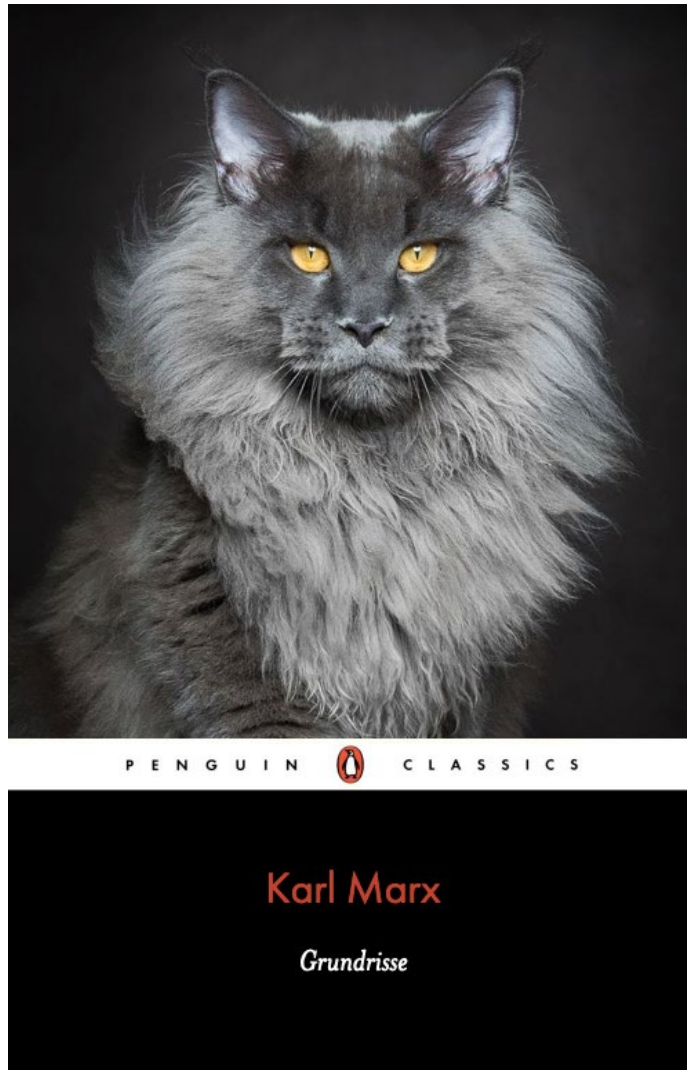




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2021 Fall: Graduate Seminar
Marx: *Grundrisse*
Notes

Update: December 2, 2021

[B]elletristic phrases, which relate everything to everything else by means of some analogy, may even appear profound the first time they are expressed, all the more so if they identify the most disparate things. Repeated, however, and then repeated with outright complacency as statements of scientific value, they are purely and simply ridiculous. Good only for belletristic sophomores and empty chatterboxes who defile all the sciences with their liquorice-sweet filth.” (Marx, *Grundrisse*, 293)

“Capital is the all-dominating economic power of bourgeois society. It must form the starting-point as well as the finishing point” (Marx, *Grundrisse*, 107)

“The exploration of the earth in all directions, to discover new things of use as well as new useful qualities of the old ; such as new qualities of them as raw materials etc. ; the development, hence, of the natural sciences to their highest point ; likewise the discovery, creation and satisfaction of new needs arising from society itself; the cultivation of all the qualities of the social human being, production of the same in a form as rich as possible in needs, because rich in qualities and relations - production of this being as the most total and universal possible social product, for, in order to take gratification in a many-sided way, he must be capable of many pleasures [*genussfaehig*], hence cultured to a high degree - is likewise a condition of production founded on capital. This creation of new branches of production, i.e. of qualitatively new surplus time, is not merely the division of labour, but is rather the creation, separate from a given production, of labour with a new use value; the development of a constantly expanding and more comprehensive system of different kinds of labour, different kinds of production, to which a constantly expanding and constantly enriched system of needs corresponds. Thus, just as production founded on capital creates universal industriousness on one side - i.e. surplus labour, value-creating labour - so does it create on the other side a system of general exploitation of the natural and human qualities, a system of general utility. Utilizing science itself just as much as all the physical and mental qualities, while there appears nothing higher in itself, nothing legitimate for itself, outside this circle of social production and exchange. Thus, capital creates the bourgeois society, and the universal appropriation of nature as well as of the social bond itself by the members of society. Hence the great civilizing influence of capital; its production of a stage of society in comparison to which all earlier ones appear as mere local *developments* of humanity and as *nature-idolatry*. For the first time, nature becomes purely an object for humankind, purely a matter of utility; ceases to be recognized as a power for itself; and the theoretical discovery of its autonomous laws appears merely as a ruse so as to subjugate it under human needs, whether as an object of consumption or as a means of production. In accord with this tendency, capital drives beyond national barriers and prejudices as much as beyond nature worship, as well as all traditional, confined, complacent, encrusted satisfactions of present needs, and reproductions of old ways of life. It is destructive towards all of this, and

constantly revolutionizes it, tearing down all the barriers which hem in the development of the forces of production, the expansion of needs, the all-sided development of production, and the exploitation and exchange of natural and mental forces. But from the fact that capital posits every such limit as a barrier and hence gets *ideally* beyond it, it does not by any means follow that it has *really* overcome it, and, since every such barrier contradicts its character, its production moves in contradictions which are constantly overcome but just as constantly posited. Furthermore. The universality towards which it irresistibly strives encounters barriers in its own nature, which will, at a certain stage of its development, allow it to be recognized as being itself the greatest barrier to this tendency, and hence *will* drive towards its own suspension." (Marx, *Grundrisse*, 409)

"Communism is thus the destruction at the same time of the law of value, of value itself, of its capitalist or socialist variants. Communism is the destruction of exploitation and the emancipation of living labor. Of non-labor. That's it. Simply." (Negri, *Marx Beyond Marx*, 83)

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Session I: Sep 13 (General Introduction & Transition to Grundrisse)

1. *Lotz's basic outlook: Marxist critical theory as a philosophical position that can be a contender in the philosophical system of knowledge, addressed in teaching over the years*
 - a. Theory of Society as a Replacement of Kant's First Critique
 - i. Theory of society as a theory of social *constitution*; society is quasi-transcendental (for that to be thinkable, certain metaphysical readjustments are necessary: life as a new synthesis for the old mind/nature dualism)
 - ii. Philosophical anthropology: *bios* as integrative horizon for other dimensions of social-human reality (psyche, language, otherness, etc.) → the *living and embodied individual* as the new subject in Marx
 - iii. Society as transcendental synthesis; categories of political economy as establishing a new horizon of space, time, and history/experience (intuition in Kant)
 - iv. Reification as a theory of object constitution (Lukacs); being = categories
 - v. Social categories as the *constitutive* elements of the unity of social *reality*
 - vi. Categories as *relational*, not substantial; they contain rules
 - vii. Capital as a social universal; primacy of time over space; importance of capital circulation, globalization, world horizon, establishment of the globe
 - b. Ideology/Knowledge
 - i. *Capital* as a missile (political economy); primacy of theory; theory *as* praxis
 - ii. Knowledge&science (Althusser, Bourdieu, Foucault)
 - iii. Religion (Bloch)
 - c. Aesthetics
 - i. Art
 - ii. Culture (Lukacs, Adorno, Bourdieu)
 - iii. Media theory
 - d. Subjectivity
 - i. Social individual (Heller, against Althusser)
 - ii. Existentialism (Sartre, Heidegger: philosophy of time, 1927 Kant lectures)
 - iii. Philosophical anthropology (Plessner, as a transformation of philosophy of mind & Husserlian Phenomenology)
 - iv. Psychoanalysis?
 - v. Language?
 - e. Nature
 - i. Ecological Marxism (Foster, Ecosocialism, Degrowth theory, etc.)
 - ii. Science & technology
2. ***Bruchlinien /Breaking Points/Problems in Marx***
 - a. Metaphysics?
 - i. Social ontology (Lukacs)
 - ii. Materialism
 - iii. Dialectics of nature (Engels, Soviet Marxism)??
 - b. Practical philosophy (not to be subsumed under ideology)? [not addressed so far]
 - i. Ethics?
 - ii. Philosophy of law

- c. Political philosophy?
 - i. Engels: reduction of politics to administration of things, political plurality is reduced to social conflict
 - ii. Arendt: autonomy of politics
 - iii. Schmitt: constitutional frameworks, community
- d. Philosophy of (world)history
- 3. *Transition*
 - a. Postone
 - i. Capital as an abstract and impersonal form of domination
 - ii. Marx offers a critique of labor
 - iii. Against evolutionary teleology
 - iv. Rejection of socialism as a different administration of the same labor process
 - v. State capitalism as a problem for old socialist thinking
 - vi. Socialism as different mode of production & change in all areas in society, not simply a different way of appropriation
 - vii. Importance of the idea of the social individual
 - b. Grundrisse
 - i. 6 book plan of Capital
 - ii. Main issues
 1. Money as social synthesis
 2. The asymmetry of exchange & crises
 3. Transition from money to capital
 4. The irrationality of capital accumulation
 5. Capital as real subsumption
 6. The importance of capital circulation (globalization)
 7. Pre-capitalist forms of production
 8. General intellect & social individual (science, technology, brain)
- 4. The grandiose opening of the text

Session II: Sep 20 (Introduction to *Grundrisse*, 83-110)

1. Reading of section (1) – (3) of the *Grundrisse* introduction
 - a. 83-85 (MARX I: critique of naturalisms)
 - i. Marx argues that bourgeois philosophers depict society as a bunch of disconnected individuals = a-relation ontology
 - ii. For Marx, we are *living individuals* “before” we are minds and bodies; *life* is the 19th Century metaphysical key concept.
 - iii. Theoretical critique: bourgeoisie philosophy naturalizes the idea that we exist originally as a bunch of unrelated atoms.
 - iv. Ideology critique: the idea that we are unrelated individuals is itself based on *historical* conditions; only under modern conditions, such as the market, private property, and utilitarianism can society appear as something that is [1] external to the individual and [2] to which we have an instrumental relationship.
 - v. Ideology = *forgetting* (85)
 - vi. Already Marx’s early theory is *relational*: when he analyses labor in the EPM (1844), he comes up with a complex system of what is implied in the concept of labor (such as mop, self, activity, product, earth, etc.)
 - vii. No activity can be thought of as *outside* of social relations; M underlines that this also can be applied to the “absurdity” of conceiving language as something that takes place between individuals, instead of it taking place in between *social individuals* (here Habermas, pragmatic speech acts as socially constitutive); note: in this tradition language as something spoken is prior to language as a written system.
 - viii. We should make a difference between *social* [sozial] and *societal* (gesellschaftlich). For Marx, all activities are ultimately *societal*, even those that seem to appear as private (such as the act of thinking, for example).
 - ix. Individuality is nothing “fixed;” rather it is *a way in which we exist as social beings*. A human being “can individuate [vereinzeln] itself only in the midst of society” (84).
 - b. 85-87 (MARX II: critique of abstract views of society)
 - i. We should understand “production” philosophically and in a broad sense; historically Marx stems from German Idealism and the idea that the “ego” is an *activity* (and not “being” - Fichte); here we see the activity of the subject turned into a social concept.
 - ii. Marx argues that “production as such” (and other social factors that political economists start with) remains a-historical and *abstract*; he argues that all basic concepts used for social theory and political economy are historically specific; i.e., they can only exist in their historical *determinations*.
 - iii. These determinations are unified by their form or “mode” [Weise].
 - iv. Though we can abstractly argue that production is necessary for all societies or that means of productions are necessary for every productive process, we never find a society that *exists* simply in the form of such abstractions. So, we need to explain how we get there; i.e., we need to learn to see that abstractions are the

result of reflections. Once we see this, our method becomes genetic, historical, and the abstract becomes concrete through thinking about the abstractions.

- v. If we conceive of capital and production as abstractions, then we naturalize these concepts.
 - vi. For example, in undergraduate classes student often say things like “capitalism is based on competition and humans are by nature competitive” = they naturalize capitalism via an *absurd* reduction of an entire world to something that is “human” (and hence, they conclude, capitalism is the most “natural” and “human” system possible), see note below on understanding/Verstand vs. reason/Vernunft.
 - vii. Similarly, an abstract philosophical anthropology is not possible, acc to Marx.
 - viii. All social-historical determinations that lead to a specific society (=production) appear as a *unity* (85).
 - ix. Society as the result of “production” (i.e., all creative activities) is divided into branches, such as agriculture, service, industry, etc.; production is a whole that makes up a *totality* (86).
 - x. Dialectics is a way of thinking and theorizing that acknowledges that concepts cannot be thought of without that which seems to be *not* them. As he demonstrated in the next section of the introduction, production cannot be thought of without being related to distribution and consumption. The attempt to divide society into neat pieces, parcels, etc. remains *metaphorical* (Althusser) and is based on abstract reflections as long as we do not *grasp* the relations contained in these concepts. We need to turn images into thoughts (Althusser).
- c. 87-88 (MARX III: social form & totality)
- i. Historical specificity of appropriation of nature = private property is a bourgeois and modern concept; the idea of private property is related to private production of isolated individuals who are part of a particular system of wealth generation through wage and capital. Private property is not “natural,” as, for example, Locke seems to think.
 - ii. Historical specificity of power and violence relations (state) = “namely that every form of production creates its own legal relations, form of government, etc,” (88) → superstructure. Marx points out that the *mode* or social form of how we bring societies into existence (i.e., the social form of production) comes with specific determinations in law and state (=prison, police, violence apparatus).
 - iii. Those who do not understand how productive activities and *seemingly* unproductive activities (intellectual stuff, teaching!, state, etc.) hang together, are accused of a “lack of concepts [Begriffslosigkeit]” (88, trans. modified)
 - 1. Note: Marx takes over Hegel’s differentiation between rationality [Verstand/Understanding] and reason [Vernunft]; whereas *Verstand* tears things via abstract reflections apart and does not see the connection between things (=abstraction!), *Vernunft* is related to the idea and unity.

2. Hegel, *Enz Logic*, section 79: “With regard to its form, the logical has three sides: the side of abstraction or of the understanding, the dialectical or negatively rational side, [and] the speculative or positively rational one [...] All of them together can be put under the first moment, that of the understanding; and in this way they can be kept separate from each other, but then they are not considered in their truth. [...] Since the understanding behaves toward its ob-jects in a way that separates and abstracts them”
3. Marx on *Verstand*/understanding = “barbarically tearing things apart that belong together” (89)
4. Marx on Proudhon in a letter, 1865: “Proudhon had a natural inclination for dialectics. But as he never grasped really scientific dialectics he never got further than sophistry. This is in fact connected with his petty-bourgeois point of view. Like the historian Raumer, the petty bourgeois is made up of *on-the-one-hand* and *on-the-other-hand*.” That’s how I usually write my papers 😞
5. See EPM on *Verstand* vs. *Vernunft* (<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Economic-Philosophic-Manuscripts-1844.pdf>) “Political economy starts with the fact of private property; it does not explain it to us. It expresses in general, abstract formulas the *material* process through which private property actually passes, and these formulas it then takes for *laws*. It does not comprehend these laws – i.e., it does not demonstrate how they arise from the very nature of private property. Political economy throws no light on the cause of the division between labor and capital, and between capital and land. When, for example, it defines the relationship of wages to profit, it takes the interest of the capitalists to be the ultimate cause, i.e., it takes for granted what it is supposed to explain. Similarly, competition comes in everywhere. It is explained from external circumstances. As to how far these external and apparently accidental circumstances are but the expression of a necessary course of development, political economy teaches us nothing. We have seen how exchange itself appears to it as an accidental fact. The only wheels which political economy sets in motion are *greed*, and the *war amongst the greedy – competition*.”
- iv. All activities hang together, insofar as they belong to *one* social totality which, in turn, comes into existence through creative activities (so, production has a certain primary status in Marx, which is not to be confused with the *absurd* position of some traditional Marxists that it is all about industry and production).
- v. Those who read Althusser can already see why Althusser’s entire work is a commentary on the introduction to the *Grundrisse* 😊
- d. 88-90 (Marx IV: Categories)

- i. “Economists explain how production takes place in the above-mentioned relations, but what they do not explain is how these relations themselves are produced, that is, the historical movement which gave them birth. M. Proudhon, taking these relations for principles, categories, abstract thoughts, has merely to put into order these thoughts, which are to be found alphabetically arranged [*Verstand/Understanding!*, CL] at the end of every treatise on political economy. The economists' material is the active, energetic life of man; M. Proudhon's material is the dogmas of the economists. But the moment we cease to pursue the historical movement of production relations, of which the categories are but the theoretical expression,” (Marx, Poverty of Philosophy, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1847/poverty-philosophy/ch02.htm>)”
 - ii. Categories are those basic concepts that are constitutive for social totality or social unity.
 - iii. Categories as theoretical unities: however, they are not based on “dialectical balancing of concepts,” instead, they consist of “grasping of real relations” (90)
 - iv. Marx differentiates *unity* (distinct elements) from *identity* (=indistinct and speculative), check p.94&99. “To regard society as one single subject is, in addition, to look at it wrongly; speculatively.” This goes against Hegel, as Marx wants to say that his dialectics is not speculative; categories cannot be generated by thought alone (i.e., thought thinking about itself); instead, they need to be wrought from the historical material and experience.
 - v. At this point I usually argue that Marx remains clearly a Kantian, insofar as he keeps the distinction between concepts and intuition/experience (most Marxians do not get it! 😊). In this sense, for Marx, reason is not speculative, since speculative for Hegel means that reason can grasp what it is not (because it is the other of itself). For Marx, concepts and experiences are ontologically distinct. If you are interested in this, I am attaching an excerpt from one of my recent papers.
2. Reading of section (2)
- a. 90-100 (Marx V: Dialectics)
 - i. 90-94: Consumption and Production
 - 1. OK, let's see how dialectics actually works!
 - 2. First, let's look at two passages by our old friend hay-gull:
 - a. Hegel, Enz. Logic, section 81: “Reflection is initially the transcending of the isolated determinacy and a relating of it, whereby it is posited in relationship but is nevertheless maintained in its isolated validity. The dialectic, on the contrary, is the immanent transcending, in which the one-sidedness and restrictedness of the determinations of the understanding displays itself as what it is, i. e., as their negation. That is what everything finite is: its own sublation. Hence, the dialectical constitutes the moving soul of scientific progression, and it is the principle through which alone immanent coherence and

necessity enter into the content of science, just as all genuine, nonexternal elevation above the finite is to be found in this principle."

- b. Ibid.: "Or again, the dialectic is not to be confused with mere sophistry, whose essence consists precisely in making one-sided and abstract determinations valid in their isolation, each on its own account, in accord with the individual's interest of the moment and his particular situation. For instance, it is an essential moment of my action that I exist and that I have the means to exist. But if I consider this aspect, this principle of my well-being, on its own, and derive the consequence from it that I may steal, or that I may betray my country, then we have a piece of sophistry. In the same way, my subjective freedom is an essential principle of my action, in the sense that in my doing what I do, I am [there] with my insights and convictions. But if I argue abstractly from this principle alone, then my argument is likewise a piece of sophistry, and all the principles of ethical life are thrown overboard in arguments like that. The dialectic diverges essentially from that procedure, since it is concerned precisely with considering things [as they are] in and for themselves, so that the finitude of the one-sided determinations of the understanding becomes evident."
- c. So, dialectics is [1] the inner movement of thought and [2] overcomes the abstraction introduced by reflection and understanding.
3. Important: pay attention to how in section (2) the basics of a materialist theory of subjectivity are contained (subject, need, perception, wants, habits, inclinations, etc.)
4. Production is immediately consumption (90)
 - a. Individual develops ability *through* creative acts and, at the same time, [1] consumes the life energies involved in these acts, [2] consumes the means of production, and [3] consumes the materials involved (note: using as "using up" is a form of consumption).
5. Consumption Proper (90)
 - a. Consumption, for example eating, is productive (body reproduces itself).
 - b. Consumption proper cannot be reduced to the consumption of finished objects alone, as it is moment *of* the coming-into-being of the object.
 - c. Production creates consumption's material and the *subject* "for whom they are products" (important!!) (91); i.e., the way we produce determines *who* we are. Think of iPhones!

- d. The products produced are only products if consumed (example: train tracks); how about art or religious objects?
 - 6. Consumption is immediately production
 - a. Consumptions *realizes* production: “a house in which no one lives is in fact not a real house” (91) [except in some fancy deconstructive architecture 😊]
 - b. A product *becomes* (important!) a product only in and through consumption.
 - c. Consumption *produces* the *need* for new production (important); GI: the historically first act is the act of (re)producing needs.
 - d. “Hunger is hunger, but the hunger gratified by cooked meat eaten with a knife and fork is a different hunger from that which bolts down a raw meat with the aid of hand, nail and tooth” (92); so, we need to understand that by “hunger” Marx does not mean some biologically defined concept; rather, it is hunger as it appears (first) in the social realm (he is very phenomenological here).
 - e. Production produces the need for a certain type of consumption; it produces a certain “perception” (92) (important!! Think of W. Benjamin here).
 - f. “Production thus not only creates an object for the subject, but also a subject for the object” (92).
 - 7. Dialectics: [1] immediate identity, [2] one mediated by the other, [3] each side “creates itself as the other” (93) Woaah!!!
 - ii. 94-98 Distribution and Production
 - 1. Main point: distribution is not identical with what classical political economists conceive of as an external, independent, and isolated chain of events or an area in society (*Achtung*: abstract understanding!), but, instead it is contained in the entire production process itself via the distribution of the mops, the distribution of societal members, and the subsumption of these individuals to a specific mode of production) (96), this in turn is determined (*bestimmt*, not causal!) by technologies, infrastructure, transportation, consumption, production, and exchange → think of graduate school and the job market! 😊
 - 2. All of this is determined by the “historic mode of production” which also contains the means of violence (wars) and laws (property regulations) (98)
 - iii. 98- Exchange and Circulation
 - 1. Main point: exchange is not simply something “in between” production and consumption; rather, it is as a mediating element already moment of the process of production, distribution, and consumption.
 - 2. Exchange contains a certain mode of labor division, time and space (99)
- b. CONCLUSION

- i. "A definite production thus determines a definite consumption, distribution and exchange as well as *definite relations between these different moments*" = society as an "organic whole" (perhaps better "structural whole")
- 3. Reading of section (3) of the introduction
 - a. 100-109 (MARX VI: From the Abstract to the Concrete)
 - i. The important distinction between method of presentation and the method of inquiry: "Of course the **method of presentation** must differ in form from **that of inquiry**. The latter has to appropriate the material in detail, to analyze its different forms of development, to trace out their inner connection. Only after this work is done can the actual movement be adequately described. If this is done successfully, if the life of the subject-matter is ideally reflected as in a mirror, then it may appear as if we had before us a mere a priori construction. My dialectic method is not only different from the Hegelian, but is its direct opposite. To Hegel, the life process of the human brain, i.e., the process of thinking, which, under the name of "the Idea," he even transforms into an independent subject, is the demiurgos of the real world, and the real world is only the external, phenomenal form of 'the Idea.' With me, on the contrary, the ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind, and translated into forms of thought. (Marx, CI, afterword 2nd German edition, p.102)
 - b. 100-102 (Abstract and Concrete)
 - i. 102 Example 1: Money 102
 - ii. 103-105 Example 2: Labour
 - c. 105-108 Historical development and categories
- 4. Let's see what comrade Hollingsworth will tell us.

Session III: Sep 27 (Money, 140-174)

1. What do we need to remember from the introduction?
 - a. M's critique of bourgeois thinkers
 - i. Ideology
 - ii. Standpoint: they do not understand how their concepts are stemming from bourgeois society and therefore introduce naturalizations
 - b. Dialectics
 - i. The difference between understanding and reason
 - ii. Dialectics = removing the abstractions from understanding and reflection
 - iii. Abstract vs. concrete
 - iv. Organic whole (Marx) vs. identity (Hegel)
 - v. Production is the overarching concept of the whole, not a part of it
 - c. Method
 - i. De-naturalizing categories
 - ii. De-historicizing categories
 - iii. Structural causality?
2. Remember:
 - a. Marx wants to be read from the back; so, what he says about money becomes later more complex and enriched with determinations that are not immediately visible on these first pages.
 - b. Also: the book is at times a bit chaotic because the *Grundrisse* are basically a bunch of notebooks.
 - c. Important: "Capital is the all-dominating economic power of bourgeois society" (107); so, we can only make full sense of money once we understand capital and how it relates to the whole.
 - d. Of course, production (labor; i.e., all creative activities that lead to social reality) and capital must be the "arch" that holds everything together and gives everything its form.
3. General remarks on money
 - a. In my view, Marx's concept of money is of philosophical interest because we can learn with M to *grasp* money as a set of relations that *constitute social reality*; i.e., money (capitalized) is neither a "tool" nor a "thing;" rather, it is a category in the sense introduced in the *Grundrisse* introduction. Money is the category through which we have access to the whole. In *Capital* M begins with the concept of value.
 - b. Postone, 13: "These categories, according to Marx, "express the forms of being [Daseinsformen], the determinations of existence [Existenzbestimmungen] . . . of this specific society." They are, as it were, categories of a critical ethnography of capitalist society undertaken from within—categories that purportedly express the basic forms of social objectivity and subjectivity that structure the social, economic, historical, and cultural dimensions of life in that society, and are themselves constituted by determinate forms of social practice."
 - c. Understanding that money is not a thing – but appears as one – is the most difficult task here, at least in my estimation. I still struggle with this, but it is a real task for thinking! If

we are successful, then we learn to understand that social reality is not simply something to which we can point with our fingers, does not occur on the level of “facts”, and is in need to be theoretically analyzed (in Frankfurt School: anti-positivism, in Althusser: anti-Empiricism).

- d. Capitalism *is in need* of theory; theory, emphatically (!) put, is the *self-consciousness* of society; self-consciousness is *knowledge of itself*; this knowledge can be obfuscating (ideology) or true; truth = insight into *what something is*. Only in this sense can “Marxist” theory be true.
 - e. Note: it is *precisely* in this sense that *theory is political*, insofar as it contains the conception that the society has of itself.
 - f. French materialism = self-knowledge is external to social reality (Althusser and his fuss about concepts); German social theory = self-knowledge is internal to social reality. That’s how simple things can be 😊
 - g. So, ideology emerges from the following sources: resentiments “against” theory (for example, in many “radical” circles), empiricist notions of social reality, positivist notions of social reality.
 - h. Sidenote: I am skeptical in regard to the position that in a post-capitalist society theory would fall away, unless we argue that it could be replaced by a completely “democratic” public sphere (note that it is not clear what “democratic” means), but I also *hesitate* to side with Althusser’s concept of ideology (who was accused of being a-historical).
 - i. Perhaps the idea of the public sphere (one that works, of course) could be a candidate, and it would be a political concept.
 - j. Put differently, the issue is whether society is a subject or not (for example, does (a) society reflect *itself* in its institutions, laws, art, philosophy?). If your answer is “yes,” go to a bookstore and buy all major texts by Hegel; if your answer is “no,” better begin to learn French 😊. Then read Marx again and begin to wonder whether the stupid differentiation between base and superstructure makes any sense.
 - k. So, the task for us here is to turn money, capital, etc. into a philosophical issue.
 - l. Given that the question of “what money is” cannot be understood on the empirical level or on the level of everyday life, we are in need of theory/thought.
 - m. Social theory is only theory *of* society if it can establish some kind of coherent relation between the issue at hand (money) and social totality, as *only then* can we make a claim that money is not some “stuff,” but that it is *constitutive for the mode of production* (now broadly understood, as discussed last class).
 - n. Also read Althusser’s chapter in *Reading Capital* on “What is the object of *Capital*” – it is damned good.
 - o. Money has been a central issue for the so-called *Monetary Value Theory* in Germany and Italy; French structuralism did not pay much attention to it (though Foucault discusses it in *The Order of Things*).
 - p. So, money is not a boring concept!
4. 140-146 Introduction
- a. The first steps in thinking about money are:

- i. Value is only possible on the basis of *generalized commodity production*, insofar as now *all* things produced can take on a *social* existence *independent* from their natural existence: “double existence” (141)
- ii. Value is *social* (i.e., you can’t find it in the material existence of products); i.e., it is confusing that sometimes he seems to fall back to reflections on labor time.
- iii. Value makes everything *divisible* (141); i.e., calculable and quantifiable; note: value is qualitative (identity) and quantifiable; everything now appears as a “numerical relation” (142); hence later the importance of time.
- iv. The beginning reflections on money are confusing, as Marx seems to argue that value is only in the “head,” exist as “symbol;” however, it becomes clear after a couple of pages that money is the *existence* of value; it is the *true* externalization of society. As such, it can only take on a general role once commodification becomes general.
- v. “As a value, the commodity is general” (141); M’s talk about value as “values” (i.e., commodities) can be confusing, insofar as we should take into account that value *as* money is first introduced as something *general* or universal. I do not like this language at all, as it seems to say that value is like a thing (“the soup can is “a” value”; this makes no sense)
- vi. The last point is crucial (and overlooked by those who claim that Marx still is all about labor time), since in capitalism everything is exchangeable with everything.
- vii. Value is a “form” (142), namely the form of “universal equivalency” (value as *identity*); value or the social form that things take on in capitalism is an *abstraction* (142); money is external to “*all* other commodities” (145); “become the relation of *all* products to money” (147; emphasis C.L.)
- viii. As things to be used commodities respond to needs, as things to be exchanged they respond to something external to needs.
- ix. Exchange depends upon “conditions of place and time” (144), this can lead to crises.
- x. So, at this point we already have labor, time, space, categories. You see how Marx still thinks within the horizon of German Idealism; however, if Postone is right with his claim that Marx’s theory is actually a critique of labor, then it would also be a critique of the underlying metaphysics of German Idealism (and Heidegger would be wrong to claim that Marx does not escape the modern *episteme*).
- xi. The externalization of value in money is related to
 1. The bourgeois externalization of society; i.e., social constitution is increasingly identical with money relations; “transformation of all relations into money relations” (146).
 2. Note that we find here an *epistemological* claim, as Marx helps us understand that my “belief” that society is external to myself is the intellectual expression of the *objective* monetary structure of society.

3. The externality of money leads to the becoming abstract of power (146); i.e., less personal, abstract domination of people. Wealth = power.
 - xii. "What originally appeared as a means to promote production becomes a relation alien to producers" (146); in EPM this is still primarily conceived of in terms of private property.
5. 147-156 Further aspects
 - a. The double existence of commodities can develop into contradictions (147)
 - i. The more important money becomes, the more dependent everything is on conditions external to the exchange act itself (just think in a full system such as ours about the role of Leeman Brothers, etc.)
 - ii. Money as an external thing changes the structure of need: without money a thing is desired because of its intrinsic properties ("natural") and because it is needed; with money being the external representative of value *per se* we desire money. "Money, by contrast, is demanded only because of its exchange value, as exchange value" (147; emphasis C.L.); Adorno uses this in his lectures in the 60s as an example for fetishism.
 - iii. Exchange "spatially and temporally separate" (148)
 - iv. Exchange becomes external to the exchange act (emergence of merchants, real estate agents, banks, currency exchange, etc.)
 - v. The purpose of the economy becomes "gaining of money" (149); this is still mercantile pre-capitalism.
 - vi. All of this establishes the possibility of crises (149)
 - vii. Money is itself contradictory, insofar as its tendency is to be completely independent from commodities, but at the same time, to negate it and to make everything dependent on it (151)
 - b. There is some discussion in the literature about whether Marx's concept of money presupposes a metal base and whether it is completely obsolete since Bretton Woods. I don't think so.
 - c. 153-156 Time chits. Marx is attacking some French socialists here, and the so called "labor theory of value" (which is often attributed to Marx himself); 160: commodities *cannot* be directly transformed into money
6. 156-165 are fantastic pages! Globalization summarized in 1858. Read them carefully. This is Marx 999.
 - a. Abstract domination (Postone!): capitalized money leads to the "dissolution of all fixed personal (historic) relations of dependence in production" (156); also read the passage in the CM about the dissolution of all traditional relations (which M&E celebrate), also check 1st p on 158.
 - b. Check the point about private interests: they are *already* socially constituted (he criticizes the naturalization and individualization of "interests"; i.e., the fact that something can appear "private" to you, already depends upon society.
 - c. The contemporary usage of "interests" is also murky: voters have interests, identity groups have interests; art is "interesting;" what does that mean?).
 - d. Consequences

- i. Indifference (156)
 - ii. Money = power (157)
 - iii. Abstract domination (157), personal ties disappear (163); “individuals are now ruled by *abstraction*” (Woahh!! 164)
 - iv. Reification/alienation (157&160)
 - v. “Versachlichung” of the social bond (160), Weber anticipated!
 - vi. Autonomization of the world market (160), due to the externality and *objectivity* of money.
 - vii. Complete opposition/externalization between individuals and society (160)
 - e. Post-capitalist society: “possibility of suspending the old standpoint” 161 !! (here is the connection to the “machine fragment”)
 - i. Universal and rational knowledge increases (161)
 - ii. Increase of “means of communication” (161)
 - iii. Science becomes central (for both society and post-capitalism) 162
 - iv. The change can occur only *with* the establishment of the world market; contradictions in globalization (which we can observe now in their full range)
 - v. New standpoint?
 - 1. Production must be directly social; but how under complex social conditions?
 - 2. It cannot be based on the universal commodity form.
 - 3. The possibility of a new standpoint must be “concealed” in existing society (159).
 - vi. All of this *completely* speaks against the idea that socialism is just another way to govern or administer existing production.
 - vii. M rejects romanticized notions of communism (162); communism can only occur *on the basis of* bourgeois individuality and social relations (so, capitalism is not all bad for Marx, he looks at *everything* as a contradiction, including capitalism). Also note: Marx himself does not use the term “capitalism.”
 - f. Money (under conditions of valorization) completely eradicates difference; everything is exchangeable with everything, nothing stands on its own (163).
 - g. Everything becomes a “commodity in general” (165) – social form.
 - h. Greed as desire to possess (more than) what others have *becomes* central (i.e., is not natural) 163; psychology!
 - i. Class produces ruling ideas = ideology 165, also check passages in GI (1845).
7. 166-174
- a. The stuff he says about labor time is problematic, as it is completely unclear whether he simply follows Ricardo here. However:
 - i. The first decisive passage is on p.169, as the claim is clearer, namely, that money *cannot* directly express labor time (goes back to the critique of the time chit idea)
 - ii. The second decisive passages are on p.171 and p.172, as he makes clear that labor time cannot be determined on the level of production; rather, it exists in *generalized* form and objectively in money and exchange = monetary theory of value.

- iii. Bourgeois society is *not* communal (see 6.c), hence it presupposes value as a *quality* and *identity* (173), independent from the labor acts; so, I am reading this as [a] a rejection of a labor theory of value and [b] an argument for the *monetary* theory of value. Only in capitalism can wealth *exist* in money; i.e., as something *external* to the individuals.
- 8. “Economy of time, to this all economy ultimately reduces itself” (173); we could think about interesting connections here between the importance of time for modern epistemological philosophy (Kant, Bergson, Husserl, Heidegger) and the increasing importance of time for our society.

Session IV: Oct 4 (Money continued, 156-165; 196-203; 216-238)

1. Remember

- a. Categories contain *social relations* (i.e., they are not fixed concepts or refer to abstract essences); for example, in Kant, “causality” does not refer to something; rather, it contains a rule to synthesize a representable and rationally accessible reality. According to Cassirer, with Kant concepts become *functions* and are no longer conceived of as *substances*.¹ With this, the concept of thinking, concept formation and abstraction changes. I think that Marx’s concept of category falls under this new modern paradigm (which is transcendental, and not empiricist).
 - i. “On the traditional theory of concept formation, concepts are formed by noticing similarities or differences among particulars and abstracting the concept, as the common element, from these similarities or differences.”²
 - ii. “The functional theory of objectivity, then, explains objectivity in terms of systematic features of a total theory, instead of appealing—as the substance theory does—to an antecedently intelligible notion of an object. With this new notion, Cassirer then introduces the functional theory of knowledge: that a representation is knowledge if it plays the sort of role within a system of representations that would make objectivity possible. The concept “object”, finally, is understood in terms of “objectivity” and “knowledge”, as that which is represented by fully objective knowledge (1910/1923, 314). We cannot know what an object is without knowing what it is for our representations to be subject to an external constraint, and this external constraint is only intelligible in terms of the rule-governed systematic “functions” of objectivity.”³
 - iii. Categories = rule-governed systematic “functions” of objectivity
- b. Value
 - i. Value should not be confused with “a” value; value = universal *exchangeability*; value = an *abstract* identity between things as *universally* exchangeable.
 - ii. Remember: value can only universally become a social constituent because of the “double existence” of commodities; again, we need to talk about the commodity *form*, not commodities as isolated things (entities with intrinsic properties). This also explains why Marx can refer to Aristotle in his discussion of value in *Capital*.
 - iii. Value is posited as quality (identity) and as quantity and quantum (divisibility, number, amount, degree, etc.).
 - iv. Value (which is *nothing* in-itself) has to *exist* in order to determine social reality; so, it is already clear at this point that value *must* become the social form of labor in order to exist universally (=abstract labor and labor power).

¹ For this also see Cassirer, Ernst, *Substance and Function and Einstein’s Theory of Relativity* (Chicago: Open Court 1923).

² Heis, Jeremy, “Ernst Cassirer’s Substanzbegriff und Funktionsbegriff,” in: HOPOS: The Journal of the International Society for the History of Philosophy of Science, vol. 4, 2014, 241-270, here 248.

³ Ibid., 259.

- v. Value externalizes itself in and as money. Money externalizes itself in the exchange process. The entire 1844 problem of alienation receives a new footing; perhaps we could say against and with Althusser: it receives a new *conceptual* basis.
 - c. Externalization
 - i. Value can only exist as money because in capitalism money establishes itself as abstract externality to the *entire* exchange process.
 - ii. Money stands in for the externalization of individual and society, it is the *existing* alienation.
 - iii. 196-197: circulation *increases* the process of externalization.
 - iv. Last step: money becomes external to the entire circulation process (go on with point 3.a).
 - v. Check also the first paragraph on p.226.
 - vi. Socialism = abolishment of the externality of society and individual.
 - d. Money – as it functions in capitalism – changes *all* aspects of social totality once it becomes the *form* of production; remember: production cannot be thought of without the other elements of the totality.
 - e. What we are discussing as money so far must be thought again after the introduction of the concept of capital.
2. 156-166 (see notes for last session)
 3. 196-203 Introduction of circulation (not yet discussed as capital!!)
 - a. Marx's thinking about circulation is more prominent in the *Grundrisse* (than in *Capital*); this has consequences for thinking about globalization, space, time, etc. Once capital runs into surplus value generating limits, it must circulate faster; consequences:
 - i. time becomes increasingly important
 - ii. space becomes increasingly subordinated to time
 - iii. means of communication become more important
 - iv. knowledge becomes more important
 - v. globalization increases, reification increases
 - vi. Finally, capital is on the way to destroy both sources of wealth: the laborer and the earth (check M's remarks on this in the *Critique of the Gotha Program*, 1875)
 - b. Passages
 - i. Read the following fantastic passage on 196 (Lukacs' concept of reification is right here, and it is less related to commodity fetishism): "To have *circulation*, what is essential is exchange appear as a process, a fluid whole of purchases and sales. Its first presupposition is the circulation of commodities themselves, as a natural, many-sided circulation of those commodities. The precondition of commodity circulation is that they be produced as *exchange values*, not as *immediate use values*, but as mediated through exchange value. Appropriation through and by means of divestiture [*Entäusserung*] and alienation [*Veräusserung*] is the fundamental condition. Circulation as the realization of exchange values implies : (1) that my product is a product only in so far as it is for others ; hence suspended singularity, generality ; (2) that it is a product for

me only in so far as it has been alienated, become for others ; (3) that it is for the other only in so far as he himself alienates his product ; which already implies (4) that production is not an end in itself for me, but a means. Circulation is the movement in which the general alienation appears as general appropriation and general appropriation as general alienation. As much, then, as the whole of this movement appears as a social process, and as much as the individual moments of this movement arise from the conscious will and particular purposes of individuals, so much does the totality of the process appear as an objective interrelation, which arises spontaneously from nature; arising, it is true, from the mutual influence of conscious individuals on one another, but neither located in their consciousness, nor subsumed under them as a whole. Their own collisions with one another produce an alien social power standing above them, produce their mutual interaction as a process and power independent of them. **Circulation, because a totality of the social process, is also the first form in which the social relation appears as something independent of the individuals, but not only as, say, in a coin or in exchange value, but extending to the whole of the social movement itself. The social relation of individuals to one another as a power over the individuals which has become autonomous, whether conceived as a natural force, as chance or in whatever other form, is a necessary result of the fact that the point of departure is not the free social individual.** Circulation as the first totality among the economic categories is well suited to bring this to light."

- ii. 197 (direct application of the introduction): "At first sight, circulation appears as a simply infinite process. The commodity is exchanged for money, money is exchanged for the commodity, and this is repeated endlessly. This constant renewal of the same process does indeed form an important moment of circulation. But, viewed more precisely, it reveals other phenomena as well; the phenomena of completion, or, the return of the point of departure into itself. The commodity is exchanged for money; money is exchanged for the commodity. In this way, commodity is exchanged for commodity, except that this exchange is a mediated one. The purchaser becomes a seller again and the seller becomes again. In this way, each is posited in the double and the antithetical aspect, and hence in the living unity of both aspects. It is entirely wrong, therefore, to do as the economists do, namely, as soon as the contradictions in the monetary system emerge into view, to focus only on the end results without the process which mediates them; only on the unity without the distinction, the affirmation without the negation. The commodity is exchanged in circulation for a at the same time, and equally, it is not exchanged for a commodity, in as much as it is exchanged for money. The acts of purchase and sale, in other words, appear as two mutually indifferent acts, separated in time and place."
- iii. 197: "The *need for exchange* and the *unmediated medium of exchange* develop in inverse proportion. Hence the necessity for a *general medium of exchange*, where the specific product and the specific labour must be exchanged for

exchangeability. The exchange value of a thing is nothing other than the quantitatively specific expression of its capacity for serving as *medium of exchange*. In money the *medium of exchange* or, the exchange value of the thing achieves an independent existence apart from the thing”

- iv. 200: “The splitting of exchange into purchase and sale makes it possible for me to buy without selling (stockpiling of commodities) or to sell without buying (accumulation of money). **It makes speculation possible**. It turns exchange into a special business; i.e. it founds the merchant estate. This separation of the two elements has made possible a mass of transactions in between the definitive exchange of commodities, and it enables a mass of persons to exploit this divorce. It has made possible a mass of pseudo-transactions.”

4. 216-238

- a. Money becomes external to the entire circulation process, and here we have (Woaahh!) *the birth of our best friend* CAPITAL – first in the form of merchant capital – who now smiles and can subsume the entire production process, including labor (not so fast, we are not yet there) under itself. **Money now “appears in itself as the result of circulation [...] This aspect already latently contains its quality as capital”** [boooooom!] (216). Think about the following: this means that suddenly, like a wonder, production comes back as money and since production is externalized, production itself appears already as the consequence of money (insofar as capital is in itself just another form of money circulation. We throw money into the circulation process and suddenly it comes back *as more* money. Consequence: money now appears as the “universal material representative of wealth” (216)
- b. Before the epoch of capital emerges, hoarding presents wealth (merchants) 230; check also the note on 232 on Protestantism, “The cult of money has its asceticism” (232); did Max Weber have access to the unpublished *Grundrisse*?⁴
- c. Important: wealth now appears as money.⁵ Accordingly, socialism includes a different idea of wealth (Postone). Check also bottom of p.218.
- d. 217 (foreshadowing the next notebook on capital): “In the case of **money as capital**, money itself is posited (1) as precondition of circulation as well as its result; (2) as having independence only in the form of a *negative* relation, but always a relation to circulation; (3) as itself an *instrument of production*, since circulation no longer appears in its primitive simplicity, as quantitative exchange, but as a process of production, as a **real metabolism**.” – That’s why we are not talking about a subjective concept of value; M tries to explain society in its “movement” (which also contains the relation to the earth); its developmental principles.
- e. “As capital, money thus also appears posited as a relation to itself mediated by circulation - in the *relation of interest and capital*. But here we are not as yet concerned with these aspects; rather, we have to look simply at money in the third role, in the form in which it emerged as something *independent* from circulation, more properly, from both its earlier aspects.” (217)

⁴ Weber, Max. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York, NY: Routledge 2001) [1930].

⁵ Check for a more recent economic critique of this concept of wealth *Mismeasuring Our Lives: Why GDP Doesn't Add Up* by Stiglitz and Sen: <https://wcfia.harvard.edu/publications/mismeasuring-our-lives-why-gdp-doesnt-add>

- f. Interest, though we are not yet there, is the *most abstract* and therefore most mystifying expression of capital; i.e., in it *the entire* social reproduction process disappears in what seems to be a pure self-relation.⁶ Accordingly, the *debt* relation is included in M's thought from the beginning. Some have argued that it is absent, but such a position is nonsense.
- g. With the increasing role of money for the *entire social organization* we become more dependent on the externalization of money (globalization is basically this: what some contemporary authors analyze as capital's "cheap frontiers" is in its essence an increase of externalization).⁷ Also: monetization leads to more rationality in terms of mathematics, logic, numbers, counting, and calculation. Science does not take place in Lalaland!
- h. Needs become abstract; money can satisfy *every* need (218).
- i. Money establishes itself as the essence of wealth in both content and form (218): you want to be healthy? You *need* money. You want to have it warm? You *need* money. At some point, you cannot develop desires anymore without desiring money first. You want to be satisfied? You *need* money. Libido and money.
- j. Wealth becomes in principle *accidental*; insofar as it does not require or presuppose certain qualities in individuals; in the possession of money my own individuality becomes external to me (222; first two paragraphs, great passage!)
- k. Greed is historical (222); externalized money comes with certain "virtues:" hedonism, miserliness.
- l. 222: "It is inherent in the simple character of money itself that it can exist as a developed moment of production only where and when *wage labour* exists; that in this case, far from subverting the social formation, it is rather a condition for its development and a driving-wheel for the development of all forces of production, material and mental."
- m. So, greed as a universal psychic structure is the result of wage labor (exchangeable, universal, and abstract labor) 224
- n. Note: slavery, as this is not based on increase of productivity beyond the physical level, M assumes, will disappear in the long run (224). Some contemporary scholars disagree with this position.
- o. Globalization: expanding the dimensions of exchange (freeing up of new markets), creation of a "*true generality*" (225); because of its real existence as abstraction, monetized wealth becomes an "enormous instrument" (225) of production.
- p. Everything becomes dependent on money: it becomes the "general substance of survival for all" (225); just think about how nowadays we increase the debt ceilings, try to solve every crisis with more money and more investment, etc.); money replaces true social community (well, what is "true" community?)
- q. Note: what Marx does not consider is the increasing externalization and power of the state, but: check bottom 227. It is on his mind.

⁶ Check my paper *Fiction without Fantasy*

⁷ Check: <https://www.ucpress.edu/book/9780520299931/a-history-of-the-world-in-seven-cheap-things>

- r. Nowadays, with the increasing abstractness of money, we could think of whether the state repressive apparatuses are connected to it (role of military as protector of the currency, control of the money flow; central state institutions for controlling banks, etc.)
 - s. Crises become the driver of history (228); read the fantastic passages on wealth and its contradictions, bottom paragraph on p.232-middle of 234
- 5. For our Deleuzian friends: society becomes a machinic monster 😊; “war, money, and the State are constituent forces, in other words the ontological forces of capitalism”⁸

⁸ Alliez, Eric and Lazzarato, Maurizio, *Wars and Capital*, Semiotext(e) (Cambridge: MIT Press 2016), 15.

Session V: Oct 11 (Money ext.; 196-203; 216-238)

1. We will go over the readings for last week; esp. 196-203 and 216-238
2. Contradictions (Jonah's question last week; tabled)
3. Overall
 - a. In the history of philosophy, the basic questions about the *law of non-contradiction* is the question of whether this "law" is subjective (a law of thought or "human") or objective (a law of being or "non-human"). Sometimes it is also conceived of as a pragmatic principle to be presupposed for meaningful speech.
 - b. "We can [...] distinguish between subjective contradictions, contradictions in our thoughts, and objective contradictions, contradictions in things. Traditional logic acknowledges the occurrence of subjective contradictions: Kant held that in reasoning about the world as a whole we inevitably fall into contradictions or 'antinomies'. But, Hegel argued, such contradictions are far more widespread and significant than Kant believed." (Inwood 1994, 67)
4. Ancient
 - a. Zeno
 - i. "If anything is moving, it must be moving either in place in which it is or in a place in which it is not. However, it cannot move in the place in which it [for the place in which it is at any moment is of the same size as itself and hence allows it no room to move in], and it cannot move in the place in which it is not. Therefore movement is impossible." (The Presocratics, 107)
 - b. Heraclitus
 - i. "Having harkened not to me but to the Word (*Logos*) it is wise to agree that all things are one." (B50)
 - ii. Heraclitus, I believe, says that all things pass and nothing stays, and comparing existing things to the flow of a river, he says you could not step twice into the same river. (Plato *Cratylus* 402a = A6)
 - iii. "It is not possible to step twice into the same river according to Heraclitus, or to come into contact twice with a mortal being in the same state." (Plutarch) (B91)
 - c. Aristotle
 - i. "Aristotle, in Book VII of his *Topica*, defines an *epicheirema* as 'a dialectical syllogism'; that is to say, a connected piece of reasoning which takes as its initial premise not an independently chosen proposition, but something which an opponent has affirmed and which the disputant undertakes to break down. Zeno is said to have devised forty different *epicheiremata* in support of one or another aspect of Parmenides monism. He carried his destructive method of argument so far and so effectively as to draw from Seneca a few centuries later the remark: 'If I accede to Parmenides there is nothing left but the One; if I accede to Zeno, not even the One is left.'" (The Presocratics, 106)
 - ii. "[T]he most certain principle of all is that regarding which it is impossible to be mistaken (...). [T]he same attribute cannot at the same time belong and not belong to the same subject in the same respect (...). This, then, is the most

certain of all principles, since it answers to the definition given above. For it is impossible for anyone to believe the same thing to be and not to be, as some think Heraclitus says; for what a man says he does not necessarily believe.” (Metaph. 4.3, 1005b11-26)

- iii. Consequences for what would happen if the *principle of non-contradiction* would not be in place and that A mentions (among other things): all things would be one (1007b19-1008a7); nothing would exist (1008a21-23); everyone would be right and everyone would be wrong (1008a29-1008b2); there would be no change (1010a35-37).
- iv. “The most certain principle belongs not only to all kind of knowledge but also to the process of acquiring knowledge; i.e., to speech and opinion. If the law of non-contradiction would not already be valid and be certain, we would not be able to exchange opinions at all. Opinions presuppose beliefs. A belief implies that I do *not* believe the contradictory proposition of my belief at the same time. Otherwise, I would not be able to have an opinion at all. If I would not be able to have opinions, I would not be able to claim something.” (I had this in old notes, source undetermined). From this follows the consequence that we would not be able to speak and communicate with each other if the law of non-contradiction would not already be certain knowledge. (This entire argument is close to transcendental pragmatics in Apel and Habermas)

5. Hegel

- a. For Kant, the principle of non-contradiction is only formal; the principle defines what can be thought, but it does not provide any criteria for the truth of what can be thought (i.e., it is silent about the object that corresponds to the formally correct thought).
- b. Transcendental logic is the logic of the intellect (reason) insofar as it related to the world. It is constitutive for the objectivity of objects and, hence, for objective reality. In the end, as we know, Kant argues that reason remains *finite*, since even transcendental logic does not reach into reality.
- c. “Kant maintains that while it is a 'necessary logical condition that a concept of the possible must not contain any contradiction . . . this is not by any means sufficient to determine the objective reality of the concept, that is, the possibility of such an object as it is thought through the concept' (CPR A 220/B 268). For the latter kind of synthetic a priori knowledge it is necessary to supplement the principle of contradiction with a series of additional principles which respect the spatial and temporal conditions of finite human cognition.” (Caygill 2000, 135).
- d. Kant differentiates between analytic, dialectical, and real oppositions. Only the first are real contradictions. “Real oppositions” are not really contradictions, for Kant
- e. Hegel argues against Kant that in order to *think opposition* we already need to imply a “double negation” (A is opposed to not A because *both* As need to be negated; in a contradiction as a *unity of opposites* both As are negative). Hegel’s thinking is quite complex, and I am not sure whether I understand it; however, the point here is that the concept of contradiction is necessary for the concept of opposition.

- f. This, some scholars argue (Arndt 2012, 242) is the central aspect for Marx, insofar as tendencies or developments in existing society can only be thought of as *opposing* tendencies if they are both related to the totality in which they exist and, *in this* unity, (or in relation to totality) become contradictory.
- g. Against hostile interpretations of Hegel, it should be said that Hegel's concept of contradiction is not posited as being against formal logic; rather, it is from the beginning on [1] an exchange with Kant's transcendental logic, and [2] a theory of the *concept of* contradiction.
- h. "In the Logic, his account of contradiction follows those of difference and of opposition, suggesting that he sees a contradiction as an intense opposition: no formal logician need deny that the world contains intense oppositions. Moreover, his examples, especially of objective contradictions, often bear little resemblance to formal logical contradictions. Objective contradictions are, for the most part, inner conflicts produced by a thing's entanglements with other things. Subjective contradictions are often the result of an attempt to keep distinct concepts, such as those of cause and of effect, that are conceptually interdependent." (Inwood 1994, 65)

6. Marx

- a. In the first edition of *Capital* (and in G) Marx argues that the commodity as the unity of use value and exchange value is an immediate contradiction that develops in the process of exchange.
- b. Note: this is also how it sounds in the *Grundrisse*. Many readers, including even David Harvey!, however, do not understand that it is FALSE (Wooahhh!) to argue that "a" commodity contains the contradiction; rather, it is the social form *under which* commodities are the way in which products (=social reality) appear in capitalism. Put differently, the contradiction can *only* occur in the process of exchange (and all other aspects of value accumulation).
- c. Philological evidence for b.: The confusing formulation in a. disappears in the second edition of *Capital*. Marx changes entire passages. "A" commodity is only defined in relation to *another* commodity; i.e., the unity of use value and exchange value only *exist* in the process of exchange. The contradiction is not "fixed" to a thing; rather, it only exists *in* the development of its form. Marx makes this change because he tries to refuse a *deductive* (Hegelian) form of thinking. We are *not* talking about separate commodities here; instead, we are talking about the commodity *form*. So, the contradiction is not contained *in* a commodity; rather, it is contained in the social relations that are contained in the social form of the commodity.
- d. The labor process that goes into the commodity as a product is itself determined by specific societal relations (this goes against the labor theory of value). Marx reconstructs the societal relations through which products of labor *can be* commodities, above all, because labor *itself* takes on the commodity form.
- e. The value form is objective *because* it posits labor and capital identical, the possibility of which is given through [1] labor turning abstract labor (=commodity form) and [2] reality turning into abstract reality (=commodity form).

- f. The contradiction as the possibility of developed **crises in which the oppositions no longer can be reconciled by shifting them to different levels and forms** can lead to make the totality visible as a unity of opposing tendencies. Perhaps the Great Depression was something like that. Perhaps the main point that Marx makes in the machine fragment is another way to conceive of it.
- g. Relations of production vs. forces of production (Communist Manifesto)
 - i. "The totality within which contradictions occur is the capitalist mode of production, and the ultimate contradiction is the contradiction between the relations of production and the forces of production. Both categories are dependent on one another, for forces of production become forces only when people organize to activate them, while relations of production are conceivable only when there are forces to develop. [...] Eventually the relations of production enter into contradiction with the forces of production. A social revolution occurs and a new mode of production emerges." (Fraser/Wilde 2011, 67); so, what Marx has in mind here is that two tendencies (forces & relations) develop, but in order to be *opposing* developments they need to be double negations, which, in turn, is only possible if they are related to the social unity/totality which eventually can lead to a resolution or destruction.
- h. Class struggle
 - i. Antinomy in Kant (from Thorpe 2015, 23)
 - 1. The section of the CPR called the *Antinomy of Pure Reason* is the second main chapter in the *Transcendental Dialectic*. Kant examines our idea of the phenomenal world as a totality and argues that insofar as we try to think of the idea of the phenomenal world as a whole, we cannot avoid falling into antinomies. And he believes that reason naturally falls into such a contradiction because reason strives to think the unconditioned.
 - 2. Four antinomies of reason
 - a. K shows that when thinking about the world as we experience it *and as a whole*, we can support both thesis and antithesis.
 - b. Mathematical (both T and AT are false)
 - i. 1st = whether or not the world is infinite in extent
 - ii. 2nd = whether material substances are infinitely divisible or whether they consist of simple parts
 - c. Dynamic (both T and AT are true)
 - i. 3rd = whether everything that happens is causally determined or whether there is a without itself being the effect of a cause
 - ii. 4th = whether or not everything that exists is contingent or whether there is some necessary being.
 - ii. *Capital* on antinomy

1. "We see then that, leaving aside certain extremely elastic restrictions, the nature of commodity exchange itself imposes no limit to the working day, no limit to surplus labour. The capitalist maintains his rights as a purchaser when he tries to make the working day as long as possible, and, where possible, to make two working days out of one. On the other hand, the peculiar nature of the commodity sold implies a limit to its consumption by the purchaser, and the worker maintains his right as a seller when he wishes to reduce the working day to a particular normal length. There is here therefore an **antinomy**, of right against right, both equally bearing the seal of the law of exchange. Between equal rights, force decides. Hence, in the history of capitalist production, the establishment of a norm for the working day presents itself as a **struggle** over the limits of that day, a struggle between collective capital, i.e. the class of capitalists, and collective labour, i.e. the working class." (C, Vol1, 344)
- iii. Against Hegel's theory of state
1. Whereas Hegel already sees the problem of capitalist civil society (poverty, class division, bourgeois ideals are constantly reverted, etc.), he argues in the *Philosophy of Right* that ethical life [*Sittlichkeit*], esp. the state and the political form of society, can *resolve the antinomies* in civil society. Put differently, reason resolves the abstractions (divisions) contained in civil society.
 2. As for Marx, the state in bourgeois society is a form of how a society appears to itself in *externalized* form (similar to money!), he rejects Hegel's attempt to think the state as a reconciliation of conflicts; instead, the state is *expressing* the antinomies in a different form and is itself constituted by *the value form*.
- i. Four contradictions contained in valorized exchange (G, 147)
- i. In G Marx mentions contradictions right at the beginning of his reflections on money and exchange; the concept of contradiction is closely connected to the concept of *crisis*.
 1. 1st contradiction: The commodity is *both* a thing to be used and a thing to be exchanged; it cannot be *treated as* both at the same time although; so, the contradiction gets shifted to other "forms" (first exchange, then money, then capital (labor power), then circulation, then consumption, etc.). The two aspects of the commodity are *incompatible* with each other: on the one hand we find its "natural" properties; on the other hand, we have its *societal* aspects. The "tension" between the two aspects of the commodity is constantly shifted and developed through the development of the commodity form. The commodity form "takes on" both sides and carries the tension between use and exchange further into the entire society so that eventually the main contradiction between

labor and capital and the contradiction between *capital* and *nature* appears. [Read my notes in 6.a-e.]

2. 2nd contradiction: separation of purchase and sale by space and time,
 3. 3rd contradiction: the splitting of exchange into mutually independent acts
 4. 4th contradiction: the twofold nature of money as a general commodity to facilitate exchange and a particular commodity subject to its own particular conditions of exchange.
- ii. These distinctions are treated as oppositions in unity because, as the system develops, they give rise to real antagonisms, particularly between laborers and capitalists, with money/capital appearing to stand above the producers *and* the capitalists as an independent power. The oppositions are conceived as dialectical contradictions because they are mediated through the exchange process to allow production to develop, but only in such a way that the antagonisms reassert themselves at a systemic level.
- j. **The main contradiction in the capitalist mode of social (re)production that holds “the whole shit” together (Marx to Engels, April 2, 1858).** 🌟🌟🌟 (Machine Fragment in *Grundrisse*) – keep for later in class; there is, in my mind, no clearer formulation in Marx of all of this. Postone is a hero. Listen to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NLaRq25dYww>.
- i. **REMEMBER (📌)** “Capital is the all-dominating economic power [*Macht*] of bourgeois society” (G, 107); economic=societal; “*Macht*” means both “power” and “force”; further: Derrida’s essay on authority, Heidegger in 1931 on Aristotle’s concept of force and *Kraft*; “*Kraft*” can mean both “powers” and “strength”)
 - ii. “The exchange of living labour for objectified labour - i.e. the positing of social labour in the form of the contradiction of capital and wage labour - is the ultimate development of the value relation and of production resting on value.” (G, 704)
 - iii. **“Capital itself is the moving contradiction, [in] that it presses to reduce labour time to a minimum, while it posits labour time, on the other side, as sole measure and source of wealth.”** (G, 706) 🌟🌟🌟
 - iv. “The more this contradiction develops, the more does it become evident that the growth of the forces of production can no longer be bound up with the appropriation of alien labour, but that the mass of workers must themselves appropriate their own surplus labour.” (G, 708)
7. Upshot (my take)
- a. By “contradiction” we should understand the unity of opposing *tendencies* of the development of value form. Perhaps – perhaps! – we could talk about *forces* here, but that would require to bring in more metaphysical subtleties. What is a societal *force*? *Would one of you write a dissertation on this, please?*

- b. In any case, a “tendency” can only be thought of in relation to the whole. Adorno sees this very clearly. Negri makes a big stink about this, too, when he talks about contemporary developments and the looming disconnect of labor from capital.
- c. If these tendencies develop into *real* opposition (antinomies=antagonisms), they lead to *crises* that are [1] either resolved and re-appear in a different form (Harvey calls this a “fix”) or [2] eventually lead to a crisis of the totality itself.
- d. Only then could we understand that capital is a “living contradiction,” insofar as that to which it stands in true opposition are living labor and the living earth.
- e. In my view, we need to replace the traditional opposition between capital and labor with the opposition between capital and life. By constantly enhancing the latter it destroys it *at the same time*. 😞

Session VI: Oct 18 (From Money to Capital; 239-274)

1. Reprise

a. Jessica's intervention

- i. One discussion we had last week was related to the concept of “development” and whether we can “apply” Marx’s ideas about the possibility of post-capitalism to the contemporary global situation. We certainly cannot do this, insofar as uneven development, political differences, cultural diversity, instable national political systems, and constitutional frameworks have made it increasingly difficult to proceed with the universalist and international outlook that many defended during the last century.
- ii. As to Jessica’s point about the conflict between indigenous and industrial developments, for example, Linera argues that traditional Marxism (in Bolivia) underestimated the role of the agricultural sector: “the community and its production-relations simply did not exist in the interpretative vision of this Marxism, not to mention any other social identity that was not strictly economic – in this case, that of the *campesino*. The cultural repertoires of the social classes, society’s identity-based diversity and the existence of indigenous nations and peoples were absent from the literature and the strategies of the Left [...] According to this Marxism, there were neither Indians nor community, such that one of the most fruitful strains of classical-Marxist thought was rejected as a useful tool for interpreting Bolivian reality”⁹. Though this does not really produce a problem for Marx’s thinking, as Marx does not offer much about “development” beyond philosophical speculation, it summarizes the problem well. It is true though that Marx assumes that the agricultural sector is, historically seen, the first that is subjected to capital (via science, such as chemistry, biology and soil research), it is the least important for political agency. In addition, there is a tendency in left theorizing to take rural populations, peasants, etc. as the least progressive and reactionary parts of populations.

b. Uneven development, theoretically, in Althusser:

- i. “Gilly, for example, begins his book *The Mexican Revolution* (written between 1966 and 1971 from the Lecumberri Prison and first published in Spanish under the title *La revolución interrumpida*) with the following quote from **Trotsky’s** famous opening chapter, “Peculiarities of Russia’s Development,” in *The History of the Russian Revolution*: ‘**Unevenness**, the most general law of the historic process, reveals itself most sharply and complexly in the destiny of the backward countries. Under the whip of external necessity their backward culture is compelled to make leaps. From the universal law of unevenness thus derives another law, which, for the lack of a better name, we may call the law of combined development—by which we mean a drawing together of the different

⁹ Alvaro Garcia Linera, *Plebeian Power. Collective Action and Indigenous, Working-Class and Popular Identities in Bolivia*, tr. Pablo Stefanoni (Leiden: Brill 2014), 309.

stages of the journey, a combining of separate steps, an amalgam of archaic with more contemporary forms.’ Almost word for word, this definition of combined and uneven development will be rebutted in Althusser’s most systematic account of uneven development that is to be found in “On the Materialist Dialectic (On the Unevenness of Origins),” the subtitle of which obviously represents a clever inversion of Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *Essay on the Origins of Inequality* (in French, *Discours sur l’origine et les fondements de l’inégalité parmi les hommes*). Unfortunately, the English translation of For Marx loses sight of the fact that the notion of *inégalité* in “Sur la dialectique matérialiste (*De l’inégalité des origines*),” especially in light of the allusion to Rousseau, should evoke both “unevenness” and “inequality,” just as **Marx himself, for the examples of “uneven development” he gives in the 1857 *Einleitung* to the *Grundrisse***, uses both the German expression *ungleiche Entwicklung* and the Gallicism *unegale*. For Althusser, in any case, unevenness is neither exceptional nor external to the very nature of contradictions that on his account defines the specificity of the object of the materialist dialectic, from Marx to Mao. Unevenness is not restricted to backward countries as opposed to more mature or advanced ones; it is also not secondary or derived, compared to an original state of affairs that otherwise might have been able to function as the absolutely prior standard of even development. Instead, all origins are marked by unevenness as the **result of processes that are themselves complex**, without ever leading back to a simple term. In sum, uneven development is an originary and universal characteristic of all social and historical phenomena. It belongs, as it were, to the very nature of things insofar as nothing whatsoever in this world develops evenly.”¹⁰

- ii. “If the dialectic itself came to be seen as metaphysical, in other words, this was due to the supposition that even a logic of contradictions—based on the famous unity of opposites as the fundamental law of the dialectic—was insufficiently attuned to the contingent play of differences.”¹¹
- c. We said last class that the *Grundrisse* differs in two regards from *Capital* (Vol.1):
 - i. Rather than the factory as the site of production the field of **knowledge production becomes the site of struggle** and center of capitalism:
 - 1. A careful read of the chapters in *Capital* that are devoted to technology and science could change this picture, but those chapters, especially in activist and politically oriented circles, have not received much attention.
 - 2. The concept of circulation is very central for Marx’s considerations in the *Grundrisse*.
 - ii. Nowadays, of course, we could ask whether indigenous populations become the site of struggle; I think it is *uneven* and therefore everywhere 😊.

¹⁰ Bosteels, Bruno, “Reading Capital from the Margins. Notes on the Logic of Uneven Development”. In: Nesbitt, Nick (ed.), *The Concept of Crisis. Reading Capital Today* (Duke UP 2017), 122-174, here 125.

¹¹ Ibid., 129 [Bosteels also claims that Derrida’s concept of *difference* should be read in the context of Althusser’s attempt to turn “uneven development” into a theoretical category].

- d. Theory and Praxis
 - i. As I mentioned at the beginning of class, the conflict between those who emphasize theory (Adorno, Althusser, for example) always stand in conflict with those who emphasize class struggle and praxis (such as Tronti, for example). The interesting aspect is that both Althusser and Tronti rejected the focus on the means of production (technology, knowledge, etc.) as bourgeois. Let's see this in context: when they wrote the CPF in France was strong and in Italy factory workers went bonkers. Since these times are long time gone the means of production (and, hence, the machine fragment) are central.
 - ii. This conflict goes through the *entire* Marxist tradition and can be traced back to [1] the theory/praxis distinction, and [2] the social/political distinction. As I mentioned in class at the beginning, I am less inclined to see potential in the political aspect of contemporary Marxism (which, again, makes me conservative in the eyes of "activists," etc.). This also means that the question of *what theory is and how it can be defended as necessary* is crucial for my own point of view.
 - iii. My view: on the one hand, theory is not pragmatic, insofar as theory is not some kind of "hypothesis" that needs to be "tested" in praxis. I therefore remain in skeptical distance to the idea of "engaged philosophy." Theory can also not come from activist praxis, as praxis remains *ideological*. On the other hand, all theoretical categories need to stem from the everyday, insofar as the *complete* breach between empirical and science (as in Althusser) is something that also do not find convincing either. Is there a way out? I do not know!
 - e. Finally, as to our discussion about whether it is "people" who make decisions or whether the objective structure makes this impossible, I'd like to underline that the main point is not about individual freedom; rather, we need to think about the social constitution of individuals and we can perhaps *then* think about how individual (or collective) freedom looks like. In any case, it is clear that Marx thinks about this in collective terms: we – both labor and capital – are class agents *before* we are individual agents..
- 2. 238-240 General
 - a. Marx reminds us of his anti-naturalism: "Nature does not produce money [...] To be money is not a natural attribute of gold and silver" (239)
 - b. Although M is, as mentioned last class, not yet completely clear about where the contradiction between use and exchange value is to be located, he underlines that it has to be related to "the social mode of production" (240). Again, this is crucial, insofar as only the claim that the contradiction is located in the entire social process can help us see that the conflict gets displaced in the *class antagonism* (once we have introduced capital and labor power).
 - c. Money is the *primary* location for fetishized social relations in capitalism; the contradictions "appear extinguished" (240); remember: he already indicated in the reading for last week that the *most abstract* form of this fetishism is *interest*; i.e. *debt*.
 - d. As this fetishism is not seen by bourgeois economists, they are only presenting *ideology*, not science.
 - 3. 240-248 Property, Contract, Equality

- a. Read these passages carefully, as they contain one of the sharpest critiques of modern bourgeois contractual thinking; Hegel is very complex, but he is the target on 243-244.
 - i. For those of you who are in the Kant class, think about Kant's take of property in the *Metaphysics of Morals* (1787); take into account that Kant *rejects* the naturalistic approach to property, as he argues that property is constituted by the *relation* between owners and the normative claims contained in the relation. So, he is one step ahead of the Brits 😊.
 - ii. As long as we remain on the level of exchange (i.e., remain bourgeois theorists), all agents involved appear as fair, free, and *equal* (240); this is also related to the central function of the *contract* in philosophy from Locke to Hegel.
 - iii. Once we understand (comes soon) that capital/labor introduces an entirely different dynamics in society, we also learn to understand that the seemingly equal relations of all social agents in exchange is constituted via domination and inequality.
 - iv. We could put this differently by saying that those who make exchange (=market) and (private property) contracts central for society do not understand the *social form* under which all relations are constituted in capitalism. M also criticizes the naturalized ideas of exchange and contract, as if contracts arose out of equal "human" needs; page 242 is fantastic!
 - v. The market, as ideology, produces "equally worthy persons" and indifference (242); these pages are *incredibly* contemporary if we take into account that the contemporary public discourse is *to a large extent* ideological, insofar as it is still public opinion that market exchanges are fair, equal and to the advantage of all.
- b. 245-248 Marx's rejection
 - i. He argues that modern social philosophers who localize freedom and equality in contractual relationships tend to talk about things that belong to pre-capitalist conceptions of law (Roman).
 - ii. Though it is true that the natural and social differences *disappear* in exchange (246), the contractual relation is completely subjected to the *money* relation in modernity.
 - iii. Note that on p.246 he confusingly already refers to the wage relation which *seems* to be based on freedom, Bentham, and equality. The wage relation has to come in at this point because the entire process of externalized exchanges and externalized circulation is only possible because of it rests on unequal labor/wage exchange.
 - iv. Note: later Marx will argue that the "inequality" and unfreedom does not simply stem from the fact that some are richer (or some bourgeois version of this); rather, the asymmetry is contained in the *entire* mode of production; i.e., based on the capital-labor(power) relation and generation of social wealth.
 - v. This is how it appears to the bourgeois mind: "if one individual accumulates and the other does not, then none does it at the expense of the other. One enjoys real wealth, the other takes possession of wealth in its general form. If one grows impoverished and the other grows wealthier, then this is of their own free will and does not in any way arise from the economic relation, the

economic connection as such, in which they are placed in relation to one another. Even inheritance and similar legal relations, which perpetuate such inequalities, do not prejudice this natural freedom and equality. If individual A's relation is not in contradiction to this system originally, then such a contradiction can surely not arise from the fact that individual B steps into the place of individual A, thus perpetuating him. This is, rather, the perpetuation of the social relation beyond one man's natural lifespan: its reinforcement against the chance influences of nature, whose effects as such would in fact be a suspension of individual freedom. Moreover, since the individual in this relation is merely the individuation of money, therefore he is, as such, just as immortal as money, and his representation by heirs is the logical extension of this role.” (247)

- vi. 🌟🌟🌟 Now, here go Kant and the French romanticizing socialists, such as Proudhon: “In **present bourgeois society as a whole**, this positing of prices and their circulation etc. **appears as the surface process**, beneath which, however, in the depths, entirely different processes go on, **in which this apparent individual equality and liberty disappear**.¹² It is forgotten, the **objective basis of the whole** of the system of production, already in itself implies compulsion over the individual, since his immediate product is not a product for him, but only becomes such in the social process, and since it must take on this general but nevertheless external form; and that the individual has an existence only as a producer of exchange value, hence that the whole negation of his natural existence is already implied; that he is therefore **entirely determined by society**; that this further presupposes a division of labour etc., in which the individual is already posited in relations other than that of mere exchanger, etc. **That therefore this presupposition by no means arises either out of the individual's will or out of the immediate nature of the individual, but that it is, rather, historical, and posits the individual as already determined [bestimmt] by society**. It is forgotten, on the other side, that these higher forms, in which exchange, or the relations of production which realize themselves in it, are now posited, do not by any means stand still in this simple form where the highest distinction which occurs is a formal and hence irrelevant one. What is overlooked, finally, is that already the simple forms of exchange value and of money latently contain the opposition between labour and capital etc. Thus, what all this wisdom comes down to is the attempt **to stick fast at the simplest economic relations, which, conceived by themselves, are pure abstractions**;¹³ but these relations are, in reality, mediated by the deepest antithesis, and represent only one side, in which the full expression of the antitheses is obscured.” (248) [Wooaahhh!]
- vii. Note, *again*, by “determination” Marx does not refer to causal determination; the German word has a logical context: *bestimmt*. If a thing is this or that because of certain properties, then these properties *determine* the thing.

¹² Freud, Nietzsche... The genealogist in our seminar must like this.

¹³ Direct application of what Marx says in the introduction to G.

- viii. Accordingly, he attacks contract theorists for only having *abstract* concepts of contract and equality; i.e., they do not see those as *societal* aspects. As a consequence, Marx is not simply arguing that we have formal equality and material inequality; rather, formal equality *is* inequality if we take into account that we cannot simply look at exchange and contract as something “outside” of the entire social process.
 - ix. Though Marx does not say much about this at this point, the concept of private property and its justification by modern bourgeois thinkers would need to be considered at precisely this point. The main point we need to understand is that property and contract are not simply relations between “people;” rather, they contain social relations determined by the capitalist social form; i.e., in the end they are related to *wealth* generation as a *social process*.
 - x. Against French socialist Proudhon (whom Marx disliked): “It is just as pious as it is stupid to wish that exchange value would not develop into capital, nor labour which produces exchange value into wage labour.” (249) --- why? Because we need to look at exchange value *from the* perspective of capital.
 - xi. Marx disliked utopian thinking (we discussed this in a former class; also check the last section of the *Communist Manifesto*); he attacks the “utopian inability” (249) of French socialists.
 - xii. Side note: we should be careful to apply the ideas about knowledge, science, general intellect, etc. all too easily to our contemporary global situation. The so called “luxury communists” who are popular in some pockets of the contemporary left should be greeted with Marx’s skepticism, as only the latter attitude will push us towards a *sober and realistic* analysis of the current situation.
 - xiii. For the term “inverted projection” (*Lichtbild*; photography!) also check the passage on ideology and the *camera obscura* in GI.
- c. 250-256 Circulation
- i. “[M]oney as *capital* is distinct from *money as money*. The new aspect is to be developed” (251). Well, then!
 - ii. Capital is not a sum of values, we do not get in a linear way from exchange value to capital (251); i.e., historically speaking, we need to assume that there is a *break* and *rupture* between merchant “wealth” and capital as *socially* conditioned wealth.
 - iii. Capital is addressed here as “the relation of capitalizing” (251) – in *Capital* he calls this “valorization” (*Verwertung*); so, capital is [1] a relation, or ensemble of relations, and [2] a *process*. It is nothing else than *movement*. Put differently, capital is not a thing; i.e., not something that you can hold in your hands and not something that you can point your finger to. Capital is the social form of abstract labor and the *movement* of society.
 - iv. Though we begin with value and money, as M points out, we can only do this in theory; in truth we already need to presuppose capital, as all of this “requires [...] a mode of production founded on capital” (251); remember: we go from the abstract to the concrete, though at first it seems to be the other way around.

- v. Important for value form theorists (such as me): “This determination of value, then, presupposes a given historic stage of the mode of social production and is itself something given with that mode, hence a historic relation.” (252)
 - vi. Historically, merchant capital is presupposed, but that’s only a condition and not a cause. In contrast, capital is the “foundation of production” (253) --- power, force, foundation: here we have the entire metaphysical arsenal.
 - vii. Although capital is not possible without simple circulation of money (exchange, market), it cannot be derived from it; i.e., merchant capital can lead to golden castles, silver spoons, and hoarding, but it cannot lead to capital as the “real metabolism” and principle, power, or force of/behind *all* social relations (254).
- d. 256- Transition
- i. Historically speaking, establishing external markets has a “civilizing influence” (256); well; master Marx, is that true?
 - ii. Agriculture is the *first* area in which exchange becomes important (257); in *Capital* he spends many pages on the *scientific* component of agricultural development.
 - iii. Again, M points out that we are not talking here about some kind of an a-historical concept of capital; capital is *not* a means within the production process; rather it is the *form* – a *specific* form – of social totality (258); if you do not understand this, then “capital is conceived as a thing, not as a relation” (258) [booom! 💣*]
 - iv. “Capital is not a simple relation, but a process” (258) [Wooaahh!] I wish that more people, including Marxist people, would read the *Grundrisse* (more closely).
 - v. Once capital has been introduced, we need to learn that from now on we look onto everything *from a new standpoint*; money (in exchange and circulation) is the first *form of capital*. (259) What the hell does this mean? It means that in the capitalist mode of production, we do not have *first* money and *then* capital; rather, seen from a categorial point of view, money *exists as capital*, or, put differently, exists *as* valorization/capitalization.
 - vi. Capital is the third externalization (circulation externalizes itself) (261); i.e., capital “exists” only *in* and *as* circulation; it is *nothing else than circulating money*; however, Marx warns that, at this point of his reflections, “capital” is still “merely a word” (262). Why? Because labor has not been introduced as that which capital has to subsume in order to appear as the *beginning and result* of the entire (re)production process.
 - vii. On p. 263 M is already one step further (without telling us), which might be confusing: “itself as exchange value only by realizing itself; i.e. increasing its value. Money (as returned to itself from circulation), as capital, has lost its rigidity, and from a tangible thing has become a process. But at the same time, labour has changed its relation to its objectivity; it, too, has returned to itself. But the nature of the return is this, that the labour objectified in the exchange value **posits living labour** as a means of reproducing it, whereas, originally,

exchange value appeared merely as a product of labour.” (263) This presupposes that living labor has entered the process.

viii. Remember: when you study Marx, you need to *think ahead of yourself*.

e. Capital and labor

- i. Jump over the section entitled “Product and Capital” (264-266)
- ii. Labor comes in on p.266, read 266-274 carefully; the definition of “living labor” is *very* central.
- iii. Note: we are here not speaking about concrete labor acts that can be timed; we are speaking of the *capacity* to labor which, in turn, makes it possible that the *entire* human now can be made productive via taking on a *specific social form* (value form, money). It is set into *motion* (267).
- iv. “When we speak of capacity for labour, we do not speak of labour, any more than we speak of digestion when we speak of capacity for digestion.” (Capital, Vol.1, 277). A capacity *cannot* be measured. Think about this.
- v. It is no longer the case that use value confronts exchange value; rather, *both* now confront capital (269); this is something that Harvey misses. The contradiction between use value and exchange value (read my notes for our last classes) shows up in different forms throughout the *entire* social process.
- vi. Again, with capital wealth becomes a *general* social form and is no longer simply tied to rich (Renaissance) individuals/families; wealth now becomes the goal of *everything*, and everyone who is part of the social process; this is important because M assumes that only then can communism develop. In a sense “wealth” is already “socialized” in capitalism [what????]. Marx seems to say in a few passages that societal form of wealth is the *precondition* for communism; so, it is not all bad! In *Capital III* as well as in some letters he calls the move from wealth in private hands to stock market wealth the “communism of capital” JEEZ! 🍀*¹⁴
- vii. Surplus value and social wealth production (growth) is only possible if capital is opposed to living labor, labor power, the “living subject” (272) [Wooaahhh!]. Only as living subject becomes labor *productive labor*.
- viii. The satisfaction of immediate needs “is not capital’s concern” (272).
- ix. Productive/unproductive
 1. “The fact is that these workers, indeed, are productive, as far as they increase the capital of their master; unproductive as to the material result of their labour. In fact, of course, this 'productive' worker cares as much about the crappy shit he has to make as does the capitalist himself who employs him, and who also couldn't give a damn for the junk.” (273)
 2. The distinction between productive und unproductive labor is problematic and has been often discussed in the literature. M makes this distinction, as he is eager to point out that only labor that is directly

¹⁴ “Share capital as the most perfected form (turning into communism) together with all its contradictions.” (Marx to Engels, April 2, 1858). Note the year!!! All of this is important for Italian Marxists.

exploited and related to the *social* wealth (not “luxury shops” (273)) is productive.

3. I think that we are nowadays at a point where *all* moments “living labor” have been made productive, insofar as these aspects have been subsumed under the process of capitalization. I am not sure whether this makes me a “sycophant¹⁵ of the bourgeoisie” or whether Marx simply could not foresee to which extent the entire social reproduction and knowledge production process becomes a moment of capital. I side with Negri here, though I am not completely sure.
4. Let’s hear what Nic will tell us about all of this!

¹⁵ Merriam Webster: synonyms for sycophant = apple-polisher, bootlicker, brownnoser, fawner, flunky (also flunkey or flunkie), lickspittle, suck-up, toady. Really?????

Session VII: Nov. 1 (Capital and Labor; 274-326)

1. General remarks about capital
 - a. As we had difficulties last class to understand the concept of capital, let me just outline the main (philosophical) aspects.
 - b. The value form is not to be confused with prices (they are a “later” instantiation of it, but not at first), commodities as values, etc.; rather, the value form is the *abstract* expression of the social form of the capitalist mode of production.
 - c. As we know from the introduction to *Grundrisse*, the capitalist mode of production is not simply “economic” production in the narrower sense; rather, it contains the entire social reproduction process; *including* state and “superstructure.”
 - d. Warning: there are still some in the Marxist tradition who argue differently; if they are right, then Marx is lost for philosophy. Did these people read the following? “While in the completed bourgeois system every economic relation presupposes every other in its bourgeois economic form, and everything posited is thus also a presupposition, this is the case with every organic system. This organic system itself, as a totality, has its presuppositions, and its development to its totality consists precisely in subordinating all elements of society to itself, or in creating out of it the organs which it still lacks. This is historically how it becomes a totality. The process of becoming this totality forms a moment of its process, of its development.” (G, 278)
 - e. What is the “entire social reproduction process”? It is a *historically specific* way of organizing the ensemble of social relations (see G, 258). Ontologically expressed, there is nothing “fixed” in society for Marx; society *can* appear in the form of things, but essentially it is *relation*.
 - f. So, the value form is the historically-specific way in which capitalist social relations are structured. The structure is introduced as a set of categories through which the totality of the process is constituted and can be *grasped* by theory. I tend to agree with Althusser that the structure exists only in its effects, though there is one problem with this: are individuals as subjects effects, too? As to class, M seems to say something like that on p.303 (Let’s table this for now).
 - g. The value-form is an *abstract* expression of this totality, insofar as the universal and immediate exchangeability cannot exist on its own (it is *not* a concept, idea or a symbol!); so, it must *be real*; i.e., it necessarily needs the money form in order to “do” anything in social reality and to be the form of the *metabolism* of society; i.e., the underlying relation between humans and earth.
 - h. The value form is the form in which wealth in capitalist society exists; the social form of all use values (things for satisfying needs) produced. Wealth is here not defined as happiness or health; rather, it is exclusively defined in *monetary* terms. However, as we said last class, there is something interesting about wealth in capitalist society because it tends to be the result of the *entire* social reproduction process and not the result of, say, a few individuals. That’s why Marx assumes that communism is possible. Remember: communism has a “species” aspect in the sense that history can be

interpreted as the self-emancipation of humanity from its shackles. It is universal and Marxism is based on *reason* and *rationality*.

- i. The value form as turning into the money form [Marx calls this in the German original *form metamorphosis* “Formwechsel”] cannot simply be “there” either; rather, it is the way in which labor (humans) and product (earth) are related to each other. Labor takes on a specific monetary form, namely, *abstract labor* (capacity to labor & immediate exchangeability); and reality/products take on a specific monetary form (universally exchangeable things, commodities); *both* sides are monetized; i.e., put into *specific ensembles of relations*; ultimately, they are forced into antagonistic forms because those who own money and those who own their labor separate into two societal forces and *standpoints* (from which knowledge *about* society can be generated and itself turned into struggle).
- j. So, though the value form is already, “abstractly” defined, a universal, it can only be or become universal because it *forms* the “substance” of society (abstract labor) and constitutes it as something universally exchangeable (which also makes it countable and calculable). Why can it do that? Through monetized labor = paid labor power = the payment depends upon a *general system of commodity exchange*.
- k. How does this work? Basically, you are getting paid for *hours*, not for your labor. Your TA contract, for example, only states that you should work 20 hours per week, but it does *not* say how many papers you should grade per hour, how many books you need to read for preparing your sections, or how much emotional work you need to do when talking to your students. Side note: emotional work has a high exploitation rate because it is hard to even come up with a description of concrete labor tasks; i.e., it tends to be only measurable in terms of abstract time.
- l. Note: the capitalist, at least in principle, *does not get paid*.
- m. So, back to our money form. As we said in class, after certain early modern historical developments money establishes itself as something that is external to the exchange process; it can then appear as something on which everything depends and it can enter *universal* circulation.
- n. Whenever money appears as “hard cash” it seems to be a thing, but if it would be a thing, then we would all have it in our pillows. Do we? No! It is constantly regulating purchases and sales. The essence of money is to *go around*. The faster the better.
- o. These market exchanges have limits, insofar as they cannot out of themselves generate surplus value; growth is possible through market expansions, etc., but they can’t internally produce surplus value: “it is equally clear that the simple movement of exchange values, such as is present in pure circulation, can never realize capital” (G, 254).
- p. So, let’s say we would live in a closed society in which no market exchanges with other societies would occur. How would we grow? Perhaps by population growth, perhaps by including more people into market exchanges. However, real surplus value requires a principle that can generate “more” **without** the increase of market exchanges. That’s why labor power comes into the picture, as only human creativity is able to be more productive within the same amount of time. Note: it can *only be productive in the sense*

of constitutive for society and the entire production process if money takes on the capital form.

- q. So, the wage paid at the end of the month is *already* money valorized.
- r. Side note: “market” as a category remains *abstract* (see G, 281) since markets presuppose [1] the social determination of market agents, [2] the social determination of products (the “abode of production”), [3] the social determination of the exchange relation(s) themselves, [4] property relations (state). “Markets” might be *part of* bourgeois society, but they are not the *essence* of it (great example for Althusser’s rejection of essence/expression 😊).
- s. Accordingly, for money to become capital, the money owner needs to find a commodity in the market that allows them to make *more* money. This is only possible by making labor more productive; i.e., by giving money for it (that does not equal the value produced) and to define it in terms of labor time. When this occurs universally, then the *condition and the result* of the entire reproduction process is defined as making more money because money is now the beginning *and* the end of the social reproduction process.
- t. This also means that crises occur at different levels of this process.
- u. Here is the magic sentence from G, 258: “Capital is not a simple relation, but a *process*”, and from *Capital*, Vol1: Capital is money *never* spent (=never used for consumption).¹⁶ “The immortality which money strove to achieve by settling itself negatively against circulation, by withdrawing from it, is achieved by capital, which preserves itself precisely by abandoning itself to circulation” (G, 261).
- v. Capital is money (going around) that *never* leads to consumption, insofar as it gets destroyed when used for consumption. Accordingly, owners of capital do not like their assets to be spent for poor people because that slows down the accumulation process. However, it sounds good to them if poor people can be used for generating more surplus.
- w. The only advantage that capitalists as money owners really have (because their wealth is *nothing else* than what other people *do*) is their *property rights* with which they control the direction of the flows (therefore power) and they can turn their accounts into a lot of cash without any sufferings and for buying super nice things like 66,000sqf mansions and a private Boing 737.¹⁷
- x. This is even clearer today because we no longer have the gold standard; instead, central banks control the money flow and can put unbelievable sums of money into societies; the result is *that the production process constantly needs to chase the money supply* (otherwise price inflation occurs & ultimately crises). So, debt is good for increasing the pressure for being more productive. This is good for the owners of capital because this means that the pressures on becoming even more productive are high. It also means that debt is the most abstract expression of $m - m'$. But what is that? Well, some have argued that debt is a promise (I owe you); I am not buying this because this kind of

¹⁶ Note: the proper virtue for this, historically speaking, is Calvinist asceticism. Note 1: the classical capitalist is not a big consumer.

¹⁷ Google Bill Gates & mansion as well as John Travolta & Boeing. Now, here is the 1000 dollar question: is John Travolta a capitalist?

promise implies social conditions under which this promise can be fulfilled. The main condition for money to become more money (=increase of value) is *improved productivity*. What is improved productivity? Well, it is an ensemble of social relations (=reorganization of labor relations, power relations, communicative relations, property relations, infrastructure relations, educational changes, etc.). Capital only *appears* as an “automatic subject” (Capital, Vol.1); it *needs* to “posit living labor” (G, 263) and the “living subject” as “potentiality” (G, 267). In sum, “I owe you” presupposes the assumption of increased productivity, surplus value, and increased exploitation.

- y. Nowadays almost everywhere in the core countries *everything* is driven forward by revolutionizing the means of production (as already the *Communist Manifesto* says); i.e., by introducing new technologies, whereas at the periphery cheap labor and cheap nature is exploited. So, capital contains both specific ecological relation & specific production of knowledge.
 - z. Voila! We have reached the core of the *Grundrisse*.
2. 278-284 Capital and Labor
- a. Labor
 - i. Again, the worker does *not* sell labor; instead, they sell “the disposition over his labour” (282).
 - ii. The first instance in which the worker’s capacity exists is their **embodiment** (282)
 - iii. This also means that birth, death, sex, and care are made productive! Also: the capitalist (or the state) must secure that enough little kids are born every year or new bodies need to be shipped in from colonies.
 - iv. “his life is the source in which his own use value constantly rekindles itself up to a certain time” (283).
 - v. Again, M underlines that both capitalist and worker become part of the *general wealth production* (183); i.e., depend upon the entire reproduction process of society and depend upon growth and wealth accumulation. Have you ever wondered why even Union leaders are not against growth? Note: this does not speak against M’s thesis later that the worker has no wealth.
 - vi. Whereas the owner of capital wants more money, the owner of labor power wants satisfaction of needs (so, here is the final split between exchange and use value that now appears on a higher level).
 - b. 284-289 Savings
 - i. For the worker (at least in principle) saving money is equal to *self-denial* (284), insofar as receiving a wage means receiving the bare minimum for reproduction; i.e., saving something means to go beneath the living minimum.
 - ii. Capitalists not only demand savings (which is good for them, as they take the social burden away, 285), but they usually also claim that they are doing the self-denial (I take on risk! I could lose everything! I work very hard! I have responsibility!).
 - iii. Savings also take crises burden away and help overcome consumption crises (286).
 - iv. Too many savings indicate to the capitalist that wages are too high.

- v. Note: today the entire problem has shifted towards DEBT!
- vi. The self-denial of workers leads to “brutalization” (286).
- vii. Now, how contemporary is the following: “and such a brutalization itself would make it impossible even to strive for wealth in general form, as money, stockpiled money - (and the worker's participation in the higher, even cultural satisfactions, the agitation for his own interests, news- paper subscriptions, attending lectures, educating his children, developing his taste etc., his only share of civilization which distinguishes him from the slave, is economically only possible by widening the sphere of his pleasures at the times when business is good, where saving is to a certain degree possible), [apart from this,] he would, if he saved his money in a properly ascetic manner and thus heaped up premiums for the lumpenproletariat, pickpockets etc., who would increase in proportion with the demand, he could conserve savings - if they surpass the piggy-bank amounts of the official savings banks, which pay him a minimum of interest, **so that the capitalists can strike high interest rates out of his savings, or the state eats them up**, thereby merely increasing the power of his enemies and his own dependence - conserve his savings and make them fruitful only by putting them into banks etc. , so that, afterwards, **in times of crisis he loses his deposits**, after having in times of prosperity foregone all life's pleasures in order to increase the power of capital; **thus has saved in every way for capital, not for himself.**” (287). [Wooaahh!]
- viii. Now, read this: PR campaigns & commercials are foreseen by Marx: “Incidentally - in so far as the whole thing is not a hypocritical phrase of bourgeois' philanthropy', which consists in fobbing the worker off with 'pious wishes' each capitalist does demand that his workers should save, but only his own, because they stand towards him as workers; but by no means the remaining world of workers, for these stand towards him as consumers. **In spite of all 'pious' speeches he therefore searches for means to spur them on to consumption, to give his wares new charms, to inspire them with new needs by constant chatter** etc. It is precisely this side of the relation of capital and labour which is an essential civilizing moment, and on which the historic justification, but also the contemporary power of capital rests” (287).
- ix. So, it is clear here that the impression that Marx does not think about consumption is NONSENSE! People, please read!!!! 🌟🌟🌟
- x. To be fair though 😞, he does argue that capitalists are in principle interested in keeping wages low; that has not been true for all developments in the world during the 20th Century (esp. Fordism).
- xi. Under neoliberalism the strategy is [1] to keep wages low and [2] to produce massive amounts of debt (for keeping wages low 😊).
- xii. Marx already sees “exceptions” to the tendency of brutalization (=middle class today), 286.

- xiii. Capitalist, beside the wage relation, are “cheating the worker” (288); watch the documentary *China Blue*.¹⁸
- c. 293-297 Abstract labor
 - i. So, we are reaching the volcanic center on these pages! – no longer are “belletristic sophomores and empty chatterboxes who defile all the sciences with their liquorice-sweet filth” (293) permitted!
 - ii. The labor capacity as the center of *everything* comprises the entire life span of a worker (294); **Marx’s considerations on labor power are the condition for Foucault’s concept of biopolitics.**
 - iii. Virno agrees with me: “Here is the crucial point: where something which exists only as possibility is sold, this something is not separable from the living person of the seller. The living body of the worker is the substratum of that labor-power which, in itself, has no independent existence. ‘Life,’ pure and simple bios, acquires a specific importance in as much as it is the tabernacle of *dynamis*, of mere potential. [...] The living body becomes an object to be governed not for its intrinsic value, but because it is the substratum of what really matters: labor-power as the aggregate of the most diverse human faculties (the potential for speaking, for thinking, for remembering, for acting, etc.). Life lies at the center of politics when the prize to be won is immaterial (and in itself non-present) labor-power. For this reason, and this reason alone, it is legitimate to talk about ‘bio-politics.’”¹⁹
 - iv. “vital force” (294) = **life becomes a force** (here are the hidden metaphysical assumptions and that’s why Heidegger still matters)
 - v. Though both laborer and capitalist depend on general wealth, the antagonism disallows the laborer wealth because they are kept at subsistence level (this assumption has to be corrected under contemporary conditions though we need to see that the gains of wealth during the 20th Century were only possible because of a long labor struggle and because the welfare state was developed.
 - vi. However, as Adorno says in one of his lectures during the 60s: Marx’s assumption about the subsistence level of the wage system would *immediately* emerge again if the state would no longer function (as it is the case in many “failed” states)
 - vii. Achtung! “Separation of **property** from labour appears as necessary law of this exchange between capital and labour” (295); we need to connect this to what he said earlier about bourgeois philosophies of contracts.
 - viii. One could argue that Marx defines the lowest level of wage labor as slave labor on p.296, insofar as in this case the laborer is reduced to a *pure use value* (=thing to be used). At this point Chase can think more about Marx/Kant, as we could argue that Kant’s moral philosophy could be read as a *reaction to the objective social conditions* of capital/labor. Boom! 🌟🌟🌟. We might also find here normative aspects of the concept of exploitation.

¹⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o9gO9MgSO7A>

¹⁹ Virno, Paolo, *A Grammar of the Multitude*, tr. I. Bertoletti (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e) 2004), 82-83.

- ix. The laborer is the “living source of value” (296), abstract, *nude*, it is the *condition* of wealth.
 - x. Capital can only *be/exist* as process *because* labor becomes abstract.
 - xi. Labor in capitalism is both “absolute poverty” and “general possibility” of wealth (here the deep contradiction of capital)
 - xii. Labor valorized is “*labour pure and simple*, abstract labour; absolutely indifferent to its particular *specificity* [*Bestimmtheit*], but capable of all specificities” (296); abstract labor is labor that is universally exchangeable, privatized, and as such constitutive for the totality (296); on the reverse side, capital “confronts the *totality* of all labours *dynamei*” (297)
 - xiii. Fichte: labour = NOT-BEING (297); heart attack 😊! Poetically put, labor power is like “yeast” (298); this also means that “labour power” is beneath concrete divisions organized by labor division and alongside gendered and racialized divisions.
 - xiv. Value = the abstract form of life. Life as the connector of mind, body, and earth.
 - xv. Abstract labor is NOT de-skilled labor, as some have argued; de-skilling is an *aspect* of abstract labor, but not its essence; it is also NOT physically defined as expenditure of energy, as some have argued. NONSENSE!
 - xvi. Boom! “since capital as such is indifferent to every particularity of its substance, and exists not only as the totality of the same but also as the abstraction from all its particularities, the labour which confronts it likewise subjectively has the same totality and abstraction in itself.” (296)
- d. 297-310 Subsumption (absorption)
- i. Capital subsumes labor; “labour become one of its moments” (298); so, in social reality, because capital is *movement*, capital appears as a process of accumulation in which more and more aspects of the results of labor vitality become subsumed under capital and made productive; here we need to think about globalization, but also about resistance in the form of *limits* that capital needs to overcome.
 - ii. Labor becomes the “fructifying vitality” (298) of capital; i.e., the real substance is labor, not capital - “living labour, as the general productive force of wealth”
 - iii. “Now, in so far as capital, money existing in all particular forms of objectified labour [i.e., in commodities], enters into the process with nonobjectified, but rather living labour, labour **existing as process and as action**, it is initially this qualitative difference of the substance in which it exists from the form in which it now also exists as labour.” (298)
 - iv. With the subsumption of labor under capital, the means of production and raw materials are subsumed, too (299); both appear as products within the process of capital.
 - v. 299-303: Marx tries to capture what happens when the general labor process (304) is turned into a process of valorization; it is as if society becomes a huge cookie eating monster. Important, again, is that only because both sides of the basic metabolism relation become abstract, capital is able to push the *entire* society forward. Note the direct application of the introduction on p.300-301.

- vi. The concept of class is introduced in epistemological terms on p.303; Lukacs probably loved the following passage (this language disappears in *Capital*): “This is the occasion to draw attention to a moment which here, for the first time, not only arises from the standpoint of the observer, but is posited in the economic relation itself. In the first act, in the exchange between capital and labour, labour as such, existing for itself, necessarily appeared as the worker. Similarly here in the second process: capital as such is posited as a value existing for itself, as egotistic value, so to speak (something to which money could only aspire). **But capital in its being-for-itself is the capitalist. Of course, socialists sometimes say, we need capital, but not the capitalist. Then capital appears as a pure thing, not as a relation of production which, reflected in itself, is precisely the capitalist.** I may well separate capital from a given individual capitalist, and it can be transferred to another. But, in losing capital, he loses the quality of being a capitalist. Thus capital is indeed separable from an individual capitalist, but not from the capitalist, who, as such, confronts the worker.”
- vii. Note the reflections on alienation on p.307.
- viii. 308-309 are important. M argues against bourgeois economists that they only see labor and capital as separate entities; they think that capital is a thing. They do not see “capital in its *specific character as form*” (309). M argues that only valorized labor can be productive (so, it is neither labor as such nor capital as such).
- ix. On the one hand, all aspects of the labor relation are made productive and increase the objective power of capital. Just think about how powerful the objective pressure to generate growth has become. It became almost *inconceivable* to even imagine a world without growth. “Thus all the progress of civilization, or in other words every increase in the powers of social production [*gesellschaftliche Produktivkraefte*], if you like, in the productive powers of labour itself - such as **results from science, inventions, division and combination of labour, improved means of communication, creation of the world market, machinery etc.** – enriches not the worker but rather capital; hence it only magnifies again the power dominating over labour; increases only the productive power of capital. Since capital is the antithesis of the worker, this merely **increases the objective power standing over labour.** The transformation of labour (as living, purposive activity) into capital is, in itself, the result of the exchange between capital and labour, in so far as it gives the capitalist the title of ownership to the product of labour (and command over the same).” (308)
- x. Note the role of private property here. Note the concept of power here.
- xi. On the other hand, as Negri has argued, the increasing power of capital equally also shows the opposite of this relation, namely, how it is increasingly difficult for capital to control labor, at least once it is based on universal knowledge. Be that as it may, Marx has in mind on these pages that capital tries to subject *every* aspect of life to it and the more aspects are subsumed, the more difficult it is for the worker to resist capital (insofar as it seems that labor now is positioned as opposed to capital, but as opposed to the *entire* society if

resisted). For example, it is hard to find unionized workers who would go on strike for socializing the means of production or for standing in for a completely different vision of society. Adorno and Horkheimer addressed this as the “integration” of labor into society, but I think we need to be more precise, insofar as it is not simply integration, but, instead, the *integration of resistance*.

- e. 310-326 Valorization
 - i. P.315 is most important here, as M argues that surplus value cannot come out of circulation and market exchanges.
 - ii. On p. 318 he argues that capital cannot exist without interest.
 - iii. On p. 319-320 he mentions the first time that capital needs an “original accumulation” (319) as one of its moments.
 - iv. Communism is at the horizon: “Capital's ceaseless striving towards the general form of wealth drives labour beyond the limits of its natural paltriness [*Naturbedürftigkeit*], and thus creates the material elements for the development of the rich individuality which is as all-sided in its production as in its consumption, and whose labour also therefore appears no longer as labour, but as the full development of activity itself, in which natural necessity in its direct form has disappeared ; because a historically created need has taken the place of the natural one. **This is why capital is productive; i.e. an essential relation for the development of the social productive forces. It ceases to exist as such only where the development of these productive forces themselves encounters its barrier in capital itself.**” (325)
 - v. The last sentence has been driven forward bei Negri/Hardt.
 - vi. Argument that slave-labor can be part of capital and its accumulation, but that capitalism *cannot* completely be based on it: “As far as they are concerned, capital does not exist as capital, because autonomous wealth as such can exist only either on the basis of direct forced labour, slavery, or indirect forced labour, wage labour. Wealth confronts direct forced labour not as capital, but rather as relation of domination [*Herrschaftsverhältnis*]; thus, the relation of domination is the only thing which is reproduced on this basis, for which wealth itself has value only as gratification, not as wealth itself, and which can therefore never create general industriousness.” (326)
 - vii. We might ask though whether capital is also a relation of domination, but in a different, abstract, form (see Postone).
- 3. Point 7: “Everything else is empty chatter” (320)

Session VIII: Nov. 8 (Primitive Accumulation; 443-471)

1. Reminders

- a. So far, I have tried to present Marx as a philosopher who gives us a theory of social reality and a social ontology. Value form theory is critical theory of society. Reducing Marx to a *non-existing* “labor theory of value” is nonsense.
- b. Labor
 - i. We need to be careful in not essentializing labor or labor power; though society is a metabolism between humans and the earth, this can only be said *abstractly*. Though we might begin with labor, we end up with relations of production, means of production, social individuals, etc. On this point I am in agreement with Althusser in *For Marx*. Accordingly, labor is not the essence, cause or ground of society or the essence of being human.
 - ii. A simplistic anthropology that speaks of “the” human and “the” labor is the effect of the capitalist mode of production in the form of bourgeois ideology.
- c. Capital in General
 - i. You seemed to be surprised about the term “capital in general;” however, M refers in our readings to it; for example:
 1. “To the extent that we are considering it here, as a relation distinct from that of value and money, capital is **capital in general**, i.e. the incarnation of the qualities which distinguish value as capital from value as pure value or as money. Value, money, circulation etc., prices etc. are presupposed, as is labour etc. But we are still concerned neither with a particular form of capital, nor with an individual capital as distinct from other individual capitals etc. We are present at the process of its becoming. This dialectical process of its becoming is only the ideal expression of the real movement through which capital comes into being. The later relations are to be regarded as developments coming out of this germ.” (310)
 2. Note how M refers to *capital in general* as an abstraction on pp.420, 447
 3. “**Capital in general**, as distinct from the particular capitals, does indeed appear (1) only as an abstraction; not an arbitrary abstraction, but an **abstraction which grasps the specific characteristics which distinguish capital from all other forms of wealth** - or modes in which (social) production develops. These are the aspects common to every capital as such, or which make every specific sum of values into capital. And the distinctions within this abstraction are likewise abstract particularities which characterize every kind of capital, in that it is their position [*Position*] or negation [*Negation*] (e.g. fixed capital or circulating capital); (2) **however, capital in general, as distinct from the particular real capitals, is itself a real existence**. This is recognized by ordinary economics, even if it is not *understood*, and forms a very important

moment of its doctrine of equilibrations etc. For example, capital in this *general form*, although belonging to individual capitalists, in its *elemental form* as capital, forms the capital which accumulates in the banks or is distributed through them.” (449)

4. “While the general is therefore on the one hand only a mental [*gedachte*] mark of distinction [*differentia specifica*], it is at the same time a particular real form alongside the form of the particular and individual” (450)

d. Class

- i. Going over the passage on the concept of class as being-for-itself last class helped me see some things clearer and in a more complex way, as I had assumed in an earlier reading of these passages that Marx is following in the footsteps of an idealist notion of subjectivity now applied to the concept of class consciousness, in Lukacs’ sense.
- ii. I am no longer sure. As I pointed out in class, we could give this also an Althusserian twist by arguing that Marx wants to say that we constitute ourselves *as* a class-subject *before* we can “grasp” ourselves as individuals; i.e., we are socially determined individuals “*before*” we can relate ourselves to ourselves – similar to the argument that M presents earlier that it is not “individuals” who enter contracts; rather, it is *socially determined* individuals who enter contracts. So, do we need to refer to babies as “class babies” then? According to Althusser, we are hailed into being subjects before birth! “Look at our sweet little laborer there in the cradle!” 😊
- iii. Further developing this thought, we might say that with overcoming the class division we *could then* become “true” social individuals.

e. Alienation

- i. Note how M uses very similar descriptions on p.307 to the early *Manuscripts*, since he argues that the creative powers of laboring individuals appear *in its opposite form*, namely as [1] dead labor in the products and [2] as capital. The *power* of labor appears as the *power of capital*, alien, that dominates labor, thus “the productivity of his labour, his labour in general, in so far as it is not a capacity but a motion, *real* labour, comes to confront the worker as an *alien power*” (307). This “power dominating over labour” (308) increases with globalization and technologies (“world market, machinery”). Note: it is not simply the case that capitalists rule over labor; rather, labor dominates itself in its *alien form*.

f. Communism (325); I am quoting and commenting on this passage

- i. [step 1] “Capital's ceaseless striving towards the general form of wealth drives labour beyond the limits of its natural paltriness” → capital needs to develop the productive forces and pushes them away from their “natural” positions in society; i.e., modernity releases individuals from their inborn social positions.
- ii. [step 2] “and thus creates the material elements for the development of the rich individuality which is as all-sided in its production as in its consumption” → it makes it possible that individuals becomes multi-dimensional and can develop

in terms of psyche, emotions, activities, knowledge, etc. So, already here it is clear that M sees capital as contradictory, insofar as only these developments can make communism possible; capital/living labor is destructive and make possible at the same time.

- iii. [step 3] “and whose labour also therefore appears no longer as labour, but as the full development of activity itself” = M presents a *critique of labor* (Postone), insofar as labor (in the narrow sense of productivity) is only central for capitalism; it will be replaced by multi-dimensional activities.
- iv. [step 4] “in which natural necessity in its direct form has disappeared; because a historically created need has taken the place of the natural one” → well, this needs to be corrected, because needs are always historically created, but by “historical” he means *free collectively organized creation of needs*.
- v. [step 5] “This is why capital is productive; i.e. an essential relation for the development of the social productive forces. It ceases to exist as such only where the development of these productive forces themselves encounters its barrier in capital itself” → as long as capitalism is in place, everything appears as a limit and barrier for accumulation and something to be overcome by capital (time, space, natural, psychological, moral, cultural, physical limits need to be overcome); when we are ready for communism, capital will – in turn – appear as the *limit* to human development (history as species development) and will be overcome by communist individuals.
- vi. I think that the entire ecological situation and its ideological debates right now show that the main contradiction of capitalism, as Marx grasps it, is *real*.
- vii. For those who took the *Marxisms* seminar last year, remember that Althusser rejects the focus on the means of production as *bourgeois* and technocratic (Adorno is equally hesitant to go beyond the Frankfurt School thesis that the means of production constitute a “technological veil” as a fetishized promise of liberation. Of course, the belief in some groups of the contemporary left that cell phones and twitter make us free – at least from my position – is the same hilarious nonsense as the belief that billionaires in rockets as well as the belief that the masses driving personal electric vehicles will bring about a new historical shift:²⁰ “[g]ood only for belletristic sophomores and empty chatterboxes who defile all the sciences with their liquorice-sweet filth” (Marx).
- viii. What we should consider though, however, is how technologies *could* go hand in hand with the development of the productive forces (which is what M has in mind in *Grundrisse*). In any case, it would really require some intellectual yoga to bring Althusser’s and Adorno’s position together with the *Grundrisse*.

2. 447-458 Labor vs Capital

- a. M follows up on alienation and class on p.452. I don’t think that he goes beyond what he said before, though it is important to understand how the contradiction between use and exchange value now appears on the level of class conflict and the problem of alienation is visible in capital becoming “the master over living labour capacity” (453); all

²⁰ I recently listened to an interview with the CEO of an initiative for bringing more women into space. She argued that this will lead to “humans” discover a new age of their development. Well, what a nonsense! However, where is my space suit? 😊.

of this emerges in exchange, but now “rules over him” (453) because capital posits living labor as one of *its* moments. Within the valorization process capital for labor becomes “the being of its non-being” (454). Woooah!!

- b. All of this is central for the workerist reception of the *Grundrisse*.
- c. On p.454 M introduces the distinction between constant (fixed) capital (land, mop, infrastructure) and variable capital (labor); this will be important for the machine fragment.
- d. Again, on p.455 M points out that the more labor activity creates the “objective world of wealth” (455) the more dependent it becomes and the more insignificant living labor becomes.
- e. This goes hand in hand with “growing capital increasingly *appropriate* alien labour without equivalent” (457) and the emergence of **property** as “the only condition for further appropriation of present or living alien labor” (457). So, this is important, as we could argue that the contractual views that we find in modern social philosophy not only do not take the social determinations of all contractual factors into account, but also do not see the social relations involved in the *appearance* of contracts as “abstract relations.” Private property becomes most central when the alienation between living labor and capital has reached complete externalization, and when the relation *between* labor and capital appears to be one of “contract” alone (as it is also assumed in all contemporary ideological expressions of this relation)
- f. Again, what we find here is the gem of a *genealogy of property* showing that it is not contract that is primary for society (as in liberal discourse); rather, it is the social relations of production that lead to certain forms of property relations. This also includes the separation of the classes as a precondition for contractual models of society: **“the result of the process of production and realization is, above all, the reproduction and new production of the relation of capital and labour itself, of capitalist and worker. This social relation, production relation, appears in fact as an even more important result of the process than its material results.** And more particularly, within this process the worker produces himself as labour capacity, as well as the capital confronting him, while at the same time the capitalist produces himself as capital as well as the living labour capacity confronting him. Each reproduces itself, by reproducing its other, its negation.” (458)
- g. Notice also that this process involves ethical components (as socially determined); i.e., *right (to exploit) and duty (to be docile) are class based*: “The right of property is inverted, to become, on the one side, **the right to appropriate** alien labour, and, on the other, **the duty of respecting** the product of one's own labour, and one's own labour itself, as values belonging to others.”²¹ The exchange of equivalents, however, which appeared as the original operation, an operation to which the right of property gave legal expression, has become turned round in such a way that the exchange by one side is now only illusory, since the part of capital which is exchanged for living labour capacity, firstly, is itself alien labour, appropriated without equivalent, and, secondly, has to be replaced with a surplus by living labour capacity, is thus in fact not consigned

²¹ Perhaps we could interpret the desire of Hollywood to show large scale destructions as a perverted or the suppressed desire to *disrespect the product of one's own labor*.

away, but merely changed from one form into another. **The relation of exchange has thus dropped away entirely, or is a mere semblance. Furthermore, the right of property originally appeared to be based on one's own labour. Property now appears as the right to alien labour, and as the impossibility of labour appropriating its own product. The complete separation between property, and, even more so, wealth, and labour, now appears as a consequence of the law which began with their identity.**" (458)

- h. "[T]he legal relation," as he says later, is a "deceptive semblance" (464). This is fascinating stuff, people! 😊
 - i. The role of property in the process of original accumulation is therefore central; just think about contemporary examples of "accumulation by dispossession" as the condition for "free contracts" to be made.
 - j. 2nd paragraph on p.462 through p.463, 1st paragraph: nice summary of what you have demonstrated on the last 200 pages, Mr. Marx! Nice summary of the concept of **alienation** and **class**, too (on p.462): "Which is why the product then appears to it as a combination of alien material, alien instrument and alien labour - as alien **property**" (462); so, the concept of class is not only based on the separation of labor and capital as independently related "subjects", but is equally an instance of alienation because the classes appear to each other as external, in which property establishes and "fixes" this relation as "eternal" (because it appears as an abstract relation).
3. 459-476 Original Accumulation
- a. Method and History
 - i. The full existence of bourgeois society presupposes an "original accumulation" (459) through either hoarding or merchant exchange. Pages 460-461 are methodologically and philosophically very rich!
 - ii. Capital posits formerly *past* conditions of its own emergence, once capital has reached its final bourgeois existence, as "results of its presence" (460); i.e., the conditions of the new epochal relations of production are becoming moments of those relations: "These presuppositions, which originally appeared as conditions of its becoming - and hence could not spring from its action as capital - now appear as results of its own realization, reality, as posited by it - not as conditions of its arising, but as results of its presence." (460); put differently, capital establishes a *temporal closure*.
 - iii. Sidenote: in *The Capitalist Schema* I have tried to argue, via Heideggerian detours, that we can see here a new emerging *temporal* synthesis through which past becomes a "having-been" and the future becomes an "already arriving" – in order to escape the dualist picture of time that runs through recent Marxist thought (abstract vs. concret) and in order to establish the value form as a temporal *unity*. Unfortunately, no one really seemed to notice my pathbreaking extensions, grrrrr... 😞.
 - iv. Now, these passages show that Marx did not think, like David Harvey and others, that the historical conditions of capital are repeated once it is in place. The original accumulation is past, and "hence belong to the *history of its*

formation" (459; this is what Foucault calls "genealogy").²² However, I think, we can find a compromise here, insofar as Harvey does not claim that the original accumulation repeats itself; rather, he argues that the *expansion* of capital in the process of globalization operates in the same way as it came originally into being (dispossession, land possession, theft, violence, etc.); i.e., Harvey does not argue that merchant capital and hoarding are currently re-appearing.

- v. Similarly, it is problematic when M claims that the "flight of the serfs to the cities" (459) is a past condition of the capitalist mode of production, insofar as that's exactly what we see still today; on the one hand, we can save Marx here, because in order to "install" capital in areas in which either feudal domination or subsistence agriculture are predominant, the conditions for capital accumulation has to be cleared through an "original" accumulation; on the other hand, this position is still problematic since this process does not seem to be as linear as M seems to assume; i.e., capital is not always successful in installing itself as the sole driving force and expulsions go on. Perhaps here a point could be made that M thinks too much from a European perspective and, as Luxemburg and others have argued, did not see the coming global and imperial extensions.
- vi. The original accumulation cannot stem from capital, but once it is established, they appear to be posited by capital (460); i.e., we today can say that merchant capital was "capital I". Zizek calls this *retroactive constitution*, and this concept is important in order to overcome teleological views.
- vii. Note that 459-460 are not simply about history; rather, they defy a *simple teleological* process of how to get from the past to the present. Teleology, as we already learned in the introduction is the *result* of the present projecting itself back into the past (and thereby incorporating it into the present = capital posits its past conditions as something of its own).
- viii. Note how M attacks the naturalism of bourgeois economists again: "The bourgeois economists who regard capital as an eternal and *natural* (not historical) form of production then attempt at the same time to legitimize it again by formulating the conditions of its becoming as the conditions of its contemporary realization; i.e. presenting the moments in which the capitalist still appropriates as not-capitalist - because he is still becoming - as the very conditions in which he appropriates *as capitalist*. These attempts at apologetics demonstrate a guilty conscience, as well as the inability to bring the mode of appropriation of capital as capital into harmony with the *general laws of property* proclaimed by capitalist society itself." (460)
- ix. Finally, we find here the transition from the presentation of the categories to historical research and historical content that these categories express. Once we achieve this, we get the "key to the understanding of the past" (461); i.e., what

²² "a study of the way in which relations of power give rise to discursive practices" (Foucault, Michel, *Lectures on the Punitive Society. Lectures at the College De France 1972-1973*, ed. B.E. Harcourt, tr. G. Burchell (London: Palgrave), 93 [footnote from the editor].

took place before capitalism → next class! Bourgeois theorists can't grasp pre-capitalist modes of production because they "eternalize" capital.

- x. So, again pp.457-462 are important because M introduces *methodological* considerations for what *historical understanding* means for him.
- xi. They can equally not grasp, to use one of these cool and fashionable terms that no one really understands, current conjunctures, i.e., "historic presuppositions" for communism, in capitalism: "This correct view likewise leads at the same time to the points at which the suspension of the present form of production relations gives signs of its becoming - foreshadowings of the future." (461)
- b. Preconditions and presuppositions
 - i. M outlines four conditions of the original accumulation; all of them are *real abstractions*:
 1. Separation of living labor capacity from the "*conditions* of living labour as well as the *means of existence*" (463).
 2. A sufficient amount of objectified labor must be available for establishing the new objective conditions for wage labor to set in (463); i.e., food, bricks for building enclosures, primitive tech, etc.
 3. Free exchange and monetary relations; i.e., the new proletariat needs to buy its use values and get paid (463); i.e., simple markets need to exist; street booths, soup kitchens, places to buy ingredients for baking bread, etc. --- booze! 😊
 4. Money making (not yet capital!) is itself the purpose of i.-iii (464).
 - ii. The conditions can be spelled out as historic presuppositions:
 1. Slavery and personal domination is no longer the dominant mode of production (464); formally the relation is based on exchange
 2. The *effect* of this exchange relation is that the worker *appears* as an individual (464) and in bourgeois form: choice, will, formal freedom (464)
 3. Serf relation = "he appears as a moment of property in land itself, is an appendage of the soil" (465); so, capital does some good, insofar as it turns natural and "fixed" individuals into historically *developing* individuals (at least potentially); it de-naturalizes humans (hehe! and, in turn, naturalizes them; whaaaat???)
 4. Day laborers appear (465); i.e., those who are *completely* dependent on the new system and in need to find work; they are in a deeper sense "free"
 5. Service work is done on the exchange of direct labor; if money is involved, it is not used for M prime but only for consumption (466), money is here revenue, not capital; prices appear, but this is still not capital (467)
 6. Service work is not yet clearly distinguished from slavery and serfdom (467); think of poor kids in developing countries who are offering "services".

7. Money often becomes more important in the context of war and armies.
 8. Service for exchange loses its status: “However, with the presupposition of capital as the dominant power, all these relations become more or less dishonoured” (468); see also the passages in the *Communist Manifesto*
 - iii. M. argues that capital produces class consciousness, and, as such, “the knell to its doom” (463). So, Lukacs would have highlighted this passage, as M seems to say that not only the development of the forces of production are in conflict with the existing relations of production, but also that class *consciousness* is a presupposition for communism. This consciousness is of course not primarily individual but can *only* be achieved in political praxis. Remember: I pointed you above to the concept of class as a *pre-individual* subjectivity; here again: Lukacs or Althusser?
 - iv. Now, one might ask why it is impossible that a few individual workers developing an awareness of their objective social position; however, the point here is that these individuals need to be *workers* first before they can recognize themselves as *alienated* workers. They need to be “hailed” as laboring subjects first, we might say with master Althusser 😊.
4. Excurses: Primitive Accumulation in *Capital*
- a. As Matthew mentions in his concept paper, the chapter on primitive accumulation in *Capital* is more extensive, less formalistic, and contains more historical material. In addition, Marx shows how violence is an intrinsic moment of capital: “If money, according to Augier 'comes into the world with a congenital blood-stain on one cheek,' capital comes dripping from head to toe, from every pore, with blood and dirt” (CI, 925).²³
 - b. An again, property: “But as soon as the question of property is at stake, it becomes a sacred duty to proclaim the standpoint of the nursery tale as the one thing fit for all age-groups and all stages of development. In actual history, it is a notorious fact that conquest, enslavement, robbery, murder, in short, force, play the greatest part. In the tender annals of political economy, the, idyllic reigns from time immemorial. Right and 'labour' were from the beginning of time the sole means of enrichment, 'this year' of course always excepted. As a matter of fact, the methods of primitive accumulation are anything but idyllic.” (874)
 - c. Removal of the worker from the conditions of his own labor (874); “enslavement of the worker” (875); expropriation from the soil (876): so, we also see here how *embodiment* and expulsions are central. Capitalism makes the body *constitutive* for its *societal* form. So, I do not want to claim that that the body wasn’t central in pre-capitalist forms, but it now becomes the center of all *developmental* tendencies.
 - d. These expulsions take place with *force* (881), the means of economic development are violent (883)

²³ I just today listened to a podcast about increasing violence in cities, related to youth, gangs, weapons, etc., and though this is not completely wrong, the main thesis was that the main violence takes place in the family. Empirically this is certainly true, but theoretically it remains insufficient.

- e. Enclosures, depopulations, hunger, starvation, “clearing of the estates” (885-889)
- f. “The spoliation of the Church's property, the fraudulent alienation of the state domains, the theft of the common lands, the usurpation of feudal and clan property and its transformation into modern private property under circumstances of ruthless terrorism, all these things were just so many idyllic methods of primitive accumulation. They conquered the field for capitalist agriculture, incorporated the soil into capital, and created for the urban industries the necessary supplies of free and rightless proletarians” (895)
- g. Free day laborer and expropriated laborers and the poor are criminalized (896), M shows that being poor means being criminalized; work refusal gets criminalized, vagabonds are terrorized (897), work discipline is enforced and created, and eventually replaces direct force (899), everyone who resists capital is placed under “penal legislation” (903)
 - i. All of this central for Foucault's lectures on *The Punitive Society*: check how Foucault puts the “prison-form” and the “wage-form” together in chapter five of *The Punitive Society*: “I have tried to show that the prison-form can be brought together with the wage-form as the introduction of a certain quantity of time into a system of equivalences: wage against so much time of labor, prison against this or that offense. I have emphasized this kinship, but without saying that the model of the wage was transferred into penalty. I have said only that the same form is found in the wage and in prison: on the one hand, the time of life becomes an exchangeable material; on the other hand, the measure of time allows the quantification of the exchange, through the relation established either between a quantity of labor and a quantity of money, or between a quantity of time and the gravity of the offense. The form refers to the essential phenomenon, which is the introduction of the quantity of time as measure, and not only as economic measure in the capitalist system, but also as moral measure. Behind this introduction, for the quantity of time to become material and measure of exchange, power must have a hold on time, [not as an] ideological abstraction, but as a real extraction of time from people's lives: real condition of possibility of the functioning of the wages system and the system of imprisonment.” (83)
- h. Overall M describes the “bloody discipline that turned them into wage-labourers” (905)
- i. Remember: all of this is done as an attack against bourgeois historians and theorists who turn capitalism and its emergence into an “idyll”; genealogy instead of naturalized ideology.
- j. The means of subsistence are now released and the worker has to buy them back (909); the laborer becomes dependent on the capitalist in terms of food!! (very contemporary for the developing countries)
- k. The following sentence has produced a lot of debates: “Force is the midwife of every old society which is pregnant with a new one. It is itself an economic power [*Potenz*]” (916). Do Marx/Engels argue that violence is *necessary* also for the next stage?²⁴

²⁴ For this see the fantastic entry on violence in the HKWM by Balibar; it has been translated: https://inkrit.de/neuinkrit/mediadaten/en/en_archivehcdm/violence-hcdm.pdf

- I. BOOM ☀️: “The public debt becomes one of the most powerful levers of primitive accumulation” (even micro-lending, we might say...), as a consequence: “it has given rise to stock-exchange gambling and the modern bankocracy” (919) and an international credit system (920)
5. Two historical voices
 - a. “Even when a major commercial centre like Florence - a case to which we shall return - developed domestic urban production (largely the production of luxury goods for a relatively limited market), in addition to its role in servicing external mercantile activity, the basic logic of economic transactions was not essentially different. It was still a matter of recycling wealth or 'profit on alienation' in the process of circulation, rather than the creation of value in production, and the appropriation of surplus value, in the capitalist manner. These non-capitalist principles of trade existed in conjunction with non-capitalist modes of exploitation. For instance, in Western Europe, even where feudal serfdom had effectively disappeared, other forms of 'extra-economic' exploitation still prevailed. Even monetary rents in pre-capitalist societies were based on extraeconomic power. In eighteenth-century France, for example, where peasants still constituted the vast majority of the population and remained in possession of most land, office in the central state served as an economic resource for many members of the dominant classes, as a means of extracting surplus labour in the form of taxes from peasant producers. Even rent-appropriating landlords typically depended on various extra-economic powers and privileges to enhance their wealth. So peasants had direct access to the means of production, the land, while landlords and officeholders, with the help of various 'extra-economic' powers and privileges, extracted surplus labour from peasants directly in the form of rent or tax. While all kinds of people might buy and sell all kinds of things in the market, neither the peasant-proprietors who produced, nor the landlords and officeholders who appropriated what others produced, depended directly on the market for the conditions of their self-reproduction, and the relations between them were not mediated by the market. It was, as we shall see in the next chapter, a fundamental change in these social property relations - a change that made producers, appropriators, and the relations between them market dependent - that would bring about capitalism.”²⁵
 - b. “Primitive accumulation, the initial step towards capitalism, i.e. the expropriation of the peasantry, began all across Western Europe at the end of the Middle Ages. It assumed different forms and different paths and speeds in different countries. Sooner or later it cleared a path to the development of capitalism. England was only the classic case of this process. Capitalism certainly developed earliest in the city-states of fifteenth-century Florence, Milan and Venice based on their highly developed agriculture and advanced commercial, manufacturing and banking enterprises. Despite political division the late medieval period saw the emergence of an internal market for labour and goods in the peninsula and, as a consequence, the appearance of agrarian capitalism in the fertile Po Valley. Capital there entered and transformed agricultural production and producers were transformed into wage labourers. Industrial development was likewise strongest there, especially in Lombardy. But lacking a centralized territorial state that

²⁵ Wood, Ellen Meiksins, *The Origin of Capitalism. A Longer View* (London: Verso 2002), 79.

could protect it and too dependent on feudal and absolutist power, Italian capitalism tended to remain at the level of finance and trade and declined in the late sixteenth century”²⁶

6. Let’s see what comrade Martinez-Cruz will tell us about original accumulation.

²⁶ Heller, Henry, *A Marxist History of Capitalism* (London: Routledge 2019), 34. Global non-European extensions of this can be found in Wallerstein, Hobsbawm, Arrighi, and Banaji.

Session IX: Nov. 15 (Pre-Capitalist Forms; 471-514)

1. From last class

a. Sociology

- i. Jonny asked how far that which we are discussing in class differs from sociology. Again, after reading the introduction with Marx' extensive reflections on methodology it should be clear that Marx offers *at least* the following: [1] a social ontology, [2] a *constitutive* theory of society, including a class theory²⁷, [3] an epistemology (how can society be known), [4] a (structuralist) philosophy of history, and [5] a critique of political economy as a critique of the *categories* of political economy, all of which cannot be addressed or is rejected by sociology, at least if we understand by this a discipline that is ruled by empirical questions or social science questions alone. For example, you cannot find out empirically whether abstract labor is the substance of value. Marx is an anti-positivist and it is odd to see that a lot of dogmatic Marxist-Leninist rhetoric during the 20th Century was completely positivist.
- ii. I am pushing Marx as a philosophical *position*; i.e., I am not following contemporary fashionable ideas about "reimagining" different concepts. Truth and reason is to be upheld in Marxism.
- iii. Put differently, within the philosophical universe you *can* remain neutral in regard to sociological research, but you can no longer remain "neutral" towards critical social philosophy once you have read Marx because theory of society here is the constitutive realm in which everything else takes place. You *either* affirm it *or* you reject it.
- iv. Politically put, if you sit in your university office and work on difficult logical problems, *in the last instance* this is only possible because you partake in class war 😊. I always liked the following statement by Sartre: "Everything is political; that is, everything questions society as a whole and ends up disputing it."
- v. Put differently, *in the last instance*²⁸ all philosophy takes on a *real position* in society (in the form of ideology in the sense of Althusser): whether you are a liberal, a Marxist or Anarchist, these cannot be spelled out in terms of "beliefs" alone, as they are *in the end* practical: "One of the goals of philosophy is to

²⁷ Reading the *Washington Post* these days is fun 😊: "Critical race theory, Guelzo says, is a subset of critical theory that began with Immanuel Kant in the 1790s. It was a response to — and rejection of — the principles of the Enlightenment and the Age of Reason on which the American republic was founded. Kant believed that "reason was inadequate to give shape to our lives" and so he set about "developing a theory of being critical of reason," Guelzo says. But the critique of reason ended up justifying "ways of appealing to some very unreasonable things as explanations — things like race, nationality, class," he says. Critical theory thus helped spawn totalitarian ideologies in the 20th century such as Marxism and Nazism, which taught that all human relationships are relationships of power between an oppressor class and an oppressed class. [...] Critical theory has led to the rise of ideologies that have killed millions." (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/11/11/danger-critical-race-theory/>). This is from the podcast transcript where the quotes come from: "Well, what prompted us to have you on is you were on Fox News the other day, and first time I'd ever heard Immanuel Kant mentioned on Fox News, but it was a fascinating explanation of what critical race theory is" (<https://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/6.23.21-Guelzo-transcript.pdf>). Also check: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0sRQJNE-M8Q>. Prof. Guelzo teaches at Princeton. Democracy dies in darkness.

²⁸ For this, see Althusser, Louis, *Philosophy of the Encounter. Later Writings, 1978-1987* (London: Verso 2006), 270.

wage theoretical battle. That is why we can say that every thesis is always, by its very nature, an antithesis.”²⁹

- vi. Having said all this, the “empirical” part in Marx is the historical research with which he tries to flesh out the historical content of the ensemble of social relations which the categories of political economy express.
 - vii. The difference between categories of thought/theory and history re-appears in 20th Century critical theory as the attempt to re-combine philosophy and empirical sociology.
- b. I had not read carefully enough for my last notes through pp.470-471. Two contexts are important for what Marx says on p.470: [1] the combination of labor, and [2] the externalization of the worker in the system of machinery.
- i. Combination/collective: this topic is discussed in an entire chapter in *Capital* in which Marx analyses the “re-combination” of individual laborers and labor tasks in the modern production system. On the one hand, we find an increasing labor division and reorganization of workers, social hierarchies, space, time, etc.; on the other hand, we find an increasing collectivization, insofar as both occurs at the same time, namely, *increasing individualization and separation of workers as well as increasing “combination” of workers under an alien production process*: “The communal or combined labour posited in this way – as activity and in the passive, objective form - is however at the same time posited as an other towards the really existing individual labour - as an alien objectivity (alien property) as well as an alien subjectivity (of capital).” (470)
 - ii. The means of production lose their instrumental character because laborers are increasingly becoming an appendix to the labor process: “The combination of this labour appears just as subservient to and led by an alien will and an alien intelligence - having its animating unity elsewhere - as its material unity appears subordinate to the objective unity of the machinery, of fixed capital, which, as **animated monster, objectifies the scientific idea**, and is in fact the coordinator, does not in any way relate to the individual worker as his instrument; but rather he himself exists as an **animated individual punctuation mark**; as its living isolated accessory.” (470) Note: science in Marx cannot be disconnected from the means of production (technology).
 - iii. Result: increasing alienation on the level of collective work, private property, as well as an increasing importance of fixed capital and science as a productive force (machine fragment); science *as* a form of alienation.
 - iv. Just think about today’s condition in office environments in which all laborers are sitting in front of monitors (note the word “monitor”): they are *completely* isolated, many are reduced to “attention”; i.e., are in truth an appendix to the machine, and as isolated workers they are completely collectivized because they are just small “nodes” in the universe of networks and the internet of things. All of this is only possible because science exists in the form of technologies, and since all of this is the “negated property of the individualized worker” (471) the entire apparatus appears as alien to everyone, no longer controllable, owned by

²⁹ Ibid., 268.

anonymous and *abstract* others and remains in the hands of invisible forces. Society becomes a separate object; *a thing*; a machine - a living machine? To be sure, as we will see in the *machine fragment*, there is also a massive contradiction to be found here, insofar as this social network still is a massive *collective* endeavor in which the means of production in the form of human knowledge are *potentially communist*.

- v. Marx on co-operation and universality (=being human & species being):
 “Whether the combined working day, in a given case, acquires this increased productivity because it heightens the mechanical force of labour, or extends its sphere of action over a greater space, or contracts the field of production relatively to the scale of production, or at the critical moment sets large masses of labour to work, or excites rivalry between individuals and raises their animal spirits, or impresses on the similar operations carried on by a number of men the stamp of continuity and manysidedness, or performs different operations simultaneously, or economizes the means of production by use in common, or lends to individual labour the character of average social labour - whichever of these is the cause of the increase, the special productive power of the combined working day is, under all circumstances, the social productive power of labour, or the productive power of social labour. **This power arises from co-operation itself. When the worker co-operates in a planned way with others, he strips off the fetters of his individuality, and develops the capabilities of his species.**”
 (Capital, Vol1., 441).
- c. Original Accumulation & Non-Teleological View of History
 - i. Althusser on objecting to teleology
 - 1. “The slightest reflection on the presuppositions of this conception suffices to show that it is predicated on a very special type of relationship between the structure and the elements which this structure is supposed to unify. For what is a mode of production? We provided an answer to this question, following Marx: *it is a particular 'combination' of elements*. These elements are an accumulation of money (by the 'owners of money'), an accumulation of the technical means of production (tools, machines, an experience of production on the part of the workers), an accumulation of the raw materials of production (nature) and an accumulation of producers (proletarians divested of all means of production). The elements do not exist in history *so that* a mode of production may exist, they exist in history *in a floating' state* prior to their 'accumulation' and 'combination', each being the product of its own history, **and none being the teleological product of the others or their history.**”³⁰
 - 2. “The fact is that this process took place, culminating in a result that was promptly diverted from its possible, presumed end by 'owners of money' looking for impoverished manpower. This diversion is the mark of **the non-teleology of the process** and of the incorporation of its

³⁰ Althusser, Louis, *Philosophy of the Encounter. Later Writings, 1978-1987* (London: Verso 2006), 198.

result into a process that both made it possible and was wholly foreign to it.”³¹

- ii. “The conjunction of the flow of money, on one hand, and a flow of those who only have their labor-power to sell, on the other, as the necessary or minimal constitution of capitalist accumulation, would seem to indicate that the capitalist mode of production cannot, in either its constitution or definition, be considered a simple effect of one term or element: it is a relation, or an ensemble of relations. To argue that the capitalist mode of production ought to be grasped as an ‘ensemble of relations’ is, in a primary and almost entirely negative (or critical) sense, to separate a thought of the capitalist mode of production from a thought of ‘human nature.’ The capitalist mode of production cannot be understood as a simple expression or deviation of human nature: it is neither the realization of a fundamental and originary desire to hoard nor the suppression of an ancient communal essence.”³²
- iii. Bosteels on the importance of the pages on pre-capitalist forms in South America (against my reading as a non-romanticised history): “Even in the *Grundrisse*, whose subject-oriented approach inspired Negri’s intervention in Althusser’s seminar that was published as *Marx Beyond Marx*, we do well to focus not just on the 1857 *Einleitung* or on the so-called “fragment on the machine” from which all Italian autonomists and post-autonomists took their inspiration, but also on the central section on “Economic Forms that Precede Capitalism,” which was edited in English as a separate booklet by Eric Hobsbawm and, **particularly in peripheral or postcolonial contexts such as in Latin America, went through numerous reprints in Spanish, published in Aricó’s Biblioteca de Pensamiento Socialista, as one of the most fundamental texts in the entire Marxist corpus.** What this section highlights is the need to raise anew the question of the historical emergence of capitalism out of the fortuitous encounter of factors that are themselves not capitalist but that subsequently come to be transcoded and reinscribed into the impossible loop of capital, as though they had been the result of capital itself. It is in large part due to such an impossible looping mechanism that the so-called primitive, agrarian, or peasant communes or communities that precede the movement of originary accumulation appear as being lost forever, so that the various uprisings and revolts, which for this reason often call themselves communes, claim to operate in the name of their utopian return. **Such a utopian dream** is not just the result of a retrospective illusion, to be dispelled through the adoption of an ontological sense of the community that would be always already lost; it is also an inevitable aspect of any political initiative that seems to mobilize a collective subject, there where previously only atomistic individualities seemed to be available on the marketplace of civil-bourgeois society.”³³

³¹ Ibid., 199.

³² Read, Jason, “Primitive Accumulation: The Aleatory Foundation of Capitalism,” *Rethinking Marxism*, Volume 14, Number 2 (Summer 2002), 24-49, here 31.

³³ Bosteels, Bruno, “Reading Capital from the Margins. Notes on the Logic of Uneven Development”. In: Nesbitt, Nick (ed.), *The Concept of Crisis. Reading Capital Today* (Duke UP 2017), 122-174, here 153.

d. Unproductive labor

- i. As Chase pointed out last class, I missed the passage in which Marx states that certain service laborers, such as lawyers, doctors, teachers, “mental servants etc.,” in “bourgeois society itself” (468) are unproductive. My response to Chase was [1] that productive labor is only labor in connection with it being valorized, and [2] that Marx still assumes that, as he puts it, “it does not occur to anyone that by means of exchange of his revenue for such services; i.e., through private consumption, the capitalist posits himself as capitalist” (468).
 1. So, to clarify, what Marx wants to say is that those rich merchants at the beginning of modernity who *purchase* services (because they have sufficient monetary resources) do not become through these acts capitalists (which is fairly obvious) because in these cases they *spent* their surplus for services that do not feed back into surplus production.
 2. Today, most services feed back into valorization.
 3. In addition, Marx seems to assume that *all* services in bourgeois society are privately purchased services. For example, you could hire someone (*not* a company!) for gardening or walking your dogs: “But even given that A pays money for the service, this is not a transformation of his money into capital, but rather the positing of his money as mere medium of circulation, in order to obtain an object for consumption, a specific use value.” (466) In fact, **those services would be “unproductive”** as long as the means of production and the service workers themselves would be completely “self-employed” people and would not require other productive forces to be purchased and used.
 4. We can also think of many activities offered by the lowest and precarious class: biking tourists around in Berlin or Mumbai (if you do *not* do it for a company), washing cars in US towns (if you do *not* do it for a company), etc.
 5. Some sociologists have recently argued that we see *again* a rise of this unproductive service work (the best example is dog walkers in Manhattan or private baby sitters) because the middle and upper classes by now have *so much* that they can directly “employ” people for services. They do not, as at the beginning of capitalism, feel as if they waste their money. So, the point is that perhaps under current unequal conditions we are moving back in time because the upper middle classes and upper classes behave like these rich merchants and other people that Marx has in mind!
 6. I do wonder though what the role of the money received for these services is if it is used to pay back debt or to “productively consume” in capitalized chains, such as Target or Walmart. Hell, I don’t know... 😞
 7. However, *overall*, I don’t think that the aforementioned points can be applied to our current situation because almost all service activities are themselves subsumed under capital (for example, even small gardening companies need investment into proper means or production,

landscapers are employed for companies that are dependents on banks, investments, etc. In these cases, the service activities *are* productive since they *do* “produce money” (467).

8. Teaching: the work we do at research universities, even philosophy, contributes to that process *without any doubt*, as it is not the case that all of you give me cash on Monday evenings for learning something in my backyard about Marx. Marx simply did not consider the possibility that service work could itself be valorized and industrialized on a large scale.
 9. Hey, paying me hard cash would be a good idea, as this could actually lead to more serious preparation for my seminar!!!!!!!!!!!!!! 😊
- ii. Finally, we should also argue that it is not in the interest of capitalists to “waste” their money for private services (as this would in fact only be consumption); rather, it is better for the capitalist if service work is valorized, since it then directly is part of surplus value creation. Now, I think that Marx wants to say something like that at the bottom of p.466: “**Here A sees his money not realized but devalued in its transposition** from the form of value into that of use value. Labour is here exchanged not as use value for value, but as itself a particular use value, as value for use. The more frequently A repeats the exchange, the poorer does he become. **This exchange is not an act of wealth-getting for him, not an act of value creation, but of devaluation of the values he has in hand, in his possession.**” (466). So, what he says here is that from the perspective of the “possible” capitalist (remember: we are talking here about original accumulation) service exchanges appear as consumption; i.e., wasteful. You see your money decreasing instead of increasing.
 - iii. To be sure, two things have changed during the 20th Century: [1] the role of consumption has completely changed and is now productive in a way unimaginable for Marx, and [2] if you are a billionaire or even upper middle class today you can care less about these things because you are rich *beyond any reasonable limits*; i.e., spending a million here or there for untaxed and unofficial services, golf caddies or baby sitters does not really hurt you at all. Put differently, **you do not experience consumption in the way it was experienced by agents in early modernity** in Europe. Of course, today the system does everything to give even those who do not have much – in the core countries - more consumption via debt.
- e. Original accumulation
- i. As Jessica pointed out, Marx’s four conditions for the original accumulation might be too narrow if seen in the light of contemporary tendencies, insofar as M does not deal with cultural, legal, and political aspects.
 1. First, to be fair to Marx, historically, the “superstructure”, especially administration, political system, legal system, state, “culture”, etc. was not really developed (as it is today).

2. Second, if we look into the related chapters in *Capital*, we can see that Marx does expand some of these aspects. For example, he mentions the centralist role of the state and its accumulated means of violence.
 3. Third, to repeat the point, the original accumulation is the situation *before* capital comes into being as the beginning and the end of the entire reproduction process. What we are facing today is the fact that capital is in full swing and perhaps, who knows?, coming to its endpoint, as some argue (I have my doubts). So, we cannot simply draw a parallel between the original accumulation that M has in mind and processes of dispossession that we see today. It is my impression that a few authors in the literature do not understand or do not reflect on this crucial difference; i.e. “accumulation of dispossession” (Harvey) *cannot* simply be the repetition of the historical presuppositions of capital’s coming into being.
2. 471-516 Forms which precede capitalist formations
- a. We should not read these pages as [1] romantic longing for the past (as Marx was progressive) and as [2] a linear history of forms preceding capitalism. A structural reading of these pages an analysis of the material encounter of elements, such as property, land, and individual, is the best way to approach these pages.³⁴ Anderson calls this “multilinearity” and EM Wood argues that these pages show that Marx is *less* a determinist than was classically thought.³⁵
 - b. Marx differentiates three modes that differ from the bourgeois social form in terms of individuality, community, property, and land.
 - i. “The positing of the individual as a worker, in this nakedness, is itself a product of *history*” (472; before = “the individual relates to himself as the proprietor, as master of the conditions of this reality” (471)
 - ii. 472 Asiatic (Oriental Despotism)
 1. Key words: Pastoralism, migratory, clan community, earth = workshop, clan community presupposes communal appropriation of land, community property; higher community is presented by a person (chief, lord, despot, or family clans), indifference city/countryside
 2. “The unity of humans and community, on the one hand, and of humans and nature, on the other hand, is not placed in question. What is significant here is that Marx presents a form of historiography that

³⁴ The best commentary on Marx’s treatment of non-Western societies, the history of social formations and ethnological research is still Kevin B. Anderson’s *Marx at the Margins. On Nationalism, Ethnicity, and Non-Western Societies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2010).

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 156

breaks with the model of the progressive domination of the development of productive forces.”³⁶

iii. 474 Ancient

1. Key words: Town/rural distinction, territories as belonging to towns, war between communes, individual and communal property is separated, migration, mediation by belonging to a state, central place of agricultural work, property in land, districts, ruralization of the city

iv. 476 Germanic

1. Key words: Contrast between city and countryside; urbanization of countryside; unity is established through coming together, meetings, state/city is not presupposed, unity is the common past (not the city), *ager publicus* = “complement to individual property” (483), center is the individual residence, communal property is mediated, not presupposed, shared projects are established through pledges
2. “The commune is neither the substance of which the individual appears as a mere accident ; nor is it a generality with a being and unity as such [*seiende Einheit*] either in the mind and in the existence of the city and of its civic needs as distinct from those of the individual, or in its civic land and soil as its particular presence as distinct from the particular economic presence of the commune member; rather, the commune, on the one side, is presupposed in-itself prior to the individual proprietors as a communality of language, blood etc., but it exists as a presence, on the other hand, only in its real assembly for communal purposes; and to the extent that it has a particular economic existence in the hunting and grazing lands for communal use, it is so used by each individual proprietor as such, not as representative of the state (as in Rome); it is really the common property of the individual proprietors, not of the Union of these proprietors endowed with an existence separate from themselves, the city itself” (484f.)

v. In all three forms

1. “In all these forms of community-relationship, be it natural or historical or traditional, the relationship is pre-given, presupposed to the individual. The community relationship is a limit [*Schranke*] to the development of both the individual and the society.”³⁷
2. the economic aim is the “production of use values” (485)

³⁶ Tomba in Bollofiore 2013, 396. As Tomba outlines in his essay, Marx’s “progressivism” in the *Grundrisse* is toned down during the 1860s: “The ‘social individual’ disappears, also terminologically, and the mutilations of the worker succeed him. Marx’s point of view is not that of history and its development, but that of the concreteness of the worker, of his body and mind. The intellectual potentialities increase, but are incorporated in science and in the machine, in the ‘dead labour, that, vampire-like, only lives by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks’. For instance, computers have not created more ‘free’ time; on the contrary, but they have been used to extend labour-time, which has also invaded the private sphere. One must not look romantically to a precapitalist past or defend the development of the means of production as representatives of liberation. Both these perspectives are apologetic for the existing state of affairs.” (Ibid., 401).

³⁷ Tomba in Bollofiore 2013, 397.

3. the earth appears as an original instrument of production (485); earth as “inorganic nature of his subjectivity”, conditions for production are *fixed*, not produced
4. the individuals have an “objective mode of existence” as being *presupposed* for activity (485)
5. Against Locke: “The relation to the earth as property is always mediated through the occupation of the land and soil, peacefully or violently, by the tribe, the commune, in some more or less naturally arisen or already historically developed form.” (485)
6. All aspects of the labor process are mediated by relations to the soil and by the relation to the commune (486); “The individual can never appear here in the dot-like isolation [*Punktualitaet*] in which he appears as mere free worker.” (485)
7. The labor process remains bound to climate and “physical make-up of the land of the soil” (486); that’s an important point, as Marx shows in *Capital* how the capital/labor productivity first appears in agriculture and in the scientific and technological modification of the soil.
8. “there can be no conception here of a free and full development either of the individual or of the society, since such development stands in contradiction to the original relation.” (487)
9. In all three forms society appears as something *natural* (492)
10. Note the role of the earth throughout all these pages: they are very important for recent attempts to think about “non-Western” notions of land, property, and community in eco-philosophy, etc.

3. Communism

- a. Marx seems to indicate at least four different forms of wealth
 - i. Wealth in the form of the common good
 - ii. Wealth in the form of use values
 - iii. Wealth in the form of value (capitalism)
 - iv. Wealth in the form of perfection (post-capitalism)
- b. Marx’s position in these pages is not romantic or a romanticized critique of capitalism by claiming that human have been in harmony with nature in precapitalist societies and that we need to return to this. The opposite is the case, insofar as Marx never gets tired of arguing that capitalism lays the foundations for a communist society to come: “In fact, however, **when the limited bourgeois form is stripped away, what is wealth other than the universality of individual needs, capacities, pleasures, productive forces etc., created through universal exchange? The full development of human mastery over the forces of nature, those of so-called nature as well as of humanity's own nature? The absolute working out of his creative potentialities, with no presupposition other than the previous historic development,**” (488; woaaahhh!! 🌟🌟🌟). Put differently, capitalism develops the forces of production (laborer&mops) up to the point where capital (i.e., the ensemble of relations of production) itself appears as a *limit* for these developments (see notes for last week).

- a. Tomba on the role of the *Grundrisse*: “For this reason, he tries to sketch out possibilities of liberation in the trend of capitalist development and stresses the ‘great civilising influence of capital’, in order to reach a new stage of society. In this context, one must understand his representation of the *social individual* as an attempt to prefigure the new anthropological type of a new social form, whose capabilities are socially developed. Social development, *social general knowledge*, is not opposed to the individual, as it will occur in *Capital*, but rather, represents his own development. If modernity has produced the individual, Marx tries to sketch the outlines of a new concept of the individual, beyond the modern concept of individuality”³⁸
 - b. Side-note: the “mastery over nature” is of course the contentious moment in the last quote, insofar as it remains unclear how to interpret this (especially in the light of current ecological crises).³⁹
4. Remarks on Proudhon
- a. Marx point here is that that which appears as “natural” conditions of the modern production process are in truth *historical* in nature: “the extraeconomic origin of property means nothing else than the historic origin of the bourgeois economy, of the forms of production which are theoretically or ideally expressed by the categories of political economy.” (489)
5. Separation earth/individual:
- a. Accordingly, what Marx points out is that we should not simply assume a unity between individual and the earth in some kind of original harmony; rather, we need to understand the historical process as a process of separation and “*dissolution* of the relations to the earth” (497): “It is not the unity of living and active humanity with the natural, inorganic conditions of their metabolic exchange with nature, and hence their appropriation of nature, which requires explanation or is the result of a historic process, but rather the separation between these inorganic conditions of human existence and this active existence, a separation which is completely posited only in the relation of wage labour and capital. In the relations of slavery and serfdom this separation does not take place; rather, one part of society is treated by the other as itself merely an inorganic and natural condition of its own reproduction. The slave stands in no relation whatsoever to the objective conditions of his labour; rather, labour itself, both in the form of the slave and in that of the serf, is classified as an inorganic condition of production along with other natural beings, such as cattle, as an accessory of the earth.” (489)
 - b. The earth originally appears as the *materially existing subjectivity*: [1] as the inorganic being of the individual, [2] a workshop of forces, [3] domain of his will (497)
 =====./////////
 ////////// [← comments from Hegel who stepped on my keyboard and apparently enjoys trampling on it!] I guess he wants to see considerations about the relationship of property and community in regard to non-human animals 😊]
 - c. Accordingly, capital *breaks* the “symbiosis” between individual and earth, and *therefore* unleashes the growth dynamics of modernity.

³⁸ Tomba in Bellofiore 2013, 395.

³⁹ Note how even Foster deals with this in an uncritical manner; Foster in Musto 2008, 98.

- d. In slavery the body of the laborer has not yet been separated from the self and appears as its natural condition (490)
 - e. Note the interesting comment on language: "The abstraction of a community, in which the members have nothing in common but language etc., and barely that much, is obviously the product of much later historical conditions" (490); so, could we say that abstract notions developed in modern philosophy of language (meaning as a super-concept, language as apriori, linguistic turn, Wittgenstein, etc.) could be subjected to ideology critique? We might ask: why does the ensemble of social relations appear in these philosophies as an abstraction in the form of logic, language, or semantics? What kind of social position is expressed in such views?
6. Property
- a. The running commentary on the concept of property is very central for these pages, insofar as Marx show that the modern, bourgeois, concept of property is certainly not the all-determining concept for the entire historical process. Among other things, Marx points out that the concept of property can *in no case* be thought of as a concept that applies only to the relation between individual and things/land; rather, historically, it means that one belongs to a community (492).
 - b. He also criticizes idealist notions of property: "Property, in so far as it is only the conscious relation – and posited in regard to the individual by the community, and proclaimed and guaranteed as law - to the conditions of production as his own, so that the producer's being appears also in the objective conditions belonging to him - is only realized by production itself. **The real appropriation takes place not in the mental but in the real, active relation to these conditions – in their real positing as the conditions of his subjective activity**" (493).
 - c. All of this is directed towards bourgeois, modern, notions of property: "Not only do the objective conditions change in the act of reproduction, e.g. the village becomes a town, the wilderness a cleared field etc., but the producers change, too, in that they bring out new qualities in themselves, develop themselves in production, transform themselves, develop new powers and ideas, new modes of intercourse, new needs and new language" (494); note that Marx points to "ideas" and "language" as something that depends upon the real and "active relations". This also stands opposed to contemporary left and politically-correct linguistic idealisms of those who believe that we will change the world by changing words.
 - d. And, of course, something Althusserian is to be found here, insofar as the active relations are nothing else than the "living reality in a specific *mode of production*" (495); i.e., a particular form of property *and its conceptual formulation and understanding* in philosophy emerges out of the mode of production itself.
 - e. Please take into account that this concept by Marx is, given what was going on in modern philosophy, *revolutionary*; put in Althusserian terms, it establishes an entirely new way of thinking about property: "**Property**, then, originally means - in its Asiatic, Slavonic, ancient classical, Germanic form - **the relation of the working (producing or self-reproducing) subject to the conditions of his production or reproduction as his own**" (495)
7. (Trans)Individuality

- a. Note the critique on p.496: to proceed “from the development of isolated individuals” is “stupid”. “But human beings become individuals only through the process of history. [...] Exchange [i.e., capitalism] itself is a chief means of this individuation [*Vereinzelung*]” (496); remember: we encountered this claim and term already in the introduction to G.
 - b. Bourgeois society “makes a meal” of the worker, Jeezz... 😞 (496)
 - c. The “development of the forces of production” (496) leads to a dissolution of social forms in which the community is prior to the individuals. So, again, for Marx this process of releasing the individual from fixed and quasi-natural determinations by community and nature is not something to be bemoaned; Marx is not presenting normative claims here; everything is contradictory in history. This dissolution contains [1] relations to the earth, [2] relations to the mop, [3] relations to the means of consumption, and [4] relations to the individual and it’s self (498).
8. Capital
- a. Capital completely externalizes relations 1-4, especially landownership and the worker (remember: labor power, not concrete labor is appropriated by capital); it also presupposes the dissolution of master-servant relations (“bondage relations” (502); these are relations of personal domination. Note: this does not mean that they completely disappear (enslaved and quasi-enslaved relations are still present all over the globe), but they are no longer *constitutive* for capitalism. The dissolution of landownership also means that capital cannot emerge out of landed property (505) because capital comes out of circulation which, in turn, is universally only possible on the basis of generalized commodity exchange and money as externalization of simple circulation (505). Put differently, M argues that only merchant profits and usury are preconditions of capital.
 - b. Remember: money is only possible as constitutive for our society *because all conditions of labor are “separated from labour itself”* (504)
 - c. “The original formation of capital does not happen, as is sometimes imagined, with capital heaping up necessities of life and instruments of labour and raw materials, in short, the objective conditions of labour which have already been unbound from the soil and animated by human labour. **Capital does not create the objective conditions of labour. Rather, its original formation is that, through the historic process of the dissolution of the old mode of production, value existing as money-wealth is enabled, on one side, to buy the objective conditions of labour; on the other side, to exchange money for the living labour of the workers who have been set free.** All these moments are present [here later ALTHUSSER: “encounter” of elements]; their divorce is itself a historic process, a process of dissolution, and it is the latter which enables money to transform itself into capital. Money itself, to the extent that it also plays an active role, does so only in so far as it intervenes in this process as itself a highly energetic solvent, and to that extent assists in the creation of the plucked, object-less free workers; but certainly not by creating the objective conditions of their existence; rather by helping to speed up their separation from them - their propertylessness” (506-507)
 - d. **“There can therefore be nothing more ridiculous than to conceive this original formation of capital as if capital had stockpiled and created the objective conditions of**

offered them to the worker, who was bare of these possessions.⁴⁰ Rather, monetary wealth in part helped to strip the labour powers of able-bodied individuals from these conditions; and in part this process of divorce proceeded without it. When the formation of capital had reached a certain level, monetary wealth could place itself as mediator between the objective conditions of life, thus liberated, and the liberated but also *homeless* and *emptyhanded* labour powers, and buy the latter with the former. But now, as far as the formation of money-wealth itself is concerned, this belongs to the prehistory of the bourgeois economy production" (509)

- e. The following is important for a Negri/Foucault perspective, as capital is here presented in close connection with power: "*Capital proper does nothing but bring together the mass of hands and instruments which it finds on hand. It agglomerates them under its command*" (508).
 - f. The following passage is super interesting, as Marx points to commodity fetishism in the *Grundrisse*: "This system of exchange rests on *capital* as its foundation, and, when it is regarded in isolation from capital, as it **appears on the surface, as an independent system**, then it is a mere *illusion*, but a **necessary illusion**." (509)
 - g. Class: "The *production of capitalist and wage labourers is thus a chief product of capital's realization process*. Ordinary economics, which looks only at the things produced, forgets this completely. When objectified labour is, in this process, at the same time posited as the worker's *non-objectivity*, as the objectivity of a subjectivity antithetical to the worker, as *property* of a will alien to him, then capital is necessarily at the same time the *capitalist*, **and the idea held by some socialists that we need capital but not the capitalists is altogether wrong**. It is posited within the concept of capital that the objective conditions of labour - and these are its own product take on a personality towards it, or, what is the same, that they are posited as the property of a *personality* alien to the worker. The concept of capital contains the capitalist." (512). This is very Lukacsian. Of course, as we said before, this becomes problematic if the middle class gets sucked up in the investment process and when workers become mega-consumers.
 - h. Piketty should have read p.513.
9. Let's see what comrade Halsne will tell us what the dissolution of the forms preceding the bourgeoisie mode of production has to do with subjectivity.

⁴⁰ It is always amusing to ask in my IAH class on globalization how workers were made to work "voluntarily" in the upcoming industrialization of the economy, or why workers agree to work under unbearable conditions on sugar plantations in central America. Often students say that workers do that because land and plantation owners offer them *incentives*, hehe! 😊

Session X: Nov. 22 (Circulation; 516-549, 690-714)

1. Last class

- a. We discussed, or at least pointed to, important underlying issues and concepts in Marx. Here are a few remarks on the problem of individuality and subjectivity (a very good secondary source for the first concept is Basso 2013)
- b. Individualism
 - i. The term itself emerges in the 18th Century and is critically analyzed from all directions. For example, Edmund Burke connects it to fragmentation, French socialists bemoan egoism, and Tocqueville mentions it in the context of democracy. So, it is important to see that the *concept* (or its ideological expressions) seems to emerge *in* bourgeois society.
 - ii. Perhaps, following Carl Schmitt here, all political concepts are political and can be traced back to a practical field of their emergence.
 - iii. Tocqueville: "Individualism is a recently coined expression prompted by a new idea, for our forefathers knew only of egoism. Egoism is an ardent and excessive love of oneself which leads man to relate everything back to himself and to prefer himself above everything. **Individualism is a calm and considered feeling which persuades each citizen to cut himself off from his fellows and to withdraw into the circle of his family and friends in such a way that he thus creates a small group of his own and willingly abandons society at large to its own devices.** Egoism springs from a blind instinct; individualism from wrong-headed thinking rather than from depraved feelings. It originates as much from defects of intelligence as from the mistakes of the heart. Egoism blights the seeds of every virtue, individualism at first dries up only the source of public virtue. In the longer term it attacks and destroys all the others and will finally merge with egoism. Egoism is a perversity as old as the world and is scarcely peculiar to one form of society more than another. **Individualism is democratic in origin and threatens to grow as conditions become equal.** [...] As each class closes up to the others and merges with them, its members become indifferent to each other and treat each other as strangers. Aristocracy had created a long chain of citizens from the peasant to the king; democracy breaks down this chain and separates all the links."⁴¹
 - i. An important (and often cited) contribution stems from Macpherson who tries to derive the concept of individualism from the concept of private property in modern society: "The assumptions which comprise **possessive individualism** may be summarized in the following seven propositions. (i) What makes a man human is freedom from dependence on the wills of others. (ii) Freedom from dependence on others means freedom from any relations with others except those relations which the individual enters voluntarily with a view to his own interest. (iii) The individual is essentially the proprietor of his own person and capacities, for which he owes nothing to society (iv) Although the individual

⁴¹ Tocqueville, *Democracy in America and Two Essays in America*, tr. G.E. Bevan (London: Penguin 2003), 587 (Vol2/Sec2/Ch2).

cannot alienate the whole of his property in his own person, he may alienate his capacity to labour. (v) Human society consists of a series of market relations. [...] (vi) Since freedom from the wills of others is what makes a man human, each individual's freedom can rightfully be limited only by such obligations and rules as are necessary to secure the same freedom for others. (vii) Political society is a human contrivance for the protection of the individual's property in his person and goods, and (therefore) for the maintenance of orderly relations of exchange between individuals regarded as proprietors of themselves."⁴²

- ii. The sociologist Zygmunt Bauman has put this into a nice image: society appears as a *campground*. Everyone is satisfied when basic services are regulated by a basic administration and your neighbor goes to sleep at 10pm; i.e., does not disturb you in your site. We might say that in our network society we live in a monster campground.
- iii. The early Marx puts it this way: "Just as civil society has split off from the political state, so too civil society has divided within itself into *class* and *social position*, even though the two are linked by numerous relations. The principle of the civil class or civil society is *enjoyment* and the *capacity to enjoy*. In his political role, the member of civil society breaks away from his class, his real private position; only then does he come into his own as a *human being*, only then does his determination as the member of a state, as a social being, appear as his human determination. **For all of his other determinations in civil society appear as *inessential* to the man, to the individual, as *external determinations*, necessary to his existence within the whole, i.e. forming a bond with the whole, but a bond which he can just as easily cast away. (The civil society of the present is the principle of *individualism* carried to its logical conclusion. Individual existence is the ultimate goal; activity, work, content, etc., are *only means*.)**" (Marx, Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, remark on section 307)⁴³
- iv. So, Corinne's intervention that there were certainly individuals before capitalism can be modified in the following way: what it means *to be* an individual differs in different modes of production or societies. Since in capitalism the individual is completely released from traditional communal relations (in connection with privatization spreading into every corner of life and the separation of civil society from the political), everyone tends to conceive of oneself as a *product of its own activities in disconnection from all others*. The self, we might say, appears as the result of one's own doing. This is only possible because society is completely externalized and appears as something *inessential* to the individual.
- v. A **material history of individualism** would contain elements such as commodification, and, for example, labor conditions. In *Capital* Marx remarks that the piece wage leads to a larger feeling of the laborer to *do something on*

⁴² Macpherson, C.B., *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism. Hobbes to Locke* (Oxford: Oxford UP 1962), 263.

⁴³ Marx, Karl, *Early Writings*, tr. R. Livingston (London: Penguin 1992), 147.

their own and to achieve something through their own activity; not to speak of competition here.

- vi. It is important to note that “official” M-L took individualism to be a purely bourgeois principle (as opposed to class consciousness, etc.), which is certainly not completely false, but this doctrine underestimates, as we know by now, Marx’s *positive* concept of the individual, insofar as a socialist society would *not* eliminate individuality. The issue is not collective praxis vs. individualism, but collective praxis *and* individualism. Remember: “when the limited bourgeois form is stripped away, what is wealth other than the universality of individual needs, capacities, pleasures, productive forces etc.” (see notes for last class). So, capitalism develops the productive forces and, like it or not, develops individuals in a variety of ways (at least potentially!). Just think about the pluralization of aesthetics, choices, sensitivities, sexual identities, etc. To be sure, this is not all positive, but we can’t say that it is all negative!
- vii. Again, this positive focus on the *productive forces* (and less attention paid to the relations of production) seems to recede into the background after *Grundrisse*.
- viii. Then look at the following passage from *Grundrisse* on alienation: “The fact that in the development of the productive powers of labour the objective conditions of labour, objectified labour, must grow relative to living labour - this is actually a tautological statement, for what else does growing productive power of labour mean than that less immediate labour is required to create a greater product, and that therefore social wealth expresses itself more and more in the conditions of labour created by labour itself?⁴⁴ - this fact appears from the standpoint of capital not in such a way that one of the moments of social activity - objective labour - becomes the ever more powerful body of the other moment, of subjective, living labour, but rather - and this is important for wage labour - that the objective conditions of labour assume an ever more colossal independence, represented by its very extent, opposite living labour, and that social wealth confronts labour in more powerful portions as an alien and dominant power. The emphasis comes to be placed not on the state of being *objectified*, but on the state of being *alienated*, dispossessed, sold [Der Ton wird gelegt nicht auf das *Vergegenstaendlichkeitsein*, sondern das *Entfremdet*-, Entäußert-, Veräußert sein]; on the condition that the monstrous objective power which social labour itself erected opposite itself as one of its moments belongs not to the worker, but to the personified conditions of production, i.e. to capital. To the extent that, from the standpoint of capital and wage labour, the creation of the objective body of activity happens in antithesis to the immediate labour capacity - that this process of objectification in fact appears as a process of dispossession from the standpoint of labour or as appropriation of alien labour from the standpoint of capital, to that extent, this twisting and inversion [*Verdrehung und Verkehrung*] is a *real [phenomenon]*, not a merely *supposed one* existing merely in the imagination of the workers and the capitalists. **But obviously this process of inversion is a**

⁴⁴ = machine fragment.

merely *historical* necessity, a necessity for the development of the forces of production solely from a specific historic point of departure, or basis, but in no way an *absolute* necessity of production; rather, a vanishing one, and the result and the inherent purpose of this process is to suspend this basis itself, together with this form of the process. The bourgeois economists are so much cooped up within the notions belonging to a specific historic stage of social development that the necessity of the *objectification* of the powers of social labour appears to as inseparable from the necessity of their *alienation vis-a-vis* living labour. But with the suspension of the *immediate* character of living labour, as merely individual, or as general merely internally or merely externally, with the positing of the activity of individuals as immediately general or *social* activity, the objective moments of production are stripped of this form of alienation; they are thereby posited as property, as the organic social body within which the individuals reproduce themselves as individuals, but as social individuals. The conditions which allow them to exist in this way in the reproduction of their life, in their productive life's process, have been posited only by the historic economic process both the objective and the subjective conditions, which are only the two distinct forms of the same conditions." (831) So, note how Marx says "merely individual"; i.e., he does not want socialism to mean a society in which individuals are stripped of their individuality; rather, they are supposed to become *social individuals*; i.e., individuals that no longer *exist* and *think of themselves* as entities opposed to the objective power of capital, dead labor, and society.

- i. It is my impression that today increasing individuality goes hand in hand with more reification (internet, network, globalization, credit, etc.) & a deep suspicion of the concept of collectivity (via identity politics, notion of "interest," reduction of class to "groups", etc.): "The individual has become not only the basis of political, cultural, and economic understanding but also the extent of all of our aspirations; the individual is both methodologically and prescriptively dominant; it is simultaneously all one needs to make sense of the world and the best that one could hope from it. This complete and utter assertion of the dominance of the individual, politically, economically, and ethically is haunted by the spectre of its own impotence."⁴⁵
- ii. Let's remember what Marx says on the second page of *Grundrisse*: "Only in the eighteenth century, in 'civil society', do the various forms of social connectedness confront the individual as a mere means towards his private purposes, as external necessity. **But the epoch which produces this standpoint, that of the isolated individual, is also precisely that of the hitherto most developed social (from this standpoint, general) relations.**" (G, 84). Accordingly, increasing individuality (which is not a bad thing!) does not occur despite increasing socialization; rather, it is an *effect* of the structure.
- iii. We need to understand the role of the technological here: the very best example is ZOOM: it allows *all* of us to be together in a global super video

⁴⁵ Read, Jason, *The Politics of Transindividuality* (Chicago: Haymarket Books 2016), 1.

conference, but at the same time we are moving in a *complete* physical and mental isolation and separation; one could argue that **ZOOM is the complete technological realization of bourgeois ideology**. Everyone *seems* to be interconnected, but everyone is *completely* isolated.

c. (Trans)Individual

- i. The concept of transindividuality in recent Marxist literature is supposed to become the new term for a new conceptual basis of individual and society; sources are usually Spinoza, Althusser, Balibar, and Simondon.
- ii. Here it is: “Simondon’s concept of **transindividuality** is framed by two general theses. The first is a radical break with the centrality of the individual in philosophical thought. Rather than assume that everything that exists must be an individual, that individuality is a principle that encompasses everything, Simondon argues that individuation must be thought of as process. Individuation is a process through which a pre-individual state, a state that is necessarily in tension or conflict, resolves itself, or is resolved into a process of individuation. Simondon understands this general relation to define physical, biological, psychic, and collective individuation, all of which individuate or are individuated differently. [...] Simondon argues that psychic individuation, the individuation that constitutes a character, personality, or psyche, is not opposed to collective individuation, but rather is integral to it, and vice versa. [...] Transindividuation is the process by which the individual and collective are constituted”⁴⁶
- iii. Despite this fashionable discourse, let us remember what Marx and Engels say. Again, the most important concept here is introduced in the 6th Feuerbach Thesis, namely, that society is not the sum of individuals, but an “ensemble of societal relation” (note that I replaced the word “social” (*sozial*) with “societal” (*gesellschaftlich*) 😊).
- iii. The latter is important because only this *base position* can overcome the reduction of society to intersubjectivity (might this be spelled out phenomenologically or via recognition). Society is the realm of being that is *presupposed* for intersubjectivity and sociality, or, again: the ensemble of societal relations is prior to social relations.

d. Subjectivity

- i. First of all, we need to note that Marx rarely uses the term “subject” or “subjectivity” – except in the *Grundrisse*. In his Proudhon critique in 1845 the term is used polemically, and I am not sure whether Marx had a good sense of it. Accordingly, we need to be careful in transporting it into his conceptual universe.
- ii. He warns in the introduction that we should not conceive of society as a subject. I somehow wonder whether “theory” is the knowledge of society of itself (see earlier notes) and whether Althusser’s concept of ideology is precisely this: *society* as subject.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 5. Read argues that Simondon only covers the aspect of *social ontology*, but not the socio-historical aspect (Marx).

- iii. The term “subject” in the history of philosophy has the following connotations: [1] subject as known “I” (German Idealism), [2] subject as barer of accidents (middle age ontology), [3] subject as logical subject to which predicates can be said to belong, and [4] subject as something that is “subjected” to something else (French tradition).
- iv. The Heideggerian take on this term that he traces back to Aristoteles’ concept of *hypokeimenon* is vast and can’t be discussed here.
- v. As I mentioned in class, classically put, subjectivity implies two assumptions [1] a subject is an entity that not only can, but *is* related to itself, and [2] is conceptually (knowingly) related to itself *as a universal*, transcendental ego. The concept of subject only took off with Kant. Even Descartes speaks of the ego cogito as a *substance*, and it is only with Kant and German Idealism that the concept becomes central. For Descartes the *cogito* is the *bearer* of the *cogitationes* (accidences). Accordingly, it is technically wrong to say that Descartes is the founder of the modern concept of the subject.
- vi. It is Kant who argues that Descartes’ *ego cogito* needs to be reformulated as *cogito me cogitare*; i.e., as a self-reflexive relationship through which we know *of* ourselves *in* our representations. This is also directed at Hume who argues that we do not need to assume some kind of “substance” for representation. With Kant, the concept of substance becomes *knowledge*. The “I think” must, as Kant argues, accompany all of my representations so that they are *my* representations and not “just” representations. As representations for Kant can only be thought of via transcendental logic that provides the conditions for having representation *of* something at all, subjectivity for German Idealism means both: we are self-reflective entities and know ourselves *through* our relation to objecthood. Knowledge is always a subject-object relation, as we know ourselves *in* and *via* objects. Note that this makes the constitution of *reality* dependent on subjects. It is false to say “here” are subjects and “there” are objects. The subject-object relation is far more complex than separating mind from world.
- vii. Another aspect of subjectivity is knowledge of one’s own being. So, do Hegel and Aristotle *know that they are cats* and, accordingly, are realizing their cat-being while being cats? Can they ask what it means to be *them*? Can Hegel ask what it means to be *him*?
 - 1. If your response to this question is negative, then Hegel and Aristotle are not subjects (though they might be self-related in other ways than intellectually; this is tricky...). And: it does not follow from this distinction that you can eat non-human animals or make them suffer in factory farming. This also means that you are committed to making a metaphysical distinction between human and non-human animals and that all of this contemporary fashionable talk about the end of dualisms and distinctions is just that: fashionable talk. As one graduate student in a recent seminar put it, “why making these distinctions at all?” Well, because philosophers ought to be truth-oriented?

2. If your response to this question is positive, then you need to work out a psychologistic concept of (self-)knowledge.
- viii. From this we should differentiate the French sense of “subject” which comes *immediately* with the sense of *subjectivation* (this is not present in the German/Latin usage of the word because it is close to the grammatical usage of subject as the *noun* to which all predicates belong).
 - ix. Zizek likes to refer to what he takes to be a quote from the *Grundrisse*, namely, that workers are *substanceless subjects*. I cannot find that quote! Zizek makes it up, but anyhow, the term is interesting, insofar as this indicates that – in connection with the concept of the individual – we appear in bourgeois society as **abstractly** self-related entities that have lost their social determinations. Ironically put, as living labor we are *made* Cartesian ego cogitos.
 - x. This problem of subject and individual is also present in the concept of morality, as morality (in the Kantian sense) refers to the *single* agent and her self-relation as *practical reason*. Lukacs interprets the bourgeois concept of morality as a sign of alienation, as the world here appears to be ripped apart between a moral agent that *ought* to act morally and a world in which this does not seem to be possible. So, the practical goal should not be morality, but, instead, a reconciliation between individual agency and existing society, through political praxis. Accordingly, political praxis receives a higher status than moral agency, and communism is supposed to overcome the abyss between ought and being.
 - xi. The problem of subjectivity in Marxism not only in philosophers such as Foucault, but is most present in the contrast between Lukacs and Althusser. Perhaps we could put it this way: how do I know myself as a *societal* being? Lukacs assumes that I can only reach this knowledge in an explicit way if I grasp myself as a (political) class-subject; Althusser assumes that I am unconsciously constituted as a subject via ideology.
 - e. So, to make a long story short, we need to carefully think about how to transport the epistemological and ontological concept of “subject” and “subjectivity” into critical social philosophy. Can we go without epistemology? I don’t think so. It is interesting to see that, for example, in Adorno the term re-appears in the Kantian sense.
 - f. Anyhow, I think it is safer to operate with the term “individual” in the context of the *Grundrisse*.
2. Circulation
 - a. General points
 - i. What we find in these pages is a **material concept of time and space**. The attention that has been paid in modern philosophy, especially phenomenology, to time consciousness and embodiment, can now be set on a different footing by the development of what we might want to call a *societal concept of time and space*.
 - ii. Harvey: the *Grundrisse* are about the “**annihilation of space by time**” (524); “**spatial distance reduces itself to time**” (538): “The more production comes to rest on exchange value, hence on exchange, the more important do the physical conditions of exchange - the **means of communication and transport** - become

for the costs of circulation. **Capital by its nature drives beyond every spatial barrier. Thus the creation of the physical conditions of exchange - of the means of communication and transport - the annihilation of space by time - becomes an extraordinary necessity for it.** Only in so far as the direct can be realized in distant markets in mass quantities in proportion to reductions in the transport costs, and only in so far as at the same time the means of communication and transport themselves can yield spheres of realization for labour, driven by capital ; only in so far as commercial traffic takes place - in which more than necessary labour is replaced - only to that extent is the production of cheap means of communication and transport a condition for production based on capital, and promoted by it for that reason." (524)

- iii. The main contradiction in capitalism is hidden in this passage: "All labour required in order to throw the finished product into circulation - it is in economic circulation only when it is present on the market - is from capital's viewpoint a barrier to be overcome - as is all labour required as a condition for the production process." (524). I call this the love-hate relationship that capital has with labor.
- iv. The concept of the *limit* is very important, as capital can only be understood in relation with something that capital *constantly* needs to overcome, change, modify, and destroy: physical, moral, historical, cultural, etc. boundaries are there to be overcome and for realizing an abstract universality. Just think about shift work, electric lighting, cell phones, automatic language translators, etc.
- v. These limits or barriers *only* appear with the need to speed up things. We might say that everything *fixed, stable, constant, thick, hard, unmoveable, traditional, habitual, etc.* is the enemy of capital, once it becomes total circulation. These "fixed" things are found on all levels of human experience: culture, morals, physical, mental, emotional: "the important thing e.g. is not the market's distance in space, but the speed - the amount of time - with which it can be reached), by that much the velocity of circulation, the *time* in which it is accomplished, is a determinant of how many products can be produced in a given period of time; how often capital can be realized in a given period of time, how often it can *reproduce* and *multiply* its value. Thus a moment enters *into value-determination* which indeed does not come out of the direct relation of labour to capital. The frequency with which the same capital can repeat the production process (creation of new value) in a given period of time is evidently a condition not posited directly by the production process itself. Thus, while circulation does not itself produce a moment of *value-determination*, for that lies exclusively in labour, its speed does determine the speed with which the production process is repeated, values are created - thus, if not values, at least to a certain extent the mass of values. Namely, the values and surplus values posited by the production process, multiplied by the number of repetitions of the production process in a given period of time. When we speak of the velocity of the circulation of capital, **we postulate that delays in the transition from one phase to the next arise only from external barriers**, not such as arise from the

production process and circulation itself (such as crises, overproduction etc.).” (538).

- vi. “Everything that has a fixed form, such as the product etc., appears as merely a moment, a vanishing moment, in this movement.” (710)
 - i. Welcome to our own world: “Thus, while capital must on one side strive to tear down every spatial barrier to intercourse, i.e. to exchange, and conquer the whole earth for its market, it strives on the other side to **annihilate this space with time**, i.e. to reduce to a minimum the time spent in motion from one place to another. The more developed the capital, therefore, the more extensive the market over which it circulates, which forms the spatial orbit of its circulation, the more does it strive simultaneously for an even greater extension of the market and for greater **annihilation of space by time**.” (539)
 - ii. This, in turn, leads to the inclusion of all populations in one general humanity and that which Marx calls the “universalizing tendency of capital” (540). Is this the cunning of reason? By subsuming every corner of the globe, it makes a true international communism possible? Well, that dream is on hold, I guess, and some would argue, is a nightmare... 😞
 - iii. The circulation of money now is determined by capital (517); i.e., the entire production process (living labor, mop, earth) as well as the entire market exchange system now can only run *through* capital circulation. Capital constantly modifies all aspects of the beginning and return of the production process. So, even when you go to Meijer and buy instant noodles, your exchange is determined by capital circulation. These are no longer two separate circulations; the direction and control has changed.
 - iv. This also is true for consumption: “With capital the consumption of the commodity is itself not final; it falls within the production process; it itself appears as a moment of production, i.e. of value-positing [*Wertsetzen*]” (536).
 - v. This also is true for agriculture: “But e.g. **if agriculture itself rests on scientific activities** - if it requires machinery, chemical fertilizer acquired through exchange, seeds from distant countries etc., and if rural, patriarchal manufacture has already vanished - which is already implied in the presupposition - then the machine-making factory, external trade, crafts etc. appear as needs for agriculture” (527). Note the role of science here, knowledge becomes a direct force of production when it begins to interfere with one of the objective conditions of the labor process, namely, the earth.
 - vii. The contradictions in the sphere of capital circulation leads to a massive increase of fixed capital in the form of infrastructure and in the form of knowledge on the side of living labour. The connection between both is technology.
- b. Time
 - i. Material time in circulation becomes *speed*. We might also say that time becomes quantified: “The breadth of the path for money circulation has been measured in advance, and the circumstances which accelerate or retard it are external impulses. In its circulation, capital expands itself and its path, and the

speed or slowness of its circulation itself forms one of its intrinsic moments.” (516).

- ii. This is most visible on stock exchanges nowadays. Short term trading is done by algorithms within milliseconds; check high-frequency trading: “Exchanges offered a type of order called a ‘Flash’ order (on NASDAQ, it was called ‘Bolt’ on the Bats stock exchange) that allowed an order to lock the market for a small amount of time (5 milliseconds)”⁴⁷
 - iii. The longer capital needs to “stay around” the lossy it becomes. Accordingly, the fastest turnaround can be reached in finance capital, which, in turn, circulates into industrial capital: “However, when it is recalled that, as far as the individual capital is concerned, the part of it which constitutes raw material and instrument (means of labour) is itself the product of an alien capital, then it may be seen that the speed with which it can repeat the production process anew is at the same time determined by the development of the productive forces in all other branches of industry. This becomes quite clear if one supposes the same capital to produce its own raw materials, instruments and final products. The length of time during which capital remains in the phase of the production process becomes itself a moment of circulation, if we presuppose various capitals.” (518)
 - iv. As to industrial capital (production), the *faster the turnover process*, the better lower profits can be compensated.
 - v. The time capital is at standstill is a process of *devaluation* (519).⁴⁸ The more capitals circulate, the more competition we see, the more refined things become, and the speedier everything becomes: “All moments of capital which appear involved in it when it is considered from the point of view of its general concept obtain an independent reality, and, further, only show themselves when it appears as real, as many capitals. The inner, living organization, which takes place in this way within and through competition, thus develops all the more extensively.” (520)
 - vi. “The constant continuity of the process, the unobstructed and fluid transition of value from one form into the other, or from one phase of the process into the next, appears as a fundamental condition for production based on capital to a much greater degree than for all earlier forms of production.” (534)
- c. Space
- i. The circulation time goes hand in hand with spatial relations: the longer things have to travel in order to finish the production process, the more capital will try to modify the infrastructure and to shorten the time needed for transport.
 - ii. Developing infrastructure (transport, rail, ships, cars, trucks, tunnels, canals, etc.) increases the amount of *fixed capital* (even if a lot of labor is involved).
 - iii. Infrastructure development by capital, as Marx remarks, is only possible either through the state or when capitalism is at its highest stages, since the

⁴⁷ https://www.wikiwand.com/en/High-frequency_trading (also note the level of fraud and criminality that these things come with)

⁴⁸ Check the 6 year BionTech value development: <https://g.co/finance/BNTX:NASDAQ>

investments needed are so large that they take on a *public* character: “a large capital concentrated in his hands, in order that he may be able to undertake work of such dimensions and of such slow turnover, [and hence] realization. Hence mostly *share-capital*, the form in which capital has worked itself up to its final form, in which it is posited, not only *in itself*, in its substance, but is posited also in its form, as social power and product.” (530) So, share capital is the most powerful form metamorphosis of capital because it takes on a quasi-collective and public form; i.e., capital is no longer controlled by individuals. Therefore, “[t]he separation of *public works* from the state, and their migration into the domain of the works undertaken by capital itself, indicates the degree to which the real community has constituted itself in the form of capital.” (531)

- iv. Social totality now becomes visible in the process of capital: “The highest development of capital exists when the general conditions of the process of social production are not paid out of *deductions from the social revenue*, the state’s taxes - where revenue and not capital appears as the labour fund, and where the worker, although he is a free wage worker like any other, nevertheless stands economically in a different relation - but rather out of *capital as capital*. This shows the degree to which capital has subjugated all conditions of social production to itself, on one side ; and, on the other side, hence, the extent to which social reproductive wealth has been *capitalized*, and all needs are satisfied through the exchange form; as well as the extent to which the *socially posited* needs of the individual, i.e. those which he consumes and feels not as a single individual in society, but communally with others - whose mode of consumption is social by the nature of the thing - are likewise not only consumed but also produced through exchange, individual exchange.” (532)
- v. M mentions the means of communication on p.524. I wonder whether we should think of modern digital means of communication as the endpoint of the time-space relation.

d. Lefebvre

- i. “Not only has capitalism laid hold of pre-existing space, of the Earth, but it also tends co-produce a space of its own. How can this be? The answer is: through and by means of urbanization, under the pressure of the world market; and, in accordance with the law of the reproducible and the repetitive, by abolishing spatial and temporal differences, by destroying nature and nature’s time.”⁴⁹
- ii. “In the most modern urban planning, using the most highly perfected technological applications, everything is produced: air, light, water - even the land itself. Everything is factitious and 'sophisticated'; nature has disappeared altogether, save for a few signs and symbols - and even in them nature is merely 'reproduced' Urban space is detached from natural space, but it re-creates its own space on the basis of productive capacity.”⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Lefebvre, Henri, *The Production of Space*, tr. Donald Nicholson-Smith (London: Blackwell 1991), 326.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 329

- iii. “Space in its entirety enters the modernized capitalist mode of production, there co be used for the generation of surplus value. The earth, underground resources, the air and light above the ground - all are part of the forces of production and part of the products of chose forces. The urban fabric, with its multiple networks of communication and exchange, is likewise part of the means of production. The town and its multifarious establishments (its post offices and railway stations – as also its storehouses, transportation systems and varied services) are fixed capital. The division of labour affects the whole of space - not just the 'space of work', not just the factory floor. And the whole of space is an object of productive consumption, just like factory buildings and plant, machinery, raw materials, and labour power itself.”⁵¹
 - iv. “The realization of surplus-value has, so to speak, been deterritorialized”⁵²
- 3. Into the communism of the machine fragment
 - a. ☼☼☼ “The development of science alone - i.e. the most solid form of wealth, both its product and its producer - was sufficient to dissolve these communities [i.e., as traditional barrier to capital]. But the development of **science, this ideal and at the same time practical wealth**, is only one aspect, one form in which the development of the human productive forces, i.e. of wealth, appears. [...] is the point at which it is itself worked out, developed, **into the form in which it is compatible with the highest development of the forces of production, hence also the richest development of the individuals. As soon as this point is reached, the further development appears as decay, and the new development begins from a new basis.**” (541)
 - b. This basis is the “universal development of the individual” (543). Again, the position reached here in the *Grundrisse* puts *technologies* into the driving seat and makes hackers and internet nerds happy: “At a certain point, a **development of the forces of material production - which is at the same time a development of the forces of the working class** - suspends capital itself.” (543).
 - c. That’s how easy that is, people! 😊
- 4. Final remark
 - a. All this talk about acceleration as the essence of capital has led to a recent fashion movement called “Accelerationism.”⁵³ The idea: we need to speed things up even more so that capital appears more quickly as the barrier to human development. Nerds! The only interesting thing is the reference to *the room that was a brain* – the *Chilean Project Cybersyn*.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Ibid., 347.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Check: <https://criticallegalthinking.com/2013/05/14/accelerate-manifesto-for-an-accelerationist-politics/> or <http://syntheticeidifice.files.wordpress.com/2013/06/accelerate.pdf>

⁵⁴ https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Project_Cybersyn

Session XI: Nov 29 (Machine Fragment; 690-714)

1. All right, let's go to the machine fragment and let's look at the quote from Ure on 690: "Division of machines into (1) machines employed to produce power; (2) machines whose purpose is simply to transmit power and to perform the work.' (Babbage, Notebook, p. 10.) *Factory* signifies the cooperation of several classes of workers, adults and non-adults, watching attentively and assiduously over a system of productive mechanisms, continually kept in action by a central force . . . excludes any workshop whose mechanism does not form a continuous system, or which does not depend on a single source of power. Examples of this latter class among textile factories, copper foundries etc. . . . In its most rigorous sense, this term conveys the idea of a vast automaton, composed of numerous *mechanical and intellectual organs* operating in concert and without interruption, towards one and the same aim, all these organs being subordinated to a motive force which moves itself.' (Ure, 1 3.)."
- a. Marx calls Ure somewhere in *Capital* the *Homer of factory analysis*. Let's not underestimate this. First, Ure makes a distinction between those machines that *produce* power and those that only *transmit* power. The first kind of machine is more interesting because energy *production* not only points to fossil fuels, but also to a *central* energy source that runs the entire system. Heidegger uses this in his later notes on technology, as energy *production* releases technology from its embeddedness in local, spatial, and natural environmental relations. So, not only do we find a parallel to how individuals are set "free," but also a parallel to capital, insofar as capital as the *central power* (Macht) in bourgeois society gets its *equivalent* in energy as the really existing *force* (Kraft) in bourgeois society. Put differently, as capital is *everywhere* energy (electricity and its endpoint in nuclear energy) is equally everywhere, can be stored and applied everywhere. The system of machinery and nowadays the global interconnected network runs on both capital and (fossil & nuclear) energy. Energy production as the center of the *entire* system of machinery is the *proper realization and material existence of capital*.
- b. The factory is described in terms of cooperation; i.e., as a reorganization of the relations of production. The factory, accordingly, as a productive force, is not simply a "building" or something fixed in a physical sense, but it is an organized system of how people relate to each other. As mentioned last class, for Marx the means of production are *never* instruments, insofar as they express and need to be analyzed *relationally*. They contain relations to others, selves, nature, etc. Marx is not a technological determinist. Those who claim he is do not understand dialectics.
- c. Here is the central footnote in *Capital*: "technology reveals the active relation of man to nature, the direct process of life, and thereby it also lays bare the production of the social relations of his life, and of the mental conceptions that flow from those relations." (493). Note here that *mental conceptions* are contained in modern technology; i.e., certain representations of *what is* and *what things are*. Technology does not cause anything; instead, it *reveals* - very Heideggerian 😊.
- d. The factory resembles a "vast automaton". Though Marx picks up here a common 19th century topic, he wants to say that the separation of the conditions of the labor process

from living labor – which we have extensively discussed during our last class sessions – now reaches its completion via a system of machinery that runs “in ideal” on its own, and, as a consequence, living **labor becomes almost exclusively intellectual** in the form of watching, being attentive, knowing, etc. Labor division is now complete, we might say. We are facing today the next step of all of this because capital *directly* modifies the “labor division” *within* the human body. For example, commercials and web pages are measured in terms of how much time/attention consumers devote to them. We see attention competition and attention markets. What is “attention” here, if not the **socially material existence of a certain type of intentionality** (here I remain a Husserlian). Intentionality is now conceived of as a *societal relation*.

- e. So, again, what we find in Marx is a **social theory of mental “acts”** and a theory of **societal noesis** that can be used to criticize standard epistemology in which acts are taken to be exclusively mental and neither appear as technologically nor as socially mediated. The laborer becomes an organ of the system of machinery; their capacities are organized *materially* through machinery. This thought can well be connected to considerations by Benjamin and others who tried to argue that perception changes with the introduction of media technologies during the 19th Century; or think of the culture industry. Also note the role of chemistry for photography and film.

2. Fixed Capital

- a. Marx then points out that the means of production as fixed capital is capital proper (690). Why? When capital subsumes all moments of the entire production and circulation process, everything becomes reduced to a means towards pressing more surplus value out of the entire society. We could say that in the light of fully developed capitalism everything potentially becomes a means of production. Put differently again, the entire social fabric appears in the light of instrumentality. Only seen from this angle makes Horkheimer’s text on instrumental reason sense, and I am not sure whether the Frankfurt School really was able to show the connection between capital and instrumental reason.
- b. The main problem, of course, already comes up at this point, insofar as the means of production are defined as that part of the production process that gets used up; i.e., decrease value over time. Accordingly, if potentially everything becomes a means of production, then the tension between surplus value and de-valuation increases, too. So, this is another way in which we can analyze the complete externalization of capital and living labor.
- c. Whereas on a first level all parts of the labor process (abstractly defined) become appropriated by capital (mainly labor, mop, and materials), they remain quantitatively defined (691). Marx wants to say that they appear as costs to capital, and that at this point of his theoretical abstraction they are not really altered by capital circulation; i.e., they are not yet really subsumed by capital. Instead, they still appear as something external to capital and that capital appropriates. Note the possible confusion: the fact that not yet everything is really subsumed to capital, means that it has not yet been *really* formed, although it is called “formal” subsumption.
- d. Given full capital circulation as the determining factor for the beginning and the end of the entire societal reproduction process, point c. changes, insofar as the moments of

the labor process now become themselves capital: “it undergoes a merely formal modification, by appearing now as a means of labour not only in regard to its material side, but also at the same time as a particular mode of the presence of capital, determined by its total process - as fixed capital. (691). Remember: “fixed” capital is good and bad!

3. Automaton

- a. The next step comes immediately. Look at the following fascinating passage: “But, once adopted into the production process of capital, the means of labour passes through different metamorphoses, whose culmination is the machine, or rather, an automatic system of machinery (system of machinery: the automatic one is merely its most complete, most adequate form, and alone transforms machinery into a system), set in motion by an automaton, a moving power that moves itself; this automaton consisting of numerous mechanical and intellectual organs, so that the workers themselves are cast merely as its conscious linkages.” (692). This quote is truly astonishing, insofar as M – as I outlined above – tries to say that the system of machinery (a not yet intelligent – but systematic - foreshadowing of our contemporary network!) – [1] is the most adequate form of capital and [2] worker become conscious links. This means that that capital’s essence is its interconnectedness, its being everywhere, its power to connect everything, and that the worker in this process becomes a knowing subject. So, knowledge is to be found on both sides living labor and the means of production. The system of machinery is the best expression of a particular set of societal relations. Woahhhh! Think about our contemporary digital network: Is it “material” or “intellectual”? We are back to Jonathan’s question on his protocol about the “third” realm, and I have no real clue how to respond it it 😞.
- b. With the entry of the knowledge worker the laborer becomes abstract: “reduced to a mere abstraction of activity” (693); we might say that the laborer becomes identified with a part of it. Remember: already Hegel in 1808 argues that “abstract” means that we falsely identify one property of an entity with its whole. For example, the judgement that someone is a racist or a murderer remains abstract, as long as we do not take into account that the same person is many things else beside being a murderer or a racist. Identity, we might say, is always a *unity* (and not, as I would say to our intersectional friends, an “overlap” or crossing of different identities as properties). Metaphysically put, an entity’s identity is not itself a property of that entity!
- c. Note that we must under all circumstances avoid fetishism here, as it is certainly not correct to argue that “all” labor activities can be described similar to how Marx does this in the machine fragment; especially not if we analyze all of this in the light of globalization. However, philosophically we can perhaps speak of *tendencies* here.
- d. Tomba against Negri: “Capital’s higher technical composition in some parts of the world does not automatically give rise to a corresponding tendency. Rather, much as the development of the textile-industry in England lead to the extension of slavery in the Americas, capitalist development may produce, at one and the same time, a massive expulsion of labour-power within the Western metropolises (by which this labour-power is rendered precarious and underpaid) and a transfer of surplus-value to productive

areas characterised by low wages, a low technical composition of capital and absolute exploitation.”⁵⁵

- e. The fact that the labor process moments themselves become moment of capital means that all elements of the labor process become, sorry for this, socialized and potentially collective, since they are no longer appear as being related to the worker alone; rather, they now are *societal* and defined as something that belongs to the entire societal reproduction: “In no way does the machine appear as the individual worker's means of labour” (692).
 - f. It is important to repeat this: a machine is not a tool and not an instrument! Why? First, because it is itself already a *product* of the societal production process, and hence, only possible on the basis of capital as its form. Second, because the machine already contains the service of the science (=universal knowledge) as valorized (=becomes a *societal* factor).
 - g. Two comments: first, of course, since capital is property in the hands of capitalists, the collective aspect gets lost and becomes externalized again; second, with the increasing power of share capital, at least in principle, the means of production become public, but that gets hidden behind private property, power, and competing capitals again.
 - h. The analogy of capital and automaton is intended: the “dream” of capital (if it could dream!) would be that it can circulate and return to itself without any “velocity” resistance, a pendulum in a vacuum. We *simply* watch it grow. No, even better put, we simply *think* it grow.
4. Power and Science
- a. With the proper realization of capital in dead labor and the means of production the *power* over living labor increases, as not only the laborer becomes an organ of the entire machinery (see above), but also because we, now nothing else than means in the system, exactly *do* what is “demanded” by us in the societal machine: “In machinery, objectified labour confronts living labour within the labour process itself as the power which rules it” (693).
 - b. Capital rules over living personalities “physically” (695).** Gilles read this with great attention.
 - c. This also means that the role of the individual, when compared to the *entire* networked system of machinery (as the best expression of the *entire* societal reproduction process), becomes minimized: “the value objectified in machinery appears as a presupposition against which the value-creating power of the individual labour capacity is an infinitesimal, vanishing magnitude” (694). Did you ever wonder why most of us feel so powerless? Perhaps you should read carefully the *Grundrisse* with your lovely professor from Germany 😊.
 - d. Side note: Marx uses often on these pages “vast”, “enormous,” “magnitude” etc. Perhaps we could think here about a certain social form of the sublime in which society in the form of the accumulated means of production becomes a form of the Kantian sublime. However, we need to be *extremely* careful not to be subjected to an Adornian

⁵⁵ Tomba, Massimiliano and Bellofiore, Riccardo, “The ‘Fragment on Machines’ and the Grundrisse: The Workerist Reading in Question”, 356

critique here, namely, that Marx *in fact* fetishizes the (machinic and scientific) productive forces. Be that as it may, who would have thought that Marxists can be such friends of modern science and technology!

- e. Knowledge and science become material and, hence, become a productive force. As such, it should also be immediately clear that any positivist argument about the supposedly “neutrality” of science should be rejected from a Marxian point. **“The accumulation of knowledge and of skill, of the general productive forces of the social brain, is thus absorbed into capital, as opposed to labour, and hence appears as an attribute of capital,** and more specifically of *fixed capital*, in so far as it enters into the production process as a means of proper. *Machinery* appears, then, as the most adequate form of *fixed capital*, and fixed capital, in so far as capital's relations with itself are concerned, appears as *the most adequate form of capital* as such.” (694). The more knowledge and science become central, the more capital appears as the overarching force of everything.
 - f. Here is the consequence of the foregoing: “the entire production process appears as not subsumed under the direct skilfulness of the worker, but rather as the technological application of science” (699).
 - g. Put poignantly, *capital has entered our brains*.
5. Labor Time, Main Contradiction in Capitalism
- a. “To the degree that labour time - the mere quantity of labour - is posited by capital as the sole determinant element, to that degree does direct labour and its quantity disappear as the determinant principle of production - of the creation of use values - and is reduced both quantitatively, to a smaller proportion, and qualitatively, as an, of course, indispensable but subordinate moment, compared to general scientific labour, technological application of natural sciences, on one side, and to the general productive force arising from social combination [*Gliederung*] in total production on the other side - a combination which appears as a natural fruit of social labour (although it is a historic product). **Capital thus works towards its own dissolution as the form dominating production.**” (700) Boom, where is the working class here? 🤖🤖
 - b. Ah, it comes later on p. 708! “The more this contradiction develops, the more does it become evident that the growth of the forces of production can no longer be bound up with the appropriation of alien labour, **but that the mass of workers must themselves appropriate their own surplus labour.** Once they have done so - and *disposable time* thereby ceases to have an *antithetical* existence - then, on one side, necessary labour time will be measured by the needs of the social individual, and, on the other, the development of the power of social production will grow so rapidly that, even though production is now calculated for the wealth of all, *disposable time* will grow for all.”
 - c. What do we find in these passages? [1] Circulating capital makes everyone dependent on everyone, [2] the interconnection of things increases, [3] capital increasingly appears in the form of fixed capital, [4] as a consequence, living labor becomes increasingly unimportant, [5] however, living labor is needed to press surplus value out of the system, [6] as a consequence, circulation increases.
 - d. So, we find here *two* competing tendencies:

- i. On the one hand, fixed capital (technologies) is introduced for *increasing* surplus value labor time; however, on the other hand, the amount needed to increase fixed capital *also* explodes and both tendencies stand opposed to each other.
 - ii. On the one hand, living labor becomes less important (unemployment, etc.) because capital now increasingly appears in *objective* form; on the other hand, living labor becomes *increasingly* important because capital needs it for surplus value. Accordingly, capital becomes a contradiction, insofar as it is forced to do *both* diminish living labor and keep it running.
- e. What else? [1] In principle, the time necessary for the reproduction of the entire system decreases, [2] free activities increase, [3] “labor” becomes less central, [4] activities beyond the specialization needed increase, [5] full human personalities *could* develop, [6] the role of intellectual labor increases. Everything “depends rather on the general state of science and on the progress of technology, or the application of this science to production.” (705)
- f. So, it is clear that Marx *projects* here a **fully automated society**, way before our contemporary beanie wearing hipster nerds who think that working for Google is cool enter the scene.
- g. “Through this process, the amount of labour necessary for the production of a given object is indeed reduced to a minimum, but only in order to realize a maximum of labour in the maximum number of such objects. The first aspect is important, because capital here - quite unintentionally - reduces human labour, expenditure of energy, to a minimum. This will redound to the benefit of emancipated labour, and is the condition of its emancipation.” (701)
- h. Oh well, fascinating stuff Mr. Karl, but don’t you underestimate the obvious counter-tendencies? [1] Free time becomes increasingly consumption time; i.e., is made productive; [2] with the increase of circulation, the direct exploitation of labor also increases somewhere else on the globe; i.e., capital *extends* the labor time somewhere else. The main contradiction of capital becomes a conflict between uneven developments between core and periphery; Harvey always says that capital shifts the crises to somewhere else.
 - i. Wait! OMG, Dr. Marx kind of sees it:
 - 1. “The smaller the direct fruits borne by fixed capital, the less it intervenes in the direct production process, the greater must be this relative surplus population and surplus production” (708). We can extend this thought and say that we not only have new *excluded* masses from the entire production process, but also a new surplus population that can be employed in new very basic ways.
 - 2. All of this leads to “**in no way abstinence from consumption**, but rather the development of power, of capabilities of production, and hence both of the **capabilities** as well as the means of consumption.” (711). Consumption is not necessarily a mindless eating of beef burgers (remember the introduction? Consumption is not simply buying, it is the process of *usage*); rather, consumption can contribute to an all-sided

personality that can *use* the things we are surrounded by in more complex ways and can eat with style at a community table.⁵⁶

- i. Sidenote on increasing circulation. M says: "Hence, the greater the scale on which fixed capital develops, in the sense in which we regard it here, the more does the *continuity of the production process* or the constant flow of reproduction become an externally compelling condition for the mode of production founded on capital." (702). So, what he wants to say is that the limits and bearers that we discussed last class also are increasingly important, insofar as capital needs to do everything to keep those to a minimum. Politically put, it is probably safe to assume that the modern development of military power and defense systems are in terms of political economy precisely this: an instrument to make sure that capital flows (with its contradictions, of course).
 - j. Summary: "Capital itself is the moving contradiction, [in] that it presses to reduce labour time to a minimum, while it posits labour time, on the other side, as sole measure and source of wealth. Hence it diminishes labour time in the necessary form so as to increase it in the superfluous form; hence posits the superfluous in growing measure as a condition - question of life or death - for the necessary. On the one side, then, it calls to life all the powers of science and of nature, as of social combination and of social intercourse, in order to make the creation of wealth independent (relatively) of the labour time employed on it. On the other side, it wants to use labour time as the measuring rod for the giant social forces thereby created, and to confine them within the limits required to maintain the already created value as value. Forces of production and social relations - two different sides of the development of the social individual - appear to capital as mere means, and are merely means for it to produce on its limited foundation." (706)
6. General Intellect
- a. Back to science and universal knowledge! Note how Marx already sees the role that the entrepreneur, the inventor, the creative guy in the garage, the light bulb inventors, the scientists play here: "However, the development of machinery along this path occurs only when large industry has already reached a higher stage, **and all the sciences have been pressed into the service of capital**; and when, secondly, the available machinery itself already provides great capabilities. **Invention then becomes a business**, and the application of science to direct production itself becomes a prospect which determines and solicits it." (704) Nowadays all of this comes with its proper ideology: Advancing knowledge, advancing lives 😊.
 - b. Sidenote on these ideologies: also think about the massive invasion of "science" not only in everyday life (remote controls! Electric toothbrushes with Bluetooth connection! Cell phones!), but also in the form of toys that make little babies more intelligent.
 - c. If Marx would have a second coming, he would be astonished about the explosion of higher education and the technification of every life.
 - d. So, what we finally arrive at is the idea of a *socialized* form of production in which individual powers have been universalized and collectively appropriated in a double sense: free individuality *and* collectivization go hand in hand: "The development of fixed

⁵⁶ In a **biergarten**, preferably 😊.

capital indicates to what degree **general social knowledge has become a *direct force of production***, and to what degree, hence, the conditions of the process of social life itself **have come under the control of the general intellect** and been transformed in accordance with it. To what degree the powers of social production have been produced, not only in the form of knowledge, but also the real life process.” (706).

- e. Sidenote: no one in the secondary literature seems to know where the term “general intellect” stems from. Marx uses English in the German original. *Schwarmintelligenz*?

7. Communism/Wealth

- a. To the people! Communism has finally arrived! “As soon as labour in the direct form has ceased to be the great well-spring of wealth, labour time ceases and must cease to be its measure, and hence exchange value [must cease to be the measure] of use value. The *surplus labour of the mass* has ceased to be the condition for the development of general wealth, just as the *non-labour of the few*, for the development of the general powers of the human head. With that, production based on exchange value breaks down, and the direct, material production process is stripped of the form of penury and antithesis. The free development of individualities, and hence not the reduction of necessary labour time so as to posit surplus labour, but rather the general reduction of the necessary labour of society to a minimum, which then corresponds to the artistic, scientific etc. development of the individuals in the time set free, and with the means created, for all of them” (705-706).
- b. “‘Truly wealthy a nation, when the working day is 6 rather than 12 hours. *Wealth* is not command over surplus labour time’ (real wealth), ‘but rather, *disposable time* outside that needed in direct production, **for every individual and the whole society.**” (706)
- c. Communism = “real wealth is the developed productive power of all individuals.” (709)
- d. Here is your hipster communist, Marcuse’s “new human being,” and new the social individual: “Free time – which is both idle time and time for higher activity - has naturally **transformed its possessor into a different subject**, and he then enters into the direct production process as this **different subject**. This process is then both discipline, as regards **the human being in the process of becoming; and, at the same time, practice [*Ausübung*], experimental science, materially creative and objectifying science, as regards the human being who has become, in whose head exists the accumulated knowledge of society.**” (712) I bet that Althusser hated these pages and removed them from his copy of the *Grundrisse*.
- e. So, given all this, we should reject what Hudis claims: “Marx is suggesting that capitalism *narrows* our individuality in that every aspect of life is reduced to one and only one sense: the sense of having or possession. The wealth and multi-dimensionality of the individual’s augmenting value – as expressed most of all in obtaining money – is considered the greatest good”.⁵⁷ Hudis is only partly right here, insofar as Marx argues that we find a *contradictory* tendency between reduction on the one hand and development on the other hand. More properly put, what he seems to suggest on the pages on post-capitalist potentiality is that it is *capitalism* that develops the multi-faceted individuality *until* these individuals discover that *capital* is a limit to their development.

⁵⁷ Hudis, Peter, *Marx’s Concept of the Alternative to Capitalism* (Chicago; Haymarket Books 2013), 144.

Concluding Remark

1. Upshot
 - a. The introduction to the *Grundrisse* contains the longest and most dense reflection by Marx on methodological issues and an explanation of how to *think* as a Marxian philosopher. The main concepts to be considered are dialectics, totality, social categories, anti-naturalism, anti-individualism, critique
 - b. Marx's reflections on money contain a social theory of society that goes well beyond "economic" issues. Money is analyzed in terms of societal relations. The reflections on money can be read as a more precise theoretical grasp of the concept of alienation.
 - c. Marx's reflection's on the concept of capital as a societal relation pushes the theory of society on a higher level, leads to the concept of class, and gives us a basic theory of globalization.
 - d. The chapters on the original accumulation contain dense methodological considerations about how to think about history as a Marxian philosopher and a rejection of the concept of historical teleology. It prepares philosophy for modern historiography.
 - e. The machine fragment contains, in contrast to *Capital*, a concept of post-capitalism and a theory that focuses on the emancipatory potential of the productive forces *through* knowledge, science (in the sense of *universalized* knowledge), and technology.
 - f. The concept of wealth considered by Marx in the *Grundrisse* does not fit to the ethos defended by most labor movements of the last Century.
2. Accordingly, if you ever teach Marx in an undergraduate class, you can no longer follow simplistic 101 versions of Marx that are still haunting many textbooks.
3. I hope you enjoyed this seminar; it gave at least the person who was permitted to talk most of the time immense pleasure 😊.