History and Obstinacy

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The subtitle of Karl Marx’s central work, Capital, reads: CRITIQUE OF POLITICAL ECONOMY. Based on the observations of the Anglo-Saxon economists Adam Smith and David Ricardo, this work poses the following of many possible questions: If capital could speak, how would it explain itself? Can capital say “I”?

The political economy of capital stands in opposition to humans who live in societies structured by capital, but who—along with large portions of their subjectivities, their ancestors, and elements of their labor capacities and essential powers—at the same time also belong to social relations not structured by capital. For a more complete economy, we must pose the question: “Who is the subject of history?”

Six thousand years of Chinese social history, for example, could serve as an object for such an analysis, or the three thousand years of European history and economic praxis that were later forced in the hothouse of the Industrial Revolution and accompanied by the rise of very young nations such as the United States, Australia, and Canada. In what follows, elements of a political economy of labor power are sketched out. At stake are the questions: What is real? Are humans spectators of their own lives, their realities, and the histories they produce? Could they even perhaps be the producers of their own lives?

The Two Economies
We begin with a simple observation: We clearly possess an elaborate theory of the political economy of capital: Marx’s Capital. The polar opposite of this would be a political economy of labor power, for which no theoretical groundwork has ever been laid. Marx never recorded any such political economy of labor power, even though his thought system immanently presupposes it as the opposite of capital.
We assume that **this** is the reason why he never wrote on **politics**. Politics necessarily presupposes a theory of the proletarian public sphere, and this in turn requires a theory of the developmental history of each and every labor capacity.

**What Does the Political Economy of Labor Power Mean?**

The expression **economy** transfers the laws of physics in second nature onto production and exchange in society. The attribute **political** designates a contradiction: a conscious and collaborative form of interaction capable of forming associations with the quasiphysical intercourse of an economy. According to Marx, the word **critique** in the “critique of political economy” refers to previously developed theories of political economy (for example, Adam Smith, Ricardo). Critique is not a way to deal with things themselves. Above all, critique defends the authenticity of facts. Critique is directed against the metaphysics of the political economy. In contrast, political-economic praxis can be addressed critically only by using **counterproduction**.

Marx uses different expressions in this context. He speaks of the **political economy of the working class** when it pertains to the confrontation with a single capitalist class (for example, the middle class as the most important producing class of capitalists, or it can refer to the fact that capitalist rule enters into certain alliances with feudal upper classes, state authorities, the army, the church, the Tory upper class and so on, and then stands as an agglomerate in opposition to the political economy of the working class). In contrast, when referring to the confined spaces of factories where labor power is transformed into labor, Marx speaks of the political economy of labor in exactly the same way that the affected class would express itself in a concrete battle. The counterpart to this designation is **property**, that is, concretized capital. When referring to the potential, the constitutional history, and the emancipatory possibility of historical labor, Marx speaks conversely of “**real essential powers of man and nature**” or “**real essential powers and faculties** [Vermögen]”. He thus avoids using a metaphoric concept [Oberbegriff].

Incidentally, it is to be expected that what constitutes the political economy of labor power does not itself tolerate a metaphoric concept in the classical sense. What we are investigating becomes incomprehensible when we cannot name it. The use value of the
category “political economy of labor power” lies exclusively in the
power of differentiation contained within this designation vis-à-vis
all the other reflections of human labor, as well as in its de velopmental history. This is therefore not about a metaphoric con cep t that eventually constitutes itself as a concept on account of
the ever-more concrete variations produced by close examination.
Rather, it pertains to a moving form of critique that contrasts the
history of the individual characteristics of labor power with the
heteropolar history of associational needs. That is to say: there can
be no labor power in itself, and what labor power is for itself has
to be queried.

Whoever cannot think of something intelligible when we invoke the expres
sion “political economy” needs only ask what an unpolitical economy or an
uneconomic politics would be. Whole branches of social sciences concern
themselves with the analysis of labor capacities and empirical labor: indus
trial and organizational psychology, business economics, industrial sociol
ogy, social psychology, drive economics, education economics. They tend,
however, not to develop the integrated theoretical relationalities of a political
economy of labor power.

As an “immense accumulation” of prehistories of characteristics,
labor power draws its specific energy for change from the fact that
it could not become a historically existent energy “for itself.” But
it is empty with respect to the conception of its own concept. This
is not because it is something, but because it can become something
only if it has the capacity to assume all the many different appointed
forms. Under the given historical conditions, on the contrary, it has
the form of nonidentity. This is its stinger [Stachel]. Were we to
imagine that a kind of identity accompanied it, it would already have
the “capacity above and beyond itself” and would be equally empty
on account of its prehistory. IT THUS HAS A SPECIFIC CAPACITY
TO EXPLODE METAPHORIC CONCEPTS OVER AND OVER
AGAIN, BUT NOT TO INSTALL ITSELF WITHIN THE SHELL OF
A METAPHORIC CONCEPT.

We arrive now at a differentiation: the political economy of labor
power is itself a laboring concept, and this is the reason why there
is no metaphoric concept for it. However, we strive to avoid definitional circumlocution at the beginning of our work on this concept for entirely different reasons. In other words, we first need to seek the locus of the contradiction originally responsible for generating the object on which we work.

**The Two Economies in Relation to Wage Labor and Capital**

The owner of money confronts the laborer in such a way that he appears as the owner of the commodity labor power itself. Possession by the owner of labor power, however, is a fiction, since he acts as if he’s the vendor of this commodity, but by no means has it at his disposal at the time of sale. He may have in his head the requisite willingness, even when all his senses, his organs, and the perfidy of his education constitute such willingness, but he must first still do the work. For example, if his consciousness does not obey him, his movements evince self-will [Eigenwillen]. He then makes mistakes, and fantasies of escape ensue. As the owner of the commodity labor power, he constantly has to acquire the labor power anew that he is expected to deliver.

In this labor process transpiring within labor power itself, both the natural characteristics and the labor that is already mastered by the disposition to work [Arbeitsdisposition] and derived from the economy of these very same natural characteristics either do battle or enter into an exchange. Owing to the rearing of labor power, originary self-regulated forces rooted in the libidinal economy shrink to a kind of solidified dead labor, a character machine. To a certain extent, they form the prior objectification of labor power within labor power.

This is the one side of labor capacity. Only on account of the friction with these ontogenetically and phylogenetically acquired influences — with the one side of labor capacity — can the natural characteristics bind themselves to labor power anew. A certain quantity of this natural force that appears anew in concrete labor processes is necessary so that the supply of acquired labor capacities effects the change in condition that we then call “labor.”

There are two products where the capitalist or national economist only sees one. One product arises in the relation of exchange between capitalist production and wage labor; the other consists of the exchange of the inner relation of labor power with itself, which
is to say, in the production relations of labor power as commodity with respect to itself as created. From the perspective of the political economy of labor power—contrary to the vantage point of the logic of capital—the result of labor is the by-product, whereas the process within the laboring individual—a piece of real life—is the primary product. The other side of labor power as commodity is thus not the character of its use value. What arises, rather, is an entire chain of differentiations of which only the last link contains the core contradiction: the application of natural forces/abstract labor/labor power as commodity/use-value character for capitalist production of meaning/use-value character for the obstinacy of labor capacity/internal production relations of self-alienation. The final link is the core of the political-economic contradiction of labor power. This contradiction permanently explodes the concept of the political economy. In other words, a real economy does not obey the aforementioned potential for contradiction; the analyzed field of experience breaks the rules of the economy. At the same time, the attribute political breaks down, because the political draws its substance from the power of this contradiction; this is obviously a very traditional notion of the political. Essentially, this pertains to the invalidity of all economic and political conditions at the moment when they strive to hold down and generate historical labor capacities under the contradictory conditions typical of production relations. And this break becomes clear as soon as the change in perspective focuses on the unity of the individual and phylogenetic history, instead of imagining the unity of capital and labor.

We have just observed the following: when an exchange is finished for the owner of money, a twofold form of work begins for the owner of labor power. He works for capital, and he performs work on himself in order to engender within himself the aptitude for his labor.

The First Contradiction in the Political Economy of Labor Power
Self-exploitation; the instrumental, the calculating ways in which the brain functions; obedience; or the way organs and cells refrain from drawing attention to themselves (to the point of a psychosomatic sickness or death)—all these factors belong to the external law. In comparison, the inner law reads in the reverse: without the supplemental labor of what works alone—the self-regulative
economy of drives—none of these processes would take place. This contradiction between appearance [Schein] and essence [Wesen] of the real process expresses itself in the fact that the history of self-regulation in our culture has to be written as the history of disruptions. This is one of the reasons why the powerful labor of self-regulation so seldom leaps into consciousness. Were we to investigate at this point the aforementioned question regarding the separation of labor power from the means of production, it would revolve around the separation of motive from labor power. If the tasks that are assigned to natural force (that is, to the self-regulative forces that encipher their own value system, namely, the idea of what they can do) are so inadequate that this force cannot express itself, then the object of labor becomes separated from the capacity for labor within labor power. Conversely: if the produced motivation is focused on something impossible, then the same torturous separation of labor capacity from the object of labor arises within labor power. The worst that can happen to labor power is the total separation of ability from the field of activity.

The question regarding the separation of producers from their labor resources or the objects of production does not pertain only to the manufacturing of goods in factories. This image prevails because this appears historically to be the primary application of labor power. However, we are interested above all in labor power inadequately reflected in traditional consciousness: labor both inside and outside the factory. This includes, for example, protest labor and the power of resistance. If the rebellion of the cells, the senses, the brain, or the feelings of protest pent up in a labor situation lacks an adequate means of production and an object for friction, a tension arises. A proletariat situation emerges capable of directing itself explosively outward or inward against the agent of labor power. The same goes for when a protest or the power of resistance is assembled into aggregates that do not correspond to individual laws, to the self-regulative, natural development of these forces; in this case, alienation arises full of similar tensions. If such protests are politicized incorrectly, they, too, direct themselves either outward in an uncontrolled fashion or inward against the agent of these forces. For the self-regulative natural force active in every social labor, the other person is a need; the power [Macht] of labor power [Arbeitskraft] that goes into relationships must not be underestimated. Here, too, the
question revolves around “the separation of the means of production from the objects of labor.”

What this cast of characters as relatively “thin abstractions” suggests is, in reality, hidden in the surplus of the objective, an immense abundance of experience. In this real form, nothing is abstract. Rather, everything is so substantial that the acrimony tied to it is one of the reasons why consciousness finds it so difficult to deal with the processes of labor power according to its own proportions. How much easier it is to occupy oneself with things or with fields of knowledge such as physics, the biology of animals, or meteorology that lend themselves to be organized objectively according to their material! As if there existed something more objective than the historical stamp of labor power! The production of this labor power entails raw materials (self-regulation, forces organized from below), labor resources (education, the influence of all previous instances of objectified labor power, learning through the reality of labor), their modes of production (it is as heterogeneous as the labor of a composer, that of an assembly-line worker, and like the labor in a love relationship or that of the producers of a revolution), and finally their relations of production (as the relation of exchange between self-exploitation of the subject, that is, already constituted labor power, and the obstinacy of the natural force acquired from it over and over again). All of this is an organic whole. In the introduction to “Outlines of the Critique of Political Economy” (Grun- drisse), Marx comprehended the process of production, distribution, and consumption exactly this way: as an organic whole whose parts all react with one another so that the respectively acquired relations of production morph again into raw materials, out of which the process of the production of labor power later asserts itself in stages down the line. This transpires, in fact, in two directions: (1) the destruction of historical labor power, and (2) in the form of a larger abundance of collective labor capacities. As a social abundance, however, this is paid for by the individual impoverishment of productive forces. At this point, it is not a matter of counting these movements in their entirety, but rather of pointing out the fundamental application of all criteria postulated by Marx to the commodity production of labor power.

The separation from both the means of production and the subjective object is the stinger, a sensation of difference that enters like
a motor into self-regulation. For this reason, it is unrest, and not calm, that again and again creates a backwardly projected sense of hope in the form of an image of an originally happy human being. Or it occupies some fleck of futurity as compensation for all that unrest in the fantasy, a sign of historical labor capacity.7

But then the reverse is also conjecturable regarding what determines the need for association: the core of radical needs. History produces a division of labor, competition, parceling, Robinsonades, absenteeism, protests generally directed against labor, the devaluation of consciousness, and the labor of resistance precisely because they have brought about nothing in so many numerous examples throughout highly industrialized societies. A loss of reality thus results, a loss that the radical needs must endure. A daring hypothesis emerges that partially flies in the face of the bulk of historical empiricism: all this points to the core of labor power's self-will. The need for the confederation and association of producers (as a subjective labor capacity and labor power) does not objectify itself because of the obstinacy of these needs.

Two elements are always present in a useful concept: authentic interest (as well as its anticipation) and a horizon (or its anticipation). Order derived not from reduction, but from autonomy. This is the motor driving the concept as it works toward the completeness of relationality. In Brecht's “Conversations in Exile,” Ziffel says to Kalle: “Concepts... are grips with which things can be moved.” That concepts are to a certain extent like hands is the very reason why we should take on the “exertion of the concept” at all. Concepts “work.”

As we have already indicated, the political economy of labor power therefore neither allows a concept to stand for itself nor permits itself to be gauged according to length, width, prehistory, or futurity. So that a production process within the concept arises, a confrontation with the root of its interest is far more necessary: this is the associational need of human producers who require the horizon of a political economy for what constitutes their strength, namely, labor power. It appears as if this associational need is a second concept that could be investigated on its own. However, it is only the first concept by means of which the other operates to any extent. In this respect, only the conflict between both, a working organic whole, constitutes a single useful concept. The one (the political economy of labor power) is the

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material, the other (the confederation or association, the need for society or for the unification of forces) is the motor, the measure, and the order of workmanship (Verarbeitung). But then it reverses itself, for the measure necessary for associational needs lies in the previous history of labor power and this, in turn, is the workmanship necessary for associational needs. This now forms the horizon for the horizon and then reverses itself once again. The one without the other would be without object and interest and would lead nowhere. It is with this nonpragmatic sense in mind that we must understand the Marxian phrase: ideas have always embarrassed themselves when they are not associated with an interest.

When it presents itself purely in the mind or in the form of written letters, the labor process possesses something playful. This is different in reality, where real concepts work effectively with one another or go to battle. The conceptual fragment “I want to survive” among occupants in a basement during an air raid and the conceptual fragment “obliterate the city, do the job right” in the armada of bombers, together with their highly unequal instruments of power, form a single situation, a single experience.

However, this situation is at the same time a publicly legible code that in everyday life or in times of so-called peace discloses a hidden relation of an entire society to humanity. This is a single concept. Concepts, or at least real concepts that refrain from isolating out factors such as the critical mind, should therefore be imaged as deriving from not only a single laboring pair of opposites, but also as an organic diversity of numerous parts working both with and against one another. It makes no sense to apply such working concepts to categories such as right or wrong or truth or meaning. Seen from the perspective of human use value, that would entail incommensurable units of measure. Rather, what is initially involved are proportions, a relation, questions regarding the completeness or incompleteness of the relationality.

The Contradiction between Living and “Dead Labor”

My name is Milchsack Number 4
I guzzle grease, you guzzle beer
I devour coal, you devour bread
You haven’t lived yet, I am still dead.
I do my daily rounds
I was here in the Ruhr before you.
When you're no more, I'll still have long to go
I know you by the way you walk.
—Bertolt Brecht, "Song of the Crane Milchsack IV"

Living labor is reflected in production and disappears therein. Marx calls this solidified form of labor "dead labor." Such dead labor is, for example, machines, trodden paths (relationships), the social relations of production, the product of history, money, the state. Living labor stands in opposition to the entirety of its prehistory: dead labor.

The second contradiction in the political economy of labor power reads as follows: The bulk of dead labor turns out to be superior to living labor.

The relation of living labor to labor already rendered into a product is experienced in life spans. Seen from the perspective of the history of already materialized production, these are extremely short periods of time. Dead labor organizes itself in far longer time frames: the lived time of machines and their heirs, in the period of entire social formations, in the time scale of the course of history, and finally in phylogenetic durations entirely unimaginable in the rhythms and modes of sensuousness typical of individual time spans.

This is initially a contradiction in the mode of experience; the interrelation between living and dead labor cannot be perceived individually on account of its vastly diverse times of production. In addition, the bulk of dead labor in a modern society is superior to living labor.

According to basic principles, superiority rules by both oppression and dead labor, an alliance against living labor. Conversely, no class can feel itself in the undisputed possession of dead labor practically. Rather, trench warfare over both points of contact and portions of dead labor takes place in a similar fashion, as in the permanent war over the limits on working hours, the distribution shares of the social product, or at the interface with the life-context [Lebenszusammenhang].

A strike, for example, is the temporary conscious separation of living labor from the resources of dead labor; it is supposed to win portions of dead labor for the realization of living labor. A general strike presents the functional incapacity of dead labor as entirely sensuous and manifest.
In revolutions, the relation of living labor to dead labor is determined anew from the side of living labor. The productive forces of people in society rebel against the relations of production by revolutionizing them; an alliance of living and dead labor is always contained in these revolting productive forces. Within dead labor, the already-acquired abilities revolt as a mute coercion of progress seized, enunciated, and set into motion against the relations of production by living forces. The goal of this motion is to bring living labor to power.

In praxis, battles over dead labor en masse run their course in more confined scenarios. It is a matter of punctuality. Strikes, revolutions, and general strikes seldom occur, compared with real battles. The theoretician Carl von Clausewitz provides us with a differentiation between possible and real combat. Possible combat has the same real consequences as real combat. This empirical rule refers as well to the battles between classes in the confrontation between dead and living labor. In this confrontation, possible strikes, revolutions, or a general strike are real determinations of social relations at any moment, even when they are not currently taking place.

We hold fast to the view that the contradiction between living and dead labor encompasses the entire basic understanding of a society.

A single machine thrusts the worker into a position, be it corporeal or temporal, best suited for it. The entirety of machinery and acquired social relationships exercise—like history—a force on the producers of living labor, regardless of their actual will. This overpowering process does not reflect itself exhaustively, not even in the experience of producers. In order to deal with this aforementioned political relation, we first need a public sphere, a public sphere in whose production processes the historical movement of dead and living labor allows itself to be converted into experience.

The Contradiction between Individual Labor and the Total Labor of Society

Marx says in Capital that the creation of social wealth, the wealth of an entire society, is tied to the impoverishment of the individual laborer. This means that the worker, who divests himself and disposes of his essential powers, does not really take part in this wealth he produces. What he gets in return is always just the minimum of self-preservation that he needs in order to reproduce his individual living conditions at a respective cultural and material level. This con-
cept of impoverishment is not a physical determination, like hunger, but describes a specific relation between the wealth of relations, relationships, and products objectively available in the whole of society, as well as the individual possibility of using these relations, relationships, and products for the expansion of the individual’s life context.

Yet pauperization reaches over into the realm of production. The rich composition of a society full of productive forces goes hand in hand with the individual impoverishment of labor qualifications. Increasing one-sidedness and the abstraction of individual labor correspond to the general expansive activity of the whole of society.

Both sides of the contradiction also lend themselves to be described as the relation of social production to private appropriation. Individual labor power is locked into its life span; it looks on the prehistory and the present totality of society from this individual, distorted angle. Individual labor is thus determined not individually, but rather socially. Appropriation occurs individually by owners of private property.

**Labor Power as Result and Process**

A process is never completely absorbed in its result. The result is itself an immobilized excerpt of the process. The prevailing process of labor is assembled from two very different dimensions of the divestiture of labor power. One dimension consists of the multitude of more or less coordinated activities that are always available, but that never enter into consciousness during this process. It appears as if they operate only on the side, when in fact, they form very diverse forms of supplemental labor not at all aimed directly or selectively at the product. However, this labor forms the production basis for the second dimension of labor, which is much more intentionally concentrated on producing a certain product and organizing the means. This dimension’s activities, which are equally necessary in prevailing labor processes, can lead, under certain social conditions, to an immense summation of labor resources, with the result that individual stages of this labor activity and the actual expended energy are no longer recognizable at all. Attempting to reconstruct this process retroactively from its result is not possible for several reasons. One reason for this resides in the fact that in its entire diversity, the labor process is not in any way objectified in the product, but rather only in selective portions. Another reason pertains to
fact that considerable portions of these activities expire, as it were, **below the threshold of consciousness** and then become, through their partial objectification in the result, neither more visible nor more conscious. Just as it is correct to say, on the one hand, that the process is never completely absorbed in the result, so, too, it is correct to say, on the other, that the result is not absorbed by the process, which is to say that the result is itself reflected in the process. A fundamental **incongruence** between process and result arises at this stage, one that is grounded in the structure of labor capacity. Marx names an additional reason for this limit of recognizability when he cites the example of the broken fork. He says: whereas all recollection of the labor process is consumed by the **successful** product, only the **broken** fork brings people to contemplate and recollect whether something in the production process itself went awry. The **successfully** functioning product erases the memory of production in such a way that we can also say that the successful reconstruction of a society uses up both memories of suffering and the efforts that are connected with it.

"The Broken Fork." Richmond after the Civil War. The capital of Scarlett O'Hara's Confederate States of America. [Library of Congress]
Within the **multifaceted product** of the labor process, which stands vis-à-vis its result, there lies the inner rationale for Marx’s observation that one hundred workers achieve more per hour than one worker in one hundred hours. Marx calls this phenomenon **animal spirits.** However, it has nothing to do with the enthusiasm that might arise “if animals were gathered together.” The labor process transpires on account of the comprehensive activity of various labor capacities. Out of this variable flow of actions—be they reactive in nature, full of detours, riddled with potential errors, or even containing a minimum of freely and newly invented variations—the intervention of labor leading to the result selects what is suitable under the concrete circumstances. **Possible** actions are initially as real as real ones. With the collaboration of numerous modalities of labor power, free or learned variants or even the interventions of labor unite with one another and bar erroneous actions, so that in between jobs (that is, below the surface of conscious labor), intersubjective alliances of labor capacities occur that are capable of enriching the result or expediting the labor process.

The relation of ends and means reverses itself frequently in the process, but not in the result. Basically, two kinds of production usually transpire: labor powers turn out a **product** and simultaneously manufacture among themselves a sense of understanding, a solidarity through mutual error correction—in other words, teaching processes—that enable pieces of reciprocal vitality to branch off. For the process of value creation, this is merely the underside of life. For real life contained in the labor process, it is the main portion of this vitality.

In a meritocracy, all attention is directed at results. Results appear as the real. Conversely, the processes from which the real emanates appear as extenuated reality, as a private matter, so to speak. But for the political economy of labor power, it is precisely the processes, and not the results, that fulfill the conditions necessary for an analysis of how **labor and real life** are **identical**. They are not to be found as such in the result. It turns out that abstract labor consists of the privation and the partial refund of concrete, lived time. The time during which a female punch operator stands at her machine is virtually struck from her lived time; it is not she—a living person—who stands there before the machine, but rather her abstraction. If she makes extraneous movements that rationalization
experts advise her to avoid, she infringes—as something real—upon the unreality of labor's time frame. An important question for the political economy of labor power lies in the way this punch operator is able to prepare herself for this abstraction by using her own powers. She does not have to exert herself in order to operate the machine; it is strenuous and consumes her powers, but the machine dictates her will. She must exert herself in order to **endure this abstraction**. Job performance therefore lies in the product she produces with herself. Without a doubt, this clearly does not enter into the results of her labor. Whether an unwilling or satisfied female worker produced the result cannot be observed in it, as long as the workplace created by a third party bars her will and restricts her capacities from making mistakes.18

The social scientist Marianne Herzog describes a female pipe welder who sweeps her arms backward in a winglike fashion after welding approximately thirty spots in order to proceed with her functional labor that entails welding yet another thirty pieces of pipe or so. The sweeping movement is real for her person (that is, her lived time). The rest of her movements are unreal. For the process of value creation oriented toward the result, the opposite is the case. This winglike movement, scratching one's head, catching the glance of a fellow female worker, exchanging a few words, a short breakfast break, these things, when taken together, do not constitute life. The results of partial products unreal for employees, which incidentally appear as equally unreal single products, unite into one sellable relationality.19

**The Reversal in the Relation of Flow and the Disruption in the Political Economy of Labor Power**

According to the punch clock, the intervention of labor is a flow, whereas the pauses that a worker makes constitute interruptions. For the lived time of labor power, the exact opposite is the case: labor is the interruption. Only an entirely different form of labor, a nonalienated kind, is "a necessary condition, independent of all forms of society, for the existence of the human race; it is an eternal nature-imposed necessity, without which there can be no material exchanges between man and Nature, and therefore no life."20 The need for such labor, labor that "breathes natural forces in and out,"
so to speak, acts like a stream with respect to alienated free time and alienated labor. The flow of protest, for example, must sedate the extant protest within itself via self-alienation so that someone can endure both work and their free time.

The reversal refers to all basic materials from which labor capacities are produced. These basic materials reside in no way merely in a period of rest or empty movement. Rather, they are presupposed by every objectification of labor itself. They are there because they are uncompensated, separately not noticeable, and inconspicuous in their flow. Memory consists of such a permanent flow; the circulation or set of spirals active in the mnemonic faculty are interrupted when memory enters into consciousness. The conscious circulation then sedates its unconscious counterpart for a certain period of time, during which memory again weakens and ostensibly vanishes. Thereafter, the unconscious flow begins anew. In school, a child's permanent interior flow of oblivious ideas is interrupted when the child attends to something, gives answers, or is called upon by its teacher. In this respect, children's activities in school are full of interruptions.

The flow of the community within the body consists of the rest energy of nerve cells, which is later interrupted by stimulation in order to revert it back into its independent flow. By nature, muscles have the ability to tighten and relax permanently. This is their potential, their flow. A complicated system of inhibitions avoids this storm of movement and facilitates concerted action via interruption. The compiled labor capacities themselves flow as a potential. A surplus is always operative when a single act of labor approaches; from this surplus, the capacity for interruption selects those essentials necessary for the concrete labor process and fortifies itself by immobilizing the remaining flow. This is generally the reason why conscious, purposeful activity evolves out of the trial-and-error method. This procedure would not be possible if the result did not materialize out of a rich flow of unrealized potential.

The Balance Economy of Labor Capacities
A result of the principle of double labor, those labor capacities belonging to streams invisible in labor's result and seldom seen in the labor process must exert labor power on account of the First Contradiction in the political economy of labor power. This
flow of labor power, which is constantly spent so as to endure the
demands of alienated work, objectifies itself in the form of a balance
economy. It expresses itself, for example, in culture’s production of
detours, the activities of fantasy, the labor of protest and interpreta-
tion, mourning [Trauerarbeit], and in the plethora of consolations of
the self and other. As a reservoir, it is a component of practically
every labor process and at the same time a compensatory form of
praxis based on counterproduction. In today’s society, its size cor-
responds roughly to the two largest visible fields in which labor
capacities are applied, namely, in the workplace and in the realm
of socialization. It exhibits the tendency of drawing on more and
more human energy and subsuming it into its praxis because the
endurance of every additional instance of alienation also demands
additional countermaneuvers. However, it may extract labor power
to a more limited degree vis-à-vis the powerful agents of real-
ity presiding over factory work. This is why the balance economy
culls forces from less-guarded life-contexts. If the extraction of
power for balancing results in the further dilution of the life-con-
text, this requires, in turn, an additional effort on the part of
the balance economy in order to withstand this drain. For this
reason, power preferably is drained from general interests and
labor capacities but particularly from political ones, as well. Since
interests and labor capacities expended in this universal direc-
tion constitute self-consciousness, ulterior kinds of balancing are
also required. The balance economy thus drains what would ren-
der it unnecessary. It goes without saying that it is not a balance
economy per se—and thus an arsenal of labor capacities exhib-
itng this balancing character—but rather involves different kinds
of balancing necessary for every class, every mode of production,
children, women, and the elderly, depending on their position
in society.21

Navigational Labor
The balance economy is a special case of a maneuvering of the
self [Selbsteuerung].22 Every expenditure of labor power contains
a portion of this navigational labor. What appears in Marx as the
difference between carpenters, builders, and bees is this portion
of specific labor capacities for maneuvering and navigating. They
must not be sought after in those realms of consciousness so easily
remembered, but rather can be found scattered in routines and particular skills. They catch the eye, above all, in the form a loss of control [Steuerungsverlust] that results from breakdowns in the balance economy. The same result can ensue on account of balance imperialism, that is, from the logic of extracting navigational energies necessary for balancing.

A special case of losing control is to be found in aggressive tendencies in society. They are almost always based on a collapse of the balance economy; in other words, they are ingrained dissatisfactions not processed in public. These aggressions do not gather only in the form of an “imperialism directed outward,” that is to say, in the form of aggression toward other peoples. They also exist as an “imperialism directed inward.” This latter form has the aggressive tendency of importing “as much world as possible” into the intimacy of the family, for example, and thus exporting problems far off into the distance. This retreat into the family is fed by a loss of control and aggression and is in no way a peaceful process.23

**Labor Capacities Aimed at the Unification of Forces**

Let us return now to the countermovement that responds to both a loss of control and the balance economy’s tendency to drain power. We saw that a system of labor capacities that emerges historically, but not as a relationality, always develops labor capacity as something cobbled together. Something cobbled together (that is, an amalgamation) is itself also a flow of labor capacities. Without a specific economy of association, the appearance of cooperation and solidarity that evolves underneath industrial processes is unthinkable. These capacities could not emerge by force. From the viewpoint of non-emancipation, that is, from that of industrial processes, this question boils down to how these powers function; evolved out of the processes of separation and contradictions, they do not exhibit the tendency to unify with one another above and beyond their already existent collectivity. From the viewpoint of emancipation, we must pose the question: In which context would these powers exhibit an autonomous tendency to abandon their inability to amalgamate and come together? The accent lies on the word: autonomous. The perspective of our investigation must therefore direct it toward the autonomous moment of these labor capacities—not
the point where they **ought** to unify, but the point where they **actually** do so.

What is astonishing is the fact that the concentration of empirically ascertainable abilities to unify does not reside in labor or life processes. These predominant and compulsory amalgamations contain just as many dispersal capacities as associative capacities. In fact, they exist opposite [*quer*] from the context of labor and life. Accordingly, a self-evident and spontaneous form of cross-referencing [*Querbeziehung*] rooted in respective disciplines arises between all specialized labor capacities—for example, all linguists, physicists, engineers, but also philatelists, bloggers, artists, and other laborers possessing specific skills—around the world.²⁴

On account of hierarchy and competition, the accommodation of these same qualifications within the workplace is inhibited. Neither cross-referencing within a concrete labor process nor the relationships within a collective political organization possesses the strength to secure specialized disciplinary cross-links for independently producing, by virtue of tacit recognition, an ability to work as soon as said abilities effectively drop out of the immediate forced relations of their production. As with factory labor and the cooperation within the generally constituted nonspecialized public sphere, this also applies to the forms of labor within relationships in the realms of socialization and life.

As impossible reaching an agreement on erotic matters may appear to be within a single relation of relationships, for example, it does nonetheless happen spontaneously in the ostensibly anonymous realm of cross-links, insofar as an exchange of experience therein is feasible. In love stories, solutions fall into place that could not otherwise be found in a nonerotic relationship between two people. The public sphere comports itself not only toward experience, but also more specifically toward intimacy as the kind of realization of experience whereby I test myself—in fact, secretly—as to whether something is in agreement with my own experience. Such intimacy is the opposite pole of the public sphere. It is a fact that a public sphere useful for humans ought to possess this intimacy as a testing mechanism. Cross-referencing intimacy is a way to aim labor capacities toward amalgamation within the labor of relationships that is otherwise neither possessed by the representative (that is, general) public sphere nor controlled by its exclusionary mechanisms.
**Trust as the Basis of Labor Capacities Aimed at Realism**

In an antagonistic reality, a realistic attitude is characterized by the fact that it recognizes the antirealism of feelings—their protest against unbearable relations—as the motor for realism. This poses demands, since the antirealism within the senses (feelings of the self cobbled together from both sensuousness and the labor capacities that are, in turn, cobbled from them) violates the obviously powerful reality principle, namely, **self-confidence**. Self-confidence can subsist only on collective confirmation. The central point of realism—and the labor capacities operating within it—is the production of epistemological procedures based on solidarity. This is not something individually producible.²⁵

No human is objective by nature. The antirealistic labor of motives is autonomous, as are both the labor that changes matter and unrest. Construction is necessary if an objective attitude is to arise from this. One of the realistic attitude’s most important constructive activities consists of accommodating within itself the foreign and the adversarial and transforming them into something of its own. If such constructive labor fails, the foreign and the adversarial must be banished and fended off; this **appears** as objectivity, but is actually the highest form of **impertinence**. In contrast, it would be impossible either to exclude or to appropriate by recognition the foreign and the adversarial, since this would suspend the autonomous activity of living labor. Part of such a misdirected attempt is contained in the exclusionary labor of defensive barriers. That this does not exclude the return of the repressed and the disruption of the order based upon repression shows that the autonomous activity of living labor cannot be stopped. A person can act as if he were dead, but he does not die because of it.

The trust necessary for the labor involved in constructing the realistic attitude, the attitude from which the recognition of the other produces itself, has adversaries in the factions that constitute the inner community: (1) natural mistrust, a fear of strangers; (2) ambivalence, the unpredictability typical of strangers and what is not mine, a lack of **credibility**; (3) the lack of trust that others will endure my contradictions and dissonances: concealment.

Recognizing a stranger presupposes that I am allowed to maintain my contradictions, my ownness [Eigenes]. Seen from the other, more positive flip side, this pertains to: (i) a certain amount of
basic trust, a subsidy from an earlier developmental period; I must have had a bit of good fortune to treat reality so fairly; this is the principally unfair and disproportionate thing about the problem of realism; (2) self-confidence; (3) trust toward others so that they can endure me (my dissonances when I introduce something real of myself) and not continually exact revenge on me. In the same way that self-confidence always returns to the sparks of basic trust, so, too, must I consider myself to be trustworthy if I am to assume that others will tolerate me. Mistrust leaves its mark when I doubt myself. I trace the image of the other’s abilities, an image in which I recognize my own contradictions from within myself.

Objectivity is seen best when understood as the scarring of experience. It fluctuates between the good will to submit to the friction of objects (their pressure) and the feeling of omnipotence (a specific obstinacy and the exuberance of knowledge). The roots of trust, as well as those of selectivity and those of relationality, develop in a twofold manner from both (1) omnipotence and (2) the point of contact. As long as the cognitive faculty remains a potential, it persists in this double form; in all objectifications, an injury arises due to the dual nature of the root. Later it becomes a scar. Herein, the realistic attitude is always at the same time both dead and living labor.

The Differentiation of Strong and Weak Social Forces and of Hermetic and Associative Forces

If we render concrete the political economy of labor capacity from an emancipatory perspective, praxis reveals a distinct differentiation: the way repulsion and attraction operate in spheres of socialization, in particular within the family, clearly differentiates them—by virtue of the degree of their emotional intensity—from those motives that enter into either public affairs or the basic materials in industrial labor processes. In fact, the latter determine social relations in fundamental ways, but in individual humans, they are weak motives. The strongest of fantasies do not revolve around work and efficiency. Instead, strong ideas and motives concentrate on reaction formations that trigger dissociation. Jealousy, ego strength in the form of character armor, the sense of having, unflinching love, stinginess, self-aggression (flight from reality, flight into death), and panic—all
of these formations bind and divest the strongest of forces. They act hermetically, but the capacities laboring therein are not capable of forming associations. When they do accumulate, they are often more likely to explode, rather to bind themselves to a related accumulation of forces. Twenty-two Medeas, forty-six Othellos, five Shylocks, multiple Michael Kohlhauses, twelve Hamlets, four Beethovens, and fourteen Lady Macbeths can gather together a tremendous concentration of forces, but they do not form a society.\textsuperscript{18}

Without the dramatic moment—that is, the one-sided concentration of forces, which is also the principle of the bourgeois mourning play [\textit{Trauerspiel}]}—the hermetic structure of labor capacities proves itself to be the essence of those methods of production that have the particular [\textit{das Besondere}] as their object. What makes me particular—for example, my dignity, my acre of land, my wife, my animals—is what I would not sell for any price; it is what constitutes my steadfast customs and the transmission of generations. These particulars are what stand opposite to exchange, as well as to the unification of forces (association). As a category of primitive property, the particular is finally something powerful and universal [\textit{Allgemeines}]; it also produces a community that emerges out of multiple particularities, my own community, which prevents me from really forming a collective community with others.

It is imaginable that interest in universals such as money and logic can be aroused in an agrarian society untouched by the process of capital. This interest can be developed in an individual born into a consanguineous or tribal society only in the form of a weak force. What I would never sell for any price will keep stronger force fields inside me occupied; no attendant weak notion could ever provide me with an abstract universal capable of uniting the world. A complex process transpires under the influence of capital and its many abilities that is responsible, on the one hand, for unifying strong foreign factors within its circulation and, on the other, for transforming a weak need—such as characterizing and exchanging something from the particulars I can do without as something universal—into a strong characteristic. This is possible only because the reaction to the suggestions of capitalism weakly present in each individual [\textit{Einzelnern}] behaves associatively toward the same weak force in other humans. (Similarly, capital makes suggestions only formally, following a violent separation from the primitive means
of production and the violent implementation of the commodity as the category of reality.)

When viewed externally, the cumulative effect of this assumption—namely, that there exist universal signs such as money and logic—leads to neither explosions nor dissociations. As soon as it becomes collective experience, this assumption lays the groundwork necessary for capital’s suggestions. If one day individual weak forces are generalized—that is, if, through a common exchange of experience, a collective general inventory of conduct arises—money and, to a limited extent, logic prove themselves to be dominating powers that retroactively allow weak forces in individual humans to appear as strong motives. In reality, weak forces do not become strong, like individual characteristics, but rather associate themselves with the whole of society. Instead of speaking of a society, one could speak of each and every association—for example, that of money, that of general welfare, that of collective defense of the community as fatherland, that of civility and helpfulness (in other words all weak forces in the individual)—as belonging to a society, a concrete association of characteristics.

When collectively translated as social characteristics, strong characteristics, like weak ones, can act immediately as inductive forces; when compliant or constituting a countermovement, they act as a motive for displacement [Übersprungsmotiv], substitution [Ersatzhandlung], or transference [Übertragung], and so on. For example, a relationship to the father can encompass attraction and repulsion. Due to the strength of the area of contact and crystallization—in other words, because of the injuries caused by paternal authority and the attraction to this authority—both can become strong forces. They induce a chain of imitations and avoidances, each of which enters into either the ego’s strength or its armor plating. They can refer to the state or its leader in the form of a transference or a misunderstanding. Because of the irrepresible libidinal loss in transference, these transferred forces are thus weaker vis-à-vis the concrete father, but through the rejection of the father again are freed from inhibitions and therefore appear strong.

The high degrees of intensity of motives that yield strong labor capacities are rooted in what is relevant to me. The danger of loss affects me; I defend these forces, and they belong to my primitive property. Their entry into cooperation—their collectivization—
presupposes trust that as a rule is not produced anywhere. It is a function of their strength that they tend more often to explode during their assembly than to integrate with one another. The same does not hold true for the weak forces that unite as labor capacities, whose defense and demarcation do not appear so necessary to me. In this sense, even terror can produce only weak characteristics.

In physics, we differentiate four relations of forces: Coulomb forces, strong and weak interactions, and gravity. Electrical attraction and repulsion—that is, Coulomb forces—differentiate themselves in their strength at the order of magnitude of $10^3$ of gravity. The negative load of electrons and the positive load of the nucleus exclusively structure the relationships inside the atom; we are omitting here some additional factors. At this level, gravity is so weak that no physicist takes it into account. The strong Coulomb forces do not coalesce above a certain mass; an association above and beyond this mass makes the aggregate explode. The weak effects of gravity act completely differently in an individual atom. Bound together into entire suns—our sun contains $10^{56}$ atoms—this association of forces determines the paths of planets.

The Fulcra of Labor Capacities
Labor is the category of social transformation. This becomes comprehensible via its opposite pole: naturally occurring (in the social sense of the word) indeterminate transformations. Voltaire protested against the earthquake in Lisbon. The earthquake brought about a transformation, but it was not labor.

Another example: a city was built. An industrial zone arises. This particular landscape is now transformed in a specific way: the numerous inanimate objects, the construction materials, and the relationships moved and transformed by humans. A social relation emerges in which human interests and needs are built into inanimate objects: this is labor.

One dimension of this transformation is measured as capital value; everything that remains untransformed is not measured. The unit of measurement called the erg used in physics measures something of this transformation. It is not identical with value in the capitalistic sense; nevertheless, what is measured is only a result (force times distance). Significant portions of social transformation are left out.
A More Specific Designation of the Category of Labor

Crops of grain sown in the fields grow. This process is not labor. It is a necessary constituent in the relationality of production processes called “cultivation.” The conceptual difference between growth and productive intervention by humans is inconsequential for the production process. Regarding the question as to what in a production process must be paid for as labor power and what unpaid labor accomplishes—that is, what is subject to the subjective will and what remains unaffected by it—this differentiation is, conversely, essential. The acuteness of the analytical interest applied to this differentiation results first from an interest in exploitation and second from an interest in comporting oneself realistically toward the production process—that is, determining what a laborer is actually capable of doing. Analytic answers will result in varied demarcations, depending on which of the many interests I follow.

The summation of instrumental egoisms that generate the historical product expresses itself negatively. An individual interest in exploitation is vehemently interested in a greater allowance of unpaid labor; “natural labor” therefore refers only to that labor whose interventions are absolutely necessary. The lifelong labor of the beating heart is remunerated just as little as the double labor of labor power that must be expended in order just to get by. In contrast, utilization interests are especially interested in how the leftover remainder of instrumental labor still functions after its subtraction from a human being’s essence.

The summation of all exploitation interests proceeds differently. This is culture’s view of labor. It has no interest whatsoever in bringing up the contradiction between paid and unpaid labor, and as we will see later, it completely masks the contexts of labor and life as processes; it is unconcerned with differentiations.

Yet the interest of labor power is again itself different. The question as to what still counts as labor and where so-called private-ness begins is a battlefield of class disputes. The unification of all labor powers is not capable of developing an independent concept for the category of labor vis-à-vis bourgeois culture because precisely here, agreement cannot be achieved; no public discussion takes place.

We have no reason to search for a firm border between labor and its opposite pole, as if any such boundary could assume the form of a
fence in the first place. Up to this point—and in general—it is labor: above all, nature, growth, a “sheer activity.” Instead, we attempt to determine its force field from the fulcrum of the individual, historically developed labor capacities. These laws of motion, poles, or fulcrum lie at the center of characteristics, in their motives. They act rather indifferently toward the exact determination of borders.

The Antagonistic Reality of Labor
From every class-specific interest that necessarily contradicts another interest there arises yet another question about the concept of labor. The interest in differentiating translates into answers. The results are heterogeneous demarcations. Seen from the interest of vitality, broad sections of abstract labor are unreal; conversely, for utilization interests, they are a particularly hardened form of reality. The instrumental concept of labor, as it correlates with the logic of capital, contradicts the emancipatory concept aimed at the general development of labor characteristics. But the one differentiation is not incorrect if the other one is correct; they coexist next to one another, signifying different perspectives, much like the way contradictions in labor processes are at odds with one another.

As indifferent as a general dividing line may be, each social observer in motion and in contradiction with every other observer is still interested in the fulcra and nodes where conflicts provoke specific experiences and labor capacities. Particularly important is the heterogeneity of aspects when their differences bind with further differentiations. Labor capacities differentiate themselves externally depending on whether they are investigated functionally, historically, or analytically according to the contradictory composition of their basic characteristics. The basic elements that are concealed in empirical labor by synthesis all possess obstinacy individually. IN AN ANTAGONISTIC REALITY, REALITY CHARACTERISTICS FLUCTUATE BETWEEN UNREAL, ANTIREAL, AND REAL.

Seen from the standpoint of the subtraction of contradictions (that is, from an unrealistic perspective), this pertains to simultaneous characteristics or processes. From the realistic standpoint of real interests, this clarity does not exist. If the fact is recognized that human producers conduct themselves like spectators, but not as adjudicators with respect to the historical products they produce, the total capacity is the historical synthesis of empirical labor
power, that is, something **real**. IN THIS DETERMINATION, THE ANTI-REALISM OF PROTEST IS JUST AS MUCH CAST OFF AS THE CATEGORY OF EMANCIPATION. Following a reality principle excised of its antirealistic traits, this is something unreal, something utopian.

The party of emancipation interests—scattered, yet effective as they are in material relations—represents the exact opposite standpoint: a social relation whose constitutive feature consists of the fact that producers are ruled by their own products; this is an **unrealistic** relation.

In a context of crises [*Krisenzusammenhang*] — the kind that leads to modern war — all individual elements are labor processes that, in their isolation, can be seen as being functional. The collective process that is assembled out of these elements is **unreal**. The individual elements consist of concrete stages in the labor process. However, the direction of movement of the entire relationality [*Gesamtzusammenhang*] is **lacking** the most important determination of reality: concreteness. Conversely, individual processes of abstract labor that confine themselves to partial delivery lack specific concreteness. They prove themselves to be derealized. Only after the fact does the abstract [*ungegenständlich*] partial product become a commodity, that is, an object [*Gegenstand*]. In the total relationality, a high level of industrial production is generated, something **real**.\(^6\) Seen from the life-context of those affected, the derealized basic situation, however, was real life. At the same time, the antirealisms based in the emotions of those same affected persons say: **It cannot have been real life.**

The polymorphy of the reality concept contains order, and not confusion. It is confusing, though, to apply a general concept to something heterogeneous.

Our main investigatory interest focuses on the category of labor — among so many others — that investigates the ability of **labor capacities** to **control the historical product, and not to be ruled by it**. One might initially think that for such an emancipatory intention, the material aggregation of capacities and forces [*Kräfte*] must be much larger than is the case for labor capacities established in alienation. In fact, the materiality of the object (of historical
production) and the materiality of labor capacities compete with one another. But this comparison does not pertain just to quantities. In certain circumstances, the materiality of labor capacities that ensconce themselves in the existing conditions is even quantitatively higher than the labor capacities necessary for a breach. This is because high volumes of labor power must be expended in order to endure those conditions. The material difference—and therewith the central point of the comparison—lies in the different shape and in the quality of alliances that labor capacities enter into among themselves. This depends not on any quantity, but rather on a phenomenal degree of cooperation.

We seek to expand the concept of what constitutes labor, just as we previously did with the concept of production in Public Sphere and Experience. On the other hand, we seek to center it by starting from the stinger and the fulcrum of contradictions active within it. We must do this for all individual labor capacities as they emerge historically from different histories.
COMMENTARY 1: THE PRINCIPLE OF SKIN-TO-SKIN CLOSENESS

In *The Principle of Hope*, Bloch turns vehemently against a series of Freud’s supposed misinterpretations. Because of his aversion to the theory that the libido is the most reliable basic drive, Bloch introduces the idea of self-preservation and insists in lieu of the sex drive, as he calls it, on the historical transformation of hunger.31

By reducing everything to an unambiguous materialistic point — it is something that can be grasped — Bloch is misled into making a violent proposition: that hunger is central. What repulses him in Freud’s manifold interpretations (he is even stronger in his engagement with C. G. Jung) is that the origins of libidinal binding — for Freud, they are chained to the development of linguistic expression, and for C. G. Jung, they dissolve into imaginary historical images — do not appear graspable enough in order to bind the intensified sublimation that the labor of hope presents. It is the tendency to grasp and cling that motivates Bloch to take corporeal privation, and not any unnecessary eroticism (from the Protestant standpoint), as the foundation for the edifice of his thought.

Surface and Depth

Bloch knows that the ego is an entity that could initially be empty. According to Freud, the ego regulates the relationships between inner representations and the outside. It mediates this regulation through the pleasure principle and the reality principle. In this regard, it deals with forces foreign to it and does not itself add anything new. This assumption also eliminates Bloch’s desired facilitation principle, which ideally arrives at the new from the id. Bloch: “there is nothing new in the Freudian unconscious.”32 Freud is so earnest about grasping things that all hope vanishes on account of his grip. Bloch grows his materialistic protest from this.

Clinging to the skin of another creature — the skin’s senses — is located at an idiosyncratic border between materialism and idealism, between inside and outside, between safety and danger, between conscious and unconscious, between perceiving something and belonging to it. As something that goes back to radical roots, this surface principle resists both the strong sublimating and weak desublimating grips of thought. It resists thought’s desublimating grip especially at the juncture where it should consolidate a sublimation that forcibly transcends the reality principle (Bloch). This
surface principle likewise resists the sublimating grip responsible for representing the image of the living and hiding away the invisible figure of God in one of the primary drives (Freud). At its core, the surface principle does not arbitrarily root self-regulation down deep or pin it up high. Rather, it affixes it to what presupposes the first thing in any environment: the skin.33

The Nature of Love

In his essay "The Nature of Love," Harry F. Harlow deals with the "question of the primary drives." 34 According to the prevailing doctrine, he says, the basic motives are, above all, hunger, thirst, loneliness, pain, and sex. The relations between mother and child are interpreted as gratifying the primary drives, and the mother-child relationship materializes through secondary strengthening mechanisms. What is correct about these observations is the fact that no other binding influences the subsequent fate of the drives and their generalization as intensively as the mother-child relationship. It is nevertheless striking that all secondary strengtheners that are bound to the gratification of the aforementioned drives or needs disappeared in experiments after a certain period of time. In contradistinction to this, the human contributions invested in the mother-child relation never completely disappeared; instead, they exhibited much more of a tendency toward broad generalization. 35
Harlow proceeded experimentally. In the process, his experiments encountered difficulties insofar as they ran up against the inadequate development of motor skills in newborn humans. Initially, the human child does not have an adequate means of expression. This, Harlow says, is different with newborn macaque monkeys. Immediately after birth, their motor skills are more mature and develop faster. In comparison, their basic responses related to love ("affection, including nursing, contact, clinging, and even visual and auditory exploration") do not exhibit any fundamental differences from those of human children. For this reason, Harlow initially studied monkey children in a three-year experiment in which he offered two ersatz mothers—a cloth mother and a wire mother—to two groups of equally strong babies. The experiment was carried out in such a way that milk was administered first by the wire mother and then by the cloth mother. In every case, the babies concentrated exclusively on the skin-covered mother, even when the cloth mother could no longer still the baby's hunger.

![Graph showing per cent responses over mean day of age for cloth and wire mothers.]

Flight to the skin-covered mother.

A bear playing a drum and moving (a typical fear stimulant).
The researcher generalized his observations thus: as long as the surface of the child's skin remains unsatisfied, neither hunger nor despair could draw it to a wire mother, or to a wire woman, for that matter.

"The socioeconomic demands of the present and the threatened socioeconomic demands of the future have led the American woman to displace, or threaten to displace, the American man in science and industry. If this process continues, the problem of proper child-rearing practices faces us with startling clarity. It is cheering in view of this trend to realize that the American male is physically endowed with all the really essential equipment to compete with the American female on equal terms in one essential activity: the rearing of infants. We now know that women in the working classes are not needed in the home because of their primary mammalian capabilities; and it is possible that in the foreseeable future neonatal nursing will not be regarded as a necessity, but as a luxury—to use Vehlén's term—a form of conspicuous consumption limited perhaps to the upper classes. But whatever course history may take, it is comforting to know that we are now in contact with the nature of love."

"Response to Cloth," one day old.
Absence of the skin-covered mother.

Flight from danger to the skin mother.
The rigorous experimental researcher, who presumed that the foundations of protection, security, and contact that are communicated through the surface of the skin build the core of needs, unexpectedly quotes—in the middle of his behavioral reports—verse that the translator failed to render into German.

**The Snake**
To baby vipers, scaly skin
Engenders love 'twixt kith and kin.
Each animal by God is blessed
With kind of skin it loves the best.

**The Hippopotamus**
This is the skin some babies feel
Replete with hippo love appeal.
Each contact, cuddle, push, and shove
Elicits tons of baby love.

**The Crocodile**
Here is the skin they love to touch.
It isn’t soft and there isn’t much,
But its contact comfort will beguile
Love from the infant crocodile.

**The Rhinoceros**
The rhino’s skin is thick and tough,
And yet this skin is soft enough
That baby rhinos always sense,
A love enormous and intense.

**The Elephant**
Though mother may be short on arms,
Her skin is full of warmth and charms.
And mother’s touch on baby’s skin
Endears the heart that beats within.
"Now let us, by a flight of imagination, suppose that Rome is not a human habitation, but a psychical entity with a similarly long and copious past—an entity, that is to say, in which nothing that has once come into existence will have passed away and all the earlier phases of development continue to exist alongside the latest one. This would mean that in Rome the palaces of the Caesars and the Septizonium of Septimius Severus would still be rising to their old height on the Palatine and that the castle of S. Angelo would still be carrying on its battlements the beautiful statues which graced it until the siege by the Goths, and so on. But more than this. In the place occupied by the Palazzo Caffarelli would once more stand—without the Palazzo having to be removed—the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus; and this not only in its latest shape, as the Romans of the Empire saw it, but also in its earliest one, when it still showed Etruscan forms and was ornamented with terracotta antefixes. Where the Coliseum now stands, we could at the same time admire Nero’s vanished Golden House. On the Piazza of the Pantheon we should find not
only the Pantheon of today, as it was bequeathed to us by Hadrian, but, on the same site, the original edifice erected by Agrippa: indeed, the same piece of ground would be supporting the church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva and the ancient temple over which it was built. And the observer would perhaps only have to change the direction of his glance or his position in order to call up the one view or the other. . . . Our attempt seems to be an idle game. It has only one justification. **It shows us how far we are from mastering the characteristics of mental life by representing them in pictorial terms.**

Self-regulation in the mental apparatus and the brain is another indication that their prehistory remains permanently present in their working capacities; in other words, it shows that self-regulation is a matter of living labor. At every moment, self-regulation constitutes a historical essence and, as such, its relationality; it would be a mistake to regard the utility of this arsenal for instrumental processes as belonging to its own life [Eigenleben].

Mental events have their history in the present. As we will see, nothing physiological transforms into psychology, nothing individual into society or history. A transformation does not exist; there are different encryptions and different methods of observation, but there are not different objects. The sublation of historical time—the contemporaneity of history—is related to all events of evolution, history, the genesis of labor capacities and the future. **When seen solely from this perspective, self-regulation is the real relation.** We do not see it, because this perspective is obscured by the arbitrary details of historical order. However, its own life has consciousness—the internal history of living labor and human property—in this real relation; in other words, it is rooted in something different from what masquerades itself as reality.
COMMENTARY 3: ON THE CONCEPT OF THE REAL

In the course of history, a mass of subjective characteristics goes into products and remains dispersed within them. Rotating around the gravitational center of this dead labor are social relations and humans. In order to assemble a human-centered world out of this arrangement, one would have to turn to the actual movement (that is, dispersion) by recognizing and collecting subjective splinters.

For experience, this entails a Copernican turn. The curiosity of the senses is capable of this on its own; their intentions are as of yet unable to do so. The Copernican turn (Galileo, Kepler, Copernicus, Newton) — the Einsteinian turn is propped up upon it — is external and is recognized by us as a foreign method; internally, a Ptolemaic image world dominates. The reason for this lies in a coercive dialectic. In the worldview of antiquity, humans gazed full of emotion at stars that were themselves cold; as a closed way of seeing, this filled their hearts with warmth. The image fulfilled a collective wish. It was daring individuals who shook this worldly edifice that sheltered humans around the earth. The new knowledge did not warm their hearts. If everything moves with a precision either too cold or too hot, there is no way that we can hope to constitute a center. There is no cozy home to be found here. The colder social relations become, the less I desire to look at them with the gaze of cold knowledge. The gaze that mimics both familial and collective closeness and that resides in the root of my self-consciousness (= ego) does not allow itself be exchanged for the promise of effort, distraction, and coldness. Different from the curious senses, motives need the warmth of a nest.

Our earth has the sun as its neighbor. The Milky Way, composed of several hundred billion suns, in which our sun moves at the periphery of one of its spiral arms, has neighboring Milky Ways. For natural relations, this is closeness. Faraway galactic clouds and pulsars act, comparatively speaking, from a distance.

Below the dimensions of humans, elementary particles exhibit similar distances. Accordingly, the mass and speeds of both history and evolution move completely askew. Collective experience and practical labor capacities do not deal with all of these real relations. In fact, doing so is
unrealistic. In order to deal with them, the recognition would suffice that using our senses, we can know nothing of this. This would be certain and result in veneration.

"Labor and language are older than man and society." Elemental characteristics that enter into labor capacities have as their foundation the temporal dimension of evolution. They therefore have their reality simultaneously in this temporal distance and in the closeness of today. If the one is subtracted from the other, either closeness or distance becomes abstract.

The Milky Way is a flat stellar mass arranged in a spiral shape. Here, a view of its center. The Earth moves around the sun. The sun moves at 750,000 kilometers per hour around the center. One orbit takes 250 million years. Planet Earth is roughly four billion years old. (From Alexander Kluge's *Labyrinth der zärtlichen Kraft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2009))
Intercourse with four billion years of evolution, two thousand years of historical time, the cumulative landscapes of industry, and the emotions of the entire body is both objective and definite. Cells know everything under the stars. Either the head has never experienced anything of this sort, or it has forgotten it altogether.

Determinacy, Indeterminacy; Concreteness, Abstraction
We saw that reality—as a mere accumulation of things in antagonistic social relations—can prove to be real or unreal. People things [Menschendinge] are real in a social relation only according to the categories of determinacy and concreteness. They are determinate with respect to the antagonism intrinsic to interests in reality; they are concretely real with respect to immediate interfaces and the completeness of relationality. Labor that yields changes in real relations follows the dialectic of reality relations in a society in terms of its determinacy and concreteness. The delineation of nonlabor can thus not be reliably determined according to anything external, neither by imagined purposes nor through the realm of activity. The concreteness of a determinate transformative production process distinguishes itself much more from indeterminate or abstract activities.

Determinacy and concreteness have labor capacities (1) far below the level of the ego (that is, in their prehistory, in their corporeal community, in their partly unconscious whole movements) and (2) far beyond the ego in the landscape of industry, including the relations of commodities that radiate outward from these landscapes (that is, in their history, in the thinglike and partly unconscious noncommunity). Their movements in this collective laboratory are exhaustive.

Ptolemaic subjectivity acts like a maverick with respect to such movements. Three instances of confinement constitute this realm: the insularity of the body, the enclosure between birth and death (a life span), and the brain, surrounded like a coffin by bones, which arrives at interpretations from corporeal impressions and insights acquired throughout life that normally block out the real movement between social macrostructures and historical microstructures. This is not about individual decisions exchanging this mode of perception for another one more suitable for reality. The distorted
mode of experience is anchored in the center of primitive property, in the massive needs for security that humans must have for themselves.

The internal community is another expression for the laboring physiology of the human being. In this respect, human producers carry the phylogenesis of their species around with them for the duration of their entire lives. All subjective-objective relations designated in this way together form a contemporary social and historically real totality. Their relationships run through individuals and all collective representations of society. It should now become clear that throughout history, humans have attempted to position themselves individually, collectively, or, using the ruling forms of production and intercourse, between these real movements and that these attempts, which incorporate ever-increasing portions of the self into the web of appropriations by expanding fictional concreteness dynamically, act like a barricade with respect to both real relations and its praxis. This barrier conceals concreteness.

Translated by Richard Langston and Cyrus Shahan
A group of egos around 2,600 B.C. [Detail from The Standard of Ur, “Peace,” 2600 B.C. © The Trustees of the British Museum/Art Resource, NY]
“Ego.” [Stone statue of Kurlil, 2500 B.C. © The Trustees of the British Museum/Art Resource, NY]