

From Scream of Refusal to Scream of Power: The Centrality of Work

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I

In the beginning was the scream.

A scream of experience. A scream of anger, a scream of horror. A scream that rises from what we live and what we see, from the newspapers we read, from the television programmes we watch, from the conflicts of our everyday lives. A scream that does not accept that mass starvation can exist with plenty, that so much work and so many resources can be devoted to the destruction of human life, that there are parts of the world in which the systematic killing of street children is organised as the only way of protecting private property. A scream of refusal.

A dissonant, discordant, often inarticulate scream: sometimes no more than a mumble, sometimes tears of frustration, sometimes a confident roar – but all pointing to the upside-downness of the world, to the untruth of the world.

But how do we move beyond the scream? How do we understand the world as upside-down, as untrue, as negative? In the media, in books, in schools and universities, society is almost always presented as positive. When we study social science, we study ‘the way things are’. The ‘way things are’ may be criticised, but a clear distinction is made between what is and our emotional reactions. The scream does not feature as a central category of social science. Indeed, social science defines itself as scientific precisely by virtue of its exclusion of the scream. The study of the world as it is, as positive, bounces our negativity back at us, redefines the negativity as our individual problem, as the expression of our maladjustment. Rational understanding of the world, we are told, is quite distinct from our private sentimental reaction.

Negative theories of society set out to salvage the viewpoint of the scream, to construct an alternative picture of the world that respects and strengthens

the negativity of experience. Such theories inevitably arise through the discussions and struggles that clarify and establish the collective nature of our negativity. As the social experience of negativity takes different historical forms, so its forms of historical expression change.

The upsurge of struggle and rebellion throughout the world at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s led millions of us to look to the Marxist tradition as a way of making sense of, and strengthening, our existence-against-society. In turning to Marxism, we were looking not for a theory of society, but a theory against society.¹ We were not looking for a political science, a sociology or an economics but for anti-political science, an anti-sociology, an anti-economics: a negative theory of society in which the scream of experience would not be eliminated by the fragmentation of 'scientific' discourse.

Although the negative thrust behind the initial turn to Marxism is clear, the issues soon became muddled. A theory *against* society implies some understanding *of* society. A theory focused on the *rupture* of capitalist society must incorporate an understanding of the *reproduction* of capitalist society. As the wave of struggle receded, as the explosion of negativity that was 1968 started to become a memory, the lines separating a theory *against* society from a theory *of* society, *rupture* from *reproduction*, became blurred. This was accentuated by the fact that one of the effects of the involvement of students in the upsurge was that much of the theoretical discussion of the years that followed took place within the universities, where theories *of* society and of social *reproduction* dovetailed more neatly with the established university disciplines. The shift in emphasis was expressed in the rise of different currents of thought which sought to smooth the negativity of the original drive, to integrate Marxism within the framework of the social sciences, to still the scream.

Obviously it would be wrong to blame everything on the universities and on the disciplinary structures into which so many Marxists found themselves integrated. The tortuous paths of Marxist theory cannot be separated from the long history of the Communist Parties and of other political groups claiming to be guided by Marxist theory, nor, above all, from the history of the former Soviet Union. In the Soviet Union, Marxism ceased by and large to be a theory of negation, being selectively manipulated to legitimise the reproduction of existing power structures. This affected the understanding of Marxism and the development of the Marxist tradition, not only within the bounds of the so-called 'communist' states, but throughout the world, through the influence of the Communist Parties and, more indirectly, of the parties and groups which defined themselves by their opposition to the Communist Parties.

The difficulties of using Marxism to theorise the struggles against the established social order were further compounded by the nature of those

struggles. The traditional interpretation of the Marxist analysis of social conflict as class conflict between capital and labour was difficult to relate to the conflicts around education, housing, health, nuclear power, the environment, race and gender which were to be so important in the years that followed. The various sociological attempts (Poulantzas, Wright, Carchedi etc.) to patch up Marx's theory of class and make it more sophisticated did little to help, partly because, by interpreting Marx's theory of class as a sociological theory, they robbed it of its negativity.

It is little wonder that, for many, Marxism lost its appeal as a vehicle for expressing their antagonism to existing society. In recent years ecological theory and above all feminism have gained much wider acceptance and, in some ways, laid deeper roots in people's behaviour.

Now that the Soviet Union, the states surrounding it and so many Communist Parties throughout the world have collapsed, the question of the relevance of Marxism is posed in a quite new context. The collapse of the Soviet regime is both a liberation of Marxism and a threat to its continued survival. It is a liberation because so much of the dreadful baggage of 'Soviet Marxism' can more easily be thrown out. But at the same time it is a threat to the survival of Marxism because the collapse of the Soviet Union is so widely seen as the failure of Marxism that fewer people are likely to turn to Marxism as a way of expressing their antagonism to capitalist society.

There is little doubt that those of us who still use Marxist categories to try to develop a theory-against-society are getting older. At times it feels as though we are speaking Latin – a highly developed language that few understand and few want to learn. Compared with the situation ten or 15 years ago, there are, for example, far fewer people reading *Capital*, the key text for acquiring the basics of Marx's theory-against-society. Although the scream of protest against capitalism will certainly not fall silent, there is a real danger that Marxism will die out as a language for articulating that scream.

Does it matter? Can Marx not be safely left to the care of the teachers and students of the History of Political Thought, to be read alongside Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes and Rousseau? If Marxism has failed as an articulation of the struggle against existing society, is it not better to abandon it to the criticism of mice and teachers of political theory?

Marxism is not ready for such a fate. It is the argument of this article that Marxism retains its relevance as the most powerful theory-against-society that exists, the most powerful theory of the negation of capitalism that we have. For this to emerge clearly, an analysis of the tragic history of the communist movement is not enough: it is essential also to address some deep-rooted conceptual problems in the Marxist tradition.

II

What is special about Marxism as a theory-against-society?

If we start from the scream of experience, the experiential rejection of existing society, then Marxism is to be judged not as a theory-of-society but as a theory-against-society. Its relevance today must be considered in the first place not in terms of its explanatory power but in terms of its power to negate society. The theoretical frame of reference is provided in the first place not by the social sciences in general but by radical theories of society, theories which take as their starting point the rejection of existing society. The task is to show not the intellectual respectability of Marxism but the power of its unrespectability. It is only as a theory-against-society that Marxism can be understood to include a theory-of-society.

To argue that Marxism occupies a unique place among theories-against-society is to argue for the importance of its survival as a form of articulating the rejection of capitalism. What distinguishes Marxism from other negative theories of society is that it takes the negation of society much further than any other radical theory. This is not a question of the intensity of feeling or the violence of the language used, but of the all-embracing nature of the negation. Marxism dissolves the whole of society in negativity, in a way in which no other radical theory does.

The negation of society typically starts as an external negation, as us-against-them: women against men, blacks against white, poor against rich. The slogan 'Kill the rich!' expresses the point neatly. The rich are clearly defined as not-us, our struggle against them is clearly an external struggle. The appeal and the force of this approach is obvious. Its weakness lies in its timeless externality. We kill the rich today, they kill us tomorrow, then we kill them, then they kill us, and so on, biff-baff, ding-dong, back and forth. Our negativity meets their positivity in external, and potentially eternal, confrontation. It is clear that the rich oppress us, that we hate them and fight against them, but the approach tells us nothing of our power or their vulnerability. In general, radical theory tends to focus on oppression and the struggle against oppression, rather than on the fragility or movement of that oppression. Feminist theory, for example, has been extremely powerful in throwing light on the nature of gender oppression in society. What it has not developed is a theory of the vulnerability or historicity of that oppression. History, in radical theory, tends to be understood as an accumulation of external struggles – a concept which, by the weight accorded to tradition, can often end up being conservative in its effect.

Against this 'us-against-them' of radical theory, Marx cries out: 'But there is no "them", there is only us. We are the only reality, the only power. There is nothing but us, nothing but our negativity. That is why the scream of refusal is a scream of power'.

The essential claim of Marxism, that which distinguishes it from other varieties of radical theory, is its claim to dissolve all externality. The core of its attack against 'them' is to show that 'they' depend on us because 'they' are continually created by us. We, the powerless, are all-powerful.

The critique of the 'them-against-us' externality of radical theory is not some abstruse theoretical point but the core of the Marxist understanding of the possibility of revolutionary transformation of society. It is through understanding that 'they' are *not* external to us, that capital is *not* external to labour, that we can understand the vulnerability of capitalist domination. To move beyond the externality of 'them-against-us' is at the same time to go beyond a radical theory of oppression to the concern of Marxism: the *fragility* of oppression.

III

The claim made above (to be argued more fully below), that what distinguishes Marxism from other varieties of negative theory is the total character of its negation, runs counter to much of the Marxist tradition. It is more common to claim that what distinguishes Marxism from other radical theories is its superior scientific character. This is expressed, for example, in the distinction commonly made (first by Engels) between utopian and scientific socialism. 'Utopian' socialism here refers to the potentially endless struggle of radical militancy inspired by a dream of fulfilment at the end of the day. Marxism's claim to be 'scientific' refers in this context to the claim that the struggle is not endless because analysis shows us that capitalism is riven by contradictions which will lead either to its collapse or to its increasing instability.

At issue here is not the scientific nature of Marxism, but the understanding of 'scientific' on which this claim is often based. In the tradition of 'orthodox' Marxism, 'scientific' comes to be identified with 'objective'. 'Science' is understood in the positivist sense as excluding subjectivity. The claim that Marxism is scientific is taken to mean that subjective struggle finds support in the objective movement of the contradictions of capitalism. A distinction is thus made between (subjective) struggle and the (objective) conditions of struggle.

This understanding of 'scientific', based on a distinction between subject and object, subjective and objective, lays the basis for a dualism that runs right

through the Marxist tradition. It is expressed in a host of different ways, as a separation between struggle and contradiction, between struggle and structure, between class struggle and the objective laws of development, between politics and economics, between labour and capital, between the scream of protest and the cool appraisal of objective reality. Within the tradition, the importance of both terms of the dualism is always recognised – no Marxist would say that class struggle is not important – but the relation between the two terms is not in practice an equal one. In so far as ‘science’ is identified with objectivity, scientific analysis gives priority to the second term of each of the pairs: to contradiction, structure, objective laws of development, economics, capital, the cool appraisal of objective reality. Marxist theorists have generally understood their contribution to struggle to be the analysis of the objective, of the contradictions of capitalism.

In all of this, struggle is not denied: work in the Marxist tradition generally arises from some sort of participation in struggle. However, whatever the motivation, this sort of ‘scientific’ analysis accords a very subordinate role to struggle. Struggle is given a ‘but also’ role, to borrow Bonefeld’s phrase:² it is allowed effectivity in the interstices of the laws of capitalist development, it is allowed to shade in the gaps left undetermined by the objective laws of development, it is allowed to seize the opportunities presented by objective conditions. (It is allowed also, and unjustifiably, to provide an alibi, whenever Marxism is accused of determinism.) The importance of struggle is not denied, but Marxism, in its ‘scientific’ guise, becomes a theory not of struggle, but of the objective conditions of struggle, a very different thing.

One of the most pervasive forms of expression of this dualist tradition, running from the far left to the revisionism of the late Communist Parties, is the notion of ‘Marxist economics’. The idea of Marxist economics (as opposed to the Marxist critique of economics) is an extension of the separation of contradiction from struggle. Marxist economics is generally understood as the study of the objective laws of development of capitalism and their relation to current economic development. A distinction between economics and struggle is taken as given, as is also a distinction between economics and politics. Although this distinction implies the possibility of a distinct ‘Marxist political science’, as Poulantzas³ saw, or indeed of a ‘Marxist sociology’, Marxists have generally seen economics as the privileged sphere of study of the contradictions of capitalism.

The implications of the notion of Marxist economics go very deep, because it assumes a certain reading of Marx’s work and of the categories used. *Capital*, in spite of its subtitle, *The Critique of Political Economy*, is seen as the key text of Marxist economics, and the categories developed there (value, surplus value, price, the law of the tendency for the rate of profit to fall, crisis,

credit) are understood as economic categories, as having an objective validity which does not depend on class struggle. Again, of course, class struggle is not denied, but it is seen as distinct from the analyses of Marxist economics. Economic analysis is seen as providing the analysis of the objective conditions of struggle. Even in the case of what might be called far-left analyses, analyses which emphasise the role of subjective struggle in the transformation of society – as in the case of Pannekoek, Mattick or Luxemburg, for example – a dualism is assumed between the objective, economic analysis of the development of the contradictions of capitalism and the possibilities of subjective struggle which those contradictions open up. A dualism between subject and object, between struggle and contradiction, is inseparable from the notion of Marxist economics.

It is this whole dualism of the dominant Marxist tradition, which is now patently in crisis. It is in crisis on both sides of its separation. On the 'objective' side, the certainties that a 'scientific', objectivist approach seem to promise look unconvincing in the light of the upheavals of recent years. More important, however, the theoretical, and often practical, subordination of subjectivity which this sort of Marxism implies has undermined the credibility of Marxism as a theory of struggle, as a theory-against-society.

IV

If this dualism were the whole of the Marxist tradition, there would be little to argue about: Marxism could be allowed to die, a fatally flawed language for theorising the rejection of capitalist society. Fortunately, this is not the case. Quite apart from the work of Marx himself, there is a very long, often subterranean, tradition of political and theoretical struggle against the deadening and deadly dualism of 'orthodoxy'. Politically and theoretically, it is a very disparate tradition, a mixture of people who were opposed to 'orthodoxy' in their politics, but did not always follow through the theoretical implications, and those who rebelled theoretically but sometimes conformed to the line of the Communist Parties. Any list of names is problematic, but obvious candidates for inclusion would be Luxemburg, Pannekoek, the early Lukàcs, Korsch, Mattick, Bloch, Adorno, Rubin, Pashukanis, Rosdolsky, Agnoli, Tronti, Negri – all reference points for a host of other heterodox Marxists.⁴

The starting point for considering the power of Marxism as a theory of struggle (and for overcoming the dualism of the orthodox tradition) has to be struggle itself, the subjective, experiential scream of refusal from which this chapter started, the scream that is muffled by the objectivist 'scientific'

conception of Marxism. The emphasis on subjectivity has been a recurrent theme in anti-orthodox Marxism.

In recent years, one of its most powerful formulations has come from the current which developed, primarily in Italy, from the 1960s onwards, variously referred to as 'autonomist Marxism' or '*operaismo*'. The critique of the objectivist tradition of orthodox Marxism is sharply formulated in an article by Mario Tronti, 'Lenin in England', that was to do much to define the approach of 'autonomist' Marxism:

We too have worked with a concept that puts capitalist development first, and workers second. This is a mistake. And now we have to turn the problem on its head, reverse the polarity and start again from the beginning: and the beginning is the class struggle of the working class.⁵

This must be the first step: to reverse the polarity of the Marxist tradition and to start clearly from below, from struggle, from negativity. But reversing the polarity is not enough: it is the polarity itself which must be examined. To reverse the polarity is to put us back at the correct starting point: to reassert that Marxism is a theory against society, not a theory of society, a theory of struggle and not a theory of the objective conditions of struggle, a theory of labour and not of capital, a theory of rupture and not of reproduction. The starting point of negativity is essential, but it does not yet show us what Marxism has to contribute to negative theory.

Tronti immediately takes the reversal of the polarity a step further. Starting from the struggle of the working class does not simply mean adopting a working-class perspective, but, in complete reversal of the traditional Marxist approach, seeing working-class struggle as determining capitalist development:

at the level of socially developed capital, capitalist development becomes subordinated to the working class struggles; it follows behind them and they set the pace to which the political mechanisms of capital's own reproduction must be tuned.⁶

This is the core of what Moulrier refers to as '*operaismo*'s ... Copernican inversion of Marxism',⁷ which, according to Asor Rosa,

... can be summed up in a formula which makes the working class the dynamic motor of capital and which makes capital a function of the working class ... a formula which in itself gives an idea of the magnitude of the inversion of perspectives which such a position implies politically.⁸

This inversion is essential if we are to think of the scream of struggle not as the cry of a victim but as a scream of power. But in a capitalist society, in a society which certainly appears to be dominated by capital and by the needs of the capitalist class, how can such an inversion be justified, how can capital be understood as a function of the working class?

There are two possible answers to this question, what one might call a weaker and a stronger answer. The weaker version would be to say that capital can be understood as a function of the working class because its history is a history of *reaction* to working-class struggle. In much the same manner one might see, say, the movements of a defending army at war to be a function of the movements of the attacking army, or, possibly, the development of the police to be a function of the activities of criminals. The stronger version would be that capital is a function of the working class for the simple reason that capital is nothing other than the *product* of the working class and therefore depends, from one minute to another, upon the working class for its reproduction. In the first case, the relation between the working class and capital is seen as a relation of opposition, an *external* relation. In the second case, the relation is seen in terms of the generation of one pole of the opposition by the other pole, as an *internal* relation. In the first case, the working class is seen as existing simply *against* capital, in the second case it exists *against-and-in* capital. These two interpretations, the 'reaction' interpretation and the 'product' interpretation, are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but in so far as the emphasis is placed on one rather than the other, the theoretical and political implications may be quite different.

Both of these elements are present in the autonomist analysis, but it is the first, the 'reaction' interpretation, which is more prominent.⁹ Typically, the dynamic of capitalist development is understood as a reaction to the power of the working-class movement. The development of capital is then understood as the defensive reaction by capital to the strength of the working-class movement revealed in moments of open revolt. Keynesianism, for example, in Negri's analysis¹⁰ is a response to the revolution of 1917, which made clear that capital could survive only by recognising and integrating the working-class movement. These analyses are immensely suggestive, but the point being made here is that capitalist development is understood as a process of reaction, that the relation between labour and capital is understood as an external relation.

The understanding of the relation between labour and capital as being external has extremely important political and theoretical consequences. Politically, the emphasis on the power of the working-class movement has an obvious appeal. Nevertheless, separating labour and capital in this way leads to a paradoxical (and romantic) magnification of the power of both. The

failure to explore the internal nature of the relation between labour and capital leads the autonomist analysis to underestimate the degree to which labour exists *within* capitalist forms. The existence of labour within capitalist forms, as will be argued more fully later, implies both the subordination of labour to capital *and* the internal fragility of capital. To overlook the internal nature of the relation between labour and capital thus means both to underestimate the containment of labour within capital (and hence overestimate the power of labour against capital) *and* to underestimate the power of labour as internal contradiction within capital (and hence overestimate the power of capital against labour).

The reversal of the polarity between capital and labour, essential though it be as a starting point, ends by reproducing the polarity in a different form. The traditional Marxist analysis emphasises the logical development of capital and relegates class struggle to a 'but also' role; autonomist theory liberates class struggle from its subordinate role, but still leaves it confronting an external logic of capital. The difference is that the logic of capital is understood now not in terms of 'economic' laws and tendencies, but in terms of a political struggle to defeat the enemy. The law of value, the key category in the Marxist economic interpretation of capitalist development, is seen by the autonomists as being redundant.¹¹ In the face of the power of the working-class movement, capital has now developed into integrated world capitalism, and its sole logic is the logic of maintaining power.¹² As is perhaps inevitable, the *reaction* understanding of the labour-capital relation leads to a mirror-image view of capitalism: the greater the power of the working-class movement, the more monolithic and totalitarian the response of the capitalist class. Autonomist theory has been crucial in reasserting the nature of Marxist theory as a theory of struggle, but the real force of Marx's theory of struggle lies not in the reversal of the polarity between capital and labour, but in its dissolution.¹³

V

One way of overcoming the issue of dualism has been to pose the question of the relation between the two poles of the dualism in terms of the interrelated categories of form, totality and critique, an approach that is often referred to as form-analysis.

The concept of 'form' is central to Marx's discussion in *Capital*, where he insists on the importance of understanding value and money, for example, as value-form and money-form – as forms of social relations. In the first chapter of *Capital*, Marx uses the concept of 'form' to distinguish his approach from that of the political economists whom he is criticising:

Even Adam Smith and Ricardo, the best representatives of the school, treat the form of value as a thing of no importance, as having no connection with the inner nature of commodities. The reason for this is not solely because their attention is entirely absorbed in the analysis of the magnitude of value. It lies deeper. The value-form of the product of labour is not only the most abstract, but is also the most universal form, taken by the product in bourgeois production, and stamps that production as a particular species of social production, and thereby gives it its special historical character. If then we treat this mode of production as one eternally fixed by Nature for every state of society, we necessarily overlook that which is the *differentia specifica* of the value-form, and consequently of the commodity-form, and of its further developments, money-form, capital-form etc.¹⁴

The concept of 'form' here carries various implications. As Marx indicates when he points to the limitations of Smith and Ricardo, the understanding of 'things' as 'forms' implies an understanding of their temporal nature, of their (at least) potential historical transcendence. To analyse capitalist society in terms of social forms is to see it from the point of view of its historical impermanence, to look at that which appears to be permanent as transient, to present that which seems to be positive as negative. To introduce the concept of form is to move from the photographic print to its negative. The shift from value to value-form, for example, is an inversion of the whole perspective of discussion, the move from political economy to the critique of political economy. That is why the category of 'form', perhaps the central category of Marx's discussion, is quite literally meaningless if the permanence of capitalist social relations is assumed (as in bourgeois social science).

The category of 'form' further implies the internal nature (non-externality) of connections between social 'things'. To speak of money as a form of value, to speak of value as a form of the product of labour, to speak of value and money as forms of social relations, is to emphasise the internal nature of the relation between value, money, labour, social relations. The apparently separate 'things' of society (state, money, capital, and so on) are social phenomena, forms of social relations, the interconnections between which should be understood not as external (causal relations, for example), but as internal, as processes of transformation or metamorphosis.

These various implications of 'form' (historicity, negativity, internality) are well captured by the term 'mode of existence'.¹⁵ Thus, for example, to say that money is a 'mode of existence' of social relations carries all the same implications of historical specificity, negativity and internality as the concept of 'form'.

The concept of 'form', as used here, implies a concept of 'totality'. If all aspects of society are to be understood as forms of social relations, then clearly they all form part of an internally-related whole, they are all moments of a social totality. Hence, to say that 'form' is the central category of Marx's theory tallies with Lukacs's famous saying that 'it is not the primacy of economic motives in historical explanation that constitutes the decisive difference between Marxism and bourgeois thought, but the point of view of totality'.¹⁶

'Form' and 'totality' clearly imply a third concept, that of 'critique'. If things that appear to be separate (money and the state, say) are to be understood as discrete forms of a single totality, that implies that the process of understanding involves a critique of their apparent separateness. To criticise, in this sense, is to explore the interconnections between 'things', to show how aspects of society which appear separate and only externally related, are internally related as forms of the same social totality.

Form-analysis, the analysis of 'things' and 'facts' as forms of the totality of social relations, dissolves hard reality into the flow of the changing forms of social relations. What appears to be separate (the state, money, countries, and so on) can now be understood in terms of their separation-in-unity or unity-in-separation. It is now possible to see how the dualism of subject and object might be overcome theoretically, by reconceptualising the separation of subject and object as a separation-in-unity, by criticising the dualism to reach an understanding of subject and object as forms of the same social totality. That which previously appeared to be hard and objective is now revealed as transitory, fluid. The bricks and mortar of capitalist reality crumble, theoretically.

Form-analysis is central to any attack on the dualism that has characterised so much of the Marxist tradition, and has rightly been emphasised by a large number of theorists in recent years,¹⁷ influenced by the work of earlier authors such as Lukacs, Rosdolsky, Rubin and Pashukanis, all of whom were rediscovered in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Nevertheless, in the case of many of the approaches that could be loosely characterised as examples of 'form-analysis', little has been achieved in terms of leading beyond the dualism criticised. Often the result has been a purely logical understanding of capitalist development (sometimes referred to as 'capital-logic') which leaves little room for class struggle.

There are two sorts of difficulty here. At one level, what one might call the 'logical' level, there is the question of the understanding of 'form'. Clearly, the term 'form' can be understood in different ways. As it has been used here, in the sense of 'mode of existence', the concept is essentially critical: it asserts the unity of that which appears to be separate, the transitory nature of that which appears to be permanent, the untruth of appearance. If, on the

other hand, it is used, as it often is, to mean a subdivision in a genus-species type of conceptualisation, as in the usage 'wheat is a form of cereal', then the concept completely loses its critical character and does nothing to lead us away from the dualism which is the object of our concern.¹⁸

Yet, even if 'form' is understood in the stronger sense, as mode of existence, such that to say 'A is the form of B', means that B is the mode of existence of A, there is still a danger that form-analysis can become just an empty logic of categories, a form of discourse in which the only reality appears to be the logical relations between categories. It is clear that the categories of totality, form and critique are crucial in the attack on the dualism which was identified as the main theoretical/political problem of the Marxist tradition, but how are they to be understood? How is the scholasticism of so much 'form-analytical' discussion to be avoided? Totality of what, forms of what? What are we talking about when we speak of totality, form and critique?

The simplest answer is that the totality is a totality of social relations, the forms are forms of social relations. Thus, to speak of money, value or the state as money-form, value-form or state-form is to say that these phenomena, which present themselves as things, are forms of social relations. All social phenomena are to be criticised (demystified) as the mode of existence of relations between people. However, this does not in itself resolve the problem: in many cases of 'form-analysis' the reference to social relations is a purely formal reference, since it is assumed that social relations follow a logically prescribed path of development. As a result, the dualism reappears, understood now in terms of a separation between a logically pre-ordained development of social relations (the logic of capital), on the one hand, and class struggle, which is understood as distinct from the social relations of capitalism, on the other.

The separation between social relations and struggle can only be overcome by seeing that the social relations of capitalism are inherently antagonistic, inherently conflictive, that all social relations within capitalism are relations of class struggle. To speak of the totality as a totality of social relations is to speak of it as a totality of antagonistic social relations (class struggle). To say that money is a form of social relations is to say that it is a form of class struggle, that its development cannot be understood as a logical process, but only as process of struggle (a struggle which has a certain mode of existence, but is not pre-determined).

Taken in this way, the categories of totality, form and critique lead us to an understanding of all social phenomena as modes of existence of class struggle and, conversely, to an understanding of class struggle as existing in and through those social phenomena. To understand all aspects of society as modes of existence of class struggle takes us beyond the dualist separation of society and struggle, object and subject, but we are still at the level of

assertion. We could say, for example, that the state is to be understood as a particular form of the totality of class struggle. Or we could say that the relation between politics and economics must be understood in terms of the unity-in-separation/separation-in-unity of class struggle. Both of those statements are important for understanding political and economic development, but they beg a further question: why? What is it that constitutes the unity (in separation) of politics and economics, what is it that allows us to speak of a totality of social relations? Where does the unity implied by the concept of totality come from? What generates that unity, how do we understand its genesis? The concept of totality, taken seriously, leads us to the question of genesis (or constitution). It is only when we move on from the concepts of totality and form to the genesis or constitution of that totality (and those forms) that the issue of power emerges.

VI

The attempt to overcome the dead hand of dualism leads us to the question of the genetic understanding of the totality of social relations (as relations of class struggle).

The exploration of the genesis or constitution of social phenomena is crucial to Marx's whole approach. This not only structures the whole of his work (*Capital*, most clearly), but is stated repeatedly as his definition of the scientific method. One of the most famous passages comes from the 1857 'Introduction' to the *Grundrisse*, and should be quoted at length:

It seems to be correct to begin with the real and the concrete, with the real precondition, thus to begin, in economics, with e.g. the population, which is the foundation and the subject of the entire social act of production. However, on closer examination this proves false. The population is an abstraction if I leave out, for example, the classes of which it is composed. These classes, in turn, are an empty phrase if I am not familiar with the elements on which they rest. E.g. wage labour, capital, etc. These latter in turn presuppose exchange, division of labour, prices, etc. For example, capital is nothing without wage labour, without value, money, price etc. Thus, if I were to begin with the population, this would be a chaotic conception [*Vorstellung*] of the whole, and I would then, by means of further determination, move analytically towards ever more simple concepts [*Begriff*], from the imagined concrete towards ever more simple concepts [*Begriff*], from the imagined concrete towards ever thinner abstractions until I had arrived at the *simplest determinations*. From there the journey would have

to be retraced until I had finally arrived at the population again, but this time not as the chaotic conception of a whole, but as a rich totality of many determinations and relations ... The latter is obviously the scientifically correct method. The concrete is concrete because it is the unity of many determinations, hence unity of the diverse. It appears in the process of thinking, therefore, as a process of concentration, as a result, not as a point of departure, even though it is the point of departure in reality and hence also the point of departure for observation [*Anschauung*] and conception. Along the first path the full conception was evaporated to yield an abstract determination; along the second, the abstract determinations lead towards a reproduction of the concrete by way of thought ... But this is by no means the process by which the concrete itself comes into being.¹⁹

The same point is made repeatedly in *Capital*, as, for example, in a concise remark in a footnote in which Marx starts from the critique of technology and moves on to the critique of religion:

It is, in reality, much easier to discover by analysis the earthly core of the misty creations of religion, than, conversely, it is, to develop from the actual relations of life the corresponding celestialised forms of those relations. The latter method is the only materialistic, and therefore the only scientific one.²⁰

But why does Marx insist that this is the only scientific method? That it is theoretically more demanding is clear, but why does this matter? And how are we to understand the genetic connection? The remark on the critique of religion suggests an answer. The reference to discovering 'by analysis the earthly core of the misty creations of religion' is a reference to Feuerbach and his argument that belief in the existence of a god is an expression of human self-alienation, that human self-alienation, in other words, is the 'earthly core' of religion. The second part of Marx's sentence, on developing 'from the actual relations of life the corresponding celestialised forms of those relations' refers to Marx's own criticism of Feuerbach, to the effect that self-alienation must be understood not in an abstract, but in a practical (and therefore historical) sense. Feuerbach is correct in pointing out that god is a human creation (and not vice versa), but the process of creation has to be understood practically, sensually. The concept of 'god' has to be understood as the product of human thought, and this thought, in turn, is not an individual ahistorical act, but an aspect of social practice in certain historical conditions.

The criticism of Feuerbach has important political implications. Religion presents humans as objects, as beings created by God, the sole creator, the

genesis of all things, the source of all power, the only Subject. Feuerbach's criticism of religion puts humans in the centre of the world, but they are not really empowered, for Feuerbach's human is trapped in a timeless self-alienation. Once the production of god is understood as a social, historical human practice, then humans are no longer objects, and no longer trapped in a timeless vacuum of powerlessness: *human practice, rather, is recognised as the sole creator, the genesis of all things, the source of all power, the only subject.* The critique of religion, understood in this sense as practical-genetic, allows humans to structure the world around themselves, as their own 'true sun'.

'The criticism of religion', says Marx, 'is the premise of all criticism'.²¹ His critique of the political economists follows the same pattern as his critique of Feuerbach. In *Capital*, Marx's attention has moved to a much more powerful god than the god of religion, namely money (value). Money, in everyday thought, proclaims itself as ruler of the world, as the sole source of power. Ricardo (taking the place of Feuerbach) has shown that that is not so: he has discovered 'by analysis' that the 'earthly core of the misty creations' of economics (the religion of money) is human labour, as the substance of value. However, Ricardo treats labour in the same way as Feuerbach treats self-alienation: as timeless, an ahistorical feature of the human condition.

Political Economy has indeed analysed, however incompletely, value and its magnitude, and has discovered what lies beneath these forms. But it has never once asked the question why labour is represented by the value of its product and labour-time by the magnitude of that value.²²

The result is that Ricardo, like Feuerbach, puts humans at the centre of the world, but leaves humanity entrapped in a timeless, unchanging vacuum of powerlessness. It is only by tracing the production of value and money by social, historical human practice that the critique of the power of money (and powerlessness of humans) becomes a theory of human power, of the power of human practice, or work.

These examples suggest that the genetic method is not just a question of applying a superior logic. Marx's method is sometimes described as based on the logical 'derivation' of categories (money from value, capital from money, and so on). This is the case, for example, in the so-called 'state derivation debate', in which it was argued that the development of a Marxist theory of the state involved the derivation of the category 'state'. This is correct, but in so far as the derivation, or the genetic link, is understood in purely logical terms, then the core of Marx's approach is misunderstood and the result is a theory which, by understanding social interconnections as purely logical, ends by disempowering rather than empowering social practice. The claim that Marx's method is scientific is not a claim that its logic is superior, or that it

is more rigorous, but that it follows in thought (and therefore consciously takes part in) the movement of the practical process of production. Genesis can only be understood as human genesis, as the power of human creation.

If, then, we return to the concept of 'totality' and ask what it is that gives foundation to the 'point of view of totality' (Lukacs's phrase)²³ – what it is that justifies the claim that the only 'scientifically correct' approach is to start out from the unity of the multiplicity of social phenomena – then the answer must be that what constitutes the totality as totality (and therefore what constitutes 'forms' of social relations as such) is the exclusive power of human creative practice (work). It is only when founded genetically-practically in work that the concept of totality (and form and critique) acquires meaning as a scientific/political concept of power.

If genesis (or derivation) is understood in this sense, as the movement in thought of the genetic power of human practice, then it follows that the 'simplest determinations' referred to by Marx in the passage from the *1857 Introduction* can only be understood as work (the creative power of human practice).²⁴ Marx's method (described by Gunn as 'determinate abstraction'²⁵) can only be grasped as scientific once all social connections, including the process of abstraction, are understood as practical.

The objectivity of capitalism, the 'that's the way things are' of capitalist reality, has now dissolved. The concepts of totality, form and so on provided a basis for overcoming the hard separation between subject and object, for conceptualising the separation as a separation-in-unity/unity-in-separation. However, it is only when those concepts are understood in a practical-genetic sense that the symmetry of subject and object disappears: it is only then that it becomes clear that there is no object, there is only a subject.

VII

The scream has now acquired a new dimension. From being a scream of negation, of refusal, it has now become a scream of power. The starting point was the subjective rejection of 'objectively existing society': now the objective has dissolved and there is nothing left but the power of the subject. The scream of the powerless victim, heard through the ears of Marxist theory, becomes the scream of the all-powerful subject.

The key to this transformation is the concept of work. The pivotal point of Marx's theory, that which gives power to negation, is the concept of the creative power of human practice, of work. For Marx, humanity is defined by conscious creative practice: 'free conscious activity is man's species-character'.²⁶ The concept of practice or work is in the first place a concept

of power. It emerges in the critique of the notion of human powerlessness expressed in religion: it is not god who is practical and creative, but humans. If humans are practical, creative beings, then all relations between them must be understood as practical relations, relations of work: 'all social life is essentially practical. All mysteries which lead theory to mysticism find their rational solution in human practice and in the comprehension of this practice' (Thesis VIII on Feuerbach). The comprehension of practice is the key to theorising about society because society is nothing other than practice. It is for this reason that Marx speaks at the beginning of *Capital* of the 'two-fold nature of the labour contained in commodities' as 'the pivot on which a clear comprehension of Political Economy turns'.²⁷

Work, creation and practice are used interchangeably here. Under capitalism, work exists in the form of the two-fold nature of labour, as concrete and abstract labour: the (contradictory and antagonistic) subordination of concrete to abstract labour (the production of value) means that work exists in a form which negates that 'free conscious activity' which is the 'species characteristic of man'. Marx's central criticism of capitalism is that it dehumanises people by depriving them of that which makes them human. Yet the existence of work as value-producing labour does nothing at all to change the all-constitutive power of work: since work is the only creative force in society (any society), it could not be otherwise. The force of Marx's theory of value lies precisely in that: it is simultaneously a theory of the subordination of work and a theory of the exclusive power of work.

Work, then, is the 'simplest determination' (to use the term of the 1857 'Introduction'). Work, so understood, is subjectivity – practical subjectivity, since there is no other; and work is negativity, since it involves the practical negation of that which exists. Work is all-constitutive. 'Objectivity' is nothing but objectified subjectivity: there is nothing but subjectivity and its objectification (its transformation into a mode of existence as objective).

The subjective scream, which first seemed to be anti-scientific (and would be so treated by most academic discussion) is now revealed as the essential starting point of scientific reflection. If society is nothing but subjectivity and its objectification, it follows that subjectivity (practice) is the only possible starting point for the comprehension of society, that the understanding of society is a process of tracing the (objectivising) forms of our own subjectivity – a path which is totally closed by the notion of 'scientific objectivity'. The world can only be understood subjectively, critically, negatively, from below. We started out looking for a theory-against-society rather than a theory-of-society: it is now clear that is only through a theory-against-society (a theory which starts from the subjective critique of the 'objective') that society can be understood, as objectification of the subject. A theory-of-society, which

starts from a supposed (and inevitably fictitious) suppression (or distancing) of the subject from society,²⁸ cannot possibly reach an understanding of society in terms of the subjective power of work. It can only take at face value the objectification which disempowers the subject, thus contributing to that disempowerment. It is only negatively, only through a theory against society, that society can be understood.²⁹

VIII

From the pivotal concept of work, as practical (and theoretical) subjectivity, as 'simplest determination', it becomes possible to recompose society, to retrace the process of the objectification of the subject, the existence of the subject as object.

This retracing of the journey from the pivotal existence of work as concrete and abstract labour is the task undertaken by Marx in *Capital*. Starting from value, he traces the genesis of money, capital, profit, and so on as forms assumed by the product of work, showing simultaneously how the relations between people (practical relations, relations of work) take the form of relations between things. This, the existence of practical social relations as relations between things, Marx refers to as fetishism.

What does fetishism mean? If relations between people exist as relations between things, if, that is, relations between subjects exist as relations between objects, then what is left of the subjectivity which has been the theme of this argument? If the relations between people exist objectively, in a certain form, then are they not objective relations? If the criticism of capitalism is that it objectifies subjective relations, does this not mean that the study of capitalism must be the study of this objectivity?

The question of objectivism comes in again by the back door, through the notion of fetishism. The justification which can be advanced for the objectivist tradition of mainstream Marxism is now not a simple dualism between people and objective conditions, but rather that people, who are in reality, in their species-characteristic, practical creative beings, exist under capitalism as objects, as dehumanised, as deprived of their subjectivity. It is the existence of people as objects, the argument runs, that allows us to understand capitalism in terms of the logical unfolding of its 'objective laws of development' first analysed by Marx in *Capital* and subsequently studied by the tradition of Marxist economics. In this view, class struggle is struggle against the logic of capital and clearly distinct from it.

This justification of objectivism rests on what one might call a 'hard' interpretation of fetishism (or alienation, reification, objectification – all

different terms for basically the same process). Fetishism is taken as an accomplished fact. The fetishised forms are taken to be the exclusive mode of existence of relations between people.

Politically and theoretically, the way in which fetishism is understood is the central issue of Marxism. Politically, the hard concept of fetishism leads to the obvious dilemma: if people exist as objects under capitalism, then how is revolution conceivable? To this dilemma there are three possible solutions. One is to say that there is no way out, that there is no possibility of social revolution, that we can only criticise without hope: the pessimism often associated with the Frankfurt School. A second is to say that there is a way forward, through the action and leadership of those who manage to free themselves from their condition as objects, through the leadership, in other words, of a vanguard party: the Leninist position. A third possible solution is to argue that revolution should not be thought of in terms of subjective action, that the unfolding of the objective contradictions will themselves bring about the downfall of capitalism and the liberation of the subject: the position of the Second International. These strategies, for all their difference, share the same point of departure – the understanding of fetishism as accomplished fact. If people are understood as objectified, then, in one form or another, a politics of treating them as objects follows.

Theoretically, the way in which fetishism is understood affects the understanding of all other categories. If social relations are understood as objectified, then the forms of existence of those social relations (and their interrelation) will also be understood as objective, and their development will be understood as the unfolding as a closed logic. Thus, for example, value, in this tradition, is understood as an economic category (often as the basis for a theory of price) and not as a form of class struggle. Money, too, is understood as existing objectively, as creating conditions which affect class struggle, but not as a form of class struggle itself. These categories are understood as 'closed', in the sense of developing according to a self-contained logic.

This understanding of fetishism tends to lead to an analytical rather than a genetic discussion of capitalism. Indeed, if fetishism is complete, then it is not clear what significance the genetic approach (or form analysis) possesses. If people are objectified, then what is the point of tracing the objectification of their subjectivity? If value rules, rather than work, then what is the point of asking 'why labour is represented by the value of its product', as Marx insists we must? The dominant approach of Marxist economics has been simply to ignore the question of genesis and of form. In discussions of value, for example, very little attention has been paid to the form (as opposed to the magnitude) of value and Marx's all-important criticism of Ricardo has, on the whole, been forgotten.

A more sophisticated approach, which succeeds in integrating the idea of form with a 'hard' understanding of fetishism, is put forward by those who take the view that form-analysis should be understood historically. In this view, the importance of Marx's insistence on form is simply to show the historicity of capitalism. The genesis of the forms of social relations, then, has to be understood historically: the establishment of the rule of value or money was a historical process accomplished in the early days of capitalism.³⁰ From this perspective, value can be understood as a form of domination, but not as a form of struggle. Value production, as the form taken by work under capitalism, is a form of capitalist domination, to be contrasted with the past and above all future liberation of work.

There is no doubt that the hard interpretation of fetishism is the dominant one within the Marxist tradition, and that it has something to do with the treatment of people as the objects rather than the subjects of politics that has characterised the worst of the communist political tradition. To put it weakly, this interpretation of fetishism is consistent with the authoritarianism that has characterised much of the vanguardist tradition.

There is, however, an alternative way of interpreting fetishism, another way of understanding the 'retracing of the journey' that Marx undertakes in *Capital*. The point is made colourfully by Ernst Bloch:

alienation could not even be seen, and condemned of robbing people of their freedom and depriving the world of its soul, if there did not exist some measure of its opposite, of that possible coming-to-oneself, being-with-oneself, against which alienation can be measured.³¹

The concept of alienation, or fetishism, in other words, implies its opposite: not as an essential non-alienated 'home' deep in our hearts, but as resistance, refusal, rejection of alienation in our daily practice. It is only on the basis of a concept of non- (or better anti-) alienation or anti-fetishism that we can conceive of alienation or fetishism. Fetishism, therefore, cannot be understood as complete: it can only be understood as a process, as fetishisation.

If fetishism is understood as fetishisation, then the genesis of the capitalist forms of social relations is not of purely historical interest. The value-form, money-form, capital-form, state-form etc. are not established once and for all at the origins of capitalism. Rather, they are constantly at issue, constantly questioned as forms of social relations, constantly being established and re-established (or not) through struggle. The forms of social relations are processes of forming social relations.³²

Our existence, then, is not simply an existence within fetishised forms of social relations. We do not exist simply as the objectified victims of capitalism.

Nor can we exist outside the capitalist forms: there is no area of capitalism-free existence, no privileged sphere of unfetichised life, for we are always constituting and constituted by our relations with others. Rather, as the starting point of this discussion, the scream, suggests, we exist against-and-in capital. Our existence against capitalism is not a question of conscious choice, it is the inevitable expression of our life in an oppressive, alienating society. Gunn puts the point nicely when he says that 'unfreedom subsists solely as the (self-contradictory) revolt of the oppressed'.³³ Our existence-against-capital is the inevitable constant negation of our existence-in-capital. Conversely, our existence-in-capital (or, more clearly, our containment within capital) is the constant negation of our revolt against capital. Our containment within capital is a constant process of fetishising, or forming, our social relations, a constant struggle.

This understanding of fetishism as fetishisation, and hence of our existence in capitalist society as an existence against-and-in capital, affects our understanding of all the categories of Marxist thought. If the forms of social relations (expressed in the categories of the political economists) are understood as processes of forming social relations, and hence as struggle, it is clear that the categories must be understood as being open. If value, for example, is understood not as an economic category, nor as a form of domination, but as a form of struggle, then the actual meaning of the category will depend on the course of the struggle. Once the categories of thought are understood as expressions not of objectified social relations but of the struggle to objectify them, then a whole storm of unpredicability blows through them. Once it is understood that money, capital, the state are nothing but the struggle to form, to discipline, to structure what Hegel calls 'the sheer unrest of life', then it is clear that their development can be understood only as practice, as undetermined struggle.³⁴ Marxism, as a theory of struggle, is inevitably a theory of uncertainty.³⁵ The notion of struggle is inconsistent with any idea of a guaranteed negation-of-the-negation happy ending: the only way that dialectics can be understood is as negative dialectics,³⁶ as the open-ended negation of the untrue, as revolt against unfreedom.

IX

Marx's method is a movement of empowerment/ disempowerment.

A principal theme of this article has been the politics of method. It is not for theoretical reasons but for political reasons that it is desperately important to open Marxism, to question the received interpretation of the Marxist method. One of the principal obstacles to the project of opening Marxism is

that it is still very common to discuss questions of Marxist method as though they had nothing at all to do with politics. Many of the most important critiques of traditional Marxism have been written in a style which suggests that their authors float in a realm of pure theory and have little interest in the political implications of what they write.

The question of method is the question of revolutionary power – though not in the Leninist sense. I.I. Rubin, in a lecture delivered in Moscow in 1927 on ‘Abstract Labour and Value in Marx’s System’,³⁷ referred to the passage already quoted from the ‘Introduction’ to the *Grundrisse* and described Marx’s method in terms of two steps, the analytical and the dialectical or genetic. The political implications of Rubin’s argument are never spelt out in his lecture, yet they were to cost him his life – he disappeared in the Stalinist purges. Possibly Stalin or his henchmen realised that the concept of power and of revolution implicit in Marx’s method was totally incompatible with the direction taken by the Russian Revolution.

The analytical movement in Marx’s method sets out to answer the revolutionary question: how can we conceptualise the power of the powerless? It is an absurd question because everything in society tells us that the powerless are powerless, that it is the politicians, the mafia, the drug barons, the rich who are the ones with power. It is a necessary question because, more and more, there is no other way of conceiving of a future for humanity.

Marx’s answer is that, by analysing the forms of social relations which proclaim constantly the power of the other and the powerlessness of ourselves (god, money, capital, state, drug barons), it is possible to see that there is a power which constitutes all of these and on which they therefore depend: that all-constitutive power is labour, work, creative practice. The power of the powerless is constituted by that which makes them (us) human, namely work. The power of the powerless is the dependence of the powerful on the powerless.

This is an absurd answer to an absurd question, a necessary answer to a necessary question. The movement of analysis is a movement of empowerment: behind all the forms of our powerlessness lies the one thing that makes us all-powerful: work. That is the first, obvious, and generally overlooked, meaning of the labour theory of value. It is a great chest-thumping cry: ‘we humans, as workers, are all-powerful’. That is the theme that resonates through all Marx’s work, from the early critique of religion to its great elaboration in *Capital*. With this the world is turned upside down: from here we can begin to recompose the world in a manner quite different from the ‘social sciences’.

The second step, what Rubin calls the dialectical movement, traces the disempowerment of our omnipotence, how it is that the omnipotence of labour exists in the form of the powerlessness of labour. Once we have seen that

labour is the substance of value, there follows the question, why is it that the product of labour takes the form of value?

Fetishisation, the process traced by the second phase of Marx's method, is a two-faced process. On the one hand, it is the disempowerment of labour. The product of labour, transformed into commodity, value, money, capital, no longer appears as the product of labour: the power of labour is extinguished (never completely) by the process of fetishisation. Fetishisation is the process by which the power of labour comes to exist (never completely) in the form of money, state, capital. It is the process by which labour is reduced (never completely) to abstract, value-producing labour, the process by which alternative futures are killed, but never completely.

On the other hand, the disempowerment of labour is impossible, since it is the source of all social power. Fetishisation is strictly speaking the transformation of the power of labour. No matter how successful capital is in its struggle to reduce labour to abstract, value-producing labour, capital always depends on labour for its existence. Capitalism is based on the objectification of subjective labour, but, no matter how complete that objectification is, it remains the objectification of the subjective. No matter how absolute and terroristic the domination of capital is, there is no way that it can free itself from its dependence on labour. The dependence of capital on labour exists within capital as contradiction.

The power of labour thus exists against-and-in capital, with no clear distinction between 'against' and 'in'. We start from struggle: the scream, our open opposition to capital, the existence of labour against capital, the disruptive power of labour expressed in strikes, sabotage, absenteeism and all sorts of militant action. The opposition to capital is not always open, it is often contained, often integrated: the disruptive power of labour is harnessed as productive power. There are no hard barriers here, no clear lines of distinction: there is a continuum between the power of labour against capital and the power of labour in capital. The productive power is always to some extent disruptive, revolt is never entirely absent. However, even fetishised, even contained, the power of labour is always there. It appears as contradiction between concrete and abstract labour, between use-value and value, between productive capital and money-capital: it appears as limitation on the extension of absolute surplus-value, as the contradiction of relative surplus-value production expressed in the tendency of the rate of profit to fall. Contradiction is the fetishised expression of the ever-present power of labour. The transformation of the product of labour into value contains the power of labour on which capital depends, but it also reproduces it as an ineradicable chaotic fragility at the heart of capital.

The specific contribution of Marxism as a theory against capitalism is thus not that struggle against capitalism is supported by the 'objective contradictions' of the system, but that the power of labour, both overt and contained, constitutes the fragility of capitalism. The dynamic of capitalist development (that is, class struggle) is the ceaseless and hopeless flight by capital from its dependence on the power of labour. It is in these terms that the question of capitalist crisis has to be understood.

In times like the present, when the labour movement has suffered such defeats throughout the world, the power of labour seems to disappear from sight. The troubles of capitalism seem to be the result of economic laws which appear to have nothing to do with struggles which could create the basis for a different sort of society. Work may be the 'simplest determination' but it seems quite irrelevant to the present powerlessness of oppositional movements. In this situation, it becomes more important than ever to 'retrace the journey', to unfold the power of work not only categorially but historically, to interpret recent history as the struggle by capital to refetishise the power of work, to show how this refetishisation both disarms revolt and reproduces the power of labour as the instability of capitalism: a message of warning and a message of hope.

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6. Ibid.
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