, planning subjectivity? The answer lies in the nature of how human beings share, and can share a world socially. The gainful game enunciating the essence of capitalism is risky and incalculable precisely because it is based upon the interplay among the economic players with their various income-sources. The first income-source is labour-power itself, i.e. an individual's powers and abilities.

The further income-sources in land, loan-capital and an operating firm are reified sources of social power. The competitive struggle among income-source owners constituting the fabric of capitalist economic life can therefore be seen to be a *power struggle*. With the socialization of total social production, the power struggle inherent in human social living is not done away with, but only changes its colours. What is supposed to become conscious, transparent, collectively controllable social production is infected by an *ongoing political struggle* over economic issues with its own risks and uncertainties. Even when the private individual of capitalist-bourgeois society is ‘abolished’ by a socialist revolution, the political struggles among socialist citizens only continue in another guise the capitalist gainful game, with different rules of play. It is an illusion to anticipate that such a socialist society inevitably infected by political power plays would be totally transparent and controllable, and the prospect of such total control of social living, with its elimination of the free private individual, must repel those who see freedom as essential to human being. Freedom necessarily implies *risky, uncertain, unpredictable* social power play among human beings; the dream of a total social, collective subjectivity is therefore a vision of unfreedom.

In contrast to Hegelian reconciliation, Marx’s thinking is based on a Feuerbachian anthropology, i.e. on a certain metaphysical casting of human being according to which everything that is can, should and must be traced back to humans as their ‘productive’ originators. The Marx-Engels’ critique proceeds “from a purely human, general basis” (*Outline of a Critique of National Economics* MEW1/502), it “intends the ‘guiding back of the human world to humans themselves’ (*On the Jewish Question* MEW1/370)” since for the Feuerbachians, Marx and Engels, as Hans-Georg Backhaus points out, society is part of “the social world created by people (vom Menschen Geschaffenen)”.⁴² Such a program of social critique as a critique of the alienation of human being is situated

⁴² Hans-Georg Backhaus *Dialektik der Wertform: Untersuchungen zur marxschen Ökonomiekritik* (Dialectics of the Value-Form: Investigations into Marx’s Critique of Economics) Ça ira Verlag, Freiburg i.Br. 1997 pp. 407, 405.

firmly within the modern metaphysics of subjectivity. Accordingly, society can only be an area of inter-subjectivity, whether alienated or not. The 'inter' or 'between' in the inter-subjectivity is thus presupposed unquestioningly, as if there were no questions regarding the open dimension in which humans could have intercourse with one another *as* humans. The free, open dimension in which humans exercise, gain or lose their freedom does not belong — *pace* Backhaus — to the “area of what is created by people” (*ibid.*) but is on the contrary presupposed by it. It is the appropriated dimension of the disclosedness of beings as such not created by humans but which humans share as social beings enappropriated to appropriation, thus first enabling something we call society by allowing a shared world to shape up *as* a world for human understanding. This precondition of the social being of humans is not seen or thought through at all by Marx at any point, to say nothing of those socially critical intellectuals who feel obliged to adhere to the Marxian critique.

The 'between' between humans is akin to that between commodity products in mirroring each other's values in an interplay and interchange of value-estimation, as investigated by Marx in the famous and notorious value-form analysis of the first chapter of *Capital*. This value-form analysis can be taken one step deeper to see the interplay among the players in the gainful game of capitalist economy, mutually estimating, valuing and esteeming each other's labouring powers and abilities. This is the 'bottom line' of value theory beyond quantitative, economic considerations and phenomenally richer than anything a mere 'theory of intersubjectivity' could present. It goes almost without saying that Marx's version of value theory does bring the estimating interplay among human beings to a value-concept.

It can still be asked whether the contradiction between dissociated and associated labour reaches originarily into the essence of the valorization of value, since it refers to the unplanned nature of capitalist labour rather than to the more ordinary limitlessness of valorization. The endless, self-augmenting circling of value as capital cannot be grounded ultimately on the contradiction in the value-form itself between particularity and universality, but represents the final grounding of the

essence of capital in a groundlessness. The voracity and insatiability of capital are one of the aspects that have to be thought through and grounded.⁴³ And capital does not rest on an insatiable anthropological human urge for riches but is, in itself, as the historical essential belonging-together of a constellation of beings with a corresponding way of thinking, the *agens movens* of the production process which snatches away the totality of beings, including humans, into availability for an orgy of production. It is the delirious poetical agent, but in the form of measureless self-augmentation.

With his answer of socialization or sociation in response to the valorization of capital, Marx has succumbed to the metaphysical illusion that collective subjectivity in a socialist society would have a measure in the needs of the members of society. Human being, however, cannot be grasped on the basis of need. Neediness is not a ground that could serve as measure, but is itself groundless and questionable. The excess lies in human being itself as the property of appropriation and not simply on the 'other side' in the measureless immoderation of rapacious capital. Capital's obsession with valorization, enforced by competition, and the set-up's obsession with ordered setting up plumb the depths of human being and enpropriate it to obsessiveness and excessiveness. The excessiveness of human being itself is already immanent in the originary transcendence of human being to the world by virtue of which beings *as* such reveal themselves to human being in such a way that they appear valuable and producible. Greed is one exemplary phenomenon that is an excessive response to the historical constellation of the gainful game, whereas risk-aversion, fear of the loss of control and obsession with security are familiar phenomena that can be regarded as excessive responses to the historical constellation of the set-up.

If a response to the excessiveness of human being is to be looked for, it must be sought at the origin and not merely in the derivative social relations. Human being is challenged by technology and capital to grasp

⁴³ Herbert Rünzi put this at the focus of attention in his doctoral thesis *Der Heißhunger nach Mehrarbeit* (The Voraciousness for Surplus Labour) Universität Konstanz 1981.

beings, thus unconcealing them, setting them up in presence and valorizing them for gain. If an insight is gained into this ontological structure, it also will be seen that there can be no political solution as an answer to the excessiveness of technology and capital insofar as the *πόλις*, i.e. society, constitutes a set-up of beings for the sake of the good life of the members of society. Political humans, i.e. citizens, do not ask reflectively what their essence is but presuppose it as given. In presupposing it, political humans reflect on their interests, cares and responsibilities, all of which are not originary categories or existentials, and struggle politically with each other to assert their own interests, to assuage their cares and to realize their particular conception of the common good of society.

Marxian thinking envisaged a political solution — socialist revolution through class struggle — because it did not posit human being on a level sufficiently deep and close to the groundless origin. On the contrary, it is left unquestioned within its metaphysical context. The antagonisms between the neediness of humans and the insatiability of capital on the one hand and between sociation and privateness on the other are merely played out. This response to the endlessness of the valorization of value is inadequate because it fails to recognize that excessiveness infects human being itself, so that no simple measure can be found within it. Following Heidegger, the step back into a casting of human being subtended by being has to be taken without obliterating Marxian insights into the essence of capital or losing sight of them. If Marx does not get beyond the metaphysics of subjectivity, then Heidegger too, in reflecting on what *is*, does not recognize and think through the capitalist gain-snatching disclosedness of all beings, which is also a thought-form under which everything appears *as* valuable for gainful appropriation in an incalculable, risky game.

Viewed from another, 'esoteric' angle (assuming that one is prepared to twist Marx in a thinking that simultaneously twists free of him), Marxian thinking is by no means exhausted in casting a transparent, consciously socialized, communist future. The other Marx, however, only becomes visible to an interpretation of his writings on the critique of political economy which, first of all, rescues the deep insights of his

value-form analysis as opposed to the labour theory of value, which constitutes the orthodox line of conceptual development.⁴⁴ A value-form analytic reading of *Capital*⁴⁵ shows that, far from having a quantitatively determinate value substance in performed socially necessary labour-time, the value of a commodity turns out to be what it is quantitatively in the exchange relation itself, i.e. the value theory should no longer be read as an explanatory theory of the quantitative price-formation of commodities in a capitalist economy, not only because such a theory is untenable, but above all because such explanatory theories obliterate insight into the deeper levels of essence on which what is ontologically decisive is situated.

What a concretely performed labour is worth is established *a posteriori* on the market in the exchange for money. The labour embodied in a commodity does not determine (causally) the price quantitatively, neither directly nor indirectly, even when ‘labour’ is qualified with the epithet ‘socially necessary’, for, what is ‘socially necessary’ is only decided on the market, i.e. the quantitative explanation of price is ultimately circular in a vicious sense. There is no ‘value content’ as value substance which could regulate the exchange relations ‘behind the backs’ of the exchanging parties. In a further step in getting-over Marx, the insight into the value-form must then be translated into the region of the gainful game as the essence of capitalism as thought through for the first time in the present text. Value then only comes about ‘relatively’ in a mirror game of mutual estimating and valuing, and has no inherent substance.

But what follows from the ‘substancelessness’ of value, its ‘unstandingness’ or ‘non-sistence’? It implies that the gainful game, which sets everything into motion under the dominating view-point of

⁴⁴ Such an interpretation is contained in my *Critique of Competitive Freedom and the Bourgeois-Democratic State* Kurasje, Copenhagen 1984. Emended digitized edition 2010.

⁴⁵ A reading perhaps not entirely unrelated to the one Derrida demands: “I am thinking of the necessity of a new culture that invents a new way of reading and

the valorization of value, i.e. of winning value, above all in the four basic forms of income, is essentially infected with an incalculability that goes against any planning, calculation or prediction. The insight into the gainful game, which represents the constellation of human being in the age of capitalism, has consequences for the thinking of the set-up, which puts the constellation of human being in the technical age into words in such a way that this thinking can now see that even the set-up toggles into incalculability, i.e. that contingency infects the essence of the set-up, especially since all technical happenings *as valuable* cannot happen without a flow of money which accompanies them and makes them possible. In the midst of the set-up world of total calculability and controllability there is the ineradicable incalculability inherent in the value-form itself. The thinking of the set-up therefore also must go through a metamorphosis. According to Heidegger, "our entire existence is challenged everywhere [...] to switch over to planning and calculating everything".⁴⁶ Even being itself is subject "to the challenge to allow beings to appear within the horizon of calculability".⁴⁷ Humans as well as being itself are subjected to the challenge of the set-up, to incorporate, to pull in by force, everything into a planning and calculating.

The cybernetic grasp of the set-up, however, comes up against a barrier immanent in the essential contingency of the value-form itself as a ground-form of social interplay with its socio-ontological structure *sui generis*. Heidegger does not think this through anywhere. On the contrary: even in late texts such as 'The Origin of Art and the Assignment of Thinking' (1967),⁴⁸ he insists that the world-casting of the present-day world has the constitution of total cybernetics:

investigating *capital* (Marx's work and capital in general)." J. Derrida *Das andere Kap* (The other cape) Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt/M. 1992 p. 43.

⁴⁶ M. Heidegger 'Der Satz der Identität' (Principle of Identity) in *Identität und Differenz* Neske Verlag, Pfullingen 1957 p. 27.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*

⁴⁸ In *Denkerfahrungen* (Experiences in Thinking) Hermann Heidegger (ed.) Klostermann, Frankfurt/M. 1983 pp. 135-150.

The fundamental trait of the cybernetic casting of the world is the regulating circuit through which the feedback of information runs. The most encompassing regulating circuit encompasses the reciprocal relation between humans and world. What holds sway in this encompassing? The world relations of humans and with them the entire social existence of humans are enclosed in the area of domination of cybernetic science. (*ibid.* p.145)

Here, as everywhere else, Heidegger totalizes calculatingness without taking the economy into account, i.e. he consistently neglects what ‘regulates’ the ‘regulating circuits’ of capitalist economic activity, namely, the essentially contingent value-form interplay among all the elaborated value-forms and their character-masks in a full-blown capitalist economy. Because he did not learn anything essential from Marx, Heidegger characterizes present-day society not as capitalist society, but as “industrial society” (*ibid.*): “It is subjectivity relying entirely on itself. All objects are aligned towards this subject.” (*ibid.*) In view of the Marxian analysis of the essence of commodity fetishism (which has to be thoroughly understood and should not be used erroneously, as in conventional left-wing cultural critique, as a code-word for the deranged tendency of modern humans to consume) which fathoms and presents the essential phenomenon of objects slipping out of the consciously controlling hands of human subjects, no matter whether individual or collective, it must be concluded that Heidegger did not understand the Marxian alienation of essence of the subject in capitalism and thus missed the opportunity of thinking through modern technology in its essential affinity to capitalist economy and its gainful game.

The circuits into which everything is dragged are circuits of capital that are subject to the dominating view-point of the valorization of value from which all players derive their winnings, if at all. All beings offer the sight (ἰδέα) of valorizability, of potential winnings. Everything, however, must go through the eye of the needle of the value-form, i.e. of money, to prove its fitness and status as a being. Only in the exchange for money in the marketplace does it turn out what something is worth (quantitatively). This applies not only to commodity products of labour, but equally to the hiring price for labour-power, the rental price for land, the interest-price for loan-capital and, finally, to the residue of profit of

enterprise left in the entrepreneur's hands. Changing prices and fluctuating exchange rates, for instance, cut across any planning and calculation, just as do crises such as a credit crunch and the collapse of bubbles in certain markets. If valorization does not run smoothly, i.e. if the advanced capital is not augmented, the beings drawn into the circuit will of necessity be let go again in the long run. Grasping is inverted into releasing. The beings challenged by the set-up suddenly become non-beings, because they can no longer find a place in any circuit, no longer promise gain. They are no longer ordered and thus fall out of the orderability of the set-up. They then subsist transitionally as beings whose orders have been cancelled. May we conjecture that this toggling of the grasp in its setting-up and striving for gain represents a "sudden flash of appropriation",⁴⁹ whose contours Heidegger tried to make out within the set-up itself? By calculation toggling into incalculability, by plans being negated by the contingency of value interplay, can we see "a *belonging* together of humans and being"⁵⁰ through which they are released from the grasping set-up? Can this release from the challenging gainful game itself be understood as a herald of letting-be, similar to how Heidegger interprets the set-up as "a foreplay to what appropriation means"?⁵¹ Appropriation...

does not necessarily persist in its foreplay. For in appropriation the possibility is announced that the mere holding sway of the set-up is twisted into a more initiant appropriating. Such a twisting and getting-over of the set-up from appropriation into appropriation would result in the appropriating (that is, never to be made by humans on their own) retraction of the technical world out of domination into service within the area through which humans reach more properly into appropriation.⁵²

Can, in parallel to this, a retraction of the capitalist world out of its domination be vaguely discerned by comprehending the essential contingency of capitalism and by gaining insight into and accepting the groundless, gainful world-play of capitalist economy? This would

⁴⁹ 'Der Satz der Identität' *op. cit.* p. 31.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*

⁵¹ *ibid.* p. 29.

⁵² *ibid.*

amount to a relative release from the grip of the grasp by gaining insight into the gainful game as the reverse side of appropriation. This would be the proper historical gain of the gainful game which turns back and toggles into appropriation. The experience in thinking of the essential contingency of the value-form opens up anticipatorily and possibly a view of the essential withdrawal of being itself which, in sending destiny, itself withdraws. The gainful game is the reverse side of appropriation as the anticipatory withdrawal symptom of being itself. In the gainful game, the non-availability of being itself lights up by way of premonition. The greed of human being in the gainful game (the gathering of all opportunities for gain) is then experienced as a merely blind response to the essential withdrawal of being itself into unavailability.

Reference is being made here to a possible getting-over which can also be interpreted as a twisting that twists graspingness into a loosening letting-go. In the gainful game as the essence of the grasping, setting-up capitalist world, there is an essential ambiguity between grasping and letting-go which perhaps leaves room for a twisting that could invert the snatching grab for everything into a letting-be by virtue of the gainful game being toggled into the windings of a twisting that allows some inner distance. Such a twisting ambiguity is *not* the same thing as an overcoming in which the technical-capitalist world would be historically superseded and replaced by another constellation of beings as a whole. Rather, there is a possibility of gaining a distance from the grasp in the ambiguity of the set-up of the gainful game which breaks its totalizing character and assuages it. In the twisting getting-over, there could be also an assuagement of totalization in such a way that a world opens up in parallel to the calculating, profit-pursuing world set-up. The Japanese philosopher Shizuteru Ueda, coming from Zen Buddhism, expresses this parallelism as “dwelling in the double world” and as an “and-at-the-same-time”:

Humans thus need beings as certain kinds of things at hand [including technical devices ME] in their living situations *and at the same time* they experience the

same beings [the internet, for instance ME] as things which open them up to end-less openness.⁵³

May we interpret such a thoughtful, world-doubling assuagement as the possibility of a turning back into appropriation? Is thinking today called on to accompany or prepare in thought the twisting assuagement of the grasping set-up by opening up another space in which a questioning of who we are is preserved?

Such questions do not solve any urgent and pressing problems of the present. If one views today's problems with unemployment in certain economies, for instance, a letting-go by the gainful game and the set-up does not seem to be at all desirable but, on the contrary, deleterious insofar as humans, set into an employed position in the set-up, have their orders cancelled and are shoved away by the set-up itself and thus lose their livelihood. For such immediate problems arising *within* the political-economic sphere, thinking does not offer any immediate solutions. How could it do so? Current concerns or a definite world region cannot be made the yardstick for thinking, which has to play a completely different, more comprehensive, or even visionary, premonitory role. Thinking today has the task of thinking what is historically necessary and possible in the future for humankind and being to belong together. This includes the question concerning the essential relationship between the cybernetic technical world and risky capitalism which could allow an alternative future to become visible simply by opening up a deeper insight into the present world. What is necessary first of all is to *learn* to see the origins in being of our racing world. Such learning, of course, is obstructed from the start by the thoughtless prejudice that such questioning is a superfluous, 'abstract theoretical' activity pursued in ivory towers far removed from the struggles and concerns of 'people's real lives' which 'doesn't get us anywhere'.

⁵³ Shizuteru Ueda 'Der Ort des Menschen im Nô-Spiel' (The Place of the Human in Nô Drama) in *Eranos Jahrbuch* 1987 Vol. 56. p. 75; emphasis in the original.

10. Release from the Grip of the Grasp?⁵⁴

Is Heidegger's answer to the excessive measurelessness of the set-up more adequate than Marx's answer to the measureless essence of capital? What are we to think of the casting of the world as fourfold? What is the situation regarding the thinging of things as opposed to the distancelessness of what can be arbitrarily and interchangeably ordered to set up on the spot on stand-by?

Two aspects in Heidegger, which he himself mixes up, now have to be kept distinct: letting-be (*Gelassenheit*) on the one hand, and a rooted stand in the soil (*Bodenständigkeit*) on the other. Don't we have to send the latter to the garbage dump of history and give up the hope that it could be "given back" or "called back" in an altered form within the technical world? But with this, would it not be the end of the casting of the fourfold, at least as a casting of a simple rooted stand in the soil? With this, the casting of the light ringing of the thing, which rests on the distinction between the (authentic) thing and (inauthentic) technical devices, would also become harder to outline in thinking. It seems that the word 'rooted stand (in the soil)' marks something only half thought through, riddled with prejudice and nostalgia in Heidegger's thinking that holds it in a provincial narrowness, unable to respond adequately to the overwhelming onslaught of the capitalist-technical world that sweeps away the old peasant rooted stand in the soil. The latter will never come again — despite Heidegger's longing —, let alone in the form of the light, supple ring of the fourfold, as long as the fourfold is thought as an unambiguous dwelling in simple conditions.

If the fourfold becomes questionable as an autonomous alternative historical casting, the thoughts on letting-be and the step back, however, do not lose their validity in any way. Reflective, meditative thinking is still called on to consider human mortality and to call a halt to the snatching grasp of the gainful game and the set-up by letting go. Letting

⁵⁴ Cf. my essay 'Heidegger's Hölderlin and John Cage', available at <http://www.arte-fact.org/heicagen.html>.

things be means, with a turn into Marxian thinking, distance from the obsession with gain that radiates from the gainful game and entices humans and ensnares them with its lures. Whereas Heidegger has only at foreknowing calculative thinking in his sights, Marx offers a way of deciphering calculating thinking as an urge for riches situated within the gainful game based on the valorization of value and also exposed, in its calculatingness, to the essential incalculability of the gainful game. Beings are open to human being also with regard to what sort of winnings can be had from them through gainful economic interplay. Letting things be means, among other things, letting the enticement of money be, leaving it alone, a motif that is not played on in Heidegger.

If other readings of Marxian texts can expect to be received by more open ears today (perhaps for the first time), Marx also offers the possibility of seeing more clearly the essential flaws in a total social planability and calculability driven by a relentless collective will to power. The grasp of set-up and gainful game bears its playful-incalculable, ungrasping other within its very essence. This other also makes an appeal to humans and gives them a distance from the ordering urge to valorize for the sake of winnings and thus possibly grants also a nearness to appropriation that cannot be grasped. This ungraspable other hardly can be interpreted as a rooted stand in the soil, old or new. Rather, the other reveals the face of playful contingency which inverts every calculation into incalculability and every plan into unforeknowable surprise. Contingency is to be thought as the essential holding-sway of withdrawal from the grasp of any plan or calculation or foreknowledge. The withdrawal concerns not only appropriation and being itself, but, consequently beings, too, in their calculability, i.e. their knowability and the predictability of their movements and changes.

Science, *by its very essence*, cannot admit incalculability. Every incalculability has to be transformed into a disclosing calculability, whether it be even through statistical analyses, probability calculations, or through chaos theory and the like. The world, however, is not entirely what science and technology uncover and set up; it is also the unexpected constellation of beings which comes about contingently through a multiplicity of movements independent of each other. Such

multiple, intertwining movements include above all the changes proceeding from human players as *free* starting-points of their own actions. Assuming that the Marxian value concept is subjected to a new interpretation, it assists in thinking through the essential contingency of these movements in the shared (economic) world as the exercise of individualized human freedom itself in social interplay.

Heidegger's simple casting of the fourfold provokes many questions. Why four, and not three, or five? In speaking of the fourfold, Heidegger does not say anything about the sea. Is it already included in talking of the earth? The characterization of the earth as, say, "the bearing element for building, the nurturing fruitful element, harbouring waters and rock, plants and animals"⁵⁵ does not seem to fit the sea very well, that swaying, dangerous element. This would imply a fifth pole in the mirror-play of the world. Why the gods and whither? Zen Buddhism, for instance, which in no way could be regarded as unfamiliar with the deepest dimensions of the world and presumably also belongs to the "few other great beginnings", does not lead to a god, but to nothing. That, in turn, would imply one pole less in the mirror-play. How are other mortals and being-together in the fourfold to be thought more explicitly? How and *as who* do human beings play with one another in the world-play? Does the casting of the fourfold leave everything with regard to such questions open? Or does it gloss over them? At one point, Heidegger even multiplies the possibility of an other beginning, without, however, elaborating on it.

There is of course no return to it [the great beginning]. The great beginning will come into presence as that which waits over against us only in its coming to precious little. This precious little (lightness?), however, can no longer remain in its Western singularity. It opens up to the few other great beginnings which, within their own element, belong to the sameness of the beginning of the endless hold in which the earth is retained.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ M. Heidegger 'Das Ding' in *Vorträge und Aufsätze op. cit.* p. 170.

⁵⁶ M. Heidegger 'Hölderlins Erde und Himmel' in *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung* (Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry) Klostermann, Frankfurt/M. ¹1951 ⁴1971 p. 177.

Here, a plurality is referred to in passing, about which otherwise an enigmatic silence is maintained in Heidegger's writings. Such a plurality is obviously "retained" as possibilities in the fourfold of the end-less hold through which, however, the fourfold is opened up and exposed to indeterminacy and difference, where plurality can be understood on the one hand as a plurality of world-historical beginnings and on the other as a doubling of world, as a "dwelling in the double world" (Ueda). If in German "ring" and "gering" can mean not only "small" but also "precious" and also "supple" and "light", then Hölderlin's verse "To *Geringem* can also come Great Beginning" can also be interpreted as meaning that in precious moments humans "come" to a light, dance-like suppleness through which they are exposed to the groundless world-play of appropriation more playfully, less graspingly, and that means at the same time: more open to anxiety. Not only Marx but also Heidegger — despite the status of anxiety as fundamental mood in *Being and Time* — probably do not have in mind such a playful suppleness open to anxiety in their respective castings of world. And from within the set-up, anxiety is merely a phenomenon grasped as a disturbance and to be brought under control through sedation.

In the age of the set-up and the gainful game, humans are hit by the destiny sent by appropriation without this being experienced as a dwelling of mortals with one another between earth and sky. Rather,

destiny hits humans of this age *immediately* [...], not just through a sounding of its voices. Destiny impacts humans without a sound — a puzzling kind of stillness.⁵⁷

This unmusical stillness is a mute thoughtlessness, since humans do not have the faintest idea of being given over to appropriation — even and especially in this "world epoch". Inkling, however, bears the thinking of being. The immediacy of destiny's visitation means that human beings are exposed to the grasp of the set-up and the gainful game without being able to maintain any distance. They are snatched and gripped by the grasp and are therefore themselves thoroughly grasping in the double sense. To step back from grasping appears as *unthinkable*. We

⁵⁷ *ibid.* p. 178.

experience technology and capital in a pure form without being able to distance ourselves from them. A distancing is inconceivable for today's hegemonic ways of thinking that belong to the set-up and gainful game. We do not know what hits us and drives us. Does Marx help us to experience more distinctly the destiny that hits us? If capital and technology in an intermeshing of essences in the grasp are our destiny, then, as we have seen, Marx says to us something of the former. We need to gain distance from both. This distance is the step back through which humans experience that they are let into appropriation *beyond their grasp*, prior to any striving to know the world or to manipulate it or to draw gain from it.

In view of the pull of the capitalist-technical networking of the world, which will open up still further unheard-of possibilities of existence, it is necessary to serenely let go of a rooted stand in the soil. Human being *may* learn to see that even this capitalist-technical world driven by a *grasping will to power* is appropriated groundlessly as the gift and destiny of appropriation, a world in which humans are en-abled to dwell as mortals. In the first place, however, it is only ever an individual human being who can learn to see, through thinking, what is hard to see, and this makes any possibility of a 'we' on the basis of seeing eye-to-eye remote. Such thinking nevertheless grants distance individually, and a remote possibility at times can become shared nearness. In the place of a customary rooted stand, a kind of individual 'nomadic' agility and suppleness is called for, which goes along with the technical revolutions without losing itself in them, i.e. which enables one to enter with equanimity into the groundlessness of both the supple, light play of the world with one another, and the inevitable rivalrous power plays in their countless guises. Here, thinking is called upon to learn to see the technico-capitalist world in which we ineluctably live today in its ambiguity, which amounts to an essential thoughtful human praxis that is a twisting and turning of human being away from unthinking exposure to an unleashed, grasping will to power, whilst not denying that worldsharing can never be anything other than a power interplay, in the first place, of individual abilities, including the ability to gain thoughtful insight into the ungraspable mystery of the world. Can the possibilities

of the technico-capitalist world be taken advantage of as conveniences whilst at the same time gaining distance at a “still point” (T.S. Eliot)?⁵⁸ Such distance is a most genuine gain.

Letting-be, which is nothing other than the step back in thinking from the bifurcated grasp itself, grants distance. This distance opens to view the graspingness both of knowing that sets up and of the striving for gain. It enables a going-along-with whilst not letting oneself be touched inwardly and the insight that there is something else besides functional technology, efficiency, accumulating riches, comfort. For this to happen, it is neither necessary nor possible to remain or to again become rooted in one’s home soil in a “peacable dwelling between earth and sky”.⁵⁹ Rather — *pace* Hebel’s poetry⁶⁰ — I take my roots with me into the ether of the globally networked world and also bear the power struggles that punctuate living.⁶¹ For, the thinking that grants distance also earths, and it is first and foremost in thinking that I am free. .

⁵⁸ Rafael Capurro proposes a “synthetic thinking” that turns about the abyss between humans, nature, technology. Cf. his article ‘*Sein und Zeit* und die Drehung ins synthetische Denken’ (‘*Being and Time* and the Twist into Synthetic Thinking’ in M. Eldred (ed.) *Twisting Heidegger: Drehversuche parodistischen Denkens* Junghans Verlag, Cuxhaven 1993.

⁵⁹ *Gelassenheit op. cit.* p. 15.

⁶⁰ “We are plants which — whether we want to admit it or not — have to rise out of the earth with the roots, in order to be able to flourish in the ether and the bear fruit”, cited after M. Heidegger *Gelassenheit op. cit.* p. 26.

⁶¹ Cf. R. Capurro *op. cit.* Letting-be cannot be interpreted as a peaceful lack of tension.

11. Afterword (Recapitulation)⁶²

Twenty-five years ago the opening line to my preface read, “Why Marx? Why philosophy at all?”⁶³ In the meantime I can add, “Why Heidegger at all?” Both these thinkers are tainted, in different ways, by associations with twentieth century totalitarianisms, both are radical and, in spite of all the ongoing efforts to put them beyond the political pale and issue intellectual death certificates, we still need both. Why? Because we continue to live in a capitalist world in which technology is a hugely dominant power, and yet we only pretend we know what capital is and what technology is. It is the primal scene of philosophy all over again: We understand very well what technology and capital are, and at the same time, we don’t. We have overlooked something, we have skipped over it and taken it for granted as self-evident, even trivial. At present we are in a global economic crisis triggered by major players in the gainful game of capitalism who played very badly, underestimating risk, and who almost managed to bring the movement of financial capital, and

⁶² This introduction first written as a separate piece ‘Kapitalism och teknikens väsen: Marx och Heidegger’ for *SUBALTERN Tidskrift för subversiv kultur* No. 3 Umeå, Sweden, December 2009 <http://www.tidskrift.nu/artikel.php?Id=6333> “Penningens betydelse för våra liv ... är vad som fått filosoferna H.D. Kittsteiner, Kostas Axelos och Michael Eldred att vända sig till de två kontroversiella tänkarna Martin Heidegger och Karl Marx, för att begreppsliggöra vår samtid och den värld som reducerar allting till mått och värden. I föreliggande nummer av *Subaltern* presenterar vi dessa tänkares analyser av sambandet Marx och Heidegger...” (English: “Money’s significance for our lives ... is what has brought the philosophers H.D. Kittsteiner, Kostas Axelos and Michael Eldred to turn their attention to the two controversial thinkers, Martin Heidegger and Karl Marx, in order to help us grasp our time and a world that reduces everything to measurement and value. In this issue of *Subaltern* we present these thinkers’ analyses of the Marx/Heidegger connection,...”)

⁶³ Michael Eldred *Critique of competitive freedom and the bourgeois-democratic state: Outline of a form-analytic extension of Marx’s uncompleted system* Kurasje, Copenhagen 1984 580 pp. ISBN 8787437406, 9788787437400 Available at <http://www.arte-fact.org/ccfbdspf.html>

with it, the entire economic movement, to a screeching standstill. In the technological direction there is the science of neurophysiology, aided and abetted by digital technology,⁶⁴ which has long since staked its claim to responsibility in matters regarding what human thinking itself *is*, and with the program of replicating human thinking in a highly complicated digital machine. Heidegger's assertion that the modern way of scientific thinking is well underway toward a "destruction of human being"⁶⁵ is no cheap polemic. And yet hardly anyone notices and, if they do, the answers fall woefully short of the insight necessary.

To bring Heidegger and Marx together in all the radicalness of their respective thinking means to endeavour to see what light the genius of each of these philosophers throws on the respective blind spots of the other, especially with regard to the questions: What is technology? and What is capital? These questions demand the ability to think both ontologically and phenomenologically. Phenomenology here is not merely one school of philosophical thought among many others vying for attention and footholds in the academic establishment, but is the attempt to bring to language those invariably overlooked phenomena that, as Aristotle already said, are "hard to see", because they are so near, so everyday. Modern science proceeds to obfuscate these phenomena from the outset by not noticing and by putting plausible theoretical constructions upon them, especially mathematical ones. The nearest of the near is the phenomenon signified by a little word employed at the birth of metaphysics: ἦ or 'as'. Ontological inquiry is inaugurated with the investigation of 'beings as such' or 'beings qua beings'. The 'as' in this formulation is not pedantry, but the crucial point: beings are not simply existent, but are given to understanding *as* the beings they are. A world shapes up for human understanding only within the scaffolding

⁶⁴ Cf. M. Eldred *The Digital Cast of Being: Metaphysics, Mathematics, Cartesianism, Cybernetics, Capitalism, Communication* Available from ontos verlag, Frankfurt/M. 2009 137 pp. ISBN 978-3-86838-045-3 and at http://www.arte-fact.org/dgtlon_e.html

⁶⁵ Martin Heidegger *Zollikoner Seminare* ed. Medard Boss, Klostermann, Frankfurt/M. 1987, 1994 S. 160, cf. also pp. 123, 124, 133.

provided by the categories that allow a being to show itself *as* it is, or even *as* it is not (the question of truth). Thus phenomenology and ontology go hand in hand, endeavouring to uncover and bring to adequate language the elusive phenomenon of the ‘as’ interposed in-between (i.e. in the neither objective nor subjective ontological dimension), through which a world opens up to human understanding, shaping up in an historical way dependent upon the fundamental categories seen in each epoch. [Thus, for instance, where the Greeks saw and thought beings first and foremost *as* $\tau\acute{\iota}$ or ‘somewhat’, we latecomers to history see the *object as* such, i.e. the object in its objectivity, and speak of scientific ‘objective’ truth that can be dispassionately measured against experiment. Objectivity itself, however, can never be objectively tested, but can only be seen in its specific constitution through the mind’s eye — the ontological mission at the heart of Kant’s subjectivist philosophy.]

A major part of Heidegger’s late thinking is dedicated to uncovering *as* what constellation of being our current historical world shapes up, which is thought and shown to be an historical destiny coming from a long way off, namely, from the beginnings of Greek philosophical thinking. He poses the “question concerning technology”⁶⁶ with regard to our present-day world and traces the decisive stages along the way encapsulated in key words of Western thinking. From the early 1920s, Heidegger’s thinking was guided by the thesis that “the sense of being is originally *Hergestelltsein*”, i.e. having-been-produced.⁶⁷ Hence the historical trajectory from Greek $\tau\acute{\epsilon}\chi\nu\eta\ \pi\omicron\iota\eta\tau\iota\kappa\acute{\eta}$ (poietic craft) through to modern technology and its overwhelming, indeed overbearing, presence in today’s world. The word “*Hergestelltsein*” already provides the clue to understanding Heidegger’s choice of terminology for the “constellation of being” *as* which today’s historical world shapes up:

⁶⁶ M. Heidegger ‘Die Frage nach der Technik’ in *Vorträge und Aufsätze* Neske, Pfullingen 1st edition 1954, 5th printing 1985.

⁶⁷ “Denn der Sinn für Sein ist ursprünglich *Hergestelltsein*.” M. Heidegger ‘Phänomenologische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles (Anzeige der hermeneutischen Situation)’ in *Dilthey-Jahrbuch* Band 6 1989 MS:50.

Ge-Stell or the set-up. The set-up sets up. [And this setting-up is not only a matter of production, but of ‘stellen’ (setting) in all its various guises, especially with regard to how beings are set up in our thinking as Vor-stellungen, i.e. representations in consciousness, which are historically a far cry from the Greek ἰδέα or εἶδος, i.e. the ‘sight’ or ‘look’ that a being presents of itself.]

The Gestell is the gathering of the various ways of setting up such as Vorstellen (represent, imagine), Herstellen (produce), Bestellen (order), Anstellen (employ), Einstellen (adjust), Verstellen (obscure, dissimulate), etc. It is therefore not simply a matter of a narrow-minded focus on production (and, say, the associated rape of the Earth’s resources), but of seeing how today’s world shapes up on the deepest, most subtle and most overlooked level in our preconceptions. Heidegger claims, and is at pains to show through detailed, lucid interpretations of Greek texts, including especially those of Aristotle and Plato, that the very basic concepts of Greek thinking itself were cast with the paradigm of craft production in view. Thus, in particular, the concepts at the nub of Aristotle’s philosophy are δύναμις, ἐνέργεια and ἐντελέχεια, or power, energy and perfected presence. Productionist concepts of power and energy pervade our thinking to this very day and indeed, without Aristotle’s having coined the neologism of ἐνέργεια (literally: at-workness) in the heartland of his thinking to capture the phenomenon of change and movement he had in view, we would not be switching on lights today. Ontologically speaking, the world itself is her-gestellt, produced in the sense of being guided forth into presence. Language itself calls beings to presence *as* the beings they are, defining the sights they present. Hence poetry itself is pro-ductive in calling forth and shaping up a world in language, and without the ‘ideas’ or ‘sights’ which beings present of themselves *as* the beings they are, we would understand literally nothing. We would not *be* human beings.

Therefore it cannot be a matter of bedevilling productionist ways of thinking, which are our heritage, and Heidegger himself underscores often that he is not hostile to technology and what it offers. Rather, he is aghast at the totalizing of productionist ways of thinking which, especially as modern, scientific ways of thinking, arrogate to themselves

the status of occupying the sole locus of truth, compared to which all else is merely poetic fantasy and other forms of cultural embellishment and entertainment. By following Heidegger's genealogy of Western thinking, starting with Aristotle's ontology of productive power, we can come to appreciate that in the bosom of this thinking nestles a *will to power over change and movement of all kinds* with the ultimate aim that, from the present, knowledge can govern the calling to presence from the future of what is foreseen and precalculated to come.

But with his single-minded focus on the productionist, setting-up nature of Western thinking, Heidegger himself was blind to another phenomenon that drew the attention of Greek thinking and which plays a ubiquitous role throughout history: exchange. Exchange here can be taken in both the narrower sense of economic trade and intercourse, and the broadest sense of interchanges of all kinds that are the fabric of human social living, including conversation, greeting, complimenting, insulting, love-making, arguing, coming to blows, and so on. This is where Marx comes in as an indispensable complement to Heidegger's thinking because, in the former's misguided attempt to emulate the Cartesian paradigm for natural science, and thus to uncover an ostensible "economic law of motion of modern society",⁶⁸ he nevertheless first focuses on the phenomenon of commodity exchange from which he forges the key ontological concept of his entire theory of capitalism: *value*. Marx's "dialectic of the value-form"⁶⁹ in the first chapter of *Das Kapital* owes much to Hegel. Both this dialectic and Hegel's thinking are difficult, for which reason, politically motivated readers of Marx were inclined to skip the philosophical niceties of the value-form to get to the punch-line of a 'scientific socialist' analysis of how capital exploits the working class by extracting surplus value from its labour. A supposed foundation for a politics of having-been-hard-done-by had been found. The concept of value required for the proof of

⁶⁸ "das ökonomische Bewegungsgesetz der modernen Gesellschaft" Karl Marx *Das Kapital* Band 1 *Marx-Engels-Werke* East Berlin MEW23:15. Other references to the *Marx-Engels-Werke* Vol. xx p. yy throughout in the form MEWxx:yy.

⁶⁹ Hans-Georg Backhaus *op. cit.*

capitalist exploitation was a quantitative one, summed up by the labour theory of value, according to which equal amounts of “socially necessary labour-time” are exchanged when commodities change hands on the market. This quantitatively conceived theory stands on shaky ground and can be shown⁷⁰ to be quite dispensable for the social ontology of capitalism.

What about the phenomenon of value itself that has to be seen prior to any quantification? This is the “hard to see” ontological phenomenon of the value-form, the ‘look’ of value. Useful things that are the product of useful labour can be exchanged by virtue of being mutually acknowledged, validated and valued *as* valuable. Here again the ontological *as* crops up. A commodity demonstrates its valuableness by exercising its power to exchange for something else that is likewise of value. Such a power is not productionist. Why? Because the simplest act of exchange is a *mutual* interchange involving *both* exchangers. So there is a mutual estimating and esteeming of values going on. Here is another clue pointing back to Aristotle and Plato for whom the phenomenon of τιμή, especially with regard to justice, was pivotal. Τιμή means honour, public office, esteem, value, thus covering both human beings and things, and the basic act of association and the germ of society itself is mutual estimation, a kind of interplay inaugurating the phenomenon of *whoness*.⁷¹ Marx himself does not make this link with Greek τιμή, but *we* must keep it in mind when the analysis in *Kapital* goes on to develop the concept of capital itself on the basis of the concept of value and its crystallization in money, won through the phenomenology of the opening chapter. Marx’s concept of *capital* is the circular, self-augmenting movement of value, and the further investigation of capital

⁷⁰ See the Appendix A *Value-Form Analytic Reconstruction of ‘Capital’* co-authored with Marnie Hanlon, Lucia Kleiber & Mike Roth in my *Critique of competitive freedom...* *op. cit.* and also, more recently, my *Social Ontology: Recasting Political Philosophy Through a Phenomenology of Whoness*ontos verlag, Frankfurt/M. 2008, xiv + 688 pp. cf. <http://www.artefact.org/sclontlg.html>

⁷¹ Cf. my *Social Ontology op. cit.*

throughout the voluminous three tomes of Marx's *Critique of Political Economy* is an elaboration of value-forms and their movements.

Marx conceives of capital in general, i.e. the self-augmentative movement of value, as the subject underlying the total social movement through which a capitalist economy reproduces itself, but consideration of the mutually estimating, validating nature of the germ cell of capital economy, namely, commodity exchange, reveals the movement of value, stripped to its rudimentary kernel, to be an ongoing interplay of mutual estimation rather than a process that could be controlled by a subject. Marx's thinking was captive to the subjectivist philosophy of his age. He therefore envisaged the movement of value as capital as an alienation from the historical possibility of a true, human subjectivity in which the reified movement of value would be wrested under the control of a collective, in some way politically organized humanity. Accordingly, socialist society would be a collective, planned productive unit. Social democracy, another 'product' of the German Geist with links to Marx's thinking, for its part is a compromise formation between capitalist interplay and a tendentially totally caring Sozialstaat that absorbs society into itself, promising security against the risks of social interplay.

So how is today's world to be characterized; *as* what does it shape up and present itself; how is it cast in today's ways of thinking and practical living? On the one hand, there is the set-up that sets up all beings with a will and a view to knowingly foresee and control their movements. On the other hand, this will to power comes up against the bewildering interplay of all those caught up in the gainful game of capitalism — and this includes all of us, not just the capitalists. Scientific and technological ways of foreknowing and controlling movement of all kinds — of things as well as people — mesh with the striving for monetary gain insofar as they contribute to enhancing its chances of success through all sorts of productivity gains. The gainful interplay, however, is played by many and, despite all efforts, does not have, and cannot have an assured, precalculable outcome, for it is a movement involving a *plurality* in mutually estimating interchange, each striving for monetary gain. Despite business plans, computer simulation models, financial analysts' forecasts etc., even the augmentation of value striven

for by the many capitals in competition with each other and with all the other players desirous of income cannot be forecast knowingly. It remains an uncertain, risky play with both successes and failures for the many players involved. On the deepest, ontological level, this has to do with the circumstance that value itself is nothing substantial and intrinsic, but is the insubstantial outcome of an interchange rather than a productive change governed by a principle. In the gainful value-game there are at least two, and in general many players. This very familiar phenomenon demands another concept of power foreign to the Greek paradigm of craft production, foreign to the ontological structure of a foreknowing starting-point having control over a movement and its outcome. Value, too, is a kind of power, for it enables an interchange of what is valued, but an interchange is a mutual, intermeshing movement depending on at least two.

To understand that constellation of being called capitalism, power cannot be understood merely as precalculating and productive, but as a power *play* from which *risk* can never be banished. This represents a rupture with both Heidegger's and Marx's concerns as thinkers, for the former had the step back from the will to productive power in view, whereas the latter envisaged a collective human subjectivity that would bring the prime movement of modern society, namely, its capitalist economic movement, under political control. Rather, an historic *side-step* is called for in which the gainful game and all other power plays are seen for what they are, namely, as the estimating interplay among many powers, each player being a source of power. The now global economic gainful game of capitalism is an ongoing movement resulting from the striving of all of those caught up in it (and that is all of us, in myriad ways and to greater or lesser extents) to have their powers and abilities of all kinds estimated, esteemed, validated, valued, perhaps even appreciated, in a mutual interplay. A social ontology of interplay relativizes the claims of the set-up to knowingly and precalculatingly set up the totality of beings, and also the totalitarian claims of political movements to put an end to rivalrous interplay by politically imposing a total social subject, even if it be in the name of welfare and security for all. If all social power is of its nature a power *play*, secure outcomes are

only to be had at the price of suppressing the interplay among differing, opposed powers, which nevertheless have to acknowledge one another in order to play with each other.

We engage in power interplay both against and for one another. There is the danger of being consumed by the gainful game. To see this is to think something simple. Yet we are struck by an ontological blindness for the phenomena in their self-disclosure. Yet precious little — that simple insight — may be granted.

Michael Eldred, Cologne, 5 May 2009
191st anniversary of Karl Marx's birth.