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True Wealth

Margherita Pascucci

Abstract

The core of my research is poverty in relation to the genesis of capital. I contextualized the reflection on poverty in relation to the gnoseological error of capital, a gnoseological error which is immediately also an ethical and ontological one.

The thesis at which I arrived is that the *productive mechanism of capital contains within itself a gnoseological error which causes the production of poverty instead of “true” wealth: true wealth being the common good for and of all.*

Poverty is the litmus test of this gnoseological, and therefore ontological, ethical, and political error of capital.

Key words: Capital, *Causa Sui*, Common Notion, Differential, Matter, “Plus of Being,” *Potentia*, Poverty, Substance, Time, Virtual, Deleuze, Marx, Spinoza

Introduction

The results of my research are gathered in three books: *Potentia of Poverty*, *Causa Sui*, and *Macchina Capitale*. *Potentia of Poverty* delimited the field: there is a field of capital, which is an inadequate production that implies inadequate knowledge (or rather, the two are contiguous, being the expression of the same movement under two different aspects). Capital’s productive inadequacy lies in the continuous production of misery, and its gnoseological inadequacy lies in the mystification of private appropriation as a principle of subjectivity/subjectification and true wealth. Poverty reveals the error of capital as a litmus test: the production of misery reveals that the productive principle on which capital is based is the exploitation of the other’s labor, a theft. This one-sided appropriation, theft, is a mistaken knowledge because on both sides, whoever owns capital and whoever is exploited by it, capital exchanges for true wealth, and for the production of true wealth, a mechanism which, in order to produce—that is, to reproduce itself—cannot but destroy what it encounters and enslave the elements that compose it. Capital’s “engine” is like a vampire, wrote Karl Marx,¹ the extraction of one’s productive capacity, and its production is, by its nature, annihilating: this extraction is subtractive. It takes away from the workers, in the form of an exploitation rate, those unpaid hours,

which would correspond to the adequate production of themselves, which should correspond to a new concept and praxis of labour.

Focusing on the gnoseological plane, we analyzed the *Heft Spinoza* (1976b), Karl Marx's youthful notes on Baruch Spinoza. We individuated there a parallelism between the mechanism of capital (Marx) and the one of imagination (Spinoza): capital and imagination work with time in the same way, by abstracting. But, whereas the abstraction that capital does is aimed at establishing and keeping an asymmetrical power relation, the abstraction of imagination has a "material" aim, to produce a presence out of an absence. There is, though, a fundamental difference between the two. According to Baruch Spinoza, when we realize that what imagination does is not the knowledge of the trace of which it is the embodiment but the production of a presence, we understand this production as a force of our mind. In Marx's analysis of capital, there is no such element. It starts here, then, the investigation of this "material" element, also in Marx. The starting point of an "ethical" plane in Marx is that commodities can be known as common notions. It is possible to know commodities as the embodiment of a produced equivalence (labour as this motor of production of equivalence, namely, of value, a commonality, the pooling of capacities. The production of equivalence as the pooling of individual capacities and the construction of commonalities that, as such, can be known). Commodities are thus known as value, a social relation. From here, if they allow for a material knowledge of this social relation, they become a "poetical object,"² a political object, and from there they can become adequate production, production of a time of life free from exploitation.

Now, both commodities and common notions are defined "through other"—we need to give back this *causa ab alio* (to be defined through other) its substance of commonality, its *causa sui*. This substance is by its nature a material one and cannot be abstract or extracted. Substance is the very weaving of this common. Thus, a commodity is a political object, an embodiment of a social relation established through labour. To know a commodity as a political object shows that labour is the motor that transforms a *causa ab alio* (I, the worker, need to sell my labour force to further produce my life) into a *causa sui* (in the actual production system: a *causa sui* of capital). The parallelism runs: imagination—common notions—intellectual knowledge. Value—commodity as poetical/political object—production of a time of life free from exploitation. The political *causa sui* must be opposed to the production of misery. The re-composition or composition of a self-determination, an affirmative adequate production, a *causa sui*, that is not appropriated by capital as its *causa sui* but, through labour, being immediately political, is both *principium individuationis* and community element. The research in *Causa Sui* focused on this, tracing the presence of the virtual in the formation of capital and subjectivity. The error of capital in its seminal self-productivity arises from the theoretical "encounter" of the *logos spermatikos* with the *seminal ratio*, of *oikonomia* with the theological reflection (Augustine). In the Middle Ages, we will begin to see this seminal capacity of matter to produce itself being extracted from matter (that is the worker) and appropriated.

Here the gnoseological level develops a further element: given the parallel between Sadi Carnot's ideal machine and capital's mechanism (according to the intuition of Antonino Drago in the 70s), the "material" element of *Potentia of Poverty* is investigated as the fourth phase which is present in Carnot's machine and absent in the cycle of capital in Marx. What is the fourth phase in Sadi Carnot's machine, the energy which goes back to the internal machine, becomes in the reading of capital's mechanism, the element which would go back to the worker as his/her surplus value: we called it the "plus of being."

The analysis is widened in *Macchina Capitale*. There it is shown how, with the establishment of the general equivalence of the concept of money in ancient Greece, the abstraction-synthesis that this entails, by establishing a "metaphysics" of matter, a transcendent use of matter, increases that self-productive force of matter which, with a single movement, is separated from its own creative capacity and thus increasingly possessed in an asymmetrical way.

By the "transcendent use of matter," I mean that its generative force is identified (what will later be called *causa sui*) and extrapolated, made a "quantum" of matter, measurable, made proportional and with this, exchangeable. Through the passage from the *logos spermatikos* to the *seminal ratio*, we have a further moment in which the movement of "transcendentization" of the matter becomes its "transcendentability," that is, the definition/establishment of the conditions for which the possibility of a metaphysical use of matter continues to be produced.

The production and reproduction of this asymmetry comes to us today in the form of a differential. Marx, in the last years of his life, looked for answers in the attempt to elaborate a material concept of the differential. On the same theme of the differential, Gilles Deleuze arrived at a very important conceptualization. According to Guillaume Sibertin-Blanc, the presence of Marx in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari can be traced in the matrix of the presupposition of the power relationship capital establishes (2016). Alfred Sohn-Rethel had already seen in the "presupposition"—which he calls the "*a priori*" of knowledge—the genesis and structure of exploitation (1971).

In *Macchina Capitale* (2022) my aim was to identify that element—the "quantum of common," as Antonio Negri calls it (2014, 36)—which is subtracted (asymmetrical/individualistic/post-Socratic *koinonia*), made abstract (coinage), synthesized (*logos spermatikos-seminal ratio*, theological economy), rendered transcendental, that is, the very condition of its producibility *ad infinitum* (Middle Ages), extracted (cogito vs. *causa sui*), categorized/allegorized (see what the *lens ustoria* of the market is—the first poor laws—and at the same time to make of money the "conceptual persona" as in Shakespeare), enslaved again (colonialism; second poor laws), shattered in a continuous real and phantasmatic crisis (wars, finance capital; third poor laws). This element is what expresses and embodies the differential. The differential—the product of the algorithm or the rhythm of the creating nature/*natura naturans*—is the quantum of common that is appropriated. Can we try to extrapolate it from the dynamic chain in which it is set and trapped and place it in another configuration, in another composition, both theoretical and practical? Can we liberate the differential from

its chains, invent new forms of production, think of and practice an adequate production whose engine would be an adequate labour? The gnoseological plane here would develop this passage: commodities can be known by common notions. The fourth element is the “plus of being”—the coefficient of production of equality is the practical production of the “plus of being.”

I. *Potentia* of Poverty

Drawing on Marx’s reading of Spinoza and my reading of Marx reading Spinoza, potentia of poverty will be related to the concept of the virtual and its fundamental importance for the birth and the constitution of capital. The aim of this section is to investigate the revolutionary role that potentia of poverty can have confronting capital’s exploitation mechanism.

Poverty, if read not as misery but as an expression of capital’s mistake, is *potentia*. The productive mechanism of capital contains within itself a gnoseological, at once also ontological and ethical, mistake, which is the cause of the production of poverty instead of the production of *wahre Reichtum* (true wealth), which is the common good of and for all. Poverty is the litmus test for these multiple errors of capital.

If we conceive poverty as what expresses capital’s inadequate knowledge and inadequate cause of production, poverty itself is the plane for a reacquisition of *potentia*, the striving for persevering in one’s own being, politically and ethically adequate. It is the plane of immanence of an adequate production, an adequate cause of ourselves, an adequate labour.

The figure of the virtual is one of the first luminous signs of both capital’s inadequate knowledge and cause of production and the *potentia* of poverty to revolutionize this mistake.

A) The Figure of the Virtual, the Birth and Constitution of Capital

To read the figure of the virtual in Spinoza and Marx—or rather to consider how the actual/virtual plane is used by Spinoza, and to employ the concept of the virtual as a kind of proof positive for the knowledge of capital in Marx—is the second step of a vaster reading of the commonalities between Marx and Spinoza. The first step highlighted three points: the shared origin in Aristotle of Marx’s concept of value and Spinoza’s common notions (“being conceived through other”); the *Hefte Spinoza* (1841); and the actual/virtual plane in Spinoza and the notion of the virtual in Marx. These commonalities can be clarified by investigating Marx’s interest in the structure of the anticipation of time in thought, evident since the dissertation and the first *Hefte* (1841-1843) and in the Marx of *Capital*, to which considerations of the structure of the imagination and the workings of the intellect in Spinoza give an exemplary key.

Here I will address only the last point: the notion of the virtual. In what follows, the conceptual figure of the virtual is analyzed with reference to its role in both the birth of capital and the formation of subjectivity. It is my contention that the conceptualization of the virtual—the date for which can be set provisionally in the 13th century—is connatural with the first theoretical reflections

on capital, the most significant example of which is the work of Petrus Johannes Olivi (1248-1298), the first Franciscan “economist,” theoretician of capital and of the *usus pauper*. The virtual, since its birth as a concept, has expressed, on the one hand, the knowledge of the relation of cause and effect—or the relation of cause and effect in knowledge—and, on the other, the immaterial aspect of matter which allows for self-production and movement. We have, thus, two planes: a gnoseological plane and a physical plane.

The importance of the conceptualization of the virtual in the 13th century lies in the fact that it, along with the reflection on value, sheds light on the economical perspective into which substance has been cast (for example, the figure of the *seminal ratio*). This “economical” dimension of substance—its being considered divisible, measurable, and quantifiable—has been influential in the history of thought up to Immanuel Kant (*Gradus*) and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel,³ but what interests us here is if that *ratio seminalis* can be seen to resurface in the 17th century in the concept of the “eminency of the cause.”

In the 17th century, Spinoza counterposes a caesura to this conception of substance: the economical dimension of substance (which is measure, a mistake of knowledge) is opposed to its ethical dimension, the production of substance and its capacity to be known. Spinoza breaks through notions of measure, quantity, and money—all inadequate knowledge of substance—to open to true knowledge of it: the *causa sui*, the production of the self, the mechanism of the production of substance. This caesura is expressed by Spinoza in the actual/virtual plane: *virtuale* never appears as a term but it is constituent of its brother concept, the actual, the vault’s key to the entire *Ethics*. The caesura, which Spinoza operates in regard to the apprehension of substance as a divisible entity (revealing its “economical” dimension), is the banishing of the possible/real plane, in order to open to true knowledge of the mechanism of the production of substance: the actual/virtual plane. The actual/virtual plane expresses immanence: substance is not divisible, nor is it a measure, a quantity, or a thing. Substance is an act, and it has to be produced; substance is *production itself*. The caesura marks the elimination of the possible/real plane and affirms the actual/virtual plane as true knowledge of the mechanism of the *causa sui* (production of substance, what I call the “formation of subjectivity”).

Marx is the heir of both these traditions: of the economical substance, capital, with its core mechanism, surplus value (a concept which is heir, in turn, to the *valor superadiunctus* in Petrus Johannes Olivi) and of the true knowledge of this mechanism (in the general intellect, or in today’s immaterial labour).

If in the 13th century substance is cast into the economical, and the figure of the virtual expresses it (in its being the knowledge of the relation of cause and effect and that immaterial aspect of matter which renders it capable of self-production and movement), if in the 17th century the question of knowledge of substance and its relation of cause and effect surfaces again and one of its examples is the eminent cause, whose place is taken by the figure of the virtual (this is the case of Adrian Heereboord, Cartesian scholar whom Spinoza reads and opposes in his early writings), then, in the 19th century, with Marx, we find both these aspects of the virtual: the virtual of capital (virtual capital, *Capital*,

Volume II) and its knowledge (the crisis—in my paradigm: poverty as *potentia*).

B) Potentia of Poverty. A Materialist Knowledge or the Parallelism between Money and Metaphysics

To understand how this mistake originates and is perpetrated, the wider framework of our reading refers to Alfred Sohn-Rethel's intuition on the parallelism, and the contemporaneity in the West of the birth of abstract thought and coinage, tracing, in different periods of time, a path that identifies the moments in the history of thought where a crisis of economic value corresponds to a reflection on poverty as an ontological force of revolutionary crisis in the production system. Sohn-Rethel (1978; 1990) developed the theory, already posited by George Thomson (1978), on the parallelism of the birth of coinage and metaphysics in Ionia in 7th century BCE and therefore of the *close epistemological relationship between money and metaphysics*: to understand one it is necessary to understand the other.

I believe, with Sohn-Rethel, that it is *essential to understand metaphysics and its crises to fully understand the gnoseological and ontological mechanism of capital, of which poverty is the most striking emblem*. Following Sohn-Rethel's intuition, I identify in history those moments when *value enters a crisis* and where, alongside a *reflection on value, on money*, there is a *reflection on poverty, not only as misery but as revolutionary force*. To this must be added a *reflection on the state of metaphysics*, of abstract knowledge, in the identified historical period.

I mention here, for example, just a few temporal junctions where reflections on value, money, and goods, are accompanied by contemporary reflections on poverty as a cognitive force (of that value, of that money, of those goods). Although we are dealing with different historical periods, each with a defined specificity, these reflections that run parallel, if read within the history of ideas, form a texture that I find fertile. Indeed, they respond to recurring and intertwining theoretical questions:

In **Ancient Greece, 7th century BCE coinage and metaphysics**: what constitutes the relationship between coinage and the birth of metaphysics and abstract thought? In the West they were born in the same period, 7th century BCE. For an answer to the question: What is money? In understanding the relationship between the birth of coinage and the birth of abstract thought, we understand the formation of money. Here we have many authors and concepts to investigate—from the first “formulation” of equivalence of the concept of money in Aristotle up to the figure of Parmenides and the One. The thesis of scholars such as Richard Seaford (2004) that the emergence of coinage, the concept of psyche, the One in Parmenides and cosmogony, express the passage, the “synthesis” as Sohn-Rethel would say, between polytheism and monism. In the transition to monism, there is, at the same time, the production of an abstract thought that synthesizes the disorder in logos, or the One; we have a unitary concept for interiority (the psyche), we have the equivalent (Aristotle), all mirrored in an idea of the universe as an intelligible order subject to the uniformity of an impersonal power (cosmogony).

In 13th century Italy and France, the concept of capital: with the first Franciscan economists, we have the first theorizations of capital and, provocatively from the point of view of the history of thought, these are in the same milieu as the debate on the *usus pauper* (use of poverty), that is, the restricted use of poverty. What is capital, the *valor superadiunctus*? This is the locus of the emergence of an economic-theological perspective on substance.

Olivi's theorization on capital (capital as *ratio seminale*) and the *usus pauper*⁴ begins a meaning and use of the concept of *ratio seminale*, which has taken course over the centuries, transforming in various ways but remaining the code and matrix of eminence, as far as metaphysics is concerned. The same conceptual texture of the *ratio seminale* is found, for example, in René Descartes with the eminent cause, then in Adrian Heereboord, Dutch contemporary and scholar of Descartes and Spinoza and theorist of the virtual.⁵

In 16th century England, money as credit and the first poor laws revealed the beginning of government-level poverty management in England. What is poverty? We understand in this period the first state apparatuses of categorization and governance of poverty. Here the very prolific terrain to be investigated is the contemporaneity of the strengthening of money as credit and the issue of the first poor laws in England. This is a period in which “European” governments began to categorize the poor as a social category and to enact laws for their management at the government level. The charity systems that had responded to the problem of poverty throughout the Middle Ages were no longer able to meet the needs of the poor populations and from the end of the 1400s to the mid-16th century a series of laws called poor laws were promulgated, with which the poor were identified and a “subsistence” system was articulated, proving to be prodromal to the extraction of low-wage labour. At the same time, the “immaterial” element of money, constituted by credit, was getting stronger and stronger.⁶

In 17th century Holland, the knowledge of substance and the *causa sui* (or the concept of productivity), that is, the reflection on the knowability of substance, leads to disclosing and understanding it as “productivity.” What is *potentia*? Substance? *Causa sui*? Spinoza opposes a caesura to metaphysics as it has come so far: the economic dimension of substance, its eminence and unknowability (which is measure, an error of knowledge),⁷ is opposed by its ethical dimension, the *production of substance*—or substance as production—and the possibility of knowing it (Negri 1991).

If the thesis is valid according to which the *ratio seminale* (defined as “capital” in the Middle Ages) is of the same gnoseological texture that will constitute the eminent cause in René Descartes, it is to this conceptual paradigm that Spinoza opposes a caesura, opening up to another line of thought, to other ethical-political conceptualizations, which find in the constitution of immanence a true, revolutionary act of rupture. There is a reflection on *substance as production*.

But what is *causa sui* and the concept of political *potentia* in Spinoza? Knowing substance according to measure and quantity (for example, money) is inadequate knowledge of substance (in other words: “a priori”), while its true knowledge is the production of self (the self as multitude). The knowledge of

substance and of the *causa sui* leads to understanding them as “productivity.” Spinoza, therefore, becomes central for us with his concept of *causa sui*, which I oppose to the eminence of the concept of capital.

By the **19th century with Marx, we have both capital and the crisis.** The “conceptual figure of capital,” the productive mode of capital, opens up to its crisis and understands itself as an incessant generator of crisis. Reflections on value, money, and capital take the form of profound knowledge and radically critical reflection of the *processes of valorization of capital*. Marx’s work, his concept of capital, is at the heart of a revolution in the understanding of capital as a “self-productive” mechanism. From the first conceptualizations of capital in the Middle Ages (the self-productivity of money as *valor superadiunctus*) to Marx’s in the 19th century (surplus value) the same theoretical composition remains.

For our parallelism between money and metaphysics, between reflection on capital and production of knowledge, together with the Marx of *Capital* we must read an ontological and ethical Marx (I am referring to a plane of ethics in Marx which can be seen as Spinoza’s trace): being and its conceivability belong together and express each other through each other. History as *dunamis* (power) expresses: history must be known as virtuality—being prospective, prospective virtue—as conceivability (ethics). Surplus value is surplus of being anticipated which is deprived of the power/*potentia* of becoming (political plan) at the moment when this virtuality (virtue of becoming of things, and their knowledge, conceivability) comes to us subtracted and appropriated from capital.

With the **20th century and Walter Benjamin, we start to “know” the commodity.** The “mystery of the commodity when it steps forth into the market” is made a knowable object, the crisis becomes critical: it is possible to know the commodity as a poetical object, that is, it is possible to experience alienation and to know it (Walter Benjamin’s reading and his elaboration in *The Arcades Project* (1982) of Marx’s phantasmagoria and the work of Jean Ignace Isidore Gérard Grandville (1803-1847)).⁸ A similar theoretical conceptualization can be found in Sohn-Rethel’s analysis of money as alienated consciousness and his critique of apriorism (1978; 1990).

For each of these periods, I kept in mind the *reflection on value, poverty, and the metaphysics/production of knowledge*. For the reflection on value declined in its various forms, the analysis went from the first reflections on coinage and money in ancient Greece, to the *valor superadiunctus* of the 13th century, to the fluctuation of value in 16th century England and the strengthening of money as credit, the 17th century Dutch market, the crisis of value in the 19th century, and the mystery of the commodity in the 20th century. For the reflection on *poverty*, the analysis touched the first definitions of poverty, the debate on voluntary poverty in the 13th century, the poor laws in the 16th century up to the end of the 19th century. For the reflection on *metaphysics/production of knowledge*, a theoretical line was proposed and investigated made by different passages: the one from polytheism to monism, and the presence of dualism in ancient Greece; materialism (Democritus-Epicurus-Lucretius); the Christian monotheism and the *rationes seminales* (Augustine); the (transcendent) substance placed in the economy (Olivi and the Franciscan economists); representation and the crisis of

representation in the 16th century; eminence-immanence in the 17th century; a physics of knowledge (Carnot); production and production crisis (Marx); the knowledge of the mystery of the commodity, the knowledge by images, capitalism as religion (Benjamin); the true knowledge of money as alienated consciousness or a priori synthesis of metaphysics (Sohn-Rethel); and of capital as theft of the *causa sui* (my interpretation of Marx and Spinoza).

Clearly, the field is endless, centuries are crossed, and the risk is to make them homogeneous when they are not. The research method that has imposed itself on me is to follow one or more concepts, for instance, “signs of light,” both within a specific historical context and its transformations through the ages. Above all, the aim is to investigate the relationship between these concepts, their contradictions, transformations, or caesuras. One of these “signs of light,” a concept or leitmotif which crosses these periods, and in some moments acts as a litmus test of knowledge, is the concept of the virtual.

Olivi and the Virtual

In the 13th century, *substance was placed in the economy by borrowing it from theology*. The reflection on matter, on substance and its knowability, in its meanings of transcendence or immanence, is transposed into economic categories.⁹ The virtual expresses this meaning of substance in the economic sense (a *seminal ratio*: a seminal virtue). It is the “*knowledge of the cause-effect relationship*” and that *immaterial aspect of the matter* which makes it *capable of self-production and movement* (virtue, *seminal ratio*, is the *principle of production* and *knowledge of the cause-effect relationship for production*, it is the *valor superadiunctus*). We will find this aspect of *seminal ratio* in Olivi as the heart of the concept of capital.¹⁰

Spinoza and the Virtual

In the 17th century, the question of the *knowledge of substance in its cause and effect relationship* is pressing again. Descartes calls the cause of everything (God who creates creatures, for example) an *eminent cause*. Heereboord defines it as *virtual*: virtual are creatures in God, and virtual is their knowledge in God (1659; 1988).¹¹ Spinoza reads Heereboord and opposes his work in his early writings. There is no mention of the virtual in Spinoza, but its concept is the “brother” of the actual; hence we can read: the eminent cause (Descartes), together with the concept of virtual (as in Heereboord, tradition), to which is opposed the actual/virtual (Spinoza, the caesura). It is here that we find the coordinates of actuality/virtuality. But this is another formulation of the virtual, not the virtual of Heereboord. In Heereboord, the virtual is still a companion of the possible, still opposite to the real, and thus an accomplice of the eminency of the cause. Spinoza breaks through this equivalency, as I read him: the mistake of considering substance divisible, the mistake of time and measure, the mistake of money, derive all from substituting the plane of the virtual/actual with the one of possible/real. In between, to mark their difference, there is the necessity of creation—and its freedom. Thus, we can affirm that *potentia* is virtual in that it is *actuosam essentiam* (*actuose essence*).

Let us then try to think of the *causa sui* as the expression of the virtual. The

causa sui is the expression of the involvement of essence in existence. It is the mode of this relation. It is the expression of the relation of mode to mode (existence, being) with substance (essence). Substance implies the relation of production of the modes. It is this relation of production. The efficient cause expresses itself in substance: the presence of the cause in the effect (actuality: God's *actuose* essence) and the presence of the effect in the cause (virtuality: its *potentia* to exist). Substance is at once production (actuality) and knowledge (virtuality).

It is here that Spinoza breaks with—and breaks through—the tradition of substance made economical in order to turn it upside down. To substance made measure, made quantity, made “possible,” he affirms substance as production, production of the self, production of the self through the other; as production and knowledge of this production. And, because it is at once production and knowledge, it is there that it *is*, and it is the *potentia* of being (necessary).

Potentia is virtuality in that it is *actuosa essentia*: a producing and knowing virtue, a “prospective virtue”—as Wim Klever in private correspondence suggested it might be called—which insists on its being by producing and knowing itself.

Marx and the Virtual

With Marx in the 19th century, we find both aspects of the virtual: the *virtual of Capital* (virtual capital, *Capital*, Volume II) and its *knowledge* (the crisis, Marx, *Capital*). Here these hints are only to glimpse a part of the theoretical mapping that I am trying to define. In Marx the virtual takes the lion's share.

II. Capital and *Causa Sui*. Δ and the “Plus of Being”

The labour-poverty relation has, at its core, the virtuality of the *causa sui*. Labour is partly the expression of that life force, the expropriation of which comes to be exposed in poverty. This force is the core of subjectivity, our capacity to produce life.

One of today's main forms of labour, immaterial labour, also has subjectivity at its core: tool of capital on the one hand, production of sense, when it escapes capital, on the other.

For us, it is crucial to see how to articulate the self-productive capacity of the subject in a relation of production to value-production, and how it is different from the one into which capital casts us. How to make labour the motor of the affirmative production of our subjectivity and not of its alienation from itself, the separation from its own life force?

This would be to produce “true wealth.” When the core of subjectivity, the virtuality of the *causa sui*, can constitute, through new relations of production, the intensive of the subject, there the “plus of being” has been produced. And a different path to produce value and for valorization has been affirmed.

A) The Crystal of the Virtual, or the Virtual of Knowledge

The figure of the virtual in *Capital*, Volume II, centres on and expresses here

the relation of the material and the immaterial (the principle of production), which we traced to Olivi and the physical line. In order to analyze this figure of the virtual in *Capital*, Volume II, we follow a trace given by Friedrich Engels in a footnote, and stressed again in his notes from Jean-Baptiste D’Alembert, *Traité de dynamique*, where Engels affirms that Marx takes the concept of latency and of virtual capital from the principle of virtual velocities in D’Alembert (1999). We can, then, pursue a cross-reading of the concept of virtual velocity in Jean-Baptiste D’Alembert and the concept of virtual capital in Marx.

The virtual appears in Volume II of *Capital*,¹² where Marx describes the process of circulation of capital. I mark references to the virtual in the passages with an asterisk [*] and a number:

Part

- I. *The metamorphoses of capital and their circuits*: in chapter one and two the function of *productive capital* [*1]; in chapter three, the commodity capital; mainly chapter five, *time of circulation* [*2]; and chapter six, *costs of circulation* [*3].
- II. *Turnover of capital*: (* indirectly).
- III. *The reproduction and circulation of the aggregate social capital*: chapter 20, simple reproduction; mainly chapter 21, *accumulation and reproduction on an extended scale* [*4].

At [*1] the virtual appears as the hoard form of money-capital: inactive, latent (possibility of the crisis, “caesura” of production). Also, the grasp of anticipation-latency-inoperability-virtuality. We find interconnected there latency—which we read as crystallized anticipation—and virtual potential capital. It is here that Friedrich Engels refers to the virtual velocities of D’Alembert.

At [*2] the virtual appears as a difference between production time and labour-time. Production time exceeds labour-time. Because of the excess of production time over labour-time, it is not produced surplus-value: “Hence there is no expansion of the value of productive capital so long as it stays in that part of its production time which exceeds the labour-time, no matter how inseparable from these pauses the carrying on of the process of self-expansion may be” (2010, 128). Hence the tendency of capital to abbreviate, to annihilate this difference, this excess: “hence the tendency of capitalist production to reduce the excess of the production time over the labour-time as much as possible” (128). But this excess is based on the productive capital latent in production—it is an excess which *Capital* tends to abbreviate but which, at the same time, constitutes the condition of the productive process (again: anticipation-excess-latency). In fact, as Marx points out, “The more the metamorphoses of circulation of a certain capital are only ideal, i.e., the more the time of circulation is equal to zero, or approaches zero, the more does capital function, the more does its productivity and the self-expansion of its value increase” (129).¹³

At [*3] the virtual appears as storage and supply, as a form of the means of production latent in the productive process. At [*4] *flagranti* reappears as potential supplementary monetary capital: we are within the “supplementary constant

capital”—*virtualiter* (the virtual), the virtually supplementary is the uncovered nerve of the excess, of the *superadiunctus*.

So from its form of *inaktiv* latent money capital (“*Schatz*—*Form des latenten (inaktiven) Geldkapitals*”), the first nucleus of virtual potential capital (it is a crystallized anticipation), from its form of hoard, passing through the reduction of the circulation of capital to 0, that is, through the abbreviation of the excess of time of production over time of labour, i.e., through the reduction of the time of production to the time of labour (and passing through the storage mechanism), we arrive at the virtually additional productive capital: the surplus-product.

We are thus at the heart of the mechanism of production. Again, we can perceive the double aspect it has, of self-production and possibility of the crisis (unproductivity for capital—this “possibility of the crisis” can also be read as that formation of subjectivity which we referred to at the beginning). With a single stroke, Marx thus takes us back, resumes the discourse, and closes it:

whereas the surplus-product, directly produced and appropriated by the capitalists A, A', A'' (I), is the real basis of the accumulation of capital, i.e., of extended reproduction, although it does not actually function in this capacity until it reaches the hands of B, B', B'', etc. (I), it is on the contrary absolutely *unproductive* in its chrysalis stage of money—as a hoard and virtual money-capital in process of gradual formation—runs parallel with the process of production in this form, but lies outside of it. It is a dead weight of capitalist production. (2010, 498)

The figure of virtuality ebbs then in the surplus-product (as virtually additional productive capital), goes to constitute the virtually additional money-capital, and signals to us that “dead weight” in capitalist production which is exactly the point from which we would like to start over.

Its *unproductivity* for capital, its being the possibility of the crisis, is the opening from being the highest point of knowledge of the mechanism of self-production to that crisis of production which is the breaking through toward the formation of subjectivity (*causa sui*).

The virtual is then so important to us because, by indicating the mistake of capital, it indicates the possibility of the crisis. The act of cross-reading with D'Alembert can now be helpful because it exemplifies the role which the virtual assumes in Marx. The virtual velocity in D'Alembert is the invisible core of the principle of equilibrium: two forces, two bodies (*puissances*) remain in equilibrium¹⁴ when clashing because of their virtual velocities (the velocities with which they would persevere in their “being” and movement) which pose themselves, in the clash, in inverted relation to these potencies.¹⁵

Let us thus think of the circulation of the equivalence as an apparent or dynamic equilibrium in Marx. The simple circulation occurs as such: C->M->C and M->C->M. So, we have two cycles: C-M-C and M-C-M *comme des puissances*. In D'Alembert the relation is of two potencies in movement which arrive clashing. Circulation, if we continue the parallelism, remains in equilibrium¹⁶ (we start from C and we arrive at C; we start from M and arrive at M) because the

tendency of the relation of the two cycles is virtual, that is, the plane of circulation is the plane of the *quantitative difference that is almost perceptible* (or rendered imperceptible). What is produced in circulation is the *movement itself*, an *element in excess* which expresses this quantitative difference of the two terms (starting and arriving point), and which expresses the latent content (of the distinction between the two): *the basis of anticipated capital which produces plus-value* (that is, of the two combined cycles what interests us here is the passage: M M and M).

It is the figure of the virtual, then, that discloses the structure of the “anticipation of time in thought,” which we hinted at in the beginning as the main interest of Marx, and as one of the features of his work’s “commonality” with Spinoza’s.¹⁷

The production of plus-value, read according to the figure of the virtual (i.e., the production of equilibrium is given by the subtraction of the living force, by the continuous transformation of the living force in dead force for the apparent equilibrium) shows its core mechanism as subtraction, from the force, of its life; subtraction from the force of its capacity of producing its own movement (its *causa sui*). The surplus-value is subtraction of the produced excess; in that, it appropriates the mechanism of self-productivity of the substance itself (*causa sui*) in order to subtract this very mechanism from the knowledge connatural to its very texture (from that capacity of the mind to know it as such, which Spinoza defined as *potentia*).

But the equilibrium, we know, is apparent, dynamic, and the evanescent quantity, the virtual (as “ratio” of surplus value) by expressing the *saltum* of productivity (the *chiasmus* of the material-immaterial), by expressing the difference of the matter (production), *knows itself* and *knows itself as the index of productivity*. It is here that the Spinozian intertwined plane of production-knowledge-being has to be put into play and this time, with Marx, in all those forms (from contemporary immaterial labour to the economy of knowledge; from the material labour of the big industrial districts of poverty to the general intellect; from each and everyone’s mind to the common notions) which allow us to adequately know the infinite and, most importantly, the infinite in circulation.

B) The Political *Causa Sui* (Or: Δ ’ and the Theft of the *Causa Sui*)

Causa sui in Spinoza’s *Ethics* has an ontological and logico-gnoseological function: “in the same sense that God is said to be self-caused he must also be said to be the cause of all things” (1992 I, P25, Sch.). Why is the Spinozian definition of *causa sui* so important to us today?

First, because it is the affirmation of immanence and creation—the production of nature—as immanence (“God is said to be self-caused” in the same sense as “he must also be said to be the cause of all things”). Here we already find the expression of *causa sui* as pure immanence, without any shadow, or any possibility, of eminence, dualism, and separations.

Second, because the time has come to extend its “ontological and logical-gnoseological” function to a third aspect, its political function. The political *causa sui* indicates the way for the liberation of man from any form of slavery

that may exist in his relationship to himself, the field of subjectivity, the field of desire, and of society, the political-economic field, for example, of labour. The “plus of being” is the object of the political *causa sui*: where the implication of the level of essence—what makes us human beings, our desire to be—and of existence—what we are—works, succeeds.

The “plus of being” is the product of implication. And it is “produced” like the intensive and affirms difference. Not in the sense of eminence, but in the sense of internally counteracting the “extensive factor” of entropy, whose excess is dissipated (which in *Capital's* terms, means stored and then appropriated). In the “plus of being” the excess is implicated.

Returning to Spinoza’s concept of *causa sui*: “the implication of essence in existence” is, for us, translated into a political sense, the production of a “plus of being,” that is, of that intensive element which affirms difference and in which the excess of the becoming of matter is implied. This is where “true wealth” is formed.

“That whose nature can be conceived only as existing” (*Ethics* I, Def. 1) indicates for us that plane in which implication must take place and must be full. Where the plane of essence, let’s call it the plane of desire, of what a nature can do, is not implicated and does not extend into existence, the plane of our life, there is violence and oppression wherein we are not free. This can also happen when desire is removed from the plane of existence as the driving force of the *causa sui*, free self-determination. To have a political *causa sui*, we must think to “actively produce ourselves,” to be “ontologically independent.” But how to be “ontologically independent” while at the same time making desire, the plane of *conatus*, of the essence, pass into existence?

C) “Plus of Being” as Deleuze’s Intensity

In Deleuze’s *Difference and Repetition* (1994), we find two concepts that help us trace or imagine a new production of modality. These are the *actual-virtual paradigm* and the *notion of the intensive*. The notion of the intensive helps us to contextualize and understand the strength of *potentia* in terms of production and self-production, that is, the construction of the “plus of being,” which is the first element of the production of the free man.

Every intensity is differential, by itself a difference. Every intensity is $E - E'$, where E itself refers to an $e - e'$, and e to $\varepsilon - \varepsilon'$ etc.: each intensity is already a coupling (in which each element of the couple refers in turn to couples of elements of another order), thereby revealing the properly *qualitative content of quantity*. (Deleuze 1994, 222, my italics)

He adds the notion of disparity which explains the “Unequal in itself” contained in the intensity:

We call this state of infinitely doubled difference which resonates to infinity *disparity*. Disparity—in other words, difference or intensity (difference of intensity) is the sufficient reason of all phenomena, the condition of that which appears. ... The reason of the sensible, the condition of that which appears, is not

space and time but the Unequal in itself, *disparateness* as it is determined and comprised in difference of intensity, in intensity as difference. (222)

I believe that the intensive is the signal that warns us of the difference between the illusion of production as autonomous (production of the possible by capital) and the real production of the new (expression of the virtual of the *causa sui*). The intensive indicates the production of sense, the “labour” that returns to the subject and cannot be taken away from them. It is the expression of that production of the *causa sui* which is irreducibly one with ourselves.

Here we find the solution to that “fourth phase” of the capital cycle which is missing in Marx and which we have investigated following the suggestion of Antonino Drago.¹⁸ The fourth phase is that phase in which the “work-labour,” the energy, the transformation made with production, goes to increase our being, the being of the worker, instead of being stored, or, today, being embedded in “fixed” capital by the production mechanism of capital.

Carnot is quoted by Deleuze in the “Asymmetrical Synthesis of the Sensible” section, and we find the fourth phase that Marx lacks in Deleuze’s notion of the intensive. Deleuze, in splendid pages, takes us inside the constitution of the intensive, of difference, its relationship with extension, depth, the idea, and individuation. He thus outlines a new revolutionary ontology.

We can thus ask ourselves now, how does the construction of the “plus of being” occur?

Deleuze’s affirmation: “the power of intensity (depth) is grounded in the potentiality of the Idea” (244), together with the Spinozian parallelism: “the order and the connection of the ideas is the same as the order and connection of things” (*Ethics* II, P7), “By virtue and *potentia* I mean the same thing” (IV, Def. 8), discloses the comprehension of becoming adequate causes of ourselves: “the force with which each thing strives to persevere in its being is nothing but its actual essence” (III, P7).

The movement of the idea, the idea-movement, is inseparable from actualization, but how does it actualize itself? With the individuation process:

The essential process of intensive quantities is individuation. Intensity is individuating, and intensive quantities are individuating factors. Individuals are signal-sign systems. All individuality is intensive, and therefore serial, stepped and communicating, comprising and affirming in itself the difference in intensities by which it is constituted. ... Individuation presupposes a prior metastable state—in other words, the existence of a “disparateness” such as at least two orders of magnitude or two scales of heterogeneous reality between which potentials are distributed. ... An “objective” problematic field thus appears, determined by the distance between two heterogeneous orders. Individuation emerges like the act of solving such a problem, or—what amounts to the same thing—like *the actualisation of a potential and the establishing of communication between dispartes*. The act of individuation consists not in suppressing the problem, but in integrating the elements of the disparateness into a state of coupling which ensures its internal resonance. The individual thus finds itself attached to a pre-individual half which is not the impersonal within it so much as the reservoir of its singularities. In all these respects, we believe that individuation is essentially

intensive, and that the pre-individual field is a virtual-ideal field, made up of differential relations. ... *Individuation is the act by which intensity determines differential relations to become actualised, along the lines of differentiation and within the qualities and extensities it creates.* ... Individuation does not presuppose any differentiation; it gives rise to it. Qualities and extensities, forms and matters, species and parts are not primary; they are imprisoned in individuals as though in a crystal. Moreover, the entire world may be read, as though in a crystal ball, in the moving depth of individuating differences or differences in intensity. (Deleuze 246-7, my italics)

The moment difference ceases to be thought, it dissolves into non-being: “Creation is always the production of lines and figures of differentiation. It is nevertheless true that intensity is explicated only in being cancelled in this differentiated system that it creates” (Deleuze 255). Creation is linked to intensity inasmuch as to create is to produce “lines of differentiation” and intensity is founded in the idea; the transformation is internal; it is the very implication at the level of the *causa sui*.

This is the principle of transformation and that of the “plus of being,” which we want to establish to oppose it to the entropic mechanism of capital where dispersion and latency are fuel for the process of continuous production of the presupposition.

D) To Construct Our Δ , the Economic Expression of the “Plus of Being”

At the end of his life, Marx was interested in studying the differential in an attempt to “unmask” the operation (“mystical” or metaphysical) of making the infinitesimal disappear in the symbolic operation of the differential. There are two movements that interest us: a) the differential as the negation of the negation (with respect to Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel) and b) the intrinsic nature of differentiation which expresses the potential for change.

The importance of these reflections can be seen if correlated with Drago’s intuition that Marx could have borrowed the cycle of capital from the cycle of the ideal machine of Carnot. However, for Drago (1987), Marx is missing the fourth phase, the one in which the work (or expended energy) returns to the machine.

For me, the fourth phase missing in Marx is the production of profit which returns to the worker as the producer of that “labour,” of that plus in the form of the “plus of being,” not just an increase in wages—plane of money—but at the level of productivity, of the capacity for productivity—level of capital, and its theft of the worker’s *causa sui*—that is, in the form of the “plus of being.” What is the relationship between Marx’s calculus of the differential and the fourth phase of the Carnot cycle? We can postulate this as regards the parallelism between the Carnot cycle and the capital cycle, we can think of the machine, on the other hand, as self-sufficient (capital as autopoietic, or as a “quasi-cause”), and on the other, with the cause of the change, production, as an external and autonomous, independent element. The first step to take here is to change the subject, *to replace the Capital Machine with the productive relationship*.

In fact, if we think of the origin of the differential as an intrinsic movement

of matter (here, of the worker), we understand that the production of surplus (the infinitesimal) cannot be eliminated or extrapolated from the relationship but is intrinsic to the productive relationship itself, that is, to the relationship between worker and capital. Overturning the presupposition, namely the apriorism of production, which establishes and nourishes the mechanism of capital, means freeing the fourth phase as a “productive *causa sui*.” It is to relate the concept of differential that we have seen in Deleuze with the study of the differential in Marx, passing through the Marx-Carnot analogy (what I call “the fourth phase”) and then constructing our Δe , the economic expression of the “plus of being.”

Marx’s missing fourth phase is Spinoza’s *causa sui*, the capacity for self-production that each of us has, and which, in Marxian terms, is taken from us by capital. A political *causa sui*. In terms of this context, the energy that must return to the worker can be defined as their ability to reproduce themselves in life, as her *potentia*, in Spinoza’s terms, as his ability, namely, to produce a “plus of being.” As the intensive that we saw in Deleuze, which is implication and what the difference consists of. I understand the fourth phase in Marx as the production of a “plus of being” which, through work/labour, returns to the worker as an increase in their being; as an increase in the implication of the essence in existence, as an increase in “that whose nature can only be conceived as existing” (*Ethics* I, Def. 1). It is about starting to outline a concept of adequate labour.

Constructing the fourth phase in Marx as a concept of *causa sui* (I dare say in ethical-political terms, the self-production of matter which, in our case, is the force to produce ourselves in life), can correspond to Carnot’s intuition, if we read it together with Deleuze, as the germ of production of the differential. For Deleuze, the increase of entropy is an illusion—which is the same sense in which I read capital, whose “increase” is the “grasp” on/of the work of others, its theft. We can speak, more productively, of differential as self-production of matter.

In the pages we saw of *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze explains the concept of the intensive as a difference of intensity, and quotes Carnot and M.L. Selme, for whom the increase of entropy is an illusion, i.e., we have the “paradox of entropy”: entropy is an “extensive factor” that exists only if it is implicated, it has the “function of *making possible* the general movement by which that which is implicated explicates itself or is extended” (229).¹⁹

A principle of causality is established for which “intensity defines an objective sense for a series of irreversible states which pass, like an ‘arrow of time,’ from more to less differentiated, from a productive to a reduced difference, and ultimately to a cancelled difference” (Deleuze 223). The transcendental illusion of the “increase” of entropy means that there is not a true increase but a transformation, and that this transformation is internal: the function of entropy is the implication itself. This, we said, is similar to the process of capital which is the continuous (re)production of the presupposition—an implication dictated from the outside, in a violent way. It is the same transcendental illusion of the production mechanism of capital

because capital merely reproduces the presupposition and increases that part of the production process which makes it so, but it is neither an increase in the worker, nor in production itself.

The construction of a fourth phase in Marx could respond precisely to this: to dissolve the transcendental illusion of the mechanism of the Capital Machine, to pursue it on its own level of immanence (the anti-production which produces the lack at the level of desire, which makes of desire an inner phantasm; which produces the infinite debt at the level of labour), and to give the differential, an element which capital uses and which it entangles in the “illusion of increase,” a materialistic procedure, a materialistic base.

III. Living Dead Labour and the Coefficient of Production of Inequality²⁰

I have given the main points of a work that is expressed in a trilogy: *Potentia of Poverty: Marx Reads Spinoza*; *Causa Sui: Essay on Capital and the Virtual* and *Capital Machine; Genesis and Structure of Exploitation*. We saw that capital works with time by anticipating it for an abstract aim, that is, the theft of the working capacity of the worker, whereas imagination anticipates time but with a “material” aim, because it is the trace of an encounter and its aim is to make present what is not.

If we understand that imagination does not tell us anything about what it is the trace of, but that it is production, it produces an absence into presence, then we understand this capacity as a force, a force of the mind. To know the commodity form as common notion means to start to understand that the commodity form can be known—in the case of the commodity form it is the knowledge of the production of a common plane made by equivalences.

By recognizing the virtual of capital and the virtual of the *causa sui* and the role of each in labour relations, we can give back to *causa sui* its *potentia*, its virtuality. In the first part, we can know the mystery of the commodity form as common notion, that is, as production of a presence (equality) instead of an absence (unaccounted difference). We now know the *knowledge of the dismeasure*. The example given traces the virtual in Marx’s *Capital*.

The third part: to give account of the dismeasure by understanding that this is the quantum of the uncommon that capital produces in its way of production. *Dismasure is the result of the presupposition*, the power relation that capital establishes with the worker. Paradoxically we can measure it, and we want to see with the *production coefficient of inequality*—like the carbon footprint of labour—how much capital produces misery, and to change this into the *potentia* of the dismeasure, into the elaboration of an adequate production whose engine would be an adequate labour, with adequate working relations (*the production coefficient of equality*).

In the third part, the element I chose is the *differential*, important for Marx and Deleuze and Félix Guattari, and what I call, the *production coefficient of inequality* and the *production coefficient of equality*.

A) The Production of Differentials (from Marx to Deleuze and Guattari)

The Capital Machine has a form and a mechanism. It stole substance. By substance I mean matter in becoming, nature, life. When I say that the Capital Machine has stolen substance, I mean that the first “leap” of which it is constituted and on which it feeds is the theft of that production of differentials (initially from Augustine and his “translation” of Plotinus’ *logos spermatikos*, to the medievals, called *ratio seminale*, and which then, after centuries of transformations but with the same virtual force, will become, in my opinion, financial capital), which does not intrinsically belong to the nature of capital as a productive mechanism but to the nature of a productive relationship which, in the case of capital, is based, and reproduced, on inequality.

By differential I mean here the notion of the “differential” that we find in Deleuze in the expression of intensity: the ability of being to produce itself as difference, the primary texture of being.

The production of differentials at the basis of the social relationship of labour is forfeited as if it were a property of the capital which, whoever owns the means of production, that is, whoever embodies capital, can dispose of at will. The productive relationship is based on a synthesis in which the dissymmetry between owner and worker is given as a presupposition of the productive relationship itself.

Capital, thus, by appropriating this capacity inherent in the production relationship—the capacity to produce surplus—annexes the capacity to produce a differential. But does this ability belong to its nature, or is it given in the productive relationship itself of which capital becomes master/owner, in the productive relationship that capital manages with its power, i.e., by establishing the unequal terms of the relationship?

We know that capital is the production and maintenance of an unequal and asymmetrical relationship. That is, regardless of its cause and nature, the mechanism it perpetuates is the production and maintenance of inequality and asymmetry.

By whom and by what is it sanctioned, permitted, and even created—this primitive element by which capital can multiply its value (in addition to inducing surplus labour, and its theft) in a disconnected, abstract way, from the production activity and from the subject of production?

With the general equivalent, the first abstraction was created, making it possible to homogenize differences and exchange products (it also made it possible to shift the debt inherent in the slave’s body to money, thus extrapolating and objectifying it, and giving the slave the possibility of redeeming themselves): a first small leap was already made in making something different commensurable.

From a first leap (simple, primitive accumulation) inscribed in the formation and establishment of the general equivalent, follows a second, more fundamental leap. This general equivalent is not only an autonomous element and abstract from what it represents and for which it stands, a production relationship and product of labour activity, but a device which allows, through a strategy of an-

icipation-latency-exploitation, to self-reproduce, making this self-production pass as its own production when this “self-production” is not actual production but appropriation and reproduction (reproduction and subtraction) of the work of others.

It is in the passage from abstraction—which began with coinage, and its expression in a general equivalent—and from there becomes anticipation-latency-profit, that we have the legitimacy of the self-fructification of money up to the transcendental illusion of the mechanism of the Capital Machine (Pascucci 2022, 7).

To dissolve the transcendental illusion of the mechanism of the Capital Machine and to give the differential a materialistic base, we need to construct the fourth phase that is missing in Marx.

B) The Productive *Causa Sui* Can be Restored by Passing through Δe and $\Delta e'$

If we remove the constant capital (C, machinery, etc.) from the rate of profit, what remains is the ratio between surplus value and variable capital. In other words, there is a *direct comparison/confrontation* between the “productive waste” constituted by surplus value and living labour (variable capital). This is called by Marx “exploitation rate.”

We are interested in overturning this formula, or rather, basing ourselves on this formula, in revolutionizing it into a positive formula, by studying how to make the “rate of exploitation,” a “ratio of the ‘plus of being’/of increase of being,” the “rate of true wealth.”

If we think of the *seminal ratio*, the encounter of the *logos spermatikos* with the actualization of *potentia*, with an imaginative leap, we can see in the *logos spermatikos* living labour, in the actualization of *potentia* (which is the actualization of a virtuality, the productivity that becomes production) the nucleus of surplus-value. The ratio, the above relation, must express the differential of the function between the two. That is Δe (the production coefficient of inequality, which we also call Π , “true wealth coefficient”) = $f(V/S)$. Function (Variable capital/surplus value). The rate of exploitation in Marx is S/V , i.e., the relationship between surplus value and variable capital, which gives the measure of the exploitation of the labour-force.

We want to develop the direct relation between living labour and surplus value. First passage: surplus value becomes function of variable capital to then transform this relation in a differential relation (filiative form of capital $x+xd$), to transform it into a frontal relation between living labour and surplus value, where surplus value is recognized as the *separation* and *subtraction* of *necessary labour* from *living labour* and not an addition from the outside, not where the implication of the production of the “plus” is a presupposition of the productive relationship, where the end and the gimmick of the extraction of surplus value is the relationship of exploitation, the “extractive” relationship between surplus value and variable capital—a rate of true wealth would show the “differential materialistic” relationship that exists between the two. What is the difference between thinking of the relationship between the two as a “materialistic differ-

ential,” and thinking of it in terms of a relationship of division and consequent appropriability?

It lies in making the production of difference “really implicating, enveloping” (instead of the differential of capital, which is the implication of an illusory increment) and thus starting to “pick” the presupposition of capital’s power (surplus value at the nominator, variable capital at the denominator; right to the wealth of capital, impoverishment *ad infinitum* of the worker: production based on the rate of exploitation). The rate of exploitation is the presupposition, which must be deconstructed.

What does it mean that S/V , the rate of exploitation, must become a differential materialist ratio? It means asking the question “what would it be if we knew the surplus value every time, and, even more, if this went to the work that produces it”? A reversal, which would consist of two steps: a) a first differentiation (in which the surplus value arises from a subtraction and not from an addition) (differentiation); and then b) a transformation of the relationship of appropriative synthesis into a materialistic differential (really involving differential, development of a Δe) by reversing its terms: no longer the variable capital which is enslaved to the surplus-value, but the surplus-value which becomes a function of the variable capital, no longer the exploitation rate, but the “true wealth rate.” Changing the relationship between surplus value and variable capital (exploitation rate) into a materialistic differential relationship not only sheds light on the relationship between virtuality and actualization (anticipation/producer-product separability—exploitation/ extraction of the *causa sui*), but also affects the presupposition mechanism of capital. The productive relationship is producing becoming, a non-appropriable flow, weaving *koinonia*, originating the common through the work of each one, not the asymmetrical and individualistic fragmentation of the elements that contribute to production.

First, therefore, *the rate of exploitation must become the “production coefficient of inequality” (Δe), then to be reversed into the “production coefficient of equality” ($\Delta e'$) which is equivalent to the differential of the “plus of being,” also called the “production differential of equality.”*

C) Conclusion: the “Production Coefficient of Inequality” and the Consequent “Production Coefficient of Equality”

We have given a hint as to the intrinsic nature of differentiation as expressing the potential for change. We have seen that if we consider the origin of the differential as an intrinsic movement of matter (here, of the worker), we understand that the production of surplus cannot be extrapolated from the production relationship, but is intrinsic to the production relationship itself, to the relationship between worker and capital, or rather, is intrinsic to the worker and is expressed in his relationship to capital.

To make the increment produced by production, an increment of being and not of profit, we have related Deleuze’s concept of differential (concept of intensive, which corresponds to our concept of the “plus of being”) with the study of the differential in Marx (the negation of the negation which explains the production of an intensive that materialistically founds the operation of the

differential), passing through the Marx-Carnot analogy (what we call “the fourth phase”), constructing our $\Delta e'$, economic expression of the “plus of being.” This is how the political *causa sui* we mentioned above is formed.

This “political *causa sui*” overturns the presupposition, the apriorism, that the mechanism of capital establishes and feeds on, and frees the fourth phase as a productive *causa sui*, liberates a material base of production.

Thus we call the *production coefficient of inequality* (Δe) that coefficient which, within production, is the figure of the rate of exploitation. It is a sort of carbon footprint—or even Gini coefficient—applied to the productive relationship: that is, what is subtracted from the worker by the Capital Machine in terms of life capacity that his work expresses. This can also be applied to nature, to populations: how much the Capital Machine subtracts from nature in order to function; how much the dynamics of the global market subtracts from individual populations in terms of their internal well-being.

Once this coefficient has been calculated, turning its elements into “positive,” we should arrive at defining the *production coefficient of equality* ($\Delta e'$, the production of the “plus of being”), a coefficient that restores what is subtracted, the element that implies production in the subject who produces, which makes production an intensive of the subject.

The *production coefficient of inequality* (Δe) is what evaluates the discrepancy between necessary labour and living labour, that is, what is transformed into dead labour and the “plus” of the difference between living labour and necessary labour. It makes living labour necessary labour and variable capital frontal, and indicates, in their relationship, surplus value as the rate of exploitation. The rate of exploitation, unlike the rate of surplus value which was given by the ratio between surplus value and variable capital, becomes equal to the ratio between living labour and variable capital.

If this is true, defining each time, in each productive relation, the production coefficient of inequality will bring us closer to that concept of adequate production, of free labour which will be expressed by the production coefficient of equality.

Biography

Margherita Pascucci, PhD (2003), has published five monographs, including *Philosophical Readings of Shakespeare: “Thou Art the Thing Itself”* (Palgrave, 2013); *Macchina Capitale. Genesi e struttura dello sfruttamento* (Ombre Corte, 2022); *Causa sui. Saggio sul capitale e il virtuale* (Ombre Corte, 2009); *Potenza della povertà. Marx legge Spinoza* (Ombre Corte, 2006), foreword by Antonio Negri; translated in Persian, by Foad Habibi, Qoqnoos (June 2019); in English *Potentia of Poverty: Marx Reads Spinoza*, forthcoming (Historical Materialism Book Series, Brill, 2023); and *Il pensiero di Walter Benjamin. Un'introduzione*, foreword by Ubaldo Fadini (Il Parnaso, 2002).

Notes

1. “Capital is dead labour which, vampire-like, lives only by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks” (Marx 1976a, 342).
2. According to Walter Benjamin, see Konvolut G in Benjamin’s *Arcades Project* (1982). Also, allow me to refer to my PhD thesis “Capital and Imagination: Commodity as a Poetical Object” (New York University, 2002).
3. *Einheit Subjekt-Objekt, das Ansich; die Intelligenz, “die alle Bestimmtheiten in virtueller Möglichkeit enthält”* (Subject-object unity; the in-itself; the intelligence, “which contains all determinations in virtual possibility”).
4. See Olivi (1980; 1990; 1992; 1994; 2016). See also Alain Boureau and Sylvain Piron (1999); Sylvain Piron (1999); Giacomo Todeschini (1987; 2004); and Julius Kirshner and Kimberly Lo Prete (1984).
5. As regards the metaphysical/theological/economical perspective, or interlacing of this *ratio seminalis* and Olivi’s conceptualization, traces of it can be found in Bernardino of Siena (1380-1444), his economic treatise *On Contracts and Usury* (and the concept of *utilitas-raritas*), from Bernardino to Galiani (value as proportion), from Galiani (1728-1787, *Della Moneta*, 1751) to Marx.
6. In Italy, more or less in parallel, there are the Monti di Pietà.
7. See letter 12 (Spinoza 1992).
8. See endnote 2.
9. See Ovidio Capitani’s work on political economy in the Middle Ages.
10. “*Quamdam rationem seminalem lucrosi quam communiter capitale vocamus*” [(money possesses) a certain seminal cause of profit that we commonly call “capital” (Olivi 1980, 85)], and: “*la virtuale possibilità di un guadagno, che noi comunemente chiamiamo capitale, e pertanto si deve restituire non solo il semplice valore della moneta o dell’oggetto, ma anche il valore che si è aggiunto*” (Olivi 1990, 131-2) [“some probable profit ... a certain seminal cause of profit that we commonly call “capital.” And for that reason, not only the simple value of the thing ought to be returned, but also the super-added value (*valor superadiunctus*) (Olivi 2016, 57). Translation slightly altered: instead of “character” I translated *rationem* with “cause”]. See also Michael Wolff (1994, 413-42). Please allow me to refer also to my *Macchina Capitale* (2022, 153).
11. See Spinoza (1988, 344). See also Jacob Freundenthal (1887, 94-106). For a further deepening of Heereboord’s philosophy within Cartesianism, see Theo Verbeek (1992, 34-51). For the relation between Spinoza and Heereboord, see F.A. Trendelenburg (1867, 316) and L. Robinson (1928, 176). For a general overview see Gunther Coppens (2003). Furthermore, please see my *Causa sui* (2009, 84; 106).
12. It is here considered only the virtual in *Capital*, Volume II.
13. “*Je mehr die Zirkulationsmetamorphosen des Kapitals nur ideell sind, d.h. je mehr die Umlaufzeit=0 wird oder sich Null nähert, um so mehr fungiert das Kapital*

als produktives Kapital um so größer wird seine Produktivität und Selbverwertung” (Marx and Engels 1999, 98-9).

14. “When several forces or powers act against each other, it is necessary to start by reducing two of these powers to only one, which will be done by prolonging their directions until they meet and then seeking by the rules of the composition of the forces, the direction, and the value of the power which results from these two. ... Now, for there to be equilibrium, this last power must be zero, or its direction must pass through some fixed point which destroys its effect” (*Equilibre, Encyclopédie*, D’Alembert and Denis Diderot 1751, Tome 5, 873-80).
15. This equilibrium is furthermore defined in D’Alembert as the relation of the dead force and the living force; as the status which transforms the living force in dead force. The dead force is expressed by the product of the mass for the virtual velocity ($f=mxv$), and the living force is expressed by the product of the mass for the square of the velocity ($f=mxv^2$).
16. It is an absolutely fictitious equilibrium—the most dynamic and omnivorous to exist.
17. The most imminent precursor of D’Alembert, for his theory of virtual velocities, is Christiaan Huygens.
18. For an explanation and analysis of this, and of the construction of the fourth phase missing in Marx, please allow me to refer to *Macchina Capitale* (2022), chapter four, “*La quarta fase è la causa sui dell’uomo*,” and to “*Il Sogno di Marx*” (Pascucci 2011).
19. “... Entropy is an extensive factor but, unlike all other extensive factors, it is an extension or ‘explication’ which is implicated as such in intensity, which does not exist outside the implication or except as implicated, and this is because it has the function of *making possible* the general movement by which that which is implicated explicates itself or is extended. There is thus a transcendental illusion essentially tied to the *qualitas*, Heat, and to the extension, Entropy” (Deleuze 229).
20. What follows is a very short summary of chapter five of *Macchina Capitale*, “*Genesi e struttura dello sfruttamento*” (Pascucci 2022).

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