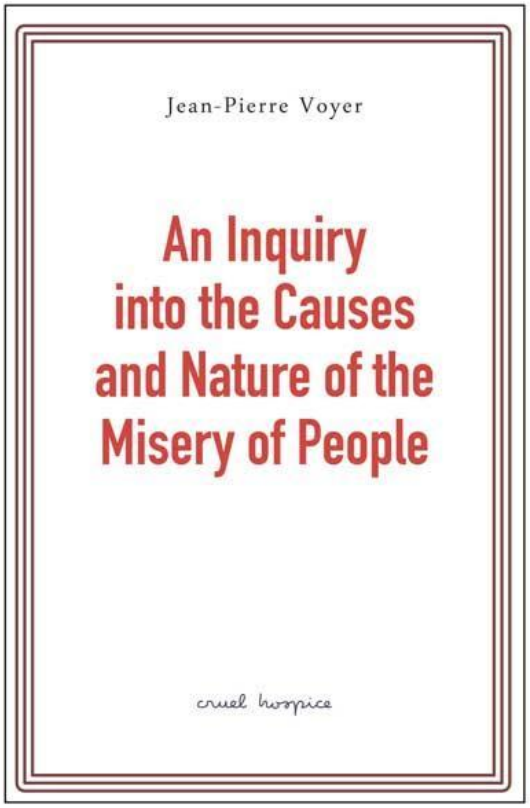
An inquiry into the causes and nature of the misery of people

Jean-Pierre Voyer



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Introduction

The Wicked Ways of This
Devious World Explained
An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes
of the Misery of People

In the mid 70s in Europe and the United States, the wave of radical revolt had ebbed. In the Bay Area, the Situationist milieu was quietly falling into inglorious disarray with vicious infighting over internal hierarchies based in part on male domination of the network. The New York-based former members of the American Situationist International had largely gone silent, had disappeared from the public screen. In France and elsewhere, Situationist sycophants (known as the Pro-Situ) were fighting over who had the best critique of the SI, mostly in an attempt to disguise the fact that their commentary was empty rhetoric.

Of course, on the streets discontent had not been waiting for the intelligentsia to legitimize the changing face of radicalism. Movements surfaced in many places. In Italy, the 19761977 strikes and protests threatened the legitimacy of revolving-door, spaghetti-western governments that came and went like nightly specials on a trattoria menu. Radical currents of the Soweto uprising in South Africa expressed contempt for the entire structure of power after young Blacks refused to study the Boer language. Workers rose up in the shipyards of Gdansk, Poland directly challenging the power of the Communist Party and the Soviet puppet regime. Meanwhile, in England and America, the punks provided some extremist comic relief: cultural posturing was the order of the day, and self-destruction the order of the night.

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There was at least one exception within the Situationist-inspired radical network. In Paris, Jean Pierre Voyer—a rising star in the Situationist firmament, one who was ostracized for daring to question Debord's delusional and self-serving claim that his own theory had been perfected–charted his own independent path.

One of Jean Pierre's closest collaborators, P., remembers meeting Jean Pierre for the first time at Debord's home in the early 70s. He was immediately drawn to Voyer, whom he found to be a spirited original thinker in a Paris that had already become jaded and a bit cynical after the ebb of the 68 tide. That evening they were discussing the concept of the unconscious. Debord insisted that the unconscious existed, that

there was a realm we could not easily access, that it was essential and unavoidable to have such an invisible territory. Voyer asserted that the unconscious was a limit on freedom and as such could not be accepted. Voyer held his ground and Debord, insisting on his position, eventually changed the topic. For P. this summed up the difference between them—Debord holding to the radical orthodoxy inherited from the Surrealists, while Voyer refused intellectual tradition and its self-imposed limits.

P. points out that over many decades none of those criticized by Voyer ever responded to his critiques. Debord and his entourage-including Gerard Lebovici, the wealthy film agent who funded the publishing company Champ Libre of which Debord was in the informal editor–chose not to engage him directly though he has given them plenty of opportunity to respond to his direct challenges to their core ideas. Instead his enemies have chosen to try to ruin his reputation, with attacks on his mental health, or slanderous references to his anti-semitism (which he has "encouraged" by his merciless critique of Israel). Some of his enemies even went so far as to say Voyer didn't know how to think, a desperate attempt to assert the absurd, since Voyer is obviously a brilliant social philosopher, which is why his opponents were discussing him in the first place.

Voyer did not have an entourage, acolytes, or a school surrounding him because his work and his approach made that kind of relationship nearly impossible. Simply repeating what he says is difficult because there are no simplistic formulas, no tag lines, no simple short cuts. And because Voyer was constantly criticizing his own previous work, improving it and rejecting inadequate formulations, it was impossible to mythologize him. What he maintained was his method (subvert, subvert, there will always be something left), and his goal—to create a society of real communication.

In 1971, Voyer wrote "Reich, How To Use" (available in *It's Crazy How Many Things Don't Exist*, Little Black Cart, 2016), in which he broke new ground in explaining the link between individual alienation and the social expression of misery, by employing the concept of publicity that was elaborated in greater detail in "The Science of Publicity" (available only in French, both on Voyer's web site http:// leuven.pagesperso-orange.fr/ isp.htm and in an edition published by Edition Champ Libre, 1975). While publicity retained the concept of the spectacle as the overarching structure of reification, it contained an implicit critique of Debord's concept of the monolithic one-way nature of modern society: Voyer's construct presented communication as partially realized in the dialogue of and about commodities (one meaning of publicity), an inhuman form of the most human aspiration. Where the Situationists, in their deeply pessimistic concept of the spectacle, saw only the voice of power, Voyer presented an inverted but real yearning on the part of slaves to practice communication unmediated by commodities. For Voyer every Rolls Royce, and in fact every commodity, offered the promise that true wealth, affluence, publicity, communication humanity was present in its absence.

Voyer's call for a detailed critique of Marx and the materialist economists fell on deaf ears in the Situationist milieu—there was no public response by Debord or anyone in his camp who had been directly challenged to take up this task. With a few collaborators,

in the years leading up to the publication of the Enquete, Voyer proceeded to make a series of bold discoveries.

An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Misery of People takes on, among other classic economists, Adam Smith, whose masterpiece is alluded to in Voyer's title. For the first time, and in a systematic fashion, Voyer shows: 1) that the economy doesn't exist except as a false idea and practice on the part of our enemies; 2) that in our world communication, the most human of human acts, is what commodities do, not what people do, and 3) that there is no such thing as exchange value vs. use value, that there is only value, which is the language of abstraction that commodities speak to each other without the slaves who transport these commodities participating in the discussion.

Voyer asserts that the Situationists joined the enemies of Marx by not criticizing his false view of political economy, which made Marx more bourgeois than the bourgeoisie because he appeared to criticize it, allowing these ideas to continue unchallenged for longer. Voyer demonstrates respect for Marx by criticizing many of the false parts of Marx's theory. He leaves us with the possibility of a real future based on an understanding of the strategic and structural contradictions of our enemies and their system of domination. We learn a great deal about what is inside the black hole of alienation, how our rulers currently operate with such impunity, what ideology is, and how we are complicit through our propagation and acceptance of false ideas about the world. The last cop is in our heads.

This was a great deal to accomplish in a little more than seventy pages and used a very concentrated style. By my third reading I was starting to get it. Along the way there were so many aha moments that I was sometimes exhausted. I was also impassioned. If someone can accurately explain how the world really works, there is hope that we can dismantle it.

This may sound trite, or like a vulgar pitch, nonetheless–if you read only one book of social philosophy, this should be it.

Isaac Cronin
April 1st, 2017 Oakland, California

I. The Enemy Has Begun His Russian Campaign

1. This world is at the mercy of an idea

A concept haunts the world: the concept of publicity, and this concept is the concept of the world itself. The world is haunted by its own concept. The Situationist International had founded its cause upon dissatisfaction[1]. Confronted by the growing success of that cause and by the mortal danger that the publicity of dissatisfaction represents for them, the enemies of the Situationist International are *forced* to organize the spectacle of dissatisfaction. The enemy has become pro-Situationist. Situationism is the most modern form of reformism.

2. Giving a public form to questions of publicity

Publicity has always been lacking, but not always publicly so. The enemy can no longer conceal the fact that, for this world, it is the world itself that constitutes the object of principal interest. Nothing prevents us now from making the link between our critique and the absence of publicity or from taking sides in that absence and thereby participating in real struggles and identifying ourselves with them. We do not stand before the world as dogmatists with a new principle: Here's the truth, kneel before it. We are developing new principles for the world out of the world's own principles. We are not saying to the world, "Give up your struggles for they are stupid, and then you will understand the real reasons for which you are fighting." We merely show the world what it is really fighting for, and that publicity is something that the enemy is forcing it to assume even should it refuse. Our entire goal can only consist in giving a public form to questions of publicity.

[1] This concept reaches us from an anonymous correspondent. If at Jena the spirit traveled by horse, today it comes by way of the mailman.

3. Our most immediate enemies are always the partisans of false critique

The revolt against existing conditions is present everywhere. It is the spectacle of satisfaction that has given it an explicit project following the basic principle, "the unity of oppression dictates the coherence of possible encounters." The enemy has experienced with horror that the greatest danger lay in things going spectacularly right. Therefore everything must now go spectacularly wrong. That way the ever-present revolt will remain incapable of further defining its object and organization. People have demonstrated their intentions to take their lives into their own hands to such a point that it is no longer advisable to confront them head on. The strategy of the current State of things is precisely to ensure that the most general principle—the critique of money and the state—remains a prisoner of the particular and there rots. Their best hope is to choose a particular detail in this revolt and support it. What was really put in question in 1968 was the world itself, the totality of what exists. But this undefeated principle did not itself prevail because it did not recognize itself in its particular forms, because it could not sufficiently abstract itself from those forms. It is always ideas that are lacking and never weapons. It is precisely everything that survived May 68 as thoughtless, fragmented activism and as a proliferation of details, in other words *everything that was already behind in May 1968,* that the enemy is counting on to prolong his domination a little longer. To this end the enemy has only to fashion a spectacular avant-garde out of the countercultural retards of 1968. Our most immediate enemies are always the partisans of false critique, its patented civil servants, guarantors of established power and guaranteed by it.

4. Burlesques

The enemy is compelled to copy down to the smallest detail that which the SI did in other times. One can observe on the comic stage, the spectacular stars of dissatisfaction, the pro-situationist duo Stoleru and Attali[2]— both "polytechnician" economists—express the subtle refinement of the current State-Vaneigemist and cybernetico-Debordist trends in the spectacle of dissatisfaction. The economist Guillaume[3] enthusiastically quotes the Situationist Debord at length and amid a string of the worst university cretins, and tries to turn the concept of the spectacle into just another detail in a semiological shopping list. Concepts such as *alienation* and *spectacle* should be disinfected after coming out of the mouth of a Guillaume. This species of New Left manipulator, lover of "political strategy", self-management, and periods of transition, dreams of nothing less than "to give to all men the means to

[2] Lionel Stoleru–Economic adviser to Valerie Giscard d"Estaing; Jacques Attali–French economist and political theorist, adviser to Francois Mitterand and to Nicolai Sarkozy.

[3] Marc Guillaume is the co-author of *Anti-Economics* with Jacques Attali.

invent their future". Citizens, regardless of the fact that the Guillaumes of this world are perfectly incapable of doing what they pretend, shall we allow ourselves to be in debt to that breed of *detritus universitatis recuperans*? We'll help ourselves. But, still, the funniest of all is the frenzied Situationism of the Stalinist party, which has suddenly decided that we can no longer continue as before, that we can no longer tolerate our world, and that it is high time "to live free", and to realize that Stalin was a great creator of situations.

5. The spectacle is only in the details

Dissatisfaction, now that it has become official, must outflank the world's comprehension of itself by *publicizing* every aspect of the world's decomposition, but separately, as details. The struggle is henceforth between the publicity of dissatisfaction—dissatisfaction about the essential, *dissatisfaction about publicity*— and the spectacle of dissatisfaction, which is only dissatisfaction about the details. For pro-situationist reformism, it is about evoking *everything* but the central question, or evoking that question only in a way that renders it incomprehensible, as a detail among details. The language of power has become furiously pro-situationist. Until now happiness was on display everywhere at bargain prices. Now the language of power denounces the omnipresent weaknesses of its system. The owners of society have suddenly discovered that "everything" must be changed immediately: education, urban planning, life in the workplace, the direction of technology. We must *truly understand* that when power and its leftist sycophants speak about changing "everything", they mean changing all the details. The world of the commodity, which is essentially unlivable, has become visibly so. Thus the owners of society must urgently make the world spectacularly unlivable, that is to say unlivable due to reasons embedded in a host of details, so the essential and unique reason remains hidden. And, of course, the same people who have made the world what it is are the ones who intend to change all those details. In short, the world has lost confidence in all its leaders and governments; so the owners propose to dissolve it and build a new one. They simply point out that they are more qualified than the revolutionaries to undertake an upheaval that requires such vast experience and enormous resources, which of course they possess and are familiar with.

6. The totality as a new detail

The State scum, journalist scum, university leftist, trade unionist, ecologist, Stalinist, countercultural scum, only talk about quality of life, daily life, self-management, "changing the world", "changing life". (A few more details for you.) Modern reformism has succeeded in turning the totality itself into a detail. The enemy responds to the concept of the world by staging the world as a threat to itself, a new version of the

spectacle of the world's demise. The accumulation of garbage on the planet (not only leftist trash but literally trash), takes center stage on cue as the new "terra incognita" so promising for updated colonialism, for the new Empire, the new eternal youth of the commodity: the trash market. All the ruckus about overflowing trash cans has only one purpose: to conceal a little longer the fact that after the great alarm of 1968, the essential waste is the absolute waste of human life, that all of life is being wasted, that to live for humans is to be completely devoid of meaning, that human life has become mere refuse, mere garbage produced by the metabolism of commodities. The trash market perfectly addresses this double function:

1. It makes people forget the central menacing question by focusing us on the grotesque and pitiful spectacle of the worldwide dissatisfaction of garbage collectors;

2. It increasingly reinforces the role of the state as a champion of the endless chore of cleanliness, champion of a natural resource economy, with a bunch of ministers of the quality of life and the proud motto, "Here comes the State, there goes the garbage." (Except for the leftist filth who truly adore the state and labor.) Incompetence pleads incompetence not only to justify its continuation but its strengthening. The essential characteristic of the commodity is that it first reproduces its own conditions, its perpetual self-justification, the new unknown worlds necessary for its development, and that nothing ever can oppose it in this domain where it stands unrivaled to the point that it is capable of destroying the planet if nothing essential opposes it. *Its real limit is elsewhere.* It has no other purpose than to produce the ashes out of which it will be reborn. For the last 6000 years, the history of the commodity is the history of a long and unique catastrophe. The commodity—as social relation—nourishes itself on the ruins that it continuously produces: Rome, the Spain of Philip II, the extermination of everything that is not marketable all over the world. Water, air (always presented by Engels and other classical thinkers as an example of something both useful yet free), silence, trash, all these used to cost nothing, required no effort, they were not yet the object of commodity exchange. This could not last. This was not *destined* to last. The civilizing role of the commodity is to socialize in its horrific way things that were not social. We are witnessing the socialization of garbage, of society, of the world. The enemy responds to this attempt at a world coup d'etat by making the world one commodity among many. He is going to sell us the world the way he sells Pepsi.

7. The enemy must fight—meaning lie—on two fronts

The enemy, loyal to his usual spectacular tactics, denounces a lie that has become too dangerous with a new lie. But this time the new lie is too late; it intervenes only after the first lie has exposed itself. Under duress of self-exposure, the enemy must scramble to organize the spectacular denunciation of the spectacle, turning the crisis

of the spectacle into a spectacle of crisis. This was such a close call that that the enemy can no longer count on forgetfulness. The enemy has to simultaneously maintain two lies. He has to maintain the spectacles of satisfaction and of dissatisfaction. He must allege that publicity both exists and does not exist. This world must organize and enhance the lack of publicity, at the same time deploring this lack. But this two-faced lie is not without risk: all of this must be accomplished in that atmosphere of frivolity and boredom that precedes great upheavals[4]. They have to simultaneously whine about gas shortages and build bigger cars. Until now, grand spectacular manuevers like the Cold War had a certain drama that was their central defining characteristic and led to their being taken seriously. The second time around it's a farce: these gambits don't reach the required level of "seriousness" and unfold in grotesque confusion. Even if the farce turned horribly dark it would be an ending perfectly suited to the ignominy of this world, after all, as good a way as any to be done with toil and boredom. The rout of the old world is visible in this ridiculous spectacle of decomposed domination. What's grotesque in the trash can war is this: what has to be done is to impassion with the issue of its survival a contemplative herd whose humanity has already been destroyed and for whom its own species is something radically alien and distant, the spectacle of the species as a threat to itself.

8. Ideas are improving—with the help of the enemy

We have suddenly learned from a bunch of little leaflets that the Situationists' socks were sagging. But it is the declared enemies of the Situationists who are to be congratulated for making the fundamental critique of the SI. Having understood with great trepidation that the times were decidedly Situationist and too much so for its liking, the old order decided to howl with the wolves. They became Pro-Situationist. This is at once the greatest homage to the SI and the most useful critique. The enemy is forced to recuperate the ideas of the SI, demonstrating at once the excellence of the ideas and above all their inadequacy. The enemy never gets away without paying a price. Recuperation is necessary. Progress implies it. The enemy by its very existence denounces the weakness of our critique. Every revolutionary defeat contains a spiritual victory because it allows us to sever the good from the bad in revolutionary theory and practice. It's trial by fire. It's the enemy that rids us of backward leftists, pro-situs, and counter-cultural losers by hiring them into their avant-garde, compromising them and ultimately cutting off the branch they sit on. Citizen! Know that when what was formerly an idea ends up as drool dribbling out of the mouth of a minister, an economist, a Stalinist, or a leftist, that idea has become worthless, and that any

[4] Now, one cannot mock people indefinitely, parachutists neither; as was clearly shown by the Radio-Renaissance station's explosive affair, and the revolt of the Tancos parachuters. [ed: Tancos Parachuters were a left wing unit of the Portugese Army who revolted against the government at the end of Portugal's colonial era.]

concept traveling in such bad company must be immediately put in front of the firing squad of critique. On reading the little pro-situ pamphlets, one could imagine that the enemy is the SI and that its principle crime was to have existed. What must be criticized is the world that practically criticizes both the SI and the masses of its times, the world that criticizes them by simply having survived their assaults.

9. Bad company

The idea of the absolute power of the exworkers councils must be pretty harmless and underdeveloped to be found traveling with the Stalinist priest Garaudy or the military man Fabiao[5]. The latter—questioned about the kinds of social relations that could exist between a centralized authority and grass roots organizations—responded, "The central authority has nothing to do with grass roots power. [One couldn't agree more.]... Grass roots power is of a totally different nature than that of the masses. [One couldn't agree more.]... Its function is to address daily life issues, collective issues, and civic issues." This is a very odd definition of the absolute power of ex-workers councils, councils that would tolerate the State and money. According to Garaudy, the councils would manage and control social activity. In other words, there are the councils on one hand and on the other, social activity, meaning the activity of the friends of Fabiao and Garaudy. Manage yourselves, we'll govern; you guys work, we'll do the rest. According to these reformist scumbags, the ex-workers councils would concern themselves with daily life while the State and money would control global issues. Daily life is in fashion. One idiot will talk of self-management of daily life (the self-management of nothing), another of the unionization of daily life. Daily life is the new work horse of modern reformism and the so-called Communist party is joining in. "We can no longer live like this." I once met an idiot, otherwise totally charming, who said she loved daily life. Apparently, like Garaudy and Fabiao, she had heard that the SI talked a lot about daily life. So she thought of herself as cool, more innocently than Garaudy and Fabiao. The only thing is, the SI had always talked about the *critique* of daily life. The naive pursuit of happiness in daily life the way it is practiced today, totally lacking publicity, is exactly what hundreds of thousands of middle managers are chasing. The strict definition of middle class consumption is the search for happiness that tolerates the State and money. *The only possible relation between the councils of exworkers and central power is war.* Fabiao knows this better than anyone else, so he ends his statement with this wish, "If one is hoping for a reconciliation between the councils and central power, you'll have to wait a long time."

[5] Roger Garaudy: a long-time Communist Party member who fought in the French resistance in the Second World War. Carlos Alberto Fabiao: a Left wing general in Portugal during the revolution of 1975 who led an anti-colonial movement in Guinea Bissau.

10. Situationism must be fought.

Situationism must be fought. And to fight Situationism effectively—there is a style of pro-situationism that consists of a spectacular opposition to Situationism—means to fight Marxism. The Situationists were the first to fight Marxism, meaning they did justice to Marx. It follows from this that to do justice to the Situationists means to give Marx his due. Thus it will be seen that it is not a matter of drawing a line between the future and the past but of realizing the *ideas* of the past. We will then see that humanity is not beginning a new project but realizing its historical task with full understanding of why it is doing so. Marxism is that ignominy that maintains that theory can be right while the masses are wrong! You have to be as big a fool as Castoriadis to believe that Marxism was ever a living theory.

11. The Scandal of Marxism

The scandal of Marxism and of Situationism consists of believing that it is possible for the thought of Marx and of the SI to be correct while the enemies of Marx and the Situationists are still standing, as if the question of the truth of the critique is not a practical question, a question of its power and of the annihilation of its enemies. In fact Marxism is the victory of Stalin's "thought", that is to say the victory of Stalin's police[6]. Marxism is a Russian and Chinese commodity. Marxism is the use of what was inadequate in Marx's thought and his life by the enemies of Marx. But then the enemy is the one making the effort to criticize the thought and life of Marx. What can I say? War is war. The best known defeat of Napoleon is also *his most famous battle*. Without a doubt, Marx was an ideologue and Napoleon an old fart.[7] In social war the

[6] Amusing note: A *Nouvel Observateur* imbecile who always comes up with buffoonish tidbits like this one on July 7 1975, "I think definitely it's marxism that's at the heart of the soviet system."

[7] It is necessary, here, to make a distinction. While the incredible extravagances and the negligent behavior of Napoleon at Ligny and at Waterloo, are only imputable to Napoleon as Clausewitz says, the "omissions" and "extravagances" of Marx are not only imputable to the enemies of Marx. For our party our "faults" are only imputable to our enemies. Our enemies are responsible for our "faults" inasmuch as these faults result from the insufficient development of an epoch dominated by our enemies, from the insufficient development of the domination of our enemies. Our intelligence consists in the critique of alienation. The enemy is the involuntary author of alienation. We cannot criticize an alienation that doesn't exist, nor can we criticize an alienation that the enemy has not developed yet; we cannot have a superior form of intelligence in the critique of a superior form of alienation that is still nonexistent. Our intelligence is dependent upon alienation as it exists, in the same way as the bottom is dependent on the tip and the negative on the positive. Our intelligence cannot become absolute (limitless, without exterior enemies), cannot cease being a conditional thing (something that suppresses its exterior conditions, its enemies), until the day when alienation itself becomes absolute. We cannot definitively defeat our enemy until it "forces" us to develop a definitive intelligence. It's the enemy that "gives" us the material of our critique. It's the enemy that critiques the insufficiency of our critique by surviving it. But it's also the enemy that gives us the means to modernize our critique, since, in order to survive, it is forced to modernize its domination, to modernize alienation; it's forced to force us to develop a superior

life of Marx and the life of the Situationists are real offensives, real battles in the sense that they have forced the enemy to become what we want them to be: Marxism and situationism are *true* lies, lies about the essential, true falsehoods, the truly false. Our task is to realize the truth of the thought of Marx and of the Situationists by defeating their enemies—our enemies. Our task is to turn thought into a practical victory.

12. Marx, the economist

At the risk of insulting his memory, we have to say that Marx was *also* an economist. Marx, along with the masses of his era, did not complete the critique of political economy. On the contrary, he retained the point of view of the economy of the work of others. The bourgeoisie knocked down Marx and the workers movement after 1848. We know after the publication of *Introduction to the Science of Publicity*[8] that exchange is the essential moment of humanity and that *the idea of exchange is the essential moment of exchange.* It is quite obvious that Marx, who used the word "exchange" hundreds of times in his writings, did not understand the concept. Thus he neglects in fact—despite his statements when he was young—the idea as an essential moment of reality. He was absolutely unable to unmask economics as a shameful, hypocritical thought that passes itself off as reality, as the contradictory unity of that which exists and the idea of what exists. He was not able to grasp the true scandal of alienation, which is the alienation of the idea of what exists. For us to appreciate the real worth of conversation, it took things getting worse: the last bastions where people talk, the last places where the commodity still tolerated conversation, had to disappear, and this disappearance gave way to an immense silence filled with the chatter of the commodity and professional blabbermouths, the silence of the equatorial forest, a place completely hostile to mankind. In the same way, the situationism of all powers and of their servants borrows from the SI only the ideas that failed and proved to be inoffensive; Marxism as an extreme form of bourgeois thinking retains from Marx what had never been other than bourgeois. By criticizing the inadequacies of our party in this way, the enemy has always condemned us to be more inventive. Thanks. By becoming pro-situationist,

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intelligence. The enemy becomes more and more agile with its responses because we force him to be like this. This is a delightful acceleration of history, of which we can flatter ourselves that we are the authors. The enemy's intelligence forces its demise! Our party is immortal. The enemy cannot hope to destroy it without destroying the entire planet.

[8] What's insufficient in Marx's thought is what's insufficient in his epoch. What's insufficient in Marx's is owned by the enemy to the extent that what is insufficient in the epoch "is owned by" the enemy that dominates it. The struggle of Marx, and of the masses of his time, made the epoch insufficient for the bourgeoisie itself by putting its domination in peril. The struggle of Marx and the masses of his epoch have, thus, forced the bourgeoisie to develop that epoch, to develop the alienation of that epoch, that is, definitively, to make that epoch more and more insufficient. The limit of the critique of the insufficiency of an epoch is nothing but the insufficient insufficiency of that epoch.

the enemy becomes truly anti-situationist. The enemy will produce Situationists on a massive scale. Thanks again.

13. Marx, an idealist despite himself

It's the same Marx who states, "The starting point is not what men say, imagine, or represent" who starts with an idea, a representation: *the economy,* and tries to make it something real, the real *par excellence*, "the process of real life". The economy exists only *as action* of the bourgeoisie and *as idea* in bourgeois thought. As action, the economy is only the economy of the work of the other. As idea, the economy is only the bourgeoisie's idea of how the world works and one that it wants us to have of the world. What is this idea? It is the idea of a world in which the bourgeoisie would not dominate, in which the action of the bourgeoisie would not dominate, one in which the bourgeoisie *would be necessary.* The bourgeoisie is a shame-ridden ruling class, a ruling class that claims it doesn't rule. Marx grasped the con. He went on the warpath to demonstrate the apologetic nature of the economy. What did he achieve? He *immortalizes* the bourgeoisie in theory, more completely than they ever hoped for, to the point that the theory he came up with introduces a bourgeois world without the bourgeoisie, a world that is bourgeois no matter what, *a world where the economy is the reality of the world.* But the economy is nothing other than a lie by the bourgeoisie about its own domination. And a world in which the economy is the reality of the world is a world in which *the domination of the bourgeoisie is the reality of the world.* We can understand Marx's mistake, since bourgeois thought, the thought of a shameful ruling class, is a shameful thought. Since bourgeois thought is a lie about the action of the bourgeoisie, like all lies, it tries to conceal its reality as a lie. It does and will do anything to make us forget that it is a belief. The bourgeoisie remembers too well that the Bastille was defended against everything except ideas. In agreement with bourgeois thought, Marx, answering their prayers, made thought into a simple by-product of human activity, a simple Bolshevik reflection. This is exactly the goal of the bourgeoisie: to be forgotten as the dominant class that acts and thinks. The economy is an idea that must remain secret because it is an idea that argues against ideas. Marx made an *economic critique of the economy* to the tune of —*"The economy is indeed the reality of the world, only the bourgeois conception of the economy is false."*—Whereas, the economy is *nothing but* the bourgeois conception of the world. If the economy exists, it is only as the bourgeois conception of the world and as the bourgeois domination of the world, therefore also as the domination of the world by the bourgeois conception of the world. The economy is false as thought and action, not because the bourgeois conception of the economy is false, but because the bourgeoisie is itself false. The economy— which is the bourgeois lie about the world and about the domination of the world by the bourgeoisie—cannot be true. The economy does not constitute a real category of the world. The commodity, money, value, capital, do. The economy

is only the lie of a particular class about the world. The commodity, money, value, capital are the world's own lies about itself. The commodity, money, value, capital are not economic categories. They are categories of the world. This amounts to saying that these categories do not belong to the bourgeoisie, that despite its efforts, the bourgeoisie never succeeded in appropriating them, that these categories have always dominated the bourgeoisie. The hunter is the hunted. Economics is nothing other than the "scientific" attempt of the bourgeois class to dominate these *categories of alienation.* The economic version of the categories of alienation is only the bourgeois version of alienation.

14. The economy is the secret police of ideas

If in antiquity the dominant categories through which one grasped social and historical relations were essentially political (citystate power, relations between city-states, the relation between force and laws, etc.), if the economy of the work of others did not receive any attention, it is not because people were less intelligent or thought was less "advanced", but rather because the economy of the work of others had not constituted itself as a separate, autonomous moment of human activity opposed to the rest of society, the rest of human activity (as the activity of the bourgeois industrialist). *In short, because this activity did not exist.* The economy of the work of others is a modern and specific mode of exploitation of man by man. This activity only appears after commerce takes over the realm of exploitation and assumes responsibility for it. A "real analysis" of the economy of the work of others (a science that explains how to get rich quick, according to Engels) was only possible starting with the seventeenth century and more likely the eighteenth century, that is to say with the birth of wage labor that pushed to the forefront the economy of the work of others as the dominant moment in social life. And this "real analysis" has *also* been for three centuries a way of making bourgeois thought and action a determining force in the last instance and an eternal factor that always has to have the last word. (Stalin, like his sinister neighbor Hitler, tried to make the economy of the work of others a determining factor for 1000 years). It is only today, with the renewed efforts of the masses to suppress themselves, do we know what to think of this "real analysis". This "real analysis" is a "practice" of the dominant class. The categories we use to view history are *real products* of historical development, but they are above all the essential moment of this development, in other words, the essential tool of domination by one part of humanity over the rest, as well as the essential instrument of the suppression of that domination. The "real analysis" of the economy of the work of others was truly the reign of an idea and of the police who protect that idea, an idea of shameful domination, and domination of a shameful idea. Political economy is the secret police of ideas.

15. For the bourgeoisie the only good ideas are dead ideas

Without a doubt, morality, law, religion, metaphysics and ideology in general, as well as the forms of consciousness that correspond to them (consciousness is the bourgeois version of the idea, the idea that an isolated person can have) are only false claims, intentional parodies of the real thought and action of the bourgeoisie. This is so widely known today that the bourgeoisie would rather modernize its lie. Marxism is its new dogma. The bourgeoisie claims that the economy is absolutely real and complete. They claim that the economy is the true actor, that which ultimately dominates and decides in the last instance. This is true, but only because the economy is the action and thought of the class that dominates and ultimately decides. And this class can only continue to dominate as long as it conceals that its lies about domination are a lie, as long as it conceals the fact that the economy, apart from its reality as the action of the bourgeoisie, is only a thought, a simple vision of the world and not the reality of the world. Ideology in general is a lie about domination, that is to say a lie about thought, a lie about ideology: a thought whose sole aim is to make us forget that it is a thought. Stalin's thought is only true, dominant, to the extent that it makes us forget that it is a thought. The enemy fears ideas more than anything. And he really fears the power of true ideas because he experiences the power of false ideas every day. Among all the taboos created by the domination of the bourgeoisie, the central taboo is thought itself. Thought is only allowed to exist in false and ridiculous forms: religion, law, morality, and then economics. Thought is severely repressed when appropriated by the masses in order to realize it.

16. The only reality for bourgeois thought is bourgeois thought

From Washington to Moscow and Beijing, for bourgeois thought—that is, *within* bourgeois thought—the economy is the reality of the world. For bourgeois thought, the reality of the world is the lie of the bourgeoisie about the domination of the bourgeoisie. *For bourgeois thought, the real world is the world depicted in Karl Marx's* Capital. In reality, the world is something altogether different and much greater than this. It is first of all the world that contains the lie of the bourgeoisie about the world, a lie which is in fact first of all the bourgeois lie about itself. And, of course, one doesn't find the slightest trace of this lie in the bourgeois lie about the world, one doesn't find a single trace of the economy in economics, one doesn't find a single trace of the economy in Karl Marx's *Capital*, a single trace of *the thing itself.* And yet this bourgeois lie about the world is not an insignificant detail of the world; it is, on the contrary, a huge detail, a lie that is in *everybody's head* and that *acts* there (and obviously doesn't act as a

lie or an illusion, but as truth, as reality), that acts effectively. Put another way, the bourgeois lie about the world is nothing less than a global system of false ideas about the world, and the real world is therefore not only a world that contains a world of false ideas about the world, but a world in which a phantom world *is in action*, a world determined by a phantom world.[9] The real world, then, is not the world contained within bourgeois thought, the world contained in *Capital*, but the world which contains bourgeois thought (or Bolshevik thought, it is the same thing), the world in which bourgeois thought acts, the world in which bourgeois thought has triumphed, and by implication the world that contains the disastrous consequences (for the bourgeoisie) of this triumph.[10] The world is thus something other than what the bourgeoisie claims it is, because the consequences of the thought and action of the bourgeoisie are not even part of their thought and action. The consequences of their thought and action are *never* the *realization* of their thought and action but on the contrary their growing non-realization, the production of that which negates them as thought and action. It is in this way that bourgeois thought is false thought, thought that does not realize itself. And it is in this way that the truth of its action—maintaining its world domination— becomes increasingly threatened. This is the true misfortune of bourgeois thought[11]: the more it tries to identify itself as reality, the more it becomes the unreal moment of the world, the more reality escapes it. Reality? The misery of

[9] The "real" world is, today, a world which is really upside down, where reality (the misery of proletarians) is only a part of "reality", and where what's real (misery) is deprived of effectiveness — and what is effective (the world that the individual finds within the bourgeois lie about the world) is unreal.

[10] The omnipotence of bourgeois thought, the omnipotence of false thought, of thought that never actualizes itself, has made of this world a world where thought is omnipotent. Whatever's in the process of disappearing should be considered for what it embodies of the essential. What's essential in bourgeois thought is not its unreality, but the omnipotence of this unreality over man. The omnipotence of false thinking, the omnipotence of ideology, opens the way to the omnipotence of true thinking, to thought that actualizes itself, to the actualization of thought. Disalienation only follows the path of alienation, and the movement that establishes truth, and its concept, are closely linked to social war. Religion was the domination of men by their false ideas about the world. The economy (the domination of the bourgeoisie) is the practical domination of men by their false ideas about the world. Bourgeois thought armed what will bring it down: A world of false ideas about the world, a world where men are practically dominated by their false ideas, a world which is at the mercy of one true idea, since it's a world where ideas — whether true or false — are omnipotent. According to Hegel, the force of spirit is as great as its concretization. The objective conditions of spirit are only spirit concretized. The becoming world of the commodity is also the becoming world of spirit: a world in which things have spirit. In a world when the spirit of things is omnipotent, it's actually spirit that's omnipotent.

[11] The visible world has become strictly utopian–Utopia, a word fashioned by Thomas Moore (from the Greek "ou" for *does not*) and "topos" (Greek for *a place*): "a place that doesn't exist." (Dauzat/ Larousse) The world that one sees, the joyous animation of commodity mules doesn't really exist *anywhere*, if not in bourgeois thought, which quite evidently is found in other heads besides bourgeois ones. What's real, on the contrary, what exists everywhere, is the world that the individual doesn't see, an omnipresent and boundless misfortune. This world is, thus, a *Geisterwelt*, a world of ghosts, an invisible world, where what's visible is ghostly and fake, and what's real is invisible, not a *Weltgeist*, a world spirit.

proletarians. Whatever it does to maintain its domination, the bourgeoisie only *produces more* misery, more fundamentally human misery. Fundamentally human misery is in fact the only real thing the bourgeoisie produces. Its great civilizing role consists in producing this fundamentally human misery. And the real threat to the bourgeoisie is the unlimited production of this misery, and not the internal consequences of its domination, which are the so-called economic crises. The world is the consequence of itself and not just the result of bourgeois action and thought. What is, not to say the last instance of the world, but the only instance of the world is the world itself, it is everything that exists. *"Weltgeschichte ist weltgericht."* (In other words, "Woe to the vanquished"). The bourgeoisie confronts a *historical world;* it confronts the totality of that which exists. That which eludes it, that which it wants to dominate is *in reality* a historical world. The bourgeoisie wants everyone to believe, starting with itself, that the world that escapes it is only an economic world, only a natural world. All its efforts to dominate a supposedly economic world have no other effect than to reveal the world as increasingly historical, as a world that contains the negative.

17. Stalin, the final time in this world where bourgeois thought is victorious

Concepts like modes of production, relations of production, forces of production, economic conditions, superstructure and infrastructure, exist only in bourgeois thought and nowhere else in the world. If these things exist in the world as well, it is because the world contains bourgeois thought; it is because bourgeois thought exists in the world. The only things that are real about the economy and economics in this world are the thoughts and actions of the bourgeoisie. Ironically, what was considered (by all who adored Stalin, the chief of police, and *secretly* still do) to be the tragically renowned "determining factor in the last instance" never existed except in the head of this chef. As Marx had clearly observed concerning the Prussian bureaucracy, nothing is more of an idea than the "material" of the bureaucracy. And nothing is more treacherously material than these "ideas" put in practice in the Gulag and at Dachau. Economic crises, economic contradictions, the economic system, these are not real crises, real contradictions, a real system of the world, but only crises and contradictions in a system that is contained in the thought and action of the bourgeoisie. The crises, the contradictions, and the system of the world are of a totally different nature than bourgeois thought can imagine. Since its appearance, humanity is experiencing a single and unique crisis: the crisis of publicity, the alienation of humanity, and its realization in things. The contradictions of the world today reside in the thought and action of the bourgeoisie, in their attempt to realize the unrealizable, to realize money without suppressing it, or to suppress it without realizing it. The world system, today, as the becoming world of the commodity through a 6000-year commercial enterprise, is a

system of false ideas about the world, a world of false ideas about the world, the world of ideology materialized, the world of false ideas about ideas.[12] What the bourgeoisie calls the economy is in fact the historical world that evades bourgeois thought and action; for the bourgeoisie the historical world is a hostile and supernatural place that they always attributed to savages. For the bourgeoisie, the historical world is a hostile and threatening one that resists all its efforts to dominate it and that it must by necessity master through discovering its laws. But all its efforts to conceive of the world in economic terms and to determine its laws are bound to fail. The savages are right. The world is full of spirit. Positivist science is a form of materialist magic that wants to ward off the spirit, the negative. What the bourgeoisie calls the economy is in fact its ignorance and its impotence that it has dressed up with the masks of science and power. The economy is assumed to be a being like the Indian spirit Manitou. Certain professors want to prove at all costs that the economy doesn't exist among the savages as the reality of their world, but it is only to more effectively persuade us that, *here*, it exists as the reality of our world. The reason that the economy could not be the reality of the primitive world is because it is not the reality of our world, *here*. Here, in our world the economy is only a moment of reality and the unreal moment, the thought and action of a class that tends toward unreality, an unreal thought and action that increasingly confronts the totality of that which exists and that reveals by this confrontation the true face of this totality. And the reason for which the economy doesn't exist among the savages, either as category of the totality or as any other category, is simply because in primitive society there are neither bourgeoisie nor bureaucrats.

18. Hegel was moderately Hegelian

It is important to oppose the propaganda that presents the formation and development of society as being subsumable to the course of nature and its history, pretending that the development and formation of society is based on laws. The dialectic is not a law; it is intelligence in social war, the intelligence of social war. The dialectic is spirit that comes to men. History cannot be both a mechanism and war. According to the bourgeoisie, history is war when they win; the rest of the time it's nature. The propaganda of the bourgeoisie, the propaganda of political economy, wants history to seem natural, that is to say protected from the negative, protected from all thought that is not bourgeois. The bourgeoisie *needs* to meet that fear—a fear they so easily project onto savages confronting the natural world— in order to reassure themselves and distract themselves from their own fear in the face of an historical world. The bourgeoisie needs to believe in the mirages it creates. The war the bourgeoisie wages is commerce. Alienation is the war of commerce venturing ever farther into enemy territory, rousing partisans along the way. Alienation is to commerce what the Russian steppes were to Napoleon. Economics *wants* to study the laws of this world because it hopes that its

[12] The objectivity of history is nothing other than the objectivity of false ideas about history.

unquestioning seriousness will be so imposing that the world will be convinced that it actually obeys laws. The world's only law is: *"Woe to the vanquished"* (in German: *Weltgeschichte ist Weltgericht*). Certainly alienation is the movement of generalization of conscious human activity that makes this activity appear natural to the point that one can recognize in the world described by Darwin, English society in Ricardo's time with its division of labor, competition, conquest of new markets, innovation, and the struggle for existence. But we increasingly understand that nature is full of spirit, and that if man can no longer act it is because he is acting, and if man can no longer think it is because he is thinking, and the less he can think, the less he can act, the more he aspires to think and act, and the more the thought and action to which he aspires are universal. In this sense Hegel was right again:

1) nature is truly a moment of the becoming of the idea; nature is truly a moment of the becoming of man's conscious activity;

2) the moment when this conscious activity becomes unconscious is the moment when truly human thought and activity become the property of things. It is the moment when things imitate man. Nature truly is an imitation of the Idea. This world is furiously Hegelian. That which the imbecile takes as the delirium of Hegel, reveals itself as an extremely moderate discourse when one discovers what world Hegel was talking about in 1807. We must show that the so-called "material conditions of existence" are only the spiritual conditions of existence, that thought is the essential moment when reality becomes real, the moment by which reality becomes real, thus the truly real moment of reality, a principal well known by all those in power and their police through their immoderate use of intimidation, lies, and false ideas.

19. The reality of alienation is the reality of this unreal world

If, in the bourgeois world, the most sordid utilitarianism rubs shoulders with the fanatical idealism of money, in bourgeois thought the most practical voluntarism goes elbow to elbow with the most theoretical fatalism. The most audacious class in history is the most fatalistic when it comes to conceiving history. While it is unfortunate that Marx, the champion of the party of consciousness, gave in to bourgeois fatalism, it is just as unfortunate that the SI, which championed the fight against Marxism, succumbed to it as well. For on page 23 of *The Veritable Scission in the S.I.* we read, "The functioning of the economic system has itself embarked of its own movement on a course of self-destruction." But the economic system exists only in the thought of the bourgeoisie. No such thing as an economic system *really* exists in the world other than in the system of bourgeois thought. "The economic system entering on the path of self-destruction" really means that the lie postulating the existence of such a system in lieu of reality is beginning a process of auto-denunciation, and as it

becomes increasingly unsustainable, it becomes increasingly difficult to hide this reality. Bourgeois fatalism amounts to saying that on one hand there exists a mechanism—an inevitability, an economic system that constitutes the bulk of reality—and, on the other hand, this feeble little thing—thought, negated thought, the proletariat, the misery of the proletariat which would be caused by a thoughtless system out of whack. It is only when the mechanism malfunctions that hope and thought would sprout like mushrooms after the rain. In fact, the economic system makes up the majority of the lie about the world. Yes, inevitability does exist, but not the one the bourgeoisie wants us to accept at all costs. The real inevitability is fatal *only to the bourgeoisie*: class struggle exists; the bourgeoisie *must* fight to dominate and remain in power. And this struggle produces fundamental misery, it produces the proletariat as the fundamentally inhuman condition of proletarians. There is really nothing economic in this other than the bourgeoisie's lust for gold and power, and above all nothing mechanical. History has made it clear that in fact, all so-called economic crises, that is to say all crises of bourgeois thought and action that the bourgeoisie passes off as a crisis of the world, were above all spectacles: grand maneuvers that allowed the commodity to perfect its world system of thought. If one can discuss "the functioning of the economic system," it is because the economic system (as a moment of the bourgeoisie's lie about bourgeois domination) has, as its function, to lie about the real nature of the world and this world's crises. And the "economic system" *really* functions best when it *appears* to function worst. The economy, that is to say the action and the lies about the bourgeoisie's actions, can *exist* only in a world in which one believes in the economic reality of the world, in a world in which one believes in the *necessity* of the bourgeoisie, where one believes in the economic reality of the world as one previously believed in the divine reality of the world and in divine necessity. *The critique of the economy is the precondition to all critique.* In the same way that the Son of God was destined to be crucified, the economic system is destined to function badly. The true misfortune of the bourgeoisie is not in its spectacular misfortune to which the "economic system" is *fated*: It is that all its efforts to convince us that it exists prove to be increasingly in vain. It is certainly not the misfortune stemming from the malfunctioning of the "economic system" that forces proletarians to understand thought, to resolve the enigma of their misery, since "economic" misery is there precisely to pretend to offer a bourgeois response to that enigma. One finds a little further down on page 24, "Capitalism has at last furnished the proof that it cannot develop the productive forces further." This is exactly what capitalism "wants" us to believe. It "wants" us to believe in the existence of "productive forces" as something *real*. Is there a better way to convince us than for the bourgeoisie to demonstrate their inability to develop these aforementioned mythical productive forces. Is there a better way to prove the existence of a unicorn than to demonstrate one's failure to tame a unicorn. Is there a better way to avoid putting into question the economic lie than to quibble ad infinitum about the domestication of productive forces, about the domestication of the unicorn, to make it a little more real, putting the existence of the planet in jeopardy.

Clearly the bourgeoisie won't be able to do all this purposely. Otherwise it would be worthy of our *admiration* and be worth serving with devotion and fidelity. But in fact they exploit this situation as long as we don't out them. There are forces in the world, forces such as those utilized by physicists and above all a force that is formidable because of its obstinacy: the force of the bourgeois class, the force that the bourgeoisie deploys to dominate the world and maintain its domination, and the forces of the workers who are subverted and corrupted to develop this absurd enterprise. But in reality productive forces do not exist. "Productive Force" is a lie from the mouth of a bourgeois, or a mouth dominated by bourgeois thought. It is the same for the entire tool chest of "contradictions" between the so-called productive forces and the no-less mystical relations of production. The most mystical of these relations is capital. Capital is anything but a relation of production. It is surprising to see Marx uncritically take the bait that Smith and Ricardo offered and to see him turn this into a *real* characteristic of our world more convincingly than any apologist of the bourgeoisie could have ever hoped to do. Of course, along with Marx we affirm that what truly characterizes our world is the fundamental misery of proletarians. Further, on page 28, we read—concerning the planet-wide accumulation of garbage, which is in fact a consequence of the non-appearance of the commodity world—that "the simple immediate sensation of the 'nuisances' and the dangers... constitutes already an immense factor of revolt, a vital exigency of the exploited, just as materialist as was the struggle of the workers in the 19th century for the possibility of eating." This materialist struggle and the resulting "materialism" lasting 100 years were the unwitting achievements of the bourgeoisie. While Marx wrongly saw them as what would destroy the bourgeoisie, they were in fact essential for its continuation. It is precisely in denying the worker the simple animal satisfaction of "eating" and "sleeping", that the exploiter made these actions into a right, an idea, something human, something social. (Marx: "Sleeping like an animal in its den became social because the human beast had to *pay*.") In this way the bourgeoisie infused the worker with its own sordid utilitarianism. As history, and above all Marx, have witnessed, the central question of humanity was never absent from the workers' struggles, but just as in 1968, this question, though undefeated, never won. This ultimate ruse (totally unplanned), made the struggle of the workers effectively materialist, in practice and in theory, and was deliberately maintained by the bourgeoisie for 100 years when they realized their good luck. Today materialism has triumphed worldwide, with, on one side, the nasty economy that refuses to feed the people, and, on the other, the nice workers who want to eat. But the nasty economy will really be punished the day it jams up and the workers revolt. This is the Disney version of class struggle. It is a mistake to think that a factor however immense— here, the totality bursting onto the spectacular agenda as a threat to the totality—could cause a revolt capable of ending the commodity if that "factor" is not central, essential,

truly false.[13] No matter how big it is, if that factor remains something particular, a detail, in relationship to the central question—something as specific as why the workers of the 19th century were forced to fight—it can only fog, as involuntary as the fog at Austerlitz and just as favorable to the enemy if the sunlight of the essential does not shine through in time. The question of the practical realization of thought does not depend on the outcome of the trash war, but on the *true misfortune of bourgeois thought*. The *true misfortune of bourgeois thought* is way beyond the accumulation of trash on earth. Whatever it does to hide itself as a thought, whatever it does to hide its desperate struggle to survive, whatever it does to present itself as a material reality, whatever it does to hide the essential role that ideas play in human life, it develops this role *ad absurdium* and thus reluctantly reveals *what is really at stake for humanity.* Rather than the practical realization of thought depending on the outcome of the trash wars, this outcome depends on the practical realization of thought. If once

[13] According to the cretinist ideologue of conviviality, Illich, "the super industrialized nations are going to be pushed against the wall by the threat of chaos" and pushed against the wall of a "mode of production based on a post-industrial equilibrium". For this economist, as for all economists, he has no doubt that the economy is the reality of the world, and that changing the world will result in a change in this reality. But in fact, the reality of the world, that is to say, the reality of its unreality, is not the economy, but the *commodity*. The reality of this world is not "an industrial mode of production," nor a market mode of production, but the commodity, which is a particular mode of generalized exchange, of publicity, or rather, of the public absence of publicity, of the general absence of generality. The economy is the bourgeois conception of the commodity, the bourgeois conception of the unreality of the world. And so the conformist economist Illich would like to reduce the central question of publicity to a simple question of tooling, and to hide first, that the modern tool, before being a tool, is a commodity and, second, that what is fundamentally wrong with the modern tool is what is fundamentally wrong with the commodity. Of course, all that's bad in the world has *become* more or less a detailed result of the commodity, a phenomenon, a symptom of the evil of commerce. This permits the enemy—through spectacular and complacent accounts of the detailed and bad consequences of the commodity—to further conceal what is good in the evil of commerce: its essentiality, its universality. The reformist, third-worldist Illich shows his hand from the first pages of his book, *Conviviality*. He announces his intent to uncover the *particular limits* of the commodity. He invites himself to conceal that the limit of the commodity is the commodity itself. He's the perfect type of whiner for the readers of *Le Nouvel Observateur* to love. He is, for example, capable of coming to the conclusion that the average American, in his powerful car, moves at a speed of 4 miles per hour, since in order to cover 6200 miles, 1500 hours of social labor devoted to the construction and upkeep of the car, the construction and upkeep of the roads, the marketing of the vehicle, the police, the courts, the medical consequences of accidents, etc., and finally the actual use of the automobile, had to be included. But he is incapable of noticing that these 6200 miles are covered in vain, since the average American really has no one to see. And so, where the Situationist International saw the totality of the detailed consequences of the commodity provoking the revolution, that is, provoking intelligence and spirit; the reformist Illich sees only the totality of details provoking an economic change. It is very clear that no chaos, stupidity, or savagery is capable of "provoking" spirit and intelligence, and only the absence of spirit, the absence of intelligence, that is to say, only the negative, alienated, and spectacular actualization of spirit and intelligence can provoke spirit and intelligence. "The objective conditions of spirit are none other than objectified spirit." One must still note how trendy the word "global" is for the enemy. Translated clearly, this word signifies *totality of details, totality that is in itself a detail, totality only for another, totality only for the owners of the world.*

again it is not the practical realization of thought that triumphs, but the spectacle of commodity tribulations, this will be just one more crushing misfortune for humanity that, no more than the previous ones, will be unable to nourish the authentic revolt, which can have only one authentic cause: itself. We are basing our approach on a stance: today, Hegel, Marx, the SI appear to be right. The alienation of the spirit is the real movement of the world. The essentially human product of man is spirit. And man deprived of his essentially human production is man deprived of spirit. The human producer deprived of his world is a producer deprived of a *world of spirit*. It is only because the proletarian is a man deprived of spirit that the proletarian is a man forced to search for spirit. No deprivation of food, air or rest, no "material" constraint can compel him to search for thought. Only the concretized deprivation of thought is capable of this. Realized deprivation? It is the deprivation of realized thought, of thought that exists. The commodity is this thought that exists and that acts universally. The proletarian is that man— deprived of thought—that exists at the heart of the beast of burden deprived of food, air, and rest. The being of the proletarian is precisely his deprivation of all social being, that is to say of all practice of thought (thought is practical or does not exist; thought is the essential moment of social practice), and it is only this particular form of deprivation that is capable of forcing proletarians to pursue thought. Only spirit can generate spirit, only spirit can act on spirit, only the realized (*practically* realized) absence of spirit can generate spirit. No matter what, on this point we are strictly Hegelian: spirit will not be conditional, freedom can only arise from itself, or rather spirit will only be conditioned by itself, by its objectified self as its own condition, only by its alienated self, only by itself becoming the world. A world where the universal absence of spirit acts universally is a world where the universal spirit already acts. Heil Hegel!

To struggle is, for the bourgeois class, fated, and a curse, because this struggle is a contradiction. The consequences of its action are exterior, foreign to its action. Alienation is first of all alienation of the action of the bourgeoisie, alienation of commerce, alienation of the specialized practice of humanity by a given class. The bourgeoisie is cursed. The suppression of this alienation is not assigned to it, because—and this is the strict definition of alienation—this alienation is an exterior consequence of its action, a consequence beyond its reach, beyond its comprehension.

20. The true misfortune of bourgeois thought

The economy is the visible part of the commodity, the visible part of a world in which things practice humanity—practice universal exchange using humanity as a means.[14]

[14] The visible world has become strictly utopian—Utopia, a word fashioned by Thomas Moore (from the Greek "ou" for *does not*) and "topos" (Greek for a place): "a place that doesn't exist." (Dauzat/ Larousse) The world that one sees, the joyous animation of commodity mules doesn't really exist *anywhere*, if not in bourgeois thought, which quite evidently is found in other heads besides bourgeois

The invisible part of the world is the silence of man. The real part of this world is not the visible but the invisible part. The reality of this world is not the self-serving blabber of commodities but the silence of man. Thus in this world the true is only a moment of the false. The economy is nothing other than the spectacle of the world's escapades with the bourgeoisie. The goal of the bourgeoisie is to reduce the world to its sole visible and unreal part. It intends to excite the crowd with the spectacle of its escapades. Economic crises are only the spectacle of dissatisfaction, the dissatisfaction of the owners of this world. They are the true malcontents of this world and let the world know it. As it becomes increasingly clear that true human misery is the real moment of this world, the bourgeoisie offers the spectacle of its own misfortune (not the misfortune of the world), intending to prove the economic reality of the world through this sophism: because the economic action of the bourgeoisie cannot master this world, this is proof that the reality of the world is economic and that the mastery of this reality requires intensified economic action by the bourgeoisie.[15] Because the reality

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ones. What's real, on the contrary, what exists everywhere, is the world that the individual doesn't see, an omnipresent and boundless misfortune. This world is, thus, a *Geisterwelt*, a world of ghosts, an invisible world, where what's visible is ghostly and fake, and what's real is invisible, not a *Weltgeist*, a world spirit.

[15] The fact that the economic crises would be accepted by the masses as crises of the world has as a consequence that the action of the bourgeoisie is not acknowledged as an action of the domination of one part of the world over the rest of the world, as a detail pretending to be the totality, as the dictatorship of a detail, but as legitimate, scientific action. If the economy is the reality of the world, then the action and thought of the bourgeoisie are the thought and action required by the world, like the action and thought of the physicist is the thought and action required by the physical world, the thought and action that experience doesn't dismiss, the action of the bourgeoisie is the action that proletarians don't dismiss. If these economic crises are crises of the world, *then* the world is economic, then the economy is the reality of the world, then the thought and action of the bourgeoisie are required, then the bourgeoisie, money, and the State are necessary, and there is not a single little place in the world for the negative, for spirit, for thought and action different than that of the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie: "The economy. It does exists. Want proof? It's out of our control." Today, now that "economic analysis" has begun to make everyone laugh, the academic trash is hastily preparing a new "real" version of the world. According to them the world is not economic anymore, it is structural, and the last example is not the economy, but code. It's a matter of replacing a really worn out leftover, Jdanovism [ed: after Andrei Jdanov, responsible for the tight control the Soviet state exercised over cultural production in the 30s], with another not so stale one. In the Jdanovist world, the economy does it all (Stalin does it all) and men do nothing. In the structuralist world code does it all and men do nothing. These two "worlds" are worlds without social war. Social war—there's the enemy. The boot licking lackeys of academia assume that everyone is as submissive and resigned as they are, but this is not the case. In the same way as the economy is the thought and action of the merchant class, structuralism is the thought and action of the merchant State, of the merchant bureaucracy. The structure and code are the idea that the bureaucrats imagine the world is. In the same way as the economy expresses in reality the powerlessness of the bourgeoisie to understand the real world, structuralism expresses the powerlessness of the bureaucracy to comprehend the real world. It's a matter of justifying powerlessness with powerlessness, a matter of explaining the unexplained with the inexplicable. The misfortune of the structuralist maggots is that, having discovered along with their time the scandal of alienation, having thus perceived that something conceives the world yet does not let itself be understood, the maggots are desperate—given the baseness and cowardliness of their life as survival, given their submission to everything that exists—that they

of the world is economic and the bourgeoisie, money, and the state have such a difficult time controlling it, this is clearly the proof of their necessity. Who would be capable of dominating that which the bourgeoisie, with its vast means, cannot dominate? The bourgeoisie is reinvigorated by the spectacle of its impotence *and ignorance. The more its action and thought* prove impotent, the more they seem to be necessary. Today it becomes increasingly clear that no crisis of bourgeois thought and action can cause a real revolution of the world (even though these crises are perfectly capable of causing the real destruction of the world) and that the economic crisis is the bourgeoisie's best weapon to hide its true misfortune, to hide the true limits of the commodity. Alienation is the true crisis of the world. Alienation is the true misfortune of the world. Alienation is also the true misfortune of the bourgeoisie and the true limit of the commodity. While the bourgeoisie can always offer a new action to solve the crisis caused by its previous action (unless in the meantime, they destroy the planet), there is never anything it can do to oppose the alienation that it in fact produces. Alienation is the true result of its action, and this result is not a part of its action. The bourgeoisie can only oppose alienation with diversion, with the spectacle of the crises of its own action, an action on a new terrain, a delaying action. It can only temporarily divert attention from its true misfortune, which is also the true misfortune of the world. The true misfortune of bourgeois thought is that in commodity relations and the commodity, there is a total absence of human relations. In alienation human relations are not non-existent, they are absent. They are realized, they are universally realized, but as the activity of things, as spectacle. Thus, the impotence of bourgeois thought and action is not its inability to master an "economic system", to master the worldwide production and pickup of trash. On the contrary, this impotence is the spectacle of its inability, the organized lie about its true impotence. The real impotence of bourgeois thought and action, its inability to humanize the world, to stop themselves from producing always more inhumanity (and this is their real production), always more commodities, that is to say the absence of human relations (not the inexistence of human relations), always more of the spectacle of human relations as the real relation of things. The real impotence of the bourgeoisie is its inability to prevent human relations from migrating ever further into things, and to prevent their generalization as a global spectacle of the world, as a universal spectacle of universality. The enemy has begun his Russian campaign. He advances ever farther into the desolate steppes of absolute idealism, ever farther from his material basis. The enemy incites an unprecedented thirst for reality wherever he travels. The real misfortune of bourgeois thought is also the true limit of the commodity, this limit is the proletariat. The proletariat is becoming more

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will ever be able to conceive what conceived the world and doesn't let itself be understood so far. They erected their own powerlessness and their own submission in a universal principle—"the whole world are stupid losers like us. No one will ever be able to understand this world much less do anything about it." According to them, there are structures—that is, traces of a thought, a trace of a concept. And that's it. There is no thought, nor any concept. Bad luck to you, imbeciles. There is no law of humanity. The class war exists.

and more the true proletariat, more and more true as proletariat, more and more the true negation of thought, the true negation of humanity. The proletariat is the true misfortune of bourgeois thought. The proletariat is more and more the *fundamentally* inhuman condition of the proletarian. The true limit of the commodity is itself the becoming world of the commodity. The proletariat is the commodity that has become intolerable for a fundamental reason: because it is the commodity. The true limit of the commodity is the dissatisfaction of the proletarian. Not the mystified dissatisfaction of the ordinary moron, dissatisfied with bad trash pickup, concerned by the threat that trash holds for his species of woodlice and who is apparently happy to be a woodlouse, but the fundamental dissatisfaction of the proletarian, of the man who knows he is a proletarian, who is indignant at having his humanity intentionally denied, the proletarian dissatisfied with the commodity, the proletarian dissatisfied with the proletariat. One can perfectly understand why, confronted with this unique, central, and universal cause, the bourgeoisie wants to make this world become uninhabitable due to a bunch of details, including "economic" reasons, all of which are only a way of considering the totality as a detail. This, then, is why they claim they can fix that with more details, with "good" commodities (the good commodity is the stalking horse of State ideology a la Vaneigem). The suppression of alienation, the realization of wealth, the realization of the commodity, all take the same path as alienation. Everything that leads down the wrong path, everything that invites us to leave the path of alienation—i.e., to focus on the spectacle of the misfortune of the bourgeoisie—adds to barbarism, is a factor in distracting the proletarian from his fundamental misery. After two centuries of social war, the enemy has become a master builder of obstacles. Confronted by the increasingly perfect realization of true misery, of essentially human misery, the explicit absence of humanity, the enemy can only undertake a rear guard action, he can only try to get us to desert the path of alienation, he can only try to distract the proletarian by new spectacles, and new, increasingly global, dramas.

II. Confidential Report

21. A scandalous confusion

Value is not a law. There is no law of value. Value is not a "field." There is no field of value. Value is not a substance. Nor does it have substance. You can neither add nor subtract value. To consider value as the relation through which the products of work are exchanged could seem to be an improvement over the approach that considers value to be a substance inhabiting those products. This is, however, a scandalous error because value is not the relation through which the products of work are exchanged. The relation through which the products of work are exchanged is exchange itself. *Value is only the idea of this relation.* To have value, for a thing, is to be exchanged in thought. Things have value, things exchange themselves in thought all by themselves, things think, and this is a misfortune. Because in our civilized countries, thought is contained in things, in the objects of exchange, exchange itself—the human act par excellence—is deprived of its own thought.[1] Finally, it is a scandal, and one more misfortune, that one has so long confused in theory the idea of the thing with the thing itself, the idea of the relation with the relation itself.[2] Money and the state have made us even more stupid and myopic than Marx could have imagined. We don't even understand the language of objects.

22. Mana

Value is the ability that products of work have to exchange themselves in thought without any human intervention. The word *value* refers precisely to this inhuman thought and nothing else. One would think that it's the market trader's job to ratify or realize this thought. Not even. Again, it is *a thing* that alone has the power to realize the thought of things. This thing is money, which the market trader either has

[1] It is commonly acknowledged that men think too. But it must be mentioned that the thought of things is true and men's thought is false. A true thought is a thought that actualizes itself, and only the thought of things actualizes itself. Men's thought never actualizes itself.

[2] And so in the *Introduction to the Science of Publicity* one can read, in §58, "With celebrity, the exchange relation takes place prior to the actual exchange of things and independently of things exchanged." Evidently, the correct thesis is: "With celebrity, the idea of the exchange relation is assigned to things that are exchanged before the very exchange relation happens and independent of that exchange relation.

or does not have. This thing implies absolutely no individual relation with its owner; its possession does not develop a single individual or essential quality of its owner. Its owner is simply a money mule. In the same way he can no longer think, he can no longer realize thought. The local observer is so stupid and myopic, he has lost sight of the practical recognition of what constitutes truly human activity, *the* generic act. He's so busy reading *Time* that he doesn't even notice that what constitutes humanity, as such, in his world, is the property and activity of things, let alone be scandalized by this. The local observer is so deprived of spirit that, of course, he cannot see that things have spirit. On the contrary, one can imagine how astonished an observer from New Guinea would be on seeing that in our civilized countries it is sufficient to take a little metal disc or a piece of paper out of one's pocket or scribble something on some paper, to execute exchange *without saying a word*. One can picture his stupor coming upon the contrast between the mutism of the locals of this strange country and the incessant babbling of commodities. He would be astonished and indignant because in his country the minute details of the Kula exchange require up to three weeks of chatter after a journey across the seas that can last a month, and preparation that takes even longer. And all of it happening in an orgy of chatter. In our countries, home of boredom, things are pre-exchanged. All possible exchanges are already realized in thought, and this thought is not inherited wealth, the noble tradition of a people, but the inherited wealth and tradition of things. In the same way, the realization of this thought is not the activity of a chief of noble lineage whose individual qualities of audacity, beauty, seductiveness, and cleverness are justifiably recognized. This realization is the work of a thing. Thought and action are properties of the products of work themselves; thought and action are abilities of things. "Value" is the word that denotes what is magical in commodities. "Value" denotes the effective, social, *practical abstraction*—elsewhere noble human activity—of all that is particular in the products of work. This *real* abstraction, this mysterious *action* is a property of the products of work. Products have value. Products have mana. They themselves have the miraculous ability to make an abstraction out of their particularity, they themselves have the power to produce the general, to suppress the particular, a noble power that was until now the province of exchange between human beings. Obviously, being the civilized people that we are, we know that there is nothing serious in this, that this is a mirage, an illusion. We know that it is not really the products of work that suppress on their own what is particular in themselves, that on their own make an abstraction of their difference. But we do not know and cannot say who or what operates this abstraction any more than can the Melanesians say who or what manifests itself as mana, the *very* property of things. Everyone knows that it's not he or she who does that, because they come upon it as a *fait accompli* in the market. There they find products pre-exchanged *in thought*, simultaneously different and identical. Appearance, the passage of difference into identity and identity into difference, is a property of things themselves. In the market, thought is an ability of objects. *"Value" is the name given to the thought*

of things.[3] Thus this practical relation *par excellence*–exchange—, is accomplished in our magical world, not through will, science, thought, age-old wisdom, the noble tradition of traders, but because the objects of exchange are exchangeable. In the commodity version of nature, apples grow up all exchangeable, a strange Hesperides. In the commodity world, it is in the nature of objects to have spirit, to be pure appearances naturally, in the same way that in the physical world it is in the nature of objects to have (or not to have) mass. The trader (the man) is nothing more than a commodity mule ("Here, porter!") because, as Marx judiciously noted, commodities cannot yet take themselves to market (at least for now).

23. What are commodities thinking of?

All the above allows us to understand at last what a commodity is: a product of work that accomplishes exchange in thought, a product of work that by itself makes an abstraction of everything that could be an obstacle to exchange, a product of work gifted with spirit, a pre-exchanged product of work. "Value" signifies nothing other than the thought of the commodity. "Commodity" signifies nothing other than an object or a thing that thinks and talks. Some sing and dance, go "psht", wear out only if we use them, but all of them are really saying, underneath their apparent chatter (which is all you can see, it's there so that you can only see it): "I am only in appearance bread, in reality I am wine, iron, cotton." In fact what they say is even more basic, more general, they say, "I am only in appearance bread, wine, etc. In fact I am three dollars." What do commodities think about? Money. Money is the idea that is in every commodity. As commodity, the product of work does not have a simple purpose. It acquires a distinct quality through its specific qualities. It becomes the idea of a relation that is more general, not only in relation to another product but in relation to all possible products. Value, the thought of the commodity, reveals, just as any thought does, what the commodity is thinking, reveals the object of that thought. Value is not the thought of just any exchange. Value is the thought of exchange for money, the thought of exchange with not only what is, in itself, the idea of exchange with everything that exists, but also the realization of that idea. Money is not an ordinary commodity; it contains the idea of exchange and the realization of this idea. This is truly the philosophical definition of substance: that which joins existence to effectiveness. Money is the substance that exists. Money truly is god, not just of the Jews, but of this world. Thus commodities

[3] Comic note: The argumentative Barthes, who always has some laughable question to pose , asks, in *Le Monde* of September 18, 1975: "Doesn't art begin when one makes objects intelligent?" The imbecile confuses art with commerce. The ignominy of academia owes its feeble importance to the discreet praise of objects (the true imbecilities of a Dichter have become in the meantime out of place), to the false critique that consists of questioning the commodity. This type of person writhes in happiness in front of an object like a slave would when his master pays some attention to him.

think about reality, about everything that exists, about substance. Value is the idea of substance. Value is nothing other than the commodity's discourse and this discourse is an encyclopedia. The commodity speaks to us continuously about what exists, like Marco Polo when he spoke to us about what existed in China. Thus the commodity is essentially spectacular; an awestruck humanity watches speechless as the essence of humanity unfolds. The modern spectacle is the becoming world of the commodity, the concretization of the world. The spectacle is truly religion materialized. The world now has a real substance and not only a divine one. That which could originally exist unnoticed— precisely because it never asked anything of anyone in order to develop and to act—has invaded everything and has left no place to gaze without seeing the commodity *at work*.

24. At last the truth concerning a murky business

Here at last, accurately presented, is the theory of commodity fetishism whose discovery must undeniably be credited to Marx and several other poets including Shakespeare, Goethe, and Hegel. And we can perfectly understand why Marx could not exploit his discovery: he neglected exchange, that essential abstract moment in analyzing humanity or the absence of humanity. And we can understand why it is that Marx neglected exchange, as did the other classic economists (Ricardo less than Marx and Smith less than Ricardo) and also the reason for Marx's increasingly methodical oversight. It's simply because the development of the commodity has made exchange, that noble human activity, an activity of things. And Marx, when looking into human activity (*ad hominem* proof), had no chance of finding so essential a moment for the simple reason that exchange was no longer there but had emigrated into things. One had to wait until today for this absence to become so immense, so complete, for it to have produced such a void (absence is a void, which is *not* non-existence; a void exists as opposed to non-existence, which by definition does not exist)—so that you, Citizen Reader, could look at these words and without an instant of hesitation relate them to your own personal experience. At the same time, we can understand why Marx made work the human essence. The only thing left for the sad creatures we have become is work. Things exchange and humans work. And, what is more, the work that we sad creatures perform is not even the bestial and limited work of hunting, gathering, grazing, ruminating, but abstract work, work suppressed before it exists, work whose own suppression does not belong to itself, work for a paycheck. Thus, the pre-exchanged products of work equal presuppressed work. Marx developed a fetishist theory of fetishism. At the same moment when the masses are defeated in their attempt to suppress themselves, Marx becomes afraid of using certain terms. He loses sight of the sole maxim of theory: "Nothing is too Hegelian for the inheritors of art and philosophy." Marx says in *Capital* "If commodities could talk..." when actually that's all they do. They have confiscated all thought and speech to the detriment of the thought

and chatter of man. This clearly shows how Marx turned his back on reality. He judged that reality had too much spirit for defeated workers and concluded that he needed to prepare for them a pabulum—a very reasonable, materialistic, bourgeois commonsensical *economic* version of reality—yet another version of reality where things work all by themselves, since the workers have proven themselves incapable of defeating their enemies on their own—a reality that broke the back of the idea of work and following from which doomsday (*Weltgericht)* is named Lenin, Trotsky, and Stalin. From this point on, Marx's thought is stamped with the contradiction of economic thought, that is to say, thought is taboo and things work all by themselves. Once this hypothetical is posed, "If commodities could talk," they would say, according to Marx, "What concerns us is our value, our relation as things." (One should say the idea of our relation.) Then they would continue, "Value only realizes itself in exchange, in a social relation." "Only realizes!" This is already admitting that value is only the idea of this relation (one should also say: "in *the* social relation"). What on earth was Marx thinking when the workers of his era were defeated? It's time to turn upside down all the terms of the fetishistic theory of commodity fetishism.

1) Work is not the creative activity of value. Commerce is, in fact, this age-old effort of merchants to realize money, each one for himself. Value is not a substance and has no substance. Expressions like "work, the creative activity of value" and "work, the substance of value" are devoid of meaning.

2) Value does not depend on abstract work but rather on the centuries and centuries of the historic creation of value as the thought of things that one day allowed a handful of enterprising men to create abstract labor, labor of which they can make an abstraction.

3) Alienation is not the alienation of work, an activity shared by all animals; it is the alienation of the essential human activity— exchange—and the alienation of that which in this activity *can be alienated*, the idea of exchange. The more exchange becomes general and universal, the more it becomes the affair of things and the more humanity becomes simply the spectator of the human activity of things.

25. Commerce is the real activity that creates value

To Marx belongs the unintentional merit of having pushed the ambiguity of classical political economy into an indefensible posture. To Marx belongs the involuntary merit of having populated our magical world with one more fetish, by making abstract work an actor in the horror of value, by considering "work as an activity creating value". Poor work is quite incapable of creating anything, and certainly not this scandalous social thing, value. First, this phrasing is misleading because it makes value a substance, a measurable quantity. It makes value a dimension of things, dimensions such as length, mass or even time. But one cannot add or subtract value. "Adding value"

and "subtracting value" are *strictly devoid of meaning.*[4] If I say that a product of work imagines that it exchanges itself for 50 francs (value is nothing other than the imagination of products of work), and that another imagines exchanging itself for 75 francs, I cannot conclude that the first has more imagination than the second. Yet that is the sophism that I commit if I conclude that the product that costs 75 francs is worth more than the product that costs 50 francs; that one is worth more than the other means that one has more imagination than the other. To say that a product of work costs 50 francs is to say that a product of work imagines that it will be exchanged for 50 francs. The scandal of value, the scandal that things are gifted with imagination, persists whatever the content of this imagination, whatever the cost of production of a product, whatever the price of a commodity. Whatever the cost or price of a product of work, this product is still pre-exchanged, exchanged in thought, without the spectator of this exchange being in the least concerned by the process. Money is the true substance of the commodity, the most philosophical, the most Spinozian of substances.[5] Money is the subject of everything that exists, because it is at the same time a thing and the idea of this thing in all commodities. And it is totally appropriate to add or subtract money. Money being *also* a thing, it is perfectly suited to this kind of operation that is not only possible but practiced universally on a daily basis. Further, work never creates value; machines do not release, little by little, the value that is supposedly incorporated, etc.; all this is animist blabber, fetishist blabber. What has

[4] An expression like "surplus value" makes even less sense.

[5] In our world, that of Hegel, we see counterposed the western Leibnizian principle of individuality as abstract and empty individuality, and the oriental, Spinozaist principle of substance—money, as the essential step in the process of humanity's development, not humanity in itself, not absolute humanity, universal chatter, but humanity that in its form is still limited to necessity: money—the absolute Thing. Every man must be confronted with this negation of any particularity. And this amounts to the liberation of spirit and is its essential foundation. Based on his condition as a proletarian, man is bathed in this ether of misery, the misery of the sole substance in which everything that one once held to be true has been engulfed. Commerce seized the negative being of determination i.e., difference, and posited money as identical to itself, different from difference. Money is what is identical, in which all determinations are engulfed, abstract unity, dead. Commerce has not grasped negation as concrete or infinite negation, universal chatter, movement, and life. One must in fact start by being a merchant, but one cannot remain a merchant. Money is the true, but it's still not the complete true. Money is the *universal determination* and consequently abstract determination. If one sticks to this substance, one cannot achieve any spirituality, any activity. Money is only congealed substance, and not yet chatter, we're not home ... (the spectator is never at home, never at home anywhere). With money, everything is just tossed into this abyss of annihilation, but it does not stem from this abyss, and the particular, the proletarian, is simply found there without his presence ever having been explained. The operation the proletarian is subject to only consists in depriving him of his determination, his particularization, in rejecting him in the need for money, the absolute and only need. That's what's unsatisfactory about money. Difference has an external presence, remains exterior; and one conceives nothing of it, which makes it incapable of addressing itself in the street because it knows nothing of itself. As "Absolute power", "Container of all wealth", as a necessity, money is indeed the absolute relation, the relation between substantiality and randomness, that relation which could be found and lost, that for which effectivity is accidental. Money is accidental humanity.

created and recreated value every day over millennia, the thinking of things, is the practice of merchants. It is the practice of merchants over millennia that little by little established this social relation, which is a relation between things and an absence of relations among men. It is the practice of merchants over millennia that little by little established the *celebrity* of money, its presence as idea in all things. But no work other than the endless activity of merchants could have created something like value. It is only after the practice of merchants over millennia that, little by little, the products of work began to think, to have value, that is to say, exchange themselves in thought independently of all human thought and even independently of the activity of merchants. It is the thought of things, *result* of *specialized* commerce, that in turn allowed commerce to develop more easily, that has allowed commerce to more calmly pillage with ever more impunity. And this because the greedy *practice of merchants* went on hiding itself more and more effectively behind the thought of things, behind the natural necessity of things to exchange themselves in thought. Whether the activity of merchants is limited to pillaging local exploiters, or the merchant himself directly exploits the workers as well, it is always this activity, this effort to realize money, this effort to measure his fortune against everything that exists, that provokes the universal hegemony of money, and its presence as an idea in everything. In the dispute between those who claim that capital creates value and those who claim that work creates value, we must side with the former. It is indeed capital as the historical effort of capitalists to realize money, every man for himself, that creates value, which creates the idea of the universal relation between things, to the detriment of human relations.

26. The Gospel according to Ricardo

Ricardo takes fewer risks than Marx. He does not go so far as to confuse abstract work with value. He prudently limits himself to saying that value depends on the relative quantity of work required by commodities. He did not attempt to say what value is. By all means Marx ought to be given credit for that). Ricardo, unlike Marx, does not have as a goal the essence of things, but only tries to find how to get rich, not only as fast as possible but above all *for as long* as possible. Despite his financial prudence, the few risks he took were in vain. Either his proposition is true, but so general and equally applicable to all epochs that it says nothing, nothing that characterizes his epoch (our epoch), or his proposition is false. Ricardo puts forward his famous formulation in a society where the majority of exploiters are capitalists who spend most of their time calculating costs of production, controlling costs of production, economizing other people's time.

This is a society where each exploiting capitalist over his entire career sees other people's time, the time it takes for other people to make something, as an intolerable obstacle to his desire to become rich. The capitalist, who makes nothing, finds that no matter how long it takes for his workers to do something, they go too slowly, it

takes them too long. The exploiting capitalist knows well that the time required to produce something (a certain amount of time in any case) has always been the principle obstacle to his desire to get rich even quicker. He knows that time (the slowness of the worker from his point of view) is a limit that is also imposed upon all the other capitalists. He knows well for having "worked" at it himself, that all capitalists work feverishly to suppress time (in the Auschwitz sense) in order to lower their costs of production. He knows that what prevents every capitalist from lowering his cost of production (apart from the difficulty of feeding the worker and his family on *nothing*, on less than feed-lot potatoes and adulterated bread), is the considerable difficulty he has in reducing production time, and despite that difficulty, this reduction of time is ongoing and generalized.

He knows well that the goal of every capitalist—and this is his goal too—is to reduce to *practically* nothing the unitary cost of production of his factory output, with the simple, unequivocal goal of increasing the difference between the cost of production and the price of the goods on the market. And there is only one way to achieve this (apart from the efforts of capitalists who "work" at reducing the cost of feed-lot potatoes, of wheat, and of adulterated bread): it is to reduce the time the workers take to produce every product that leaves his factory; it is to suppress time (in the Auschwitz sense) in his factory or, for the same number of workers, to increase their production by lengthening the work day or by expanding his factory. Under these conditions of constant daily activity, the amount of work time (the slowness of the workers, their well-known laziness) is truly the ultimate ratio, the last instance of a thought that has only one goal: to economize the work others.

Thus one can see that it is not so much that the value of a commodity depends upon the relative quantity of work necessary to produce it, *but rather that it depends on the thought of the capitalist.* It is because the manufacturing capitalist always comes up against necessary production time as an intolerable obstacle to his desire to get rich that time becomes, in bourgeois thought, the alpha and omega, in the last instance, that which *determines* all bourgeois activity. Economizing other people's time is the bourgeois activity *par excellence.* The time required to produce something is what the manufacturing capitalist tries to suppress (in the Auschwitz sense). Above all, the capitalist works at economizing that which costs him no effort. All manufacturing capitalists do this. And the result is that time is the absolute limit confronting all manufacturing capitalists in their desire to get rich. It was simple for bourgeois thought in general and for Ricardo in particular to conclude that the value of a commodity depends on the relative quantity of work necessary to produce it and not the compensation level afforded to the worker. And in such a world the value of a commodity truly depends on the relative amount of work needed to produce it, because and only because the activity of all capitalists consists of reducing, economizing this time, other people's time. And what Ricardo said, at best, amounts to this: value, the thought of things, is the result of the activity of capitalists to realize money, to get rich, to indefinitely expand their fortunes. He said something generally true for the

entire time money and the activity seeking to realize it have existed. At best, Ricardo says nothing. He has not advanced one inch on the matter of value, the matter of the *celebrity* of money, since after 6000 years, value, the hegemony of money, results from the activity of the capitalist, results from the specialized activity of those who want to realize money. Whether the activity of capitalists consists primarily of pillaging, here and there, from the local exploiters as the merchant banking families did (eg. the Fuggers, the Bardis, Jacques Coeur), or whether capitalists are *forced* to take over the realm of exploitation and therefore *forced* to economize the time of others, value, the hegemony of money, still depends on the capitalists' ferocious efforts (each for himself) to realize money, the idea that imperiously demands its realization. When this effort to realize money is *forced* to become a permanent calculation of production costs and of economizing the work of others, then value, the fact that things exchange themselves in thought, is still the result of this same effort but expanded to the realm of exploitation, just as, for 6000 years, value was the result of the effort to realize money limited to the trickery and pillage of the local exploiters. What distinguishes the local exploiter from the capitalist exploiter is simply that the former is not *forced* to economize the work of others, while the latter is.[6] Economizing the work of others is not the activity of the former; his activity consists of squandering wealth. Economizing the work of others is the activity of the latter. Today, if we take the formulation of Ricardo literally, it is false. Ricardo's prudence is even more useless in this case because it does not prevent him from making a mistake.

The merit of Marx is to have taken this formulation literally. It is not value that depends on abstract work, but abstract work that depends on value. Abstract work is the result of an activity. It is the result of the activity of the capitalist who makes of the work of others an abstraction (in the sense of Auschwitz). Abstract work is the work of which the capitalist makes an abstraction. And this new activity of the capitalist is only possible when value has become generalized, when the thought of things has invaded *every* thing. It is because something like value exists, and because of the historical consequences of this existence that is increasingly universal, that in a certain epoch enterprising men invented abstract work, work out of which one makes an abstraction; first, through work in domestic workshops and then in factories by carefully exploiting an historical situation of the decomposition of a certain society, but also compelled to do this themselves by that which was destroying this society: the development of money and the ruin of that which commerce had pillaged up until then. It is because something like value *exists* (the thought of commodities), because something like the commodity *exists* (products of labor that exchange themselves in thought) and that something like money exists (not only the product of work that exchanges itself in thought, but that also actualizes this thought) that the capitalist (who also exists, hell!—in reading some of Marx writings one could think otherwise) was able to—in a certain epoch and

[6] The former is a slaveholder or has serfs, the latter is a capitalist having taken over the realm of exploitation.

for certain time-determined reasons—calculate the costs of production, and this with a well-defined goal in certain no less well-defined conditions. It is based on several thousand years of this well-established *practice of things* (this *activity of things*) that he now *wants to* and is able to calculate costs of production, long after pillaging and plundering without the slightest interest in calculating anything. It is because exchange is accomplished in thought—independently of all human acts and of the uncertainty of human acts—that the entrepreneur can *rely* on this *natural phenomenon,* which like all natural phenomena, like the laws governing falling bodies, has a predictable regularity in contrast with the uncertainty of human acts (acts like pagan feasts degenerating into horrible carnage because of who knows what offense). It is because he can count on this inhuman phenomenon that presents all the solidity of the universe of La Place, that he is *first* able to calculate a cost of production and produce a product only *if* the price is less than the market price *and if* he cannot find a better deal. Voila the whole mystery of the origin of profit!

It is because the universe of the commodity seems to have a law (the misfortune of the bourgeoisie is that this is a mere illusion, and history has shown as much, to the point when a disorderly aboriginal celebration seems calm next to the disorder in the world of the commodity) that he will try to transgress it according to whim and to his greatest advantage. It is only after thousands of years of primitive accumulation mostly on the part of local exploiters, that merchants were forced to take over the world of exploitation. And this for two simple reasons: they ruined everything they pillaged; and the growth of the prosperity of their class led to ferocious competition despite the development of a universal market. To these two reasons, the ruin of those who didn't know how to count, and limitations on the market, one should add another: the development of commerce of the detail (commerce with the help of poor people who did know how to count) that merchants were lead to calculate the costs of production. But these reasons alone were not sufficient. The key is the following: only after the 2000 year development of value, of the thought of things, that everything came to have a value, that everything effectuated exchange in thought, including what the workers ate, that the capitalist *could* calculate the cost of production. For this concept to succeed, it was sufficient to add together the price of the necessary incentives to get workers to labor and the price of what it took to feed the workers. It was this historical and social thing called value, that, once created by the 2000 year activity of merchants (perhaps by an entire nation of merchants), allowed the creation of abstract labor, salaried labor—that is labor that can be calculated as a cost of production—that this abstraction can be created. It is value, the presence *everywhere* of the idea of money (which is itself the idea of everything that exists) that, once created by several thousand year of practice, dominates the entire world that it has conquered and taken apart, and allows money to go further in its labor of universal destruction, that is to say, more exactly in its Hegelian labor of universal suppression.

It is value that universally forces opposites to embrace. It has effectively established the celebrity of money as that which alone has the universal power to realize the

thought of things, and from the fact that this total power is guaranteed, total power that uniquely consists of the deployment everywhere and at all times of its total power (celebrity is a system of false ideas about celebrity), that the capitalist is able to enter into exploitation by introducing costs of production. The capitalist cannot calculate cost until money is truly present as the idea in everything, until everything has a price, principally, what the workers eat. It is only when practically everything has been transformed into commodities, into things that think, that truly commoditized exploitation could begin. Summing up, on one hand Ricardo has told us that value depends on the activity of capitalists, which is without interest to us. I say "to us", because calculating the costs of production and calculating the time it takes to produce a commodity are necessities for those who cannot conceive of wealth except as money and the State, for those who only aspire to this form of wealth (we hate them because every day we see better their fundamental misery).[7] This question can only have interest for those who intend to justify salary and the State, maintain and manage the world founded by money and the State, a Ricardo, a Lenin, a Mao, a Robert Reich. On the other hand Ricardo has told us that "the necessary labor time" is that which *acts*, and this is an absurdity. It is this absurdity that Marx decided to uphold against all odds, and, first of all, in spite of his own principles. Certainly we know that necessary labor time *acts*. But we also know that it only acts in the mind of the capitalist. It is the *idee fixe* of the capitalist.

Neither Marx nor Engels got the English humor of Ricardo, for whom "labor time" meant "the laziness of the worker" and "the power of the worker" meant "the weakness of the worker". They decided to take Ricardo literally and to prove that "the necessary labor time" exists and that it exists independently of the activity of the capitalist exploiting his workers *to reduce it*. And to support this they are ready to invert reality, to invent as many phantoms as needed, forces of labor, modes of production, relations of production, productive forces, infrastructure, and superstructure simply to prove that labor time exists, lives, acts, that it pulls the strings, that it is the substantial subject of capitalist reality, and at the limit of all reality (what a pity!), that it is the subjective essence of private property.

Marx forged a fetishistic theory of fetishism, capitalism without capitalists, and at the limit—despite all his affirmations of faith—without wages, a proletariat without proletarians. Things must, for various reasons, go it alone. A reality without social war, a history without conflict, or better, where the only social conflicts are conflicts between "things": productive forces, relations of production, etc, where the real conflicts are only false pretenses, tiny waves on the surface of "reality". In 1848 the proletariat was defeated in its effort to suppress itself. They could not prevent bourgeois thought from spreading peacefully. This is not to say that the world became exactly what the bourgeoisie wanted it to become even though Marx believed everything the bourgeoisie

[7] This is precisely the aim of the bourgeoisie; to make everyone incapable of knowing how to dispense with the bourgeoisie.

said. He embraced all their ideas uncritically and "improved" them. In doing so he rendered them ridiculous and unsustainable. Today in Washington, Moscow, Peking, and Algiers, Marx's ridiculous ideas are the credo of all the world's powers. History is amusing.

Ricardo got our agent Marx drunk. But he who laughs last laughs best. Our drunk agent Marx today is the one getting the world's powers drunk on ridiculous ideas. Dear comrade Marx, you have been avenged. If one believes in phantoms, one is forced to believe in scarcity as a given in nature, in the necessity of the cybernetic dictatorship of the calculation of the costs of production (which is only a dictatorship in bourgeoisie ideology and behavior, this exploiting maniac, and in the world where this maniac rules). We don't know how to abolish capitalism. We just don't have a single idea that is *against* this world. (This is truly the cause of the unhappiness of all the university imbeciles, one doesn't visit the university with impunity).

Marx proved what the economist wanted to prove, that which Malthus and Robert Reich wanted to prove; we can go on in the same way, free to change all the details. In the best case this absurd theory was like the jokes at a burlesque revue. Didn't Marx write "no form of society can prevent available labor time from ruling production one way or another." And what is this "one way or another": the same thing that allows a cannon to cool down. Question: "How long does a cannon take to cool down?" A good answer: "To cool down, a cannon takes a certain amount of time." Evidently whatever a society does, it does for a certain amount of time. In the same way the leftist imbeciles take a certain amount of time to sell their stupidities and promote their whining drivel. When the world truly knows publicity, we will be engaged in discussion and animated debate *all the time*. But you can't talk 25 hours a day. Here is where economic science comes in. The theory of surplus value leads to the same kind of stupid cliche: in all forms of exploitation if man is exploited, he is exploited for a certain amount of time. What are feet about? "Feet are the object of constant care." Marx spent his whole life going where his adversaries wanted him to go to prove that the exploited worker worked a *certain amount of time* for his exploiter. Even a Marquis knew as much in the timid era of Stendhal. In 1827 Voyer d'Argenson wrote "My friends, you are men destined to labor. Your destiny is to labor, on average, 16 hours a day. Of those 16 hours, half or so, are focused on creating the inheritance of the 'elite' of society, divided into property owners, capitalists, priests, public functionaries, landlords, inn owners, kings or ministers and academics." This extravagant (and immensely wealthy) Voyer also wrote in 1833, "You lack the ability to achieve your true needs...if after a successful social upheaval you are weak or ignorant enough to limit yourself to ask for a reduction in taxes or a wage increase."

Let us conclude with a most interesting remark. It is this same crowd—for whom the excuses are profitability, real value, the accumulation of cash flow, the war against waste, and the anarchy that will follow the suppression of the calculation of the costs of production as a form of human relations and as a correction for the natural laziness of the workers, in a word those for whom the excuse is the economy of the labor of

others—who employ we would say fifty percent of the so-called active population to get rid of the labor of the other half with the calculation of costs, control of costs, selling and reselling, various manipulations of money, the army and the police as well as the State clowns. Money costs a lot. No kidding. The question is elsewhere: it is that the economy of the labor of others has become the economy of life itself. What it really wastes, it wastes absolutely. It wastes reality itself. It wastes the totality of life in taking away all of its meaning. It isn't a big deal to say that money costs society dearly. Money is society. It is money that actually practices social activity. Compared to it society is nothing. It is the same crowd who, we will discover, are totally ready to acknowledge and to assert that they waste x percent of the somnambulist zombie activity of commodity mules (these same somnambulist commodity mules who report in surveys that without labor they would be bored) with the goal of hiding in the shadows the scandal of the existence of zombies who have taken the place of men. Citizens, who among you are drawn by the song of the eco-siren? Obviously it is the legions of leftist cretins who take up their melody. The issue is clearly not that fifty percent of the zombies work and that fifty percent of the pseudo-workers suppress the labor of the zombies. Nor is it the issue that x percent of zombie activity creates useless or harmful products, which would suggest that a product of labor can be, in particular circumstances, useful to man (by that I mean humanly useful, useful to man as man). The issue is that whatever is produced by a society based on the economy of others, the only human way to organize society is through the economy of conversation and debate. The economy of the labor of others is in fact the economy of humanity. This is what replaces conversation and debate, which are the only *rational* way, the only human way, to organize the world. The only thing useful to man as man is conversation. The issue is that money and the State have a monopoly on the global suppression of labor. All of humanity is responsible itself for the suppression of the totality of labor. Generalized conversation must triumph over the calculation of the costs of production as the new mode of human existence.

27. Humanity is what loses itself and thus finds itself

The theory of publicity enables us to effectively conceive of the alienation of human activity because it alone is capable of grasping human activity. Marx, in his analysis having ignored the essential moment of abstraction, could not arrive at the critique of alienation. Alienation is not the alienation of labor, the activity common to all animals, but the alienation of the essential human activity, the alienation of exchange. Humanity is nothing other than the generalization of exchange, the suppression of everything that is particular, independent, in exchange. Alienation is the mode of this generalization, as the generalization of exchange between things. The prehistory of

humanity is the history of commerce. This prehistory leads to the commodity, to the exchange of everything with everything. The commodity is the alienation of the activity of merchants, men who have conceived of the project of concentrating all of humanity in their hands. The commodity is actually humanity that constitutes itself independently of all mankind. It is the strictly Hegelian conception of the second coming of the spirit: the alienation of the spirit as nature. History properly understood is on the contrary the true movement that restores humanity, the denaturalization of humanity. Searching too zealously, overwhelmed with gold fever, humanity has lost itself in things; and history is the movement by which it rediscovers and centers itself. Today the thought of Hegel is totally true. The alienation of exchange, its generalization in things, is the alienation of that which, in this activity, can become alienated: the idea of exchange. The idea of exchange is the essential moment of exchange. True exchange, that is to say, exchange that has been realized, is the realization of this idea. Exchange is the practical idea, the idea that realizes itself. Exchange only achieves its consistency in the generalization of the communication of this idea. Exchange doesn't achieve immediate consistency independent from labor, from animal activity. Exchange only realizes consistency when the same idea exists in everyone's heads.

The publicity of this idea is immediately the essential moment of exchange. The generalization of exchange, that is to say the generalization of this idea, is also the realized moment of exchange. Alienation is the generalization of this idea in things. The consistency of exchange, the publicity of its idea, takes the solid consistency of things. The idea of exchange becomes universal, but it become universal independent of humanity. Value is the idea of exchange independent of humanity. Money is the realization of this idea that has become independent of humanity. The commodity is exchange that has become independent of humanity. Here it is, the alienation of exchange, the alienation of the essence of humanity. Here it is as well that which permits the idea of exchange, the realization of exchange and exchange itself to appropriate the world, appropriate everyone's minds, appropriate everything. When finally the idea of exchange has completely taken over, when everything practices the essential human act, knows it, realizes it, alienation becomes *real*. Thus everything particular about exchange is suppressed, but the price of this universalization is the disappearance of exchange between humanity. The publicity, the generalization of exchange, is truly the suppression of exchange, the suppression of the independence of exchange. Alienation realizes this suppression. But it is generalization itself that has become independent of humanity. Exchange has become absolutely general.[8] Humanity is reduced to observing its own humanity as natural, as the humanity of things. Some people take this

[8] It's not so much that "publicity has deserted any particular exchange" (*Introduction To the Science of Publicity* §64) as it is that any particular exchange has completely disappeared in order to become the general exchange between things, exchange that requires fastidious measurement of time, of the activity of commodity mules. The generalization of exchange, which is the suppression of everything independent in exchange, is itself something independent, a new independence that must, as such, be suppressed in turn. Generalized chatter, publicity, is the suppression of this new independence,

moment as an opportunity to criticize commodity exchange, the exchange of commodities among themselves, for being individual, while they are anything but individuals, while there is no exchange among individuals, and the individual is this completely modern invention of a man who never practices exchange and who however pretends, in the absence of all human practice, to be human; thus man—practically inhuman and ideally human, man deprived of humanity, pure idea of humanity that cannot externalize itself, man who does not know the idea as practical and who is reduced to pure consciousness— has an idea that he cannot realize. But he is also man who knows all of this, the proletarian. The individual, the free worker, man reduced to a pure consciousness of humanity, the spectator, man who is reduced to contemplating the spectacle of universal exchange of things among themselves, man who never exchanges, who never speaks, a commodity mule.

The movement of alienation is thus the following: the individual must recognize publicity before publicity can realize thought. The seizure of the timeless realm of exploitation by commerce reveals the essence, the core of exploitation. The worker is *in fact* robbed of the suppression of his work, of publicity. Modern exploitation, salaried work, has this in particular that it tends to become pure alienation, that it tends to offer to the exploited the totality of what labor produces without granting him humanity, that is the suppression of all labor. No science fiction writer—even one who swims willingly in the sea of the sinister and the hideous—is capable of rendering the simple reality of our epoch in all of its horror—man reduce to a commodity mule. Exchange between men through the mediation of things has been replaced by the universal exchange of things through the mediation of men. The measurement of the labor of others has only one goal: that things can exchange themselves *freely and without risk*. The commodity is not a thing. The commodity is not a social relation among men. The commodity is a social relation between things mediated by men.

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the absolute suppression of exchange, therefore the absolute suppression of what is suppressing the independence of work, and, as a consequence, the absolute suppression of work.

III. Class Struggle Exists, But Not Only as We Presume

28. Vorwarts!

Now when the enemy thinks he is definitively done with it, the concept of alienation returns with more force, more precision, strengthened, more violent than ever. Initially taken surprise, all the scum are now changing sides. The scandal must be smothered at any cost. "Situationism", the diluted, inoffensive, form of the critique of alienation, makes a timely debut, and in this context the Situationism of the Stalinist parties is not the least bit surprising. It's less surprising on the part of the Socialist scum, who have always maintained humanist pretentions when confronted with the rigidity of the Stalinist aestheticians, the Jdanovists. In 1968 it was the proletarians who clearly attacked alienation, their own inhuman condition, that is to say the proletariat. It was those very proletarians that took it upon themselves to suppress the proletariat.

With the New Deal, the bourgeoisie, accepting the challenge of the Bolsheviks, explicitly acknowledges the existence of exploitation to affirm its ability to suppress it. Society concentrates on demonstrating that it is quite capable of giving *everything* without putting its fundamental ignominy in doubt. But the misfortune of the bourgeois thought is that this expedient measure produces the opposite of what it intended, it produces with an incomparable clarity the *reality* of alienation; it really gets rid of the question of exploitation by revealing its reality as a false question. The essential question of alienation emerges brutally into daylight. Our party charges again, posing the only question that matters in order to answer it. This is why the bourgeoisie must, in a pro-situationist New-New-Deal, pose the same question, in its own way, in an attempt not to resolve it.

29. The wage worker is a slave who nourishes on commodities

The modern epoch, Marx's epoch, our epoch, is not characterized by capital, but by salary, by the fact that capital, commerce "take over the realm of exploitation."[1]

[1] Hierarchy is the statist, militaristic principle that rules the factory. When money takes hold of the realm of exploitation it is as well the principle of that realm that takes hold over money. Salary is

Over sixty centuries of commerce, capital remained totally exterior to the realm of exploitation. When, a few centuries ago after ruining a large part of the planet, commerce seized the realm of exploitation, it created a new form of money, money that cannot grow: salary. It is this form of money that will reveal the essential poverty of money and the secret poverty of the masters. Salary is first of all the democratization of money, debased money, because democratization debases everything it touches. All of this was not easily seen during Marx's time because salary was in its early stage. What does the enemy claim, what does political economy say? It claims that capital not only characterizes our epoch, but has always existed. It is right. At a minimum, the existence of capital is not different from the existence of money. It claims that the modern era has always been characterized by capital. It is wrong; or if it says something, it is nothing more than a generality. Rather than capital being a particular mode of money (Marx), salary is a particular mode of capital. What does Marx claim? That capital characterizes the modern era. He is wrong. What defines the modern era is a new form of money that contains the seed of the decline of capital.

One can understand the motivation of Marx when one looks at the unintentional ruse perpetrated by the enemy. The enemy not only claims that capital as an immediate form of money has existed as long as money has; he claims that capital is a mode of production and that this mode of production has always existed. But capital cannot have always existed as a mode of production because capital is not a mode of production. Capital is a mode of publicity, or rather a mode of the absence of publicity. Marx went where the enemy wanted him to go, he waged a lifelong battle to prove that capital had not always existed as a mode of production, without thinking for a single second that capital is not a mode of production, and that analyzing modes of production, a project checklist, has no significance for his real subject of research, and ours as well. It results in a catastrophic chain of errors. It is false that "the transformation of money into capital only takes place after the force of work is transformed into a commodity for the worker himself, thus when the category of commerce seizes a realm that was excluded."

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hierarchical money. In the same way that the class as social organization of merchants seemed likely to free humanity from the State monster, it appeared along with the Bolshevik adventure, that the mercantile state was the truth behind the merchant class. In the same way as the modern state cannot do without money, modern money cannot do without the state. The modern movement of salaried work is the reconciliation of brother enemies through the hierarchization of money and the universalization of the state. Up to now, money has always represented disorder to the state, disorder which had to be suppressed without actualizing it. And the State was, for money, for commerce, the obstacle that had to be and was knocked down. The two ancient rivals, each facing an impossibility, one trying to realize money without suppressing it, and the other trying to suppress money without actualizing it (the Bolsheviks), reconcile in a compromise. Salary is the state's money, and the state is the world's capitalist. Capital took hold of exploitation and created wage work. And what do you think happened? Capital died.

1) It is perfectly untrue that the transformation of the slave into a free salary man is necessary for the birth of capital. On the contrary, this transformation requires a considerable development of capital, of commerce.

2) Then the "force of work", the force of the worker is mainly an obsession that resides in the mind of the exploiting capitalist. He is obsessed by this force that he finds too expensive and too weak.

3) But above all it is absolutely false that work (Smith) or the force of the worker (Marx) transform into the commodity. A commodity is first of all a thing that thinks. Here at last is the truth about this fundamental question: what is transformed into a commodity for the worker himself are the products that he was used to being nourished with. The wage worker is thus forced to search for money. The capitalist can thus easily calculate the costs of production. Here then is the real definition of a wage worker: a wage worker is a slave nourished by commodities. This absurdity of the "force of work" that becomes a commodity is for sure the most catastrophic mistake Marx made. This mistake allowed the lying Bolshevik sacks of shit to wonder, 100 years later, whether the engineer of a train produced surplus value, and that in turn allowed our attention to be hijacked from the real question of alienation for a hundred years.

4) The realm that took over the category of commerce was not that of the mythical force of work but that of exploitation. The new style of exploiter becomes a merchant. The new style of exploiter seeks money and no longer the provincial pleasures of the ancient masters.

5) Marx spends his life proving that the worker works "a certain time" for his boss, for society, for the State, the immediate consequence of which leads us to deduce that happiness consists of eating everything that one produces, that happiness consists of being an animal. But the main consequence of Marx's mistake is that it totally conceals that it is the worker's time, his entire life that he dedicates to constructing an absurd world, a world that has nothing to do with him. It is not only during the hours that he works for the idiotic needs of his boss, and those during which he works for the renewal of the means to produce an idiotic world, but also the hours dedicated to producing his own survival, and this subsistence is that of an idiotic animal. The idiocy doesn't stop there with the time it takes to produce commodities, it expands to the time it takes for him to annihilate commodities. All the worker's time is spent in producing and annihilating commodities. All the capitalist's time is spent making absolutely sure that commodities exchange themselves. But it is always the commodity that practices humanity, it is the commodity that exchanges itself universally thanks to the human commodity mules. Daily life is life reduced to transporting commodities.

30. Capital is money that goes to your head

The modern form of money is not capital but salary. On the contrary, capital is the immediate form of money, its archaic form. Marx doesn't ignore this archaic form of

capital. Marx doesn't ignore the ancient nature of capital. He frequently made allusion to it. Nor did he ignore the concept of capital as immediately contradicting money. This concept can be found in the part of Marx's labor that he self-censored. When money, the idea that is in every commodity, decides to enter someone's head, it takes another name because it changes its nature. The existence of money as an idea in someone's mind is radically different than its existence as an idea in things, or its existence as a pure and simple thing. Its existence as a pure and simple thing violently contradicts its existence as an idea in someone's mind. The existence of money as an idea in someone's mind is the idea that you can buy anything with money. In fact *in reality* it cannot buy everything because, in reality, it is not only an idea in someone's mind, but also a thing and an idea in every thing. As a thing it only exists as a fixed quantity in a wallet, a quantum, and it can only purchase a limited quantity of that which exists, and the grandest fortune is demeaningly small compared to the totality of that which exists. As an object in a wallet, money is money individual by individual. Money, the idea of everything that exists, as a thing is immediately limited. It is violently in contradiction with itself as thing and as idea. Money is the immediate and violent contradiction of the idea and the thing. Thus it suffices for money to enter a mind for it to become that which is lacking, that which creates a deficiency, that which must grow, so money becomes the thirst for money. Immediately, the goal of money is money.

Money is not only the object of the desire to get rich, it is also this very desire. The passion for money is something other than particular need for weapons, jewelry, women, clothing, wine. The passion for money is the passion for universality, the passion to be everything. Money is immediately the contradiction between the idea of everything that exists and everything that exists. Capital is money that want to realize itself *as money.* Capital is money that has gone to one's head. Money is immediately a lie about money: When money is essentially that which is lacking, scarcity that exists, capital as an idea in the mind of a capitalist and as the activity of a capitalist is that which is lacking but which can increase indefinitely. Money wants to realize itself without suppressing itself. The misfortune of bourgeois thought is it wants to realize money without suppressing it.

31. Salary is money that has lost its illusions

Salaried work doesn't earn its originality through exploitation, but rather from the fact that the exploited get to taste the magic of money. The salaried worker is a slave who has access to the marketplace, which is the place where money exercises its power, the spectacle of its magnificence. There is no difference between the miserable who constructed the Great Wall of China or the pyramids of Egypt and the miserable who build pyramids of cans of dog food. Yes, there is one, the latter nourish themselves on commodities. With salaried work, for the first time in the history of humanity, slaves feel alienation. Until now the realms of alienation and exploitation were mutually

exclusive. Alienation was a sad privilege reserved for the master, a rich lord squandering everything for silk, brocade and velour, or a wealthy merchant drunk on his money. The slave, the serf, was protected from of all contact with this hellish sphere. Exploitation produced the alienation of the master and not of the slave. The alienation of the master was the only thing that exploitation of man by man *really* "produced". The alienation of humanity could only take place among "men" (not among the beasts who think, slaves). Alienation is the wrong the exploiter does to himself in trying to affirm his humanity with the help of the products created by his slaves. When capital seized exploitation, it forced another class of humanity other than the capitalist or the wealthy to seek money. It communicated the thirst for money to a new race of men at the same time as it denied them the means to satisfy this thirst. For the first time in the history of the world, slaves can feel the "humanity" of the master. But as slaves they are immediately deprived of the illusions of the rich about wealth, illusions about the very real, practical possibility of becoming rich. The salaried worker is well placed to become immediately (after a few centuries) dissatisfied with alienation. Salary is the modern, evolved, finished form of money: poor money. Capital is only the immediate, self-deluding form, money that grows forever. With salaried work, money will penetrate into new minds and reveal itself for what it essentially is, scarcity and utility, meanness and banality, in other words the opposite of what it claims to be. Salaried work reveals the essence of money, which is to be that which is essentially lacking, with no possible remedy. In the mind of a salaried worker money remains an idea that imperiously demands its realization, as in the mind of a capitalist, but in the former's mind this idea is reduced to impotence. What a proletarian commodity mule discovers and what a capitalist money mule cannot discover, is that money is a social relation and that this social relation is an absence of social relations. The proletarian discovers that what is fundamental in his suffering is his inability to *name* his suffering: he has nothing to say about his suffering; even that is stolen from him. There you go!—His suffering is precisely his inability to say anything about his suffering. The proletarian suffers from the whole world; he suffers from everything. *He is condemned to understand everything or nothing.* The capitalist is happy just looking for money, the statesman for power. The proletarian, forced to look for money during period of a few centuries, is already forced to look for thought. The enigma that his suffering has become is his true suffering. (If for the slave his master was mean, at least he knew the source of his suffering.) His misery has become true because it forces him to look for thought; it forces him to *understand everything.* This explains the haste and rash action of the university and political scumbags to provide "their" response to this enigma that has clearly become too dangerous, too concretely dangerous for them. This enigma, this suffering, is beginning to offer its own practical and theoretical responses. The misery of the proletarian is finally coming to understand itself as the misery of practical thought, as thought that fails to understand its own misery.

32. With salaried work, exploitation becomes the universal form of alienation

When commerce takes over exploitation, when commerce abolishes slavery, it says to the exploited: "Be a man, here, take this money." The new master infects the freed slave with his own gold fever, with his own idea of humanity. And so in the course of three centuries the following reversal happens: It is within the very realm of exploitation that the exploited can still assert his humanity. It is outside of this realm where the bourgeois grants the proletarian the quality of being human (read: the quality of a bourgeois, the quality of a commodity consumer) that the proletarian is absolutely unable to assert his humanity. It made no difference to the ancient master that his slave worked for him "a certain time". The only thing that mattered was that his slave stayed a beast like the others, while he, the master, practiced humanity. For him there was no difference between a steer and a slave. He liked them both; he appreciated their strength, their good manners and their patience. He treated his slaves with kindness as long as they never dared to claim humanity, which rarely happened. Everything changes when commerce takes control of exploitation. The master invites the exploited to become a free man (read: a man who has money outside the factory), though like all masters he requests him to be well behaved in the factory. Alas, he transmitted to the freed slave his passion for money; he made him share his passion for human metal, while at the same time he meant to deny the slave the means to satisfy this passion. He let the fox into the henhouse.

He handed his slave the *idea* of humanity and then was surprised to find it in his head. What does political economy say? That the force of work is a commodity. What do we see? In this society the only truly human relations that have been maintained are the relations between bosses and employees and employees among themselves, as Freud, a celebrated psychoanalyst, noted at the beginning of the last century. The only human relation that men still have consists of the *bitter dispute* that salaried work has imposed between master and slave. The implementation of salaried work and the history of this implementation is a bitter dispute over how many commodities a wage worker can carry, and for two centuries the world has resounded with this loud argument. The entire world has been transformed into stalls in a market hall. Fixing a salary is precisely the opposite of fixing the price of a commodity. Here it is not things that are thinking and realizing their thought. It is truly men who are fighting, arguing, disputing.

The salaried worker vigorously demands the right to be exploited (the right to work), the right to carry a lot of commodities, and in order to do that the right to make a lot of commodities, always more commodities. For a moment the central question of alienation is completely forgotten. The dispute winds up with the exploiter being convinced that it is in his interest—the interest of commerce and of the commodity—that the salaried worker be allowed to carry the maximum number of commodities

possible, and if possible all of them, and that all of these commodities be produced *for* the salaried worker. The exploiter decides then to put a definitive end to the question of exploitation. But then the consumption of commodities by the salaried workers shows that, whatever the share of commodities the master hands out to the exploited (this childish idea of dividing up a pie), the worker can never become a man, and no wage will ever allow him to realize his humanity. All this culminates in the modern spectacle.

Today, everything the salaried slave produces, he produces for himself. This world is aimed at him, with its freeways for idiot drivers, its TVs for idiot TV watchers, its police to protect him, its governments to govern him, its B52 bombers with their napalm to create captivating news stories for leftist imbeciles, etc. Yes indeed, the enemy has settled the question of exploitation quite well, and the lying Bolshevik sacks of shit have played a non-negligible role in that. The salaried worker can finally acknowledge that he is reduced to the simple role of commodity mule, and that the only *brief moment* of social existence he experiences is when he carries a commodity to allow it to realize itself as money. And immediately after that, the shimmering commodity—like most male insects after briefly copulating—dies exhausted from its intercourse with money, the consumer has nothing more than a bulky cadaver in his hands that he has to get rid of at all cost. The consumer is only the veterinarian of commodities. He is the specialist facilitating their brief flings with money. He assures their monstrous reproduction. We can understand, then, that the shameless solicitations offered by commodities (by means of their ad men pimps) are for them a matter of life or death. If the customer doesn't show up, they die before being able to copulate with money; they die without being able to reproduce. Thus in the midst of incessant chatter, that hides their real, essential chatter, they do everything to persuade their mule that they are—each one better than the other—capable of focusing all attention on him if only for a moment. But the commodity mule, who wants all the attention, doesn't even earn a single glance. After a century of bitter struggle we have arrived at this grotesque situation: intoxicated by poor money, intoxicated by the desire to get rich, salaried workers have feverishly demanded the right to carry all the commodities. They have furiously demanded the right to faithfully serve the commodity. Today they carry *almost all* the commodities. Not content with that, self-management cheats demand the right to carry *absolutely all* the commodities, including those commodities that political economists call capital. Until now, those commodities were carried by capitalists themselves. The self-management scumbags want proletarians to carry them as well. And, of course, you know cops are workers too! After a century of bitter struggle, starting from nothing, salaried men have finally arrived at true misery. A capitalist is a man who wants to realize money. A salaried worker is a man who wants to realize the commodity. The capitalist wants to realize the heavenly existence of the commodity. The salaried worker wants to realize the earthly existence of money, the money that one sees. The capitalist is a money mule. The salaried worker is a commodity mule. The capitalists are organized in a class. The salaried workers form a mass. The efforts of both have

only one result: the free exchange of commodities among themselves, the production and then the destruction of commodities *after exchange.* An economic crisis is a great misfortune for commodities; they are destroyed before exchange; they are destroyed before having been able to practice exchange, before being able to practice humanity. For a moment commodities know the same fate as proletarians. What a scandal!

33. The growth of salaried work poses on a world level the question of universal wealth.

The stand political economy takes on wealth boils down to this: wealth is made up of the products of work (Smith) but it is capital that makes work effective, it refines and divides work, without it these products would not exist. Capital would be, then, the co-author of wealth. This stand on wealth like every other stand taken by political economy is false. It only wants to obfuscate the question of alienation and bring it back to an issue of exploitation, in other words to offer a fair allocation of material triviality. This stance aims to obfuscate the fact that wealth does not consist of the products of work but in the universal exchange of activities and the products of these activities, in the very act of infinite suppression of the infinite division of work. It seeks to obfuscate that capital, which is this activity of division and suppression, is true wealth, is all wealth. It wants to obfuscate that capital is the activity of a single class that has monopolized all the world's wealth, all the activity of infinite division, of the infinite suppression of work, all activity of the world appearing in itself, the activity of the appearance of all that exists in all that exists. The slippery Smith wants us to believe that all wealth is not only on capital's side, that it also embodied in the products of work, that it is also embodied in work. Accordingly, the counter-espionage operation launched by the teammates Smith and Ricardo can and wants to appear as a generous and scientific rehabilitation of work according to this principle: render unto work what work deserves. These two team members want to "render" unto work the triviality that it has never ceased to embody since the class that these two guys are a part of had taken over true wealth, the universal suppression of work. It is very obvious today *that what should be rendered unto work is the suppression of work.*

Smith and Ricardo truly would want to have us forget that capital is a real benefactor to humanity, not to the extent that it develops material triviality, but to the extent that it communicates to humanity an unquenchable thirst for humanity.[2] Capital is

[2] The aim of the theory of surplus-value, in a word, the goal of the theory of work value of Smith-Ricardo is to make exploitation into a quantitative question. The development and extension of this condition to the majority of men reveals, on the contrary, that exploitation has never been a quantitative question but a qualitative one. With the development of salaried the work, the worker experiences what the merchantmaster has burned and bloodied the planet for. The salaried worker experiences the master's humanity without any of the masters' illusions. The masters have always been impassioned by wealth. They have always been impassioned by alienation.

a benefactor to humanity when it demonstrates to humanity, by the development of salaried work, of what true wealth consists, how it concentrates within itself all the true wealth of the world, how it represents the global function of exchange, how it identifies totally with the appearance of the world in itself. It is a benefactor to humanity when it shows the true goal pursued by exploitation. The dominant class and the state appropriate the act of suppression itself, the universal division of labor. This is why it is ready in the last instance to cede to the proletarians the trivial details of the division of labor provided that the essential is not put into question, provided that it maintains its monopoly on the infinite suppression of the infinite division of labor. We are totally in agreement with Hegel: what is beautiful about work is its abstraction. What is beautiful about work is its suppression. We cannot teach the merchant what the passionate practice of exchange is really about, the savage pleasure of money practiced as an end in itself. We are not going to teach him that money is the goal for money and is self-sufficient.

On the contrary, the merchant, or perhaps those he pays to think for him, would like to teach us something that contradicts his daily reality. They want us to think that wealth consists in the products of work. All of the utilitarianism of political economy has only one goal: deflect attention from the real subject of wealth from real activity of the merchant. Commerce is, in truth, the specialized practice of wealth. For political economy, man is no more than a scavenger who benefits from the feast of the exchange and suppression of things. While things exchange themselves, man profits, man eats the leftovers. What Ricardo and Smith ask is for things to have the freedom to exchange themselves so that men may profit as they please.[3]

[3] A poor on-the-left is a poor who thinks he's rich (this role was ascribed to what was then called the "petty-bourgeois"). It is an imbecile that imagines one can "profit" from commodities, that one can "profit" from this world. It is an imbecile that imagines that he is profiting from the commodity and is ashamed of it. He doesn't know that it is the commodity profiting off him. His shame has, evidently, only one goal; to avoid having to recognize that he's a poor, that the summit of misery *is him* (the equivalent of the xenophobia and antiSemitism of the petty-bourgeoisie). The acceptance of culpability of a prick on-the-left has only one goal: to avoid recognizing that his cowardice and self-denial are the price he has had to pay to succeed at survival (for example, tolerating the university when he was a student, tolerating the vast stupidity of academia, reading and understanding the tons of bullshit a student must read and listen to) have all been in vain, and he had to struggle only to attain misery. To feed this culpability, he must find, at all cost, someone poorer than himself (so he thinks), which explains his gourmet tastes for internal and external third worldism, as well as the metropolitan and ultramarine versions. The prick on-the-left is the declared enemy of wealth, the contrary of the proletarian, a poor who doesn't know that he's poor. The goal of the dominant class is to produce as many pricks on-the-left as possible. In order to do that it employs an army of bastards on-the-left (the dominant class doesn't dare proclaim itself to be on the right anymore); academics, artists, journalists, C.E.O.s, PR men, economists, former students from the ENA, [Ecole Nationale d'Adminstiration—the most prestigious school producing high ranking bureaucrats] ministers and statesmen. The prick on-the-left is part of the foot soldiers engaged in the grand maneuvers of this reformist army. As if it were a duck hunt, the prick on-the-left plays the role of the whistler.

This is illustrated by the well-known and ridiculous Robinson Crusoesque hunter/fisherman analogy of Smith. In fact, *barter* is the utilitarian conception of exchange, the only conception that vulgar utilitarian thought—engendered by the idealistic conception of money—can reach if you want to conceive of what exchange between man is, and no longer exchange between things. The modern idiot can only conceive of grossly utilitarian reasons for men to practice exchange with each other and this is what the idiot calls barter. Ethnography has destroyed all of these Robinson Crusoesque utilitarians. The highest form of exchange among primitives is based on exchanging objects seen as useless by modern utilitarianism, that is objects whose only value is that they are exchangeable. Political economy wants to reduce the salaried worker to the lowest utilitarianism. The real salaried worker increasingly experiences that in the consumption of commodities, in the consumption of products of work that contains the idea of wealth, something other than utility is present which is actually the idea of humanity. The corollary to the utilitarian conception is the grossly utilitarian conception of communism, the bourgeois conception of communism, (that popular fantasy where one fishes in the morning, hunts in the afternoon and produces theory at night) as a world of Cockaigne[4] and cotton candy filled with sausages and little birds. Our conception of communism is, on the contrary, that of a world where one talks night and day, where one practices theory on the largest scale, that of the universe. In the same way, laziness is the utilitarian conception of the suppression of work that doesn't break fundamentally with the notion of servile work. It is the appeal of a slave who envies the vulgarity of his master. This conception is destroyed by capitalism as well as by ethnography. The latter shows us the extent to which the Trobrianders will go to create a fete of exchange (the "kula"). The former shows us the extent to which merchant masters will go to achieve wealth. What is most profound and influential in the SI is their practical definition of wealth as the construction of situations, of situations as the only real product of human activity.

34. Down with the proletariat!

The thing that disturbs the senile, idiotic, academic Marcuse makes us rejoice: the proletariat has finally left the stage of history. The spectacular proletariat has disappeared. Fuck the spectacular proletariat. Fuck the spectacle of the proletariat. And for sure, down with the real proletariat and with the conditions that the proletariat has to endure. Down with the world. Who would be interested in knowing where the proletariat has gone if not some unemployed manipulator who wants to get his hands on them to teach them how to live like a Russian or a Chinese in some "period of transition" or, some law enforcement bureaucrat. Proletarians have gone underground.

[4] Cockaigne, an imaginary land of idleness and luxury, from a satirical poem of that name (coquina, a kitchen), where the monks live in an abbey built of pasties, the rivers run with wine, and the geese fly through the air ready roasted. The name has been applied to London and Paris.

As a result they are anti-spectacular, they are invisible (that which does not appear). They are shielded from all representation, from all spectacle and from all police. Some regret the good old days of the spectacular proletariat. And this improvement is the work of the spectacle itself. The goal of the spectacle is the spectacular artificial suppression of the proletariat. It has only succeeded in suppressing the spectacle of the proletariat. The triumphant spectacle of satisfaction has sawed off the branch it is sitting on. Now all the powers and their friends and admirers are struggling like crazy men to replace this regretted deceased with the spectacle of dissatisfaction. The SI achieved the destruction of the spectacle of the proletariat. They were the first to discover the clandestine state of modern proletarians and to see their new *power*.

The proletariat as a class is the spectacle of the proletariat. The proletariat is not a class. In the same way that grass is the basic condition for grass eaters to exist, the proletariat is the basic condition for proletarians to exist. A proletarian is someone who only nourishes himself on commodities, that is to say a man whose only activity is that of a commodity mule. The commodity is the basic condition for modern proletarians to exist. The basic condition of modern proletarians is achieved deprivation of humanity, that is to say the achieved deprivation of all social existence. The proletariat could never be a class, because a class is still a mode of social existence.

Class is the social mode of existence of the bourgeoisie, men who practice commerce, men who want—each for himself—to realize money without suppressing it, men who practice the universal suppression of the work of others, men who entirely monopolize the social function of exchange, men who speak for all others. Separating exchange into buying and selling, two indifferent moments, creates the possibility of buying without selling (accumulating commodities) and selling without buying (accumulating money). It permits speculation and accumulation, i.e., commodity pillage. It makes exchange a specific activity, a job; in short it creates the merchant class. Class is the mode of social existence of men who make exchange (who practice their humanity) their job. Class is not a hollow taxonomical term. One cannot understand class as, for example, the class of the bourgeoisie, the class of proletarians, the class of invertebrates, a bag of white balls, a bag of black balls, that is, we cannot understand class as a class that only exists for another. A social existence that is not simply a purely hollow taxonomic term is a *practical* existence. The bourgeois class taken as a social entity is as much the relation of the bourgeois among themselves as it is the relation of all the bourgeois to all that is not them. Class consciousness is the essential moment of class that provides it with its consistency, not simply the individual consciousness of the bourgeois, but all the practical means that the bourgeois arm themselves with to combat that which is exterior to their class. Class consciousness is the typical consciousness of the merchant. Not only is the *only possible class* the merchant class, the only class consciousness is the consciousness of merchants. Class consciousness is the consciousness of men competing with each other, fighting each other, but sticking together when faced with an external foe, faced with that which is not part of their class. Class consciousness is that which unites the bourgeois as bourgeois, separated in practice and together

ideally, united in thought. Class is the unity of competitors whose general interest is identical and whose particular interest is antagonistic. It is the war of all the bourgeois against all the bourgeois, but at the same time the war of all the bourgeois against everything else. Class has this unique characteristic in relation to other social forms of existence: it is structured through its opposition to an exterior by men who, themselves, are exterior to each other (in competition with each other). Class as a unique social formation in history is absolute exteriority. Exterior to everything, it is exterior to itself. Unlike hierarchy, unlike the state, unlike feudalism, class is made up of peers, of equals. Rich merchant, not so rich merchant, are no less equal, because money does not create individual qualities, money can be made and lost, the individual who carries it remains unchanged in his nullity, equal to himself and to others. Unlike the state, unlike feudalism, class is what tolerates an exterior. The state, like Hegelian philosophy, does not tolerate any exterior; it wants to encompass everything in its grand pyramid. From its origins the merchant class defines itself against the rest of the world. Because money ruins the societies it comes in contact with, it is hated, feared and rejected. Merchants, the practitioners of the universal, find themselves rejected by the communities they encounter, so they move on, all over the world, which happens to be required by their commercial activity. When commerce takes over exploitation, it is still the realm of the suppression of work, of social exchange, facing the proletarians, facing salaried workers whose work it suppresses.

Finally, it is false to say that class struggle is a struggle among several classes. Class struggle is the struggle of the sole class that has ever existed only to dominate and maintain its domination. The only class struggle is the struggle of merchants to dominate and maintain their domination once they triggered the catastrophic process that is salaried work. The bourgeoisie is Promethean. It steals the humanity of mankind only to return it in an inaccessible but universal form. Its domination and the catastrophes it lets loose are something of a curse: it is not up to the bourgeoisie to *realize* what it has stolen from the particular to convert it into something chimerical but universal. Of course, class struggle is also the struggle of the owners of the proletariat, of those who have made the proletariat into a class, a spectacle, the struggle of all the Stalins and Maos to maintain the domination that they have dearly paid for. The proletariat as a class is a spectacle of the proletariat organized by the owners of this new Bolshoi, and all the petty leftist impresarios and their scrawny circus performers. The modern proletariat has this unique quality that it is not a class and cannot become one. Proletarians can never fight each other and cannot fight the Exterior because since it is not a class there is nothing exterior to it. They are completely separated from each other and this separation leaves nothing exterior to this state of things. When proletarians fight they don't fight an exterior, another class, they fight against this separation, they fight the proletariat. The dominant class struggles to prevent the proletarians from fighting separation because they own this separation, and owns the proletariat. What the dominant class wants more than anything is that the proletarians fight on its terrain: the terrain of class war and the state. More than anything the bourgeoisie and

the state fear that one day the proletarians leave them where they are in the trashcans of history, in the museum of pre-historic horrors, and go on about their own business, addressing their own agenda. But the struggle of the bourgeois class to dominate at any cost produces increasing alienation, *forcing* proletarians to confront the proletariat and not the bourgeoisie. Here is the true misfortune of the bourgeoisie. Already governments are going on strike, and the striking officials pout like spoiled brats concluding that one does not pay enough attention to their gross stupidities.

35. The essential question

The commodity and the state have made us so stupid and myopic that the only language that we can use is that of objects and their mutual relations. We incapable of understanding a human language which has no effect on us. On one hand, human language is seen and experienced as subservience, as pleading, and as a result is experienced as humiliation expressed as shame and supplication. On the other hand it is understood as insolence, as madness, as a threat and is rejected as such. We are alienated to such an extent that the intimate language of our human essence appears to be an outrage to human dignity, while the alienated language of commodities seems to express the dignity of man confirmed by their rights, dignity that is self-assured and recognizes itself as such. Why can't people talk to each other in public places, places that are so incorrectly named? Here is the essential, unique question that contains all the others. Every other question that claims to be interesting in itself is an impostor, reformism, a diversionary maneuver on the part of the enemy. On this question, above all on the response to this question, the divide opens between the friends and enemies of money, the friends and enemies of the state. The question of the silence of people in the streets is the essential question. The response to this question is the strategic response to all questions. The response to this question *suddenly* provokes generalized chatter. One can easily understand that the enemy will do everything in its power not to have this question addressed. And its best tactic is to supply its own false answers to the real question rather than acting as it has before hiding the question itself. It can't completely hide the question. Therefore it will hide the question by overwhelming it with answers. The enemy knows well that the response to the question is nothing other than the publicity of the question. Publicity is when people chat in the streets. The essential question is the question of publicity. Publicity is chattering a lot.

36. The theoretical response to the essential question

The theory of publicity is the theoretical response to the essential question. The theory of publicity is the materialist theory of practical chatter. To the question "why

don't people talk to each other in the streets" the theory of publicity responds "because they have nothing to say to each other".[5] The preceding statement guarantees the complete failure of the efforts of the modernist, cultural and counter-cultural scoundrels who pretend that people have something to say. This fact ridicules their vain efforts to "animate" the stupified herd. Most importantly, the theory of publicity responds to the question "why do they have nothing to say" because it is the theory of practical chatter. It ridicules the empty academic discourse on empty discourse. It understands that

1) to have *one* idea you have to be at least two;[6]

2) the idea of a relation is the essential moment of the practical relation;

3) no idea happens *outside* of this relation;

4) the realization of this idea is the goal, the explicit human goal of this relation;

5) chatter is itself the practice of this relation and chatter has as its goal the realization of an idea. Without this relation, no idea, no chatter, no humanity, *no relation*. The only *real relation p*ossible has to be practical.[7] The theory of publicity knows that chatter is a practical activity, filled with consequences, that chatter is itself the *act* of the suppression of labor and that chatter is also the goal of this suppression. It knows that work only becomes human when it only use is chatter. Work becomes truly human when it really produces chatter, that is when it produces chatter and only produces chatter, in other words when it knowingly, explicitly, *theoretically*, produces chatter,

[5] In an article in the 3rd issue of the electro-confusionist review *Interferences* devoted to the graffiti that recently covered the walls of New York, the semiologist Baudrillard is astonished that these graffito, a profusion of *noms de guerres*, code names, *mean nothing*. This is followed by a lengthy investigation that tries to persuade us that 'the total manipulation of codes and significations" constitutes "the true strategic terrain", which would like to then convince us of the importance of Baudrillard's meager, academic specialization. This type of imbecile couldn't be find a tree in a forest. What the young black and Puerto-Rican authors of these inscriptions say is that *they have nothing to say, and that they are scandalized at having nothing to say*. They're not at all like these academics and these "modern artists" who have accommodated themselves so well to the fact they having nothing to say, that they have made a profession out of it.

[6] That's what refutes the disgraceful bourgeois conception of the idea, psychology. Bourgeois consciousness is the idea you can have alone. It's onanism of the spirit.

[7] It is always those who are mouthing the word communication because they are *paid to do so* who know the least about what communication can be, (If not, they wouldn't get paid. They're paid because they know nothing). And thus is the ignominy of academia, incapable of making the simple observation that there is an absence of all communication between men. How could they? These are people who've renounced all hope for communication and have no experience at all in their lives of what communication is. These are the same people who talk endlessly about the communication between men by means of objects. They are perfectly incapable of observing that it is the objects that are communicating with each other through men. In order to be able to do that they'd have to have an idea of what communication is about. It is they again who are extensively using the expression, "mass communication" without suspecting, for a single instant, how trivial they are, communication being precisely the masses suppressing themselves.

And finally, impotent among the impotent, the linguists and the semiologists ponderously study language, signs, symbols ... without being able to have a single clue about what they can be used for.

when it make makes it its goal. When work doesn't limit itself to the production of random discourse among the other things it would produce. To the question "why do people have nothing to say," the theory of publicity says, "because commodities practice chatter in their name, because commodities practice thought in their name, because commodities have ideas in their name, because commodities have human relations in their name." For the Belgians it's even worse, these guys are fucked. Public chatter being a practical activity, it doesn't exist apart from its *material* means except as parody, empty and impotent discourse. "To say something to someone" really, is to say something real, to suppress work. Man is that activity of suppression, this chatter, this practical thought, this thought that realizes itself. Where things chat, where things have spirit, men shut up. Not because things speak too loudly and drowns out men's voices, but because men have nothing to say and have no spirit. Spirit is practice or it is nothing. There is no spirit deprived of its material means. Commerce has deprived men of their material means of chatter. Commodities practice exchange in place of men: but commerce has universalized this exchange. Things practice humanity in place of men, but things practice humanity universally.

37. Publicity is a lot of chatter

Publicity creates the general suppression of work—animated disputes and uninterrupted dialogue—with conscious intent and through that the basis of all human life. In the same way that up until now the only *real* production of men has been the *reality* of alienation, the chatter of commodities, with publicity the only real production of men is chatter. All activity consists of chatter, true wealth, realized wealth. Universal chatter is the practical realization of thought. Universal chatter is the practical realization of thought. Universal chatter is the perfection of humanity, it is humanity that is totally itself because it is totally what it expresses. Professional gabbers, those who speak in the name of others and who are paid to do so, understand perfectly that in a world where everyone will be chattering a lot, there will hardly be any space for them. They will have to accommodate themselves to this state of affairs, and that disquiets them because on the subject of chattering they are inferior to the rest of men, and it is only their silence that keeps the gabbers' puerile discourse from descending into the ridiculous. The professional gabbers fear nothing more than chatter. To plan the world coup is very simple. It consists of replacing money and the state by universal chatter. Chatter is the real basis of history, the real basis of spirit. Chatter is means and goal united. It is the means. It is the goal. It is the unity of the system and the method. Chatter organizes and produces chatter. Everything that counteracts chatter is mercilessly sacrificed by chatter. Everything that contributes to chatter is developed by chatter. All of life is organized itself as a function of chatter. All of life organizes itself as a function of life. Chatter is not a theoretical discovery. When proletarians chatter the world trembles down to its roots. But chatter won't triumph unless proletarians

discover that not only can they live on chatter: *but that chatter is life itself.*[8] The proletarian revolution is totally reliant on this necessity, that chatter as the *totality* of human practice must be recognized and practiced by the masses.

38. To arms, citizens

In social war the masses are both the infantry and the cavalry, that is, the decisive forces. Theory is the artillery, that which always falls short (one can never be too caddy with a cad). With the disorder that followed the grand battle of 1968, contact with the enemy has been reestablished. We have rediscovered it within range. It is important not to give them the opportunity of escaping our sights. Now that the Big Bertha of theory has rediscovered its voice, it is important not to stop hearing it resound. We can't let the enemy rest. We have to censor their imbecilic dialogue with the noise of our canons. Artillery to your weapons!

In full view of the enemy, 10 am, December 2, 1975,
Oberdada Hegelsturmfuhrer Voyer

[8] Presently Portugal is (in 1975) the world's largest producer of chatter, ahead even of Italy. But this production still tolerates money and the state. The improvement of the quality of their chatter is for them a question of life and death. Unhappy Portugal, swarming with admirers of the state: leftists, scum on-the-left, Stalinists. Happy Portugal, where the assembly of mutinous soldiers in the Serra do Pilar barracks decide to direct the struggle towards "immediate socialism" *(Le Monde* of October 9, 1975), that is, uninterrupted chatter, against all the partisans of "transitional periods" that proliferate there like they do here. If we consider the record of the specialists from *Le Monde* on this subject, we can see that profession discourse fears prolific chatter more than anything else. For almost two years, the specialists from Le Monde have been able to go on and on every day about Portugal, to go on and on about the professional discourse going on in Portugal and its grotesque activism, without ever talking about what is really being done there, without ever talking about what is really being said in Portugal.

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Jean-Pierre Voyer
An inquiry into the causes and nature of the misery of people
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