

Matteo Pasquinelli, *Άυλος Εμφύλιος Πόλεμος. Πρότυπα Σύγκρουσης στον Γνωσιακό Καπιταλισμό* [...] Σε αυτό το κείμενο προσπαθώ να συμπεριλάβω ένα μέρος της συζήτησης γύρω από τη «δημιουργική» εργασία το οποίο διαφεύγει. Καταρχάς, επισημαίνω τη συλλογική διάσταση της δημιουργίας αξίας: είναι μια διερεύνηση των κοινωνικών διαδικασιών πίσω από τη δημιουργικότητα, τη δημιουργική δύναμη της συλλογικής επιθυμίας και την πολιτική φύση οποιουδήποτε γνωσιακού προϊόντος (ιδέα, εμπορικό σήμα, μέσο, έργο τέχνης, δρώμενο). Ερώτηση: τι ή ποιοι παράγουν την αξία; Απάντηση: το «κοινωνικό εργοστάσιο» παράγει το μέγιστο ποσοστό της αξίας (και άρα της σύγκρουσης). Δεύτερον, θέτω στο επίκεντρο τον πολιτικό χώρο του γνωσιακού ανταγωνισμού. Δεν εστιάζω στους όρους εργασίας ή τις νεοφιλελεύθερες πολιτικές μέσα στις Δημιουργικές Βιομηχανίες, αλλά στη δημόσια ζωή των άυλων αντικειμένων. Τοποθετώ τα γνωσιακά προϊόντα σε ένα πεδίο δυνάμεων, πλαισιώνοντας ανάλογα αντικείμενα απέξω παρά από μέσα. Προσπαθώ να απαντήσω σε μια άλλη ερώτηση: εάν η παραγωγή μετασχηματίζεται σε δημιουργική και γνωσιακή, συλλογική και κοινωνική, ποια είναι τα πεδία και οι μορφές της σύγκρουσης; Συμπερασματικά, εισάγω το σενάριο ενός «άυλου εμφύλιου πολέμου», έναν σημειωτικό χώρο στον οποίο οι Δημιουργικές Βιομηχανίες αποτελούν μόνο ένα μικρό μέρος.

Μέχρι στιγμής το σενάριο μοιάζει γραμμικό, υπάρχει όμως μια γκρίζα ζώνη που πρέπει να ληφθεί υπόψη: η μαζικοποίηση της «δημιουργικής» στάσης ζωής. Το «όλοι είμαστε δημιουργικοί» είναι κοινό σλόγκαν σήμερα. Πολλά χρόνια μετά το «έργο τέχνης» του Benjamin, ο μαζικός καλλιτέχνης εισέρχεται στην εποχή της κοινωνικής αναπαραγωγιμότητάς του και «η δημιουργικότητα» πωλείται ως σύμβολο κύρους. Η κοινωνική βάση των Δημιουργικών Βιομηχανιών επεκτείνεται (τουλάχιστον στον δυτικό κόσμο) και αποκαλύπτει νέα σενάρια. Σε μια πρώτη φάση, οι Δημιουργικές Βιομηχανίες γίνονται ηγεμονικές (ως πραγματικότητα και ως ιδέα). Σε μια δεύτερη φάση, αντιμετωπίζουν την εντροπία νοήματος και παραγωγών. Χάρη στο διαδίκτυο και την ψηφιακή επανάσταση γινόμαστε καθημερινά μάρτυρες συγκρούσεων στο προαναφερόμενο στάδιο.

Στο παρελθόν, όλες οι διαφορετικές θεωρητικές σχολές εστίαζαν καθεμία σε διαφορετική άποψη. Για να αποσαφηνίσουμε το θέμα πρέπει να αναλύσουμε την ερώτηση στα συστατικά της. Το «δημιουργικό πράγμα» θα μπορούσε να αποσυναρμολογηθεί σε: δημιουργική εργασία (ως αυτόνομη ή εξαρτώμενη εργασία), δημιουργικότητα ως ικανότητα και παραγωγή, δημιουργικό προϊόν (σε όλα τα επίπεδά του: μηχανολογικό, λογισμικό, γνωσιακό, εμπορικό, κ.λπ.), ελεύθερη αναπαραγωγιμότητα του γνωσιακού προϊόντος, πνευματική ιδιοκτησία επί του ίδιου του προϊόντος, κοινωνική δημιουργικότητα πίσω από αυτό, διαδικασία συλλογικής αξιοποίησής του. Η κοινωνική ομάδα των δημιουργικών εργατών (η «δημιουργική τάξη»), η «δημιουργική οικονομία» και η «δημιουργική πόλη» αντιπροσωπεύουν διευρυμένα νοηματικά πλαίσια [...] <http://ratnet-blog2.blogspot.com/2010/03/blog-post.html>

Matteo Pasquinelli, Άυλος Εμφύλιος Πόλεμος. Πρότυπα Σύγκρουσης στον Γνωσιακό Καπιταλισμό [...] «άυλη» είναι η συνεχής πάλη στο στάδιο της κοινωνίας του θεάματος: μια σκληρή «μπαλλαρντιανή» ζούγκλα από εμπορικές μάρκες, αστέρες της ποπ, γκάτζετ, συσκευές, δεδομένα, πρωτόκολλα, simulacra. Άυλη εκμετάλλευση είναι η καθημερινότητα των επισφαλών εργατών, και ιδιαίτερα των νεότερων γενεών, αρκετά ενήμερων για το συμβολικό κεφάλαιο που παράγεται από τις ζωές τους «που μπαίνουν στη δουλειά» (νέες τάσεις και τρόποι ζωής που παράγονται από αυτό που ο μετα-Εργατισμός αποκαλεί βιοπολιτική παραγωγή). Ο άυλος εμφύλιος πόλεμος είναι η έκρηξη των κοινωνικών σχέσεων που εσωκλείονται στα προϊόντα. Στο βιβλίο του Les révolutions du capitalisme (Οι επαναστάσεις του καπιταλισμού) ο Lazzarato λέει ότι «ο καπιταλισμός δεν είναι τρόπος παραγωγής, αλλά παραγωγή τρόπων και κόσμων» (που φτιάχτηκαν από εταιρίες και πουλήθηκαν στους ανθρώπους) και ότι ο «παγκόσμιος οικονομικός πόλεμος» είναι ένας «αισθητικός πόλεμος» ανάμεσα σε διαφορετικούς κόσμους.

Ο άυλος εμφύλιος πόλεμος είναι επίσης οι συνηθισμένες συγκρούσεις μεταξύ των γνωσιακών εργατών παρόλη τη ρητορική περί διανομής της γνώσης και των ψηφιακών κοινών (digital commons). Είναι το γνωστό αστείο: «ένας φίλος μου, μου έκλεψε την ιδέα μου για ένα βιβλίο σχετικά με το Creative Commons». Είναι ο γνωστός ανταγωνισμός μέσα στον ακαδημαϊκό και καλλιτεχνικό χώρο, η οικονομία των αναφορών, ο αγώνας για τις προθεσμίες, ο ανταγωνισμός για τη διοργάνωση φεστιβάλ, ο φθόνος και η καχυποψία μεταξύ των ακτιβιστών. Η συνεργασία είναι δομικά δύσκολη μεταξύ των γνωσιακών εργατών, στις τάξεις των οποίων η οικονομία γοήτρου λειτουργεί κατά τον ίδιο τρόπο όπως ακριβώς σε οποιοδήποτε star system (για να μην αναφέρω τους πολιτικούς φιλοσόφους!), και όπου οι νέες ιδέες πρέπει να αντιμετωπίσουν η μια την άλλη, εμπλέκοντας συχνά τους δημιουργούς τους σε μια διαμάχη. Όπως ο Rullani επισημαίνει, υπάρχει σχεδόν περισσότερος ανταγωνισμός στη σφαίρα της οικονομίας της γνώσης, όπου η δυνατότητα αναπαραγωγής είναι ελεύθερη και όπου αυτό που έχει σημασία είναι ταχύτητα [...]

Matteo Pasquinelli, *Animal Spirits* [...] Digitalism is a sort of modern, egalitarian and cheap gnosis, in which the religion of knowledge has been replaced by the Enlightenment cult of the digital network and its code. Erik Davis, for instance, extensively documented this mystical undercurrent of the information society in his book *Techgnosis*. Like a transversal sect, the peculiar economic credo of digitalism has many followers in both the core apparatuses of power (the Californian Ideology) and the communities of political activists (the supporters of Free Culture). In particular, the theoretical and political deployment of digitalism can be tracked through the work of a new generation of thinkers, such as Lawrence Lessig and Yochai Benkler. A summary is useful here to anticipate some general traits or characteristics.

Ontologically, the techno-paradigm of digitalism believes that the semiotic and biologic domains are positioned in parallel or specular to each other. As a consequence, the digital can easily render the offline world as a sort of Google-like utopia of universal digitization. A material event can be translated and mapped onto the immaterial plane, and *conversely*, the immaterial can easily be embodied in materiality. This second move – the ease of this transition – is the passage of a millenary misunderstanding that is traditionally described in terms of logocentrism (the power of the divine Word onto the world). Economically, digitalism states that this almost energy-free digital reproduction of data can affect energy-expensive material production, eventually taking it over and triggering social change. The idea of a ‘peer-to-peer society’ is based on such a virtuous circle supposedly governed by online *free cooperation*. Certainly, digital programming can dematerialize any communications technology and reorganize old media forms (email replacing mail, etcetera), but it cannot *easily* affect biomass production and, in particular, its surplus economy. Politically, digitalism believes in a mutual gift society. The Internet is supposed to be virtually free from any exploitation, tending naturally towards a democratic equilibrium and natural *cooperation*. Certainly, digital programming can dematerialize any communications technology and reorganize old media forms (email replacing mail, etcetera), but it cannot easily affect biomass production and, in particular, its surplus economy. Politically, digitalism believes in a mutual gift society. The Internet is supposed to be virtually free from any exploitation, tending naturally towards a democratic equilibrium and natural cooperation. Here, digitalism works as a disembodied politics with no acknowledgement of the offline labour sustaining the online world (a *class divide* that precedes any *digital divide*). Ecologically, digitalism promotes itself as an environmentally friendly and zero-emission machine against the pollution of older Fordist modes of industrial production, and yet it is estimated that an avatar on Second Life consumes more electricity than the average Brazilian. [...]

http://matteopasquinelli.com/docs/temp/Pasquinelli_Animal_Spirits.pdf

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Just as Marx emphasized commodity fetishism at the opening of *Capital*, code fetishism should be considered as the basis of the network economy. Indeed, a whole tradition has originated from Marx's foundational reading, inspiring media philosophers from Debord to Baudrillard. Today, however, the fetishism of code is shared by both alternative thought and neoliberal discourse. 'God Is The Machine', Kevin Kelly's digitalist manifesto, proclaimed these points distinctly: computation can describe all things, all things can compute, all computation is one. At the same time, code is the DNA of any virtual world, the substance of immaterial labour, the battlefield of intellectual property and the fuel for the collective intelligence of programmers. It is a sort of intelligent object that moves far beyond Marx's original premonitions on commodities:

There it is a definite social relation between men that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things. In order, therefore, to find an analogy, we must have recourse to the mist-enveloped regions of the religious world. In that world the productions of the human brain appear as independent beings endowed with life, and entering into relation both with one another and the human race

Actually, code may both represent and manage the productive relation between workers more effectively than the commodity form. Code as a form of language and machinery is fundamentally *relational* and can easily establish its own fictional economy (as Baudrillard already observed). The commodity fetishism of the nineteenth century has become the code phantasmagoria of the twenty-first century, to the extent that the materiality of the commodity is effectively removed. According to the quasi-religious tradition mentioned before, code fetishism incarnates again the credo of the supremacy of the Word over material production. [...]

Matteo Pasquinelli, *Animal Spirits* [...] Digitalism is one of those political models influenced by technological evolution and not social conflict – as McLuhan repeatedly stated: ‘We shape our tools, and afterwards our tools shape us.’ The Internet, in the beginning, was fuelled by the political dreams of the American counterculture of the 1960s. Today, according to the tradition of post-Operaismo, the Network is simultaneously the form of Empire and the tool for the self-organization of the Multitude. Only in Anglo-American culture, however, do we find a faith in the primacy of technology over politics. If activists today apply the Free Software model to traditional artefacts and talk of a ‘GPL society’ and ‘P2P production’, this is a consequence of the belief in a pure symmetry of the technological over the social.

In this sense, the definition of Free Culture gathers together all those subcultures that have established a fundamental political agenda around the free reproduction of digital files. The kick off was the slogan ‘information wants to be free’, launched by Stewart Brand at the first Hackers’ Conference in 1984. (Interestingly, the original statement contained a much more nuanced meaning in context: ‘On the one hand information wants to be expensive, because it’s so valuable. The right information in the right place just changes your life. On the other hand, information wants to be free, because the cost of getting it out is getting lower and lower all the time. So you have these two fighting against each other.’) Later, the hacker underground boosted the Free Software movement and a new chain of keywords was generated: Open Source, Open Content, Gift Economy, Digital Commons, Free Cooperation, Knowledge Sharing and other do-it-yourself versions like Open Source Architecture, Open Source Art, and so on. *Free Culture* is also the title of a famous book by Lawrence Lessig, founder of the Creative Commons initiative. Rather than focussing on the social value and crucial battles of the Free Software movement within the digital sphere, however, what should finally be addressed is the possibility of an offline application of this paradigm.

There is an old saying that still resounds: *the word is made flesh*. A religious unconscious seems to be at work behind the contemporary technological credo. In his book *Words Made Flesh*, Florian Cramer clearly illustrates the genealogy of code culture in the ancient traditions of the West belonging to Judaism, Christianity, Pythagoreans, the Kabbalah and Hermeticism. As Serres would suggest, however, the primordial adage should be reversed to unveil its hidden dimension or underside: the flesh is *made code*. The knowledge itself is the parasitic strategy of the flesh. The spirit proceeds from the animal. The flesh comes first, before logos. There is nothing digital in the digital dream. Enmeshed with a global economy, every bit of ‘free’ information carries its own microslave like a forgotten twin [...] http://matteopasquinelli.com/docs/temp/Pasquinelli_Animal_Spirits.pdf

[...] Free Culture and Creative Commons are the two leading keywords for both progressive institutions and activist counterculture during the first decade of the 2000s. Literature on *freeculturalism* is vast, usually divided in two fronts: libertarian supporters and neoliberal conservative critics. If Lawrence Lessig's *Free Culture* is the manifesto, Andrew Keen's *The Cult of the Amateur* is the reactionary response. From another perspective, however, the literature on freeculturalism can be critically examined through the issue of *surplus* and the underlying model of surplus-value that remains invisible or unacknowledged. Starting from the main authors like Stallman and Lessig, a fundamental question would be: where does the surplus production reside in the so-called Free Society? Is the Free Society a society liberated from the contradictions of surplus? The whole battle for Free Software and Free Culture has been established around issues of *property rights* rather than *production*. However, on closer examination, the spectres of surplus always re-emerge as a persistent concern. In *Free Culture*, Lessig articulates the Creative Commons initiative in terms of Anglo-American rights-based discourse, where the right to *free speech* is directly associated with the rights of the *free market*:

We come from a tradition of 'free culture' – not 'free' as in 'free beer' (to borrow a phrase from the founder of the free-software movement), but 'free' as in 'free speech,' 'free markets,' 'free trade,' 'free enterprise,' 'free will,' and 'free elections.'

Throughout the book, Lessig implicitly embraces the credo of a universal digitization of culture (that is, *digitalism*). The Internet infrastructure that makes this 'free' reproduction possible is never questioned, but conceived in terms of 'technology in transition', a movement towards the further digitization of life. Lessig takes inspiration from copyleft and hacker culture, specifically quoting the seminal essay 'Free Software, Free Society' by Richard Stallman. Although Stallman refers primarily to software, Lessig extends his paradigm to the entire spectrum of cultural artefacts. In other words, software is conceptualized as a universal political model. While the book offers a useful critique of the current regime of copyright, it also represents an apology of sorts for the generic freedom of digital media – at least until Lessig finally invokes a great evil for any libertarian, interestingly, only at the conclusion of the book: *taxation*. Searching for a practical economic model to legitimize Free Culture after the digital tsunami has thrown the music and film industries into crisis, Lessig has to provide an *alternative compensation system* to reward creators for their works. To solve the financial predicament of the content industry, therefore, he modifies a proposal originally offered by Harvard law professor William Fisher, and later expanded on in the book *Promises to Keep* [...]

[...] That the solution to the media industry crisis for the 'tradition of free culture' is a new form of *taxation* sounds strangely paradoxical. The tracking of Internet downloads and their charge would imply a strong centralized public intervention that is quite unusual for neoliberalist countries such as the USA – the system is realistically imaginable only, for instance, in a Scandinavian social democracy. Indeed, the actual implementation of this scheme remains unclear. Another passage, meanwhile, discusses this dilemma more explicitly, but suggests that intellectual property must be finally sacrificed in order to gain a more expansive Internet. Here, Lessig's intuition is correct (for capitalism's sake): he is aware that the market needs a self-generative space to establish new monopolies and new types of rent. A dynamic space is more important than a lazy copyright regime. Lessig provocatively asks:

Is it better (a) to have a technology that is 95 percent secure and produces a market of size x , or (b) to have a technology that is 50 percent secure but produces a market of five times x ? Less secure might produce more unauthorized sharing, but it is likely to also produce a much bigger market in authorized sharing. The most important thing is to assure artists' compensation without breaking the Internet.

'Without breaking the Internet': the protection of the new frontier is the utmost priority before all else. In this sense, Creative Commons licences help to expand and ameliorate new spaces of the market. Or as John Perry Barlow puts it: 'For ideas, fame is fortune. And nothing makes you famous faster than an audience willing to distribute your work for free.' Despite its political aspirations, the friction-free space of digitalism actually accelerates towards an even more competitive scenario. From this perspective, Benkler is wrong when he claims that 'information is non-rival' in *The Wealth of Networks*. The non-rivalry of information is another important postulate of *freeculturalism*. Lessig and Benkler both assume that free digital reproduction will not cause competition, but cooperation. Of course, rivalry is not produced by digital copies, but by their friction with real economy, material contexts and limited resources. For example, attention is crucial for the consumption of any kind of 'cognitive commodity' such as music, but it is a limited and material resource. Digital bonanza becomes competition when it has to access the very small window of human 'uptime'. In his book, Benkler celebrates 'peer production' as the source of new social wealth, but actually refers only to the easy *immaterial reproduction*. Predictably, Free Software and Wikipedia are over-quoted as the main examples of 'social production' (this definition, again, covers exclusively the *online* 'social production'). Throughout the entire book, materiality remains in the background, like a 3D effect of a cheap hologram image from a postcard [...]

Tiziana Terranova, *Of Sense and Sensibility: Immaterial Labour in Open Systems* [...] As Marina Vishmidt has put it, '[I]n recent years, there have been myriad attempts in curatorial, critical and media sectors to index the characteristics of their fields to the wider structural transformations in the landscape of work. These have mainly been enunciated along the axes of 'creativity' and 'flexibility' once deemed endemic to the artist as constitutive exception to the law of value and now valorized as universally desirable attributes...' (2005: 93).

The concept of 'immaterial labour' has been central in this work of indexing. In as much as such a concept addresses the transformations undergone by labour in its post-industrial mode, it will be introduced here as a way to think through some of the themes discussed in this book: the decomposition of models of aesthetic production which relied on stable notions of the author, the work and the public; the crisis of spaces such as the museum or the gallery and figures such as the curator; and the challenges of a new mode of aesthetic production which operates through the semi-autonomous power of automated cybernetic systems - logarithms, algorithms and networks.

The introduction of a Marxist debate about labour in a context that deals with art is not meant to be reductive of 'art' to 'work'. On the contrary, the concept of immaterial labour challenges not only the modern emphasis on art as an autonomous sphere of existence, but also work as the only domain of economic relations and political struggle. I will thus focus on the genealogy of the notion of 'immaterial labour', outline some of its key traits and speculate about how we might deploy this field of thinking to conceptualise the politics of aesthetic production and distribution within open systems. In doing so, I will draw mostly on the work of contemporary Italian Marxist thinkers, and in particular on recent work by Maurizio Lazzarato, Christian Marazzi and Paolo Virno.

Immaterial labour is a Marxist concept that aims at a redefinition of labour in the age of the general intellect - the age where the production of value is dependent on a socialised labour power organised in assemblages of humans and machines exceeding the spaces and times designated as 'work'. The notion of the 'general intellect' is the starting point for a reflection on the changes undergone by living labour and the production of surplus value in a context characterised by the saturation of mass markets. The overall tendency is identified in an expansion of the market for 'information-rich' commodities, which are not destroyed in the act of consumption but which persist and reverberate as events able to transform the sensorial basis of subjectivity - whereby subjective experience is seen as constituted mainly at the level of sense and sensibility. In this sense, the commodity in the age of the general intellect tends to become more akin to a work of art rather than a 'material' commodity. [...]

Tiziana Terranova, *Of Sense and Sensibility: Immaterial Labour in Open Systems* [...] It is important to highlight the fact that 'immaterial labour' is not intended as a sociological description of a new class formation. On the contrary, in the spirit of Marx's formulation of the concept of class, it is intended as a political concept able to actively respond to the social transformations undergone by subjectivity in what have been called post-industrial, post-Fordist or network societies (Lazzarato 1997). As a concept, thus, it is a way of thinking outside the socialist obsession with work as the only political category worth thinking with, while at the same time by-passing some of the impasses that a general focus on signification and representation might cause in thinking the political dimension of postmodernity.

This production of subjectivity, as Felix Guattari argued, is neither exclusively signifying nor determined by an economic instance but it mobilises automated and autonomic processes involving non-linguistic and a-signifying semiotics. 'Considering subjectivity from the point of view of its production does not imply any return to traditional systems of binary determination - material infrastructure/ideological superstructure. The various semiotic registers that combine to engender subjectivity do not maintain obligatory hierarchical relations fixed for all time... Subjectivity is in fact plural and polyphonic... It recognizes no dominant or determinant instance guiding all other forms according to a univocal causality.' (1995: 1)

The genealogy of the concept of immaterial labour is thus Marxist and is an innovative development of Marx's notion of the 'general intellect' as described in the *Grundrisse*, in a section entitled 'Fragment on Machines' (1973). As summarized by Paolo Virno (1996), Marx identifies a future where increasingly the production of value resides not simply in the appropriation of the time of the worker, defined by units of time, but in scientific knowledge incarnated in the system of machines; and in a mass intellectuality understood as a living articulation of such machines. In the *Grundrisse*, Marx explicitly states that in the capitalist mode of production, the source of wealth is no longer the immediate work of the individual, but a general productivity of the social body - dispersed through technologies and human bodies, connected in new, shifting assemblages (the general intellect). In this context, the creation of wealth no longer depends on the working time narrowly defined, but coincides with the whole time of life. From the point of view of the evolution of the general intellect, it is the whole of social life - from child rearing to new forms of sexuality, from making music or videos on one's home computer to watching TV, from inventing new ways of dressing to making up a new way of speaking - that produces wealth. This is a socialised wealth, which cannot be measured by money but resides in the intensive value of relations, affections, modes of expressions, and forms of life [...]

[...] the emergence of this socialised production does not only imply a liberation from work. However, this situation has not created the conditions for a liberation of life from work: on the contrary, the paradox of immaterial labour in the age of the general intellect, is that the production of value increasingly takes place in what was supposed to be 'liberated time' and in 'free action' but also a mutation and intensification of exploitation. Maurizio Lazzarato, for example, remarks how immaterial labour is subject to more intensive forms of control as implied by the 'management mandate to be 'active, that is to become subjects of communication'. In the world of work, the new autonomous worker can always turn into the precarious worker subjected to archaic relations of 'servitude' to his/her boss, while the potential inherent in a symbiotic relation with the machine can always be turned into an exhausting form of machinic enslavement.

Immaterial labour is thus a bit of a paradox, in as much as it expresses the moment where the productive qualities of this instrumental action that used to be work, something performed by workers, literally is freed up in order to become something that is no longer work, something that feels more like Art, albeit a reconfigured art suited to the age of the cybernetic machine. This mode also signals the emergence of new machines of control and subjectification which reimpose hierarchical relations at the service of social reproduction and the production of surplus value. These are movements which turn qualitative, intensive differences into quantitative relations of exchange and equivalence; which enclose the open and dissipative potential of cultural production into new differential hierarchies; which accumulate the rewards for work carried out by larger social assemblages; which exercise the perceived threat of nonlinear movement by imposing a kind of hyper-disciplinarian cybernetic control.

Immaterial labour, in fact, is not immune to new diagrams of control, on the contrary. As the experience of the digital economy and network culture demonstrate, such diagrams work by reimposing centres and hierarchical distinctions against a much larger background of continuous variation (as the work on scale free networks demonstrate); by preemptively assigning objectives, outcomes and deadlines against the uneven temporality of processes of autonomous organisation which do not always follow their rhythm (as in the software industry); by channeling desire to prop up identities against the threat of dissipation (as in movements such as evangelical and nationalist blogs); by policing the rights of property against the indiscipline of nonlinear circulation (as in the legal wars against peer-to-peer systems) [...]

Tiziana Terranova, *Of Sense and Sensibility: Immaterial Labour in Open Systems* [...] by preemptively assigning objectives, outcomes and deadlines against the uneven temporality of processes of autonomous organisation which do not always follow their rhythm (as in the software industry); by channeling desire to prop up identities against the threat of dissipation (as in movements such as evangelical and nationalist blogs); by policing the rights of property against the indiscipline of nonlinear circulation (as in the legal wars against peer-to-peer systems).

What we are dealing with is not a dialectical opposition, but the schizophrenic coexistence of a bifurcation, of diverging tendencies that tend to resonate and interfere. This bifurcation does not produce a simple clash of two distinct and differentiated modes of production, one free and the other controlled, but messy local assemblages and compositions, subjective and machinic, characterised by different types of psychic investments, that cannot be the objects of normative, pre-made political judgments, but which need to be thought anew again and again, each time, in specific, dynamic compositions (Parisi & Fuller 2004).

In this sense the figure of an immaterial labour force organised in open systems allows us to think more concretely about the dynamics of such processes of bifurcation, resonance and interference between the corporeal and the incorporeal, the material and the immaterial, dissipation and accumulation, and autoorganisation and control. Open cybernetic networks, as a specific instantiation of the dynamics of open systems, show a tendency to constitute a singular field of interaction that is not enclosed by limits which separate it from the Outside, but is radically exposed to it from all sides. Contrary to what early discussions of cyberspace pointed out, in the open network the outside is everywhere and keeps flooding in as if in a cascade of waves (Terranova 2004). Open cybernetic networks are radically open to the Outside, that is, they are relentlessly traversed by a flow of matter that is informationally compressed in logarithms, organised by algorithmic code and modulated by technical machines. The open network is thus more than a collective space, where collaborations between individual actors take place through the mediation of technical machines at the service of the production of value. On the contrary, it is a space of permutations radically open to the Outside - to the intensive temporalities which underlie the real time of networked, global communication, to the fabric of incorporeal events and corporeal modifications, to the creative destruction unleashed by the realtime, stratified, global interplay of the technological, the social and the cultural. There is no outside, not even the outside of aesthetic experience in relation to the world of production or that of open modes of organisation as outside the world of closed institutions - because the outside is everywhere [...]

[...] Simondon argues that there is a “pre-capitalist alienation which is essential to work qua work”. This alienation does not just take place at the individual level: the “social community of work,” as an “interindividual relation,” is itself alienating according to Simondon because it only takes place among beings who are individuated as “somato-psychic men,” that is, reduced to their labors. The true transindividual collectivity develops instead when “human beings communicate through their inventions”. The paradox here is that technical thinking is superior to work as a field of communication and a ground of collectivity because “human nature” – “what remains original and anterior even to constituted humanity within man himself” – is carried and communicated better by technical objects than it is by the face-to-face social interactions of laboring men and women. But this transindividual form of collectivity, whereby men communicate with one another, with nature, and with what is in them more than themselves (pre-individual “human nature”) is instrumentalized under the conditions of modern productivism, which is dominated by what Simondon calls “the morality of output.” An authentic, nonalienated form of social interaction would thus demand the integration of technical thought and social life, beyond work. As Simondon declares: “It would be necessary to discover a social and economic mode in which the user of the technical object is not only the owner of this machine, but also the man who chooses and maintains it”. But what is this mode, which in 1958 could be found in neither Washington nor Moscow? And what might it mean for an attempt to rethink interaction today?

The first point to note is that Simondon’s is a deeply normative, even moral understanding of the interactions between men and technical objects (or machines), and a fortiori between men and men (with technical objects as intercessors and bearers of preindividual “human nature”). In this regard the vagueness and eclecticism of the contemporary ideology of interaction is harshly curbed by an ethics of invention and use, such as Simondon’s, which constantly subordinates the whims of men to the integrity, concreteness and individuality of technical objects. Consider his denunciation of the customdesigned car, for instance: “The type of relationships that exist between these inessential aspects and the proper nature of the technical type is negative: the more the car must respond the important demands of the user, the more its essential characters are burdened by an external servitude; the chassis is weighed down with accessories, the forms no longer correspond to the structure that allow for the best air-flow. The made-to-measure character is not only inessential, it goes against the very essence of the technical object, it is like a dead weight imposed from the outside” (pp. 24–5). The ethical use of technical objects, which, albeit indirectly, is also an ethics of our transindividual interaction with other humans, thus depends on a respect for the concrete and engendered individuality of the object, and on a kind of asceticism vis-à-vis the superficial desires of men [...]

Alberto Toscan, *Technical Culture and the Limits of Interaction: A Note on Simondon* [...] In this respect, a thinly-veiled contempt for the fripperies of consumption can be registered throughout Simondon's writings on technics. But in light of the critical attention, ever since the 1970s at least, to the reproductive and symbolic work of consumption, as well as to the emergence of exploited and servile forms of immaterial labour that no longer easily fall under the paradigm of fabrication-as-alienation proposed by Simondon, is it possible to base the dream of an alternative "technical culture" on a transindividual collectivity of inventors, interacting through technical objects just as technical objects and machines communicate with each other via men (Simondon, 1989, p. 12)? One of Simondon's gambits is that we can only terminate our alienation by terminating the servile alienation of machines themselves (a condition which is symptomatically signalled by our Asimovian nightmares of robot revolts) if we surpass the separation between work and invention (or between manual and intellectual labour). As Marcuse aptly put it in his commentary on Simondon, in this scenario we would be required to "translate values into technical tasks – materialise values" (Marcuse, 1964).

But this depends on thinking that – to the degree that "work and capital lag behind the technical individual [which] does not belong to the same period as the work that activates it and the capital that frames it" (Simondon, 1989, p. 119) – it is by building collectivity and interaction from the fulcrum of invention that an instrumental, anti-technical culture can be surpassed and the antagonism between capital and labour circumvented. It is here that contemporary work on "cognitive capitalism" (Vercellone 2006) cannot but cast some doubt on the dichotomy of work and invention as the allpurpose key to the emergence of a nonalienated technical culture. Is it really enough that the genesis and existence of the technical object not be sundered for us to speak of nonalienation, and of interactions that would communicate and actualize our preindividual "human nature"?

Simondon tells us that technical activity differs from mere alienating labor to the extent that it "involves not only the utilization of the machine, but also a certain coefficient of attention to technical functioning, maintenance, regulation, betterment of the machine, which prolongs the activity of invention and construction" (Simondon, 1989, p. 250). This description snugly fits high-tech work, which is increasingly prevalent but which does not seem to have thereby vaulted over the "frame" of capital or the limits put on interaction by a society where waged labor remains an ineluctable predicament for most. Alienated inventors abound. Moreover, in the domain of programming, for instance (where certain forms of hacking and open source may be viewed as Simondonian "transindividual collectives"), the criteria for neatly distinguishing the essence of technical objects from the ornamental trinkets imposed by the dictatorship of the user might not be altogether transparent. Despite the enlivening vistas opened up by Simondon's passionate forays into the interstices of technical genesis and invention, perhaps treating objects like people – respecting their essential individuality, integrity and autonomy – is still not a sufficient basis for the political emancipation of people, or of objects [...]

Maurizio Lazzarato, *Immaterial Labour* [...] A significant amount of empirical research has been conducted concerning the new forms of the organization of work. This, combined with a corresponding wealth of theoretical reflection, has made possible the identification of a new conception of what work is nowadays and what new power relations it implies.

An initial synthesis of these results—framed in terms of an attempt to define the technical and subjective-political composition of the working class—can be expressed in the concept of *immaterial labor*, which is defined as the labor that produces the informational and cultural content of the commodity. The concept of immaterial labor refers to two *different* aspects of labor. On the one hand, as regards the “informational content” of the commodity, it refers directly to the changes taking place in workers’ labor processes in big companies in the industrial and tertiary sectors, where the skills involved in direct labor are increasingly skills involving cybernetics and computer control (and horizontal and vertical communication). On the other hand, as regards the activity that produces the “cultural content” of the commodity, immaterial labor involves a series of activities that are not normally recognized as “work”—in other words, the kinds of activities involved in defining and fixing cultural and artistic standards, fashions, tastes, consumer norms, and, more strategically, public opinion. Once the privileged domain of the bourgeoisie and its children, these activities have since the end of the 1970s become the domain of what we have come to define as “mass intellectuality.” The profound changes in these strategic sectors have radically modified not only the composition, management, and regulation of the workforce—the organization of production—but also, and more deeply, the role and function of intellectuals and their activities within society.

The “great transformation” that began at the start of the 1970s has changed the very terms in which the question is posed. Manual labor is increasingly coming to involve procedures that could be defined as “intellectual,” and the new communications technologies increasingly require subjectivities that are rich in knowledge. It is not simply that intellectual labor has become subjected to the norms of capitalist production. What has happened is that a new “mass intellectuality” has come into being, created out of a combination of the demands of capitalist production and the forms of “self-valorization” that the struggle against work has produced. The old dichotomy between “mental and manual labor,” or between “material labor and immaterial labor,” risks failing to grasp the new nature of productive activity, which takes this separation on board and transforms it. The split between conception and execution, between labor and creativity, between author and audience, is simultaneously transcended within the “labor process” and reimposed as political command within the “process of valorization.” [...] <http://www.generation-online.org/c/fcimmateriallabour3.htm>

[...] Twenty years of restructuring of the big factories has led to a curious paradox. The various different post-Fordist models have been constructed both on the defeat of the Fordist worker and on the recognition of the centrality of (an ever increasingly intellectualized) living labor within production. In today's large restructured company, a worker's work increasingly involves, at various levels, an ability to choose among different alternatives and thus a degree of responsibility regarding decision making. The concept of "interface" used by communications sociologists provides a fair definition of the activities of this kind of worker—as an interface between different functions, between different work teams, between different levels of the hierarchy, and so forth. What modern management techniques are looking for is for "the worker's soul to become part of the factory." The worker's personality and subjectivity have to be made susceptible to organization and command. It is around immateriality that the quality and quantity of labor are organized. This transformation of working-class labor into a labor of control, of handling information, into a decision-making capacity that involves the investment of subjectivity, affects workers in varying ways according to their positions within the factory hierarchy, but it is nevertheless present as an irreversible process. Work can thus be defined as the capacity to activate and manage productive cooperation. In this phase, workers are expected to become "active subjects" in the coordination of the various functions of production, instead of being subjected to it as simple command. We arrive at a point where a collective learning process becomes the heart of productivity, because it is no longer a matter of finding different ways of composing or organizing already existing job functions, but of looking for new ones.

The problem, however, of subjectivity and its collective form, its constitution and its development, has immediately expressed itself as a clash between social classes within the organization of work. I should point out that what I am describing is not some utopian vision of recomposition, but the very real terrain and conditions of the conflict between social classes. The capitalist needs to find an unmediated way of establishing command over subjectivity itself; the prescription and definition of tasks transforms into a prescription of subjectivities. The new slogan of Western societies is that we should all "become subjects". Participative management is a technology of power, a technology for creating and controlling the "subjective processes." As it is no longer possible to confine subjectivity merely to tasks of execution, it becomes necessary for the subject's competence in the areas of management, communication, and creativity to be made compatible with the conditions of "production for production's sake." Thus the slogan "become subjects," far from eliminating the antagonism between hierarchy and cooperation, between autonomy and command, actually re-poses the antagonism at a higher level [...]

[...] the cycle of immaterial labor takes as its starting point a social labor power that is independent and able to organize both its own work and its relations with business entities. Industry does not form or create this new labor power, but simply takes it on board and adapts it. Industry's control over this new labor power presupposes the independent organization and "free entrepreneurial activity" of the labor power. Advancing further on this terrain brings us into the debate on the nature of work in the post-Fordist phase of the organization of labor. Among economists, the predominant view of this problematic can be expressed in a single statement: immaterial labor operates within the forms of organization that the centralization of industry allows. Moving from this common basis, there are two differing schools of thought: one is the extension of neoclassical analysis; the other is that of systems theory. In the former, the attempt to solve the problem comes through a redefinition of the problematic of the market. It is suggested that in order to explain the phenomena of communication and the new dimensions of organization one should introduce not only cooperation and intensity of labor, but also other analytic variables (anthropological variables? immaterial variables?) and that on this basis one might introduce other objectives of optimization and so forth. In fact, the neoclassical model has considerable difficulty in freeing itself from the coherence constraints imposed by the theory of general equilibrium. The new phenomenologies of labor, the new dimensions of organization, communication, the potentiality of spontaneous synergies, the autonomy of the subjects involved, and the independence of the networks were neither foreseen nor foreseeable by a general theory that believed that material labor and an industrial economy were indispensable.

Today, with the new data available, we find the microeconomy in revolt against the macroeconomy, and the classical model is corroded by a new and irreducible anthropological reality.

Systems theory, by eliminating the constraint of the market and giving pride of place to organization, is more open to the new phenomenology of labor and in particular to the emergence of immaterial labor. In more developed systemic theories, organization is conceived as an ensemble of factors, both material and immaterial, both individual and collective, that can permit a given group to reach objectives. The success of this organizational process requires instruments of regulation, either voluntary or automatic. It becomes possible to look at things from the point of view of social synergies, and immaterial labor can be taken on board by virtue of its global efficacy. These viewpoints, however, are still tied to an image of the organization of work and its social territory within which effective activity from an economic viewpoint (in other words, the activity conforming to the objective) must inevitably be considered as a surplus in relation to collective cognitive mechanisms. Sociology and labor economics, being systemic disciplines, are both incapable of detaching themselves from this position. [...]

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I believe that an analysis of immaterial labor and a description of its organization can lead us beyond the presuppositions of business theory— whether in its neoclassical school or its systems theory school. It can lead us to define, at a territorial level, a space for a radical autonomy of the productive synergies of immaterial labor. We can thus move against the old schools of thought to establish, decisively, the viewpoint of an “anthropo-sociology” that is constitutive.

Once this viewpoint comes to dominate within social production, we find that we have an interruption in the continuity of models of production. By this I mean that, unlike the position held by many theoreticians of post-Fordism, I do not believe that this new labor power is merely functional to a new historical phase of capitalism and its processes of accumulation and reproduction. This labor power is the product of a “silent revolution” taking place within the anthropological realities of work and within the reconfiguration of its meanings. Waged labor and direct subjugation (to organization) no longer constitute the principal form of the contractual relationship between capitalist and worker. A polymorphous self-employed autonomous work has emerged as the dominant form, a kind of “intellectual worker” who is him or herself an entrepreneur, inserted within a market that is constantly shifting and within networks that are changeable in time and space [...]

[...] Up to this point I have been analyzing and constructing the concept of immaterial labor from a point of view that could be defined, so to speak, as “microeconomic.” If now we consider immaterial labor within the globality of the production cycle, of which it is the strategic stage, we will be able to see a series of characteristics of post-Taylorist production that have not yet been taken into consideration.

I want to demonstrate in particular how the process of valorization tends to be identified with the process of the production of social communication and how the two stages (valorization and communication) immediately have a social and territorial dimension. The concept of immaterial labor presupposes and results in an enlargement of productive cooperation that even includes the production and reproduction of communication and hence of its most important contents: subjectivity.

If Fordism integrated consumption into the cycle of the reproduction of capital, post-Fordism integrates communication into it. From a strictly economic point of view, the cycle of reproduction of immaterial labor dislocates the production-consumption relationship as it is defined as much by the “virtuous Keynesian circle” as by the Marxist reproduction schemes of the second volume of *Capital*. Now, rather than speaking of the toppling of “supply and demand,” we should speak about a redefinition of the production-consumption relationship. As we saw earlier, the consumer is inscribed in the manufacturing of the product from its conception. The consumer is no longer limited to consuming commodities (destroying them in the act of consumption). On the contrary, his or her consumption should be productive in accordance to the necessary conditions and the new products. Consumption is then first of all a consumption of information. Consumption is no longer only the “realization” of a product, but a real and proper social process that for the moment is defined with the term communication.

To recognize the new characteristics of the production cycle of immaterial labor, we should compare it with the production of large-scale industry and services. If the cycle of immaterial production immediately demonstrates to us the secret of post-Taylorist production (that is to say, that social communication and the social relationship that constitutes it become productive), then it would be interesting to examine how these new social relationships innervate even industry and services, and how they oblige us to reformulate and reorganize even the classical forms of “production.” [...]

[...] All of these characteristics of postindustrial economics (present both in large-scale industry and the tertiary sector) are accentuated in the form of properly “immaterial” production. Audiovisual production, advertising, fashion, software, the management of territory, and so forth are all defined by means of the particular relationship between production and its market or consumers. Here we are at the furthest point from the Taylorist model. Immaterial labor continually creates and modifies the forms and conditions of communication, which in turn acts as the interface that negotiates the relationship between production and consumption. As I noted earlier, immaterial labor produces first and foremost a social relation—it produces not only commodities, but also the capital relation.

If production today is directly the production of a social relation, then the “raw material” of immaterial labor is subjectivity and the “ideological” environment in which this subjectivity lives and reproduces. The production of subjectivity ceases to be only an instrument of social control (for the reproduction of mercantile relationships) and becomes directly productive, because the goal of our postindustrial society is to construct the consumer/communicator—and to construct it as “active.” Immaterial workers (those who work in advertising, fashion, marketing, television, cybernetics, and so forth) satisfy a demand by the consumer and at the same time establish that demand. The fact that immaterial labor produces subjectivity and economic value at the same time demonstrates how capitalist production has invaded our lives and has broken down all the oppositions among economy, power, and knowledge. The process of social communication (and its principal content, the production of subjectivity) becomes here directly productive because in a certain way it “produces” production. The process by which the “social” (and what is even more social, that is, language, communication, and so forth) becomes “economic” has not yet been sufficiently studied. In effect, on the one hand, we are familiar with an analysis of the production of subjectivity defined as the constitutive “process” specific to a “relation to the self with respect to the forms of production particular to knowledge and power (as in a certain vein of poststructuralist French philosophy), but this analysis never intersects sufficiently with the forms of capitalist valorization. On the other hand, in the 1980s a network of economists and sociologists (and before them the Italian postworkerist tradition) developed an extensive analysis of the “social form of production,” but that analysis does not integrate sufficiently the production of subjectivity as the content of valorization. Now, the post-Taylorist mode of production is defined precisely by putting subjectivity to work both in the activation of productive cooperation and in the production of the “cultural” contents of commodities. [...]

[...] But how is the production process of social communication formed? How does the production of subjectivity take place within this process? How does the production of subjectivity become the production of the consumer/communicator and its capacities to consume and communicate? What role does immaterial labor have in this process? As I have already said, my hypothesis is this: the process of the production of communication tends to become immediately the process of valorization. If in the past communication was organized fundamentally by means of language and the institutions of ideological and literary/artistic production, today, because it is invested with industrial production, communication is reproduced by means of specific technological schemes (knowledge, thought, image, sound, and language reproduction technologies) and by means of forms of organization and “management” that are bearers of a new mode of production.

It is more useful, in attempting to grasp the process of the formation of social communication and its subsumption within the “economic,” to use, rather than the “material” model of production, the “aesthetic” model that involves author, reproduction, and reception. This model reveals aspects that traditional economic categories tend to obscure and that, as I will show, constitute the “specific differences” of the post-Taylorist means of production.² The “aesthetic/ideological” model of production will be transformed into a small-scale sociological model with all the limits and difficulties that such a sociological transformation brings. The model of author, reproduction, and reception requires a double transformation: in the first place, the three stages of this creation process must be immediately characterized by their social form; in the second place, the three stages must be understood as the articulations of an actual productive cycle.³

The “author” must lose its individual dimension and be transformed into an industrially organized production process (with a division of labor, investments, orders, and so forth), “reproduction” becomes a mass reproduction organized according to the imperatives of profitability, and the audience (“reception”) tends to become the consumer/communicator. In this process of socialization and subsumption within the economy of intellectual activity the “ideological” product tends to assume the form of a commodity. I should emphasize, however, that the subsumption of this process under capitalist logic and the transformation of its products into commodities does not abolish the specificity of aesthetic production, that is to say, the creative relationship between author and audience [...]

[...] Allow me to underline briefly the specific differences of the “stages” that make up the production cycle of immaterial labor (immaterial labor itself, its “ideological/commodity products,” and the “public/consumer”) in relation to the classical forms of the reproduction of “capital.”

As far as immaterial labor being an “author” is concerned, it is necessary to emphasize the radical autonomy of its productive synergies. As we have seen, immaterial labor forces us to question the classical definitions of work and workforce, because it results from a synthesis of different types of knowhow: intellectual skills, manual skills, and entrepreneurial skills. Immaterial labor constitutes itself in immediately collective forms that exist as networks and flows. The subjugation of this form of cooperation and the “use value” of these skills to capitalist logic does not take away the autonomy of the constitution and meaning of immaterial labor. On the contrary, it opens up antagonisms and contradictions that, to use once again a Marxist formula, demand at least a “new form of exposition.”

The “ideological product” becomes in every respect a commodity. The term ideological does not characterize the product as a “reflection” of reality, as false or true consciousness of reality. Ideological products produce, on the contrary, new stratifications of reality; they are the intersection where human power, knowledge, and action meet. New modes of seeing and knowing demand new technologies, and new technologies demand new forms of seeing and knowing. These ideological products are completely internal to the processes of the formation of social communication; that is, they are at once the results and the prerequisites of these processes. The ensemble of ideological products constitutes the human ideological environment. Ideological products are transformed into commodities without ever losing their specificity; that is, they are always addressed to someone, they are “ideally signifying,” and thus they pose the problem of “meaning.”

The general public tends to become the model for the consumer (audience/client). The public (in the sense of the user—the reader, the music listener, the television audience) whom the author addresses has as such a double productive function. In the first place, as the addressee of the ideological product, the public is a constitutive element of the production process. In the second place, the public is productive by means of the reception that gives the product “a place in life” (in other words, integrates it into social communication) and allows it to live and evolve. Reception is thus, from this point of view, a creative act and an integrative part of the product. The transformation of the product into a commodity cannot abolish this double process of “creativity”; it must rather assume it as it is, and attempt to control it and subordinate it to its own values [...]

[...] The legitimation that the (Schumpeterian) entrepreneur found in his or her capacity for innovation has lost its foundation. Because the capitalist entrepreneur does not produce the forms and contents of immaterial labor, he or she does not even produce innovation. For economics there remains only the possibility of managing and regulating the activity of immaterial labor and creating some devices for the control and creation of the public/consumer by means of the control of communication and information technologies and their organizational processes.

These brief considerations permit us to begin questioning the model of creation and diffusion specific to intellectual labor and to get beyond the concept of creativity as an expression of “individuality” or as the patrimony of the “superior” classes. The works of Simmel and Bakhtin, conceived in a time when immaterial production had just begun to become “productive,” present us with two completely different ways of posing the relationship between immaterial labor and society. The first, Simmel’s, remain completely invested in the division between manual labor and intellectual labor and give us a theory of the creativity of intellectual labor. The second, Bakhtin’s, in refusing to accept the capitalist division of labor as a given, elaborate a theory of social creativity. Simmel, in effect, explains the function of “fashion” by means of the phenomenon of imitation or distinction as regulated and commanded by class relationships. Thus the superior levels of the middle classes are the ones that create fashion, and the lower classes attempt to imitate them. Fashion here functions like a barrier that incessantly comes up because it is incessantly battered down. What is interesting for this discussion is that, according to this conception, the immaterial labor of creation is limited to a specific social group and is not diffused except through imitation. At a deeper level, this model accepts the division of labor founded on the opposition between manual and intellectual labor that has as its end the regulation and “mystification” of the social process of creation and innovation. If this model had some probability of corresponding to the dynamics of the market of immaterial labor at the moment of the birth of mass consumption (whose effects Simmel very intelligently anticipates), it could not be utilized to account for the relationship between immaterial labor and consumer-public in postindustrial society. Bakhtin, on the contrary, defines immaterial labor as the superseding of the division between “material labor and intellectual labor” and demonstrates how creativity is a social process. In fact, the work on “aesthetic production” of Bakhtin and the rest of the Leningrad Circle has this same social focus.

This is the line of investigation that seems most promising for developing a theory of the social cycle of immaterial production.

A physician goes to visit a sick person, observes the symptoms of disease, prescribes a remedy, and takes his leave without depositing any product, that the invalid or his family can transfer to a third person, or even keep for the consumption of a future day. Has the industry of the physician been unproductive? Who can for a moment suppose so? The patient's life has been saved perhaps. Was this product incapable of becoming an object of barter? By no means: the physician's advice has been exchanged for his fee; but the want of this advice ceased the moment it was given. The act of giving was its production, of hearing its consumption, and the consumption and production were simultaneous. This is what I call an immaterial product.

The industry of a musician or an actor yields a product of the same kind: it gives one an amusement, a pleasure one can not possibly retain or preserve for future consumption, or as the object of barter for other enjoyments. This pleasure has its price, it is true, but it has no further existence, except perhaps in the memory, and no exchangeable value, after the instant of its production.

Smith will not allow the name of products to the results of these branches of industry. Labour so bestowed he calls unproductive; an error he was led into by his definition of wealth, which he defines to consist of things bearing a value capable of being preserved, instead of extending the name to all things bearing exchangeable value: consequently, excluding products consumed as soon as created. The industry of the physician, however, as well as that of the public functionary, the advocate or the judge, which are all of them of the same class, satisfies wants of so essential a nature, that without those professions no society could exist. Are not, then, the fruits of their labour real? They are so far so, as to be purchased at the price of other and material products, which Smith allows to be wealth; and by the repetition of this kind of barter, the producers of immaterial products acquire fortunes.

To descend to items of pure amusement, it cannot be denied, that the representation of a good comedy gives as solid a pleasure as a box of comfits, or a discharge of fire-works, which are products, even within Smith's definition. Nor can I discover any sound reason, why the talent of the painter should be deemed productive, and not the talent of the musician.

Smith himself has exposed the error of the economist in confining the term, wealth, to the mere value of the raw material contained in each product; he advanced a great step in political economy, by demonstrating wealth to consist of the raw material, plus the value added to it by industry; but, having gone so far as to promote to the rank of wealth an abstract commodity, value, why reckon it as nothing, however real and exchangeable, when not incorporated in matter? [...]

Jean-Baptiste Say, *A Treatise on Political Economy, Book I, Ch. XIII* [...] This is the more surprising, because he went so far as to treat of labour, abstracted from the matter wherein it is employed; to examine the causes which operate upon and influence its value; and even to propose that value as the safest and least variable measure of all other values.

The nature of immaterial products makes it impossible ever to accumulate them, so as to render them a part of the national capital. A people containing a host of musicians, priests, and public functionaries might be abundantly amused, well versed in religious doctrines, and admirably governed; but that is all. Its capital would receive no direct accession from the total labour of all these individuals, though industrious enough in their respective vocations, because their products would be consumed as fast as produced.

Consequently, nothing is gained on the score of public prosperity, by ingeniously creating an unnatural demand for the labour of any of these professions; the labour diverted into that channel of production can not be increased, without increasing the consumption also. If this consumption yield a gratification, then indeed we may console ourselves for the sacrifice; but when that consumption is itself an evil, it must be confessed the system which causes it is deplorable enough.

This occurs in practice, whenever legislation is too complicated. The study of the law, becoming more intricate and tedious, occupies more persons, whose labour must likewise be better paid. What does society gain by this? Are the respective rights of its members better protected? Undoubtedly not: the intricacy of law, on the contrary, holds out a great encouragement to fraud, by multiplying the chances of evasion, and very rarely adds to the solidity of title or of right. The only advantage is, the greater frequency and duration of suits. The same reasoning applies to superfluous offices in the public administration. To create an office for the administration of what ought to be left to itself, is to do an injury to the subject in the first instance, and make him pay for it afterwards as if it were a benefit.

Wherefore it is impossible to admit the inference of M. Garnier, that because the labour of physicians, lawyers, and the like, is productive, therefore a nation gains as much by the multiplication of the class of labour as of any other. This would be the same as bestowing upon a material product more manual labour than is necessary for its completion. The labour productive of immaterial products, like every other labour, is productive so far only as it augments the utility, and thereby the value of a product: beyond this point it is a purely unproductive exertion. To render the laws intricate purposely to give lawyers full business in expounding them, would be equally absurd, as to spread a disease that doctors may find practice [...]

[...] Immaterial products are the fruit of human industry, in which term we have comprised every kind of productive labour. It is not so easy to understand how they can at the same time be the fruit of capital. Yet these products are for the most part the result of some talent or other, which always implies previous study; and no study can take place without advances of capital.

Before the advice of the physician can be given or taken, the physician or his relations must first have defrayed the charges of an education of many years' duration: he must have subsisted while a student; professors must have been paid; books purchased; journeys perhaps have been performed; all which implies the disbursement of a capital previously accumulated.*¹⁹ So likewise the lawyer's opinion, the musician's song, &c. are products, that can never be raised without the concurrence of industry and capital. Even the ability of the public functionary is an accumulated capital. It requires the same kind of outlay, for the education of a civil or military engineer, as for that of a physician. Indeed we may take it for granted, that the funds expended in the training of a young man for the public service, are found by experience to be a fair investment of capital, and that labour of this description is well paid; for we find more applicants than offices in almost every branch of administration, even in countries where offices are unnecessarily multiplied.

The industry productive of immaterial products will be found to go through exactly the same process, as, in the analysis made in the beginning of this work, we have shown to be followed by industry in general. This may be illustrated by an example. Before an ordinary song can be executed, the arts of the composer and the practical musician must have been regular and distinct callings; and the best mode of acquiring skill in them must have been discovered; this is the department of the man of science, or theorist. The application of this mode and of this art, has been left to the composer and singer, who have calculated, the one in composing his tune, the others in the execution of it, that it would afford a pleasure, to which the audience would attach some value or other. Finally, the execution is the concluding operation of industry.

There are, however, some immaterial products, with respect to which the two first operations are so extremely trifling, that one may almost account them as nothing. Of this description is the service of a menial domestic. The art of service is little or nothing, and the application of that art is made by the employer; so that nothing is left to the servant, but the executive business of service, which is the last and lowest of industrious operations [...]

[...] It necessarily follows, that, in this class of industry, and some few others practised by the lowest ranks of society, that of the porter for instance, or of the prostitute, &c. &c.: the charge of training being little or nothing, the products may be looked upon not only as the fruits of very coarse and primitive industry, but likewise as products, to the creation of which capital has contributed nothing; for I can not think the expense of these agents' subsistence from infancy, till the age of emancipation from parental care, can be considered as a capital, the interest of which is paid by the subsequent profits. I shall give my reasons for this opinion when I come to speak of wages.

The pleasures one enjoys at the price of any kind of personal exertion, are immaterial products, consumed at the instant of production by the very person that has created them. Of this description are the pleasures derived from arts studied solely for self-amusement. In learning music, a man devotes to that study some small capital, some time and personal labour; all which together are the price paid for the pleasure of singing a new air or taking part in a concert.

Gaming, dancing, and field-sports, are labours of the same kind. The amusement derived from them is instantly consumed by the persons who have performed them. When a man executes a painting, or makes any article of smith's or joiner's work for his amusement, he at the same time creates a durable product or value, and an immaterial product, viz. his personal amusement.

In speaking of capital, we have seen, that part of it is devoted to the production of material products, and part remains wholly unproductive. There is also a further part productive of utility or pleasure, which, can, therefore, be reckoned as a portion neither of the capital engaged in the production of material objects, nor of that absolutely inactive. Under this head may be comprised dwelling-houses, furniture and decorations, that are an addition to the mere pleasures of life. The utility they afford is an immaterial product.

When a young couple sets up house-keeping for the first time, the plate they provide themselves with cannot be considered as absolutely inactive capital, for it is in constant domestic use; nor can it be reckoned as capital engaged in the raising of material products; for it leads to the production of no one object capable of being reserved for future consumption; neither is it an object of annual consumption, for it may last, perhaps, for their joint lives, and be handed down to their children; but it is capital productive of utility and pleasure. Indeed, it is so much value accumulated or in other words withdrawn from reproductive consumption; consequently, yielding neither profit nor interest, but productive of some degree of benefit or utility, which is gradually consumed and incapable of being realised, yet it is possessed of real and positive value, since it is occasionally the object of purchase: as in the instance of the rent of a house or the hire of furniture, and the like [...]

'In the period of manufacture, and during the long apogee of Fordist labour, labour activity is mute. Who labours keeps quiet. Production is a silent chain, where only a mechanical and exterior relation between what precedes it and what follows it is allowed, whilst any interactive correlation between what is simultaneous to it is expunged. Living labour, an appendix of the system of machines, follows a natural causality in order to use its power: what Hegel called 'cunning' of labouring. And 'cunning' is known to be taciturn. In the postfordist metropolis, on the other hand, the material labouring process can be empirically described as a complex of linguistic acts, a sequence of assertions, a symbolic interaction. This is partly due to the fact that now labour activity is performed aside the system of machines, with regulating, surveillance and coordinating duties; but also because the productive process uses knowledge, information, culture and social relations as its 'primary matter'.

The labourer is (and must be) loquacious. The famous opposition established by Habermas between 'instrumental' and 'communicative' action (or between labour and interaction) is radically confuted by the postfordist mode of production. 'Communicative action' does not hold any privileged, or even exclusive place in ethico-cultural relations, in politics, in the struggle for 'mutual recognition', whilst residing beyond the realm of material reproduction of life. On the contrary, the dialogic word is installed at the very heart of capitalist production. Labour *is* interaction. Therefore, in order to really understand postfordist labouring praxis, one must increasingly refer to Saussure, to Wittgenstein and to Carnap. These authors have hardly shown any interest in social relations of production; nonetheless, having elaborated theories and images of language, they have more to teach in relation to the 'talkative factory' than professional sociologists.

When labour performs surveillance and coordinating tasks, its duties no longer consist in the accomplishment of a single particular aim, but rather in the modulation (as well as variation and intensification) of social cooperation, i.e. of the totality of systemic relations and connections that constitute the now authentic 'sustaining pole of production and wealth' (Marx). Such a modulation occurs through linguistic performances that, far from creating an independent product, are exhausted in the communicative interaction determined by their execution. Shortly:

a) labour based on communication does not have a rigidly finalistic structure, i.e. it is not guided by a predefined and univocal objective; b) in many cases, such labour does not produce an extrinsic and long-lasting object, due to its being an *activity without Work* (opera). Let us look at these aspects more closely [...]

[...] The traditional concept of production is one and the same as that of finalism: the producer is someone who pursues a determined aim. However, the strength of the production-finalism is dependent on the *restricted* character of labour: more precisely, on the rigorous exclusion of communication from the productive process. The more we are dealing with merely instrumental action, for which the fabric of dialogical intersubjective relations is inessential, the more finalism appears to be prominent and unequivocal. Vice versa, the moment communication becomes its constitutive element; it also damages the rigidly finalistic connotation of labour.

Firstly, let us consider the system of machines that characterise postfordism. Unlike the fordist automated machine, the electronic machine is incomplete and partially undetermined: rather than being the technological imitation of given natural forces, to be bended for a specific purpose, it is the premise for an indefinite cluster of operative possibilities. This cluster of possibilities requires to be articulated by a number of linguistic acts performed by living labour. Communicative actions that elaborate the chances endemic to the electronic machine are not oriented towards an aim that is external to communication itself: they do not introduce a precedent in view of a consequence, but have in themselves their own outcome. Enunciation is simultaneously means and end, instrument and final product. In a linguistic context, the rules of the project and those of its execution are one and the same. Such identity abrogates the distinction between the two moments: intention and realisation coincide.

Let us come to the second aspect. Besides contradicting the model of finalistic action, communicative labour often fails to give rise to autonomous work that will survive the labouring performance. Hence, the activities whose 'product is inseparable from the act of producing' (Marx)- i.e. activities that are not objectified in a lasting product- have a mercurial and ambiguous status that is difficult to grasp. The reason of this difficulty is obvious. Long before being incorporated in capitalist production, the *activity without Work* (communicative action) was the architrave of *politics*. Hanna Arendt writes: 'the arts that do not produce any 'Work' share certain features with politics. The artists who perform them –dancers, actors, musicians etc- need a public to show their virtuousisms, just as those who act politically need others to appeal to'. When communicative actions rather than new objects are constructed, we enter the realm of politics. Postfordist labour, as linguistic labour, requires attitudes and characteristics that used to be those of political praxis: presentations in the presence of others, management of a certain margin of unpredictability, capacity to begin something new, ability to navigate amongst alternative possibilities [...]

[...] When we speak of language put to work, the main issue is not the massive increase of communication industries, but the fact that communicative action predominates in all industrial sectors. Therefore, one needs to look at the techniques and procedures of the mass media as a model of universal value, independently of whether we are considering the work on cars or steel. It is worth asking what the relation between the peculiar characters of the culture industry and postfordism in general is. As we know, since Adorno and Horkheimer, the 'factories of soul' (publishing, cinema, television, radio etc) have been scrutinised under the microscope of criticism, in the hope of finding out what made them comparable to the productive chain. The crucial point was to demonstrate that capitalism was able to mechanise and parcellise spiritual production, just as it had mechanised and parcellised agriculture and manufacture. Seriality, indifference to the singular task, econometrics of emotions and feelings: these were the habitual refrains. Of course, it was conceded that some aspects of what could be defined 'production of communication by means of communication' seemed refractory to a complete assimilation to the fordist organisation of the labouring process: but, rightly, these were regarded as non influential, residual, modest nuisances, minute scoria. However, looking at things with the eyes of the present, it is not difficult to recognise that such 'residues' and such 'scoria' were in fact pregnant with future: not echoes of a preceding period, but real predictions. In brief: the informality of communicative action, the competitive interaction that is typical of an editorial board meeting, the unpredictable twist that can animate a television program, and generally, all that would be inconvenient to regulate and rigidify beyond a certain level within the culture industry, has now become the central and propelling nucleus of all social production under postfordism. In this sense, one could ask whether 'toyotism' consists, at least in part, in the application of operative models that were once only applied to the culture industry to factories that produce lasting commodities.

The communication industry (or 'culture' industry) has an analogous role to that traditionally occupied by the industry of the means of production: it is a particular productive sector that determines the operative instruments and procedures which will then be largely applied to each corner of the social labouring process.

The putting to work (and to profit) of language is the material ground, hidden and distorted, on which postmodern ideology rests. Examining the contemporary metropolis, postmodern ideology underlines the unlimited and virtual proliferation of 'linguistic games', the insurgence of provisional dialects, the multiplication of dissimilar voices. If we limit ourselves to fix our eyes on this exuberant plurality, it is easy to conclude that it eludes any analytical approach [...]

[...] In fact, the postmodern vernacular sustains that we are faced with a net without mesh: the forms of metropolitan life –often brought about rather than reflected by the new idioms- could only be defined by saying a rosary of ‘no longer’ and ‘not even’. A nice paradox: precisely due to its eminently linguistic nature, the metropolis seems now indescribable. Hypnotized by the generalised noise, postmodern ideologues proclaim a drastic dematerialisation of social relations, as well as an enfeeblement of domination. In their view, the only ethico-political dimension oscillates between the acceptance and the refusal of the multiplicity of idioms. The sole unforgivable sin is the wish to limit the diasporas of ‘linguistic games’. Apart from this, everything is fine. The plurality of idioms would entail in itself an emancipatory effect, by melting away the illusion of a univocal and restrictive reality. The hermeneutics that has become common sense suggests that that which, as we go along, results from the crossing of different interpretations is properly ‘real’. However, the ironic infatuation for the plurality of discourses reascribes to language all the myths that liberalism once nurtured about the market. Centrifugal communication, fed by infinite independent speakers, is dealt with the same deferential arguments once given in favour of the free circulation of commodities: Eden of rights, kingdom of equality and mutual recognition. But does multiplicity as such really weaken control? Is it not rather the case that the latter is powerfully articulated in each of the ‘many’? None of the stockbrokers is now aware of the hermeneutic character of truth or the ephemeral character of each interpretation: is this sufficient to revoke any objection to their form of life?

A distinctive feature of the contemporary metropolis is the full identity of material production and linguistic communication, rather than the swarming of idioms. This identity explains and increases that multiplication. But this identity has nothing emancipatory. Contrary to what the postmodern jingle suggests, the coinciding of labour and linguistic communication radicalises the antinomies of the dominant mode of production, rather than weakening them. On the one hand, labouring activity is less measurable on the basis of abstract temporal units, since it includes aspects that up until yesterday belonged to the sphere of the ethos, of cultural consumption, of aesthetic taste, of emotion. On the other hand, labour time remains the socially accepted unit of measure. Hence, the multiple ‘linguistic games’, even the most eccentric, are always about to be configured as new ‘tasks’, or as desirable requirements for the old ones. When wage labour gets abolished because it constitutes an excessive social cost, then even taking the word is included in its horizon. Language presents itself at once as the terrain of conflict and as what is at stake, to the extent that freedom of speech, with a less parodic meaning than the liberal one, and abolition of wage labour are today synonyms. The critical stand must possess this radicalism; otherwise it merely amounts to resentful grumbling. In a way, we cannot question wage labour without introducing a powerful idea of freedom of speech; whilst we cannot seriously invoke freedom of speech without aiming to suppress wage labour [...]

[...] In Postfordism, the tendency described by Marx is actually realised but surprisingly with no revolutionary or even conflictual implication. Rather than a plethora of crises, the disproportion between the role of the knowledge objectified in machines and the decreasing relevance of labour time gave rise to new and stable forms of domination. Disposable time, a potential wealth, is manifested as poverty: forced redundancy, early retirement, structural unemployment and the proliferation of hierarchies. The radical metamorphosis of the concept of production itself is still tied down to the idea of working for a boss. Rather than an allusion to the overcoming of the existent, the 'Fragment' is a sociologist's toolbox and the last chapter of a natural history of society. It describes the empirical reality as it is seen. For example, at the end of the 'Fragment' Marx claims that in a communist society, rather than an amputated worker, the whole individual will produce. That is the individual who has changed as a result of a large amount of free time, cultural consumption and a sort of 'power to enjoy'. Most of us will recognise that the Postfordist labouring process actually takes advantage in its way of this very transformation albeit depriving it of all emancipatory qualities. What is learned, carried out and consumed in the time outside of labour is then utilised in the production of commodities, becomes a part of the use value of labour power and is computed as profitable resource. Even the greater 'power to enjoy' is always on the verge of being turned into labouring task.

In order to take hold of the conflict of this new situation we need to level a fundamental criticism at the 'Fragment'. According to Marx, the general intellect – i.e. knowledge as the main productive force – fully coincides with fixed capital – i.e. the 'scientific power' objectified in the system of machinery. Marx thus neglects the way in which the general intellect manifests itself as living labour. The analysis of Postfordist production compels us to make such criticism; the so-called 'second-generation autonomous labour' and the procedural operations of radically innovated factories such as Fiat in Melfi show how the relation between knowledge and production is articulated in the linguistic cooperation of men and women and their concrete acting in concert, rather than being exhausted in the system of machinery. In Postfordism, conceptual and logical schema play a decisive role and cannot be reduced to fixed capital in so far as they are inseparable from the interaction of a plurality of living subjects. The 'general intellect' includes formal and informal knowledge, imagination, ethical tendencies, mentalities and 'language games'. Thoughts and discourses function in themselves as productive 'machines' in contemporary labour and do not need to take on a mechanical body or an electronic soul. The matrix of conflict and the condition for small and great 'disorders under the sky' must be seen in the progressive rupture between general intellect and fixed capital that occurs in this process of redistribution of the former within living labour [...]

