

system insofar as possible, making it interior to this system. As for the rest, it will be a question of starting again from zero: the founding of a spiritual empire there where forms exist under which the State can no longer function as such in the physical system. When the Christians took possession of the Empire, this complementary duality reappeared between those who wanted to do everything possible to reconstruct the Urstaat from the elements they found in the immanence of the objective Roman world, and the purists, who wanted a fresh start in the wilderness, a new beginning for a new alliance, a rediscovery of the Egyptian and Syriac inspiration that would provide the impetus for a transcendent Urstaat. What strange machines those were that cropped up on columns and in tree trunks! In this sense, Christianity was able to develop a whole set of paranoiac and celibate machines, a whole string of paranoiacs and perverts who also form part of our history's horizon and people our calendar.* These are the two aspects of a becoming of the State: its internalization in a field of increasingly decoded social forces forming a physical system; its spiritualization in a supraterrrestrial field that increasingly overcodes, forming a metaphysical system. The infinite debt must become internalized at the same time as it becomes spiritualized. The hour of bad conscience draws nigh; it will also be the hour of the greatest cynicism, "that repressed cruelty of the animal-man made inward and scared back into himself, the creature imprisoned in the 'state' so as to be tamed. . . ."65

9 | The Civilized Capitalist Machine

The first great movement of deterritorialization appears with the overcoding performed by the despotic State. But it is nothing compared to the other great movement, the one that will be brought about by the decoding of flows. The action of decoded flows is not enough, however, to cause the new break to traverse and transform the socius—not enough, that is, to induce the birth of capitalism. Decoded flows strike the despotic State with latency; they submerge the tyrant,

*In this regard Jacques Lacarrière has called attention to the figures and the moments of Christian asceticism Egypt, Palestine, and Syria, starting with the third century: *Les hommes ivres de Dieu* (Grenoble: Arthaud, 1961). First come gentle paranoiacs who install themselves close to a village, then withdraw into the desert where they invent astonishing ascetic machines expressing their struggle against the old alliances and filiations (the Saint Anthony stage); next, communities of disciples are formed, monasteries where one of the main activities is to write the life of the founding saint; celibate machines with a military discipline where the monk "reconstructs around him, in the form of ascetic and collective constraints, the aggressive universe of the old persecutions" (the Saint Pachomius stage); and finally, the return to the city or the village; armed groups of perverts who assign themselves the task of struggling against the dying paganism (the Schnoudi stage). More generally, concerning the monastery's relationship with the city, see Lewis Mumford, who talks about an "elaboration of a new form of urban structuration" in terms of monasteries (*The City in History* [New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1961], pp. 246ff., 258–59).

but they also cause him to return in unexpected forms; they democratize him, oligarchize him, segmentalize him, monarchize him, and always internalize and spiritualize him, while on the horizon there is the latent Urstaat, for the loss of which there is no consolation. It is now up to the State to recode as best it can, by means of regular or exceptional operations, the product of the decoded flows. Let us take the example of Rome: the decoding of the landed flows (*des flux fonciers*) through the privatization of property, the decoding of the monetary flows through the formation of great fortunes, the decoding of the commercial flows through the development of commodity production, the decoding of the producers through expropriation and proletarianization—all the preconditions are present, everything is given, without producing a capitalism properly speaking, but rather a régime based on slavery.⁶⁶ Or the example of feudalism: there again private property, commodity production, the monetary afflux, the extension of the market, the development of towns, and the appearance of manorial ground rent in money form, or of the contractual hiring of labor, do not by any means produce a capitalist economy, but rather a reinforcing of feudal offices and relations, at times a return to more primitive stages of feudalism, and occasionally even the re-establishment of a kind of slavery (*esclavagisme*). And it is well known that the monopolistic action favoring the guilds and the companies promotes, not the rise of capitalist production, but the insertion of the bourgeoisie into a town and State feudalism that consists in devising codes for flows that are decoded as such, and in keeping the merchants, according to Marx's formula, "in the very pores" of the old full body of the social machine. Hence capitalism does not lead to the dissolution of feudalism, but rather the contrary, and that is why so much time was required between the two. There is a great difference in this respect between the despotic age and the capitalist age. For the founders of the State come like lightning; the despotic machine is synchronic while the capitalist machine's time is diachronic. The capitalists appear in succession in a series that institutes a kind of creativity of history, a strange menagerie: the schizoid time of the new creative break.

The dissolutions are defined by a simple decoding of flows, and they are always compensated by residual forces or transformations of the State. Death is felt rising from within and desire itself becomes the death instinct, latency, but it also passes over into these flows that carry the seeds of a new life. Decoded flows—but who will give a name to this new desire? Flows of property that is sold, flows of money that circulates, flows of production and means of production making ready in the shadows, flows of workers becoming deterritorialized: the encounter

of all these flows will be necessary, their conjunction, and their reaction on one another—and the contingent nature of this encounter, this conjunction, and this reaction, which occur one time—in order for capitalism to be born, and for the old system to die this time from without, at the same time as the new life begins and desire receives its name. The only universal history is the history of contingency. Let us return to this eminently contingent question that modern historians know how to ask: why Europe, why not China? Apropos of ocean navigation, Fernand Braudel asks: why not Chinese, Japanese, or even Moslem ships? Why not Sinbad the Sailor? It is not the technique, the technical machine, that is lacking. Isn't it rather that desire remains caught in the nets of the despotic State, entirely invested in the despot's machine? "Perhaps then the merit of the West, confined as it was on its narrow 'Cape of Asia,' was to have needed the world, to have needed to venture outside its own front door."⁶⁷ The schizophrenic voyage is the only kind there is. (Later this will be the American meaning of frontiers: something to go beyond, limits to cross over, flows to set in motion, noncoded spaces to enter.)

Decoded desires and desires for decoding have always existed; history is full of them. But we have just seen that only through their encounter in a place, and their conjunction in a space that takes time, do decoded flows constitute a desire—a desire that, instead of just dreaming or lacking it, actually produces a desiring-machine that is at the same time social and technical. That is why capitalism and its break are defined not solely by decoded flows, but by the generalized decoding of flows, the new massive deterritorialization, the conjunction of deterritorialized flows. It is the singular nature of this conjunction that ensured the universality of capitalism. By simplifying a lot, we can say that the savage territorial machine operated on the basis of connections of production, and that the barbarian despotic machine was based on disjunctions of inscription derived from the eminent unity. But the capitalist machine, the civilized machine, will first establish itself on the conjunction. When this occurs, the conjunction no longer merely designates remnants that have escaped coding, or consummations-consumptions as in the primitive feasts, or even the "maximum consumption" in the extravagance of the despot and his agents. When the conjunction moves to the fore in the social machine, it seems on the contrary that it ceases to be tied to enjoyment or to the excess consumption of a class, that it makes luxury itself into a means of investment, and reduces all the decoded flows to production, in a "production for production's sake" that rediscovers the primitive connections of labor, on condition—on the sole condition—that they be

linked to capital and to the new deterritorialized full body, the true consumer from whence they seem to emanate (as in the pact with the devil that Marx describes—the "industrial eunuch": so it's *your* fault if . . .)⁶⁸

At the heart of *Capital*, Marx points to the encounter of two "principal" elements: on one side, the deterritorialized worker who has become free and naked, having to sell his labor capacity; and on the other, decoded money that has become capital and is capable of buying it. The fact that these two elements result from the segmentation of the despotic State in feudalism, and from the decomposition of the feudal system itself and that of its State, still does not give us the extrinsic conjunction of these two flows: flows of producers and flows of money. The encounter might not have taken place, with the free workers and the money-capital existing "virtually" side by side. One of the elements depends on a transformation of the agrarian structures that constitute the old social body, while the other depends on a completely different series going by way of the merchant and the usurer, as they exist marginally in the pores of this old social body.⁶⁹ What is more, each of these elements brings into play several processes of decoding and deterritorialization having very different origins. For the free worker: the deterritorialization of the soil through privatization; the decoding of the instruments of production through appropriation; the loss of the means of consumption through the dissolution of the family and the corporation; and finally, the decoding of the worker in favor of the work itself or of the machine. And for capital: the deterritorialization of wealth through monetary abstraction; the decoding of the flows of production through merchant capital; the decoding of States through financial capital and public debts; the decoding of the means of production through the formation of industrial capital; and so on.

Let us consider more in detail how the elements come together, with the conjunction of all their processes. It is no longer the age of cruelty or the age of terror, but the age of cynicism, accompanied by a strange piety. (The two taken together constitute humanism: cynicism is the physical immanence of the social field, and piety is the maintenance of a spiritualized Urstaat; cynicism is capital as the means of extorting surplus labor, but piety is this same capital as God-capital, whence all the forces of labor seem to emanate.) This age of cynicism is that of the accumulation of capital—an age that implies a period of time, precisely for the conjunction of all the decoded and deterritorialized flows. As Maurice Dobb has shown, an accumulation of property title deeds—in land, for example—will be necessary in a first period of time, in a favorable conjuncture, at a time when this property costs little (the

disintegration of the feudal system); and a second period is required when the property is sold during a rise in prices and under conditions that make industrial investment especially advantageous (the “price-revolution,” an abundant reserve supply of labor, the formation of a proletariat, an easy access to sources of raw materials, favorable conditions for the production of tools and machinery).⁷⁰ All sorts of contingent factors favor these conjunctions. So many encounters for the formation of the thing, the unnamable! But the effect of the conjunction is indeed capital’s tighter and tighter control over production: capitalism or its break, the conjunction of all the decoded and deterritorialized flows, cannot be defined by commercial capital or by financial capital—these being merely flows among other flows and elements among other elements—but rather by industrial capital. Doubtless the merchant was very early an active factor in production, either by turning into an industrialist himself in occupations based on commerce, or by making artisans into his own intermediaries or employees (the struggles against the guilds and the monopolies). But capitalism doesn’t begin, the capitalist machine is not assembled, until capital directly appropriates production, and until financial capital and merchant capital are no longer anything but specific functions corresponding to a division of labor in the capitalist mode of production in general. One then re-encounters the production of productions, the production of recordings, and the production of consumptions—but precisely in this conjunction of decoded flows that makes of capital the new social full body, whereas commercial and financial capitalism in its primitive forms merely installed itself in the pores of the old socius without changing the old mode of production.

Even before the capitalist production-machine is assembled, commodities and money effect a decoding of flows through abstraction. But this does not occur in the same way for both instances. First, simple exchange inscribes commercial products as particular *quanta* of a unit of abstract labor. It is abstract labor, posited in the exchange relation, that forms the disjunctive synthesis of the apparent movement of commodities, since the abstract labor is divided into qualified pieces of labor to which a given determinate quantum corresponds. But it is only when a “general equivalent” appears as money that one enters into the reign of the *quantitas*, which can have all sorts of particular values or be worth all sorts of quanta. This abstract quantity nonetheless must have some particular value, so that it still appears only as a relation of magnitude between quanta. It is in this sense that the exchange relation formally unites partial objects that are produced and even inscribed

independently of it. The commercial and monetary inscription remains overcoded and even repressed by the previous characteristics and modes of inscription of a socius considered in its specific mode of production, which knows nothing of and does not recognize abstract labor. As Marx says, the latter is indeed the simplest and most ancient relation of productive activity, but it does not appear as such and only becomes a true practical relation in the modern capitalist machine.⁷¹ That is why, before, the monetary and commercial inscription does not have a body of its own at its disposal, and why it is inserted into the interstices of the pre-existing social body. The merchant is continually speculating with the maintained territorialities, so as to buy where prices are low and sell where they are high. Before the capitalist machine, merchant or financial capital is merely in a relationship of alliance with noncapitalist production; it enters into the new alliance that characterizes precapitalist States—whence the alliance of the merchant and banking bourgeoisie with feudalism. In brief, the capitalist machine begins when capital ceases to be a capital of alliance to become a filiative capital. Capital becomes filiative when money begets money, or value a surplus value—“value in process, money in process, and, as such, capital. . . . Value . . . suddenly presents itself as an independent substance, endowed with a motion of its own, in which money and commodities are mere forms which it assumes and casts off in turn. Nay more: instead of simply representing the relations of commodities, it enters now, so to say, into relations with itself. It differentiates itself as original value from itself as surplus-value; as the father differentiates himself qua the son, yet both are one and of one age: for only by the surplus-value of £10 does the £100 originally advanced become capital.”⁷²

It is solely under these conditions that capital becomes the full body, the new socius or the quasi cause that appropriates all the productive forces. We are no longer in the domain of the quantum or of the quantitas, but in that of the differential relation as a conjunction that defines the immanent social field particular to capitalism, and confers on the abstraction as such its effectively concrete value, its tendency to concretization. The abstraction has not ceased to be what it is, but it no longer appears in the simple quantity as a variable relation between independent terms; it has taken upon itself the independence, the quality of the terms and the quantity of the relations. The abstract itself posits the more complex relation within which it will develop “like” something concrete. This is the differential relation $\frac{Dy}{Dx}$, where *Dy* derives from labor power and constitutes the fluctuation of variable capital, and

where Dx derives from capital itself and constitutes the fluctuation of constant capital ("the definition of constant capital by no means excludes the possibility of a change in the value of its constituent parts"). It is from the fluxion of decoded flows, from their conjunction, that the filiative form of capital, $x+dx$, results. The differential relation expresses the fundamental capitalist phenomenon of *the transformation of the surplus value of code into a surplus value of flux*. The fact that a mathematical appearance here replaces the old code simply signifies that one is witnessing a breakdown of the subsisting codes and territorialities for the benefit of a machine of another species, functioning in an entirely different way. This is no longer the cruelty of life, the terror of one life brought to bear against another life, but a *post-mortem* despotism, the despot become anus and vampire: "Capital is dead labour, that vampire-like, only lives by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks." Industrial capital thus offers a new new filiation that is a constituent part of the capitalist machine, in relation to which commercial capital and financial capital will now take the form of a new alliance by assuming specific functions.

The celebrated problem of the tendency to a falling rate of profit, that is, of surplus value in relation to total capital, can be understood only from the viewpoint of capitalism's entire field of immanence, and by taking into account the conditions under which a surplus value of code is transformed into a surplus value of flux. First of all, it appears that—in keeping with Balibar's remarks—this tendency to a falling rate of profit has no end, but reproduces itself while reproducing the factors that counteract it. But why does it have no end? Doubtless for the same reasons that provoke the laughter of the capitalists and their economists when they ascertain that surplus value cannot be determined mathematically. Yet they have little cause to rejoice. They would be better off concluding in favor of the very thing they are bent on hiding: that it is not the same money that goes into the pocket of the wage earner and is entered on the balance sheet of a commercial enterprise. In the one case, there are impotent money signs of exchange value, a flow of means of payment relative to consumer goods and use values, and a one-to-one relation between money and an imposed range of products ("which I have a right to, which are my due, so they're mine"); in the other case, signs of the power of capital, flows of financing, a system of differential quotients of production that bear witness to a prospective force or to a long-term evaluation, not realizable *hic et nunc*, and functioning as an axiomatic of abstract quantities. In the one case, money represents a potential break-deduction in a flow of consumption; in the other case, it

represents a break-detachment and a rearticulation of economic chains directed toward the adaptation of flows of production to the disjunctions of capital. The extreme importance in the capitalist system of the dualism that exists in banking has been demonstrated, the dualism between the formation of means of payment and the structure of financing, between the management of money and the financing of capitalist accumulation, between exchange money and credit money.⁷³ The fact that banks participate in both, that they are situated at the pivotal point between financing and payment, merely shows the multiple interactions of these two operations. Thus in credit money, which comprises all the commercial and bank credits, purely commercial credit has its roots in simple circulation where money develops as means of payment (bills of exchange falling due on a fixed date, which constitute a monetary form of finite debt). Inversely, bank credit effects a demonetization or dematerialization of money, and is based on the circulation of drafts instead of the circulation of money. This credit money traverses a particular circuit where it assumes, then loses, its value as an instrument of exchange, and where the conditions of flux imply conditions of reflux, giving to the infinite debt its capitalist form; but the State as a regulator ensures a principle of convertibility of this credit money, either directly by tying it to gold, or indirectly through a mode of centralization that comprises a guarantor of the credit, a uniform interest rate, a unity of capital markets, etc.

Hence one is correct in speaking of a profound *dissimulation* of the dualism of these two forms of money, payment and financing—the two aspects of banking practice. But this dissimulation does not depend on a faulty understanding so much as it expresses the capitalist field of immanence, the apparent objective movement where the lower or subordinate form is no less necessary than the other (it is necessary for money to play on both boards), and where no integration of the dominated classes could occur without the shadow of this unapplied principle of convertibility—which is enough, however, to ensure that the Desire of the most disadvantaged creature will invest with all its strength, irrespective of any economic understanding or lack of it, the capitalist social field as a whole. Flows, who doesn't desire flows, and relationships between flows, and breaks in flows?—all of which capitalism was able to mobilize and break under these hitherto unknown conditions of money. While it is true that capitalism is industrial in its essence or mode of production, it functions only as merchant capitalism. While it is true that it is filiative industrial capital in its essence, it functions only through its alliance with commercial and financial capital.

In a sense, it is the bank that controls the whole system and the investment of desire.* One of Keynes's contributions was the reintroduction of desire into the problem of money; it is this that must be subjected to the requirements of Marxist analysis. That is why it is unfortunate that Marxist economists too often dwell on considerations concerning the mode of production, and on the theory of money as the general equivalent as found in the first section of *Capital*, without attaching enough importance to banking practice, to financial operations, and to the specific circulation of credit money—which would be the meaning of a return to Marx, to the Marxist theory of money.

Let us return to the dualism of money, to the two boards, the two inscriptions, the one going into the account of the wage earner, the other into the balance sheet of the enterprise. Measuring the two orders of magnitude in terms of the same analytical unit is a pure fiction, a cosmic swindle, as if one were to measure intergalactic or intra-atomic distances in meters and centimeters. There is no common measure between the value of the enterprises and that of the labor capacity of wage earners. That is why the falling tendency has no conclusion. A quotient of differentials is indeed calculable if it is a matter of the limit of variation of the production flows from the viewpoint of a full output, but it is not calculable if it is a matter of the production flow and the labor flow on which surplus value depends. Thus the difference is not canceled in the relationship that constitutes it as a difference in nature; the "tendency" has no end, it has no exterior limit that it could reach or even approximate. The tendency's only limit is internal, and it is continually going beyond it, but by displacing this limit—that is, by reconstituting it, by rediscovering it as an internal limit to be surpassed again by means of a displacement; thus the continuity of the capitalist process engenders itself in this break of a break that is always displaced, in this unity of the schiz and the flow. In this respect already the field of social immanence, as revealed under the withdrawal and the transformation of the *Urstaat*, is continually expanding, and acquires a consistency entirely its own, which shows the manner in which capitalism for its part was able to interpret the general principle according to which things work well only providing they break down, crises being "the means immanent to the capitalist mode of production." If capitalism is the exterior limit of all societies, this is because capitalism for its part has no exterior limit, but

*Brunhoff, *L'offre de monnaie* (reference note 73), p. 124: "The very notion of a monetary mass can have a meaning only relative to the workings of a system of credit where the different kinds of money combine. Without such a system, one would have only a sum of means of payment that would have no access to the social nature of the general equivalent and that could serve only in local private circuits. There would be no general monetary circulation. Only in the centralized system can the different kinds of money become homogeneous and appear as the components of an articulated whole." And with regard to the objective *dissimulation* in the system, see pp. 110, 114.

only an interior limit that is capital itself and that it does not encounter, but reproduces by always displacing it.* Jean-Joseph Goux rigorously analyzes the mathematical phenomenon of the curve without a tangent, and the direction it is apt to take in economy as well as linguistics: "If the movement does not tend toward any limit, if the quotient of differentials is not calculable, the present no longer has any meaning. . . . The quotient of differentials is not resolved, the differences no longer cancel one another in their relationship. No limit opposes the break (*la brisure*), or the breaking of this break. The tendency finds no end, the thing in motion never quite reaches what the immediate future has in store for it; it is endlessly delayed by accidents and deviations. . . . Such is the complex notion of a continuity within the absolute break."⁷⁴ In the expanded immanence of the system, the limit tends to reconstitute in its displacement the thing it tended to diminish in its primitive emplacement.

Now this movement of displacement belongs essentially to the deterritorialization of capitalism. As Samir Amin has shown, the process of deterritorialization here goes from the center to the periphery, that is, from the developed countries to the underdeveloped countries, which do not constitute a separate world, but rather an essential component of the world-wide capitalist machine. It must be added, however, that the center itself has its organized enclaves of underdevelopment, its reservations and its ghettos as interior peripheries. (Pierre Moussa has defined the United States as a fragment of the Third World that has succeeded and has preserved its immense zones of underdevelopment.) And if it is true that the tendency to a falling rate of profit or to its equalization asserts itself at least partially at the center, carrying the economy toward the most progressive and the most automated sectors, a veritable "development of underdevelopment" on the periphery ensures a rise in the rate of surplus value, in the form of an increasing exploitation of the peripheral proletariat in relation to that of the center. For it would be a great error to think that exports from the periphery originate primarily in traditional sectors or archaic territorialities: on the contrary, they come from modern industries and plantations that generate an immense surplus value, to a point where it is no longer the developed countries that supply the underdeveloped countries with capital, but quite the opposite. So true is it that primitive accumulation is not produced just once at the dawn of capitalism, but is continually reproducing itself. Capitalism exports filiative capital. At the same time

*Marx, *Capital* (see reference note 72), Vol. 3, p. 250: "Capitalist production seeks continually to overcome these immanent barriers, but overcomes them only by means which again place these barriers in its way and on a more formidable scale. The real barrier of capitalist production is capital itself."

as capitalist deterritorialization is developing from the center to the periphery, the decoding of flows on the periphery develops by means of a “disarticulation” that ensures the ruin of traditional sectors, the development of extraverted economic circuits, a specific hypertrophy of the tertiary sector, and an extreme inequality in the different areas of productivity and in incomes.⁷⁵ Each passage of a flux is a deterritorialization, and each displaced limit, a decoding. Capitalism schizophrenizes more and more on the periphery. It will be said that, even so, at the center the falling tendency retains its restricted sense, i.e., the relative diminution of surplus value in relation to total capital—a diminution that is ensured by the development of productivity, automation, and constant capital.

This problem was raised again recently by Maurice Clavel in a series of decisive and willfully incompetent questions—that is, questions addressed to Marxist economists by someone who doesn’t quite understand how one can maintain human surplus value as the basis for capitalist production, while recognizing that machines too “work” or produce value, that they have always worked, and that they work more and more in proportion to man, who thus ceases to be a constituent part of the production process, in order to become adjacent to this process.⁷⁶ Hence there is a machinic surplus value produced by constant capital, which develops along with automation and productivity, and which cannot be explained by factors that counteract the falling tendency—the increasing intensity of the exploitation of human labor, the diminution of the price of the elements of constant capital, etc.—since, on the contrary, these factors depend on it. It seems to us, with the same indispensable incompetence, that these problems can only be viewed under the conditions of the transformation of the surplus value of code into a surplus value of flux. In defining precapitalist régimes by a surplus value of code, and capitalism by a generalized decoding that converted this surplus value of code into a surplus value of flux, we were presenting things in a summary fashion, we were still acting as though the matter were settled once and for all, at the dawn of a capitalism that had lost all code value. This is not the case, however. On the one hand, codes continue to exist—even as an archaism—but they assume a function that is perfectly contemporary and adapted to the situation within personified capital (the capitalist, the worker, the merchant, the banker). But on the other hand, and more profoundly, every technical machine presupposes flows of a particular type: *flows of code* that are both interior and exterior to the machine, forming the elements of a technology and even a science. It is these flows of code that find themselves encasted, coded, or overcoded in the precapitalist societies

in such a way that they never achieve any independence (the blacksmith, the astronomer). But the decoding of flows in capitalism has freed, deterritorialized, and decoded the flows of code just as it has the others—to such a degree that the automatic machine has always increasingly internalized them in its body or its structure as a field of forces, while depending on a science and a technology, on a so-called intellectual labor distinct from the manual labor of the worker (the evolution of the technical object). In this sense, it is not machines that have created capitalism, but capitalism that creates machines, and that is constantly introducing breaks and cleavages through which it revolutionizes its technical modes of production.

But several correctives must be introduced in this regard. These breaks and cleavages take time, and their extension is very wide-ranging. By no means does the diachronic capitalist machine allow itself to be revolutionized by one or more of its synchronous technical machines, and by no means does it confer on its scientists and its technicians an independence that was unknown in the previous régimes. Doubtless it can let a certain number of scientists—mathematicians, for example—“schizophrenize” in their corner, and it can allow the passage of socially decoded flows of code that these scientists organize into axiomatics of research that is said to be basic. But *the true axiomatic* is elsewhere. (Leave the scientists alone to a certain point, let them create their own axiomatic, but when the time comes for serious things . . . For example, nondeterminist physics, with its corpuscular flows, will have to be brought into line with “determinism.”) The true axiomatic is that of the social machine itself, which takes the place of the old codings and organizes all the decoded flows, including the flows of scientific and technical code, for the benefit of the capitalist system and in the service of its ends. That is why it has often been remarked that the Industrial Revolution combined an elevated rate of technical progress with the maintenance of a great quantity of “obsolescent” equipment, along with a great suspicion concerning machines and science. An innovation is adopted only from the perspective of the rate of profit its investment will offer by the lowering of production costs; without this prospect, the capitalist will keep the existing equipment, and stand ready to make a parallel investment in equipment in another area.⁷⁷

Thus the importance of human surplus value remains decisive, even at the center and in highly industrialized sectors. What determines the lowering of costs and the elevation of the rate of profit through machinic surplus value is not innovation itself, whose value is no more measurable than that of human surplus value. It is not even the profitability of the new technique considered in isolation, but its effect on the over-all

profitability of the firm in its relationships with the market and with commercial and financial capital. This implies diachronic encounters and countersectings such as one already sees for example in the early part of the nineteenth century, between the steam engine and textile machines or techniques for the production of iron. In general, the introduction of innovations always tends to be delayed beyond the time scientifically necessary, until the moment when the market forecasts justify their exploitation on a large scale. Here again, alliance capital exerts a strong selective pressure on machinic innovations within industrial capital. In brief, there where the flows are decoded, the specific flows of code that have taken a technical and scientific form are subjected to a properly social axiomatic that is much severer than all the scientific axiomatics, much severer too than all the old codes and overcodes that have disappeared: the axiomatic of the world capitalist market. In brief, the flows of code that are “liberated” in science and technics by the capitalist régime engender a machinic surplus value that does not directly depend on science and technics themselves, but on capital—a surplus value that is added to human surplus value and that comes to correct the relative diminution of the latter, *both of them constituting the whole of the surplus value of flux that characterizes the system*. Knowledge, information, and specialized education are just as much parts of capital (“knowledge capital”) as is the most elementary labor of the worker. And just as we found, on the side of human surplus value insofar as it resulted from decoded flows, an incommensurability or a fundamental asymmetry (no assignable exterior limit) between manual labor and capital, or between two forms of money, here too, on the side of the machinic surplus value resulting from scientific and technical flows of code, we find no commensurability or exterior limit between scientific or technical labor—even when highly remunerated—and the profit of capital that inscribes itself with another sort of writing. In this respect the knowledge flow and the labor flow find themselves in the same situation, determined by capitalist decoding or deterritorialization.

But if it is true that innovations are adopted only insofar as they entail a rise in profits through a lowering of costs of production, and if there exists a sufficiently high volume of production to justify them, the corollary that derives from this proposition is that investment in innovations is never sufficient to realize or absorb the surplus value of flux that is produced on the one side as on the other.⁷⁸ Marx has clearly demonstrated the importance of the problem: the ever widening circle of capitalism is completed, while reproducing its immanent limits on an ever larger scale, only if the surplus value is not merely produced or extorted, but absorbed or realized.⁷⁹ If the capitalist is not defined in

terms of enjoyment, the reason is not merely that his aim is the “production for production’s sake” that generates surplus value, it also includes the realization of this surplus value: an unrealized surplus value of flux is as if not produced, and becomes embodied in unemployment and stagnation. It is easy to list the principal modes of absorption of surplus value outside the spheres of consumption and investment: advertising, civil government, militarism, and imperialism. The role of the State in this regard, within the capitalist axiomatic, is the more manifest in that what it absorbs is not sliced from the surplus value of the firms, but added to their surplus value by bringing the capitalist economy closer to full output within the given limits, and by widening these limits in turn—especially within an order of military expenditures that are in no way competitive with private enterprise, quite the contrary (it took a war to accomplish what the New Deal had failed to accomplish). The role of a politico-military-economic complex is the more manifest in that it guarantees the extraction of human surplus value on the periphery and in the appropriated zones of the center, but also because it engenders for its own part an enormous machinic surplus value by mobilizing the resources of knowledge and information capital, and finally because it absorbs the greater part of the surplus value produced.

The State, its police, and its army form a gigantic enterprise of antiproduction, but at the heart of production itself, and conditioning this production. Here we discover a new determination of the properly capitalist field of immanence: not only the interplay of the relations and differential coefficients of decoded flows, not only the nature of the limits that capitalism reproduces on an ever wider scale as interior limits, but the presence of antiproduction within production itself. The apparatus of antiproduction is no longer a transcendent instance that opposes production, limits it, or checks it; on the contrary, it insinuates itself everywhere in the productive machine and becomes firmly wedded to it in order to regulate its productivity and realize surplus value—which explains, for example, the difference between the despotic bureaucracy and the capitalist bureaucracy. This effusion from the apparatus of antiproduction is characteristic of the entire capitalist system; the capitalist effusion is that of antiproduction within production at all levels of the process. On the one hand, it alone is capable of realizing capitalism’s supreme goal, which is to produce lack in the large aggregates, to introduce lack where there is always too much, by effecting the absorption of overabundant resources. On the other hand, it alone doubles the capital and the flow of knowledge with a capital and an equivalent flow of *stupidity* that also effects an absorption and a

realization, and that ensures the integration of groups and individuals into the system. Not only lack amid overabundance, but stupidity in the midst of knowledge and science; it will be seen in particular how it is at the level of the State and the military that the most progressive sectors of scientific or technical knowledge combine with those feeble archaisms bearing the greatest burden of current functions.

Here André Gorz's double portrait of the "scientific and technical worker" takes on its full meaning. Although he has mastered a flow of knowledge, information, and training, he is so absorbed in capital that the reflux of organized, axiomatized stupidity coincides with him, so that, when he goes home in the evening, he rediscovers his little desiring-machines by tinkering with a television set—O despair.⁸⁰ Of course the scientist as such has no revolutionary potential; he is the first integrated agent of integration, a refuge for bad conscience, and the forced destroyer of his own creativity. Let us consider the more striking example of a career à l'américaine, with abrupt mutations, just as we imagine such a career to be: Gregory Bateson begins by fleeing the civilized world, by becoming an ethnologist and following the primitive codes and the savage flows; then he turns in the direction of flows that are more and more decoded, those of schizophrenia, from which he extracts an interesting psychoanalytic theory; then, still in search of a beyond, of another wall to break through, he turns to dolphins, to the language of dolphins, to flows that are even stranger and more deterritorialized. But where does the dolphin flux end, if not with the basic research projects of the American army, which brings us back to preparations for war and to the absorption of surplus value.

In comparison to the capitalist State, the socialist States are children—but children who learned something from their father concerning the axiomatizing role of the State. But the socialist States have more trouble stopping unexpected flow leakage except by direct violence. What on the contrary is called the co-opting power of capitalism can be explained by the fact that its axiomatic is not more flexible, but wider and more englobing. In such a system no one escapes participation in the activity of antiproduction that drives the entire productive system. "But it is not only those who man and supply the military machine who are engaged in an anti-human enterprise. The same can be said in varying degrees of many millions of other workers who produce, and create wants for, goods and services which no one needs. And so interdependent are the various sectors and branches of the economy that nearly everyone is involved in one way or another in these anti-human activities: the farmer supplying food to troops fighting in

Vietnam, the tool and die makers turning out the intricate machinery needed for a new automobile model, the manufacturers of paper and ink and TV sets whose products are used to control the minds of the people, and so on and so on."⁸¹ Thus the three segments of the ever widening capitalist reproduction process are joined, three segments that also define the three aspects of its immanence: (1) the one that extracts human surplus value on the basis of the differential relation between decoded flows of labor and production, and that moves from the center to the periphery while nevertheless maintaining vast residual zones at the center; (2) the one that extracts machinic surplus value, on the basis of an axiomatic of the flows of scientific and technical code, in the "core" areas of the center; (3) and the one that absorbs or realizes these two forms of surplus value of flux by guaranteeing the emission of both, and by constantly injecting antiproduction into the producing apparatus. Schizophrenization occurs on the periphery, but it occurs at the center and at the core as well.

The definition of surplus value must be modified in terms of the machinic surplus value of constant capital, which distinguishes itself from the human surplus value of variable capital and from the nonmeasurable nature of this aggregate of surplus value of flux. It cannot be defined by the difference between the value of labor capacity and the value created by labor capacity, but by the incommensurability between two flows that are nonetheless immanent to each other, by the disparity between the two aspects of money that express them, and by the absence of a limit exterior to their relationship—the one measuring the true economic force, the other measuring a purchasing power determined as "income." The first is the immense deterritorialized flow that constitutes the full body of capital. An economist of the caliber of Bernard Schmitt finds strange lyrical words to characterize this flow of infinite debt: an instantaneous creative flow that the banks create spontaneously as a debt owing to themselves, a creation *ex nihilo* that, instead of transferring a pre-existing currency as means of payment, hollows out at one extreme of the full body a negative money (a debt entered as a liability of the banks), and projects at the other extreme a positive money (a credit granted the productive economy by the banks)—"a flow possessing a power of mutation" *that does not enter into income and is not assigned to purchases*, a pure availability, nonpossession and nonwealth.⁸² The other aspect of money represents the reflux, that is, the relationship that it assumes with goods as soon as it acquires a purchasing power through its distribution to workers or production factors, through its allotment in the form of incomes—a

relationship that it loses as soon as the latter are converted into real goods (at which point everything recommences by means of a new production that will first come under the sway of the first aspect). The incommensurability of the two aspects—the flux and the reflux—shows that nominal wages fail to embrace the totality of the national income, since the wage earners allow a great quantity of revenues to escape. These revenues are tapped by the firms and in turn form an afflux by means of a conjunction; a flow—this time uninterrupted—of raw *profit*, constituting “at one go” an undivided quantity flowing over the full body, however diverse the uses for which it is allocated (interest, dividends, management salaries, purchase of production goods, etc.).⁸³

The incompetent observer has the impression that this whole economic schema, this whole story is profoundly schizo. The aim of the theory is clear—a theory that refrains, however, from employing any moral reference. “Who is robbed?” is the serious implied question that echoes Clavel’s ironic question, “Who is alienated?” Yet no one is or can be robbed—just as, according to Clavel, one no longer knows who is alienated or who does the alienating. Who steals? Certainly not the finance capitalist as the representative of the great instantaneous creative flow, which is not even a possession and has no purchasing power. Who is robbed? Certainly not the worker who is not even bought, since the reflux or salary distribution creates the purchasing power, instead of presupposing it. Who would be capable of stealing? Certainly not the industrial capitalist as the representative of the afflux of profit, since “profits do not flow in the reflux, but side by side with, deviating from rather than penalizing the flow that creates incomes.” How much flexibility there is in the axiomatic of capitalism, always ready to widen its own limits so as to add a new axiom to a previously saturated system! You say you want an axiom for wage earners, for the working class and the unions? Well then, let’s see what we can do—and thereafter profit will flow alongside wages, side by side, reflux and afflux. An axiom will be found even for the language of dolphins. Marx often alluded to the Golden Age of the capitalist, when the latter didn’t hide his own cynicism: in the beginning, at least, he could not be unaware of what he was doing, extorting surplus value. But how this cynicism has grown—to the point where he is able to declare: no, nobody is being robbed! For everything is then based on the disparity between two kinds of flows, as in the fathomless abyss where profit and surplus value are engendered: the flow of merchant capital’s economic force and the flow that is derisively named “purchasing power”—a flow made truly *impotent* that represents the absolute impotence of the wage earner as well as the

relative dependence of the industrial capitalist. This is money and the market, capitalism’s true police.

In a certain sense, capitalist economists are not mistaken when they present the economy as being perpetually “in need of monetarization,” as if it were always necessary to inject money into the economy from the outside according to a supply and a demand. In this manner the system indeed holds together and functions, and perpetually fulfills its own immanence. In this manner it is indeed the global object of an investment of desire. The wage earner’s desire, the capitalist’s desire, everything moves to the rhythm of one and the same desire, founded *on the differential relation of flows having no assignable exterior limit, and where capitalism reproduces its immanent limits on an ever widening and more comprehensive scale*. Hence it is at the level of a generalized theory of flows that one is able to reply to the question: how does one come to desire strength while also desiring one’s own impotence? How was such a social field able to be invested by desire? And how far does desire go beyond so-called objective interests, when it is a question of flows to set in motion and to break? Doubtless Marxists will remind us that the formation of money as a specific relation within capitalism depends on the mode of production that makes the economy a monetary economy. The fact remains that the apparent objective movement of capital—which is by no means a failure to recognize or an illusion of consciousness—shows that the productive essence of capitalism can itself function only in this necessarily monetary or commodity form that controls it, and whose flows and relations between flows contain the secret of the investment of desire. It is at the level of flows, the monetary flows included, and not at the level of ideology, that the integration of desire is achieved.

So what is the solution? Which is the revolutionary path? Psychoanalysis is of little help, entertaining as it does the most intimate of relations with money, and recording—while refusing to recognize it—an entire system of economic-monetary dependences at the heart of the *desire* of every subject it treats. Psychoanalysis constitutes for its part a gigantic enterprise of absorption of surplus value. But which is the revolutionary path? Is there one?—To withdraw from the world market, as Samir Amin advises Third World countries to do, in a curious revival of the fascist “economic solution”? Or might it be to go in the opposite direction? To go still further, that is, in the movement of the market, of decoding and deterritorialization? For perhaps the flows are not yet deterritorialized enough, not decoded enough, from the viewpoint of a theory and a practice of a highly schizophrenic character. Not to

withdraw from the process, but to go further, to “accelerate the process,” as Nietzsche put it: in this matter, the truth is that we haven’t seen anything yet.

10 | Capitalist Representation

Writing has never been capitalism’s thing. Capitalism is profoundly illiterate. The death of writing is like the death of God or the death of the father: the thing was settled a long time ago, although the news of the event is slow to reach us, and there survives in us the memory of extinct signs with which we still write. The reason for this is simple: writing implies a use of language in general according to which graphism becomes aligned on the voice, but also overcodes it and induces a fictitious voice from on high that functions as a signifier. The arbitrary nature of the thing designated, the subordination of the signified, the transcendence of the despotic signifier, and finally, its consecutive decomposition into minimal elements within a field of immanence uncovered by the withdrawal of the despot—all this is evidence that writing belongs to imperial despotic representation. Once this is said, what exactly is meant when someone announces the collapse of the “Gutenberg galaxy”? Of course capitalism has made and continues to make use of writing; not only is writing adapted to money as the general equivalent, but the specific functions of money in capitalism went by way of writing and printing, and in some measure continue to do so. The fact nonetheless remains that writing typically plays the role of an archaism in capitalism, the Gutenberg press being the element that confers on the archaism a *current function*. But the capitalist use of language is different in nature; it is realized or becomes concrete within the field of immanence peculiar to capitalism itself, with the appearance of the technical means of expression that correspond to the generalized decoding of flows, instead of still referring, in a direct or indirect form, to despotic overcoding.

This seems to us to be the significance of McLuhan’s analyses: to have shown what a language of decoded flows is, as opposed to a signifier that strangles and overcodes the flows. In the first place, for nonsignifying language anything will do: whether it be phonic, graphic, gestural, etc., no flow is privileged in this language, which remains indifferent to its substance or its support, inasmuch as the latter is an amorphous continuum. The electric flow can be considered as the realization of such a flow that is indeterminate as such. But a substance is said to be formed when a flow enters into a relationship with another

flow, such that the first defines a content and the second, an expression.* The deterritorialized flows of content and expression are in a state of conjunction or reciprocal precondition that constitutes figures as the ultimate units of both content and expression. These figures do not derive from a signifier nor are they even signs as minimal elements of the signifier; they are nonsigns, or rather nonsignifying signs, points-signs having several dimensions, flows-breaks or schizzes that form images through their coming together in a whole, but that do not maintain any identity when they pass from one whole to another. Hence the figures, that is, the schizzes or breaks-flows are in no way “figurative”; they become figurative only in a particular constellation that dissolves in order to be replaced by another one. Three million points per second transmitted by television, only a few of which are retained. Electric language does not go by way of the voice or writing; data processing does without them both, as does that discipline appropriately named fluidics, which operates by means of streams of gas; the computer is a machine for instantaneous and generalized decoding. Michel Serres defines in this sense the correlation of the break and the flow in the signs of the new technical language machines, where production is narrowly determined by information: “Take for example a cloverleaf highway interchange. . . . It is a quasi point that analyses, through multiple overlappings, along a dimension that is normal to the network space, the lines of flow for which it serves as a receiver. On it one can go from any afferent direction to any efferent direction, and in whatever order, without ever encountering any of the other directions. . . . If I like, *I will never come back to the same point*, although it will be the same. . . . A topological knot where everything is connected without confusion, where everything flows together and is distributed. . . . Thus a knot may be seen as a point having several dimensions”—which, far from cancelling the flows, contains them and sets them in motion.⁸⁴ This cordoning off of production through information shows once again that the productive essence of capitalism functions or “speaks” only in the language of signs imposed on it by merchant capital or the axiomatic of the market.

There are great differences between such a linguistics of flows and linguistics of the signifier. Saussurian linguistics, for example, in effect discovers a field of immanence constituted by “value”—i.e., by the

*Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media* (New York: McGraw-Hill, Signet, 1964), p. 23: “The electric light is pure information. It is a medium without a message, as it were, unless it is used to spell out some verbal ad or name. This fact, characteristic of all media, means that the content of any medium is always another medium. The content of writing is speech, just as the written word is the content of print, and print is the content of the telegraph.”

system of relations among ultimate elements of the signifier; but apart from the fact that this field of immanence still presupposes the transcendence of the signifier, which uncovers the field if only through the signifier's own withdrawal, the elements populating this field have for a criterion a minimal identity that they owe to their relations of opposition, and that they keep throughout all the types of variations affecting them. The elements of the signifier as distinguishing units are regulated by "coded gaps" that the signifier overcodes in its turn. There result diverse but always convergent consequences: the comparison of language to a game; the signified-signifier relationship, where the signified finds itself by nature subordinated to the signifier; figures defined as effects of the signifier itself; the formal elements of the signifier determined in relation to a phonic substance on which writing even confers a secret privilege. We believe that, from all points of view and despite certain appearances, Louis Hjelmslev's linguistics stands in profound opposition to the Saussurian and post-Saussurian undertaking. Because it abandons all privileged reference. Because it describes a pure field of algebraic immanence that no longer allows any surveillance on the part of a transcendent instance, even one that has withdrawn. Because within this field it sets in motion its flows of form and substance, content and expression. Because it substitutes the relationship of reciprocal precondition between expression and content for the relationship of subordination between signifier and signified. Because there no longer occurs a double articulation between two hierarchized levels of language, but between two convertible deterritorialized planes, constituted by the relation between the form of content and the form of expression. Because in this relation one reaches figures that are no longer effects of a signifier, but schizzes, points-signs, or flows-breaks that collapse the wall of the signifier, pass through, and continue on beyond. Because these signs have crossed a new threshold of deterritorialization. Because these figures have definitively lost the minimum conditions of identity that defined the elements of the signifier itself. Because in Hjelmslev's linguistics the order of the elements is secondary in relation to the axiomatic of flows and figures. Because the money model in the point-sign, or in the figure-break stripped of its identity, having now only a floating identity, tends to replace the model of the game. In short, Hjelmslev's very special position in linguistics, and the reactions he provokes, seem to be explained by the following: that he tends to fashion a purely immanent theory of language that shatters the double game of the voice-graphism domination; that causes form and substance, content and expression to flow according to the flows of desire; and that breaks these flows according to points-signs and figures-

schizzes.* Far from being an overdetermination of structuralism and of its fondness for the signifier, Hjelmslev's linguistics implies the concerted destruction of the signifier, and constitutes a decoded theory of language about which one can also say—an ambiguous tribute—that it is the only linguistics adapted to the nature of *both* the capitalist and the schizophrenic flows: until now, the only modern—and not archaic—theory of language.

The extreme importance of J.-F. Lyotard's recent book is due to its position as the first generalized critique of the signifier. In his most general proposition, in fact, he shows that the signifier is overtaken toward the outside by figurative images, just as it is overtaken toward the inside by the pure figures that compose it—or, more decisively, by "the figural" that comes to short-circuit the signifier's coded gaps, inserting itself between them, and working under the conditions of identity of their elements. In language and in writing itself, sometimes the letters as breaks, as shattered partial objects—and sometimes the words as undivided flows, as nondecomposable blocks, or full bodies having a tonic value—constitute assignifying signs that deliver themselves over to the order of desire: rushes of breath and cries. (In particular, formal investigations concerning manual or printed writing change their meaning according to whether the characteristics of the letters and the qualities of the words are in the service of a signifier, whose effects they express following exegetical rules; or whether, on the contrary, they break through this wall so as to set flows in motion, and establish breaks that overflow or rupture the sign's conditions of identity, and that cause books within "the book" to flow and to disintegrate, entering into multiple configurations whose possibilities were already the object of the typographical exercises of Mallarmé—always passing underneath the signifier, filing through the wall: which again shows that the death of writing is infinite, so long as it arises and arrives from within.)

Similarly, in the plastic arts there is the pure figural dimension formed by the active line and the multidimensional point, and on the other hand, the multiple configurations formed by the passive line and the surface it engenders, so as to reveal—as in Paul Klee—those "intermundia that perhaps are visible only to children, madmen, and primitives."⁸⁵ Or in dreams: in some very beautiful pages, Lyotard shows that what is *at work* in dreams is not the signifier but a figural

*Nicolas Ruwet, for example, takes Hjelmslev to task for having elaborated a theory whose applications are on the order of *Jabberwocky* or *Finnegans Wake*: *Introduction à la grammaire générative* (Paris: Plon, 1967), p. 54. (Regarding Hjelmslev's indifference to the "order of the elements," see p. 345.) André Martinet stresses the loss of the conditions of identity in Hjelmslev's theory: *Au sujet des fondements de la théorie linguistique de Louis Hjelmslev*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Paulet, 1946).

dimension underneath, which gives rise to configurations of images that make use of words, making them flow and cutting them according to flows and points that are not linguistic and do not depend on the signifier or its regulated elements. Thus Lyotard everywhere reverses the order of the signifier and the figure. It is not the figures that depend on the signifier and its effects, but the signifying chain that depends on the figural effects—this chain itself being composed of asignifying signs—crushing the signifiers as well as the signifieds, treating words as things, fabricating new unities, creating from nonfigurative figures configurations of images that form and then disintegrate. And these constellations are like flows that imply the breaks effected by points, just as the points imply the fluxion of the material they cause to flow or leak: the sole unity without identity is that of the flux-schiz or the break-flow. The pure figural element—the “figure-matrix”—Lyotard correctly names desire, which carries us to the gates of schizophrenia as a process.⁸⁶

But what explains the reader's impression that Lyotard is continual-ly arresting the process, and steering the schizzes toward shores he has so recently left behind: toward coded or overcoded territories, spaces, and structures, to which they bring only “transgressions,” disorders, and deformations that are secondary in spite of everything, instead of forming and transporting further the desiring-machines that are in opposition to the structures, and the intensities that are in opposition to the spaces? The explanation is that, despite his attempt at linking desire to a fundamental *yes*, Lyotard reintroduces lack and absence into desire; maintains desire under the law of castration, at the risk of restoring the entire signifier along with the law; and discovers the matrix of the figure in fantasy, the simple fantasy that comes to veil desiring-production, the whole of desire as effective production. But at least for an instant the mortgage of the signifier was raised: that enormous archaism that causes so many of us to groan and bow under its weight, and that others use to establish a new terrorism, diverting Lacan's imperial discourse into a university discourse characterized by a pure scientificity, that “scientificity” perfectly suited for resupplying our neuroses, for strangling the process once again, and for overcoding Oedipus with castration, while chaining us to the current structural functions of a vanished archaic despot. For it is certain that, even and especially in their manifestations of extreme force, neither capitalism nor revolution nor schizophrenia follows the paths of the signifier.

Civilization is defined by the decoding and the deterritorialization of flows in capitalist production. Any method will do for ensuring this universal decoding: the privatization brought to bear on property, goods, and the means of production, but also on the organs of “private man”

himself; the abstraction of monetary quantities, but also the abstraction of the quantity of labor; the limitless nature of the relationship between capital and labor capacity, and between the flows of financing and the flows of incomes or means of payment; the scientific and technical form assumed by flows of code themselves; the formation of floating configurations starting from lines and points without a discernible identity. The route taken by the decoded flows is traced by recent monetary history: the role of the dollar, short-term migrating capital, the floating of currencies, the new means of financing and credit, the special drawing rights, and the new form of crises and speculations. Our societies exhibit a marked taste for all codes—codes foreign or exotic—but this taste is destructive and morbid. While decoding doubtless means understanding and translating a code, it also means destroying the code as such, assigning it an archaic, folkloric, or residual function, which makes of psychoanalysis and ethnology two disciplines highly regarded in our modern societies. Yet it would be a serious error to consider *the capitalist flows and the schizophrenic flows* as identical, under the general theme of a decoding of the flows of desire. Their affinity is great, to be sure: everywhere capitalism sets in motion schizo-flows that animate “our” arts and “our” sciences, just as they congeal into the production of “our own” sick, the schizophrenics. We have seen that the relationship of schizophrenia to capitalism went far beyond problems of modes of living, environment, ideology, etc., and that it should be examined at the deepest level of one and the same economy, one and the same production process. Our society produces schizos the same way it produces Prell shampoo or Ford cars, the only difference being that the schizos are not salable. How then does one explain the fact that capitalist production is constantly arresting the schizophrenic process and transforming the subject of the process into a confined clinical entity, as though it saw in this process the image of its own death coming from within? Why does it make the schizophrenic into a sick person—not only nominally but in reality? Why does it confine its madmen and madwomen instead of seeing in them its own heros and heroines, its own fulfillment? And where it can no longer recognize the figure of a simple illness, why does it keep its artists and even its scientists under such close surveillance—as though they risked unleashing flows that would be dangerous for capitalist production and charged with a revolutionary potential, so long as these flows are not co-opted or absorbed by the laws of the market? Why does it form in turn a gigantic machine for social repression—psychic repression, aimed at what nevertheless constitutes its own reality—the decoded flows?

The answer—as we have seen—is that capitalism is indeed the limit

of all societies, insofar as it brings about the decoding of the flows that the other social formations coded and overcoded. But it is the *relative* limit of every society; it effects *relative* breaks, because it substitutes for the codes an extremely rigorous axiomatic that maintains the energy of the flows in a bound state on the body of capital as a socius that is deterritorialized, but also a socius that is even more pitiless than any other. Schizophrenia, on the contrary, is indeed the *absolute* limit that causes the flows to travel in a free state on a desocialized body without organs. Hence one can say that schizophrenia is the *exterior* limit of capitalism itself or the conclusion of its deepest tendency, but that capitalism only functions on condition that it inhibit this tendency, or that it push back or displace this limit, by substituting for it its own *immanent* relative limits, which it continually reproduces on a widened scale. It axiomatizes with one hand what it decodes with the other. Such is the way one must reinterpret the Marxist law of the counteracting tendency. With the result that schizophrenia pervades the entire capitalist field from one end to the other. But for capitalism it is a question of binding the schizophrenic charges and energies into a world axiomatic that always opposes the revolutionary potential of decoded flows with new interior limits. And it is impossible in such a régime to distinguish, even in two phases, between decoding and the axiomatization that comes to replace the vanished codes. The flows are decoded *and* axiomatized by capitalism at the same time. Hence schizophrenia is not the identity of capitalism, but on the contrary its difference, its divergence, and its death. Monetary flows are perfectly schizophrenic realities, but they exist and function only within the immanent axiomatic that exorcises and repels this reality. The language of a banker, a general, an industrialist, a middle or high-level manager, or a government minister is a perfectly schizophrenic language, but that functions only statistically within the flattening axiomatic of connections that puts it in the service of the capitalist order.⁸⁷ (At the highest level of linguistics as a science, Hjelmslev is able to effect a vast decoding of language only by setting in motion from the start an axiomatic machine based on the supposed finite number of the figures considered.) Then what becomes of the “truly” schizophrenic language and the “truly” decoded and unbound flows that manage to break through the wall or absolute limit? The capitalist axiomatic is so rich that one more axiom is added—for the books of a great writer whose lexical and stylistic characteristics can always be computed by means of an electronic machine, or for the discourse of madmen that can always be heard within the framework of a hospital, administrative, and psychiatric axiomatic. In brief, the notion of break-flow has seemed to us to define

both capitalism and schizophrenia. But not in the same way; they are not at all the same thing, depending on whether the decodings are caught up in an axiomatic or not; on whether one remains at the level of the large aggregates functioning statistically, or crosses the barrier that separates them from the unbound molecular positions; on whether the flows of desire reach this absolute limit or are content to displace a relative immanent limit that will reconstitute itself further along; on whether controlling reterritorializations are added to the processes of deterritorialization; and on whether money burns or bursts into flames.

Why not merely say that capitalism replaces one code with another, that it carries into effect a new type of coding? For two reasons, one of which represents a kind of moral impossibility, the other a logical impossibility. All the cruelties and terrors meet in the precapitalist formations; some fragments of the signifying chain are struck by secrecy—secret societies or initiation groups—but there is never anything in these societies that is, strictly speaking, unavowable. It is with the thing, capitalism, that the unavowable begins: there is not a single economic or financial operation that, assuming it is translated in terms of a code, would not lay bare its own unavowable nature, that is, its intrinsic perversion or essential cynicism (the age of bad conscience is also the age of pure cynicism). But in point of fact it is impossible to code such operations: in the first place, a code determines the respective qualities of the flows passing through the socius (for example, the three circuits of consumer goods, prestige goods, and women and children); the characteristic object of codes is therefore to establish necessarily indirect relations among these qualified and therefore incommensurable codes. Such relations indeed imply a quantitative siphoning off of portions of the different sorts of flows, but these quantities do not enter into equivalences that would presuppose an unlimited “something”; they simply form composites that are themselves qualitative, essentially mobile and limited, where differences between the elements compensate the disequilibrium (whence the relationship of prestige and consumption in the block of finite debt).

All these code characteristics—indirect, qualitative, and limited—are sufficient to show that a code is not, and can never be, economic: on the contrary, it expresses the apparent objective movement according to which the economic forces or productive connections are attributed to an extraeconomic instance as though they emanated from it, an instance that serves as a support and an agent of inscription. That is what Althusser and Balibar show so well: how juridical and political relations are *determined as dominant*—in the case of feudalism, for example—because surplus labor as a form of surplus value constitutes a flux that is

qualitatively and temporally distinct from that of labor, and consequently must enter into a composite that is itself qualitative and implies noneconomic factors.* Or the way the autochthonous relations of alliance and filiation are determined as dominant in the so-called primitive societies, where the economic forces and flows are inscribed on the full body of the earth and are attributed to it. In short, there is a code where a full body as an instance of antiproduction falls back on the economy that it appropriates. That is why the sign of desire, as an economic sign that consists in producing and breaking flows, is accompanied by a sign of necessarily extraeconomic power, although its causes and effects lie within the economy (for example, the sign of alliance in relation to the power of the creditor). Or—what amounts to the same thing—surplus value here is determined as a surplus value of code. Hence the code relation is not only indirect, qualitative, and limited; because of these very characteristics, it is also extraeconomic, and by virtue of this fact engineers the couplings between qualified flows. Consequently it implies a system of collective appraisal and evaluation, and a set of organs of perception, or more precisely of belief, as a condition of existence and survival of the society in question—thus the collective investment of organs that causes men to be directly coded, and the appraising eye as we have analyzed it in the primitive system. It should be noted that these general traits characterizing a code are rediscovered precisely in what today is called a genetic code; not because it depends on an effect of a signifier, but on the contrary because the chain it constitutes is only signifying in a secondary way, insofar as it calls into play couplings between qualified flows, interactions that are exclusively indirect, qualitative composites that are essentially limited, and organs of perception and *extrachemical* factors that select and appropriate the cellular connections.

So many reasons for defining capitalism by a social axiomatic that stands opposed to codes in every respect. First of all, money as a general equivalent represents an abstract quantity that is indifferent to the qualified nature of the flows. But the equivalence itself points to the position of a relation without limitation: in the formula M-C-M, “the circulation of money as capital has therefore no limits.”⁸⁸ The studies of Bohannon concerning the Tiv of the Niger River, or those of Salisbury concerning the Siane of New Guinea, have shown how the introduction of money as an equivalent—which makes it possible to begin and end with money, therefore never to end at all—is enough to disturb the

*See Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 3, p. 791; “Under such conditions the surplus-labour for the nominal owner of the land can only be extorted from them by other than economic pressure, whatever the form assumed may be.”

circuits of qualified flows, to decompose the finite blocks of debt, and to destroy the very basis of codes. Secondly, the fact remains that money as an unlimited abstract quantity cannot be divorced from a becoming-concrete without which it would not become capital and would not appropriate production. We have seen that this becoming-concrete appeared in the differential relation; but it must be borne in mind that the differential relation is not an indirect relation between qualified or coded flows, it is a direct relation between decoded flows whose respective qualities have no existence prior to the differential relation itself. The quality of the flows results solely from their conjunction as decoded flows; outside this conjunction they would remain purely virtual; this conjunction is also the disjunction of the abstract quantity through which it becomes something concrete. Dx and dy are nothing independent of their relation, which determines the one as a pure quality of the flow of labor and the other as a pure quality of the flow of capital. The progression is therefore the opposite of that of a code; it expresses the capitalist transformation of the surplus value of code into a surplus value of flux. Whence the fundamental change in the order of powers. For if one of the flows finds itself subordinated and enslaved to the other, the reason is precisely that they are not to the same power (x and y^2 for example), and that the relation is established between a power and a given magnitude. This is something that became evident as we pursued the analysis of capital and labor at the level of the differential relation between flows of financing, and flows of means of payment or income. Such an extension merely signifies that capital has no industrial essence functioning other than as merchant, financial, and commercial capital, where money would take on functions other than those deriving from its form as the equivalent. But in this way the signs of power completely cease being what they were from the viewpoint of a code: they become coefficients that are directly economic, instead of being doubles to the economic signs of desire and expressing for their part noneconomic factors determined as dominant. That the flow of financing is raised to an entirely different power from the flow of means of payment signifies that the power has become directly economic. And yet, as regards paid labor, it is evident that there is no longer any need for a code in order to ensure surplus labor, when the latter is merged qualitatively and temporally with labor itself into one and the same simple magnitude (the condition characterized by surplus value of flux).

Hence capital differentiates itself from any other socius or full body, inasmuch as capital itself figures as a directly economic instance, and falls back on production without interposing extraeconomic factors that would be inscribed in the form of a code. With the advent of

capitalism the full body becomes truly naked, as does the worker himself who is attached to this full body. In this sense the antiproduction apparatus ceases to be transcendent, and pervades all production and becomes coextensive with it. Thirdly, as a result of these developed conditions involving the destruction of all codes within a becoming-concrete, the absence of limits takes on a new meaning. This absence no longer simply designates the unlimited abstract quantity, but the effective absence of any limit or end for the differential relation where the abstract becomes something concrete. Concerning capitalism, we maintain that it both does and does not have an exterior limit: it has an exterior limit that is schizophrenia, that is, the absolute decoding of flows, but it functions only by pushing back and exorcising this limit. And it also has, yet does not have, interior limits: it has interior limits under the specific conditions of capitalist production and circulation, that is, in capital itself, but it functions only by reproducing and widening these limits on an always vaster scale. The strength of capitalism indeed resides in the fact that its axiomatic is never saturated, that it is always capable of adding a new axiom to the previous ones. Capitalism defines a field of immanence and never ceases to fully occupy this field. But this deterritorialized field finds itself determined by an axiomatic, in contrast to the territorial field determined by primitive codes. Differential relations of such a nature as to be filled by surplus value; an absence of exterior limits that it is "filled" by the widening of internal limits; and the effusion of antiproduction within production so as to be filled by the absorption of surplus value—these constitute the three aspects of capitalism's immanent axiomatic. And monetarization everywhere comes to fill the abyss of capitalist immanence, introducing there, as Schmitt says, "a deformation, a convulsion, an explosion—in a word, a movement of extreme violence."⁸⁹

There results, finally, a fourth characteristic that places the axiomatic in opposition to codes. The axiomatic does not need to write in bare flesh, to mark bodies and organs, nor does it need to fashion a memory for man. In contrast to codes, the axiomatic finds in its different aspects its own organs of execution, perception, and memorization. Memory has become a bad thing. Above all, there is no longer any need of belief, and the capitalist is merely striking a pose when he bemoans the fact that nowadays no one believes in anything any more. Language no longer signifies something that must be believed, it indicates rather what is going to be done, something that the shrewd or the competent are able to decode, to half understand. Moreover, despite the abundance of identity cards, files, and other means of control, capitalism does not even need to write in books to make up for the vanished body markings.

Those are only relics, archaisms with a current function. The person has become "private" in reality, insofar as he derives from abstract quantities and becomes concrete in the becoming-concrete of these same quantities. It is these quantities that are marked, no longer the persons themselves: *your capital or your labor capacity*, the rest is not important, we'll always find a place for you within the expanded limits of the system, even if an axiom has to be created just for you. There is no longer any need of a collective investment of organs, as they are sufficiently filled with the floating images constantly produced by capitalism. To pursue a remark of Henri Lefebvre's, these images do not initiate a making public of the private so much as a privatization of the public: the whole world unfolds right at home, without one's having to leave the TV screen. This gives private persons a very special role in the system: a role of *application*, and no longer of implication, in a code. The hour of Oedipus draws nigh.

While capitalism thus proceeds by means of an axiomatic and not by means of a code, one must not think that it replaces the socius, the social machine, with an aggregate of technical machines. The difference in nature between the two types of machines persists, although they are both machines in the strict sense, without metaphor. Capitalism's originality resides rather in the fact that the social machine has for its parts technical machines as constant capital attached to the full body of the socius, and no longer men, the latter having become adjacent to the technical machines—whence the fact that inscription no longer bears directly, or at least in theory has no need of bearing directly, on men. But an axiomatic of itself is by no means a simple technical machine, not even an automatic or cybernetic machine. Bourbaki* says as much concerning scientific axiomatics: they do not form a Taylor system, nor a mechanical game of isolated formulas, but rather imply "intuitions" that are linked to resonances and conjunctions of structures, and that are merely aided by the "powerful levers" of technique. This holds even truer of the social axiomatic: the way in which this axiomatic fulfills its own immanence; pushes back or enlarges its limits; adds still more axioms while preventing the system from becoming saturated; and functions well only by grinding, sputtering, and starting up again—all this implies social organs of decision, administration, reaction, inscrip-

*Nicolas Bourbaki is the pseudonym of a group of French mathematicians who are known for their work in the theory of sets and for their advocacy of an "axiomatic method" which "allows us, when we are concerned with complex mathematical objects, to separate their properties and regroup them around a small number of concepts: that is to say, using a word which will receive a precise definition later, to classify them according to the *structures* to which they belong" (Nicolas Bourbaki, *Elements of Mathematics* Vol. 3: *Theory of Sets* [Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1968], p. 9). In this way they propose to elaborate a language of mathematical formalization capable of integrating the different branches of mathematics. (Translators' note.)

tion; a technocracy and a bureaucracy that cannot be reduced to the operation of technical machines. In short, the conjunction of the decoded flows, their differential relations, and their multiple schizzes or breaks require a whole apparatus of regulation whose principal organ is the State. The capitalist State is the regulator of decoded flows as such, insofar as they are caught up in the axiomatic of capital. In this sense it indeed completes the becoming-concrete that seemed to us to preside over the evolution of the abstract despotic Urstaat: from being at first the transcendent unity, it becomes immanent to the field of social forces, enters into their service, and serves as a regulator of the decoded and axiomatized flows. The capitalist State completes the becoming-concrete so fully that, in another sense, it alone represents a veritable rupture with this becoming, a break with it, in contrast to the other forms that were established on the ruins of the Urstaat. For the Urstaat was defined by overcoding, and its derivatives, from the ancient City-State to the monarchic State, already found themselves in the presence of flows that were decoded or in the process of being decoded. These flows doubtless had the effect of making the State more and more immanent and subordinate to the actual field of forces; but precisely because the circumstances were not right for these flows to enter into a conjunction, the State could be content to save fragments of overcoding and of codes, to invent others, and by marshaling all its forces, was even able to prevent the conjunction from taking place (as for the rest, its project was to resuscitate the Urstaat insofar as possible).

The capitalist State is in a different situation: it is produced by the conjunction of the decoded or deterritorialized flows, and is able to carry the becoming-immanent to its highest point only to the extent that it is party to the generalized breakdown of codes and overcodings, and evolves entirely within this new axiomatic that results from a hitherto unknown conjunction. Once again, this axiomatic is not the invention of capitalism, since it is identical with capital itself. On the contrary, capitalism is its offspring, its result. Capitalism merely ensures the regulation of the axiomatic; it regulates or even organizes the failures of the axiomatic as conditions of the latter's operation; it watches over or directs progress toward a saturation of the axiomatic and the corresponding widenings of the limits. Never before has a State lost so much of its power in order to enter with so much force into the service of the signs of economic power. And capitalism, despite what is said to the contrary, assumed this role very early, in fact from the start, from its gestation in forms still semifeudal or monarchic—from the standpoint of the flow of "free" workers: the control of manual labor and of wages; from the standpoint of the flow of industrial and commercial production:

the granting of monopolies, favorable conditions for accumulation, and the struggle against overproduction. There has never been a liberal capitalism: action against monopolies goes back first of all to a time when commercial and financial capital is still allied with the old system of production, and when nascent industrial capitalism can secure its production and its market only by obtaining the abolition of such privileges. That the struggle against monopolistic privileges does not imply any struggle against the very principle of State control—providing the State sees fit—can be seen clearly in mercantilism, inasmuch as it expresses the new commercial functions of a capital that has secured for itself direct interests in production. As a general rule, State controls and regulations tend to disappear or diminish only in situations where there is an abundant labor supply and an unusual expansion of markets.⁹⁰ That is, *when capitalism functions with a very small number of axioms within relative limits that are sufficiently wide*. This situation ceased to exist long ago, and one must regard as a decisive factor in this evolution the organization of a powerful working class that required a high and stable level of employment, and forced capitalism to multiply its axioms while having at the same time to reproduce its limits on an ever expanding scale (the axiom of displacement from the center to the periphery). Capitalism was able to digest the Russian Revolution only by continually adding new axioms to the old ones: an axiom for the working class, for the unions, and so on. But it is always prepared to add more axioms, it adds axioms for many other things besides, things that are much smaller, tiny even, absurdly insignificant; it has a peculiar passion for such things that leaves the essential unchanged. The State is thus induced to play an increasingly important role in the regulation of the axiomatized flows, with regard to production and its planning, the economy and its "monetarization," and surplus value and its absorption (by the State apparatus itself).

The regulative functions of the State do not imply any sort of arbitration between social classes. That the State is entirely in the service of the so-called ruling class is an obvious practical fact, but a fact that does not reveal its theoretical foundation. The latter is simple to explain: from the viewpoint of the capitalist axiomatic there is only one class, a class with a universalist vocation, the bourgeoisie. Plekhanov notes that the French School of the nineteenth century, under the influence of Saint-Simon, should be credited with the discovery of class struggle and its role in history—precisely the same men who praise the struggle of the bourgeois class against the nobility and feudalism, and who come to a halt before the proletariat and deny that there can be any difference in class between the industrialist or banker and the worker,

but only a fusion into one and the same flow as with profits and wages.⁹¹ This proposition contains something other than an ideological blindness or denial. Classes are *the* negative of castes and statuses; classes are orders, castes, and statuses that have been decoded. To reread history through the class struggle is to read it in terms of the bourgeoisie as the decoding and decoded class. It is the *only* class as such, inasmuch as it leads the struggle against codes, and merges with the generalized decoding of flows. In this capacity it is sufficient to fill the capitalist field of immanence. And in point of fact, something new occurs with the rise of the bourgeoisie: the disappearance of enjoyment as an end, the new conception of the conjunction according to which the sole end is abstract wealth and its realization in forms other than consumption. The generalized slavery of the despotic State at least implied the existence of masters, and an apparatus of antiproduction distinct from the sphere of production. But the bourgeois field of immanence—as delimited by the conjunction of the decoded flows, the negation of any transcendence or exterior limit, and the effusion of antiproduction inside production itself—institutes an unrivaled slavery, an unprecedented subjugation: there are no longer even any masters, but only slaves commanding other slaves; there is no longer any need to burden the animal from the outside, it shoulders its own burden. Not that man is ever the slave of technical machines; he is rather the slave of the social machine. The bourgeois sets the example, he absorbs surplus value for ends that, taken as a whole, have nothing to do with his own enjoyment: more utterly enslaved than the lowest of slaves, he is the first servant of the ravenous machine, the beast of the reproduction of capital, internalization of the infinite debt. “I too am a slave”—these are the new words spoken by the master. “Only as personified capital is the capitalist respectable. As such, he shares with the miser the passion for wealth as wealth. But that which in the miser is a mere idiosyncrasy, is, in the capitalist, the effect of the social mechanism, of which he is but one of the wheels.”⁹²

It will be said that there is nonetheless a class that rules and a class that is ruled, both defined by surplus value, the distinction between the flow of financing and the flow of income in wages. But this is only partially true, since capitalism is born of the conjunction of the two in the differential relations, and integrates them both in the continually expanded reproduction of its limits. So that the bourgeois is justified in saying, not in terms of ideology, but in the very organization of his axiomatic: there is only one machine, that of the great mutant decoded flow—cut off from goods—and one class of servants, the decoding bourgeoisie, the class that decodes the castes and the statuses, and that

draws from the machine an undivided flow of income convertible into consumer and production goods, a flow on which profits and wages are based. In short, the theoretical opposition is not between two classes, for it is the very notion of class, insofar as it designates the “negative” of codes, that implies there is only one class. The theoretical opposition lies elsewhere: it is between, on the one hand, the decoded flows that enter into a class axiomatic on the full body of capital, and on the other hand, the decoded flows that free themselves from this axiomatic just as they free themselves from the despotic signifier, that break through this wall, and this wall of a wall, and begin flowing on the full body without organs. The opposition is between the class and those who are outside the class.* Between the servants of the machine, and those who sabotage it or its cogs and wheels. Between the social machine’s régime and that of the desiring-machines. Between the relative interior limits and the absolute exterior limit. If you will: between the capitalists and the schizos in their basic intimacy at the level of decoding, in their basic antagonism at the level of the axiomatic—whence the resemblance, in the nineteenth-century socialists’ portrait of the proletariat, between the latter and a perfect schizo.

That is why the problem of a proletarian class belongs first of all to praxis. The task of the revolutionary socialist movement was to organize a bipolarity of the social field, a bipolarity of classes. Of course it is possible to conceive a theoretical determination of the proletarian class at the level of production (those from whom surplus value is extorted), or at the level of money (income in wages). But not only are these determinations sometimes too narrow and sometimes too wide, but the objective being they define as *class interest* remains purely virtual so long as it is not embodied in a consciousness that, to be sure, does not create it, but actualizes it in an organized party suited to the task of conquering the State apparatus. If the movement of capitalism, in the interplay of its differential relations, is to dodge any assignable fixed limit, to exceed and displace its interior limits, and to always effect breaks of breaks, then the socialist movement seems necessarily led to fix or assign a limit that differentiates the proletariat from the bourgeoisie—a great cleavage that will animate a struggle not only economic and financial, but political as well. Now the meaning of just such a conquest of the State apparatus has always been and remains problematical. A supposedly socialist State implies a transformation of production, of the units of production and the economic rationale. But this transformation can only take place starting from an already

**les hors-classe*: This term shares an affinity with *hors-caste* (outcaste) and *hors-la-loi* (outlaw). (Translators’ note.)

conquered State that finds itself confronted by the same axiomatic problems of extraction of a surplus or surplus value, of accumulation and absorption, of the market and monetary reckoning. Consequently, either the proletariat prevails and transforms the apparatus in conformity with its objective interest—but these operations are carried out under the domination of its consciousness or party vanguard, that is, for the benefit of a bureaucracy or technocracy that stands in for the bourgeoisie as the “great-absent” class—or the bourgeoisie keeps its control of the State and is free to secrete its own technobureaucracy, and above all to add a few more axioms for the recognition of the proletariat as a second class. It is correct to say that the alternative is not between the market and economic planning, since planning is necessarily introduced in the capitalist State, and the market subsists in the socialist State, if only as a monopolistic market of the State itself. And in effect, how does one define the true alternative without assuming all these problems resolved beforehand?

The immense accomplishment of Lenin and the Russian Revolution was to have forged a class consciousness consonant with the objective being or interest of the class, and as a consequence, to have imposed on the capitalist countries a recognition of class bipolarity. But this great Leninist break did not prevent the resurrection of a State capitalism inside socialism itself, any more than it prevented classical capitalism from getting round the break by continuing its veritable mole work, always effecting breaks of breaks that allowed it to integrate into its axiomatic sections of the newly recognized class, while throwing the uncontrolled revolutionary elements—no more controlled by official socialism than by capitalism itself—further into the distance, to the periphery or into enclaves. Thus the only choice left was between the new terroristic and rigid axiomatic—quickly saturated—of the socialist State, and the old cynical axiomatic—all the more dangerous for being flexible and never saturated—of the capitalist State. But in reality, the most direct question is not that of knowing whether an industrial society can do without a surplus, without the absorption of a surplus, without a commodity-exchanging and planner State, and even without an equivalent of the bourgeoisie: it is evident both that the answer is no, and that in these terms the question is poorly put. Nor is it a question of knowing whether or not class consciousness, embodied in a party or a State, betrays the objective class interest, to which a kind of potential spontaneity would be ascribed, suffocated by the agents claiming to represent that interest. Sartre’s analysis in *Critique de la raison dialectique* appears to us profoundly correct where he concludes that there does not exist any class spontaneity, but only a “group” spontaneity:

whence the necessity for distinguishing “groups-in-fusion” from the class, which remains “serial,” represented by the party or the State.⁹³ And the two do not exist on the same scale. This is because class interest remains a function of the large molar aggregates; it merely defines a collective preconscious that is necessarily represented in a distinct consciousness that, at this level, does not even present any grounds for asking whether it betrays or not, alienates or not, deforms or not. The problem is situated there, between unconscious group desires and preconscious class interests. It is only starting from this point, as we shall see, that one is able to pose the questions issuing indirectly therefrom, concerning the class preconscious and the representative forms of class consciousness, and the nature of the interests and the process of their realization. Reich always comes back to us with his innocent standards, claiming the rights of a prior distinction between desire and interest: “The leadership has no task more urgent, besides that of acquiring a precise understanding of the objective historical process, than to understand : (a) what are the progressive desires, ideas and thoughts which are latent in people of different social strata, occupations, age groups and sexes, and (b) what are the desires, fears, thoughts and ideas (‘traditional bonds’) which prevent the progressive desires, ideas, etc., from developing.”⁹⁴ (The leadership has a tendency rather to reply: when I hear the word “desire,” I pull out my gun.)

Desire can never be deceived. Interests can be deceived, unrecognized, or betrayed, but not desire. Whence Reich’s cry: no, the masses were not deceived, they desired fascism, and that is what has to be explained. It happens that one desires against one’s own interests: capitalism profits from this, but so does socialism, the party, and the party leadership. How does one explain that desire devotes itself to operations that are not failures of recognition, but rather perfectly reactionary unconscious investments? And what does Reich mean when he speaks of “traditional bonds”? The latter also belong to the historical process and bring us back to the modern functions of the State. Civilized modern societies are defined by processes of decoding and deterritorialization. But *what they deterritorialize with one hand, they reterritorialize with the other*. These neoterritorialities are often artificial, residual, archaic; but they are archaisms having a perfectly current function, our modern way of “imbricating,” of sectioning off, of reintroducing code fragments, resuscitating old codes, inventing pseudo codes or jargons. Neomarchaisms, as Edgar Morin puts it. These modern archaisms are extremely complex and varied. Some are mainly folkloric, but they nonetheless represent social and potentially political forces (from domino players to home brewers via the Veterans of Foreign Wars).

Others are enclaves whose archaism is just as capable of nourishing a modern fascism as of freeing a revolutionary charge (the ethnic minorities, the Basque problem, the Irish Catholics, the Indian reservations). Some of these archaisms take form as if spontaneously, in the very current of the movement of deterritorialization (neighborhood territorialities, territorialities of the large aggregates, "gangs"). Others are organized or promoted by the State, even though they might turn against the State and cause it serious problems (regionalism, nationalism). The fascist State has been without doubt capitalism's most fantastic attempt at economic and political reterritorialization. But the socialist State also has its own minorities, its own territorialities, which re-form themselves against the State, or which the State instigates and organizes. (Russian nationalism, the territoriality of the party: the proletariat was only able to constitute itself as a class on the basis of artificial neoterritorialities; in parallel fashion, the bourgeoisie reterritorializes itself in forms that are at times the most archaic.)

The famous personalization of power is like a territoriality that accompanies the deterritorialization of the machine, as its other side. If it is true that the function of the modern State is the regulation of the decoded, deterritorialized flows, one of the principal aspects of this function consists in reterritorializing, so as to prevent the decoded flows from breaking loose at all the edges of the social axiomatic. One sometimes has the impression that the flows of capital would willingly dispatch themselves to the moon if the capitalist State were not there to bring them back to earth. For example: deterritorialization of the flows of financing, but reterritorialization of purchasing power and the means of payment (the role of the central banks). Or the movement of deterritorialization that goes from the center to the periphery is accompanied by a peripheral reterritorialization, a kind of economic and political self-centering of the periphery, either in the modernistic forms of a State socialism or capitalism, or in the archaic form of local despots. It may be all but impossible to distinguish deterritorialization from reterritorialization, since they are mutually enmeshed, or like opposite faces of one and the same process.

This essential aspect of the regulation performed by the State is even more readily understood if one sees that it is directly based on the social and economic axiomatic of capitalism as such. It is the very conjunction of the deterritorialized flows that delineates archaic or artificial neoterritorialities. Marx has shown what was the foundation of political economy properly speaking: the discovery of an abstract subjective essence of wealth, in labor or production—and in desire as well, it would seem. ("It was an immense step forward for Adam Smith

to throw out every limiting specification of wealth-creating activity—not only manufacturing, or commercial, or agricultural labour; but one as well as others, labour in general . . . the abstract universality of wealth-creating activity."⁹⁵ Here we have the great movement of decoding or deterritorialization: the nature of wealth is no longer to be sought on the side of the object, under exterior conditions, in the territorial or despotic machine. But Marx is quick to add that this essentially "cynical" discovery finds itself rectified by a new territorialization, in the form of a new fetishism or a new "hypocrisy." Production as the abstract subjective essence is discovered only in the forms of property that objectifies it all over again, that alienates it by reterritorializing it. Although they had a presentiment of the subjective nature of wealth, the mercantilists had determined it as a special activity still tied to a "money-creating" despotic machine; the physiocrats, pushing this presentiment still further, had tied subjective activity to a territorial or reterritorialized machine, in the form of agriculture and landed property. And even Adam Smith discovers the great essence of wealth, abstract and subjective, industrial and deterritorialized, only by immediately reterritorializing it in the private ownership of the means of production. (Nor can one say in this regard that so-called common ownership changes the direction of this movement.) Moreover, if it is not a question of writing the history of political economy, but the real history of the corresponding society, one is better able to understand why capitalism is continually reterritorializing with one hand what it was deterritorializing with the other.

In *Capital* Marx analyzes the true reason for the double movement: on the one hand, capitalism can proceed only by continually developing the subjective essence of abstract wealth or production for the sake of production, that is, "production as an end in itself, the absolute development of the social productivity of labor"; but on the other hand and at the same time, it can do so only in the framework of its own limited purpose, as a determinate mode of production, "production of capital," "the self-expansion of existing capital."⁹⁶ Under the first aspect capitalism is continually surpassing its own limits, always deterritorializing further, "displaying a cosmopolitan, universal energy which overthrows every restriction and bond"; but under the second, strictly complementary, aspect, capitalism is continually confronting limits and barriers that are interior and immanent to itself, and that, precisely because they are immanent, let themselves be overcome only provided they are reproduced on a wider scale (always more reterritorialization—local, world-wide, planetary). That is why the law of the falling tendency—that is, limits never reached because they are

always surpassed and always reproduced—has seemed to us to have as a corollary and even as a direct manifestation, the simultaneity of the two movements of deterritorialization and reterritorialization.

An important consequence emerges from the above considerations. The social axiomatic of modern societies is caught between two poles, and is constantly oscillating from one pole to the other. Born of decoding and deterritorialization, on the ruins of the despotic machine, these societies are caught between the Urstaat that they would like to resuscitate as an overcoding and reterritorializing unity, and the unfettered flows that carry them toward an absolute threshold. They recode with all their might, with world-wide dictatorship, local dictators, and an all-powerful police, while decoding—or allowing the decoding of—the fluent quantities of their capital and their populations. They are torn in two directions: archaism and futurism, neoarchaism and ex-futurism, paranoia and schizophrenia. They vacillate between two poles: the paranoiac despotic sign, the sign-signifier of the despot that they try to revive as a unit of code; and the sign-figure of the schizo as a unit of decoded flux, a schiz, a point-sign or flow-break. They try to hold on to the one, but they pour or flow out through the other. They are continually behind or ahead of themselves.*

How can the nostalgia for, and the necessity of, the Urstaat be reconciled with the insistence and the inevitability of the fluxion of the flows? What can be done so that the decoding and the deterritorialization constitutive of the system do not make it flee through one end or another that would escape the axiomatic and throw the machine into a panic (a Chinese on the horizon, a Cuban missile-launcher, an Arab hijacker, a consul kidnapper, a Black Panther, a May '68, or even stoned hippies, angry gays, etc.)? There is an oscillation between the reactionary paranoiac overcharges and the subterranean, schizophrenic, and revolutionary charges. Moreover, one no longer quite knows how it goes on one side or the other: the two ambiguous poles of delirium, their transformations, the way in which an archaism or folklore in a given set of circumstances can suddenly become charged with a dangerous progressive value. How things turn fascist or revolutionary is the problem of the universal delirium about which everyone is silent, first of all and especially the psychiatrists (they have no ideas on the subject—why would they?). Capitalism, and socialism as well, are as though torn between the despotic signifier that they adore, and the schizophrenic

*Suzanne de Brunhoff, *La monnaie chez Marx* (reference note 73), p. 147: "That is why in capitalism even credit, formed into a system, brings together composite elements that are both *ante-capitalist* (money, money commerce) and *post-capitalist* (the credit circuit being a higher circulation . . .). Adapted to the needs of capitalism, credit is never really contemporary with capital. The system of financing born of the capitalist mode of production remains a bastard."

figure that sweeps them along. We are thus entitled to maintain two conclusions that we have already put forward and that seemed to stand mutually opposed. On the one hand, the modern State forms a break that represents a genuine advance in comparison with the despotic State, in terms of its fulfillment of a becoming-immanent, its generalized decoding of flows, and its axiomatic that comes to replace the codes and overcodings. But on the other hand there has never been but one State, the Urstaat, the Asiatic despotic formation, which constitutes in its shadow existence history's only break, since even the modern social axiomatic can function only by resuscitating it as one of the poles between which it produces its own break. Democracy, fascism, or socialism, which of these is not haunted by the Urstaat as a model without equal? The name of the local dictator Duvalier's chief of police was Desyr.

But the events that restore a thing to life are not the same as those that gave rise to it in the first place. We have distinguished among three social machines corresponding to the savage, the barbarian, and the civilized societies. The first is the underlying territorial machine, which consists in coding the flows on the full body of the earth. The second is the transcendent imperial machine, which consists in overcoding the flows on the full body of the despot or his apparatus, the Urstaat: it effects the first great movement of deterritorialization, but does so by adding its eminent unity to the territorial communes that it conserves by bringing them together, overcoding them and appropriating their surplus labor. The third is the modern immanent machine, which consists in decoding the flows on the full body of capital-money: it has realized the immanence, it has rendered concrete the abstract as such and has naturalized the artificial, replacing the territorial codes and the despotic overcoding with an axiomatic of decoded flows, and a regulation of these flows; it effects the second great movement of deterritorialization, but this time because it doesn't allow any part of the codes and overcodes to subsist. However, what it doesn't allow to subsist it rediscovers through its own original means; it reterritorializes where it has lost the territorialities, it creates new archaisms where it has destroyed the old ones—and the two become as one. The historian says no, the Modern State, its bureaucracy and its technocracy, do not resemble the ancient despotic State. Of course not, since it is a matter in the one case of reterritorializing decoded flows, but in the other case of overcoding the territorial flows. The paradox is that capitalism makes use of the Urstaat for effecting its reterritorializations. But the imper-turbable modern axiomatic, from the depths of its immanence, reproduces the transcendence of the Urstaat as its internalized limit, or one of

the poles between which it is determined to oscillate. And in its imperturbable and cynical existence, it is prey to great forces that form the other pole of the axiomatic, its accidents, its breakdowns, its chances of being blown to pieces, of causing what it decodes to pass beyond the wall of its immanent regulations and beyond its transcendental resurrections.

Each type of social machine produces a particular kind of *representation* whose elements are organized at the surface of the socius: the system of connotation-connection in the savage territorial machine, corresponding to the coding of the flows; the system of subordination-disjunction in the barbarian despotic machine, corresponding to over-coding; the system of co-ordination-conjunction in the civilized capitalist machine, corresponding to the decoding of the flows. Deterritorialization, the axiomatic, and reterritorialization are the three surface elements of the representation of desire in the modern socius. So we come back to the question: in each case what is the relationship between social production and desiring-production, once it is said that they have identical natures and differing régimes? Could it be that the identity in nature is at its highest point in the order of modern capitalist representation, because this identity is “universally” realized in the immanence of this order and in the fluxion of the decoded flows? But also that the difference in régime is greatest in the capitalist order of representation, and that this representation subjects desire to an operation of social repression—psychic repression that is stronger than any other, because, by means of the immanence and the decoding, antiproduction has spread throughout all of production, instead of remaining localized in the system, and has freed a fantastic death instinct that now permeates and crushes desire? And what is this death that always rises from within, but that must arrive from without—and that, in the case of capitalism, rises with all the more power as one still fails to see exactly what this outside is that will cause it to arrive? In short, the general theory of society is a generalized theory of flows; it is in terms of the latter that one must consider the relationship of social production to desiring-production, the variations of this relationship in each case, and the limits of this relationship in the capitalist system.

11 | Oedipus at Last

In the territorial or even the despotic machine, social economic reproduction is never independent of human reproduction, of the social form of this reproduction. The family is therefore an open praxis, a strategy that is coextensive with the social field; the relations of

filiation and alliance are determinant, or rather “determined as dominant.” As a matter of fact, what is marked or inscribed on the socius—directly—is the producers (or nonproducers) according to the standing of their family or their standing inside the family. The reproduction process is not directly economic, but passes by way of the noneconomic factors of kinship. This is true not only with respect to the territorial machine, and to local groups that determine the place of each member in social economic reproduction, according to one’s status from the standpoint of the alliances and the filiations, but also with respect to the despotic machine, which adds the relations of the new alliance and direct filiation to the old alliance and filiations (whence the role of the sovereign’s family in despotic overcoding, and that of the “dynasty”—whatever its mutations, its indecisions—which are inscribed under the same category of new alliance). The process by no means remains the same in the capitalist system.⁹⁷ Representation no longer relates to a distinct object, but to productive activity itself. The socius as full body has become directly economic as capital-money; it does not tolerate any other preconditions. What is inscribed or marked is no longer the producers or nonproducers, but the forces and means of production as abstract quantities that become effectively concrete in their becoming related or their conjunction: labor capacity or capital, constant capital or variable capital, capital of filiation or capital of alliance. Capital has taken upon itself the relations of alliance and filiation. There ensues a privatization of the family according to which the family ceases to give its social form to economic reproduction: it is as though disinvested, placed outside the field; in the language of Aristotle, the family is now simply the form of human matter or material that finds itself subordinated to the autonomous social form of economic reproduction, and that comes to take the place assigned it by the latter. That is to say that the elements of production and antiproduction are not reproduced in the same way as humans themselves, but find in them a simple material that the form of economic reproduction preorganizes in a mode that is entirely distinct from the form this material has as human reproduction. Precisely because it is privatized, placed outside the field, the form of the material or the form of human reproduction begets people whom one can readily assume to be all equal in relation to one another; but inside the field itself, the form of social economic reproduction has already preformed the form of the material so as to engender, there where they are needed, *the* capitalist as a function derived from capital, and *the* worker as a function derived from labor capacity, etc., in such a way that the family finds itself countersected by the order of classes. (In this sense, indeed, segregation is the only origin of equality.⁹⁸)

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 48. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Joyful Wisdom*, V, § 346. See also Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, pp. 144–46.
 49. Hochmann, *Pour une psychiatrie communautaire*, p. 38.
 50. *Selected Letters of Malcolm Lowry*, ed. Harvey Breit and Margerie Bonner Lowry (Philadelphia and New York: J. B. Lippincott, 1965), p. 66.
 51. "Letter to Michael Fraenkel by Henry Miller, May 7, 1936," in Henry Miller, *Hamlet* (Puerto Rico: Carrefour, 1939), Vol. 1, pp. 124–26.
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4 INTRODUCTION TO SCHIZOANALYSIS

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