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# From Closed Need to Infinite Greed: Marx's Drive Theory

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## Repeating Freudo-Marxism: Drives Between Historical Materialism and Psychoanalysis

The title of my piece obviously makes reference to Alexandre Koyré's 1957 book *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe*. Therein, Koyré unfurls a narrative in which modern science is born in and through Galileo Galilei's insistence that the great book of nature is written in the language of mathematics.<sup>1</sup> On the Koyréan account, the Galilean mathematization of all things natural brings about, as one of its several momentous consequences, a leap "from the closed world to the infinite universe" precisely by rupturing the finite sphere of the qualitative cosmos and replacing it with the centerless expanse of a quantitative limitlessness. Along with the capitalism and Protestantism arising in the sixteenth century, the natural science originating in the early seventeenth century is a foundational component and key catalyst of modernity as such. Hence, by Koyré's lights, the historical transition from the pre-modern to the modern involves the shift designated by his influential book's title.<sup>2</sup>

As I have contended on prior occasions, Koyré arguably is guilty of an anachronistic reconstruction of the history of the genesis of modern science. Specifically, he retrojects twentieth-century French neo-rationalist commitments and preferences back onto his chosen historical site of intellectual preoccupation. Koyré's brand of neo-rationalism leads him both indefensibly to sideline the

empiricist epistemology and methodology of Francis Bacon as at all relevant to the founding of scientific modernity as well as correspondingly to (mis)represent Galileo as a Platonic mathematical philosopher little reliant upon empirical observation and experimentation.<sup>3</sup> The Koyréan neglect of Baconian empiricism and downplaying of Galilean empiricism is unpardonable in what is put forward as an accurate history of the birth of modern science.<sup>4</sup>

That said, Koyré's history and philosophy of science, warts and all, exerts a broad and deep influence on various of his French contemporaries, including Marxist Louis Althusser and psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. This fact of intellectual history brings things close to my concerns in this context, in that what follows will involve a Lacan-inspired engagement with Karl Marx. More precisely, the central thesis of my intervention on this occasion is that Marx's historical materialist critique of political economy (as embodied primarily in the *Grundrisse* and volumes of *Capital*) contains what could be called a theory of modern drive in the strict psychoanalytic sense of *Trieb*. To be even more exact, I will argue below that Marxian modernity, as ushered in with the advent of capitalism, entails a transition "from closed need to infinite greed" (as my title has it) in which the rise of capitalist political economy brings to explicit light features of the human libidinal economy subsequently crucial for psychoanalysis once the latter is founded *circa* the start of the twentieth century.

Lacan, in identifying the historical possibility conditions for Freudian psychoanalysis, repeatedly relies upon Koyré's story of scientific modernity effectuating a shift "from the closed world to the infinite universe."<sup>5</sup> On Lacan's assessment, Galileo's invention of modern science makes possible René Descartes's invention of the modern subject (i.e., the *Cogito*), with the latter in turn making possible Sigmund Freud's invention of the subject of the unconscious (incidentally, Lacan also associates Marx's thinking with the rise of specifically modern forms of subjectivity<sup>6</sup>). Without retelling this Lacanian tale here – I have done so a number of times elsewhere,<sup>7</sup> as also has, most notably, Jean-Claude Milner<sup>8</sup> – my ensuing psychoanalysis-inflected parsing of Marx's critique of political economy is intended by me as a friendly supplement to Lacan's explanation of the specifically modern conditions of possibility for the Freudian discovery of the unconscious (this friendly supplement is hinted at by Lacan in 1965, but left vague and undeveloped<sup>9</sup>). This small contribution to the psychoanalytic general intellect complements Lacan's emphasis on modern science generating a modern subject pivotal for analysis with a parallel emphasis, via Marxism (especially historical materialism's philosophical anthropology), on modern capitalism generating a modern drive equally pivotal for

analysis. That is to say, modernity overall, itself the product of an economic in addition to a scientific revolution (not to mention, as any Hegelian must, a religious Reformation), renders *an und für sich* libidinal as well as subjective transformations paving the way for Freud's own self-styled "Copernican revolution."<sup>10</sup>

As regards Marx, my focus, as already indicated above, will be on his mature economic works, namely, the *Grundrisse* and *Das Kapital*. I will show that, within these epoch-making volumes, one can find historical materialist anthropological theories tracing a socially-mediated mutation in human libidinal economics induced by changing political economics. However, my own interfacing of Marxism with psychoanalysis will not amount to a simple, straightforward historicization of the latter – specifically, a thesis according to which the drives of the libidinal economy are entirely the socio-historical creations of the political economy of capitalism.

Instead, my thesis, more precisely stated, is that capitalism's distinctive fashions of centering human life around surplus- and exchange-values (as delineated in Marx's critique of political economy) introduces, so to speak, a difference-of-degree rather than a difference-in-kind between pre-modern and modern libidinal configurations—albeit a difference-of-degree arguably so great as to approach being a difference-in-kind. This difference between pre-modernity and modernity is the referent of my title, "from closed need to infinite greed." For philosophical-anthropological reasons to which Marx himself would not be automatically averse,<sup>11</sup> I accept the assertion of psychoanalytic metapsychology that the structures and dynamics of *Trieb* proper are displayed by psyches distributed across various socio-economic formations past and present (and likely future too). That is to say, I maintain, following Freud and Lacan, that uniquely-human drives are not peculiar to a single historical constellation, such as the capitalist era.

However, I will contend below, through an exegesis of select moments in Marx's *Grundrisse* and *Capital*, that capitalism, in terms of the roles of money and commodities therein, renders what psychoanalysis identifies as drives (*als Triebe*) significantly more extensive and prominent as motors of human activity. With reference to the above-mentioned difference-of-degree (approaching a difference-in-kind) between pre-modern (pre-capitalist) "closed need" and modern (capitalist) "infinite greed," capitalism induces pre-modern *Trieb* to transition from being more constrained and implicit (in itself [*an sich*]) to becoming more unbound and explicit (for itself [*für sich*]). Although there already, in antiquity, are to be found clear instances of Marx's driven greed – one need only read Aristotle on certain merchants' insatiable lust for amassing and hoarding currencies<sup>12</sup> – the pre-modern exception

becomes the modern rule under capitalism. Moreover, subjects' relationships to objects of concern both to Marxian accounts of accumulation and consumption as well as to psychoanalytic accounts of drives bear the marks of the capitalist commodification of human reality right down to the quotidian intimacies of these subjects' existences (as the young Georg Lukács, among others, brings out very effectively<sup>13</sup>). Along these lines, Lacan himself suggests there are overlaps between his and Marx's conceptions of object relations<sup>14</sup> (a suggestion to be fleshed out by me in much more detail later).

My contribution is, in part, a Lacan-informed return to the roots of Freudo-Marxism. Two of the earliest attempts at wedding Marx and Freud are Wilhelm Reich's 1929/1934 *Dialectical Materialism and Psychoanalysis* and Otto Fenichel's "Psychoanalysis as the Nucleus of a Future Dialectical-Materialist Psychology" (tentatively and approximately dated by its posthumous editors and publisher as written during the early 1940s). Reich shares with G.W.F. Hegel and many Marxists (such as Marx himself, Friedrich Engels, V.I. Lenin, Mao Tse-Tung, and much of mainly non-Western Marxism) a robustly realist conception of dialectics.<sup>15</sup> Tacitly echoing Engels's interpretations of the natural sciences, he portrays Freudian psychoanalysis as a discipline spontaneously forging an anti-reductive materialist dialectic entirely compatible with Marxian dialectical materialism.<sup>16</sup>

Fenichel opens his posthumously published piece "Psychoanalysis as the Nucleus of a Future Dialectical-Materialist Psychology" by stressing, in good Marxist fashion, that the effort "to formulate a dialectical-materialist psychology" must navigate between the Scylla of spiritualist/dualistic idealism and the Charybdis of reductive/eliminative materialism<sup>17</sup> (an emphasis he repeats near the end of the same text<sup>18</sup>). Reich and Fenichel likewise each compare the psychoanalytic depiction of the mind-body relationship to non-economistic versions of the historical materialist schema of the infrastructure-superstructure rapport.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, both Reich and Fenichel propose in their own different manners that, to put it in Hegelian terms, Freudian psychoanalysis posits the presuppositions of Marxian materialism. More precisely, for them, Marx's historical materialist renditions of subjects and societies implicitly assume without explicitly elaborating (at least sufficiently) something along the lines of the sort of dialectical materialist philosophical anthropology forwarded by Freud's clinically informed metapsychology.<sup>20</sup>

By comparison with Reich, Fenichel goes into much more detail regarding exactly what a synthesis of Marxian dialectical materialism and Freudian psychoanalysis would involve. To begin with, he specifies that, "A dynamic

psychology is always first of all a psychology of drives"<sup>21</sup> (with "dynamic psychology," for Fenichel, ultimately being synonymous with psychoanalysis specifically as "dialectical-materialist psychology"). According to him, *Triebe* are the necessary, albeit not sufficient, conditions of psychical-subjective life; mindedness cannot be reduced to drivenness, although the former arises from and thereafter depends upon the latter.<sup>22</sup> Like Freud, Fenichel, as does Lacan too, pinpoints human beings' initial prolonged prematurational helplessness (*Hilflosigkeit*) as making humans, from the ontogenetic get-go, biologically inclined towards the dominance of the social over the biological, namely, naturally predisposed, in terms of internal, intra-subjective immediacy, to denaturalization in terms of external, inter- and trans-subjective mediation.<sup>23</sup> From Marxist perspectives, both Althusser<sup>24</sup> and Ernest Mandel<sup>25</sup> similarly appreciate the profound significance of Freudian *Hilflosigkeit*.

On Fenichel's account, the biological fact of protracted infantile helplessness in human beings is, as it were, the Cartesian-type pineal gland as the pivotal switch-point or crossroads between the endogenous libidinal economy of Freudian psychoanalysis and the exogenous political economy of Marxian historical materialism, that is, the site of interactions for these economies. This *Hilflosigkeit* renders id-level beings exposed and vulnerable to modifications and reconfigurations imposed from without by social agents and structures.<sup>26</sup> The actions of infrastructures and superstructures (including ideologies) upon the rudiments of the drives, via "education" in a broad sense as formation (*Bildung*) and/or upbringing (*Erziehung*), effectuate instances of "structural alteration" in the psyches subjected to such education.<sup>27</sup>

Lacan himself had a poor opinion of both Reich and Fenichel. As for Reich, Lacan, in 1953's "The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis," criticizes him both for reducing sexuality to some sort of natural substance ("an ineffable organic expression beyond speech"<sup>28</sup>) as well as for seeing the ego as simply defensive and nothing more<sup>29</sup> (interrelated criticisms echoed in the 1955 *écrit* "Variations on the Standard Treatment"<sup>30</sup>). *Seminar VIII* implies that Reich is nothing more than a sort of sexual gymnastics instructor, rather than a real and true analyst.<sup>31</sup> As pointed out in a session of *Seminar XV*, psychoanalysis is not a Reichian-style sexology, with the analyst as an expert in matters of sexuality, a subject supposed to know about sex.<sup>32</sup> Analysis is not about teaching neurotics how to fuck.

As for Fenichel, Lacan sometimes uses his name to lament that analytic institutes and training candidates of the mid-twentieth century often prefer the

perusal of this sort of second-generation analyst to reading Freud himself.<sup>33</sup> Fenichel's association with ego psychology and its analysis of defenses unsurprisingly elicits Lacan's disapproval and spite.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, Fenichel is accused by Lacan of turning analytic practice into an unthinking application of oversimplified metapsychological theory.<sup>35</sup> On Lacan's assessment, whereas Freud is a skilled and careful archaeologist, Fenichel carelessly pillages and leaves in disarray whatever sites he stumbles across.<sup>36</sup> Fenichel's ideas about sexuality likewise are found to be seriously wanting.<sup>37</sup>

Especially given my circumscribed purposes here, I am not committed to defending Reich and Fenichel against Lacan's objections, since the latter's low estimation of the two of them is based on references to texts other than the ones that concern me in the present setting. Lacan shows no evidence of having read either Reich's *Dialectical Materialism and Psychoanalysis* or Fenichel's "Psychoanalysis as the Nucleus of a Future Dialectical-Materialist Psychology," both having appeared in print during Lacan's lifetime. Arguably, this is of a piece with Lacan's relative lack of thoroughgoing familiarity with the Marxist tradition (although, as will be on display at the close of the present intervention, Lacan exhibits a rather nuanced appreciation of Marx himself). Nonetheless, I see nothing preventing, and a lot recommending,<sup>38</sup> a synthesis of Lacanian psychoanalysis with dialectical materialism. The later Lacan even occasionally self-identifies as a dialectical materialist.<sup>39</sup> Along these lines, Lacan's convergences with the Reich of *Dialectical Materialism and Psychoanalysis* and the Fenichel of "Psychoanalysis as the Nucleus of a Future Dialectical-Materialist Psychology" outweigh, in my view, the divergences. Even though Lacan dismisses prior permutations of Freudo-Marxism as hopelessly confused,<sup>40</sup> nothing he says rules out the potential for and viability of a Lacano-Marxism.

In terms of what I bring to Freudo-Marxism as initiated by Reich and Fenichel, there is, to begin with, my rapprochement between Lacan and dialectical materialism I have developed elsewhere in tandem with the substantial contributions of the Slovene School of Lacanian theory<sup>41</sup> (and, I have dealt with the Freudo-Marxism of the Frankfurt School, as paradigmatically represented by Herbert Marcuse, on earlier occasions<sup>42</sup>). Without rehashing that rapprochement on this occasion, one in which Freudo-Marxism is updated as Freudo-Lacano-Marxism, I conceive of my intervention here as making four contributions. First, thanks primarily to its Lacanian background, it equips Freudo-Marxism with a more sophisticated and accurate version of Freudian drive theory than is relied upon by pre/non-Lacanian Freudo-Marxists (such as Reich, Fenichel, and Marcuse). Second, it interfaces this

drive theory with the core of the mature Marx's crowning achievements at the level of his critique of political economy (like much of the twentieth-century "Western Marxism" of which it is a component, classical Freud-Marxism does not really dirty its hands with the nitty-gritty economic details of historical materialism). Third, this synthesis between Freudian-Lacanian drive theory and Marxian political economy provides both powerful refutations of load-bearing (neo)liberalist assumptions as well as better understandings of really existing capitalism itself. Fourth and finally, I see this essay as opening out onto avenues for further psychoanalytic research regarding the complex mediations of libidinal by political economies (research some of which I hope to pursue myself in the not-too-distant future).

### ***Der Mehrwertstrieb: The Libidinal Economy of Modern Social History***

At the end of the introduction to the *Grundrisse*, Marx brings up the example of Homer. After referring to the *Iliad*, he famously observes:

...the difficulty lies not in understanding that the Greek arts and epic are bound up with certain forms of social development. The difficulty is that they still afford us artistic pleasure and that in a certain respect they count as a norm and as an unattainable model.<sup>43</sup>

As Marx is well aware, apart from Homer's *Iliad*, countless other examples drawn from a wide range of fields and contexts manifest the same phenomenon of a striking time-defying endurance. Marx's observation is a warning to the effect that Homeric poetry and similar long-lasting cultural goods pose a serious (nay, insuperable) problem for historical materialism if the latter wrongly reduces itself to a mere historicism mindlessly repeating the gesture of uninformatively pointing out that each and every human historical development indeed arises in a specific social period and place. These kinds of historicist reductionism, to be distinguished from genuine historical materialism, are unable, on their own, to explain instances (such as the *Iliad*) of phenomena that come to transcend their sites of origin and moments of birth. Such phenomena thereafter laterally cut across, in a temporally stretched-out trajectory, a historical span of different, shifting societal arrangements. Insofar as Marxian historical materialism seeks to be able to register and explain such instances, as Marx himself signals, it includes within itself a theory of the historical and social geneses of the trans-historical and the trans-social.

Of course, the *Grundrisse's* introduction also contains a certain renowned assertion. A few pages before Marx raises the just-glossed Homer problem, he asserts that:

Human anatomy contains a key to the anatomy of the ape. The intimations of higher development among the subordinate animal species, however, can be understood only after the higher development is already known.<sup>44</sup>

I would suggest that there is a complementarity between these references first to anatomy and then, soon after, to the *Iliad*. That is to say, I view them as designating the two sides of one and the same historical materialist coin. Whereas Homeric epic poetry epitomizes an irreducible-to-context past-in-the-present, the human-ape relation embodies, correlatively but conversely, an irreducible-to-context present-in-the-past. With Homer, the pre-capitalist past successfully projects itself forward into the capitalist present. With economics, the capitalist present of "human anatomy" somewhat legitimately (with the appropriate qualifications added to it by the critique of political economy) retrojects itself backward into the pre-capitalist past of "the anatomy of the ape." As for the human-ape analogy, the real becoming-abstract of labor under industrial capitalism makes possible the field of economics, with the conceptual abstractions of its theories of economic systems. This in turn helps generate an understanding of the arc of pre-capitalist social history eventuating in capitalism itself.

Combining Marx's invocations of anatomy and the *Iliad* as I have just recommended, one could say that crucial features of historical materialism, appropriately conceived (as not simply another [pan-]historicism), are paradigmatically embodied in in the odd figure of a Greek primate, Homer as an ape. Such things as great ancient epic poetry (i.e., the *Iliad*) already contain within themselves those facets that lend them such enduring worth in the eyes of subsequent audiences and admirers. However, at least some of these facets (i.e., "the anatomy of the ape") perhaps do not come to light unless and until the historical surfacing of social contexts postdating their social context of origin (i.e., "human anatomy").

As I have advocated at length on a prior occasion,<sup>45</sup> such temporal dialectical dynamics between past and present (as well as future) are central to psychoanalysis in addition to historical materialism. Furthermore, on this occasion, I will plead, basing myself on the core texts of Marx's critique of political economy, for a historical



materialist metapsychology of *Trieb* in which the anatomy of capitalist drive(s) contains a key to the anatomy of drive as such, of *Trieb an sich* (which itself becomes dramatically more *für sich* in and through capitalism, especially in its recent consumerist permutations). As for the Hegel who identifies Socrates as an ancient precursor and prophet of distinctively modern individualism,<sup>46</sup> so too for me: Another awe-inspiring Greek primate, Aristotle, foregrounds a libidinal economics linked to political economics (i.e., the “love of money”) already exhibiting the characteristic peculiarities of drive in the modern psychoanalytic sense, although not becoming the hegemonic, ubiquitous rule (rather than the marginal, compartmentalized exception) until the much later advent of capitalism. Interfacing historical materialism and analytic metapsychology thusly circumvents and renders ill-conceived and obsolete false, zero-sum debates between a reductively historicizing pseudo-Marxism and a transcendently de-historicizing pseudo-Freudianism (and/or pseudo-Lacanianism).

So, how does the Marx of the *Grundrisse* and *das Kapital* contribute, at the level of philosophical anthropology, to a historical materialist metapsychology of the psychoanalytic drive? Where are these alleged contributions to be found in the volumes of Marx's mature critique of political economy? In what ensues, I will make my case by proceeding through these volumes more or less generally in order, starting with the *Grundrisse* and then turning to the trilogy of *Capital* itself.

Already in the *Grundrisse's* introduction, a long paragraph on the co-dependent relationship between production and consumption delineates certain cardinal aspects of Marx's historical materialist philosophical anthropology of the human libidinal economy (as mediated by political economy). He explains:

Production... (1) furnishes the material and the object (*Gegenstand*) for consumption. Consumption without an object is not consumption; therefore, in this respect, production creates, produces consumption. (2) But the object is not the only thing which production creates for consumption. Production also gives consumption its specificity (*Bestimmtheit*), its character, its finish. Just as consumption gave the product its finish as product, so does production give finish to consumption. *Firstly*, the object is not an object in general (*überhaupt*), but a specific (*bestimmter*) object which must be consumed in a specific manner, to be mediated in its turn by production itself. Hunger is hunger, but the hunger gratified by cooked meat eaten with a knife and fork is a different hunger from that which bolts down raw meat with the

aid of hand, nail and tooth. Production thus produces not only the object but also the manner of consumption, not only objectively but also subjectively.

Production thus creates the consumer.

(3) Production not only supplies a material for the need (*Bedürfnis*), but it also supplies a need for the material. As soon as consumption emerges from its initial state of natural crudity and immediacy (*ersten Naturroheit und Unmittelbarkeit*) – and, if it remained at that stage, this would be because production itself had been arrested there – it becomes itself mediated as a drive by the object (*so ist sie selbst als Trieb vermittelt durch den Gegenstand*).

The need which consumption feels for the object is created by the perception of it. The object of art – like every other product – creates a public which is sensitive to art and enjoys beauty. Production thus not only creates an object for the subject, but also a subject for the object.

Thus production produces consumption (1) by creating the material for it; (2) by determining the manner of consumption; and (3) by creating the products, initially posited by it as objects, in the form of a need felt by the consumer. It thus produces the object of consumption, the manner of consumption and the motive of consumption (*Trieb der Konsumtion*). Consumption likewise produces the producer's *inclination* (*die Anlage des Produzenten*) by beckoning to him as an aim-determining need (*zweckbestimmendes Bedürfnis*).<sup>47</sup>

For a reader familiar with the texts of Freud and Lacan, it is virtually impossible to avoid hearing, at the risk of anachronism, anticipations of psychoanalytic drive theory (as does Fenichel when addressing Marx on needs from an analytic angle<sup>48</sup>). Marx literally refers to a "*Trieb*" on the side of consumption, with a corresponding "*Anlage*" on the side of production (an "*inclination*" that itself has a drive-like character, as will be seen soon enough). Incidentally, although the twentieth-century rises of the advertising industry and consumer capitalism occur after Marx's death, Marx anticipates exactly from whence these post-1883 developments in capitalist social history arise. He discerns what makes possible, both anthropologically and economically, the cultivation and management of ever-proliferating consuming desires.

Additionally, just as the Freudian drive is "objectless" (*objektlos*) *qua* not innately soldered to the invariant template of a species-universal type of satisfying object of cathectic investment, so too is the Marxian "*Trieb der Konsumtion*" not

tethered to “an object in general” (*Gegenstand überhaupt*) as a generic gratifier of brute primitive need in its “natural crudity and immediacy” (*Naturroheit und Unmittelbarkeit*). For both Marx and Freud, drives are mediated productions instead of immediate givens. More precisely, *Triebe*, for both historical materialism and psychoanalysis, are produced by social mediations (economic and/or familial, among other strata of sociality) involving structural and phenomenal dimensions. Even more precisely still, these mediations, as more-than-naturally exogenous rather than naturally endogenous, render all drives' objects (whether as Marx's *Gegenstand* or Freud's *Objekt*) historically specific variables whose determinacy (*als Bestimmtheit*) results from objective externalities introjected and metabolized into subjective internalities. The (drive-)object fabricates the subject (of drive).

Jumping ahead a bit in the *Grundrisse*, Marx subsequently renders explicit that the producer's drive (i.e., “the producer's *inclination*” [*die Anlage des Produzenten*] as nothing other than *der Trieb des Kapitals*) ultimately is the driver of the consumer's drive (as the “*Trieb der Konsumtion*”). Nonetheless, this producer's drive also remains (co-)dependent on the consumer's drive (as the preceding block quotation from the *Grundrisse's* introduction explicates). Overall, capital's drive to enhance itself (i.e., to self-valorize) by generating ever more surplus-value in and through the processes of production is more driving of consumption's clamoring demands than *vice versa*. The fourth notebook of the *Grundrisse* states at detailed length:

...the production of *relative surplus value*, i.e. production of surplus value based on the increase and development of the productive forces, requires the production of new consumption; requires that the consuming circle within circulation expands as did the productive circle previously. Firstly quantitative expansion of existing consumption; secondly: creation of new needs by propagating existing ones in a wide circle; *thirdly*: production of *new* needs and discovery and creation of new use values. In other words, so that the surplus labour gained does not remain merely quantitative surplus, but rather constantly increases the circle of qualitative differences within labour (hence of surplus labour), makes it more diverse, more internally differentiated. For example, if, through a doubling of productive force, a capital of 50 can now do what a capital of 100 did before, so that a capital of 50 and the necessary labour corresponding to it become free, then, for the capital and labour which have been set free, a new, qualitatively different branch of production

must be created, which satisfies and brings forth a new need. The value of the old industry is preserved by the creation of the fund for a new one in which the relation of capital and labour posits itself in a *new* form. Hence exploration of all of nature in order to discover new, useful qualities in things; universal exchange of the products of all alien climates and lands; new (artificial) preparation of natural objects, by which they are given new use values. The exploration of the earth in all directions, to discover new things of use as well as new useful qualities of the old; such as new qualities of them as raw materials, etc.; the development, hence, of the natural sciences to their highest point; likewise the discovery, creation and satisfaction (*Befriedigung*) of new needs arising from society itself; the cultivation of all the qualities of the social human being, production of the same in a form as rich as possible in needs, because rich in qualities and relations – production of this being as the most total and universal possible social product, for, in order to take gratification in a many-sided way, he must be capable of many pleasures [*genussfähig*], hence cultured to a high degree – is likewise a condition of production founded on capital. This creation of new branches of production, i.e. of qualitatively new surplus time, is not merely the division of labour, but is rather the creation, separate from a given production, of labour with a new use value; the development of a constantly expanding and more comprehensive system of different kinds of labour, different kinds of production, to which a constantly expanding and constantly enriched system of needs (*System von Bedürfnissen*) corresponds.<sup>49</sup>

According to Marx, this auto-expanding infernal circle of production and consumption, in which the former is the primary driving impetus, expresses nothing other than the unslakable thirst of capital for surplus-value, namely, capital's *Trieb* to enhance itself, to be fruitful and multiply. Much like the Lacanian super-ego, the (death) drive of capital commands, via its ownership of and authority over the means of production, consumer enjoyment (“*Genuss*” as the German equivalent of the French “*jouissance*”) on the side of capital's legions of servants, its subjected subjects (who come to hear and obey in the guise of polymorphously perverse conspicuous consumption). Capitalism's earth-devouring spiral of frenetic, self-stimulating activity is one that starts with and remains fueled by surplus-value-bearing exchange-values (tied to quantitative capital) instead of use-values (tied to the qualitative facets of commodities). The consumption drives of libidinal

economies are symptoms of the production drives of political economies (and, again, not the other way around). Therefore, a historical materialist comprehension of the cause or origin of the peculiar traits of libidinal economics under capitalism requires grasping *der Trieb des Kapitals* (i.e., “the producer’s *inclination*” [*die Anlage des Produzenten*]) as the political-economic root-source of these psychical-subjective characteristics. Or, as Hegel puts it already in the 1821 *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, “A need... is created not so much by those who experience it directly as by those who seek to profit from its emergence” (*Es wird ein Bedürfnis... nicht sowohl von denen, welche es auf unmittelbare Weise haben, als vielmehr durch solche hervorgebracht, welche durch sein Entstehen einen Gewinn suchen*).<sup>50</sup>

But, before undertaking a psychoanalytic (re-)conceptualization of the drives of capital, I feel it worthwhile briefly to remark upon Marx’s utilization of the phrase “system of needs” in the just-quoted passage from the *Grundrisse*. One of many things Marx and Hegel share in common is a deep appreciation (albeit, for both, marked by grave reservations and critical objections) of the epoch-making intellectual contributions of Adam Smith. Following the central role played by division of labor in *The Wealth of Nations*,<sup>51</sup> Hegel characterizes labor-dividing socio-economic apparatuses as systems of needs, namely, frameworks of mutual dependence within which the laboring of a member of society satisfies other members’ requirements as well as his/her own (with the same holding in turn for the laboring of these other members too).<sup>52</sup> Moreover, Hegel, with an eye to the modern markets of liberal-bourgeois “civil society” (*bürgerliche Gesellschaft*) and foreshadowing Marx, asserts that divisions of labor as systems of need are effective not only in meeting existing needs, but adept at continually creating new needs multiplying into a decadent “luxury” (*der Luxus*).<sup>53</sup> This last Smith-inspired Hegelian observation, one made in light of the socio-economic apparatus of capitalism, is echoed by Marx when, at the end of the preceding block quotation, he refers to “the development of a constantly expanding and more comprehensive system of different kinds of labour, different kinds of production, to which a constantly expanding and constantly enriched system of needs (*System von Bedürfnissen*) corresponds.”

Closely related to the preceding, Marx, in the third volume of *Capital*, speaks of market-mediated “need” (*Bedürfnis*) as “completely elastic and fluctuating” (*durchaus elastisch und schwankend*).<sup>54</sup> In Marx’s critique of political economy, this elasticity of needs can and does move in two opposed directions. On the one hand, the flexibility of human beings’ requirements is such that they can withstand, and even be pressured into tolerating, deprivations in which relative approaches absolute

immiseration (as in the paradigmatic Marxian case of the wage-laboring industrial proletariat of nineteenth-century Dickensian England). One could call this downward (or depressive) elasticity. On the other hand, this same flexibility allows for the stimulation and growth of multiplying impulses and urges in which “needs” are extensively broadened and/or intensively deepened (as in advertising- and branding-fueled consumerist late-capitalism, wherein, through capital expanding in time via credit rather than space via colonization, the immiserated, with their stagnant or declining wages, are made to stave off capital’s falling rates of profit through consuming their own futures at prices they ultimately cannot afford to pay). One could call this upward (or manic) elasticity. Smith himself already highlights the boundless upward/manic extendability of needs/wants.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, one does not have to be psychoanalytically educated or inclined in order to discern the bi-polar (what used to be labelled “manic-depressive”) characteristics of capitalism.

Crucially for my present, psychoanalysis-shaped theoretical purposes, this libidinal flexibility (i.e., Marx’s “need” [*Bedürfnis*] as “completely elastic and fluctuating” [*durchaus elastisch und schwankend*]) must not be seen exclusively as a secondary effect or subsequent by-product of capitalism’s circuits of production, distribution, exchange, and consumption. It indeed is this. In fact, capitalism obviously is responsible for inducing increasingly rapid and frenetic transformations drastically amplifying the elasticity and fluctuations of its subjects’ libidinal economies. These phenomena would be libidinal flexibility made explicit, *für sich*.

Nevertheless, such explosions of production-driven consumption (i.e., the extensive broadening and/or intensive deepening of Marxian *Bedürfnisse*) are transcendently enabled by a libidinal elasticity pre-dating capitalism itself. Put more precisely in psychoanalytic terms, the plasticity of *Triebe* makes possible, at the level of trans-historical *an sich* libidinal structure (as not specific to capitalism), the “*durchaus elastisch und schwankend*” profuse multiplication of demands and desires at the level of historical *für sich* libidinal phenomena (as specific to capitalism). To be even more exact, plastic drive structure, as theorized within a metapsychological *qua* philosophical/psychoanalytic anthropology, is a necessary condition for capitalism’s peculiar libidinal economics as per historical materialism. It becomes a sufficient condition when capitalist production, spurred by the pursuit of surplus-value, begins exploiting this plasticity for its gains. Such exploitation, made possible by libidinal elasticity, comes to render this initially latent factor steadily more manifest, aggravating and amplifying it. My title’s talk of “from closed need to infinite greed” here takes on greater determinacy and concreteness.

## Addictions to Unenjoyable Enjoyments: The Twin Hedonisms of Commodity Fetishism

Both the *Grundrisse* and volumes of *Capital* have much to say about greed in relation to needs and drives. The *Grundrisse's* treatment of money highlights the libidinal significance of the historical advent both of currency in general (as universal equivalent) as well as of capitalistic monetary functions in particular (especially when currency operates as self-valorizing capital pursuing its own in-principle limitless accumulation via the accrual of surplus-value). In the passage from the *Grundrisse* I am now going to quote, Marx suggests a thesis along the lines of my notion of a historical-libidinal mutation "from closed need to infinite greed":

Money is... not only *an* object (*Gegenstand*), but is *the* object of greed [*Bereicherungssucht*]. It is essentially *auri sacra fames*. Greed as such, as a particular form of the drive (*eine besondere Form des Triebs*), i.e. as distinct from the craving for a particular kind of wealth (*der Sucht nach besondrem Reichtum*), e.g. for clothes, weapons, jewels, women, wine etc., is possible only when general wealth (*allgemeine Reichtum*), wealth as such (*der Reichtum als solcher*), has become individualized in a particular thing (*einem besondren Ding*), i.e. as soon as money is posited in its third quality. Money is therefore not only the object but also the fountainhead of greed (*die Quelle der Bereicherungssucht*). The mania for possessions (*Habsucht*) is possible without money; but greed itself is the product of a definite social development (*einer bestimmten gesellschaftlichen Entwicklung*), not *natural* (*natürlich*), as opposed to *historical* (*Geschichtlichen*). Hence the wailing of the ancients about money as the source (*Quellen*) of all evil. Hedonism [*Genussucht*] in its general form and miserliness [*Geiz*] are the two particular forms of monetary greed. Hedonism in the abstract presupposes an object which possesses all pleasures in potentiality. Abstract hedonism realizes that function of money in which it is the *material representative of wealth*; miserliness, in so far as it is only the general form of wealth as against its particular substances, the commodities. In order to maintain it as such, it must sacrifice all relationship to the objects of particular needs (*besondren Bedürfnisse*), must abstain, in order to satisfy the need of greed for money as such (*das Bedürfnis der Geldgier als solche*).<sup>56</sup>

Marx herein elaborates a plethora of details resurfacing again and again throughout the sketches and delineations of what I would call his drive theory in *das Kapital* itself. To start parsing this key passage, "*Bereicherungssucht*" literally means addiction (*Sucht*) to enrichment (*Bereicherung*). In addition to Marx's talk here about addictions to enrichment and enjoyment (*Genussucht* [hedonism] being, in German, literal addiction to enjoyment [*Genuss*]), his associations of capitalist speculative activity with gambling further brings capitalism as per the historical materialist critique of political economy within the orbit of the psychoanalytic clinic of addictions (as themselves, in no small part, libidinal disorders).<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, "*auri sacra fames*" likewise signifies the accursed greed for gold.

Immediately after where the preceding block quotation leaves off, Marx equates "monetary greed" (*die Geldgier*) with "mania for wealth" (*Bereicherungssucht*).<sup>58</sup> Subsequently, the first volume of *Capital*, entirely in line with the *Grundrisse*, identifies the capitalism-specific multiplication of exchange-and-surplus-value-bearing commodities as arousing "the lust for gold" (*die Goldgier*).<sup>59</sup> The historical emergence of commodity production proper awakens and whips up into a frenzy a before largely dormant libidinal potential, a sleeping monster, slumbering within humanity (an inhumanity in humanity more than humanity itself, as Lacan might say).

Much remains to be unpacked in the passage from the *Grundrisse* just quoted. In fact, the bulk of what immediately follows will be preoccupied with this unpacking in connection with the volumes of *das Kapital* (with the latter faithfully continuing along these lines laid down already apropos matters libidinal in Marx's notebooks of 1857-1858). The first of several details within the prior quotation I wish to highlight is Marx's historical materialist insistence on the social specificity of greed *als Bereicherungssucht* in the precise technical sense of his critique of political economy. Marx depicts this peculiar species of lust ("greed as such" *qua auri sacra fames* or *die Goldgier*) as "a particular form of the drive" (*eine besondere Form des Triebs*). Consistent and resonant with this proto-psychoanalytic invocation of drive *als Trieb* in the *Grundrisse*, the first volume of *Capital* too repeatedly speaks of "drive," as in, for example, "greed" as a "hoarding drive" (*der Trieb der Schatzbildung*)<sup>60</sup> and "avarice" (*Geiz*) as "the drive for self-enrichment" (*Bereicherungstrieb*).<sup>61</sup> Likewise, the third volume of *Capital* refers to "the drive for accumulation" (*Akkumulationstrieb*).<sup>62</sup>

In writing of "a particular form of the drive" (*eine besondere Form des Triebs*), the Marx of the *Grundrisse* indicates that greed per se (as *auri sacra fames*, *die*



*Bereicherungssucht*, and/or *die Goldgier*) is a species of the genus *Trieb als solche*. Thereby, Marx's historical materialist critique of political economy implies a philosophical-anthropological drive theory. His *Triebtheorie* anticipates that of psychoanalytic metapsychology. Even more specifically, his claim that money "is... not only the object but also the fountainhead of greed (*die Quelle der Bereicherungssucht*)" makes the universal equivalent function as what Jean Laplanche later identifies as the "source-object" (*Quelle-Objekt*) of drive (*Trieb*),<sup>63</sup> with money being the source-object of capitalist greed *qua* drive. In Marx's drive theory, there is a trans-historical structure of drive or drives (perhaps rooted in humanity's *Gattungswesen* with its natural history<sup>64</sup>) that takes on different precise configurations in its various manifestations across shifting social formations. The infrastructural and superstructural dimensions of social formations at the level of objective political economies mediate the structure of drive(s) at the level of subjective libidinal economies. The previous passage from the *Grundrisse* explicitly suggests, by characterizing capitalism-specific greed as "not *natural (natürlich)*, as opposed to *historical (Geschichtlichen)*," that drive-form in general indeed is natural. By contrast, a socially mediated particular instantiation of this form, such as greed, is historical.

Continuing a bit longer to stick to the details of the same quotation from the *Grundrisse*, Marx identifies money as responsible for bringing into existence the species that is greed out of the genus that is drive. To be more exact, this would be money insofar as it: one, gets embodied in a specific commodity (paradigmatically, gold) coming to function as universal equivalent, namely, as the commodity *par excellence* which, in its universality, can be exchanged with all other commodities; and, two, allows for boundless mathematical accumulation (paradigmatically, capitalists' amassing of surplus-value via capital's basic circuit of M-C-M' [money-commodity-money-plus-surplus-value]). Related to this, Marx, in the preceding passage, situates a cluster of terms and phrases along the line of a fundamental distinction between those drive-forms specific to capitalism and those to be found in pre- and non-capitalist social formations too (i.e., drive-forms not specific to capitalism).

On the one hand, "the craving for a particular kind of wealth (*der Sucht nach besondrem Reichtum*), e.g. for clothes, weapons, jewels, women, wine etc." is not peculiar to capitalist social formations. As Marx observes, the "mania for possessions (*Habsucht*) is possible without money" – precisely without money as surplus-value-producing universal equivalent within systems of commodity relations. On the other hand, "abstract hedonism," as "the need of greed for money as such" (*das Bedürfnis*

*der Geldgier als solche*), comes into existence and persists only in and through capitalism as its socio-historical necessary condition. Hedonism becomes abstract in and through the becoming-abstract of one particular commodity (i.e., currency-as-capital) *vis-à-vis* all other commodities (including especially commodified labor-power as itself bound up with the real abstraction of labor as such under capitalist economics). This abstracting/abstraction of libidinal economics defensibly can be depicted as a historical transition, facilitated by money turning into “wealth” (*Reichtum*) as “individualized in a particular thing (*einem besondren Ding*),” from concrete-*qua*-qualitative hedonism to abstract-*qua*-quantitative hedonism. Concrete-*qua*-qualitative hedonism would be “the craving for a particular kind of wealth” in the guise of use-values to be consumed. Abstract-*qua*-quantitative hedonism would be the craving for “general wealth (*allgemeine Reichtum*), wealth as such (*der Reichtum als solcher*)” as surplus-value-generating-exchange-values to be assembled into inexhaustible stores of self-valorizing capital. The latter, and not the former, is peculiar to capitalism.

The well-known distinction I just invoked between qualitative use-values and quantitative exchange-values also is a deliberate allusion on my part to two connected components of Marx's critique of political economy: more obviously, “commodity fetishism” as per the most famous chapter in all of *das Kapital*, that of the first volume on “The Fetishism of the Commodity and Its Secret”; and, less obviously but nonetheless relatedly, the different socio-economic and libidinal logics of capitalists and consumers. Apropos this entwined pair of allusions, I propose interpreting the second as a distinction between two varieties of capitalist commodity fetishism. The capitalist as capitalist (and not, as he/she also is, as him/her-self a consumer) operates according to the law of M-C-M'. The vast bulk of consumers, as not owning any means of production, are not capitalists and hence rarely, if ever, can and do think and act in terms of M-C-M'. Instead, these consumers operate according to the law of C-M-C'. For a worker/employee, his/her only commodity to bring to market is his/her own commodified labor-power (C), which is exchanged for money in the guise of wages/salary (M), with this money in turn permitting the purchase of other commodities (C') as, ultimately, use-values to be consumed (and not surplus-value-generating-exchange-values to be accumulated) as the worker's/employee's means of subsistence.

On the basis of the immediately preceding, I contend that commodity fetishism within capitalism comes in two fundamental types: one wholly engendered by capitalism, namely, abstract-*qua*-quantitative hedonism (i.e., greed as *auri sacra*

*fames, die Bereicherungssucht, and/or die Goldgier*), and another merely mediated in its specific manifestations by capitalism, namely, concrete-*qua*-qualitative hedonism (i.e., the “mania for possessions (*Habsucht*)” as “the craving for a particular kind of wealth (*der Sucht nach besondrem Reichtum*), e.g. for clothes, weapons, jewels, women, wine etc.”). Abstract-*qua*-quantitative hedonism fetishizes amassing valorizable exchange-values and obeys the logic of M-C-M'. Concrete-*qua*-qualitative hedonism fetishizes consuming determinate use-values and obeys the logic of C-M-C'. All of this is to say that the capitalist and the consumer are seized by different kinds of commodity fetishism. The capitalist fetishizes one commodity above all others (i.e., the universal equivalent as “general wealth (*allgemeine Reichtum*), wealth as such (*der Reichtum als solcher*)... individualized in a particular thing (*einem besondren Ding*)”), while the consumer fetishizes commodities other than money (albeit, as commodities, bearing surplus-value for the capitalists flogging them).

Connected to this, and to repeat a point I already have emphasized several times, Marx's historical materialist analyses of capitalism insist that capital's quantitative drive towards cumulative self-valorization via exchange-values is the core engine generating and propelling various qualitative drives towards the consumption of a proliferating multitude of use-values. In other words, consumers' drives to consume are themselves ultimately driven by capitalists' drive to accumulate. Consumerist commodity fetishism (fixated upon C' as qualitative use-values) is itself a symptom whose underlying disease is capitalist commodity fetishism (fixated upon M' as quantitative exchange- and surplus-values).

I would argue that both sympathetic commentators on and hostile critics of Marx tend implicitly or explicitly to fixate upon consumerist rather than capitalist commodity fetishism when addressing this renowned portion of the first volume of *Capital*. This is to mistake the symptom as effect for the disease as cause. Capital's drive to produce ever more surplus-value, with M' as its fetishistic *telos*, produces surplus-value precisely by spurring, among other things, consumers' drives to consume ever more commodities, with C' as their fetishistic *teloi*. Within capitalism, the former is primary and the latter is secondary. Likewise, Marx, in the third volume of *Capital*, characterizes consumption as the determined “subjectification [*Versubjektifizierung*]” of production *qua* the producing of surplus-value for capital.<sup>65</sup>

Particularly in the wake of the rise of specifically consumerist capitalism starting in the mid-twentieth century, it is quite understandable that many Marxist theorists have trained their critical gazes on the manners in which capital's subjects

are interpellated as consumers caught in a constantly accelerating and intensifying looping of the circuit C-M-C'. Advertising, marketing, branding, planned obsolescence, myriad sources of credit, countless purchasing platforms, commodification of the natural and the experiential, big data and the mining of social networks, and so on fuel the steadily increasing rapidity and expansion of this infernal circle of slaving away for shiny trinkets and amusing distractions and, in so doing, selling oneself more and more into the slavery of debt in perpetuity. However, again, this glaringly visible and deafeningly noisy form of commodity fetishism gripping consumers in late-capitalism is not the form governing capitalists themselves as proper capitalists.

As is common knowledge, Marx, in his discussion of the fetishism of commodities, distinguishes between the material dimensions of commodities (as qualitative use-values) and their social dimensions (as quantitative exchange-values).<sup>66</sup> Consumer commodity fetishism arguably involves the category mistake of gauging qualitative use-value by quantitative exchange-value. The paradigmatic example of this is afforded by the classical miser's near-delusional belief that the power to effect economic transactions (at the social level of exchange-value) is a physical property (at the material level of use-value) arising from and inhering within the element assigned atomic number seventy-nine on the periodic table – and this in the same way as gold's properties of being metallic, malleable, and yellow (putting aside in this context Kripkean thought experiments about atomic number seventy-nine as a "rigid designator" across possible worlds<sup>67</sup>). Under the influence of the delusion of consumerist commodity fetishism, the miser, in hoarding gold (or whatever commodity is made the universal equivalent), self-subversively and almost comically withdraws from social systems of exchange, so as to preserve for him/herself alone gold's value, that which has this fetishized value only in and through the same social systems of exchange from which the miser withdraws it.<sup>68</sup> As Marx observes in the *Grundrisse* regarding money, "it is realized only by being thrown back into circulation, to disappear in exchange... If I want to cling to it, it evaporates in my hand to become a mere phantom of real wealth (*wirklichen Reichtums*)."<sup>69</sup> If there is no such thing as a private language,<sup>70</sup> there definitely also is no such thing, *contra* the miser's fantasy, as a private exchange-value attached to the commodity *par excellence* as one of its several thingly qualities. The miser obsessively relates to gold as C rather than M (whereas the capitalist relates to it precisely as M).

Different, but not different-in-kind, from the miser, late-capitalism's consumers, goaded and prodded by capital itself, have their own fashions of fetishistically

mistaking quantitative social exchange-values for qualitative material use-values. Over roughly the past century, capitalism has refined and honed its arts for creating more and more “needs” *ex nihilo*, implanting in the targets of its ceaseless, relentless publicity efforts multiplying, recurring senses of deprivation, insufficiency, lack, and the like. Whether in the guise of the “Veblen effect” in “conspicuous consumption” or related capitalist socio-economic phenomena defying naive notions of straightforward supply-and-demand relations, heightened prices and measurable social valuations, at the quantitative level of exchange-value, can and do create the illusion that the thus quantitatively (over)valued commodity is, at the qualitative level of use-value, intrinsically of greater desirability. In such cases, the consumer feels he/she “needs” the commodity in question because it has been made to appear to him/her to possess consumable material utility on the basis of social exchangeability as an entirely separate categorial dimension of the commodity. Although the miser fetishizes the metals of currencies and the consumer fetishizes other commodities instead, they both fetishize C rather than M per se as M (again, the capitalist *qua* neither consumer nor miser indeed fetishizes M per se as M and not C).

So, what about capitalist as distinct from consumerist commodity fetishism? Whereas the latter is structured by C-M-C', the former, as capitalistic, unsurprisingly is structured by M-C-M'. For capitalists as capitalists, all material, qualitative use-values appear useful only insofar as they contribute to and/or are translated into social, quantitative exchange-values (as the vehicles bearing and yielding surplus-value). Capitalists' commodity fetishism treats use-values as exchange-values, while, in mirroring reciprocity, consumers' commodity fetishism treats exchange-values as use-values. Additionally, and to refer back once more to the earlier lengthy block quotation from the *Grundrisse*, fetishistic consumers could be said to be enflamed by the capital-stoked fever of the “mania for possessions (*Habsucht*)” as “the craving for a particular kind of wealth (*der Sucht nach besondrem Reichtum*), e.g. for clothes, weapons, jewels, women, wine etc.,” namely, what I earlier labeled “concrete-*qua*-qualitative hedonism.” Fetishistic capitalists, by contrast, suffer from and are in thrall to the malady of greed proper (i.e., *auri sacra fames*, *die Bereicherungssucht*, and/or *die Goldgier*) as “a particular form of the drive (*eine besondere Form des Triebs*),” namely, abstract-*qua*-quantitative hedonism. The miser's fetishism would be a transitional, hybrid pathology situated in-between the parallel fetishisms of capitalist and consumer. Like the capitalist, the miser fixates upon the universal equivalent as the one unique commodity standing in for all other commodities. But, unlike the capitalist, the miser, as seen, relates to the universal equivalent in the mode of the

consumer, that is, as a material thing (C *qua* use-value) instead of a social relationship (M *qua* exchange- and surplus-value).

## Selfless Capitalism, Selfish Communism: Refuting Liberalism's Favorite Old Canard

What is the payoff of my brief revisitiation, in the preceding section, of the fetishism of commodities *à la* Marx? As I see it, there are two primary gains generated by this: first, a line of counter-argumentation against a (if not the) standard (neo)liberal objection to Marxism; and, second, further clarification and nuancing of my dual Marxist-psychoanalytic motif of “from closed need to infinite greed” (I will deal with the second of these gains in the next section of this intervention). As for the first, both classical and contemporary liberalisms base their objections to Marxism on the all-too-familiar charge, repeated *ad nauseam*, that human beings are, by nature, fundamentally and incorrigibly self-serving animals, vicious predators especially dangerous to their conspecifics (*Homo hominis lupus est*). From a standpoint of assumed pragmatic realist pessimism, liberals brandish variations on this bleak, cynical Hobbesian vision of a rigid, recalcitrant human nature with an incurable egocentric orientation against Marxists they accuse of hopelessly utopian optimism.

I will not rehearse here the established, canonical Marxist responses to liberalism's contentions that there is a firmly fixed essence of humanity and that this essence is irredeemably selfish. Starting with Marx himself, numerous Marxists have raised serious questions and powerful objections as to whether there is a “human nature” in the sense relied upon by liberals and, if this nature exists in some form or other, whether it is refractory to radical transformations and/or forever inherently self-centered. Already before Marx, Hegel aggressively goes on the counter-attack again and again against liberalism's myths about nature (especially the so-called “state of nature”) and “social contracts” (all of this being associated with what Hegel's critiques in these veins label the “natural law” tradition).<sup>71</sup> Needless to say, I am quite sympathetic to these Hegelian and Marxian lines of response to ideological false naturalizations of capitalist (anti-)social relations.

That said, what if, at least for the sake of argument, one were to grant to the liberal tradition that there is something to the notion of selfishness being a stubbornly persistent feature of human subjects? Via hypothetically entertaining this scorched-earth argumentative maneuver, I believe I can show why a pro-capitalism, anti-Marxism conclusion does not follow even if the liberalist thesis about humans'

intrinsic self-interestedness is conceded. My demonstration of this will draw and depend on the results of the prior analyses here of drive theory and commodity fetishism *à la* Marx. In good Hegelian fashion, my critique of egocentrism as per liberalism will be immanent rather than external, working from within the liberalist psychology of selfishness so as to arrive at this psychology's (self-)problematization.

As I establish above, the mature Marx's historical materialist critique of political economy crucially distinguishes between those drives that are peculiar to capitalism as a specific social formation and those that are not. More precisely, capitalism-specific abstract-*qua*-quantitative hedonism (i.e., "the need of greed for money as such (*das Bedürfnis der Geldgier als solche*)" as *auri sacra fames*, *die Bereicherungssucht*, and/or *die Goldgier* and whose *telos* is M') is different-in-kind from any non-specific concrete-*qua*-qualitative hedonism (i.e., the "mania for possessions (*Habsucht*)" as "the craving for a particular kind of wealth (*der Sucht nach besondrem Reichtum*)" and whose *telos* is C'). Marxism carefully differentiates between two categories of inclinations: on the one hand, those fetishistically oriented toward the production and accumulation of surplus-value-bearing-exchange-values (M'); and, on the other hand, those fetishistically oriented toward the purchase and consumption of use-values (C').

By contrast, most liberals' images of selfishness tend not to contain or allow for anything along the lines of what could be called Marx's distinction between capitalist and non-capitalist forms of "selfishness," namely, abstract-*qua*-quantitative and concrete-*qua*-qualitative hedonisms respectively. Moreover, I would allege that the egocentrism of liberalism often is envisioned in this tradition and its ideological offshoots more along the lines of the consumerist "mania for possessions" (i.e., concrete-*qua*-qualitative hedonism) than properly capitalist greed per se in Marx's exact sense (i.e., abstract-*qua*-quantitative hedonism). When this is the case, the selfishness liberalism appeals to as justifying capitalism in particular is not even the selfishness peculiar to and driving of this very same capitalism itself. This is a fatal flaw in liberalism's attempted defense of capitalism as the least bad, if not optimally good, socio-economic arrangement.

Unlike the "selfish" consumer, the "selfish" capitalist, as a proper capitalist, is not driven by a desire to shop until he/she drops, so to speak. However, under the influence of consumerist capitalism in particular, liberals themselves are prone to model selfishness on crowds' manias for consumption. Such modeling constructs a picture of capitalists in which their insatiable public pursuits of profits ultimately aim at private consumptive ends. That is to say, the (neo)liberal image of selfishness,

especially within consumerist late-capitalism, confusedly collapses the capitalist's abstract-*qua*-quantitative hedonism fetishizing M' into the consumer's concrete-*qua*-qualitative hedonism fetishizing C'. In so doing, the capitalist *qua* capitalist is mischaracterized as being animated at root by "the craving for a particular kind of wealth (*der Sucht nach besondrem Reichtum*), e.g. for clothes, weapons, jewels, women, wine etc."

A mere descriptive phenomenological sketch of the capitalist is enough to illustrate the problems with reducing abstract-*qua*-quantitative to concrete-*qua*-qualitative hedonism. If and when a capitalist crosses a certain threshold in the accumulation of surplus-value, the further accumulation to which he/she is driven by the very logic of capital and the corresponding framework of capitalism as a socio-economic system reveals itself to have nothing to do with his/her personal consumption of commodities as material use-values (i.e., as "particular kinds of wealth"). In truth, as capitalism-specific greed in Marx's technical sense, it never did have to do with this. The goal of every capitalist as a capitalist is to accumulate as much surplus-value (and not use-values [C']) as possible. But, past certain quantities of amassed money (M'), the individual capitalist would be hard-pressed to spend all of this mass on him/her-self in terms of commodities for private enjoyment (a version of this challenge is depicted in the 1985 Richard Pryor comedy film *Brewster's Millions*). Moreover, were he/she somehow to manage to do so, he/she would be out of business, altogether ceasing to be a capitalist by exiting the loop of M-C-M'. He/she would be literally out of the capitalist loop.

Those who embody the aims and aspirations of any and every capitalist as a proper capitalist – nowadays, these avatars of capitalism would be the individuals listed on *Forbes* magazine's annual ranking of the world's billionaires – are not driven by a "mania for possessions" (i.e., concrete-*qua*-qualitative hedonism as the consumerist drive toward C'). Their accumulated monetary wealth is well beyond both what is necessary for their (and their dependents') extremely high material quality of life as well as what even would be possible for them to squander on themselves by way of (conspicuous) consumption. Hence, their amassing of money ultimately is not pursued with an eye to consumer-style selfishness. Furthermore, one of the key lessons of historical materialism is that trans-individual socio-structural dynamics, and not individual psychologies, are the real determinants of the conduct of persons as representatives of class positions.

Perhaps Freud is right that sometimes a cigar is just a cigar. But, money is never just money. To begin with, there is the Marx-underscored difference between



money as currency (i.e., a means of exchange for the procurement of C') and money as capital (i.e., a means of self-valorization for the generation of M'). What is more, there also is, for both Marxism and psychoanalysis, the essentially social status of money (with analysis adding supplementary emphases on the idiosyncratic subjective significances of it too). From the analytic perspective (whether Freudian, Lacanian, Kleinian, etc.), consumers' libidinal-economic relationships to the money-governed marketplace and its commodity-objects are much more individuated, complex, nuanced, and varied than some sort of straightforward universal, natural instinct of the human animal to possess or devour.

Likewise, from the Marxist perspective, capitalists' incessant pursuits of the valorization of their capitals is not at all reducible to the desire to consume commodities as providers of private pleasures. As noted, Marx, particularly when discussing commodity fetishism, associates the distinction between use- and exchange-values with the material and social dimensions of the commodity respectively. Hence, and with reference to the (neo)liberal notion of selfishness, one could distinguish between material selfishness (i.e., consumerist fetishism as concrete-*qua*-qualitative hedonism) and social selfishness (i.e., capitalist fetishism as abstract-*qua*-quantitative hedonism). To return to the example of *Forbes* magazine's ranking of the world's billionaires – in line with my immanent critique of the (neo)liberal psychology of selfishness, I here run the multiple risks involved with hypothetical descriptions of the psychical-subjective motives of these bourgeois behemoths – if they are “selfish,” this is likely almost always a burning thirst for self-aggrandizement as symbolically-collectively recognized status. In this example, money, specifically as the numerical amount of quantified wealth on the basis of which a rank on the *Forbes* list is assigned, is about social rather than material selfishness, about one's fantasized standing in the eyes of an anonymous big Other.

On the basis of the preceding, the *non sequiturs* in the liberal tradition's argumentative wielding of alleged human selfishness against the Marxist tradition now readily can be seen for what they betray, namely, outright sophistry. In apologizing for and speciously justifying capitalism, (neo)liberalism assumes that selfishness in its very nature can be satisfied only by money as itself always merely a means to the end of the egocentric enjoyment of goods and services for private consumption. Were this to be the case, consumerist late-capitalism might be the unsurpassably rational culmination of social history.

But, really existing capitalism, particularly when viewed through the dual lenses of Marxism and psychoanalysis, shows that the selfishness of the capitalist

drive ruling its heart (i.e., Marxian greed as *auri sacra fames*, *die Bereicherungssucht*, and/or *die Goldgier*, abstract-*qua*-quantitative hedonism, the circuit of M-C-M') is something quite different from what liberals have in mind. Liberalism ferociously defends capitalism without understanding its basic logic and phenomena. Liberalism's chain of false equivalences between selfishness, money, and consumption is an emblematic misunderstanding on its part.

If the drives of capitalists (and even of many, if not all, consumers in late-capitalism) ultimately are about things social rather than material, then there is no reason why such "selfish" impulses and ambitions cannot be at least symbolically satisfied in a post-capitalist arrangement of a socialist or communist sort. As per my immanent critique of (neo)liberal appeals to selfishness, the psychological narcissism of individual capitalists, such as *Forbes*-ranked billionaires, is largely (if not entirely) about accruing socio-symbolic currency as a means to the end of inter- and trans-subjectively recognized status and standing, not as a means to the end of purchasing and enjoying objects and experiences (although this second end admittedly is a happy by-product of the first end under capitalism). Even at the level of the liberalist psychology of selfishness, apart from the unconscious structural dimensions of non-psychological Marxian and psychoanalytic drive theories, capitalism has to be seen, contrary to what is presupposed in liberals' protests against socialism and communism, as driven by something other than literal money as nothing more than the power to purchase goods and services. Moreover, in the new information age, the cutting-edge of contemporary consumer capitalism's more affective, socially-networked modes of primarily experiential consumption already points in the direction of the growing primacy of social over material selfishness for consumers themselves.

Therefore, even if one agrees with liberalism that humans always are fundamentally motivated by some kind of natural self-interestedness, it by no means follows that the unique or best way to accommodate and satisfy such egocentricity is in and through the currency-ruled, commodity-filled economic networks of modern capitalism. Could not post-capitalist forms of cultural-political symbolic recognition provide the same or similar enough gratification as is already the real goal of the biggest of the big bourgeoisie as animated by social rather than material selfishness? And, with such socialist/communist sublimations of both capital's and capitalists' self-valorizations (in several senses of "self-valorization"), what would happen to the material selfishness of consumers (i.e., the "mania for possessions" [C'] as concrete-*qua*-qualitative hedonism) as a secondary effect driven by and

symptomatic of capitalism's primary logic of M-C-M'? What already is happening in terms of the increasing dematerialization (i.e., the becoming social, experiential, and/or affective) of consumption in the internet era?

Before leaving behind this debate with the liberalist tradition, I wish to add a further inflection to my preceding suggestion that the link between capitalism and selfishness is not what (neo)liberals have taken it to be (and, as will be highlighted in the subsequent section here, Marx himself makes a suggestion along the same lines via comparing and contrasting the figures of the miser and the capitalist). As seen, I refer as an example to a well-known representative of the capitalist press, namely, *Forbes* magazine. I now will employ reference to another pro-capitalist magazine, *The Economist*, so as to add the inflection I have in mind. Founded in 1843 and furnishing Marx himself with ample grist for the mill of his historical materialist critique of political economy, this journalistic bastion of British liberalism remains up through today a tireless cheerleader for global capitalism. As Thomas Picketty observes with acidic accuracy in an endnote to his *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, *The Economist* manifests a "limitless and often undiscerning zeal to defend the powerful interests of its time."<sup>72</sup> However, not only did Marx consider this weekly magazine well worth consulting and assaulting – it certainly was good enough for his admirable purposes – it remains one of the more sophisticated popular journalistic defenders of (neo)liberal globalization. Defeating one's stronger opponents is always the most productive critical procedure. Additionally, the bourgeoisie is never so honest as when it believes that it is talking only to itself, such as within the pages of *The Economist*.

Like so many other (neo)liberals, the editors of *The Economist* repeatedly rehearse the selfishness objection to Marxism and its branches I rebut above. Yet, they fail to register at all the supreme irony that their pleas for the supposedly ideal (although also allegedly feasible and realizable) utopia of frictionless capitalist globalization call for at least as much self-sacrifice as what they imagine both the theory and practice of Marxism unrealistically demand (of course, Marx himself, in his 1848 speech "On the Question of Free Trade," also pleads on behalf of such globalization, admittedly because he sees it as a developmental trajectory inherent to but ultimately destructive of capitalism<sup>73</sup>). To be more exact, *The Economist*, in their frequent hymns to the Schumpeterian "creative destruction" of capitalism (and its more recent computer-age permutation, Christensenian "disruptive innovation"), forget that those who relish the creating (i.e., the tiny minority constituted by capitalists) are not the same as those who suffer the destruction (i.e., the massive

majority constituted by everyone else). Of course, creative destruction, despite the deceptive façade of unity presented by this single phrase as single, is internally divided along class lines.

Additionally, the neoliberals who, like *The Economist's* writers, celebrate creative destruction seem to forget that Joseph Schumpeter himself forges this concept on the basis of close considerations of Marx's works. Like Marx, he believes that these sorts of structural dynamics inherent to capitalism sooner or later will bring about capitalism's own self-wrought ruin.<sup>74</sup> Moreover, Schumpeter's phrase is, by virtue of its grammar, more honest about capitalism than Clayton Christensen's apparently similar one. The latter's "disruptive innovation," translated into Schumpeter's words, would be "destructive creation," namely, a one-hundred-eighty-degree inversion of the original Schumpeterian phrase. Schumpeter makes "destruction" the substantial noun modified by "creative" as the supplementary adjective, thus suggesting, in line with Marx, that capitalism is primarily ruinous and catastrophic. By contrast, the Harvard Business School Mormon academic Christensen implicitly reverses Schumpeter's grammar – "innovation" (i.e., creation) is now the substantial noun modified by "disruptive" (i.e., destructive) as the supplementary adjective – thereby indicating that capitalism is first and foremost a benign force for bringing about desirable advances and benefits. What is more, "disruptive" arguably is a much milder adjective than "destructive," downplaying the true severity of the havoc wreaked and the harms inflicted by capitalism.

The British liberals of *The Economist* and their ilk daydream about a global capitalism in which commodities, including commodified labor-power, move unimpeded across borders anywhere in their ceaseless chasing after exchange- and surplus-values. But, these liberals' fantasies have built into them the implicit assumption that particular interests and specific communities selflessly are going to submit to and accept their own destruction, the erosion and liquidation of their forms of life, if and when the creation of gains for capital dictates automation, outsourcing, migration, retraining, impoverishment, unemployment, obsolescence, and so on. The "selfishness" of these particular interests and specific communities is the source of those "frictions" resisting frictionless global capitalism.

If these frictions do not generate the red heat of socialist or communist political pushback against the bourgeoisie, they instead ignite right-wing-populist or fully fascist conflagrations. As Walter Benjamin's deservedly famous insight has it, "every rise of Fascism bears witness to a failed revolution."<sup>75</sup> Although the Marx of the late-1840s might have been too sanguine about the frenetic dynamics of free-trading

globalization inadvertently paving the way for socialism and communism – this is understandable, considering that “the specter of communism” truly was haunting Europe in 1848 – these dynamics, if they fail to lead in this radically progressive direction, will pave the way alternately for far-right coups and all their attendant violence and brutality (i.e., radically anti-progressive directions). As Rosa Luxemburg, citing Engels, puts it in her 1915 “Junius Pamphlet” – the geopolitics of the early-twenty-first century, with its combustible rivalries between great capitalist powers, frighteningly resembles the circumstances surrounding the First World War – the only two options on the road ahead are “socialism or barbarism.”<sup>76</sup> A “third way” combining liberal parliamentarianism with global capitalism as a new thousand-year Reich continually threading the needle between revolution and counter-revolution is, especially in light of present conditions, the most improbable or impossible scenario for social history *à venir*. Today’s looming specters of right-wing populisms and exponentially accelerating technology-prompted redundancies for white-collar as well as blue-collar workers around the globe – the current prospect of artificial intelligence does not look like its previous false dawns of years past – warn of the stark socialism-or-barbarism-style alternatives already starting to face humanity. In this light, *The Economist’s* “radical centrism” is the most utopian radicalism of them all.

*The Economist* defends capitalism precisely as, by its reckoning, an optimizer of the greater collective good of societies and the world as a whole, a rising tide purportedly lifting all boats. In the name of this greater collective good, its editors insistently urge people to make their peace with and even embrace the (creative) destruction of their modes of existence in the name of the “flexibility” (i.e., precarity, instability, insecurity, and the like) demanded by the flows and fluctuations of the movements of capital around the planet in its tireless questing after always greater surplus-value for itself. Hence, what these British (neo)liberal journalists advocate, given their own statements (and not words put in their mouths by me or anyone else), is tantamount to nothing less than forms of self-sacrifice on the part of the vast majority of human beings ostensibly for the abstract sake of maximizing the sum total of quantifiable economic gains distributed, in mathematical theory/ideality, across the numerical aggregates of entire populations. Of course, in the material practice/reality masked by the mathematical theory/ideality, these gains fall disproportionately into the hands of small sub-portions of these populations. The faceless big Other of the Market, with its stock indices, bond rates, investment grades, and growth statistics, repeatedly demands the selfless offerings of austerity

measures and “structural reforms,” brandishing weaponized forms of debt so as to reinforce these demands. Belts must be tightened. Capital must eat.

How does *The Economist's* rallying cry for reconciliation with capitalistic creative destruction not assume a potent, efficacious human capacity for certain sorts of selflessness, for acting against one's own immediate interests in the name of an abstract optimization of overall social well-being? Given this assumption, how can this very same liberal magazine dismiss again and again radical leftists for themselves allegedly assuming an identical potential in humans' natures? If Marxism, for instance, is indefensibly utopian *qua* unrealistic in supposedly calling for the masses to sacrifice their egocentric self-interests to the transcendent Cause of humanity's greater good in general, is not (neo)liberalism, with its always-just-around-the-corner dream of perfectly frictionless capitalist globalization, at least as (if not more) utopian in the same way and for the same reasons? How and why is serving the invisible hand of the market – Smith's famous metaphor certainly is an example of, and arguably also an inspiration for, Hegel's “cunning of reason” (*List der Vernunft*)<sup>77</sup> – any less disinterested than serving the invisible hand of history?

As an aside, *The Economist*, like all anti-communists, wrongly equates Marxism with Stalinism. In the *diamat* of the latter, there really is an invisible hand of history. Marx and Marxism(s), at their best moments, reject such views of history.

The editors of *The Economist* continually find themselves, albeit without realizing it, awkwardly in the same position *vis-à-vis* really existing capitalism as the Marxists they mock *vis-à-vis* really existing socialism. For these (neo)liberals, no empirical evidence of shortcomings in actual, factual capitalism, however serious and severe, ever raises the slightest doubts about the timeless theoretical legitimacy of (neo)liberalism itself. If their pro-capitalist ideas and ideologies have thus far failed to be confirmed by real facts on the ground, the fault inevitably is found to reside on the side of the “is” of reality and not the “ought” of ideality. Thus, *The Economist's* narratives continually lapse from journalistic description into editorializing prescription, into exhortations essentially along the Sadean lines of, “Gentlemen, one more effort if you wish to be capitalists!” Like the tardy fiancée of a certain joke, capitalism, for *The Economist*, never fails, since, if it fails, it is no longer capitalism.

Both Hegel and Marx insist on negativity (as death, destruction, wars, struggles, etc.) as history's real motor. Hegelian history is a “slaughter-bench”<sup>78</sup> and Marxian history advances by its “bad side.”<sup>79</sup> By contrast, the editorial preaching of *The Economist*, like the mutualist-libertarian socialism of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon as attacked in Marx's 1847 *The Poverty of Philosophy*,<sup>80</sup> makes a convenient unreal

abstraction of historically existent capitalism in which one can cherry-pick this hypothetical capitalism's "good" features and quietly leave behind its not-so-good ones that happen to be glaringly on empirical display. The finger-wagging "thou shalt nots" of *The Economist's* policy recommendations work to sustain the far-from-innocent illusion that capitalism's sins are never deadly, that its grave faults are mere venial sins as isolable and reformable contingent accidents (rather than necessary consequences inseparable from and expressive of capitalism's fundamental structural dimensions and tendencies). Under the watchful eyes of the priests of the Washington consensus, governments performing the penances of savagely slashing social spending, drastically deregulating all sorts of markets, and artfully striking the right trade deals guarantees the salvation of a heavenly socio-historical future. With enough political will-power and sufficient cajoling by the prosperity-gospel clerics of capitalist economics, (neo)liberalism will be redeemed in the end. What is the Enlightenment-style narrative of historical movement towards a classless society compared with this pseudo-secular theodicy of profit-driven progress towards the raining (or, at least, trickling) down of limitless riches?

Given my immanent critique of the psychological natural selfishness objection brandished over and over against Marxism by (neo)liberalism, Marxists, as seen, can lay claim to the possibility of sublating/sublimating the social egocentrism of capitalists themselves, with their abstract-*qua*-qualitative hedonism (as different from the material egocentrism of consumers, with their concrete-*qua*-qualitative hedonism). Additionally, I am tempted to go further and completely turn the tables on such (neo)liberal critics: It is capitalism, in fact, that is vainly fighting an ultimately doomed idealistic war against human selfishness, with socialism and communism being much better suited to satisfying the self-interests of the masses. Not only, *pace* liberalism, is the abstract-*qua*-quantitative hedonism of capitalists able to be channeled and sated in post-capitalism – considering the relative and absolute immiseration of the vast bulk of humanity under capitalism, the concrete-*qua*-qualitative hedonism of consumers will be better appeased and soothed once the pursuit of surplus-value at all costs (generating everything associated with "creative destruction" as well as gratuitous artificial scarcities, massively unequal distributions of wealth, and so on) is no longer the *raison d'être* of socio-economic activity.

In a complete reversal of a standard picture too often accepted by Marxists themselves along with their (neo)liberal enemies, capitalism ruthlessly suppresses individual self-interests in the name of serving an abstract, impersonal big Other, namely, the creatively destructive invisible hand of the market, the Economy as God.

By contrast, communism promises the abolition of this self-sacrificial capitalist service and, after it, the free indulgence of everyone in human selfishness, the egalitarian appreciations of both comfortable material quality of life as well as socio-symbolic recognition. If capitalist globalization's utopian overriding of humans' self-interests is not replaced by more realistic radical leftist selfishness, it will be replaced by the nightmarish identitarian delusions of enflamed far-right narcissisms with their hyper-aggressive manias. The liberal tradition is right about one thing at least: Human selfishness cannot be effortlessly conjured away by mere ideological fiat.

### The All-Consuming Miser: Capitalism's Headless Subject

After the preceding excursus on the topic of selfishness, I now return to the task of further specifying and substantiating the motif guiding my interfacing of Marxism and psychoanalysis: the conception of a shift in libidinal economics prompted by a historical mutation in political economics, as per the theme of "from closed need to infinite greed." This theme's reference to Koyré's *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe*, as I explained at the very beginning of my text, is meant to suggest a parallel between scientific modernity's mathematization of the natural world (via Galileo as per Koyré) and economic modernity's mathematization of the social world (via capitalism as per Marx). Both of these mathematizations open out onto infinities, onto certain forms of limitlessness.

As seen, I go on to identify Marx's technical conception of greed strictly speaking (i.e., *auri sacra fames*, *die Bereicherungssucht*, and/or *die Goldgier*) with abstract-*qua*-quantitative hedonism. This mode of commodity fetishism peculiar to capitalists alone is the limitlessness of the drive of the capitalist (as per Marx, "a particular form of the drive (*eine besondere Form des Triebs*)") as animated by the structural dynamic of M-C-M'. The M' of surplus-value, as the *telos* of this movement, is the indefinite quantitative self-valorization of M functioning as capital proper (rather than as simple currency *qua* means of exchange, as in C-M-C'). Furthermore, as I pointed out in relation to Marx, this capitalist drive towards in-principle limitless numerical amassing (i.e., "infinite greed") is the fundamental libidinal-economic motor of capitalism as a general political-economic framework.

In both the *Grundrisse* and volume one of *Das Kapital*, Marx repeatedly foregrounds the quantitative infinity of capitalist greed proper. The *Grundrisse*, in connection with the topic of self-valorizing value, speaks of "the constant drive to go beyond its quantitative limit: an endless process" (*der beständige Trieb über seine*



*quantitative Schranke fortzugehen: endloser Prozeß*),<sup>81</sup> the “ceaseless striving towards the general form of wealth” (*das rastlose Streben nach der allgemeinen Form des Reichtums*),<sup>82</sup> “the endless and limitless drive to go beyond its limiting barrier” (*der schranken- und maßlose Trieb über seine Schranke hinauszugehen*),<sup>83</sup> and “the infinite urge to wealth” (*unendlicher Trieb der Bereicherung*).<sup>84</sup> Likewise, the first volume of *Capital* refers to a “hoarding drive... boundless in its nature” (*Trieb der Schatzbildung... von Natur maßlos*),<sup>85</sup> a “boundless drive for enrichment” (*absolute Bereicherungstrieb*),<sup>86</sup> and an “unmeasured drive for self-valorization” (*maßlosen Trieb nach Selbstverwertung*).<sup>87</sup> Here, the drive-loop of M-C-M' is an infinite one<sup>88</sup> – with it being tempting, from a psychoanalytic perspective, to link this to the matter of repetition compulsion (*Wiederholungszwang*). Just as the mathematicization of nature opens up a boundless universe, so too does the quantified accumulation of monetary surplus-value open up a boundless greed. Modernity begins by plunging humanity into two bottomless abysses.

The first volume of *Capital*, in close connection with these emphases on the infinitude of the capitalist drive (i.e., abstract-*qua*-quantitative hedonism), adds another facet to Marx's drive theory bringing it even closer to the analytic (especially Lacanian) metapsychology of *Trieb*. Apropos value (as exchange- and surplus-values), Marx characterizes its M-C-M' circuit as “an automatic subject” (*ein automatisches Subjekt*)<sup>89</sup> and “a self-moving substance” (*eine prozessierende, sich selbst bewegende Substanz*).<sup>90</sup> Within capitalism, this quasi-Hegelian *Substanz-als-Subjekt* is “the dominant subject [*übergreifendes Subjekt*]”.<sup>91</sup> Again, greed per se, the distinctive form of the drive under capitalism, propels along both species of commodity fetishism, namely, the abstract-*qua*-quantitative hedonism on the side of capitalists with which greed strictly speaking is identical and also, as this greed's secondary effect, concrete-*qua*-qualitative hedonism on the side of capitalism's consumers. Furthermore, Lacan, in his celebrated eleventh seminar of 1964, likewise describes the drive in general (i.e., *Trieb überhaupt, pulsion tout court*), itself one of “the four fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis” (as per the title of *Seminar XI*), as “a headless subject” (*un sujet acéphale*)<sup>92</sup> and “a headless subjectification without subject” (*une subjectivation acéphale, une subjectivation sans sujet*).<sup>93</sup>

At one point in *Capital* volume one, Marx explicitly combines the two just-glossed features of capitalism's fundamental drive: first, infinitude/limitlessness and, second, automaticity/headlessness. He describes the capitalist's abstract-*qua*-quantitative hedonism as “blind and measureless drive” (*maßlos blinden Trieb*) with its “insatiable appetite” (*Werwolfs-Heißhunger*).<sup>94</sup> The individual capitalist can be

seen as the “personification” (*Personifikation*) or “bearer” (*Träger*) of this “blind and measureless drive.” With respect to the “movement” M-C-M', Marx explains:

As the conscious bearer [*Träger*] of this movement, the possessor of money becomes a capitalist. His person, or rather his pocket, is the point from which the money starts, and to which it returns. The objective content of the circulation we have been discussing – the valorization of value – is his subjective purpose, and it is only in so far as the appropriation of ever more wealth in the abstract is the sole driving force behind his operations that he functions as a capitalist, i.e. as capital personified (*personifiziertes*) and endowed with consciousness and a will. Use-values must therefore never be treated as the immediate aim of the capitalist; nor must the profit on any single transaction. His aim is rather the unceasing movement of profit-making. This boundless drive for enrichment, this passionate chase after value, is common to the capitalist and the miser; but while the miser is merely a capitalist gone mad, the capitalist is a rational miser. The ceaseless augmentation of value, which the miser seeks to attain by saving his money from circulation, is achieved by the more acute capitalist by means of throwing his money again and again into circulation.<sup>95</sup>

Marx's comparing and contrasting of the related figures of the capitalist and the miser echoes a passage from the *Grundrisse* quoted by me a while ago and, as seen, pivotal for my purposes. In that earlier passage, Marx, on the one hand, compares the capitalist's and the miser's self-sacrificial abstinence *vis-à-vis* all other commodities besides the universal equivalent (traditionally gold) and, on the other hand, contrasts the miser relating to precious metal as an inert material commodity (C) versus the capitalist relating to it as self-valorizing social capital proper (M' as, in the block quotation immediately above, “the valorization of value,” “the appropriation of ever more wealth in the abstract,” “the unceasing movement of profit-making,” etc.). Much later in the first volume of *Das Kapital*, Marx, in line with his distinction between the madness of the miser and the rationality of the capitalist, adds that, “what appears in the miser as the mania of an individual is in the capitalist the effect of a social mechanism in which he is merely a cog” (*Was... bei diesem als individuelle Manie erscheint, ist beim Kapitalisten Wirkung des gesellschaftlichen Mechanismus, worin nur ein Triebrad ist*).<sup>96</sup> Incidentally, “*Triebrad*” (here translated as

“cog”) can be rendered literally as “drive-wheel,” thus further amplifying the resonances with the Lacanian *pulsion* as restless, interminable looping.

It seems therefore that, in terms of contrasting misers and capitalists, Marx distinguishes between insane idiosyncrasy and sane sociality respectively. Under capitalism, there is the exception of miserly madness and the rule of capitalistic rationality. However, it would be more faithful to Marx's spirit, if not also his letter, to maintain that capitalistic rationality is, in a way, miserly madness writ large, namely, the socio-structural installation of the (il)logic of an “individual mania” (*individuelle Manie*). Of course, psychopathologies usually are easier to discern in individuals than in collectives; psychopathological symptoms in single persons standing out against social backgrounds are more readily discerned as such, as deviations, abnormalities, or extremes. But, one does not have to embrace psychoanalysis in order to have the sense that, at least on certain occasions or in certain instances, whole societies can and do qualify as “pathological.” In capitalism, the miser's mania is normalized by being generalized in the altered guise of the capitalist's greed.

However, I want to focus now on the self-sacrificial conduct Marx identifies as a trait common to both misers and capitalists. As seen in the preceding section of my intervention here, this trait flies in the face of the traditional liberal claims that human beings are naturally “selfish” and that capitalism is the unsurpassably most rational *qua* natural socio-economic system insofar as it supposedly gives free reign to this selfishness. Marx's historical materialism challenges not only appeals to an ahistorical human nature – its critique of (capitalist) political economy also rebuts liberalism's linking of capitalism and self-interested egocentrism of a consumptive sort.

Well before Max Weber's 1905 *The Protestant Ethic and the “Spirit” of Capitalism*, Marx's historical materialist critique of political economy duly recognizes the important part played by Protestantism and related superstructural phenomena in the historical genesis of capitalism. As Roman Rosdolsky notes, “This idea was later written about by bourgeois sociologists and economists as if it was something entirely new.”<sup>97</sup> Moreover, Marx himself definitely is not guilty of the economic reductions of the superstructural to the infrastructural, of the “naive historical materialism,” to which Weber objects.<sup>98</sup>

That said, the *Grundrisse* speaks of “the severe discipline of capital” (*die strenge Disziplin des Kapitals*).<sup>99</sup> Going into more detail, it remarks:

One sees how the piling-up of gold and silver gained its true stimulus with the

conception of it as the material representative and general form of wealth (*allgemeine Form des Reichtums*). The cult of money (*Das Geldkultus*) has its asceticism, its self-denial (*Entsagung*), its self-sacrifice (*Selbstaufopferung*) – economy and frugality, contempt for mundane, temporal and fleeting pleasures (*Genüsse*); the chase after the *eternal* treasure. Hence the connection between English Puritanism, or also Dutch Protestantism, and money-making.<sup>100</sup>

In German-language Lacanian literature, “*jouissance*” standardly is translated as “*Genuss*.” However, the “*Genüsse*” at stake in this passage (i.e., “mundane, temporal and fleeting pleasures”) are matters of pleasure rather than enjoyment, as per Lacan’s distinction between *plaisir* (associated with Eros’s pleasure principle) and *jouissance* (associated with Thanatos’s death drive). Indeed, *Genuss als jouissance* lies on the side of the “asceticism,” “self-denial,” “self-sacrifice,” and “economy and frugality” in the service of the “cult of money” and its “chase after the *eternal* treasure” *qua* ruthless, single-minded pursuit of “the piling-up of gold and silver” in their function of embodying “the material representative and general form of wealth.”

After the *Grundrisse*, the three volumes of *Das Kapital* proceed to buttress this emphasis on ascetic self-renunciation as essential to capitalism and as common to both miser and capitalist. Volume one, on the heels of emphasizing the unbound infinitude of the capitalist drive as greed, states:

In order that gold may be held as money, and made to form a hoard, it must be prevented from circulating, or from dissolving into the means of purchasing enjoyment (*als Kaufmittel sich in Genußmittel aufzulösen*). The hoarder therefore sacrifices the lusts of his flesh to the fetish of gold. He takes the gospel of abstinence very seriously. On the other hand, he cannot withdraw any more from circulation, in the shape of money, than he has thrown into it, in the shape of commodities. The more he produces, the more he can sell. Work, thrift and greed (*Geiz*) are therefore his three cardinal virtues, and to sell much and buy little is the sum of his political economy.<sup>101</sup>

Two features of this passage are worth highlighting. First, it indicates why, according to Marx, the miser is a failed capitalist and the capitalist is a successful miser, so to speak. Earlier, I explained why the miser is a failed capitalist. The miser’s commodity

fetishism as regards gold fetishizes it as the incarnation of exchange-value (assuming this malleable yellow metal to be the paradigmatic embodiment of the universal equivalent). At the same time, this fetishism compels the miser to withdraw it from circulation – with the social networks of economic circulation being the only spheres within which this element assigned atomic number seventy-nine possesses real exchange-value. Succinctly put, the miser, in hoarding a substance fetishized because it epitomizes value, nullifies this very value (something Lacan hints at in his sixteenth seminar<sup>102</sup>).

Moreover, Marx pointedly contrasts the miser's failure with the capitalist's success in the endeavor of hoarding gold, namely, accumulating materializations of value. In the case of the miser, greed as the hoarding drive requires not spending in order to save gold. Miserly avarice relies on mere, sheer withdrawal, and hence demands strict asceticism, frugality, renunciation, and the like ("The hoarder... sacrifices the lusts of his flesh to the fetish of gold. He takes the gospel of abstinence very seriously"). However, the capitalist, precisely in and through spending his/her gold on certain commodities (specifically, labor-power as variable capital and both fixed and circulating capitals as constant capital), accumulates value much more effectively than the saving-*qua*-non-spending miser. Seen in this light, the capitalist is a hybrid of the consumer and the miser. Like the consumer, the capitalist spends M on C. But, like the miser, this spending of M on C ultimately is motivated by the desire to hoard M (as M').

If and when the capitalist's investments pay off, his/her hoard grows much larger much faster than the miser's hidden, private stash of metallic bits and pieces. Continual hoarding precisely via perpetuating the cycle of M-C-M' even allows the capitalist to soften (albeit not eliminate) miserly self-sacrificial economizing. The capitalist can spend for consumption some (although far from all) of the profit he/she extracts from the quotas of surplus-value generated by the exploitation of labor. Yet, the rigid discipline constantly imposed by the merciless whip-hand of market competition sets firm limits to this softening of the regime of renunciation.

The second feature of the above-quoted passage I wish to underscore has to do with its observation that, "Work, thrift and greed (*Geiz*) are" the capitalist's "three cardinal virtues." It might seem that the third of these virtues, greed, is at odds with the first two, namely, work and thrift. However, one must remember that Marx consistently uses "*Geiz*" in his precise technical sense as synonymous with the specifically capitalist drive as abstract-*qua*-quantitative hedonism (i.e., *auri sacra fames*, *die Bereicherungssucht*, and/or *die Goldgier*). Instead of being opposed to

work and thrift, greed defined thusly directly dictates these other two virtues. In fact, the capitalist's greed as his/her peculiar form of hedonism positively commands such other self-sacrificial, self-renunciative characteristics. Recalling that capitalists are themselves consumers too, one could say that each and every properly capitalist subject is split such that his/her abstract-*qua*-quantitative hedonism (akin to a super-egoistic death drive) imposes and impinges upon his/her concrete-*qua*-qualitative hedonism (akin to an egoistic pleasure principle). As Marx puts this in the first volume of *Capital*, "there develops in the breast of the capitalist a Faustian conflict between the passion for accumulation and the desire for enjoyment (*Akkumulations- und Genußtrieb*)."<sup>103</sup>

In the second and third volumes of *Capital*, Marx accentuates his stress on the importance of appreciating what I have described, against (neo)liberalism, as the selflessness of capitalism. In the second volume, he goes so far as to insist that, "capitalism is already essentially abolished once we assume that it is enjoyment that is the driving motive and not enrichment itself" (*der Kapitalismus ist schon in der Grundlage aufgehoben durch die Voraussetzung, daß der Genuß als treibendes Motiv wirkt, nicht die Bereicherung selbst*).<sup>104</sup> The third volume expands upon this insistence:

It should never be forgotten that the production of this surplus-value – and the transformation of a portion of it back into capital, or accumulation, forms an integral part of surplus-value production – is the immediate purpose (*der unmittelbare Zweck*) and the determining motive (*das bestimmende Motiv*) of capitalist production. Capitalist production, therefore, should never be depicted as something that it is not, i.e. as production whose immediate purpose is consumption (*unmittelbaren Zweck den Genuß*), or the production of means of enjoyment for the capitalist (*die Erzeugung von Genußmitteln für den Kapitalisten*). This would be to ignore completely its specific character, as this is expressed in its basic inner pattern (*ihrer ganzen inneren Kerngestalt*).<sup>105</sup>

For Marx, the very basis/essence (*Grundlage*) and the "inner pattern" or core shape (*Kerngestalt*) of "capitalist production," its "immediate purpose" (*unmittelbare Zweck*) as "driving" (*treibendes*) and "determining motive" (*bestimmende Motiv*), is "the production of... surplus-value" as "enrichment itself" (*Bereicherung selbst*) – in a single symbol, M'. And, this is absolutely different-in-kind from what would be a defining orientation towards "means of enjoyment for the capitalist" (*die Erzeugung*

*von Genußmitteln für den Kapitalisten*) as “consumption” (*unmittelbaren Zweck den Genuß*) or simply “enjoyment” (*Genuß*) – in a single symbol, C'. To assume, as many liberals do, that selfishness as concrete-*qua*-qualitative hedonism (in the language of the *Grundrisse*, the “mania for possessions” as “the craving for a particular kind of wealth”) is the fundamental driving force of capitalism is to commit a grievous category mistake. By Marx's (as well as Weber's) reckoning, this is to miss the very political- and libidinal-economic nucleus of the capitalist mode of production.

By this juncture, a basic categorial division is glaringly apparent in Marx's historical materialist critique of political economy. On one side of this divide, there is the abstract-*qua*-quantitative hedonism of the capitalist drive as greed, *auri sacra fames*, *die Bereicherungssucht*, and *die Goldgier*. On another side of this divide, there is the concrete-*qua*-qualitative hedonism of the consumerist drive. These twin manifestations of commodity fetishism are closely related yet utterly distinct. In terms of their close relationship, the capitalist drive fuels the consumerist drive, with the former as cause, origin, or source and the latter as effect, result, or symptom. In terms of their utter distinctness, the *telos* of the capitalist drive is M' (i.e., socially produced and recognized quantitative exchange- and surplus-values), while the *telos* of the consumerist drive is C' (i.e., physically instantiated qualitative use-values). The primary product of capitalism is accumulable surplus-value, with consumable use-value as its secondary by-product. To fail to understand this is to fail to understand capitalism.

The time has come to finish substantiating my initial thesis according to which the mutations in libidinal economies induced by capitalist political economies are themselves historical conditions for the subsequent advent of psychoanalysis. As I explained, this thesis of mine runs parallel to one of Lacan's having it that the early-seventeenth-century birth of the natural sciences, especially as registered in Descartes's rationalist metaphysics with its *Cogito*, makes possible the later rise of the Freudian field. For Lacan, the modernity-defining shift “from the closed world to the infinite universe” (Koyré) ushered in by science is a historical condition of possibility for the appearance of the analytic subject.

For me, the modernity-defining shift “from closed need to infinite greed” ushered in by capitalism is a historical condition of possibility for the appearance of the analytic drive. For Lacan and me alike, the modern era does not create subjects or drives *ex nihilo*. Instead, it effectuates a Hegelian-style transition from subject and drive *an sich* to these structural dynamics becoming *an und für sich*. In other words, natural science and capitalist economics introduce differences-in-degree (albeit

ones so intense as to be virtually *de facto* differences-in-kind) into the subjective and libidinal dimensions of human beings such that the subjectively and libidinally more latent is rendered significantly more manifest. Such transitions are far from without their real ramifications.

So, exactly how and why are the capitalist and consumerist drives peculiar to capitalism as per Marx's historical materialist critique of political economy possibility conditions for psychoanalysis, with its metapsychology of the libidinal economy? Asked differently, in what fashions does Marxian *Triebtheorie* pave the way for its Freudian successor? Just as Galilean modern science infinitizes nature, so too does the modern capitalist economy infinitize drives. This libidinal infinitization is at work in both capitalist and consumerist drives (with the latter conditioned by the former).

The capitalist drive, as the greed of abstract-*qua*-quantitative hedonism, is limitless precisely in and through its quantitative nature.<sup>106</sup> This *Trieb des Kapitals* is oriented towards mathematically determined surplus-value, namely, the numerically unbounded, open-ended self-valorization of capital. The consumerist drive, *der Trieb der Konsumtion* as the mania for possessions of concrete-*qua*-qualitative hedonism, echoes the infinitude of the capitalist drive.

Capital-driven production (in pursuit of M') produces an ever-growing multitude of surplus-value-bearing commodities actually generating surplus-value only if and when ultimately exchanged for consumption. Indeed, capital requires, in order to reproduce itself, continual consumption-motivated exchanges (in pursuit of C'). Hence, the ceaseless agitation and insatiability of capitalism's consumerist drive is a symptomatic by-product of capitalist greed (*qua* M-C-M') as the primary drive of capitalism. This agitation and insatiability are created and sustained by a variety of mechanisms and manipulations, ones continuing to multiply vertiginously within consumerist late-capitalism (to recall a list I presented a while ago here: advertising, marketing, branding, planned obsolescence, myriad sources of credit, countless purchasing platforms, commodification of the natural and the experiential, big data and the mining of social networks...).

I will not spend time in this context belaboring the resemblances between, on the one hand, Marx's capitalist drive (i.e., abstract-*qua*-quantitative hedonism, M-C-M', greed, *auri sacra fames*, *die Bereicherungssucht*, and/or *die Goldgier*) and, on the other hand, Freud's and, especially, Lacan's death drive. Others, particularly Slavoj Žižek and his fellow members of the Slovene School, already have done much invaluable work in this vein. As I will emphasize below shortly, the novelty of my contribution on this occasion, in terms of Lacano-Marxism, pertains more to the link



between Marx's consumerist drive and the analytic metapsychology of the libidinal economy as involving sublimation and the like. Nonetheless, I ought to pause briefly to highlight a few of the most important details situated at the conceptual intersection between the Marxian-capitalist and Lacanian-death drives.

As seen, Marx regularly employs the German word "*Genuss*" in certain places. And, as I observed before, German-language Lacanian literature often translates "*jouissance*" as "*Genuss*." However, despite this, Marxian *Genuss* definitely is not synonymous with Lacanian *jouissance*. In fact, Marx's distinction between enrichment (*Bereicherung*) and enjoyment (*Genuss*) – this distinction is on display in material I quoted a short while ago – instead should be aligned with Lacan's between *jouissance* (enjoyment) and *plaisir* (pleasure) respectively. That is to say, Marxian enjoyment corresponds to Lacanian pleasure, and Marxian enrichment corresponds to Lacanian enjoyment.

Consequently, when Marx insists that capitalism is not about enjoyment *als Genuss* – this insistence beats Weber to the punch and contradicts liberalism's notion that the pleasures of hedonistic selfishness constitute capitalism's core interests – this does not mean that capitalism is not about enjoyment *comme jouissance*. Quite the contrary – Marxian enrichment *als Bereicherung*, as equivalent to the greed of the capitalist drive, is an epitomization of lethal Lacanian *jouissance*. As the production and reproduction of capital, the circuit M-C-M' compels, in its mathematized infinitude/limitlessness, its own interminable repetition. This *Wiederholungszwang* of capital's self-valorization through the boundless accumulation of quantified surplus-value is an acephalous kinetic configuration disregarding and overriding any and every other interest. The latter include even the (self-)interests of those human beings who, as capitalists, are this drive's personifications/bearers.

Even in (hypothetical) instances in which no individual capitalists wish to outsource, automate, pollute, despoil, and so on, the blind structural logic of capital itself forces them to do so nonetheless. The 2003 documentary film *The Corporation* nicely illustrates this, showing how individual capitalists, in terms of their psychologies, can be perfectly non-psychopathic persons while, at the same time, participating in trans-individual social entities (here, corporations as legal "persons") that themselves are structurally, although not psychologically, psychopathic. Such destructive and self-destructive behavior recurs regardless of whether or not those playing roles in perpetrating and perpetuating it desire to do so. The self-sacrificial renunciations of Marxian *Genuss* (as Lacanian *plaisir*) are dictated directly by the

capitalist drive to its representative agents (i.e., Marx's "severe discipline of capital," ascetic "cult of money," and the like *à la* "English Puritanism" and "Dutch Protestantism").

What is more, this peculiar socio-economic *Trieb* also commands conduct that can and does sooner or later bring about consequences inimical to the needs and wants of this drive's personifications/bearers. As capitalists, these representatives of the endless loop of M-C-M' are led again and again by this very loop to generate economic crises undermining their own self-interests specifically as capitalists. Moreover, as subjects not fully identical with or reducible to their roles as capitalists, these persons may also find themselves, however consciously or not, engaged in capitalist activity at odds with those of their inclinations and desires not directly entangled with the M-C-M' circuit.

So much for my extremely condensed recapitulation of some of the parallels between Marx's capitalist drive and Lacan's death drive, between greed as per Marx and *jouissance* as per Lacan. Now, what about the connection I have in mind here between Marx's consumerist drive and the libidinal economics of psychoanalysis? Although exchange-values (and, with them, surplus-values) are quantitative and use-values are qualitative, the consumption of the latter motivated, at root, by the accumulation of the former (i.e., exchange- and surplus-values) results in a fluidification of qualities (as qualities under the influence of quantities). As I underlined much earlier, Marx emphasizes how capitalism exploits the flexibility and malleability of human needs. It both pushes hard upon the downward/depressive elasticity of the needs of those forced to endure immiseration as well as also banks on the excitability of the upward/manic elasticity of those called upon to cultivate ever more "needs" in relation to endlessly multiplying commodities. Additionally, each and every commodity-mediated form of consumption, via capital's arsenal of instruments and techniques, is compelled to lust after limitless series of not-so-useful use-values (as themselves bearers of exchange- and surplus-values). Such commodities, in their indefinite and boundless fungibility, lose the sharpness of their qualitative determinacy and distinctness *vis-à-vis* each other, partially dissolving into rapidly churning currents of compulsively repeated processes of fleeting, incomplete gratifications.

The political economy of capitalism, over the course of its history, steadily has made more and more explicit just how both mediated and plastic is the human libidinal economy. Capital's relentless commodification of anything and everything under the sun transforms, among many other things, the entities and experiences

invested in by the drives of consuming subjects, thereby altering these very drives in turn (assuming the fundamental correctness of the Freudian metapsychology of *Trieb*, in which all drives consist of cathected objects, such as invested-in entities and experiences, in addition to sources, pressures, and aims). To cut a very long story very short, both the theory and practice of psychoanalysis rely upon accounts of libidinal economies in which the unconscious is inextricably intertwined with the vicissitudes (*Schicksale*) of drives. Of course, these vicissitudes involve sublimations as well as metaphoric and metonymic displacements (what Lacan describes as the “drifting” of drives, of *Trieb* / *pulsion* as *dérive*<sup>107</sup>).

My main claim is that the distinctively modern immersion of drives and their drive-objects in flows of capital and the lubricant of currency *qua* universal equivalent – these are the mathematically infinite expanses of the “icy waters” famously spoken of by the *Communist Manifesto*<sup>108</sup> – renders the mediated, plastic, and drifting features of uniquely-human *Triebe* significantly more visible and ubiquitous. As Marx's own drive theory reflects, the capitalist drive, itself a historical mutation of modernity in both political and libidinal economies, depends and parasitizes upon an ever more extended and intensified elasticity and variability of consumerist drives. Is it any accident or coincidence that psychoanalysis is not invented until well after the rise of capitalism? Could Freudian analysis have been created, given its resting upon observations and posits regarding investments that twist, turn, meander, and fluctuate, before the pervasive rule of money makes general fungibility (via exchangeability) a palpably omnipresent component of everyone's daily existences and quotidian motivations? Without the closely paired socio-structural perversions of capitalist and consumerist commodity fetishisms (i.e., abstract-*qua*-quantitative and concrete-*qua*-qualitative hedonisms fetishizing M' and C' respectively) essential to and ubiquitous within capitalism, would the perversions of psycho-sexual lives have been sufficiently exhibited and widespread so as to afford Freud the grist for his clinical and metapsychological mill? Not only does Lacan identify money as the fetish *par excellence*<sup>109</sup> – he indicates that *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* is nothing other than the later Freud's registration of a *malaise* secreted specifically by monetized, commodified capitalist societies.<sup>110</sup>

For a Lacano-Marxism that itself is, in part, a renewal of the best of the Freudo-Marxist tradition, putting the literal economy back in “libidinal economy” is a long-overdue gesture, one that traditional Freudo-Marxism itself never adequately performed (and that admittedly I only manage to call for here – this is a line of research I plan to carry out in years to come). Capitalism brings about the

monetization-through-commodification of more and more of subjects' relations to both objects and other subjects. As the universal equivalent, money introduces a general equivalence, an all-pervading substitutability and interchangeability, amongst and between subject-object and subject-subject relationships.<sup>111</sup> This is what, in Marx's and Engels's eyes, makes bourgeois society, albeit inadvertently and unwittingly, ideologically revolutionary *qua* profaning and desacralizing.<sup>112</sup>

Obviously, the subject-subject relationship of the analytic clinic, the rapport between analyst and analysand, is itself predicated on a financial pact. Starting with Freud himself, analysts rightly consider monetary matters, particularly those concerning the analytic fee, important in terms of both techniques and interpretations. Without on this occasion developing a detailed Freud-Lacano-Marxist treatment of the topic of money – this is something I hope to develop in the not-too-distant future – suffice it to say for now that the significances of currency *qua* universal equivalent go well beyond issues in clinical technique apropos the analytic fee. In addition to the clinic of money (which already has received a certain amount of attention in various bodies of analytic literature), there is a metapsychology of money too.

I will limit myself here to observing that, for any adult subject lying on the couch in a capitalist context, money mediates not only his/her relationship with the analyst, but also, in light of Marx's critique of political economy, his/her relations to other subjects as well as virtually all objects (the latter insofar as capital strives to commodify every actual and potential object with a consumable use-value). Intra-subjectivity, one's reflexive relation to oneself, even is affected by this monetary mediation. If Marx is right that capitalism continually transforms more and more relations between persons into relations between things, then both the theory and practice of psychoanalysis, at least within capitalism, must take into account this all-pervasive mediation permeating and saturating the very roots of subjects' libidinal economies. Marx's own drive theory, as I have unpacked it throughout the preceding, indicates both the need for such an account as well as some of the key ingredients required by this *Triebtheorie*. Along with Reich and Fenichel, among others, I see Freud (and then Lacan too) as going on to elaborate such a drive theory more fully than Marx himself, albeit without the accompanying fine-grained clarity apropos the political economy's influences upon drives, desires, needs, wants, and the like.

A hybrid Marxian-psychoanalytic metapsychological anthropology of money-mediated libidinal life must theoretically employ the temporality of "deferred action"

(i.e., Freud's *Nachträglichkeit* and/or Lacan's *après-coup*). If the analytic rendition of ontogenetic subject formation and psycho-sexual development is even basically correct, then at least in the earliest years for the forming psycho-sexual subject-to-be, economic issues of capital and currency are not directly and explicitly thematized as such by and for the very young human being. However, two considerations make it such that this concession to psychoanalysis neither problematizes nor invalidates a Freudo- and/or Lacano-Marxian insistence on the all-pervasiveness of political-economic mediations in relation to libidinal-economic forces and factors.

First, as both Marxism and psychoanalysis (particularly the Lacanian version of the latter) highlight, something along the lines of Hegel's trans-individual, trans-generational "objective spirit" (whether as Marx's social structure or as Lacan's "symbolic order") always precedes the coming into existence of each and every singular, nascent subjectivity. Well before Lacan (not to mention Martin Heidegger, with his concept of *Geworfenheit* [thrownness]), Marx himself emphasizes the fact that all human beings are hurled at birth into determinate infrastructural and superstructural sets of configurations that are themselves parts of an already-underway social history.<sup>113</sup> As he famously observes at the start of 1852's *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*:

Men make their own history, but not of their own free will; not under circumstances they themselves have chosen but under the given and inherited circumstances with which they are directly confronted. The tradition of the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the minds of the living (*wie ein Alp auf dem Gehirne der Lebenden*).<sup>114</sup>

The upshot crucial for my purposes in the present context is that this overlap between Marx and Lacan on thrownness entails there being indirect but efficacious influences of political on libidinal economics from the get-go. In other words, even though, at the ontogenetic beginning, the immature subject-to-be does not immediately register experientially for itself these influences, the latter nonetheless indirectly mediate (via such institutions as the socially constituted family unit) this subjectivity-in-formation. Just as, for Lacan, the incubus (*Alp*) of language acquires the human being before the human being acquires language, so too for Marx (and Freudo-Lacano-Marxism): The economy, hanging over from "the dead generations," participates in drives (pressing down on "the brains [*Gehirne*] of the living") before drives participate in the economy.

Second, ontogenetic subject formation within capitalism makes it such that maturing psyches quickly are marked by very direct and tangible registrations of the interlinked capitalist and consumerist drives. Via media conduits, parental preoccupations and anxieties, errands and outings, schooling and peers, etc., children all-too-early start to acquire a lifelong intimate familiarity with the various rituals and routines of commodified consumption in capitalism's myriad marketplaces (starting at a time when, as children, they are ill-equipped to fend off critically the effects of capitalist institutions, practices, and ideologies). How can all of this not profoundly impact the wishes, fantasies, and object relations of those exposed as relatively helpless youths to such surroundings and impressions? In a universe of thoroughly corrupted social relations, how can the youth not promptly succumb to corruption?

This is where Freudian-Lacanian *Nachträglichkeit/ après-coup* is particularly crucial to appreciate. Why? In addition to the just-noted indirect influences of infrastructural and superstructural dimensions on even the most archaic phases of subject formation and psycho-sexual development, the subsequent direct metabolizations of socio-economic structures by libidinal life, as per analytic deferred action, retroactively re-transcribe early economic naiveté in terms of later economic worldliness (just as supposed pre-Oedipal stages are reconfigured after-the-fact in and after passage through the Oedipus complex). Of course, at the same time, psychoanalysis reciprocally would insist that infrastructures and superstructures (as socio-economic, political, and related domains) remain themselves marked in turn by sexual, familial, childhood, etc. influences. As, for instance, the mature Jean-Paul Sartre already maintains, both Marxism and psychoanalysis can and should acknowledge and delineate the mutual entanglements between their areas of respective focus.<sup>115</sup>

But, what, if anything, does Lacan bring to these issues? How are Freudo-Marxism as well as the Marxist critique of political economy altered or enhanced, if at all, by Lacanian theory in particular? I will conclude this intervention by addressing these questions in the next (and last) section.

## **Manufacturing Discontent: Lacano-Marxism and the Critique of Capitalist Economics**

In the first section of this contribution, I mention Reich and Fenichel as early-to-mid-twentieth-century pioneers of efforts to marry Marxism and psychoanalysis. It seems

fitting to me in this final section to end with one of the latest of these efforts, namely, Samo Tomšič's 2015 study *The Capitalist Unconscious: Marx and Lacan*. Therein, Tomšič furnishes readers with a wide-ranging, thorough exploration of Lacan's references to Marx's ideas and texts. I agree with quite a bit in his survey. But, there are crucial differences too, especially in terms of how Tomšič and I each handle the rapport between capitalism and selfishness.

There is much with which I concur in Tomšič's reconstruction of drive theory at the intersection of Marxism and Lacanianism. To begin with, Tomšič acknowledges that:

The paradoxes of the drive were not an unknown for Marx, whose manuscripts already contained the connection between the structure of the drive, the abstract nature of the general equivalent and the production of surplus-value.<sup>116</sup>

He then quotes the passage from the *Grundrisse* distinguishing between capitalist greed and the not-specifically-capitalist mania for possessions<sup>117</sup> (in the language I have been utilizing, abstract-*qua*-quantitative and concrete-*qua*-qualitative hedonisms respectively). Relying on an asserted equivalence of Marx's greed and mania for possessions with Lacan's drive and desire (*désir*) respectively, Tomšič proceeds to state:

The desire for the object (wealth)... accumulates a collection of objects that embody value – it focuses on the *objects of value* and not on *value as object*. The drive, on the other hand, is fixated on *the* object, the general equivalent, which due to its paradoxical status – being both singular and universal, a commodity and a Commodity in which all commodities are reflected – supports the infinitisation of satisfaction, which is to say, its impossibility and endless perpetuation. The capitalist drive for self-valorization is an unsatisfiable demand, to which no labour can live up to.<sup>118</sup>

Here, "*objects of value*" would be C' and "*value as object*" would be M', with the consumptive drive (or Lacanian desire as per Tomšič) fetishizing the former and the capitalist drive fetishizing the latter. I should add that what I might call the miserly drive apparently fetishizes the same object as the capitalist drive (i.e., gold as the universal equivalent), but treats this "Commodity in which all commodities are reflected" as a mere "commodity," namely, as an inert substance (a "singular" C as a

material thing) rather than a self-valorizing subject (a “universal” M as a social process).

Tomšič concludes above that, “The capitalist drive for self-valorization is an unsatisfiable demand, to which no labour can live up to.” As I have pointed out several times here with respect to Marx’s analyses, the insatiability of the capitalist’s infinite greed is a cause one of whose effects is a corresponding infinitization (and, hence, rendering insatiable too) of the consumer’s mania for possessions (another effect being, as Tomšič’s wording signals, capital’s tendency towards the unlimited exploitation of the ultimate source of surplus-value, namely, labor-power). Of course, this mania for possessions is the means in and through which capital valorizes itself, since surplus-value is realized only if and when exchange-values are realized in purchases of commodities by those intending to consume them (as use-values). One consequence of this given Tomšič’s equation of Marx’s capitalist and consumerist drives with Lacan’s drive and desire respectively is that desire (as the mania for possessions with *C’ qua “objects of value”* as its *telos*) must be viewed as created (and thereafter relied upon) by drive (as greed with *M’ qua “value as object”* as its *telos*). A Marxist *qua* historical materialist perspective would be adamant about contextualizing the Lacanian *pulsion-désir* distinction in relation to capitalist socio-economic conditions.

I wholeheartedly agree with Tomšič, considering some of the Lacanian ground we share, about what he rightly describes as “the infinitisation of satisfaction” entailing the generation of a particular form of lack or deficit (Smith himself speaks of “those desires which cannot be satisfied, but seem to be altogether endless”<sup>119</sup>). Indeed, neither the capitalist, with his/her greed for “*value as object’ qua M’*, nor the consumer, with his/her mania for “*objects of value” qua C’*, can reach a sufficient, satisfying end when their *teloi* recede endlessly in being infinitized. The capitalist as capitalist will never have enough infinitely accumulable surplus-value.<sup>120</sup> Correspondingly and consequently, the capitalist consumer will never have enough boundlessly multiplying commodities (whose boundless multiplication is a capitalism-specific by-product and reflection of the limitless structural push of capital towards more surplus-value). Capitalism’s socio-structural quantification of libidinal economics via the becoming mathematized of political economy makes the infinite into a real abstraction. More precisely, quantitative infinity introduces into social and subjective existences causally efficacious absences and impossibilities (specifically, absences of gratifying ends and impossibilities of satisfying completions). The mathematical mediation of drives, desires, and things closely related to them



associated with capitalism creates real voids at the hearts of libidinal economies. With eyes to the interfacing of Marxism and psychoanalysis, Tomšič and I both see these aspects of Marx's critique of political economy as justifying, and able to be done unique justice to by, recourse to Lacanian theory especially.

However, as I already have begun to insinuate, I worry that Tomšič's fashion of mobilizing Lacan's differentiation between *pulsion* and *désir* is not sufficiently sensitive to the distinguishing specificities of capitalism, a sensitivity essential both to Marx and to historical materialism generally. Simply and bluntly put, the Lacanian drive-desire distinction is not, for Lacan himself, peculiar to properly capitalist socio-economic systems – Lacan's countless references to ancient and medieval (i.e., pre-modern, pre-capitalist) figures, texts, and phenomena, including in connection with the metapsychology of libidinal matters, amply reveal as much – whereas the Marxian greed-mania distinction is (as I show throughout the preceding). Immediately identifying, as Tomšič appears to do, manic consumerism with Lacan's *désir* dehistoricizes the former, tearing it out of its capitalist context by decoupling it from its dependence upon and connection with the specifically capitalist drive (i.e., abstract-*qua*-quantitative hedonism as the circuit M-C-M'). Likewise, greed *a/s* *Mehrwertstrieb* comes into effective existence and operation only in and through capitalism.

Resolving the tension between Marx's historicism and Lacan's comparative ahistoricism would require, as a nuancing caveat, hypothesizing that the rise of capitalist modernity brings about an extending and intensification of the constellations and kinetics Lacan associates with *pulsion* and/or *désir*. I am not sure whether Tomšič would or would not endorse such a qualification. However, my own position involves precisely this. As a Lacanian, I would say that the metapsychology of the libidinal economy transcends and is irreducible to merely one or several historical contexts, with capitalism (as one of these contexts) at most generating differences-in-degree between pre-capitalist and capitalist libidinal economics. But, as a Marxist, I would say that these differences-in-degree generated by capitalism are so broad and deep as to be tantamount *de facto* to differences-in-kind. Moreover, as a Hegelian Marxist, I would say that this tipping over of differences-in-degree into differences-in-kind exhibits the dialectical-speculative logic of quantity, quality, and measure.<sup>121</sup> This borrowing from "The Doctrine of Being" of Hegel's *Logik* allows for a Lacano-Marxism in which a metapsychological anthropology of the libidinal economy helps explain some of what facilitates the emergence of capitalism's political economy as per historical materialism. At the same time, this

thus-Hegelianized Lacano-Marxism acknowledges that this thereby-emergent capitalist political economy comes to exert reciprocal modifying influences upon its libidinal-economic catalyts.

Of course, Tomšič is well aware of the importance of historical dimensions for Marx. As he observes regarding Marx's drive theory:

Marx... made an important point when he detached the notion of drive from its biological or physiological connotation. He entirely conditioned it with the social existence of the general equivalent and with historical development. The capitalist drive is therefore not the only possible drive. There is something like a history of the drive, a historical transformation of fixations, which alters the social articulation of the drive together with the function of the general equivalent in the predominant mode of production.<sup>122</sup>

Tomšič continues, making cross-resonate a passage in Marx's *Grundrisse* I quoted a while ago<sup>123</sup> with Lacan's depiction of the Freudian *Trieb* in *Seminar XI*<sup>124</sup>:

Marx...aims at the historical and the social transformation of the drive, leaving no doubt that the placement of the drive at the intersection of presumably natural need and its cultural articulation can be considered a predecessor of the psychoanalytic notion, for the Freudian notion of the drive is *not* the hunger that swallows raw meat but the hunger that reaches satisfaction through the *montage* of cooked meat, cutlery and table manners. Indeed, Lacan brought this to a crucial point when he compared the drive to a surrealist collage, underlining that the montage of the heterogeneous elements contains a differentiation between the *aim* and the *goal*, so... between use-value and exchange-value.<sup>125</sup>

It sounds as though there is a slight tension between these two block quotations, with the first striking the ear as more absolutely anti-naturalist (with *Trieb* as "detached... from its biological or physiological connotation" and "entirely conditioned" by socio-historical variables) and the second as more qualified along these lines (with *Trieb* as situated "at the intersection of presumably natural need and its cultural articulation," with its collage-like montages bringing together hodgepodes of somatic and psychical elements). Not only do I consider Tomšič correct to associate this second qualified anti-naturalism with Freud's and Lacan's

views – despite Marx being associated in the first of these block quotations with a thoroughly anti-naturalistic socio-historical constructivism, I think Marx's own writings, from start to finish, show him to be less of a categorical anti-naturalist than he sometimes is taken to be.<sup>126</sup>

That said, Tomšič's first set of remarks quoted above nonetheless signal his appreciation that Marx, like Freud and Lacan, believes drive per se, as a general structural dynamic forming part of a philosophical-metapsychological anthropology, to precede capitalism. That is to say, the capitalist drive and its offshoots are permutations of *Trieb als solche und überhaupt*, with the latter, for proper Marxism as well as psychoanalysis, exhibiting pre-capitalist (as well as, presumably, possible post-capitalist) instantiations too (as seen, Marx himself speaks of capitalist greed as "a particular form of the drive (*eine besondere Form des Triebs*)"<sup>127</sup>). And, needless to say at this juncture considering what has come before in my intervention, I unreservedly concur with Tomšič when he identifies the Marxian drive as "a predecessor of the psychoanalytic notion" of *Trieb*.

But, what about, at the end of the second of the two prior block quotations, Tomšič's alignment of Lacan's distinction between a drive's aim and its goal with Marx's (Smithian-Ricardian) distinction between use- and exchange-values respectively? Lacan, in his eleventh seminar, distinguishes between aim and goal in order to address an apparent contradiction in Freud's theory of sublimation (itself a vicissitude of the drive [*Triebchicksal*]). According to Freud, the aim of each and every drive is its specific variety of satisfaction (*Befriedigung*). Yet, Freudian sublimation is nothing other than the achievement of satisfaction in the face of aim-inhibition. So, if a drive's aim is inhibited, and this aim is defined as satisfaction, then how can an aim-inhibited drive be said to achieve satisfaction? Lacan's answer, in a nutshell, is that the true aim of *Trieb* – this is its goal of *jouissance* as distinct from its aim of *plaisir* – is repeatedly to circle around its object. This circling includes in its orbit whatever obstacles (i.e., Freudian aim-inhibitions) are placed in its path. The detours imposed by these obstacles simply become part of the larger curved trajectory to be followed. The recurrent enjoyment of the movement of this looping circuit is the real goal *qua* end-in-itself of *la pulsion*, a goal indifferent to whether or not barriers are raised to aimed-at satisfaction-as-pleasure.

So, what might Tomšič have in mind when he equates Lacanian aim and goal with Marxian use- and exchange-values respectively? On Marx's account, one of the distinctive peculiarities of capitalism is that it is the first and only socio-economic system in human history organizing its processes of production around (surplus-

value-yielding) exchange-values rather than use-values. In capitalism, consumable goods and services of utility (i.e., use-values gratifying needs and wants) are no longer the final causes, the ultimate *teloi*, of economic activity. Instead, commodities, however useful (or not), are mere means to an end different-in-kind from consumable utility; these objects are the incidental vehicles for transferring and amassing surplus-value along networks of exchanges. Capitalism leaves the matter of whether or not enough use-values are produced for the needs and wants of populations to the chanciness of the casino-like anarchy of decentralized, headless markets. The capitalist drive ceaselessly pursues the goal of capital's self-valorization unconcerned with whether other (consumerist) drives are satisfied – with this satisfaction being the aim of those drives other than the capitalist drive, drives concerned with use- rather than exchange/surplus-values.

Hence, I suspect Tomšič means to underscore that *der Trieb des Kapitals* is indifferent to whether or not aims towards the satisfaction of consuming use-values (C') are inhibited, so long as the goal of repeatedly spinning off surplus-value (M') can be continuously achieved without interruption and *ad infinitum*. The boundless greed of the capitalist drive (as *auri sacra fames*, *die Bereicherungssucht*, *die Goldgier*, abstract-*qua*-quantitative hedonism, and/or the logic of M-C-M') can and does reach its goal even when billions gratuitously starve amidst plenty and recurrent crises dramatically immiserate multitudes (while fabulously enriching further an already obscenely wealthy few). Capitalism succeeds at meeting its real goal despite, and even because of, failing to reach the aim of social production as producing use-values meeting needs and wants (including sometimes the needs and wants of capitalist persons themselves as the mere bearers of the capitalist drive).

However, insofar as Lacan's drive-desire distinction is not historically specific to capitalism, so too is his goal-aim distinction, as internal to his metapsychological conception of drive, not historically specific to capitalism either. I would be loath to deny the virtues of Tomšič's insightful employment of Lacanian aim and goal to illuminate Marx's proto-psychoanalytic *Triebtheorie*. But, this employment generates the same concerns in me I voiced a short while ago apropos his applications to Marx of Lacan's *pulsion-désir* contrast. Relatedly, I would contend that my above-mentioned, Hegel-inspired manner of finessing the (seeming) tensions between Marxian historical materialism and Lacanian trans-historical metapsychology are called for in order to remedy such worries.

At long last, I come now to what I consider to be the most important difference between Tomšič's and my versions of a Lacano-Marxism. This difference is most apparent in relation to the conclusion of *The Capitalist Unconscious*. Tomšič's conclusion, unlike those closing many books, is much more than a summation encapsulating what already came before in his book's main body. Therein, he advances significant new arguments on the basis of preceding elaborations.

Specifically, Tomšič ends his 2015 study with some assertions bearing upon the issue of capitalism's rapport with selfishness. He opens his conclusion with reference to Milner's reflections on psychoanalysis in relation to the modern sciences of nature. Following Milner, Tomšič portrays Freud, through Freud's self-avowed wounding of humanity's narcissism, as carrying forward from the natural to the human sciences the anti-narcissistic implications of modernity's valorization of an anonymous, impersonal, trans-individual reason. Whether as the literal revolutionary shift from geocentrism to heliocentrism or Freud's metaphorical "Copernican revolution," Tomšič, in line with Milner, contends that the core of the scientific *Weltanschauung* in which Freudian analysis proudly participates consists of an anti-humanist rationality corrosive to human narcissism.<sup>128</sup>

Tomšič links Milner's Lacan-dependent construal of the science-psychoanalysis rapport with Marxism by contrasting the anti-narcissistic nature of scientific modernity with the narcissistic character of economic modernity (i.e., capitalism). The latter, according to Tomšič, amounts to "the dictatorship of irrational beliefs and the restoration of human narcissism, the self-love and self-interest that Adam Smith and other political economists took for the foundation of social relations."<sup>129</sup> The politics of capitalism revolves around "a narcissistic subject"<sup>130</sup> (by contrast, "For both Marx and Lacan, the negative, which... means the non-narcissistic subject, is the necessary singular point on which political universalism should build"<sup>131</sup>). Tomšič adds:

While capitalism considers the subject to be nothing more than a narcissistic animal, Marxism and psychoanalysis reveal that the subject of revolutionary politics is an alienated animal, which, in its most intimate interior, includes its other. This inclusion is the main feature of a non-narcissistic love and consequently of a social link that is not rooted in self-love.<sup>132</sup>

Soon after this, the closing paragraph of Tomšič's book heralds, on the basis of the Lacano-Marxism delineated in this 2015 study, a politics that is properly modern

insofar as it finally catches up to the anti-narcissistic modernity already achieved in the natural and certain of the human sciences. From this perspective, capitalism and its politics remain stubbornly, aggressively pre-modern, with slavery and serfdom in the service of capital and worship of the Economy as a pseudo-secular transcendent power.<sup>133</sup> Speaking of the rise of a new communism that is as selfless as the reason common to science and psychoanalysis, Tomšič ends his book declaring that, "Only then will politics be consistently in synch with modern science and inhabit the same universe."<sup>134</sup> Yet, it should be noted, classical British liberalism both philosophical and economic (including such figures as Thomas Hobbes and John Locke along with Smith and David Ricardo) presents itself, with its social atomism and contract theories as well as hypothetical states of nature, as drawing inspiration and justification from seventeenth- and eighteenth-century natural science, particularly Newtonian mechanical physics.

That noted, there is much I find powerful in Tomšič's concluding reflections upon modernity, science, analysis, and politics. Nonetheless, I have some significant reservations and objections to raise in response to these reflections. To begin with, capitalism's social relations of servitude, domination, exploitation, oppression, etc. ultimately arise from and remain fueled by capitalism-specific greed (i.e., *der Trieb des Kapitals, der Mehrwertstrieb* as *auri sacra fames, die Bereicherungssucht*, and/or *die Goldgier* [M-C-M']). Therefore, however much social relations within capitalism appear to reproduce ancient and/or medieval inequalities and hierarchies, this really is an appearance emerging from modern rather than pre-modern social structures, a matter of superficial resemblances belying structural differences-in-kind between incommensurable social orders.

Furthermore, Tomšič, as seen, equates "narcissism" with the selfishness central to the self-conception of classic (Smithian) liberalism and its offspring. He speaks in this vein of "self-love and self-interest." Likewise, Tomšič's closing arguments pivot around a zero-sum binary opposition of the "narcissistic animal" of capitalism versus the "alienated animal" of "revolutionary politics" (including a certain Lacanianism). The latter's emphasis on "extimate" social mediation "in the subject more than the subject itself"<sup>135</sup> (to resort fittingly to some Lacanese) is said to allow for "a non-narcissistic love and consequently... a social link that is not rooted in self-love." By implication, capitalism actually, factually is materially grounded in a social link rooted in self-love.

But, this is precisely where there are some serious problems, especially given Tomšič's dual allegiances to both Marx and Lacan. By Marx's and Lacan's lights

alike, Tomšič mistakes capitalism's representations of itself for its true real(ity). As Marx warns while delineating the fundamentals of historical materialism in the (in)famous preface to 1859's *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, "Just as one does not judge an individual by what he thinks about himself, so one cannot judge... a period... by its consciousness."<sup>136</sup> Therefore, as a Marxian historical materialist, one cannot judge capitalism by its own ideas about itself. Similarly, psychoanalysis conveys no lesson if not that one cannot trustingly take for granted as accurate the self-awarenesses and self-depictions of both psyches and societies.

Of course, liberal and neo-liberal ideologies explicitly assert and rely upon images of capitalism as the social arrangement best suited to accommodate peacefully and sublimate productively an incorrigible human selfishness. In Marx's view, capitalism is split from within by a dialectical-structural discrepancy between (to borrow some Hegelian language) what it is for itself (*für sich*) and what it is in itself (*an sich*). For itself, at the superstructural level of the ideological, capitalism seems to be inseparable from selfishness, narcissism, self-love, self-interest, and so on. But, at the infrastructural level of the economic, capitalism really is, in itself, a potent accelerator of the socialization of production, a set of material processes transforming means and relations of production such as to bring about a historically unprecedented extension and intensification of social co-dependence between more and more people and populations. Capitalism does not become synonymous with "globalization" for nothing.

For both Hegel and Marx, when there is a discrepancy between the *für sich* and the *an sich*, the truth resides on the side of the latter. As is well known, one of the principle contradictions at the core of capitalism, in Marx's eyes, is its constitutive juxtaposition of, on the one hand, private property and everything entangled with it politically, legally, and ideologically (i.e., superstructurally) and, on the other hand, a thoroughly socialized mode of production as its real underlying infrastructural base. So, Marx, as already seen here, and Lacan, as will be seen below, both object to liberalist and individualist ideologies that capitalism's conception of itself as serving private persons' egocentrism (i.e., Tomšič's "narcissism") is a misconception, a paradigmatic case of ideological self-consciousness (or *réconnaissance de soi*) as *méconnaissance* (to employ another key term from the Lacanian lexicon).

Although the antagonism Tomšič relies upon between the "narcissistic animal" of capitalism versus the "alienated animal" of "revolutionary politics" has some validity at the level of competing ideologies, of clashing superstructural appearances, it is inaccurate and misleading apropos infrastructural being(s) within the capitalist

mode of production. When he says of Marxian and Lacanian subjectivities that, “the subject of revolutionary politics is an alienated animal, which, in its most intimate interior, includes its other,” this suggests that capitalism’s egocentric subject, by contrast, does not harbor within itself any such extimacy (*qua* public/social mediation within seemingly private/individual immediacy). But, one of the load-bearing theses of Marx’s historical materialist critique of capitalist political economy is precisely that, however unconsciously, the subjects of capitalism are caught up and absorbed in a historical trajectory of socialization far exceeding the breadth and depth of such mediation in human history hitherto.

Now, what about Lacan’s take on capitalism *vis-à-vis* selfishness? To begin with, narcissism, in light of the Lacanian accounts of both ego (*moi*) and subject (*sujet*), is vain according to both meanings of this adjective. That is to say, not only is narcissism synonymous with vanity – it also is vain in the sense of futile. For Lacan, the narcissist, corresponding to how Tomšič uses the word “narcissism” (as Freudian secondary narcissism<sup>137</sup>), is stuck in a doomed endeavor to (over)valorize him/her-self in and through the alterity of matrices of mediation consisting of words, images, etc. external to his/her “self.” Succinctly stated, this vanity of narcissism is tantamount to the impossibility of transubstantiating otherness into otherlessness. It mistakes the outer for the inner.<sup>138</sup>

However, an authentically Lacanian assessment of capitalist selfishness cannot and would not limit itself to such broad brushstrokes of an ahistorical, metapsychological sort. This is especially true considering some of the highly astute glosses on Marx offered by Lacan himself. Indeed, as I will show in what follows, Lacan interfaces Marx’s historical materialist analyses of political economies with his own psychoanalytic account of libidinal economies in ways that further elucidate what I have counter-intuitively described as the selflessness of capitalism.

In the context of *le Séminaire*, some of Lacan’s earliest references to Marx surface in the fifth and sixth seminars. These hint at a structural resemblance between the ego’s self-thwarting (secondary) narcissism and the dynamics of capitalist economics. In *Seminar V*, he claims, somewhat enigmatically, that Marx’s conception of exchange-value anticipates aspects of his own mirror stage.<sup>139</sup> Then, in *Seminar VI*, he maintains, citing Marx’s critique of Proudhon in 1847’s *The Poverty of Philosophy*, that exchange-valorizing an object is equivalent to devalorizing it.<sup>140</sup> Taking these two 1950s Marx references together, it seems that Lacan is suggesting an isomorphism between his theory of the ego and Marx’s theory of value. The Lacanian ego attempts to valorize itself, to validate its narcissistic “selfness,” via a



detour through mirroring others (and Others). This detour invariably ends up compromising and diluting the (false) self of the ego with alterity, with foreign (i.e., not-self) mediation. Likewise, Marxian use-value, on Lacan's reading, enters the economy's networks seeking to be represented as exchange-value, only to find that exchange-values have no correspondence with use-values from the perspective of the latter. For instance, commodities of the greatest utility rarely command notably high prices in the marketplace, while those that are unusually expensive quite often possess little to no practical-material utility.

Lacan's analytic interventions of the 1960s and early 1970s with respect to Marx's theory of value are what is most indispensable for my present purposes. Therein, Lacan develops a hybrid of political and libidinal economics capturing the self-subverting narcissism and ultimate selflessness of capitalism. This will be the focus of my remaining remarks in this contribution.

Admittedly, Lacan is cautious and even ambivalent in his approaches to Marx. He is careful to acknowledge that Marxian historical materialism and Freudian psychoanalysis both deal with specific structures and phenomena distinct from and irreducible to each other.<sup>141</sup> Nevertheless, Lacan's assessment of the Marx-Freud pair clearly counts them as sharing a sizable amount in common: In their wakes, neither thinker can be avoided or surpassed by the intellectually honest<sup>142</sup>; Neither thinker "bullshits" (*déconner*), intended as the highest of praise by Lacan<sup>143</sup>; Marx, along with Freud, helps define modernity through contributing to a rigorous conceptualization of the unconscious<sup>144</sup>; And, both Marxism and psychoanalysis, by Lacan's reckoning, equally depend on what (post-)Saussurian structuralism comes to delineate in the guise of a general theory of the signifier<sup>145</sup> (Lacan highlights Marx's account of commodity fetishism in particular as depending on "the logic of the signifier,"<sup>146</sup> with currency as the signifying stuff of this fetishism<sup>147</sup>). Additionally, and as I have underscored here as well as elaborated upon elsewhere,<sup>148</sup> Lacan goes so far as, from time to time, to self-identify as a Marxian materialist of a certain sort.<sup>149</sup>

Especially starting during the latter half of the 1960s, Lacan zeroes in on the Marxian theory of value specifically as a scientific *qua* proto-structuralist predecessor of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis. For this Lacan, the complex interactions between use-, exchange-, and surplus-values as delineated in Marx's critique of political economy are largely unconscious for those caught up in capitalism's socio-economic networks. The acephalous subjectivities of self-valorizing flows of capital, driven on indefinitely by the prospect of ever more surplus-value, are inseparable

from a signifier-like logic of quantitative real abstractions<sup>150</sup> latently governing the manifest surfaces of social life.<sup>151</sup>

In terms of libidinal economics, Lacan's metapsychological concept of *jouissance* provides him with the basis upon which he constructs his rapprochement of psychoanalysis with Marxism (specifically the latter's value theory as key to its political economics). The later Lacan speaks of "*plus-de-jouir*" in order to bring to the fore certain aspects of *jouissance*. *Plus-de-jouir* can be rendered as both "no more enjoying" and "more enjoying." The latter is rendered by Lacan as "surplus-*jouissance*" with an eye to surplus-value as the conceptual cornerstone of Marx's decrypting of capitalism.

But, before examining the cross-resonances Lacan establishes between Marx's surplus-value and his surplus-*jouissance*, what about the rendering of *plus-de-jouir* as "no more enjoying?" Several of Lacan's descriptions of surplus-*jouissance* reveal that "*plus-de-jouir*" is another name for Lacanian *désir*. Desire as *plus-de-jouir* is what remains of *jouissance* once and insofar as the latter is mediated by the signifiers of a socio-linguistic big Other. Specifically as regards castration *qua* the symbolic order's incisions into the singular *parlêtre* (speaking being), the pivotal 1960 *écrit* "The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious" famously asserts near its close that, "Castration means that *jouissance* has to be refused in order to be attained on the inverse scale of the Law of desire" (*La castration veut dire qu'il faut que la jouissance soit refusée, pour qu'elle puisse être atteinte sur l'échelle renversée de la Loi du désir*).<sup>152</sup> Desire is generated in and through the laws of socio-symbolic mediation. This mediation also generates, along with *désir* as bound and constrained by the structures of Others, the compelling phantasm of an enjoyment-beyond-the-Law, of a non-castrated *jouissance* as pure, undiluted, limitless, and absolute. The incarnations and representations of this impossible fully to obtain (but also impossible ever to exorcise) spectral *jouissance* are manifestations of the Lacanian *objet petit a*. Hence, *plus-de-jouir* is the infinitely receding residue of supposedly lost *jouissance* connected with each and every instance of object *a*. *Plus-de-jouir* is the donkey's carrot, the dragon forever chased but never caught – thus, *plus-de-jouir* as "no more enjoying" (or as "*manque-à-jouir*" [lack of enjoying], as Lacan puts it in 1970's "*Radiophonie*"<sup>153</sup>). Various of Lacan's pronouncements regarding surplus-*jouissance* substantiate the highly condensed summary I provide in this paragraph<sup>154</sup> (what is more, my 2005 book *Time Driven: Metapsychology and the Splitting of the Drive* covers much of this ground).

Lacan's *plus-de-jouir* (or, as he translates it into German, *Mehrlust*) is avowedly modeled on Marx's surplus-value (*Mehrwert*).<sup>155</sup> The latter is specifically capitalist surplus-*jouissance* as orbiting around *objet petit a* in the socio-historical guise of commodities (as use-values bearing exchange-values that themselves in turn bear surplus-values). Lacan relabels Marx's *Mehrwert* as *Marxlust qua* Marxian *plus-de-jouir*.<sup>156</sup>

The insatiable drives of capitalists and capital-prodded consumers are the embodiments of a *plus-de-jouir* secreted by capitalism as a determinate mode of production.<sup>157</sup> The commodity fetishisms of both abstract-*qua*-quantitative hedonism (i.e., the capitalist's greed) and concrete-*qua*-qualitative hedonism (i.e., the consumer's mania for possessions) both vainly chase after, *ad infinitum* and *ad nauseam*, schematizations of the metapsychological category of object *a* (with the surplus-*jouissance* embodied in *a* incessantly slipping away, metonymically sliding off<sup>158</sup>). Lacan credits Marx, with his fetishism of commodities, as foreshadowing this peculiar object.<sup>159</sup> Likewise, on one occasion, he portrays *objet petit a* as the point of overlap/convergence between Marx's surplus-value and surplus-*jouissance*.<sup>160</sup> The more (*plus*) commodities capitalism manufactures, the more discontent (*Unbehagen, malaise, unenjoyable jouir*) it produces in its various (class) subjects.<sup>161</sup>

In *Seminar XVII*, Lacan identifies commodities and associated consumerist spectacles as "imitation surplus *jouissance*" (*plus-de-jouir en toc*), with capitalist "crowds" (*beaucoup de monde*) continually swarming around whatever is advertised as the latest shiny "semblance" (*semblant*) of *plus-de-jouir*.<sup>162</sup> Capitalism, as illuminated by the Marxist critique of political economy, reveals itself to be organized around individual and collective flights toward mirages of never-to-be-attained infinite (and inexistent) enjoyments.<sup>163</sup> *Plus-de-jouir* is a bottomless pit<sup>164</sup> unable to be filled with any amount of profits or products.

Lacan's sixteenth and seventeenth seminars contain what arguably are his most detailed and significant engagements with Marx. I will return to *Seminar XVII* in a moment. In *Seminar XVI*, Lacan playfully Oedipalizes Marx's *Mehrwert* (surplus-value) by associating it with the homophonous *mère verte* (green mother).<sup>165</sup> One indeed fairly could portray surplus-value as the mother of capitalism. Capitalism's very *raison d'être* is the augmentation of *Mehrwert* in perpetuity.

I take the greenness of this *mère* to signal envy. The circuit M-C-M', as movement of capital in pursuit of surplus-value, is envious in its extraction of everything else from everyone else. That is to say, *Mehrwert* endlessly demands of others that they sacrifice themselves and their belongings to it, to its boundless self-

valorization. Additionally, many might assume that Lacan implicitly conflates *la mère verte* with the figure of the capitalist – with the corresponding figure of the proletarian as the addressee of this envious mother's commands. This assumption would align with a cartoon version of Marxism pitting selfish capitalists against victimized proletarians. However, as a not imperceptive reader of Marx, Lacan does not conflate the capitalist, as bearer or personification of capitalism's greed-as-drive, with the green mother. The de-psychologized, structural envy of surplus-value (*Mehrwert*) relentlessly extorts sacrifices out of capitalists too as its fungible, disposable bearers/personifications. Although *la mère verte* gives birth to capitalists, she is all too ready to cast them aside or utterly destroy them if they fail to live up to her greedy imperatives. She is an inhuman monster.

Several key moments a year later, in *Seminar XVII*, corroborate my immediately preceding assertion that Lacan sees capitalists too as amongst the green mother's countless potential and actual victims. The first of these moments occurs in the session of November 26, 1969:

...in Marx the *a...* is recognized as functioning at the level that is articulated – on the basis of analytic discourse, not any of the others – as surplus *jouissance* (*plus-de-jouir*). Here you have what Marx discovered as what actually happens at the level of surplus value (*plus-value*).<sup>166</sup>

After this linkage of Marxian *plus-value* with psychoanalytic *plus-de-jouir* and its *objet petit a*, Lacan continues:

Of course, it wasn't Marx who invented surplus value. It's just that prior to him nobody knew what its place was. It has the same ambiguous place as the one I have just mentioned, that of excess work (*travail en trop*), of surplus work (*plus-de-travail*). 'What does it pay in?' he says. 'It pays in *jouissance*, precisely, and this has to go somewhere.'<sup>167</sup>

Lacan might have the Althusser of 1965's *Lire le Capital* in mind in the first two sentences here. He perhaps is thinking specifically of Althusser's contention that Marx, in forging the theory of surplus-value, did not invent this *ex nihilo*, but, rather, explicitly and systematically posited the implicit and unsystematic presuppositions of such economic predecessors as the Physiocrats, Smith, and Ricardo<sup>168</sup> (economists

who blindly bumped up against surplus-value without, in Lacan's words, "knowing what its place was"). That noted, Lacan's equation of *plus-value* with *plus-de-travail* is perfectly, orthodoxly Marxist. Marx himself defines surplus-value as the value produced by the worker in excess of what the capitalist pays in terms of the worker's wages – an excess arising from surplus laboring time over and above the laboring time necessary for producing value equivalent to the worker's means of subsistence (reflected in wages). Every working day without exception under capitalism contains unpaid overtime, whether this is acknowledged or not.

But, what about Lacan's linkage of surplus work with *jouissance* in the second half of the block quotation above? Although the worker is paid a wage, he/she pays the capitalist back in value exceeding this wage. Despite ideological misrepresentations of labor contracts as fair-and-square deals for the workers "freely" accepting to enter into them – of course, Marx fiercely debunks these insidious, pervasive, and persistent capitalist myths – capitalism is predicated upon the structural injustice of unequal exchange between the bourgeois and the proletarian. Each working day is divided between "necessary labor" (as producing exchange-value equal to the entire day's wages paid by the capitalist to the worker) and "surplus labor" (as uncompensated labor producing surplus-value accruing to the capitalist at the expense of the worker). In short, surplus labor = unpaid labor = surplus-value (= surplus-*jouissance*, Lacan adds).

Lacan's psychoanalytic supplement to Marx's meticulous accounts of all this is that the worker "pays in *jouissance*" in exchange for wages that never compensate this loss. There is a libidinal as well as financial imbalance in this socio-economic relationship between bourgeois and proletarian. Presumably, the "somewhere" to which the worker's *jouissance* goes, to where it is paid, is the capitalist and his/her (deep) pockets. As regards this destination of legally stolen *jouissance*, the worker may well consciously or unconsciously fantasize about something along the lines of an envious parental figure relishing ill-gotten gains with a sadistic smirk.

On the heels of the prior quoted passages from the session of November 26, 1969, Lacan injects a further twist. He states:

What's disturbing is that if one pays in *jouissance*, then one has got it, and then, once one has got it it is very urgent that one squander it. If one does not squander it, there will be all sorts of consequences.<sup>169</sup>

*Jouissance* is akin to the proverbial hot potato. As soon as it lands in one's hands, one must quickly toss it to someone else. If one holds onto it for any length, one suffers the painful "consequence" of getting burned (with *jouissance*, if ever attained, proving to be traumatically intense or crushingly anti-climactic). This supposed enjoyment (in)exists in a state of constant circulation, always being passed on to others (and forever being imagined as really enjoyed only by these third parties). Perhaps Lacan is hinting that workers might be, at least in part, libidinally complicit in their exploitation by capital, repeatedly "squandering" the excess/surplus of their lives in payment to capitalists as a means of avoiding what otherwise would be unbearably too much and/or miserably not enough. To paraphrase one of Lacan's glosses on the Oedipus complex,<sup>170</sup> if the exploitation of labor were not a fact, it would have to be invented. But, what about the capitalists themselves? What do they do when these payments of *jouissance* land in their laps and start oozing into the lining of their pockets?

Later in *Seminar XVII*, during its March 11, 1970 session, Lacan begins to answer these questions about capitalists. In doing so, he believes himself to be correcting Marx in certain respects:

What is masked at the level of Marx is that the master to whom this surplus *jouissance* is owed has renounced everything, and *jouissance* first up, because he has exposed himself to death, and because he remains firmly fastened to this position whose Hegelian articulation is clear.<sup>171</sup>

In the theory of the four discourses developed in the seventeenth seminar and the contemporaneous intervention "*Radiophonie*," Lacan treats the capitalist as a variant of the figure of the master (*maître*), with "the discourse of the master" being one of the four discourses (along with those of university, hysteric, and analyst). He elsewhere reiterates this subsumption of capitalism under a more general template of mastery.<sup>172</sup> Through this identification of capitalist with master, Lacan then, as he does in the passage just quoted, casts this bourgeois power in the role of the lord as per Hegel's dialectic of "Lordship and Bondage" in the 1807 *Phenomenology of Spirit* (i.e., Hegel's master-slave dialectic, itself the veritable obsession of Lacan's own *maître* in matters Hegelian, namely, Alexandre Kojève).

To condense a very well-known story, Hegel's lord wins what ends up being a Pyrrhic victory. His apparent triumph turns into, converges or coincides with, his actual defeat. The position of (seeming) mastery is supposed to confirm both the

master's transcendence of animality (via defiance of death) and his authority over others (represented by the slave). Instead, this position proves to be self-subverting, resulting in a regression back into what Aristotle would call the pleasures of a barnyard animal<sup>173</sup> furnished by servants upon whom the lord becomes abjectly dependent. And, of course, these denigrated bondsmen, in their denigration, are unable to confer authority-sustaining recognition (*Anerkennung*) upon the lord, since being recognized by a dehumanized slave counts for nothing. Moreover, as he-who-does-not-work, the Hegelian master unwittingly deprives himself of the only real *praxis* in and through which subjective agents leave lasting traces of themselves within the worked and reworked world. In exchange for risking everything in the initial struggle for dominance, the victor, through his very victory, loses everything. The sacrifice through which he becomes master proves to be self-sacrifice.<sup>174</sup>

In the prior quotation from *Seminar XVII*, Lacan not only alleges that the capitalist, like the Hegelian master, is (however knowingly or not) self-sacrificial – he charges Marx with having failed to learn this lesson from Hegel (with Marx's writings, starting in the early 1840s, exhibiting his familiarity with the *Phenomenology of Spirit*). But, I would maintain that this is a rare instance in which Lacan uncharacteristically proves to be a less than stringently rigorous and attentive reader. In fact, Lacan here repeats Weber's mistake of failing to credit Marx with already having alighted upon and done justice to the selflessness of capitalism. As I have shown throughout much of the preceding, Marx's texts reveal him to be acutely conscious of and intellectually responsive to the renunciative character of capitalism for capitalists themselves.

Still in the seventeenth seminar's session of March 11, 1970, promptly after the previous quotation above, Lacan embellishes further upon his misdirected criticism of Marx. He proceeds:

The master in all this makes a small effort to make everything work, in other words, he gives an order. Simply by fulfilling his function as master he loses something. It's at least through this something lost that something of *jouissance* has to be rendered to him – specifically, surplus *jouissance*.<sup>175</sup>

Lacan continues:

If, by means of this relentlessness (*acharnement*) to castrate himself that he had, he hadn't computed this surplus *jouissance* (*comptabilisé ce plus-de-jouir*), if he hadn't converted it into surplus value (*fait la plus-value*), in other

words if he hadn't founded capitalism, Marx would have realized that surplus value is surplus *jouissance*. None of this, of course, prevents it being the case that capitalism is founded by him, and that the function of surplus value is designated with complete pertinence in its devastating consequences.<sup>176</sup>

When Lacan claims that, "Simply by fulfilling his function as master he loses something," he likely is relying upon his account of specifically symbolic castration. The very signifiers of mastery (i.e.,  $S_1$ s as insignias, marks, traits, etc.) are prostheses external to the speaking subject (masquerading) as master. These prostheses always remain irreducible to, not fully identical with, the subjectivity attaching itself to them. A gap stubbornly persists between subject-as-\$ and  $S_1$ -as-signifier. This gap is the cut of symbolic castration. Hence, just as the Hegelian master is defeated in and through his very moment of (seeming) triumph, so too is the Lacanian *maître* (symbolically) castrated in and through the very process of being crowned with the emblems of potency-as-non-castration. The signifiers of power simultaneously signify impotence.<sup>177</sup> Put in Lacanian terms, the phallus is the signifier of castration.

Likewise, the Marxian master-as-bourgeois "castrates himself" in and through assuming the very role of capitalist as the ostensible potentate of capitalism, namely, capitalism's subject-supposed-to-enjoy. Lacan almost certainly is well aware of Marx's renditions of the individual capitalist as a mere bearer (*Träger*) or personification (*Personifikation*) of capital. As seen, de-psychologized greed as the circuit M-C-M', the logic of capital itself, is a drive (*Trieb, pulsion*) in the capitalist more than the capitalist him/her-self. Abstract-*qua*-quantitative hedonism is a socio-structural thrust capable of overriding (Lacan might say "overwriting") what would otherwise be the volitions and actions of the person bearing/personifying capital and its drive. This drivenness is, as Lacan indicates in *Seminar XXII*, the *père-version*, the perversion of the father, for the paternal figure of the capitalist-as-master<sup>178</sup> (in addition to his/her structurally dictated sadism and psychopathy, there is also, for Marx as well as Weber, his/her miserliness and masochism). Therefore, insofar as the "symbolic" in Lacan's "symbolic castration" also refers to the symbolic order as a set of social structures akin to Hegel's objective spirit and/or Marx's infrastructure-superstructure arrangement, Marx's capitalist, seen from a Lacanian perspective, indeed should count as symbolically castrated. Whether Lacan himself, as a somewhat shameless French bourgeois *bon vivant*, intends for his audience to shed tears on behalf of the poor, castrated capitalists is difficult to tell.



In the second of the two preceding quotations from the seventeenth seminar, Lacan asserts psychoanalytic metapsychology's explanatory priority *vis-à-vis* historical materialism. For him, Marx's surplus-value is a species of the genus surplus-*jouissance*, with the former being a historically peculiar instantiation of the latter. He evidently assumes that Marx (and Marxists) would have to take this as a critical correction. Lacan maintains that Marx's focus on capitalism-specific surplus-value (i.e., the species) blinds him to the trans-historical category of (surplus-) *jouissance* (i.e., the genus). Marx purportedly cannot see the forest of *plus-de-jouir* for the tree of *Mehrwert* ("if he hadn't converted it into surplus value (*fait la plus-value*), in other words if he hadn't founded capitalism, Marx would have realized that surplus value is surplus *jouissance*").

As my earlier unpacking and reconstruction of Marx's drive theory indicates, Marx actually is sensitive to such genus-species distinctions. He refers, as seen, to "a particular form of the drive" (*eine besondere Form des Triebs*),<sup>179</sup> thereby signaling a difference between drive (as such) and its specific instantiations. Hence, it is unclear whether Marx would object, as Lacan presumes he would, to Lacan's analytic insistence on distinguishing between, on the one hand, the socially non-specific categories of libidinal economics (here, surplus-*jouissance*) and, on the other hand, the socially specific manifestations of these categories as mediated by political economics (here, surplus-value). Near the start of this intervention, I argued that Marx is not the unreserved, reductive historicizer many view him as being (including Lacan in this context). With Marx's Homer problem and drive theory (with the latter as part of a general philosophical anthropology underpinning historical materialism), he is not automatically averse to the sorts of amendments suggested by Lacan's remarks in the seventeenth seminar.

The second quotation above from *Seminar XVII* also refers to the notion of "computing surplus *jouissance*" (*comptabiliser plus-de-jouir*). This leads into the last of the moments of concern to me in the seventeenth seminar, a moment likewise featuring this idea of *comptabiliser (comme compter)*. Near the end of the session of June 10, 1970, Lacan observes:

Something changed in the master's discourse at a certain point in history. We are not going to break our backs finding out if it was because of Luther, or Calvin, or some unknown traffic of ships around Genoa, or in the Mediterranean Sea, or anywhere else, for the important point is that on a certain day surplus *jouissance* became calculable, could be counted, totalized

(*le plus-de-jouir se compte, se comptabilise, se totalise*). This is where what is called the accumulation of capital begins.<sup>180</sup>

Lacan's wording indicates his de-emphasizing of the historicist sensibilities of three related theoretical perspectives: Hegel's (Luther), Weber's (Calvin), and that of Marxian historical materialism ("some unknown traffic of ships"). Consistent with his maintenance of a level distinction between the dimensions covered by analytic metapsychology and historical materialism, Lacan pinpoints the transition from socio-economic pre-modernity to modernity proper ("Something changed in the master's discourse at a certain point in history") at the tipping point of the phase transition wherein trans-historical surplus-*jouissance* historically becomes mathematized, mediated by quantification, thereby becoming surplus-value ("the important point is that on a certain day surplus *jouissance* became calculable, could be counted, totalized (*le plus-de-jouir se compte, se comptabilise, se totalise*). This is where what is called the accumulation of capital begins"). Already in *Seminar XIII*, Lacan recognizes that the historical emergence of capitalism induces a fundamental mutation in *jouissance*.<sup>181</sup> And, with this, my own analytic labors here come full circle: This is Lacan's version of "from closed need to infinite greed."

Before concluding, I should note that Lacan's decision to speak of "totalization" in the above quotation is strange and questionable. He proposes that rendering *jouissance* computable/calculable/countable also renders it totalizable. I assume he means "totalization" as synonymous with the accumulation designated in the phrase "the accumulation of capital." But, Marx himself as well as Lacan elsewhere both indicate that the capitalist mathematization of all things (including the seemingly most intimate) infinitizes and, hence, de-totalizes *jouissance*, drives, and the like. From the Marxist standpoint, I have been elaborating throughout my contribution, it is crucial to appreciate that the libidinal unboundedness opened up by quantitative infinitization liquidates any actual or potential totality as final end or limit.

It now can be anticipated, with the combined lights of Marx and Lacan, that if one ends up at the very top of the *Forbes* billionaires list – God forbid – one will hurl one's enormous mass of accumulated surplus-value/*jouissance* into philanthropic endeavors. One thereby not only evades getting burned by *jouissance* attained, but, in the process, launders one's past misdeeds, airbrushes one's legacy. Nobody dares be caught dead wallowing in *plus-de-jouir*. Following the Lacan of "*Radiophonie*," one even can say that capitalism forecloses surplus-value by turning it into an infinite void, a never-ending hole, everyone, capitalists included, strains to

avoid at all costs.<sup>182</sup> No sooner does the bourgeois (re-)obtain it than he/she “squanders” it again. The capitalist repeatedly sends surplus-value, and the surplus-*jouissance* clinging to it, back into circulation via reinvestment, decadence, philanthropy, and/or buying politicians.

As it turns out, capitalism is not good at satisfying selfishness, its supposed primary strength much touted by its defenders and apologists. Agreeing that it at least provides substantial private satisfactions is still to grant it too much credit. Even on the terms capitalism sets for itself, it is wretchedly bankrupt – and this also for Smith's imagined lucky few apart from his admitted unfortunate majority.<sup>183</sup> In actuality, nobody gets truly to enjoy capitalism.

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<sup>1</sup> Galileo Galilei, “The Assayer,” *Discoveries and Opinions of Galileo* [trans. Stillman Drake], New York: Anchor Books, 1957, pg. 274-278.

Alexandre Koyré, *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe*, New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1958, pg. 99, 278.

<sup>2</sup> Koyré, *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe*, pg. 4-5, 14, 16-17, 24, 29-30, 32-35, 40-43, 60-61, 63-65, 67, 69, 96, 112, 188, 275-276.

<sup>3</sup> Koyré, *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe*, pg. 72, 84, 161.

<sup>4</sup> Adrian Johnston, *Prolegomena to Any Future Materialism, Volume One: The Outcome of Contemporary French Philosophy*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2013, pg. 6, 146-147.

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<sup>5</sup> Jacques Lacan, “The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis,” *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English* [trans. Bruce Fink], New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2006, pg. 235-239.

Jacques Lacan, “Variations on the Standard Treatment,” *Écrits*, pg. 299-300.

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<sup>6</sup> Jacques Lacan, *Le Séminaire de Jacques Lacan, Livre XII: Problèmes cruciaux pour la psychanalyse, 1964-1965* [unpublished typescript], session of February 3, 1965.

Jacques Lacan, *Le Séminaire de Jacques Lacan, Livre XIV: La logique du fantasme, 1966-1967* [unpublished typescript], session of February 22, 1967.

<sup>7</sup> Adrian Johnston, *Time Driven: Metapsychology and the Splitting of the Drive*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2005, pg. 61-71.

Johnston, *Prolegomena to Any Future Materialism, Volume One*, pg. 6, 40, 42, 58.

Johnston, *Adventures in Transcendental Materialism*, pg. 73, 254-255.

<sup>8</sup> Jean-Claude Milner, *L'Œuvre claire: Lacan, la science, la philosophie*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1995, pg. 39-42, 47-48, 50-51, 64-69, 81-82, 85-87, 89-90, 92-95, 97-111, 136-137.

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<sup>9</sup> Lacan, *Le Séminaire de Jacques Lacan, Livre XII*, session of June 9, 1965.

<sup>10</sup> SE 16: 284-285.

SE 17: 140-141.

SE 19: 221.

SE 22: 158-182.

<sup>11</sup> Johnston, *Prolegomena to Any Future Materialism, Volume Two*.

<sup>12</sup> Aristotle, *Politics* [trans. C.D.C. Reeve], Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998, lines 1257a-1258a [pg. 15-18].

<sup>13</sup> Georg Lukács, "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat," *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics* [trans. Rodney Livingstone], Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971, pg. 83-110.

<sup>14</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, 1959-1960* [ed. Jacques-Alain Miller; trans. Dennis Porter], New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1992, pg. 225-226.

<sup>15</sup> Adrian Johnston, *A New German Idealism: Hegel, Žižek, and Dialectical Materialism*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2018 [forthcoming].

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<sup>16</sup> Wilhelm Reich, *Dialectical Materialism and Psychoanalysis*, London: Socialist Reproduction, 1972, pg. 15-16, 31, 56.

<sup>17</sup> Otto Fenichel, "Psychoanalysis as the Nucleus of a Future Dialectical-Materialist Psychology" [ed. Suzette H. Annin and Hanna Fenichel; trans. Olga Barsis], *American Imago*, vol. 24, no. 4, Winter 1967, pg. 290-291.

<sup>18</sup> Fenichel, "Psychoanalysis as the Nucleus of a Future Dialectical-Materialist Psychology," pg. 306.

<sup>19</sup> Reich, *Dialectical Materialism and Psychoanalysis*, pg. 20-21.

Fenichel, "Psychoanalysis as the Nucleus of a Future Dialectical-Materialist Psychology," pg. 311.

<sup>20</sup> Reich, *Dialectical Materialism and Psychoanalysis*, pg. 40.

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<sup>21</sup> Fenichel, "Psychoanalysis as the Nucleus of a Future Dialectical-Materialist Psychology," pg. 295.

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- <sup>23</sup> Fenichel, "Psychoanalysis as the Nucleus of a Future Dialectical-Materialist Psychology," pg. 303-304. Johnston, *Prolegomena to Any Future Materialism, Volume Two*.  
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- <sup>25</sup> Ernest Mandel, *Marxist Economic Theory, Volume II* [trans. Brian Pearce], New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970, pg. 669.
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- <sup>31</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VIII: Transference, 1960-1961* [ed. Jacques-Alain Miller; trans. Bruce Fink], Cambridge: Polity, 2015, pg. 255.
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- <sup>33</sup> Lacan, "The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis," pg. 215-216.  
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- <sup>43</sup> Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft)* [trans. Martin Nicolaus], New York: Penguin, 1973, pg. 111.

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- <sup>52</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *System of Ethical Life, System of Ethical Life and First Philosophy of Spirit* [trans. H.S. Harris and T.M. Knox], Albany: State University of New York Press, 1979, pg. 103-107, 124, 154.
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- <sup>55</sup> Smith, *The Wealth of Nations, Books I-III*, pg. 269.
- <sup>56</sup> Marx, *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie (Rohentwurf)*, pg. 133-134.
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- <sup>57</sup> Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume III*, pg. 609.
- <sup>58</sup> Marx, *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie (Rohentwurf)*, pg. 134.
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- <sup>65</sup> Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume III*, pg. 1020.
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