

Stephen Squibb

Parahistories of Self-Instituting Sunlight

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Revolutionary theory begins with recognizing accumulation as a fact of planetary existence. We find ourselves on a rock on which five billion years of solar accumulation have already taken place. If we also find ourselves in a planetary crisis, it is because rather than capturing the energy already falling on the earth, we have rereleased previously gathered energy back into the air. Rather than shifting our legacy infrastructures away from digging up old, consolidated sunlight and towards capturing contemporary sunlight, the latter continues to fall while we add to it the sunlight buried beneath. This doubling up on sunlight – adding the energy from the ground to what continues to come from the sun – is the cause, unsurprisingly, of what is called “climate change.”¹

Knowing what we know about planetary existence in the visible universe, it is likely that this problem – of climate change due to semi-intelligent, self-instituting sunlight burning the traces of a previous era’s self-organizing sunlight – is a fairly common one. Statistically, we can be confident that this planetary drama has played out countless times before across ours and other galaxies, and to various degrees of destructive intensity.

We can imagine a number of different planets confronting our problem in their own ways. Maybe some just solve climate change the way we solved polio. Maybe the sixth planet in Alpha Centauri just got solar power correct relatively quickly and the whole problem was avoided. But maybe this same planet struggled for centuries to construct an internal combustion engine. Maybe they never discovered the novel or invented their version of basketball. I wonder: of all the things we cherish about our semi-intelligent self-instituting existence together, which are truly rare in the universe and which are hopelessly common?

It is important to recognize that climate change is a problem we can solve, based on our institutional track record. It is a very big project, probably top ten, maybe top five, but it is totally manageable, and there are hundreds of thousands of semi-intelligent planetary societies that have solved similar problems. No doubt they struggled with other issues. Perhaps the arrival of the interstate highway system coincided with a residual commitment to fashion that resulted in centuries of passengers going without seat belts until some method was invented to secure these creatures with magnets. And that when confronted with the relative ease by which earth-critters invented the seat belt, representatives from the planet of seat-belt refusers will marvel at our wise intelligence the way we will marvel at how they solved the climate-change problem almost without realizing it.

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A film still of the sun in ultra HD titled "Thermonuclear Art." Photo: NASA.

Why has climate change been magnified to existential proportions of a planetary scale, in the way that seat belts were on Alpha Centauri Six? Because we have a peculiar material-ideological hang-up of our own, and that is a hang-up about accumulation. Rather than accept the process of planetary accumulation and the wasting or bloating disorders of over- and under-accumulation that accompany it, we become neurotic and agitated and accusatory. But these metabolic disorders are serious. They can be cancerous circuits of over-accumulation or they can be deleterious circuits of under-accumulation. Both kinds of disorder can be treated, but only if we understand that both are not only possible but inevitable.

This tendency towards mis-accumulation is what the political economist Thomas Piketty represents with his simple formula $r > g$, which states that the rate of return on capital tends to outpace the rate of growth more generally. One wants to say: “Yes comrade! That is what makes it capital!” For a capital is simply a circuit of accumulation, which attempts to accumulate more sunlight someplace rather than somewhere else. Left on their own, some circuits become cancerous and others get wasted as a result. Only conscious and directed intervention in the inherited institutional landscape can adjust these toxic circuitries.² The coincidence of the crisis called climate change with the centenary of the October Revolution invites a revolutionary theory of planetary accumulation and the metabolic disorders that accompany it. One hundred years after the storming of the Winter Palace, we still struggle to understand the relationship between palaces and winter.

Parahistory from Metaphysics to Political Economy

Accumulation becomes historical at the planetary level by means of four parahistorical processes: reproduction, representation, production, and distribution. To the extent that we speak of a history of planetary accumulation, we speak of reproduction, representation, production, and distribution; and it is by these four processes together that sunlight comes to institute and recognize itself in the midst of planetary accumulation. This theoretical emphasis on accumulation at the planetary level is not metaphysical. We might call the character of the four processes universal, but we can’t be sure. In any case, it is probably not necessary to appeal to the universal in order to say what we must about accumulation. Our planet is such that accumulation takes place. Often, when we refer to the universal, we are referring to the parahistorical.

These processes are parahistorical because

they are both inside and outside of history, in the way that what is paranormal is understood to be both inside and outside the normal. The four processes constitute history, taking place both transhistorically – across any given historical scene – and also ahistorically, as that which stands beyond any given instance of history as its condition of possibility. Philosophy is laden with efforts at parahistorical thinking: God is one example; the social contract is another, insofar as it creates the individual and the society it claims to bind, even as, in order to be a contract, it must proceed as though its progeny preceded it. The social contract, society, and the individual are thus always already both inside and outside history, and in fact vibrate back and forth depending on whether we take the contract as something that binds what already exists or as something that creates two things in the act of declaring them bound.

Another example of parahistorical thinking, much closer to home, is Marx’s concept of production. It is because Marx presents production as a parahistorical process that he can speak of a capitalist *mode* of production as one specific and contingent manifestation and constitution of that process. Without a parahistorical process of production, it would be impossible to record differences between modes of production as distinct instances of that process. We cannot record the difference between feudalism and capitalist modes if we cannot further specify what they are modes of. In order for there to be a history of production, production must be parahistorical relative to that same history.³

There is an inherent contradiction, or tension, or even straightforward difficulty to thinking parahistorically. Parahistorical concepts are difficult because their origins are contested by definition. On the one hand, it is easy to see that, over time, our repertoire of parahistorical ideas has shifted; on the other hand, the “parahistorical” itself, by definition, can never be completely subordinated to history. The annals of experimental science provide many helpful illustrations. For example, the concept of “the ether” cannot be understood as something that could be displaced by history; neither can it be understood as something that has not been displaced by history. We are constantly struggling with how to recognize and record the parahistorical even as such recognition and recording has apparently always already taken place.⁴

Metaphysics is the archive of unsuccessful struggles with parahistory. Philosophy is the privileged subgenre of metaphysics, whose fate it is to perpetually encircle the parahistorical with concepts like the diachronic and the

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Chimpanzees glow brightly under infrared light. Photo: Courtesy NASA/JPL-Caltech

synchronic, noumena and phenomena, algebra and topology. When the apparatus of philosophy is trained on parahistory, it breaks apart, precisely because philosophy cannot admit of parahistorical experience without transforming it into the ahistorical, the nonhistorical, or simply the historical.

If the parahistorical demands recognition, even as it shatters, upsets, or traumatizes philosophy, what takes the place of this fragmented metaphysics? What do we call the long archive of efforts to reckon with parahistorical phenomena, that would include but not be limited to metaphysics? What is the syntax that corresponds most closely to parahistory?⁵

We call this syntax political economy, because it consists in notating the parahistorical in terms of a division between politics and economics. The tension at work in the parahistorical is built into political economy – “political/economy” we might write – because parahistorical experience is never anything other than a received division between politics and economics. To think a planet in which this division exists without reducing one side to the other is the object of political economy, which is more than metaphysics by being less. What

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political economy lacks in metaphysical neurosis it makes up in capacious rigor. Political economy says as much as possible, including philosophy but also beyond, around, and outside of it. Whereas metaphysics is a presentation of one division between politics and economics against a second, received division whose existence it works to suppress, deny, or undo, once and for all. Metaphysics is always a monotheism of the political/economic division, insisting on one true instance of this division, even as its articulation admits of others as the condition of its own legibility and significance. Monotheism of the division makes metaphysics a bad comrade, because solidarity means recognizing that the work of others on other political economic divisions is necessary, too. Metaphysics would rob the others of their parahistorical experience, reducing them to spectators at its own, total unfolding. Political economy understands that it is never anything more than a recognition and a record of the practice of others, occasioned by the parahistorical, and instituted as a division between politics and economics.⁶

It would be a mistake to think that history always lines up on one or the other side of this divide – that politics is what is historical while economics is what is ahistorical – because such



Gwyneth Paltrow relaxes in an infrared sauna.

consistency is always less available than the division considered separately from these assignments. Sometimes politics is one thing, sometimes another; sometimes economics is presented historically, sometimes it isn't, but a division of this kind persists regardless. Any content that would fill in *this* politics, *this* economics is subsequent to the persistence of the division itself and depends on it. No result is capable of crawling back behind this dividing such that the cut between politics and economics is no longer made. Metaphysics is an insatiable desire to fix once and for all the parahistorical division of politics from economics.⁷ This desire quickly encounters the impossibility of accounting for shifts in parahistorical experience while maintaining a static division between politics and economics. Heresy and blasphemy proliferate. Children sing songs of a coming insurrection. Whatever was fixed as objects, means, or measures becomes unfixed. The line is being redrawn. But by what?

How is this movement from metaphysics to political economy possible? What is the condition of possibility for the record of political-economic shifts? If political economy and parahistory correspond, what is the principle announced by this correspondence? Ricardo's answer to this question endures. Class struggle is the condition of possibility for the recognition of parahistorical shifts in the syntax of political economy. Class struggle is what authors the shifts in parahistorical phenomena that are recognized and recorded as political economy.⁸

Certainly the affective associations that we inherit alongside this phrase "class struggle" do much to inhibit the relatively affectless and precise way it is deployed it here, which is as a substitute for earlier metaphysical logics like dialectic, existence, structure, difference, or inconsistent multiplicity. Class struggle authored each of these and will author more so long as sunlight falls on planet earth. To note that the class struggle records itself as a shifting series of parahistorical phenomenon in the syntax of political economy is to describe planetary accumulation with maximum consistency. All that is needed for metaphysics is to pass over these parahistorical shifts in silence.⁹

Whatever can recognizing such shifts consist in? Too briefly, recognition consists in re-counting the set of forces and re-counting the set of relations. Consider Marx's intervention in the capitalist mode of production, which takes a political economy that counts wages as market forces and re-counts them as social relations. Take Judith Butler's intervention into the patriarchal mode of reproduction, which takes a political economy that counts sex as a biological force and recounts it as social relations. Recall

Elaine Scarry's intervention in the mode of distribution, which takes a political economy that counts the body in pain as a force of nature and recounts it as social relations. Remember Hito Steyerl's intervention into the mode of representation, which takes a political economy that counts poor images as technological hiccups and recounts them as social relations.¹⁰

Accumulation, Institutions, and Revolutionary Theory

In each of the above cases, the coordinates of the political-economic division are received as an *institutional constellation* composed of fixed capitals that function to legislate this division of forces from relations along whatever axis. It is in the nature of institutions, we might say, to secrete the political-economic division, as a symptom of their peculiar kind of accumulation. It is not just that we find ourselves in the midst of a planetary process of accumulation, but that within this process, some accumulations have become institutional to whatever degree. Institutions are what happens when planetary accumulation becomes an issue for itself. Sunlight moves from self-organizing to self-instituting when it begins to understand itself as divided into forces and relations. Certainly all planetary accumulations are precarious and contingent, but only institutions articulate a distinction between force and relation as a way of containing or resisting this contingency.

Practically, this is why it is often easiest to recognize the class struggle in its anti-institutional, anti-accumulative, or insurrectionary valence, because institutions – in order to accumulate persistently – deny the essential contingency at work in any given instance of planetary accumulation, which they nevertheless consist in. No doubt reminding institutions of their fundamental precariousness is an eternal joy for partisans of class struggle, and political economy resounds with testimonies to the sweetness of such satisfactions. Yet insurrectionaries, too, become metaphysicians when they imagine such reminders are sufficient. Revolutionary theory teaches otherwise.

Revolutionary theory is the subgenre of political economy occupied with institutional contingency. Institutionality is a form of accumulation, and like accumulation, it needs to be concentrated at certain points and reduced at others. Like accumulation, institutionality is a fact of planetary existence. And it is interesting to consider the history of science-fictional imaginings of the relative insititutionality of other worlds. Are these otherwise-than-planetary societies maximally institutional, like *Star Trek*? Or minimally institutional? Or counter-

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The Naruto whirlpools photographed from a boat, 2008. Photo:Wikimedia Commons

institutional? One thing that makes the original six *Star Wars* films exceptional, whatever other serious failures may have occurred along the way – here's looking at you Jar Jar – is their institutional pluralism and self-consciousness. *Star Wars* is a world with complex and competing institutional stakes – the entire thing begins with a trade dispute – while *Star Trek*, in its perfect military institutionality, limits itself chiefly to considering the exceptional adventures of a small kingdom presided over by a wise captain.

When we say that class struggle is the condition of possibility for parahistorical experience recognized and recorded in the syntax of political economy, what we mean is that class struggle is the *principle of possibility for shifts in the accumulated institutional landscape*. Revolutionary theory is the recognition of these shifts, such that accumulation and institutionalization are *sometimes* one thing and *sometimes* another. The difference between revolutionary theory and metaphysics of whatever kind rests on this *sometimes*. As a subgenre of political economy, revolutionary theory has realist moments and rationalist moments but it never denies that *sometimes* accumulation, *sometimes* institutionalization.

It is metaphysical to imagine that planetary existence can take place without accumulation or institutionalization. Metaphysics refuses the parahistorical experience of planetary life. Metaphysics thinks the accumulation of sunlight on this planet is optional. Revolutionary theory recognizes the inevitability of sunlight accumulated to the point of self-organization and self-institutionalization, recorded as the four parahistorical processes of representation, reproduction, production, and distribution. Class struggle is sunlight confronting itself on these planetary terms. Metaphysics is all that fails to recognize the planetary being of self-instituting sunlight in the parahistorical experience of class struggle in and around accumulation and institution.

This is why it is metaphysical to suggest that accumulation is always bad or always good. Or that institutions are always bad or always good. We become revolutionary when we accept that class struggle results in a planetary political economy consisting in shifts of accumulation and institutionalization across four parahistorical processes. One of the ways metaphysics refuses political economy is by a moral approach to accumulation or institutionalization, insofar as one or the other is thought to be bad or good intrinsically in whatever measure. This judgment cannot be made without reference to the accumulation of planetary sunlight. Sometimes institutions and

accumulations need to be encouraged and sometimes they need to be restrained. A(ny) political economy is articulated by the four parahistorical processes: the sex-process, the value-process, the labor-process, and the body-process, or reproduction, representation, production, and distribution.¹¹

Class struggle appears in the form of these four processes, insofar as their unfolding cuts a division between forces and relations, which is then iterated thousands upon thousands of times until it is possible also to speak of a division between politics and economics.¹² Exchange, accumulation, and institution are present in and through all four process, whose constant unraveling leaves these as its trace. As a subgenre of political economy, revolutionary theory recognizes the complementary coexistence of politics and economics in the wake of these four processes.

Metaphysics consists in reversing the sequence, so that this or that political economic element, this accumulation or that institution, is presented as the cause, not as the result, of this or that parahistorical process, singly or in combination. For example, a set of institutions and accumulations are organized by reference to the human. Humanity, such as it is, takes place as a specific set of parahistorical results diffracted over one another from the four processes of sunlit self-institution.¹³

Theoretical A-humanism

The failure of humanists to be humane has everything to do with this mistake. They imagine that the human is the source of all authority and so they appeal to it to come and save them. In the early twenty-first century, the cult of metaphysical humanism is undergoing a great deal of pain. Partially this is because its expert professionals and their institutions are actually being subject to wasting, or relative dis-accumulation. But more importantly, humanism struggles to confront the fact that the human lacks sufficient reality to serve as an explanatory cause on which to base a revolutionary theory.

One cannot recognize the fundamental structures of institution and accumulation, to say nothing of the four processes that summon them and then send them away, if one has presupposed the human. Semi-intelligent, self-organizing accumulations of planetary sunlight begin self-instituting, which results, in very specific times and places, in a distinction being drawn between the human and the inhuman. But this result can no more be read back as a cause of the process that produced it than the ark can be said to be a cause of the flood. The human, like the ark, is articulated as a result of the interplay of class struggle and planetary

accumulation.

Revolutionary theory is not anti-humanist because such a position would commit oneself to recognizing the institutional and accumulated coordinates of humanity – if only to reject them – regardless of whether these remain in any sense necessary. Revolutionary theory is a-humanist because the human is less parahistorical than the four processes. It is certain circumstances of the labor-process, the sex-process, the body-process, and/or the value-process that result in the distinction between human and inhuman being drawn. But it makes no sense to play one side against the other at a theoretical level, because political economy is not the political economy of the human but of the four planetary processes of self-instituting sunlight. What matters is to measure these results against the criteria of over- and under-accumulation, and over- and under-institutionalization.

These interactions can take a number of forms, the most intense of which is refusal. Class struggle is simply sunlight refusing itself. Sunlight accumulates on a planet, begins to self-organize, begins to self-institute, and then refuses itself and so results in the four processes expressed as a political economy composed of institutions and accumulations of whatever consistency or nature.¹⁴

The labor-process appears when self-instituting sunlight refuses to exchange itself as labor-power in a certain mode of production. The body-process appears when sunlight refuses to release itself from the flesh in a certain mode of distribution. The value-process appears when sunlight refuses to recognize itself in a certain mode of representation. The sex-process appears when sunlight refuses to reorganize itself in this or that mode of reproduction. The material history of self-organizing on this planet is assembled from the strange capacity of the sun to refuse itself into distinct parahistorical processes, and to recognize its doing so in the accumulation and institutions that result.

It would be a mistake to think that this exposition of revolutionary theory consists in naturalizing accumulation or institutionalization. Indeed nature, like the human, is always evidence of a decision already made vis-à-vis this or that political-economic result of the four diffracting processes. Strictly speaking, accumulation does not admit of a natural/unnatural distinction at the level of planetary phenomenon. We can certainly speak of more less institutionally intensive or saturated spaces, of which city/country is one of the most important gradients, but we cannot say with any planetary consistency that one is natural and the other is not. To do so would be to fall back into

metaphysics.

It may be that we need to rapidly de-urbanize, if we are interested in maintaining certain transplanetary accumulations like coral reefs. But this cannot be because the urban is unnatural and the reef is natural, because the arrival of the city and the disappearance of the reef can't be linked to any fundamental break in the four processes, such that they can be said to be natural one moment and unnatural the next. This is why revolutionary theory places so much emphasis on refusal, because it is refusal that invites parahistorical reflection, and parahistorical reflection which undoes metaphysical philosophies of nature.

To refuse the human is to save the human. To be revolutionary is to recognize the necessity of a-humanism, by recognizing the priority of the four process as parahistorical results of class struggle which sometimes overlap and diffract in such a way that the distinction between human and inhuman becomes convoked and operative. It would be a mistake, on the occasion of the hundredth anniversary, to pound the table about whether the Bolsheviks were wrong or right. The revolution does not abolish the difference between the instituting and the instituted. This difference is eternal and encountered by all. It persists in every circumstance. Instead, the revolution abolishes the enslavement of what institutes to what is instituted, without erasing the difference between them. The revolution is like a stage: people step on and off of it all the time from one side or the other.¹⁵

There are two exits off the stage of revolution. Insurrection to the left and reform to the right. The left exit collapses the difference between instituting and instituted in favor of the former: a permanent instituting, a hatred of accumulation, or a metaphysics of insurrection. We exit the revolution stage left when we decide in advance that institutions are corrupt by virtue of their being institutions. The Marquis de Sade is the patron saint of insurrection, and the ultraleft neurosis is any attachment to institutional austerity that results in a sadomasochistic fixation on process. The process fetishist refuses every instituted thing in favor of a permanent and all-consuming practice of instituting.

The right exit collapses the difference between instituting and instituted in favor of immortal institutions and the consolations of conservation. We exit the revolution stage right when we decide in advance that institutions must be patronized or defended by virtue of their being institutions. The melancholic pseudo-patriarch violently identifies with every instituted thing against the slightest acknowledgement of its parahistorical contingency. The rightist

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hysteria is any attachment to the instituted past that results in blind vengeance against the present.

Many attempts to determine the legacy of the October Revolution once and for all deny the transhistorical reality of each of these three positions; ultraleft, right, and revolutionary. But the truth is that then, as now, there are those who destroy in the anxiety of envy and wrath and those who corrupt with fear of lust and greed. Between these go the revolutionaries, speckling the waves of a crisis like sunlight before vanishing beneath a phosphorescent wake.

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1

In a conversation with Anton Vidokle published earlier this year, Hito Steyerl noted how the baroque and bombastic style of Georges Bataille and his followers has inhibited the reception of their ideas concerning planetary accumulation. What follows is an attempt to consider this reality with less in the way of “synth violins and too much death metal,” as she put it so perfectly. (See Anton Vidokle and Hito Steyerl, “Cosmic Catwalk and the Production of Time,” *e-flux journal* 82, May 2017 <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/82/134989/cosmic-catwalk-and-the-production-of-time/>.) Beyond Bataille & Co., I should mention also what is known as the “surplus” approach to questions of distribution and relative prices within classical economics, in contrast to the marginalist emphasis on the substitutability of factors of production and the “forces” of supply and demand. The approach developed here has significance for both schools, I hope, but cannot pretend to less sympathy for the former. Tony Aspromourgos details the history of this tradition with a rare combination of excitement and erudition in *The Science of Wealth* and *On the Origin of Classical Economics*, while the debates on capital theory for which it is known can be found in the volume of the Palgrave dictionary dedicated to the topic, as well as G.C. Harcourt’s *Some Cambridge Controversies in the Theory of Capital*.

2

Frequently the reasons for this overlap with the psychology of addiction: accumulation addicts over-accumulate sunlight and imperil the planet. Sometimes one can argue an accumulation-addict into recovery, sometimes one cannot. But there is good evidence that denouncing addicts as moral failures is not the most effective way of treating metabolic disorders of whatever kind.

3

Louis Althusser did the most to develop the significance of this concept as the first properly scientific object in the history of history. Althusser’s Marx would be the discoverer of the scientific “continent” of history in the way the Newton was the discoverer of the scientific “continent” of physics. However, Althusser’s commitments within a rapidly de-Stalinizing French Communist Party required him to oversell, understandably, Marx’s success on this score. Derrida noticed this immediately, and says so explicitly in an interview with Michael Sprinker in *The Althusserian Legacy*, and somewhat more elliptically in *Specters of Marx*. Happily or otherwise, we no longer need to think with respect to the internal stakes of the Communist Party (and it is interesting to read

Althusser’s discussion of Montesquieu’s disguised critique of French absolutism, in *Politics and History*, as his own sly acknowledgement of this constraint) nor resist speaking directly about the limitations of Marx’s approach to production, which fails to define itself as a concept in relation to other concepts, as tradition dictates. (See LeCourt’s *Marxism and Epistemology* on this and much more.) Instead, Marx uses production to negate two distinctly nonconceptual or unscientific legacies: the Hegelian mystery of spirit and the anarchist fixation on circulation or exchange, or what I call “representation.” Marx’s “concept” of production is thus actually an anti-nonconcept consisting of two negations laid one on top of the other: a “political” anti-circulationism and a “philosophical” anti-spiritualism. (Discussed in Todd Hollander’s *Economics of Karl Marx*, Howard and King’s still-standard *The Political Economy of Karl Marx*, and finally in King’s essay “Value and Exploitation” contained in Bradley and Howard’s *Classical and Marxian Political Economy*.) This double negation has allowed partisans of production to shift back and forth between anti-representationalism and anti-spiritualism as needed, and so accounts (alongside the Abrahamic legacy more generally) for the incredible endurance of production as a theoretical master node, we might say. This legacy reaches its baroque peak in the first few pages of Deleuze and Guattari’s *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, when the non-concept of production reveals its theological roots by expanding to include absolutely everything. My own efforts, here and elsewhere, are chiefly to give production the scientific dignity Althusser wanted for it but failed to establish: by defining it only against its peers, namely the concepts of representation, distribution, and reproduction (formerly consumption), and not against whatever mysticisms might have come before it. Be careful of battling mysticisms, Nietzsche might have added, lest you become mystical.

4

Tortorici points out that ‘ether’ is probably not the best example here, and that something like ‘the four humors’ might be clearer. I keep ether because Einstein’s discussion of it in “Ether and Relativity” hews so closely to the difficulty I am trying to capture with this idea of parahistory, even as he concludes the ether might not be destined for the dustbin of history after all! Not only this, but ether also allows me to cite the term’s recent resurrection as the name for a cryptocurrency designed for the automated dissemination of ‘smart contracts’ which is as perfect example of a revolutionary development in what, further

down, I call 'the value-process.'

5
The triplicate "syntax-experience-principle" (as well as the progression of the first four philosophical logics) is Laruelle's in *Philosophies of Difference*, though I don't know his project well enough yet to say with any certainty how my deployment differs, or doesn't, from his own.

6
The emphasis on recognition and recording is from Grace Lee Boggs, Cornelius Castoriadis & C. L. R. James, who write, in *Facing Reality*, that the essential task is to "recognize and record."

7
A subgenre of metaphysics, philosophy demands that its phenomena settle their accounts with history one way or another. When philosophy recognizes metaphysical desire at work in itself, it begins to negate its own name, if not always transcend it, and this is finally what sends it tumbling into the pit of anxiety to which it had fallen by the end of the twentieth century, when even the exponents of what-would-have-been-philosophy felt the need to identify themselves by its negation: Derrida's deconstruction, Groys's anti-philosophy, Laruelle's non-philosophy, Badiou's delicate and reactive "philosophy" that is already less than art, politics, science, love, mathematics, theater, and maybe even less than the anti-philosophy he diagnoses in Deleuze and Lacan.

8
This proximity or intimacy between class struggle and philosophy is what led Althusser to remark that philosophy is class struggle in theory, by which he meant that philosophy is class struggle by other means. This is often true, but it is for this reason that political economy is summoned to describe how this could be the case.

9
In the *Reply to John Lewis*, Althusser at last recognized the priority of class struggle, but was prevented from developing the significance of this priority. It was Harry Cleaver in *Reading Capital Politically* who showed in detail how the relative commodification of labor-power refers not to some kind of postlapsarian totality of alienation or reification as the Romantics would have it, but to the relative status of class struggle at the point of production. I think we can say something similar for class struggle at the point of representation, reproduction, and distribution as well.

10
Some of the relevant works include Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies that Matter*, Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain*

and *Thermonuclear Monarchy*, and Hito Steyerl, the *Wretched of the Screen* and *Duty Free Art*. The significance of counting and re-counting sets is from Badiou, of course, whose beautiful revival of idealist metaphysics finds him reading the four parahistorical processes of representation, production, reproduction, and distribution as a sequence of truth-events called art, science, love, and politics, respectively.

11
All of these processes have been theoretically recorded and developed across a huge range of works, such that the claim here is that most everything can be shown to concern them, singly or in combination, consciously or otherwise. As a result the only piece of *theoretical* originality I am prepared to claim is the insistence on a distinction between the sex-process and the body-process - between the mode of reproduction and the mode of distribution - which does so much to untangle the limitations left us by the legacy of Foucault, it seems to me, in particular. The inspiration for this separation is the surgery performed by Kozo Uno on Marx's *Capital*, in his *Principles of Political Economy*, where he similarly insists on conceptually separating the value-process from the labor-process, which Marx's residual Hegelianism had confused in the first chapter of *Capital*. After living with this confusion for most of my intellectual life, I am afraid I must agree with Althusser that anyone reading Marx's big book for the first time should skip this first chapter on the commodity and begin directly with the process of exchange.

12
The division into forces and relations is necessary to explain the division between this or that politics and this or that economics but in no way corresponds to it, any more than "the circulation of the blood" corresponds to this or that specific blood type or condition, healthful, maleficent, or otherwise.

13
The significance of diffraction is developed in Karen Barad's *Meeting the Universe Halfway*. Little in the new century has contained as much genius, insight and possibility as Barad's book, which also includes a much more detailed and concrete description of what I mean by the division of forces from relations. Following Castoriadis, I call this process institutionalization, while Barad follows Foucault, via Hacking et al., in describing it in terms of the apparatus. But this difference is, pardon the pun, immaterial. What matters (!) is her development, from Niels Bohr, of the concept of complementarity which describes also what I mean by

the coexistence of politics and economics. Nor is political economy itself left unconsidered in Barad's masterpiece, as her sixth chapter offers a reading of Leela Fernandes' *Producing Workers* which is probably a better example of what I am talking about than anything I've managed to include here. Forced to dissent from Barad's framework, I might question her reliance of Foucault's idea of power, which to my mind is still a question-begging non-concept with a suspiciously mystical pedigree, and then also ask about the prevalence of 'production' throughout her text, which does not, I don't think, immediately escape the objections to this concept detailed above in note three.

14
Mario Tronti develops the importance of refusal in his essay the "Strategy of Refusal." Somewhat heretically, one can see via the crucial work of Suzanne de Brunhoff in *Marx on Money* that bankers' refusal to lend in a credit crisis helps constitute the concept of value-power in a way that parallels how the refusal of work during a strike constitutes the concept of labor-power.

15
This is Cornelius Castoriadis, in particular in "Socialism and Autonomous Society."