Time, Space, and Money in Capitalism and Communism

Geoff Mann
Department of Geography
Simon Fraser University

I. The politics of the future: awaiting and anticipating

Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. Marx and Engels, *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1967: 83)

Money is the code through which capital regulates the abstraction necessary for its temporal and spatial regime. That regulation is not limited to the oft-noted coordination, in particular spaces of production, of human labor and every-day clock-time—seconds, minutes, and hours (Thompson, 1967; Roediger and Foner, 1989; Postone, 1993). Capital also regulates, at a more fundamental level, through the production of the spatio-temporal frame itself: i.e. the formal abstraction essential to any conception of social life as unfolding over something called "time" and across something called "space". Capital structures multiple geographies—times and spaces—through abstraction, substituting logical time and space, for real time and space. Money is the chief instrument by which this abstraction is accomplished.

Money's coercive regulatory and ideological work is essential because of capitalism's evident volatility, which, as the subprime crisis of 2007-2008 reminds us, is less discriminate in its victimization than capital might wish. Still, although risk cannot be confined to the life-world of workers alone, capital is necessarily insecure and volatile, as Marx and Engels point out in the *Manifesto* (1967: 82-4). There, they attack the common sense according to which instability permeates social life. They argue that "everlasting uncertainty and agitation" is not a universal feature of human life. On the contrary, it describes a narrow range of possible conditions particular to life under capital; the insecurity of this uncertainty (they are not the same thing) is neither natural nor universal. But it is absolutely necessary to the functioning of the social relations of production (Schumpeter, 1950: 81-6). Without volatility, without fear, capitalism could not work: the vagaries of the markets are a spur in the side of labor, an incentive for entrepreneurial capital (Brenner, 2006). Uncertainty in capitalism thus has a history, an ideological life, and a massive and dynamic institutional structure. Indeed, as Marx and Engels note, the dependability of capitalism's volatility in many ways renders its uncertainty laughable—nothing that is "constant" is "uncertain".

The problem does not reside in price movements or imprecise elasticities of supply and demand—indeed, within a band of normative expectations, such quantitative measures prove remarkably stable. Nor is volatility merely a function of the shocks inevitably visited upon capitalism, nor even of the contradiction-driven crises Marx studied, although these of course always matter. Rather, the uncertainty in question is an inner necessity of capitalist social relations that must not be overcome for, without it, the mode of production cannot persist. The structuring code capitalism transmits—what Jessop and Oosterlynck (2008) call its "semiotic order"—is thus constitutively unable to account for anything but its own inevitability. The idea that the future could lead to anything other than a bloated version of today, let alone to a collective or radical political alternative to capitalism—is structurally unimaginable. For capitalism to function today, tomorrow must be capitalist. The future is the premise of the present.

Capitalism's uncertainty is consequently, and paradoxically, not all that uncertain; an "appearance of random changes that are mere stasis, a disorder after the end of history" (Jameson, 1994: 20). The uncertainty powering capitalism's remarkable dynamism is invisible, but utterly dependable and omnipresent, like some mystic force. To point this out is not critical hyperbole: even if we leave aside the myths of perfect markets, information and foresight, a mode of quasi-mysticism is fundamental to modern economic theory. It was not Keynes the poetic Bloomsbury-ite, but Keynes the theoretical economist, that said capital operated under the spell of "animal spirits" (1965: 161-2). And despite the fact that so much of Keynes is now abjured by the mainstream, the orthodox modern understanding of economic dynamics remains predicated on a specifically capitalist demand for prostration before the uncertainty attributed to the "whims" of a totalizing supra-human market. This metaphysics of uncertainty underwrites an axiom of the capitalist future: you never know what "the economy" might do, and you will only have yourself to blame. The assertion of inevitable volatility naturalizes capitalism and its allocative inequalities. Indeed, it almost defies the market, the movement of which happens "spontaneously", like plate tectonics, or God (Peet, 2008: 83).
Another, perhaps more fundamental, argument for capitalism's uncertain nature is based on an increasingly biologized theory of "human nature". Darwinian accounts of social evolution find the origins of market society in purportedly universal competitive propensities. The staggering expansion of our faith in genetic explanation affords a hypothetical ground for many to claim (by way of the field of evolutionary economics, for example) that the uncertain future has a biochemical basis: it is always present, coded into the base pairs of human DNA (e.g. Becker, 1976: 282-94; Behrman and Taubman, 1976; Robson, 2001). In the hypothetical domain of capitalist uncertainty, the absolute dependability of agents' rational and opportunistic pursuit of private "interests" (Laffont and Martimort, 2002; Laffont and Tirole, 1993: 34-5; Williamson, 1983: 26-8), and the "asymmetry" of information given a dynamic political economy, combine to ensure that one can never know precisely what anyone else is going to do. In other words, everyone is presumed to pursue profit qua utility, and to have different information regarding the state of things. All anyone can know is that others will pursue that utilitarian end; one cannot know how they will do so, since we have only incomplete knowledge of the "subjective" conditions under which they act (i.e., preferences, knowledge, budget constraints). This informational asymmetry is posited as a condition of all social interaction, pre-existing sociality itself (Laffont and Martimort, 2002: 33). The influence of this theodicy can hardly be understated; Joseph Stiglitz won his Nobel prize for it.

From the perspective of orthodoxy, then, the rational, asymmetric economy of information originates with the biologized individual, working upward and outward, harmonizing with and reinforcing the unknowability that always characterizes the market. At the scale of "society" and "economy", the sum of these atomized forces is an aggregate political economy whose morphology is the individual profit-seeker writ large. Just as others' choices of any of an infinite number of paths to an objective end render individual behaviour uncertain, the absolute dependability of firms' relentless pursuit of new ways to respond to that uncertainty guarantees the volatility of market outcomes. The development of institutional forms, physical assets, and labor power that maximize "flexibility" and "substitutability" in factors of production, distribution, and consumption create the conditions for massive upheaval in commodity chains, product markets, business strategies, and workers' lives. Explanations of economic growth from the discipline of economics and business associations focus so single-mindedly on these qualities as to fetishize them. Indeed, the modern theory of growth in capitalism is a derivative of what the economist Robert Solow (1956)—in work that also won a Nobel prize—called "variable proportions", i.e. flexibility and substitution. One could just as easily call on Schumpeter's (1950: 83) account of the "incessant revolutionizing" of "creative destruction". In any case, growth is a product of nothing less than "everlasting uncertainty and agitation", without which capitalism is correctly understood to be in crisis.

Uncertainty and agitation are unevenly distributed across society. So too are the resources needed to weather what Marx and Engels called the "freaks of fortune" (1998: 89), freaks that are not "natural", but political and historical. That said, a functionalist search for an evil puppeteer is mistaken. The terrain of volatility is too vast and powerful. We should focus instead on the ways in which the contours of that terrain are produced, disciplined, driven and constrained by money. Money, as "general equivalent" (the one thing for which all commodities are exchangeable), mediates all capitalist exchange relations, and as such, strictly defines capital's spatial and temporal potential (Marx, 1970; 1973; 1976; Fine and Lapavitsas, 2000). In other words, although it is true there can be money without capitalism, there can be no capitalism without money. Money is the vector through which capital circulates: where and when capitalism goes, money is always the vehicle. Consequently, capitalism's particular uncertainty is contained in it; its paths are cleared by the movement, the tides, the circulation, of money.

**Monetary Circulation**

Circulation is a spatial metaphor. Since capital's spatiality has been brilliantly analyzed, I will not rehearse it here (see Lefebvre, 1991; Harvey, 1999; Henderson, 2003). Yet circulation is nonetheless always temporal: even an instant is time (Altivater, 1993: 77-8). But the concept of temporal circulation is troublesome (Stahel, 1999), for circulation implies a return—in a different form, perhaps, like Marx's famous M'—but always a return (Harvey, 1999: 246). Spatially, we can handle this. But time is unidirectional; it cannot flow backward. So how can capital circulate from the present to the future and then back again? This temporal circulation happens in money's very being. "By permitting the assumption of intertemporal obligations, money binds together past, present and future" (Altivater, 1993: 95).

At least one aspect of this fundamental temporality is commonplace. As "general equivalent", even as a commodity, money is a "highly energetic solvent" (Marx, 1973: 507): it mediates social relations by dissolution, undoing historically necessary unities. Its first object is the unity of the moment of exchange. Money disengages purchase and sale, impossible in non-monetary exchange (Lee, 1999: 207). Since the "two essential moments of circulation are indifferent to one another and separated in place and time, they by no
means need to coincide" (Marx, 1973: 198). In the context of capitalist social relations, then, money becomes an instrument of domination, a "third party" in the capital-labor exchange, since the separations it secures make possible both the condition of propertylessness—the purchase of the means of production and the sale of living labor, neither of which are imaginable without money—and its reproduction in the form of the "plucked" free worker (Marx, 1973: 507; Marx and Engels, 1998: 71; Negri, 1991: 72; Alliez, 1996: 6). The spatio-temporal separation that money enables allows capital to pay workers out of profit realized far away from and long after labor-power has been exercised at the point of production, and to "advance" wages to workers before the expansion of capital in circulation (Henderson, 2003). Money is central to the oft-noted "time-space distanciation" of modern social interaction (Giddens, 1990: 14-20).

In its capitalist form, then, money's spatio-temporal regime consists partly in something like Deleuze and Guattari's "infinite debt" (1983: 229; Foucault, 1994: 181), an unending circulation of payment and counter-payment across space and time. However, despite the famous duo's desire for novelty, this is neither a particularly novel nor radical perspective. Indeed, as Keynes' writes in his General Theory: "For the importance of money essentially flows from its being a link between the present and future. We can consider what distribution of resources between different uses will be consistent with equilibrium under the influence of normal economic motives in a world in which our views concerning the future are fixed and reliable in all respects;—with a further division, perhaps, between an economy which is unchanging and one subject to change, but where all things are foreseeied from the beginning. Or we can pass from this simple propaedeutic to the problems of the real world in which our previous expectations are liable to disappointment and expectations concerning the future affect what we do to-day. It is when we have made this transition that the peculiar properties of money as a link between the present and the future must enter into our calculations (1965: 293-4; emphasis in original).

Notably missing from this analysis, and from Keynes' work in general, is some recognition of the essential coerciveness of these spatio-temporal relations. The fact that, at any moment, every individual in capitalist society is implicated in a seemingly endless cycle of credit and debt denominated in money is a powerful determinant of what geographies are socially possible to produce. In other words, not only does the debtor owe the creditor, but any value money can represent is necessarily propped up, given its very meaning, by the totalitarian claims of a future in which that value must be realizable (cf. Simmel, 1990: 182; Foucault, 1994: 188-9). In Éric Alliez's words, "the future is the magnetic pole of value" (1996: 12). Money is not merely a "promise to pay", but a command. Every time one cent changes hands, money is a surety that the future will be qualitatively like the present, and each moment will be like now. This is the temporal horizon of "general equilibrium"; its theorists say as much themselves (Debreu, 1959: 29, 35). Indeed, the neutrality of money in neoclassical theory is intimately related to the orthodox inability to deal with time and space as anything other than abstract vectors in "commodity space", a difficulty epitomized by the analytical reduction of "economic dynamics" to a consecutive series of static equilibria (Ingham 2004).

The more "obvious" spatio-temporality of circulation through money, an everyday "clock-time" marking the hours in an everyday set of economic relations in space, rests on an underexamined, but more fundamental space-time relation in money. For money does not merely allow things to happen at different times and different places, it is essentially futural and extraverted. Its meaning is premised upon its function as a "temporal reserve" (Alliez, 1996: 6), a store of temporality more foundational than clock-time. It prefigures and constrains not merely the realization of an act of exchange, but the infinite persistence of capitalist exchange itself—elsewhere, and later. Money, both its "value" and its very essence, posits a future and a place that echo, or are "economically" substitutable for, here and now. If that future-place were untenable, or even contestable, money would not be a general equivalent. Such incapacitation has nothing to do with price volatility or instability in "real" exchange rates, nor is it in any way incompatible with the certain uncertainty outlined above. These obstacles test money's limits only quantitatively, not qualitatively: money remains the number of exchange-value, however wildly it may vary. The surety of money's promise to persist serves as the essential constraint; a price may change extraordinarily and unexpectedly, but it can never become something other than a price, denominated in money. Unless money exceeds its own qualitative limits, becoming what by definition it cannot be, then its circuits of movement determine its degrees of freedom. As mentioned above, capitalism's uncertain future is always a capitalist future—it is not that uncertain. It forecloses the possibility of a world after and outside of price.

Consequently, insofar as this futurity holds, circulation between the present and future, between here and not-here, is partly constitutive of money's being. Each exchange passes through the hands of the future—a future that is banking on current value" (Alliez, 1996: 12)—and elsewhere before it returns to the present-here, and the hands of its recipient. It is thoroughly "grounded in fore-having, fore-sight, fore-
conception" (Heidegger, 1996: 141). And insofar as the recipient is a worker selling living labor, she or he is holds an "equity position" in the maintenance of capitalist social and spatial relations. That position, however, which each of us in capitalist society has virtually no choice but to accept, is always a product of the complex interaction of that capitalist mode of everyday space and time with another "time", and a different space. Herein lies its weakness?

II. Labor and money: double space-time in capitalism and communism

The immateriality of the future sketched above may seem incommensurable with the Marxian critique of capitalist social relations, a critique indispensable to a consideration of the capitalist future. For Marx, space-time was mediated by labor. "Labor-time", a concept central to his life's work (Postone, 1993), is usually mobilized as part of the struggle over the length of working day. And clearly, labor-time assumes a labor-space—this is especially clear in the paradigmatic cases of workers' efforts to control the workday, which assume a particular disciplinary and surveillance function for labor-space. Yet this is not the only space-time that matters to the Marxian critique of capital. The other spatio-temporality in Marx's work is an Hegelian world and world-time that plots the evolution of human communities along an unfolding mode-of-production time. (Marx does not, despite the wealth of mischaracterizations over the last 150 years, posit a telos nearly so fixed as Hegel's Absolute Spirit, nor is capital some Marxian code for Spirit. Indeed, Marx's telos is merely the "always other than the current state of things" of social reproduction; not a goal, but the negativity of history. Marx's telos is the future per se; i.e. what is most radical about his account of history is that he believes the future matters, that it will be different, that it will always matter.)

Most readings of Marx identify the importance of these two space-times of struggle in his work, especially in the Grundrisse and Capital. We know the hours and years spent at the point of production matter, and we know the struggle over the larger historical terrain matters too. So it seems strange that we rarely if ever think about them as theoretically differentiated; perhaps this is a product of the tendency to understand world-time as "history" in the banal sense, and as such to mistake it for a long-run accounting of "clock-time" in "labor-space". World-time and clock-time are surely intimately related, but they are not micro- and macro- manifestations of the same dynamics. In fact, their relation, which has meaning only because they are different, informs an absolutely crucial phase in Marxian analysis—the elaboration of the meaning of communism.

The basis for these claims is the centrality of space and time to Marxian critique—i.e. to theory and to practice. At first glance, this may not seem to distinguish him from a broad range of economic theorists who do not share his politics. Indeed, his quip that "[e]conomy of time, to this all economy ultimately reduces itself" would seem to reverberate rightward all the way to Gary Becker. But for Becker time is unproblematic (not to mention untheorized). The most one can glean from him and his neoclassical comrades is that time is some smooth choice-space in which individuals and households maximize utility subject to preferences and budget constraints (1976: 89-114). This is merely a simplistic invocation of Benjamin Franklin's "time is money".

It is true that in Marx's analysis of capitalism, time is also money (abstract labour-time is exchange value (Marx 1970: 43)). But there is a crucial difference. The time-money identity is not the natural law that Becker adopts and universalizes. On the contrary, it holds specifically in capitalist social relations: Labour time as the measure of value posits wealth itself as founded on poverty, and disposable time as existing in and because of the antithesis to surplus labour time; or, the posing of an individual's entire time as labour time, and his degradation therefore to mere worker, subsumption under labour (Marx, 1973: 708; emphasis in original).

Consequently, when Marx said Franklin's aphorism is "the basic law of modern political economy" (1970: 55), he was definitively not affirming it as transhistorical axiom: we must not forget that "modern political economy" was the object of his critique (as in the subtitie of Capital, volume I). In fact, Marx writes "economy of time—to this all economy ultimately reduces itself" to characterize the political economy of communism. This is not long-hand for "time is money", but a critical rejection of its facile spatio-temporal accounting. Time is not reducible to the neutral category of money; economy (remember: not "economics" or "the economy") reduces itself to time. This inverts the mantra of capitalist vulgar time. Franklin sets time upon its head, and Marx turns it on its feet. So, when Derrida (2002: 322) asks "could it not be said that money is time?" he is not deconstructing the Marxian analytic, he is following the trail it blazed. Marx worked the ground this thinking opened, touching upon the unstable boundaries between labor, space, time and money.

The double space-time of capital

In both his critique of capital and in his meditation on communism, Marx's temporal analysis works in
two registers. In capital times, there is on the one hand labor-time and "free time", the contested hours and minutes in which the struggle over surplus value takes place in capitalism. On the other hand is the "world-historical" temporality in which capitalism is one mode of production among several. Not even labor-time can be contained—abstractly—in mere clock-time (cf. Postone, 1993). It is neither unitary nor linear. Rather, "posited as general" by money-as-time (exchange value), it is multiple, manipulable: "the working day, regarded spatially—time itself regarded as space—is many working days alongside one another" (Marx, 1973: 171, 399). Capital "can leap over the natural limit formed by one individual's living, working day... only by posting another working day alongside the first at the same time" (Marx, 1973: 400; emphasis in original).

Neither is world-historical time ticking abstractly away in some universally busy industrial space. To argue otherwise is to hold to an historical determinism that is disavowed by the Manifesto and by Marx's mature political economy; it is also, and most importantly, politically silly. Yet the frequency with which Marx is still accused of anticipating the "realization" of history (and presumably geography) as automatic or mechanical outcomes of capitalism's contradictions highlights the need to emphasize this point. Unless history determines the future fatallyistically, as the misreaders of Marx claim he said, then any critical historicism must confront the problem of time and space as subjects of history. In the spatio-temporality of capitalism as mode of production, workers are agents of radical change, not passengers on some mystically-powered revolution train that left Prehistoric Station centuries ago. Moreover, while they live their history in the sediment of the past, they clearly inherit their political role from the future—and (in a phrase I think Marx would have loved) "inheritance is never a given, it is always a task" (Derrida, 1994: 54). The proletariat may turn out to be "the class that holds the future in its hands" (Marx and Engels, 1967: 91) but for precisely this reason, it is not a spectator in time: it must make history, it must act (Lukács, 1971: 208). Indeed, it must turn fearlessly and openly toward the future and the world. As Marx wrote a couple of years earlier:

For even if there is no doubt about the 'whence,' all the more confusion reigns about the 'whither.'

Apart from the general anarchy that has erupted among the reformers, each is compelled to confess to himself that he has no clear conception of what the future should be. That, however, is just the advantage of the new trend: that we do not attempt dogmatically to prefigure the future, but want to find the new world only through criticism of the old (Marx, 1978: 13).

The Manifesto's chief purpose is to call this posture into being: "The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Working Men of all Countries, Unite!" (1967: 120-1).

The double space-time of communism

For Marx, space-time in communism operates differently than under capitalism. This is not surprising, but it is nonetheless worth noting, since the common assumption, even among communists at the height of their revolutionary potential, is that space-time is for all intents and purposes invariant. That may be true at some base "physical" level, but in his analysis of the everyday dialectic of labour power and space-time in capitalism, and its sublation in the classless society, Marx suggests the means through which working class struggle, if successful, might displace the centrality of labor-as-value and overthrow the regime of money. Here, in the process of radical social change, value becomes space-time (cf. Jameson, 1991: 268), and the future is differentiated, possible, unstemmed from the monetary here-now. The "materialist predication of the subject as labor-power" is less rendered indeterminate (Spivak, 1985: 80) as explicitly reconceived as the double space-time of the individual's and society's creative mutual constitution:

Real economy—saving—consists of labour time... . The saving of labour time [is] equal to an increase of free time, i.e. time for the full development of the individual, which in turn reacts back upon the productive power of labour as itself the greatest productive power. From the standpoint of the direct production process it can be regarded as the production of fixed capital, this fixed capital being man himself... . Free time—which is both idle time and time for higher activity—has naturally transformed its possessor into a different subject, and he then enters into the direct production process as this different subject. This process is then both discipline, as regards the human being in the process of becoming; and, at the same time, practice, experimental science, materially creative and objectifying science, as regards the human being who has become, in whose head exists the accumulated knowledge of society (Marx, 1973: 711-2).

In communist times, human freedom accumulates to lay the ground for a purposefully open world of revolutionary potential.

Marx's construction of a double space-time, with its distinctly theological tenor and redemptive theme, resonates with many models of radical social change before his era and since. That form of spatio-temporal politics, which enables us to think about money in a manner that can help flesh out a critique of work in capitalism, is not exclusively Marxian. The sounding board for any discussion of work, redemption and capi-
talism is of course Max Weber's *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1958). There, Weber outlines his famous thesis that the spirit of capitalism, "in the sense of a definite standard of life claiming ethical sanction" (Weber, 1958: 58), is the historical sediment of a European Calvinism that emphasized a "worldly asceticism" in pursuit of individual salvation. Accumulation was the dance to Christ's song. For Weber, then, work under capitalism was also disciplined by a double time: the clock-time of working life, and the eternal time of judgment beyond this world and this life. Work is redemptive, a purgatorial economy regulating the passage from original sin to Heaven, and articulating (in both senses) one's eternal place (cf. Le Goff, 1984; 1990).

Weber's account illustrates the power of "the hand that charts the future" (Wood, 2001: 366), be it Calvin's or Milton's hated New Presbyter's (1646). Compared to Marx, however, Weber is much less interested in the structural demands of capitalism, or in the meanings for capitalism of the immense differences in social and political economic opportunity under which individual or collective subjects labor. In his analysis, the capitalist politics of the future is a politics of certainty. You live in one time and place, then you move to the next (the afterlife), where you are either saved or damned. For Marx, the "spirit of capitalism" is not captured by a dependable relation between a worker and his or her God—money or Jesus—but by an historically particular articulation of the working subject in two spatio-temporal registers simultaneously: The first of these, labor-time in labor-space, looks somewhat like Weber's. But the second is very different. It is not dependable nor other-worldly, but consists of a "natural" and inescapable "certain uncertainty".

This promise without promise constitutes the worker's life under capitalism, a future that forecloses not only "alternatives", but the very idea of the possible. Money is the promise's guarantor: it is the fluid "tautology of power" through which capitalism's temporal compression and "homogenization" are organized without being coordinated (Alliez, 1996: xvi-xviii). Monetary circulation abets and epitomizes the "static mobility" (Koselleck, 2004: 22) of substitutability and flexibility (Solow's variable proportions), which "discredits change, since henceforth the only conceivable radical change would consist in putting an end to change itself" (Jameson, 1994: 18). In this context, even the "alternatives" for working people are dependant upon capitalism and its certain uncertainty. Moreover, many of these alternatives, lotteries for example, simply recreate capitalist social relations' punish-and-reward system in microcosm, offering the slim chance to escape from under the constant discipline of boss and creditor. The revolutionary task thus calls for a complicated spatio-temporal strategy: to realize a radical politics of the future by first demonstrating the content of the capitalist future's uncertainty—by defying its certainty—and thus by opening society and its subjects to the "possible possibilities" an emancipatory politics of the future-elsewhere might allow (Heidegger, 1996: 279; cf. Massey, 2005). This is no simple trick, of course. Capitalism is so woven into our sense of security, dignity, and the ideological and material means through which we attempt to maintain them, that the very possibility that things could be otherwise is not usually perceived as hopeful, but as life-threatening. As Fredric Jameson puts it, "It seems to be easier for us today to imagine the thoroughgoing deterioration of the earth and nature than the breakdown of late capitalism; perhaps that is due to some weakness in our imaginations" (1994: xii).

**III. Elsewhere, not now**

The consequences are total: in the face of a capitalist space-time that in its irreducible instantaneity so radically constrains not merely where we have been and where we are, but where we are going, the ground of politics is disavowed. Money plays an essential role in this depoliticization. It materializes the value-form under capitalism, and provides its spatio-temporal infrastructure. Its circulatory threads and paths knit the future to the present and here to there such that they are indistinguishable. It is perhaps the single greatest reason "there is no alternative" clearly makes sense to so many. I experience the perverse hypocritical futility of it everyday, trying to maintain my "radical" politics while I spend my way through the years: stand in line for my coffee, pay my credit card bills online, drag my monetized "now" around with me like a snail with its shell.

This political paralysis is not easily attributable to insufficient "resistance", or to some failure to organize a spatio-temporal politics in the face of "the crushing ensemble of dailiness itself" (Alliez, 1996: xx). Rather, even that "resistance" and "organization" are conjunctural dynamics in the Gramscian sense (1971: 177-8) insofar as they are carried with capitalism on the current of money's circuitry—which they most certainly are, since most do not challenge the hegemony of money as the stitch of space-time—they do not constitute a challenge to a capitalist political economy institutionally contained in a subtle yet apparently inescapable monetary form.

Not that I have the answer. I offer a sketch of the space-time of money under capital only as an analysis of the formidable infrastructure of the current mode of social relations. Moreover,
I hope it is obvious that the above in no way comprises a claim that everyday oppositional politics, from the refusal to buy genetically modified foods to marching in Seattle, is pointless. Far from it. Just as Marx (e.g. 1935: 50-62; 1973: 287) always cheered and supported workers’ daily efforts to increase their wages or slow down the pace of machinery, we must recognize the absolutely essential material and symbolic achievements of these efforts. And if, in the end, "resistance" will not tip the historical scales, no matter—we must keep at it. But also with Marx (and Gramsci), I believe it is necessary to theorize and historicize the place of these politics in terms of the material and ideological conditions at hand. It seems to me difficulf, in the course of that conceptual work, to fail to see the fact to which these conjunctural politics do not "discover a point" in the curve of capitalist "development" from which to develop a more radically tangential politics:

The distinction between organic "movements" and facts and "conjunctural" or occasional ones must be applied to all types of situation; not only to those in which there is a progressive development or an acute crisis takes place, but also to those in which there is a progressive development towards prosperity, or in which the productive forces are stagnant. The dialectical nexus between the two categories of movement, and therefore of research, is hard to establish precisely. Moreover, if error is serious in historiography, it becomes still more serious in the art of politics, when it is not the reconstruction of past history but the construction of present and future history which is at stake (Gramsci, 1971: 178-9).

In recognition of these constraints, a consideration of the ontological necessity of the not-here, not-now—the absolute dependence of the present order on the production of its own immutable future—can help push the emancipatory project associated with the Marxian tradition toward a less programmatic path. Marx himself was very clear in his admonition that the realization of communism would have no definite shape: it is the "real movement that abolishes the present state of things". It stands in stark contrast to the temporality of "freedom" in work under capitalism, which Marx famously captured in the bitter irony of "free labor". Whether or not anyone is willing to call themselves a "communist" any more, there seems little substance to any commitment to freedom that does not accept and welcome the openness that freedom—by definition—enables and proclaims.

That commitment is the flip-side of critique. It is neither positivist prediction nor Utopian prophecy. It is not a communist variation on liberal "ideal speech" (Rawls, 1971; Habermas, 1990), since it acknowledges neither given political frontiers, nor fixity of community, nor the sanctity of the value-form that mediates them. Instead, it is vigilant in the face of the inevitable ubiquity of power. The future is always unnameable, even if the name is always on the tips of our tongues. Indeed, the call to "usurp the future" by writers like Paul Gilroy (2000: 337) or Aimé Césaire (1955: 57-61) is not merely a demand to overthrow a Eurocentric "common interest" with one that is more "universal". It is also a recognition that the very idea of a truly "common" interest is premised on an openness to the future, and to the rest of the world. That future, and that rest of the world, must be the ground upon which a radically open politics can take place.

Does it consequently also demand the rejection of the logic of the general equivalent (Goux 1990), of the essence of money under capitalism? Kojin Karatani, considering precisely this question, writes:

Bourgeois economists stress the superiority of the market economy by veiling the aspect of capital's movement. Yet one cannot abandon the market economy in general. It would result in a total loss. And again, there is no prospect of abolishing capital and state in social democracy that acknowledges but controls the capitalist market economy. The ultimate conclusion of Capital is the antinomy: money should exist, money should not exist (2003: 22).

Karatani is always compelling, but the first two claims (the persistence of the market and the limits of social democracy) do not produce antinomy (cf. Derrida, 2002: 325-6). Can money, burdened with its historical role as the midwife of capitalism, exist beyond capitalism? No. I know that sounds ridiculous, but I nevertheless think it true. Perhaps something like money could be reborn, later, in a form unimaginable today. But capital's money cannot outlast the end of the mode of production itself, which would necessarily mean the annihilation of the capitalist value-form. Although money is not identical to the value-form, it is its spatio-temporal infrastructure; the end of one is the end of the other.

Thinking on these terms might challenge our revolutionary imagination: a revolution against capital could perhaps be waged as a revolution against money. To suggest as much is certainly not Leninism, for good or ill. But opportunities exist. Karatani's own response to the antinomy he reads in Marx is to redeem money by taking it back from the state, via so-called Local Exchange Trading Systems (LETs), community monies whose currency and power is produced in (local) circulation (Lee, 1999). This is perhaps a medium-term solution, but it is subject to the same expansionary tendencies, and implicit assumptions, Marx laid out in his withering critique of Proudhonist labor-money schemes (1973: chapter 1). A less organized, and more fearful, political space might emerge unintentionally with the precipitous decline of personal
saving (and the growing pension gap—talk about the future!) now underway in advanced capitalist countries. As terrifying as it is in many respects, that collapse may be conceptually reconfigured. For while it is clearly wrong to cast it what economists sometimes call "dis-saving" (i.e. debt) as "resistance", there is nonetheless a sense in which—as Marx and Hegel might have said—it does prepare a ground for the (necessary?) active rejection of capitalism’s certain uncertainty. The refusal to wager on capitalism—which could take the form of a refusal to save (at least in the conventional money-in-the-bank sense)—of course entails great risks for many of us, and there are strategic ("reformist") options: the weakening of the saving-investment linkage by withholding earnings from financial institutions, for example, or demanding more secure and substantial medical care and public pensions. To the extent that these leave the capitalist politics of the future intact, however, they will be limited in their scope for radical social change in its most fundamental form, a revolution in space-time.

The difficulties such a program faces are of course enormous. The political practice involved is demanding and endless, perhaps even impossible (although we can never be certain of such impossibility—like money, it only makes sense if it can guarantee its own future—so it seems no reason not to try). Certainly we cannot eschew the speculative entirely—it is a far greater good than the currently dominant anti-Hegelianism would have us believe—it must be more than a collection of visions of a just, democratic future, more than Utopias. It must begin with a rejection of capital’s attempts to fix and dehistoricize "value" so that there really is "no alternative". Today, this means two things at the very least: first, laughter in the face of claims to omniscience (which has surely begun); and second, a relentless rejection of the necessity of suffering implicit in capital’s certain uncertainty. We must build instead on something close to an uncertain certainty, an open and expansive commitment to common human welfare in a radical democracy the shape of which we not only do not yet know, and the creation of which will never end. This is a fundamental challenge to all conservatisms, including our own. The politics of the future cannot consist in answers to questions not yet asked.

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