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Editorial

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One common explanation for why intellectual property makes no sense in an era of file-sharing uses the example of what happens when you copy a file on a computer. Copy-Paste: a second file has been produced, but the original is unaltered. Now it has a sibling, a partner, a twin. And if they keep reproducing themselves in this way, no problem. Which is to say that, at least in the digital domain, the entire calculus of scarcity is very different from the material domain. The difference between a single entity, two entities, or a billion is almost nil. Under these circumstances, as the argument goes, reintroducing laws of scarcity by limiting access is simply backward.

But this is not to say that people go unaltered by this kind of proliferation. And it is definitely not to say that scarcity goes away and all people become wealthy just because we can get our hands on lots and lots of computer files. No, it's just to say that the nature of what we consider a resource has been profoundly redistributed across domains of knowledge and whatever its material base has become. Original and counterfeit mutually melt. Some things can be reproduced ad nauseam while others simply decay. It is where the simulacrum is no longer deceptive in its distance from the real but just really confusing when it comes to trying to locate actual resources.

To be more precise, it is forcing such a high level of abstraction that productive and reproductive forces become indistinguishable from each other. In a response in this issue to the "Manifesto for Accelerationist Politics," Antonio Negri identifies this particular level of abstraction as the place that must be occupied. Cognitive labor is already abstract, and it is under the auspices of this abstraction that its output is left by the roadside to be swept up by capital and taken elsewhere. Strangely, we are faced with a scenario in which not only the Left, but also capitalism suffers from retrograde approaches to technology. And yet, as the relation of the human to technology is being rewritten seemingly on its own, the urgent task becomes one of locating the places where the most crucial abstract and immaterial effects register themselves in life. It is a question of form.

The artist Mary Walling Blackburn has pointed out that it becomes very interesting to think about overpopulation in this scenario. She was actually pregnant at the time. Overpopulation implies a capacity that has reached its limit, a bloat that is taxing resources. But what is it that is being overpopulated, and how is the capacity reached? Let's try to look at it differently – by way of the family. The family is the place where public and private mash

together. It is the interface of both. It is a shelter from society. It forges subjectivity, for better or for worse. It is universal even if it doesn't assume a singular form. The family can be a living hell, a mafia, a black market, a restaurant, or a network of solidarity. And the purpose of any kind of solidarity is to form a micro-society whose bonds are strong enough to resist external pressures from outside. And ideally these strong bonds surpass the calculus of exchange. Giving and receiving mesh. Everything is shared according to a logic that is taken for granted. One family member is crippled and the other one is healthy as an ox, that's just how it is. You don't need a doctor to tell you what to do. You simply figure it out. Even in the most miserable family where everyone hates everyone else, there is some care and there is support. Without that, there is no family.

But a form of care that is bountiful and not subject to any measurement is also not infinite. It may be absolute in its commitment, but it is not infinite in its capacity. If we look at what is happening to family relations at the moment, we may start to see the place where the reproduction of humans and the replication of effects go to war over your love, over your time, over your vital energies. The family marks the point of indistinction where the cozy conservatism and organic purity of human reproduction and the replication of culture exert the most profound and discernible stresses. It is where China, now easing its one-child policy, might consider instituting its one-artwork policy. It is where gallerists and collectors may want to reconsider keeping it all in the family. But it is also where I can become you and you can become me. It is also where we can always pay the rent and where dinner and everything else will sort itself out, somehow.

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