

PLACEBOS OF DEVELOPMENT: A CRITIQUE OF MODERN HEALTH
OBJECTIVITY IN KANT, MARX, AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

By

Scott Zeman

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Approved:

Professor John Lachs

Professor Gregg Horowitz

Professor Idit Dobbs-Weinstein

Professor Volney Gay

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INTRODUCTION

DEVELOPMENTAL HEALTH

In this, my dissertation, I want to analyze the relationship between human development and health by seeking to understand their foundations in what both critical and psychoanalytic theory have come to call objectification and, more particularly, the objectification of culture. Take, for instance, such modern health science institutions as biomedicine and cognitive-behavioral psychology. In their practice and inquiry, we find a guiding assumption about therapeutic causality, namely, that health and illness are invariably produced through (at least hypothetically) knowable, locatable, and efficient causes, through what a Kantian might call empirical causes. Supplementing and critiquing this assumption, one of my theses is that while we are right to understand health and illness to be empirically produced through ordinary (efficient) causal mechanisms (which can be biological, chemical, physical, psychological, behavioral, etc), we would do well, and be more scientific, to expand our notion of causality in its relation to health to include preconscious and unconscious influences—for human health and illness are *also* cultural phenomena “all the way down”; they are steeped both in history and, as I come to examine in detail, in the secretly lingering forces of *prehistory*.

As everyone knows, for instance, a physician’s white coat, licensure, and, with and through these objects, her or his general *authority to prescribe* medicines and other therapeutic objects can mean a lot to a needy patient — not just “in belief” but in and as what Žižek calls “the objectivity of belief” — even if the patient is unaware of this need,

its dynamics and meanings, its objects of force. Indeed, what is an “object of force” in and between development and health? My answer to this question is that such an object will be something like a “symbolic placebo.” While I do not focus upon the term “placebo” at too much length, and even rarely employ the term in Part Two, I remain interested throughout the dissertation in examining the relationship between development, objective causes, and the idea that health arises “placeboically.”

Health and development are linked then, I suggest, in and as a symbolic objectification of archaic forces. In the meetings and exchanges between patients and doctors, for instance, these meetings and exchanges reflect what is currently happening, true; but my suggestion is that there is always more going on and that this “more” can be quite helpfully understood, since we are here dealing with a relation between authority and need, as reflecting the development of (both) the patient’s (and doctor’s) earliest and steadfast relating of need to authority in his or her infancy. When prescribed amidst, through, and as doctoral authority in this or that way, for instance, bioactive medicines also embody, they take on and reflect, an unconscious relation to authority and need. I thus ask questions like this: What is the relationship between the pacifiers and teddy-bears offered by a baby’s parents, on the one hand, and the therapeutic objects offered by an ordinary physician, on the other hand? Might the latter be extensions, symbolic elaborations of the latter? Incorporating the psychoanalytic idea that the vicissitudes of “memory” and “trust” are formed archaically in relation to objects of early need in both “individual” and “sociohistorical” development, my goal is to develop a theory of development which links modern objects and cultures of need to their heritage in what I will often call primitive processes of objectification. “Primitive” may have its negative

connotations, denoting “crude,” “infantile,” or even “barbarous,” but I retain the word here to the degree that I want to emphasize that modern, more developed cultures can be just as primitive as those which are supposedly less developed. One aspect of the persistence of the primitive, in other words, concerns and pivots upon its denial, such that so-called modern cultures can be just as primitive as so-called traditional or tribal cultures to the degree that the former deny their developmental continuity with the latter. But this isn’t also to say that developed and/or modern cultures aren’t more symbolically developed than traditional or tribal cultures. The rise of the human sciences in the “West” exemplifies this, although this isn’t to say that the sciences aren’t (often secretly) layered in primitive aggression. Nuclear power has been developed as a useful energy and as a destructive weapon together, for instance.

In the end, then, I focus this analysis on the rise of modern value and valuation. My idea is that value is not just the currently scriptive but also the primitively pre-scriptive objectification of need in relation to the illusion of authority: Value arises to the degree that the wishes that belong to need and authority are constructed and externalized, but not just constructed and externalized, objectively. We could thus say that primitive need and authority are always steeped in and filtered through fantasies and illusions. But this then reflects back on our wider theme: To the degree that precognitive wishing secretly influences how the causes of health and illness appear cognitively, consciously, and empirically, it turns out that health and illness are secretly also indices of development, of progression *and regression* in tension.

To defend and expand these points, I develop and weave together the following three (main) tactics. *First*, without relying too heavily on psychoanalytic material, I

examine Kant's critical aesthetics and Marx's theory of fetishism to reveal and track what Kant calls the a priori and what Marx calls the prehistorical or primitive relation between development and objectivity; I note as well how each thinker relates these concepts to the issue of health in a more or less secret, a partially primitive, way. Indeed, the distinct materials on Kant and Marx comprise the two basic Parts of the dissertation.

Concerning the former, my idea is that in critiquing the a priori conditions of healthy, enlightenment cognition, Kant's transcendental philosophy stands out as the first scientific examination of what later comes to be called the unconscious: In examining how in judgments of taste we waver between attributing our pleasure to either subjective and/or intersubjective factors, on the one hand, or to the object "itself" and other objective factors (as if the object contained and exhibited the property of beauty like water exhibits wetness), on the other hand, Kant shows not just that but also partly how our cognitively subjective and objective judgments of taste are produced through a sly form of *developmental misattribution*: When we empirically judge some-thing to be beautiful, noting how the *object* seems to contain elements which prompt our *subjective* enjoyment, this judgment secretly reflects and distortedly embodies the persistence of the primitive development of our relating of (sensuous) need and (moral) authority (as well as our relating of causes to effects). Thus, for Kant aesthetic judgments on the whole are conditioned by what he calls the *subreption* — something like the cloaking, preserving, and distorting through *symbols* — of precognitive wishes and illusions into objectively and subjectively registered forms of cognition and enjoyment. He thus shows how cognition and enjoyment in general secretly rely upon, stem from, are conditioned by, and distortedly exhibit primitive material forces, even destructive forces which end up,

through what we might call subreptive distortion, appearing as forms of *value* and *culture* in the course of human development. In building and rebuilding each other and the earth, we transform prehistorical culture into an objective history, our record, of meaning.

Marx inherits this Kantian legacy to the degree that he examines how values (such as money and capital in particular) historically objectify, and so also mis-objectify, their archaic conditions. How and why, for instance, might we say that capitalism is more than just metaphorically cannibalistic? My answer to this question highlights the fact that what Kant calls subreption in relation to taste, as if to describe individual development, Marx calls *fetishization* in relation to the wider production and consumption of culture. With fetishization at issue, I concentrate on money and gold as key developmental objects of value's form of appearance. What we discover is this: To the degree that *traces* of money's prehistorical formation and status as a magical object in tribal cultures *persist* in modern exchange, and so to the degree that money still appears in modern society to be *the* means of fulfilling wishes (despite and in castes, ranks, and classes), money secretly reproduces, it recapitulates despite and in its development, a widely unknown and unexplored archaic heritage. Money's use in and as capital hints at things past, things necessarily partly forgotten, in the present. Similarly, money can be seen as a "placebo" to the degree that, while on the one hand it is this or that elaborated form of dirt, on the other hand it is often taken as value incarnate, as some "thing" possessing social power in-itself. But Marx is also sharp and quick to point out that, especially in modern society, money is not just positively productive (like a placebo, in my terms) but also contains deeply destructive elements (like a *nocebo*). So somewhat like Kant but more globally and historically oriented, Marx traces these appearances not just to their

hidden “historical” roots, but to their deeper “prehistorical” roots. Money can become capital, for instance, only insofar as history doesn’t just recapitulate its positive source material but also, together with this, its *repressed* negative source material, its secret prehistorical “baggage.”

In the end, then, Marx traces the valuation of capital as the modern force and form of class domination to its secret roots in “primitive accumulation,” wherein various peoples are dispossessed, expropriated of any direct means of production, whether these means were once “possessed” individually or in common. As the expropriation and hoarding of useful means of sustenance and reproduction, primitive accumulation reproduces the divisive, archaic, violent symptoms of prior forms of class; it reproduces them in modernity in and as an *object-relation* between capital and wages. Money therefore stands out as an objective mechanism moving history “forward” while yet secretly retaining certain prehistorical and “regressive” elements that continue to demand their working through. This is why Marx is constantly pointing out that while it would seem that the “economy,” since a social construction of human power relations, should be under our direct control, it is rather something the forces of which move largely “behind our backs.”

Second, to the degree that Kant and Marx both articulate how the modern cognition of value (in general) secretly hinges on, branches from, and figuratively displays primitively communal and destructive material as objective forms of culture, I occasionally employ and analyze some psychoanalytic cultural theory. For the latter, I also want to show, derives from the former; that is, psychoanalysis derives from the articulation of the secret (a priori) conditions of experience in Kant, which is rearticulated

as the prehistorical (primitively accumulative) conditions of history in Marx. The conceptualization of the “unconscious” in the more Freudian sense thus becomes possible. Indeed, to the degree that this is also a theory of culture, Freud’s examination of the *fort/da* games played by children and D.W. Winnicott’s theory of transitional objectivity become key here. Indeed, to the degree that I am less concerned with the term “sublimation” or “transitional objectivity” and more concerned with the general problem of understanding the relation between primitivity, violence, their persistence, and the development of human culture which takes place in and despite violence and its persistence, I also turn to Tzvetan Todorov’s impressive cultural and historical analyses in *Conquest of America*. Through analyses of Freud’s, Winnicott’s, Žižek’s, and Todorov’s ideas concerning culture, we can more deeply understand the idea of developmental health which Kant and Marx introduce.

Human culture, I want to suggest, develops out of (what we might generally call) “nature,” although not merely naturally of course, in, say, two general steps. In the first step, before and as culture appears, before and as it is objectified, a break or split is suffered within what we must later presuppose and take merely as “nature.” The latter splits (and is split off from itself) into “nature” on the one hand and what we might call “proto-humanity” on the other. This proto-humanity, then, is natural and animal to some degree, but it’s now, given the split, also partially meta-natural, something even contra-natural; in any case, as humans, we develop and exhibit what many philosophers have called a “second nature,” which brings me to the second step. Culture arises and develops, I suggest, as the symbolic mediation of our splitting off from (what, again, can and must then be presupposed as if it was “sheer”) nature. Or we could say that culture

appears in and as the “symptom” of this splitting, this violence, this primitive destruction, which is only then felt and understood later, by deferred action and by means of the meaning the symbol is and contains, as *loss*. Indeed, the difference between an object and a symptom pivots on how this loss is exhibited.

So, while elephants, gorillas, and other mammals may shed tears in response to pain, and while various animals use what we now call simple tools, and while a number of animal species build dwellings to live in, and while almost all animals can be said to communicate with various interests in mind in more or less simple ways, especially within their species, and while human birth births babies with cultural potential to the degree that this process is a dividing-off from mothers, I want to suggest that we build culture, the distinctly human world, to the degree that we need to make some sense of, and yet also distance ourselves from the immediacy of, the death and/or loss of our most needed loved-ones and most “natural” needs. As far as I can tell, non-human animals don’t build arts and religions even if this or that animal has become a sacrificial or totemic object for our forgetful remembrances, in religious and magical rituals, of animal-things “past.” In this respect culture is both a partial dividing-off from *and* an ability to make developmental use of this separation (in developmental forms of appearance) from the rest of the animal kingdom. Children love their stuffed animals in and as they distance themselves from the oral voracity and fierceness which many of these animals present. *The voracity goes elsewhere—into (or “in and as,” as I will often say) the objects and antagonisms of culture and value.* Following upon our heritage in cannibalism, there is already, behind and within each of our particular losses of loved-ones, the more general, persistent, culturally-structuring loss of our more or less

immediate immersion in, well, for lack of a better word, nature. Here, then, I end up suggesting that culture in the widest sense of the term is the symbolic work and play of the developmental process of *mourning* — even if this mourning is culturally disguised as this or that specific form of “high” or “low” culture — of the process of “coping” with our being persistently and destructively divorced from what we (then) take to be “pure” nature.

Third, and as a framework to guide future research, I ask larger questions about the relation between individual and historical development. Does individual development (ontogeny) recapitulate historical development (phylogeny), and vice versa? I suggest that they do—that culture is located and objectified between individual development in one generation (since the enculturation of an individual is a pedagogical process facilitated through symbolizations taking place between two or more generations) and historical development across and through many (nonetheless punctuated and individuated) generations. But I don’t want to suggest that ontogeny and phylogeny “parallel” each other. More strongly, I want to say that cultural objectification between generations is the very means (not just of signifying development) but also of making development and culture transmissible, indeed, of making and moving development forward (say “progress”) and backward (“regress”) at once in an activity of forgetting and remembrance. Indeed, we often forget this — in the abstractions of alphabetic script, for instance — but as humans we don’t just write history using the conceptual language of alphabetic narrative. Before we are capable of this, we “read” the world through objects, indeed, through objects which first of all “present” our parents and family even as they also “represent” them and their disappearance, their image and non-image, for instance.

Indeed, we don't just "read" the world in this way but make it, "write" it in this way. We create the world by carving and reworking objects out of mother earth. All objectivity is a detachment (in connection), or say, an externalization. A typical infantile "pacifier" is in the shape of a nipple. Thus, babies first image and incorporate body-parts, which means that these are on the way to being personified through loss, just as our earliest relations with others cannot develop outside such pacifying objective mediations. History and development, then, aren't simply "represented" but move through, are "presented" in, objectifications which are never merely external to human relations.

As an extension of infantile desire and its frustrations, and as the individual reanimation of the springing of logos from mythos, adult conceptual thinking is a developmental achievement. Abstract, cognitive symbolizations such as alphabetic writing, for instance, are individual elaborations of part-objects and pacifiers. I note and examine in this regard the uncannily intimate relationship between the development of alphabets, the development of money, and the transformation of culture from magical to scientific thinking and praxes. Is it merely a coincidence that when a child moves from picture-book "reading" to reading using alphabets and abstract, general concepts, for instance, this movement largely coincides with his or her ability to understand the representational use of money and prices?¹ History, then, comes in stages, whether it is of an individual, a culture, or set of cultures. First, as the unbroken seed of history, there is potential in the undifferentiated unity of what we might, for lack of a better word, call "nature." I tend to, but don't feel I have to, place plants and animals here. With the violent splitting of this seed, however, human prehistory arises as the realm of somatization and war. The original proto-human tribe becomes a number of tribes. But

¹ See the Marxian epigram to this dissertation's Part Two, below.

there is very little conceptual “recording” of these events, although there is plenty of blood and dirt. Eventually, magic arises as a form of wish-fulfillment. Magic links and divides us by giving human power to things. These things are the first symbols. And eventually symbolization comes to reflect back on itself when, after losing track of each other, these tribes meet, or rather meet again, only eventually to recognize that the magic of the world is both illusory and as good as real. This, then, entails a general principle of history: History is communicated (like a beneficent disease) between generations through symbols of value and significance that join and distance these generations in their violent splits and intimate confluences, in their archaic losses and reconnections, and through the (dis)illusions arising out of these, in and as the historical dialectic which we call *development*.

PART ONE

THE CULTURE OF HEALTH: KANT'S ARCHAEOLOGY OF
OBJECTIVITY

CHAPTER I

HYPOCHONDRIACAL DISPOSITIONS

For fear of obstructing the circulation of the blood ... [Kant] never would wear garters; yet, as he found it difficult to keep up his stockings without them, he had invented for himself a most elaborate substitute.... In a little pocket, somewhat smaller than a watch pocket, but occupying pretty nearly the same situation as a watch pocket on each thigh, there was placed a small box, something like a watch case, but smaller. Into this box was introduced a watch spring in a wheel, round about which wheel was wound an elastic cord, for regulating the force of which there was a separate contrivance. To the two ends of this cord were attached hooks, which hooks were carried through a small aperture in the pockets, and so, passing down the inner and outer side of the thigh, caught hold of two loops which were fixed on the off side and the near side of each stocking. As might be expected, so complex an apparatus was liable, like the Ptolemaic system of the heavens, to occasional derangements.

—Thomas De Quincy,
The Last Days of Immanuel Kant

I anticipate that when my stomach comes to do its duty, my fingers will do so as well.

—Kant, 1771

Although many theorists in our academic universe know of Kant's persistent and anxious concern for his health, and although Kant biographers occasionally lap voyeuristically at the pool of quirky habits which made up his health regimen, only a few critics have ever investigated, let alone sought to develop, Kant's philosophy of health.²

² See Shell, especially the chapter on "Kant's Hypochondria."

It is especially the formalists in and among us who have tended to see Kant's theoretical objectivity as existing outside this supposedly Ptolemaic and deranged aspect of his subjectivity. After all, what could a complex system of strings and pulleys meant to hold up Kant's socks, for instance, have to do with pure reason's deduction of synthetic a priori judgments, or of duty's freedom from the sensuous inclinations of the stomach?

For the few who have sought answers to these and similar questions, there is a basic and, again, a somewhat biographically famous response. Supposedly Kant's philosophical formalism so subsumed his personal heteronomies that the latter eventually became mind-numbingly predictable and boring—except or perhaps precisely insofar as he revolutionized philosophy. The irony runs deep here. Indeed, what especially stands out for the typical inquirer is the famous joke which places Kant himself at the center of a Ptolemaic worldview. So rigidly punctual was his daily afternoon walk, the jibe goes, that his fellow citizens set their watches not so much by heeding the path of the arms of the town clock around its face as by tracking *Kant's* orbit around his miniature universe, his quiet tree-lined neighborhood. As Heine puts it:

The history of Kant's life is difficult to describe, for he neither had a life nor a history. He lived a mechanically ordered, almost abstract, bachelor life in a quiet out-of-the-way lane in Königsberg.... I do not believe that the great clock of the cathedral there completed its task with less passion and less regularity than its fellow citizen Immanuel Kant. Rising in the morning, drinking coffee, writing, giving lectures, eating, taking a walk, everything had its set time, and the neighbors knew precisely that the time was half past three o'clock when Kant stepped outside his door in his grey, tight-fitting coat, Spanish reed in hand, and walked toward the small linden avenue.... Strange contrast between the outer life of this man and his destructive, world-crushing thoughts! To be sure, had the citizens of Königsberg had the least presentiment of the full significance of his ideas, they would have felt a far more awful dread in the presence of this man than at the sight of an executioner, who can but kill the body.³

³ See Heine, 108-9. Arsenij Gulyga (p. xi) similarly quips that Kant "has no biography other than the history of his thought."

But as his biographers tell us, Kant's regimen and health idiosyncrasies included much more than his daily "constitutional" (as he called his walk). For instance, we hear that he was so averse to perspiring that he would stop in the middle of whatever he was doing to step into a cool shadow, hold steady, refresh, and prevent himself from sweating. Only then would he again take up the task at hand. Or, as he grew old he developed a number of rituals which were performed as if to stave off death: He was supposedly afraid of mentioning the recently dead and he even kept in touch with Konigsberg's police chief to monitor the area's mortality rates and speculate upon his own life-expectancy. He disliked receiving gifts and would immediately "re-gift" a present, to use our contemporary term, if possible. In his last year he needed and performed the same elaborate bedtime ritual night after night, evenly and exactly placing his watch between the barometer and thermometer he kept near his bedside—all three items put there as metrics for the surveillance of the time, the weather, and, in the end, his health. Similarly, his daily dinner conversation with friends and guests just had to include talk about the weather. According to his official biographer and intimate Jachmann, Kant spoke of nothing with greater interest than health, diet, hygiene, and prolonging life: "Perhaps no man who ever lived paid a more exact attention to his body and everything that affected it."⁴

This exacting self-attention to his body, however, made for some paradoxically somatic, if not contradictory, mental self-assessments. While admitting to Marcus Herz, a physician and philosophical friend, that he was "never actually sick" (10:231), for example, and while boasting when he was quite old that "there was never anyone so

⁴ See Stuckenberg, 173, 435-45, Scharfstein, 218-21, and Shell for all of these anecdotes and more.

healthy as myself,” Kant was nonetheless invariably touched if not always simply nagged by symptoms which, if not illnesses or diseases “in themselves,” betrayed a certain and continuous susceptibility to illness and disease. He had “sensitive nerves,” he told his intimates many times. It is guessed in this regard that although Kant commonly and intensely read medical texts and occasionally published critiques of these or included discussions of them (among other places) in his anthropological works, he may have visited the doctor — above and beyond his friend Herz — but once his entire adult life. This is the case, moreover, even though it’s clear from his letters that he suffered deeply from “winds” and constipation, especially during the so-called (and in this regard ironically named) “silent decade” of 1770-1781. Kant was sick in various obscure ways, in other words, during the period in which he invariably imagined that he would finish and publish his work in progress (what became the *Critique of Pure Reason*) in but a few more months—again and again, year upon year, imagining, wishing, and workingly enacting this same thing.⁵

It is only in 1798, however, a year often regarded as just past the beginning of his decline toward senility and death, that Kant publicly admits of his own health troubles. In his “On the Power of the Mind to Master its Morbid Feelings by Sheer Resolution,” he tells us that this essay’s thesis conforms directly to its title, or a version of it:

Morally practical philosophy... provides a panacea which, though it is certainly not the complete answer to every [health] problem, must still be an ingredient in every prescription. This panacea, however, is only a regimen to be adopted.... But an art of this sort presupposes, as its necessary condition, an ability that only philosophy, or the spirit of philosophy, can give. The supreme task of the art of formulating a regimen, which refers to this spirit, is contained in the following thesis:

⁵ The second epigraph above indicates that this event was underway as early as 1771. See “Letter to Herz,” June 7, 1771, (10:124).

On the Power of the Human Mind
to Master its Morbid Feelings Merely by a Firm Resolution

My examples confirming the possibility of this proposition cannot be drawn from other people's experiences, but, in the first instance, only from what I have experienced in myself; for they come from introspection.... To want to entertain others with the inner history of the play of my thoughts, which has subjective importance (for me) but no objective importance (valid for everyone), would be presumptuous, and I could justly be blamed for it. But if this sort of introspection and what I found by it is something rather uncommon, which it is worthwhile for everyone to try though it must be pointed out to them, the nuisance of telling others about my private feelings can at least be excused. (7:98=313-14)⁶

The goal of this chapter is to develop a Kantian philosophy of health by extending, analyzing, and making use of the puzzle which Kant introduces here. What is this puzzle? Note on the one hand that in his thesis Kant names the power of resolution of the human mind, "an ability that only philosophy, or the spirit of philosophy, can give," as a "moral" and "objective" ingredient in all health, an ingredient transcendently valid, in other words, for everyone without exception. This health thesis corresponds generally, if certainly imperfectly, to the thesis of the second *Critique*, then, since in both cases the suggestion is that *we ought to ascend to a vigorous kind of objectivity*: Much as the moral person ought not exclude herself, despite her inclination for self-exclusion, from the maxims, rules, and obligations reason suggests everyone as self and other-respecting persons ought to live by, so similarly ought the ill person, in and despite the morbidities of her illness, not exclude herself from reason's obligation to live salubriously. And yet on the other hand Kant immediately tells us that he has come to recognize this objective component of health through a "subjective," indeed, a "private," introspection concerning his feelings, his "inclinations" (to use his terminology). The

⁶ Kant (1996), 311-327. This essay can be found in volume 7 of the *Akademie* edition (1902), *Kants Gesammelte Schriften*, Berlin: Königlich Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften. I will call the essay the "Sheer Resolution" essay for short.

puzzle this chapter will concern itself with, then, is just the puzzle that Kant himself subtly brings up here when he worries if he can construct an objective theory of health out of what “in the first instance” is apparently a subjective and sensuous matter. Indeed, this puzzle is the same as the “conflict” which Kant mentions in the title of the section of his *Conflict of the Faculties* — “The Conflict of the Philosophy Faculty with the Faculty of Medicine” — under which this “Sheer Resolution” essay falls: The conflict/puzzle concerns the status of health objectivity given the fancies and heteronomies of subjective experience. What this objectivity is it will here be our job to discover, if possible.

Kant immediately deepens this puzzle, however, when he on the one hand admits to a lifelong effort to determine the *causes* of his personal health vicissitudes — since locating the “causes” of health and illness would obviously be crucial for any regimented development of health — but on the other hand confesses to having a “disposition” toward illness the very heart of which consists, in an almost philosophical fashion, in a putative inability to distinguish subjective from objective causes of health. Now, *this* is a problem! Indeed, we can imagine Kant secretly regulating the pulleys in his pockets, adjusting his socks, as he sat to confess the origins of his mature health habits in this, his non-hypochondriacal hypochondria:

The exact opposite of the mind’s power to master its pathological feelings is *hypochondria*, the weakness of abandoning oneself despondently to general morbid feelings that have no definite object (and so making no attempt to master them by reason). Since this sort of melancholia, *hypochondria vaga* [Kant’s footnote here: as distinguished from *localized* hypochondria, *hypochondria intestinalis*], has no definite seat in the body and is a creature of the imagination, it could also be called *fictitious* disease, in which the patient finds in himself symptoms of every disease he reads about in books. The opposite of the mind’s self-mastery, in other words, is fainthearted brooding about the ills that could befall one, and that one would not be able to withstand should they come. It is a kind of insanity; for though some sort of unhealthy condition (such as flatulence or constipation) may be the source of it, this

state is not felt immediately, as it effects the senses, but is misrepresented [*vorgespielt*] as impending illness by inventive imagination. And then the self-tormenter (*heautontimorumenos*), instead of pulling himself together, summons the doctor's help. But this does no good, since only he himself, by disciplining the play of his thoughts, can put an end to these harassing notions that arise involuntary— notions, indeed, of diseases that could not be prevented if they were really forthcoming. As long as a man is afflicted with this sickness we cannot expect him to master his morbid feelings by sheer resolution; for if he could do this, he would not be hypochondriacal. A reasonable human being does not permit himself any such hypochondria; if uneasiness comes over him and threatens to develop into melancholia — that is, self-devised illness — he asks himself whether his anxiety has an object. If he finds nothing that could furnish a valid reason for his anxiety, or if he sees that, were there really such a reason, nothing could be done to prevent its effect, he goes on, despite this claim of his inner feeling, to his agenda for the day; in other words, he leaves this oppression (which is then merely local) in its proper place (as if it had nothing to do with him), and turns his attention to the business at hand.

I myself have a natural disposition to hypochondria because of my flat and narrow chest, which leaves little room for the movement of the heart and lungs; and in my earlier years this disposition made me almost weary of life. But by reflecting that if the cause of this oppression of the heart [*Herzbequemung*] was purely mechanical [and] nothing could be done about it, I soon came to pay no attention to it. The result was that, while I felt the oppression in my chest, a calm and cheerful state prevailed in my mind, which did not fail to communicate itself to society, not by intermittent whims (as is usual with hypochondriacs), but purposely and naturally. And since our *joie de vivre* depends more on what we freely *do* with life than on what we *enjoy* as a gift from it, mental work can set another kind of heightened vital feeling against the limitations that affect the body alone. The oppression has remained with me, for its cause lies in my physical constitution. But I have mastered its influence on my thoughts and actions by diverting my attention from this feeling as if it had nothing to do with me. (7:103-04=318-19)

If we reflect upon the almost subjectivist world-constructing strategy of Kant's Copernican revolution, we have to wonder how deeply this confession speaks of another kind of philosophical revolution, one concerning the relation between philosophy and health. For although Kant suggests quite common sensibly, for instance, that discovering an illness's objective cause is the first step towards overcoming that illness, nonetheless, since he's here writing about *hypochondria*, he also puts into question the very possibility of discovering what common sense generally — and even what Kant the philosopher, late in the passage — would consider to constitute an objective cause of illness or health. It's

precisely the form of Kant's descriptions, however, which, if noticed in relation to their specified and local content, allows us to see that hypochondria is an illness which *divides and conflates* subjectivity and objectivity and which even *slyly slips* between this very division and conflation. If looked at carefully, in other words, Kant's "objective" descriptions in the first paragraph begin to admit of (and certainly fall into tension with) his proposed "subjective" disposition to hypochondria in the second paragraph, and vice versa.

In the first paragraph alone, however, a hypochondriacally disposed textuality begins to present itself. As the passage opens, Kant offers a basic and guiding distinction between hypochondria vaga, as the subjectively-devised form of hypochondria which "has no definite seat in the body," and localized hypochondrias, the objective causes of which are apparently always somatic. After offering this clear distinction, however, and indeed, right on top of it, he more or less *identifies* h. vaga and localized hypochondria. By the end of the paragraph we witness "mind" slipping into textual semblance with "body" and "cause" slipping textually into semblance with "symptom" (or "effect") to the point where the two variables within each of these binaries begin to conflate:

A reasonable human being does not permit himself any such hypochondria; if uneasiness comes over him and threatens to develop into melancholia — that is, self-devised illness — he asks himself whether his anxiety has an *object*. If he finds nothing that could furnish a valid reason for his anxiety, or if he sees that, were there really such a reason, nothing could be done to prevent its effect, he goes on, despite this claim of his inner feeling, to his agenda for the day; in other words, he leaves this oppression (which is then merely local) in its proper place (as if it had nothing to do with him), and turns his attention to the business at hand. [my emphasis]

One of Kant's considerations in this passage, or at least in the first half of it, is what "a reasonable human being" will do if, to the question concerning *whether his*

anxiety has an object, he “finds nothing that could furnish a valid reason for his anxiety.” Although this is putatively one of the considerations early on, however, we find by the end of the passage — rightly or wrongly but certainly curiously — that there has been a shift away from this problem at least *as* a problem. In other words, the problem is *denied*, in the psychoanalytic sense: Though Kant seems ready early on to consider both the possibility and the problem of a subjectively-devised hypochondria *vaga*, a melancholia, in the reasonable person — thus suggesting that enlightenment reason might self-contain correlative irrational elements, as it were — by the end of the passage this “*vaga*” consideration has *already*, and thus slyly, been determined. The “reasonable” hypochondriac’s lived difficulty of *not* being able as yet to find an object “that could furnish a valid reason for his anxiety” has been pleasantly if paradoxically resolved in and as a *resolutely ignorable localized* hypochondria: This apparently self-sickening but also apparently reasonable person suddenly needs, I emphasize, only to “leave this oppression (which is *then* merely local) in its proper place (as if it had nothing to do with him).” For Kant, in other words, the melancholia to be “reasonably” explored in terms of its *non-objective* and/or *non-objectifying* anxiety has *already* and *slyly* been objectified and, to this degree, “cured” of anxiety. So what was apparently a subjective anxiety beyond self-control is now suddenly only objectively caused and so, suddenly, subjectively insignificant, as if the body weren’t even a part of the self!

The second instance of this sly and mutual slippage between mind and body and cause and symptom — which again conflates and divides the two variables in each of these binaries, marking a simultaneous slippage between subjectivity and objectivity — mirrors this first instance. When Kant confesses to having faced a kind of despair earlier

in his life, it seems likely that this despair was of a “self-caused,” and thus melancholic, form. But since his judgment that his constricted heart was the objective cause of his disposition seems (as a judgment) to be that which enabled him to resolutely ignore this acute despair, a despair making him “almost weary of life,” and thus since it seems unlikely that he would or even could have fallen into this inimical weariness if at that *earlier* point he had judged or discovered his anxiety to be caused by a somatic constriction of this sort, it remains possible and even likely that Kant himself has here, to borrow his word, “misrepresented” (*vorgespielt*) a *vaga* hypochondriacal difficulty, the experience of which *lacks an object*, as an *objectively localized* hypochondriacal solution (*h. intestinalis, h. pectoris*, or those in sequence, as we shall eventually see). For to objectify an objectless anxiety — especially an anxiety anxious about its *own* objectlessness — is here to provide sickness an objective (and to this degree somewhat therapeutic) cause, which means that Kant may have *somatized* this “illness,” in and despite himself, as a “therapy.” He may have wishfully created his sense of an “objective” heart constriction as if to secretly “remedy” what is then forgotten to have been a “subjective” illness beyond subjective control. So what neither the self-conscious mind nor the body can salubriously manage, here some *other* part of the mind and body, as if together, secretly “manage.”

Let’s interpret a bit more, to clarify: Textually speaking, what Kant casts *as if objectively* in the first paragraph as a slippage among hypochondriacs in general between mind and body and between cause and symptom, he here slyly casts, and even partially performs, as a *subjective* slippage, something personal. Here then is the key: In both cases, somatically localized hypochondriacal causes seem *already* to contain or to be a

“misrepresented” vago hypochondriacal form just as the mental symptoms of h. vago seem already to contain or to be the somatic causes of localized hypochondria. So much, then, for unambiguous philosophical distinctions. What we have instead is a divisive conflation of mind and body, cause and effect, and, most generally, subject and object. Mind and body are seemingly separated as if they are unambiguously distinct and even distant, and yet, the more they are explored in terms of Kant’s self-relation to hypochondria, the more we, if perhaps not Kant, recognize that this attempted separation also deeply (con)fuses them.

This being the case, it is unclear in the end whether Kant is confessing in the “Sheer Resolution” essay to suffering or to having suffered — or even to never having suffered! — from either hypochondria vago or from localized hypochondria, or even whether, as a sufferer of both of these hypochondriacal kinds (perhaps at once, perhaps in “reasonable” transition), he is somehow *performing* the mind-body and cause-symptom “conflicts” this disposition, objectively speaking from the viewpoint of philosophy, apparently subjectively devolves. The borders within and between each of these dualisms are thrown into question, in other words, despite *and in* the attempted clarification and confession. Indeed, since the confessional phrase “disposition to hypochondria” sounds as much like an *unactualized* tendency to self-devised illness as an actualized *tendency* to self-devised illness, we can be sure neither about the lived status of Kant’s possible hypochondria nor — given the common and supposedly objective portrayal of this illness as self-fulfilling sickness and disease — about his subjective *and* objective descriptions of it. For, again, it is precisely subjectivity and objectivity which “hypochondria” conflates in terms of health and illness.

Despite this mess or apparent mess, however, the mess *does* have a structure, namely, as a *disavowal* of a divisive conflating — a mirroring or slippage, as it were, between the identity and splitting — of mind and body, cause and symptom, subject and object.⁷ Indeed, what this mirroring *does* show us — as critical philosophers, despite and in the disavowal — is that *nearer the root* of vaga hypochondria, of melancholia, there is yet another, deeper slippage, another ambivalence of splitting and identity, this time however between *wishful thinking and actuality*.⁸ When Kant *writes* of hypochondria that it is “a kind of insanity” he has this last slippage somewhere “in mind.”⁹ The anxiety which Kant mentions is key here, then, and key precisely in relation to the “objects” of sickness, therapy, and health (all of which interpenetrate and overlap like Greek *pharmaka*, as poison and cure).¹⁰ In short: The hypochondriac has a basic anxiety that he’s falsely making up or at least misrepresenting his illness-, remedial-, and health-objects in a series of *self-fulfilling prophecies*, as this or that self-produced objectification. He feels ill or at least feels on the verge of being ill but is not quite sure if he’s ill or, rather, illness-disposed. He worries about impending and felt illnesses but for all of his worry he can find no “definite” reason for this. The problem thus emerges as one steeped and rooted, or at least routed, in anxiety and in anxious *thinking*.

Although his anxiety may at times feel somatic or somatically caused, for instance, he can’t be sure whether it *is* somatic, somatically-based, *or not*. Maybe his various

⁷ I realize that this is a complicated way of putting this, but in my judgment it is accurate enough. The paradox here, moreover, is not accidental but unnaturally “natural” to the object of melancholia for which we are trying to account.

⁸ In Part Two of this dissertation, we will explore in Marx this same ambivalence between splitting and identity as another pre-Freudian precursor to the psychoanalytic idea that development and health hinge together on the necessity of primitive disavowal. What again might seem to some here as Kant’s “accidental” emphasis on wishing and wishful-thinking is not accidental in this regard.

⁹ In Part Two, we will also further explore the historicizing relation between the materiality and somatics of primitive writing and the use of inscriptive symbols as objects of developmental health.

¹⁰ See for example Derrida (1978) and Girard.

symptoms, he worries, are “fictitious” and therefore “insanely” made-up.¹¹ Since “the hypochondriac” worries about this state of affairs persistently, almost constantly, moreover, the very content of his anxiety ends up being largely, if not always precisely, about this anxiety’s objectivity. Is this reasonable? Of course not, since anxious worrying to the point of illness is never reasonable, and yet, to the degree that the anxiety is felt and worried about, it is precisely reasonable to wonder whence it comes and how to void or avoid it. The problem, however, is that with *h. vaga* these two aspects of anxiety are conflated. Indeed, it is in this sense — concerning the deep critical concern over and between thinking and objectivity — that hypochondria and philosophy, no doubt, may not always be in conflict or identity.¹²

The hypochondriac, then, does not simply ask “himself whether his anxiety has an object.” Rather, since the anxiety seems to have no cause behind it — which is reason enough, he thinks, for his anxiety! — he doesn’t simply ask or wonder about but *wants* an objective cause of it. He *desires* such a cause, an objective cause, and not just of it, then, but *for* it as well. Thus, when Kant shows us (in more ways than one) that the reasonable person who is faced with not being able to find a “definite” objective cause of his anxiety suddenly and somehow can and does, since he’s reasonable, leave this anxiety in a “proper,” “local” place, he shows us exactly what the hypochondriac most desires in an

¹¹ Marx relates the production of cyclical crises in capitalist culture to the production of fictitious capital. This will perhaps be my next area of research. See Harvey, chapters 10 and 11, especially.

¹² By “objectivity,” I — like Kant (and Marx as well, as we shall see) — will continue to mean a number of things which cannot be neatly isolated in experience even if they are philosophically codifiable. “Objectivity” is the noun, static form of the transformation of precognitive things into objects of cognition, much as Kant’s “things in themselves” (which we cannot *directly* cognize) are transformed into and root the “objects of experience.” But by “objectivity” I will also have in mind the epistemic and scientific concern to abstract from subjectivity and its biases to judge something with a sense of disinterest. Indeed, it is my contention that for Kant this latter form of objectivity hinges developmentally on and is produced through the (“transcendental”) production of the objects of the former form. Objectivity of judgment hinges on and is bound to the use of things in the *developmental* distinguishing of subjective fantasy and objective resistance to fantasy, as we shall see.

as-if self-fulfilling way. The latter's basic empirical wish is to locate the cause of his anxiety (i.e. the anxiety that this very anxiety is falsely made up) in an object *beyond the scope of his wishing*, since only then could he be *sure*, certain that this "causal object" was not falsely produced by "himself," given the desperate strength of his desire for it, in and as a kind of hallucination. The vicious circularity here is obvious, no doubt especially for the person vexed in this way: Since his wish for an objective cause of his condition is, in fact, a wish for an object to appear *beyond the reach of this very wishing for it*, if such an object does at some point appear to have arrived, its localization as a definite causal object will necessarily point back to the possibility — if he remains melancholic — that he's produced it through an hallucinatory wishing, a "sheer" if fictitious "resolution" perhaps, which means that his wish to overcome his anxiety is a *futile* one, or at least apparently so.

So let's examine this wish in a little more detail. The fact that the hypochondriac wants the cause of her anxious experience to appear objectively beyond her wishing for such a cause implies that what she needs is not so much (or just) this causal object (which apparently promises to soothe to the degree that it gives suffering a reason, making it reasonable); what she *also* needs before or together with the object's objectification is a *disavowal* or *forgetting* of her (at least melancholic) wishing for it, for only via such a disavowal, apparently, could this object appear as distinctly *beyond* her wishing and so, by her current melancholic standards, as what we might call an "objectivist object," something objective "in-itself," rather than as an object the objectification of which still largely or solely hinges on the power of her subjective wishing. So here again we encounter the disavowal that Kant's himself was apparently faced with. This structural

link between therapeutic objectivity and the need to disavow desire, however, should remind us not just of hypochondriacal experience but of a more common health phenomenon. Where else do we find disavowal, if not quite so obviously the need for disavowal, in the coming to appearance of an objective cause of health? Indeed, where else in what we today call healthcare do we witness what appear to be divisively conflational slippages between the subjective and the objective, the mental and the somatic, the symptomatic and the causal, and the wishful and the actual in the search for health's objective causality? We find these slippages, of course — and indeed, to be more precise we see a kind of wishing beneath and within the appearance of health's causes — in what are called placebo effects.

Take the example of a woman who, believing she has taken medicines bioactively specific for treating her ailment, insists that she is recovering or has recovered despite the fact that she did not take bioactive remedies but instead “blindly” took what are called “dummy” remedies, such as water-filled caplets, which (let us suggest) have been given to her *on the sly*. There are plenty of interpretations about what has happened here worth considering. For the moment, though, let's stick with two perspectives which we can understand as readily or typically conforming to those of our two characters, namely, to the patient and to the person or doctor who knowingly slipped her the dummy pills. According to the latter's perspective, the patient's “recovery,” to put it mildly, is more subjectively than objectively caused. Dummy pills are used as placebos in therapeutic trials, after all, precisely because they can and do serve as “controls” against which to test “real” drugs for what might be called the latter's objectively causal therapeutic properties. And biomechanically speaking, a water-caplet has no, or at least very little,

objectively causal or “causally active” therapeutic properties, especially when compared (as here) to other chemical compounds. Indeed, extending this logic to its limit, someone might conclude that our patient recovered solely from psychologically subjective causes, that is, precisely because she *expected* to recover or *believed* that her “remedy” was a bioactive one. The recent “expectation theory” of placebo effects offered and defended by many biologists and psychologists alike, for example, directly and *merely determinately* links the actualizing powers of expectation to the patient’s belief in the object’s “natural” therapeutic causality. From the point of view steeped in our patient’s *experience*, however, her recovery was not subjectively, and certainly not merely subjectively, caused. If asked, she would minimally likely assert that a biomedical drug was causally active alongside or together with her mental expectations. Maximally, however, since she took the “drug” precisely to recover, she might *disavow her desire* for health altogether and assert that the “drug” alone, the “thingly” pill “itself,” was causally and objectivistically responsible for her recovery.

This last possibility, then, resembles *Kant’s* self-experience of recovery, or at least on a *critical* reading of the “Sheer Resolution” essay it does. Kant tells us that he was melancholically anxious and ill to the point of wearying of life; but then later he seems to have found that his *Herzbequemung* was *alone* causally responsible for this anxiety; which meant in turn, he says, that he could now finally ignore this anxiety. His anxiety dissipated, he suggests, when he *later* found it to have an *earlier* cause, and so an objectivistic cause. But from our perspective this tension between what is *taken later to have already been at work earlier* cannot be so easily smoothed over. Similarly, Kant’s “subjective” description of his experience is interesting precisely to the degree that it

matches the “objective” description he had just given of the “reasonable person” faced with melancholic anxieties and wishes. And certainly there is a kind of “reasonableness” here even if it’s steeped — indeed, precisely insofar as it invariably remains possibly steeped — in this disavowal that we will continue to investigate: For Kant *does* pleasantly if paradoxically “resolve” the hypochondriacal difficulty of not being able to find an object beyond his wishes “that could furnish a valid reason for his anxiety”; he does this precisely by “finding” this object *as if* it *had* arrived from beyond the reach of his wishes. Since *we*, however, have noticed a structural convergence and perhaps even a structural identity between the hypochondriacal *need* for disavowing desire and the disavowing “as if” judgment hidden within the experience of a placebo effect — where the subject [mis]takes his object to be an objectivistic one — we should here go where Kant himself seems to have been unable or unwilling to go. We must ask whether his solution could itself be a “placeboic” disavowal of desire, a cognitive self-blinding undergone in the name of and need for “recovery.” Indeed, if Kant is right to suggest, however vaguely, that health for the hypochondriac can appear when his or her melancholia “objectively” disappears, we will have to investigate whether there is some secret *relation* between health and its apparent overt, hypochondria.

If we understand Kant’s descriptions as flatly as possible, and indeed, if we compare one of his basic suggestions about the relation between mind and body to the essay’s title, we can suggest that Kant is *not* self-blinding himself: When he suggests that “mental work can set another kind of heightened vital feeling against the limitations that affect the body alone,” the “sheer” of the essay’s title converges upon this “alone” to advocate a kind of “mind over matter” health psychologism. If this psychologism is

acceptable or accepted, then it's not too difficult to accept how Kant brings his discussion of hypochondria to an end, namely, once again, by suggesting that he himself had mastered his erstwhile illness by subjectively ignoring its objective cause. Flatly and uncritically understood, in other words, Kant's health ducks appear to be in an unproblematic psycho-causal row. Sheer mental resolution, as the essay's title indicates, can master the illnesses and limitations which stem from the body alone.

On this idealist reading, however, especially if the "resolution" belonging to "sheer resolution" is itself thought too purely, too "sheerly," Kant's analyses of hypochondria as an illness which is at least partly psychic become incoherent. Regarding his own case, for example, does it not *remain* possible, especially given his prior admissions, that his judgment that his *Herzbequemung* was the cause of his hypochondriacal disposition is, as a *judgment*, both anxiously motivated and so hypochondriacally determined, at least in part? We uncovered this possibility above in a variety of ways: If someone wants an "objective cause" to appear so as to "resolve" a subjective anxiety about this anxiety's apparent causelessness, its apparent idiopathy, then if this cause appears *as if* objectively the "as if" here cannot easily or simply be dismissed, disregarded, or dissolved. For one could never know if one's wishes played a part or role in the appearance of the object. Thus, more particularly, if someone *later* comes to judge a local area of the physical body "alone" as the objective cause of a *hypochondriacal* anxiety which *pre-existed* this judgment, then this newly discovered objective cause, like a placebo, may very well both disavow and localize — here, it may very well be a *somatization* of — the anxious desire to make objective what was experienced as a desperate kind of objectlessness. From a philosophical and, yes, a

Kantian point of view, an objective cause of *health* is not and could never be an object “in-itself,” an objectivistic object: To the degree that when we’re ill we wish for health, any object that stands out as a health object or cause will have to be recognized at least as bearing traces of a psychic, wishful event. A health object, in other words, is always psychically *objectified* at least in part. As a trace or as something bearing traces, however, it is also not a psychic or, more specifically, a *cognitive* event pure and simple, as the “expectation” theorists believe is possible and often actual. An object cannot be a mere hallucination even though hallucinations appear to be objective to the hallucinating subject.¹³ From a philosophical point of view, in other words, an object is never merely objective or merely subjective, never merely psychic or merely, say, nonpsychic or physical. Rather, when some thing is an *object* — and this is consistent with Kant’s terminology — it is *already* a managed and mediated *relation* of and between the psychic and the nonpsychic or material.

This brings us, or in fact returns us, to the one unambiguous if all too brief statement in the “Sheer Resolution” essay where Kant directly addresses the problem of relating subject to object and mind to body without divisively conflating these binaries. He declares early on, we recall, that as a lived and determinate practice *a regimen* nonetheless somehow refers to its “necessary condition,” the “spirit of philosophy.” How does a regimen refer a mentally sheer philosophical spirit to our bodily experience of objects and vice versa? How does it balance the “panacea” of moral objectivity with the subjective heteronomy of “feeling”? Kant does not elaborate here — and, in fact, right

¹³ When a hallucinator sees a “a monster” moving across the room, for example, his *eyes objectively* move as if they were following this mental object through the air. So, more properly understood, the apparently “sheer” subjectivity of the hallucination is a kind of “objective subjectivity,” if we may call it that—at least to the degree that the eyes are objects which can be studied in their somatic relation to the brain. To deny this type of concern would be to deny that drugs, for instance, *can* help the so-called “mentally” ill.

where he seems ready to investigate this “necessary condition,” he slips into an investigation of the objective causes of health and illness — but at least he provides us with an explicit clue: A health regimen, he twice indicates, can produce health as an effect neither through mental resolution alone (this despite his apparent thesis) nor through somatic corrigibility alone (this despite the apparent causal “heart” of his illness) but precisely insofar as a regimen’s practice as an *art* refers, and so relates, philosophy’s resolute spirit to whatever else remains, beyond and resistant to this spirit, in this practice nonetheless. He names the ill person’s “supreme task,” in fact, not simply the following of a regimen, as if adherence or conformity to imperatives were health incarnate, but the “art of formulating a regimen, which refers to this spirit,” *as if health has something to do with creating health* and, in particular, with creating (reflectively determinate yet) *meaningful objects*. Indeed, since a regimen as an artistic practice can be said to mediate the difference between its necessary philosophical *condition* and the *experience* of objectivity, we can say that health appears through regimens neither purely psychologically, cognitively, naturally, nor somatically, but insofar as psyche, cognition, nature, and the body “cross” or “overlap” to create *placeboic* health objects which the subject can meaningfully if half-naively use.

We have thus created a tripartite hypothesis, namely, (a) that health and illness, despite first appearances, are aesthetic categories, (b) that a disciplined artistic practice somehow mediates the difference between its necessary condition and the experience of objectivity, and (c) that this objectivity (which remains our broadest category of philosophical investigation and critique) can be best understood as a distinct — what will turn out to be a *critically* Kantian — sort of “placebo effect.”

There must be a different relation in health and illness, then, between subject and object, psyche and soma, cause and symptom, and especially between wish and actuality than we see in the hypochondriacal disavowal which enables Kant to offer his sheer resolution thesis. And to understand that different relation we need to take seriously his comments about regimen, practice, and especially artistic creation. For there are apparently various unseen details taking place within artistic regimens which enable health's appearance but which hypochondriacal disavowal covers over. How, then, might we examine aesthetic practice? Rather than steep ourselves in yet another of Kant's medico-theoretical texts and rather than relying on his precritical *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*, let's turn to his third and culminating *Critique*. For this text, of course, is critically concerned with the issue of aesthetic objectification.

In the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant transcendently isolates and variously examines the divisive confluences, slippages, and movements which we have here been joining to call disavowal. He calls this process "subreption." Like what Marx will call "fetishization" and like what a wing of psychoanalysis will call "sublimation" (as we shall discover in Part Two), subreption is a *culturally productive* form of disavowal. By necessarily disavowing the conditions for the possibility of experience, this form of judgmental praxis produces objects of culture and valuation, and so of development and health to boot. In the rest of Part One, then, we shall investigate how Kant isolates and examines subreption and how he relates the confluences and slippages it bears to the movements and relation of development and health. While his analysis is subtle — as if he was learning about subreption while undergoing it in and through the processes of learning and of writing about it — we shall eventually discover that subreption is a not-

merely-mechanistic developmental mechanism. Indeed, it is the reflective seed not just of judgment but of judgment's continuous growth, a growth which exhibits itself performatively in and as a series of forms (or even stages) of *developmental objectification*. Before we examine these forms of objectification which subreptively exhibit subreptive movement, however, we will first turn to a couple of moments where Kant isolates what turns out to be the pre-subreptive "ground" of subreption. Kant calls this ground *transcendental desire*, but through further analysis we will end up calling it *fantastic objectification* to the degree that desire's power of fantasy, its power of wishing, turns out to be the noumenal source of the making of culture, growth, and health. For Kant, in other words, the noumenal "ground" of salubrious development is idealized wish-fulfillment, the power of wishing in general to condition the appearance of the *world of objects* in general.¹⁴ In any case, subreption's work first *appears*, developmentally speaking, in and through the *failure* of fantastic objectification. Subreption *is* this failure, but it is also this failure automatically covered over, in disavowal, in and as the worldly appearances we call subjects and objects.

I therefore next examine the developmental trajectory of subreptive development. As it turns out, subreption first appears, on the back of the failure of pure fantasy, as a kind of *somatization*, an objectification which will remind us immediately of Kant's *Herzbequemung* but which transcendently refers us to the process of the *origination* of the distinction between mind and body in every human being.¹⁵ Through further subreptive slippage, this somatization takes on the appearance of what I end up calling *magical ritualization*. For it turns out that when mind and body are first distinguished, it

¹⁴ Though we will not emphasize this, this phenomenon is eventually recognized and conceptualized by psychoanalysis as the pleasure principle's ability to condition the appearance of the reality principle.

¹⁵ The thumb- and fist-sucking of infants exhibits this process well, that is, once we are prepared to see it.

is not cognitive or moral understanding which immediately emerges but rather the fantasy-based production and use of magical and religious ritual. The failure of fantastic objectification produces both new objects and new needs, in other words, and these end up taking the form, developmentally speaking, of magical thinking in and through practices and objects. At this point, I follow Kant in trying to provide an overall conceptualization of this developmental process in the notion of *symbolization*. For Kant, symbols do not simply represent morality, as is explicitly specified, for instance, late in the third *Critique*. Moreso, they embody the subreptive movement from sensuousness toward morality and from desire toward the self-reflective cognition of experience. Thus, as we shall see, for Kant development does not take place merely as a linear process of continuous growth. Rather, to the degree that cultural objects of value symbolize both the persistence of perfect *archaic* wishing *and* the persistence of its *failures*, development is always self-challenged, “as if” hypochondriacally. I thus return in the end to what I call Kant’s placeboic conception of the relation between development and health.

Chapter II

PLACEBOIC STRUCTURE, AESTHETIC NEED

Subreption

A careful reading of the Critique of Aesthetic Judgment in the *Critique of Judgment* confirms that there is, minimally, a structural identity between the problem of health as cast by Kant in the “Sheer Resolution” essay and the problem of taste. Pluhar’s introduction to his translation of the third *Critique* contains a passage which nicely summarizes the latter problem:

The problem with these judgments [i.e. judgments of taste or beauty] is roughly the following: When we call something ‘beautiful’ we seem to do so on the basis of a certain liking, a certain feeling of pleasure; and pleasure is something very subjective. And yet it seems that in such a judgment we say more than ‘I like the thing.’ For in using the adjective ‘beautiful’ we talk as if beauty were some sort of *property* of the thing, and hence we imply that other people, too, should see that ‘property’ and hence should agree with our judgment.¹⁶

What Pluhar here calls an “as if” relation obviously resembles what we have been calling a relation of slippage or, more particularly, a placeboic relation. In a judgment of taste regarding an object, there is a pleasure or displeasure which the subject feels and judges to be caused by the object and its properties, at least to some degree, but which from outside this perspective seems to be brought to or projected upon the object by the subject with her inclinations, expectations, interests, etc.

¹⁶ Kant, 1987, xxiv. Pluhar’s introduction precedes Kant’s own (second) Introduction. All citations of the *Critique of Judgment* will here begin with the Hackett edition’s page numbers followed by the equivalent *Akademie* edition’s page numbers.

Although many third *Critique* critics take notice of this problem (as Pluhar has cast it here, for instance), rarely do they suggest that what we have been calling a slippage between subject and object might be crucial for understanding the text in its entirety or, indeed, for understanding the holistic whole of Kantian critique. And actually, given the dearth of Kant's own explicit analysis on this idea of slippage, this is to be expected. Instead, we are expected to learn about the slippage, including the divisive conflation of subject and object, by paying attention to other concerns, even though in the meantime a relation between subject and object *is* being painted, as it were. Indeed, I stand to be corrected here, but so far as I can tell, only in the *Critique of Judgment's* first Introduction (410=222'), on the one hand, and when Kant turns from the Analytic of the Beautiful to the Analytic of the Sublime, on the other hand, does he track and analyze this slippage explicitly, naming it "subreption" in but a single sentence of section twenty-seven, to which we will turn in a moment.

Mentioned in the third *Critique* but twice, it nonetheless turns out that Kant had introduced the idea of "subreption" some twenty years earlier in his Inaugural Dissertation of 1770.¹⁷ Dividing subreption into "logical" and "metaphysical" types and developing from these types three kinds of subreptive axioms, he there describes the "fallacy of subreption" as the "intellect's trick" of "[passing] off what is sensitive as if it necessarily belonged to a concept of the understanding." Consistent with this but more precisely relevant to our purposes here are Kant's first and third subreptive axioms. His first axiom (§27) marks as a "prejudice," as a definitively empiricist bias, the assertion that "whatever is, is somewhere and somewhen" while his third axiom critiques assertions which impart to objects the "conditions which are peculiar to subjects" (§29).

¹⁷ Kant, 1992, 373-416. For a different translation, see Kant, 1929, 74-85.

How and why, then, does Kant reintroduce subreption in the third *Critique*? The need for subreption opens up, or rather opens up as a need to be explicitly addressed, when Kant's investigations of the sublime lead him *astray of the realm of objects and objective experience* as if to something sheer and *objectless*. According to Kant's précis of sublimity in section 25, for example, "...nothing that can be an object of the senses is to be called sublime. What happens is that our imagination strives to progress toward infinity, while our reason demands absolute totality as a real idea, and so the imagination, our power of estimating the magnitude of things in the world of sense, is inadequate to that idea. Yet this inadequacy itself is the arousal in us of the feeling that we have within us a supersensible power" (106=250).

And yet, while here and throughout the entire *Analytic of the Sublime* Kant emphasizes that "the sublime" is not an objective thing and that properly speaking sublimity is merely intelligible and not sensible, *nonetheless* we also find him describing what external sublime objects, and what the experiences of those objects, are or would have to be like. Indeed, despite his consistent guarded emphasis that the sublime is merely the *supersensible* (and so "sheer") *power* of the human *mind* to elevate itself towards and grasp the moral ideas of reason, which are in-themselves (since beyond the understanding's concepts) objectless, Kant both (a) occasionally offers examples of what he himself calls "sublime objects" and (b) mentions at various points that the feeling of sublimity is not just intelligibly caused but is caused by an object insofar as the latter serves as the site where a complex empirical mix of displeasure and pleasure is *initiated* in and for the subject. Kant mentions St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, for example: Anyone who walks into this edifice, he says, "has the feeling that his imagination is inadequate

for exhibiting the idea of a whole, a feeling in which imagination reaches its maximum, and as it strives to expand that maximum, it sinks back into itself, but consequently comes to feel a liking that amounts to an emotion” (109=252). The object here seems to be the “source,” or at least the trigger or catalyst, of awe if not of the awe itself. Indeed, the awe is seemingly the “consequence” of the object and its forces producing a feeling in the imagination.

Indeed, Kant offers plenty of descriptions which render sublimity objectless and yet somehow at the same time, despite his more obvious and guarded emphases, as objectively cast, a trigger of what is only then seen to be “objectless” or a “true” sublimity. Thus, *the paradox of an objectless objectivity which haunted both hypochondriacal experience and Kant’s ambiguous analysis of hypochondria is at work here, more than latently, in sublime experience*. Take the following example. “True sublimity,” says Kant, “must be sought only in the mind of the judging person, not in the natural object the judging of which prompts this mental attunement” (111=254). On a first approach, this statement might seem simple and unidirectional. Since psychic subjectivity and natural objectivity are apparently separated off from each other and the subject’s feeling is said to consist in a relation located in the former but “not” in the latter, not in the natural object, the structure of sublimity looks just like the structure of *melancholic hypochondria*. “Properly speaking,” they are both “vaga” conditions, objectless. And yet, at the same time, Kant also indicates that the natural object, or at least the occasion of judging it, “prompts” sublimity, so it’s clear that sublimity would not even arise were it not for this “object,” minimally, as prompt. Indeed, it’s as if only *certain* natural and artificial objects, with particular awe-inspiring characteristics or

properties, could be sublime enough to serve as the occasion for, for catalyzing or prompting, sublimity in the human subject. And so suddenly the structure of sublime experience looks like the structure not of *h. vaga* but of *localized* hypochondria—as a “reasonable person” would see sublimity! Indeed, why *are* many of us, like Kant, inclined to call St. Peter’s Basilica sublime but not the simple house which sits around the corner from it? Indeed, why does he suggest that we consider sublime not this pebble or that cloud or this little hill or this light breeze but, instead, “bold, overhanging and, as it were, threatening rocks, thunderclouds piling up in the sky and moving about accompanied by lightning and thunderclaps, volcanoes with all their destructive power, hurricanes...” (120=261)? His reasoning partly suggests, against the highlighting of sublimity’s objectlessness, that the feeling of the sublime has, at least at some level, an “objective” cause: “[W]e like to call these objects sublime,” he continues, “because *they* raise the soul’s fortitude above its usual middle range and *allow* us to discover in ourselves an ability to resist which is of quite a different kind, and which gives us the courage to believe that we could be a match for nature’s seeming omnipotence” (120=261, my emphases).¹⁸ These examples and others like them to be found in these sections are admittedly subtle and, again, if they’re compared to Kant’s regular and explicit defense of the sublime as the mind’s supersensibility, these passages might be interpreted as mistakes, as instances of Kant briefly losing track of his analysis and objectifying noumenal objectlessness.

If this were the case, however, then his reintroduction of the notion of subreption soon after giving these examples would stand out as an incoherent codicil. He would not

¹⁸ This reference to omnipotence is not accidental, as we will see when we examine the notion of fantasy in its relation to primitive wishing in both Marx and a branch of psychoanalysis.

need to or even be able to *name* this slippage from objectlessness to objectivity if he weren't aware of it as something like "slippage," and if he weren't also aware of it as a problem. Rather than mostly disparaging subreption as a fallacy or mistake in need of correction as he did twenty years before, however, Kant here presents subreption more positively. He indicates that without subreption — even if it is fallacious, mistaken, or a kind of self-trickery — we could not possibly have an *experience* of the sublime.

"Experience" in the Kantian rubric, after all, is comprised of subjects in *phenomenal relation* to objects. As Kant had put this in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, "...the conditions of the possibility of experience in general are likewise conditions of the possibility of the *objects* of experience and...for this reason they [i.e. the conditions] have *objective* validity" (A 158=B 197, my emphasis). This is a crucial and basic Kantian insight, perhaps *the* basic insight. Notice, too, the double sense of "objectivity."

On the one hand objectivity refers to the "things," or rather, the objects of experience, the this and that which we encounter, like the small house or sublime basilica, in experience. But on the other hand objectivity also points to understanding the world not just privately but more widely, more understandingly and even scientifically, and so more objectively.

The question, then, is how a subject can have an objective experience of something which is in itself and properly speaking, as Kant repeatedly insists, objectless and supersensible. How, for Kant, does sublime experience "take place"? The answer which he gives — which is not merely a cognitive or psychologistic response but a *critical* one — is that sublime experience takes place exactly through the *deceiving and mistaken but necessary* objectification, the objective disavowal or (mis)presentation, of nonobjective conditions. Here then is Kant's brief statement on subreption:

[T]he feeling of the sublime in nature is respect for our own vocation. But by a certain *subreption* (in which respect for the object is substituted for respect for the idea of humanity within ourselves as subjects) this respect is accorded an object of nature that, as it were, *makes intuitable* for us the superiority of the rational vocation of our cognitive powers over the greatest power of sensibility. (114=257, my emphases)

This, then, is why the first and third of Kant's pre-critical subreptive axioms remain relevant to this elegant objectifying — which critically is to say transcendental — trick: If we are to intuit or experience the sublime, this experience, if not its vago condition *per se*, must have a “somewhere and somewhen,” which is to say that our (falsely) attributing to a particular object of nature or art the “conditions which are peculiar to subjects” is simply how these as a priori or *supersensible* conditions are made intuitable and available for experience. The experience of a sublime object such as St. Peter's Basilica, in other words, is the (*mis*)*experience* of the intelligible conditions of this experience.¹⁹ Indeed, this (mis)attribution has cognitive relevance in terms of our (secretively placeboic) experience of causality. The sublime object appears as the cause of a mix of pleasure and displeasure in the subject, but critically speaking there are *also* supersensible conditions, conditions which cannot be directly intuited, which lie (as I will here put it) behind and within (or “in and as”) the sensible experience of this cause. “Cause and effect,” as categories of experience and understanding, are thus secretly framed by a secret power of “causality.”

In fact, if we now turn from the sublime back to beauty we find that despite the fact that Kant makes no explicit mention of subreption in his sections on taste and art and

¹⁹ I put the “mis” in parentheses to show that the mistake belongs, albeit largely invisibly or “under erasure,” to this experience. The *mistake* is a necessary though little-acknowledged *part* or *aspect* of the *process* of objectification.

despite his efforts to otherwise distinguish the beautiful and the sublime, beauty also “takes place” through subreptive slippage. Kant only builds up to this, however. *He creatively develops it.*²⁰ As soon as the third *Critique* opens we don’t see him officially marking out a slippery and puzzling relationship between the pleasure-causing status of subjectivity in relation to objectivity, as Pluhar’s summary of the problem of taste suggests he should, so much as we see him emphasizing that judgments of taste, as he soon seemingly emphasizes concerning judgments of the sublime, are strictly and basically subjective. Recalling that for Kant a cognitive judgment is one in which imagination combines a manifold of intuition which the understanding’s unifying categories objectively and schematically subsume, Kant begins the third *Critique* as follows:

If we wish to decide if something is beautiful or not, we do not use understanding to refer the presentation to the object so as to give rise to cognition; rather, we use imagination (perhaps in connection with understanding) to refer the presentation to the subject and his feeling of pleasure or displeasure. Hence, a judgment of taste is not a cognitive judgment and so is not a logical judgment but an aesthetic one, by which we mean a judgment whose determining basis *cannot be other than subjective*. (44=203)

This is a relatively clear and emphatic beginning. Judgments of taste are to be distinguished from logical or cognitive judgments, Kant says, because instead of referring “the presentation” (*Vorstellung*) to the object by subsuming it beneath the understanding’s categories (such as that of cause and effect), this presentation is referred to the subject’s imagination and understanding in a more general way, and indeed, as he

²⁰ It’s as if he’s secretly concerned with health in and through the ritualized act of creative objectification.

later specifies, to the harmonious *play* between them.²¹ Beyond the question of what Kant might mean here by “presentation” — in part because it can apparently be either subjective or objective — there is as yet no other question.²² Judgments of taste are subjective.

By section three, however, we begin to see hints, resembling those we uncovered within the *Analytic of the Sublime*, that the “subjectivity” of taste, including especially its “determining basis,” are neither merely subjective nor private. So here we have the beginning of a subreptive relation, a substitution which criticism can notice but which the pre-reflective subject, insofar as she *experiences* the *object* as pleasure-causing, cannot:

When something determines the feeling of pleasure or displeasure and this determination of that feeling is called sensation, this term means something quite different from what it means when I apply it to the presentation of a thing (through the senses, a receptivity that belongs to the cognitive power). For in the second case the presentation is referred to the object, but in the first it is referred solely to the subject and is not used for cognition at all, not even for that by which the subject *cognizes* himself. (47=206)

Although Kant here clearly wants to discern and even protect the aesthetic status of judgments of taste from possible conflation with cognitive judgments which, as we

²¹ As we shall see, the relation between play, objectification, and development is taken up and examined critically by Freud and then especially by Winnicott. But Kant is clearly the first. His analysis is critical to the degree that the objectifications of work and play reflect the development and content of experience into the conditions of experience.

²² As we shall continue to see, Kant’s analysis attempts to show both how and why experience (mis)objectifies its conditions, producing taste as a secretly-conflicted experience, which means that representation, which is a cognitive category, hinges secretly on *presentation*, which we and Kant understand as a pre-cognitive condition of conceptual thinking and experience. Thus, I understand presentation to refer to the form of appearance or making appear that Freud, for instance, will end up calling “primary process.” Representation is thus a derivative form of appearance or making appear that, while secretly containing primary process, is the stuff of secondary process and, at least to some degree, of cognitively filtered experience. Pluhar is right then that Kant’s aesthetics is non-representational, or as we shall specify it, pre-representational even when it appears to be representational. The forms and stages of representation are more mature achievements which “take place” in and through the *aesthetic development* of objectivity, the development, specifically, of more primitive forms of *symbolization*, generally understood.

learned in the first *Critique*, are determinative and subsumptive judgments about objects, and so although he again emphasizes that the presentation of beauty's pleasure "is referred solely to the subject," there is a definite hint here that this referring is somehow also *beyond* subjectivity in some as yet undetermined and indeterminate way. Instead of saying that the subject actively refers the presentation of his feeling to himself, Kant uses the passive voice—"it is referred." Behind or within, but certainly beyond, the subject "proper," there is something *else*, something non- or pre-subjective in the subject's "determining basis," which refers this presentation solely *to* the subject. There is a blind-spot, then, not just in sublimity but in taste too, and indeed, as the *condition of the experience of beauty* this blind-spot cannot be experienced directly or in-itself. Further, when Kant compares the sensation of cognitive understanding to the sensation of aesthetic judgment and calls the former a receptivity, he implies that aesthetic sensation, by contrast, is a kind of activity—say, an impressing or projecting of feelings of pleasure or displeasure upon an "object," as if the latter caused them but *not* the reverse, where the object's properties either sensibly determine the perception of gratification or pain in the subject or serve as the intuitive particularities for the subject's conceptual subsumption. If aesthetic judgment is an "activity," then, it is not simply located in the subject's self-activity. It is a non- or pre-subjective activity somehow beyond self-awareness, a foreign inner realm (if not an inner territory or place) the processes of which do not — and as we shall see, cannot — directly show themselves. This, then, is why Kant must indicate that in judgments of taste the subject does not "cognize himself" in this aesthetic process despite the fact that his pleasure or displeasure *is referred* to himself. For the subject is simply not doing the referring.²³

²³ The subject is an extension (in the sense both of being a *res extensa* and a development) of the meaning-

If Kant has begun to modify the apparent subjectivist slant of his initial account, however, this of course does not mean that he means to characterize judgments of taste as objectivistic judgments, that is, either as judgments which mark, as determinative judgments mark, a characteristic which properly belongs to the object, or as judgments which simply command, as moral reason properly commands, universal and necessary assent. Indeed, in sections six and seven of the *Analytic of the Beautiful*, Kant places judgments of taste precisely between the objectivity of ordinary cognitive understanding, on the one hand, as described and analyzed in the first *Critique*, and the necessity and universality of moral legislation, on the other hand, as described and analyzed in the second *Critique*—and yet he does this without asserting that judgments of taste are in-themselves objectivistic, objectively universal. Avowals of beauty’s pleasure are claims, rather, to “subjective universality”—“universal” because the subject has no personal interest in finding the thing pleasing and yet she does,²⁴ and “subjective” because this universality does not arise from the objectifying subsumption of understanding which (subreptively) takes place nonetheless (54=212). The experience is (mis)experienced subjectively, we could say.

The combination of pleasure before the object and lack of subjective interest in it means that the judge cannot help but to expect others and even demand of others that they experience in the object what she experiences, what she experiences, that is, *as if* by objective determination. Pluhar’s hint had pointed in this direction generally but, as a summary, did not specify beauty’s subreptive activity: In an aesthetic experience of an

making process; it is not the latter’s source.

²⁴ See 212=339: “[T]here can be no doubt that in a judgment of taste the presentation of the object (and at the same time of the subject as well) is referred more broadly, i.e. beyond ourselves, and this broader reference is our basis for extending such judgments and treating them as necessary for everyone.”

object, and especially when experiencing beauty, the object necessarily appears as if it were the determinate and determining cause of the subject's feeling since the subject, again especially in beauty, does not "cognize himself" in this process. As Kant puts this in sections six and seven:

If someone likes something and is conscious that he himself does so without any interest, then he cannot help judging that it must contain a basis for being liked [that holds] for everyone... Hence he will talk about the beautiful as if beauty were a characteristic of the object and the judgment were logical (namely, a cognition of the object through concepts of it), even though in fact the judgment is only aesthetic and refers the object's presentation merely to the subject. He will talk in this way because the judgment does resemble a logical judgment inasmuch as we may presuppose it to be valid for everyone. On the other hand, this universality cannot arise from concepts. For from concepts there is no transition to the feeling of pleasure or displeasure (except in pure practical laws; but these carry an interest with them, while none is connected with pure judgments of taste)... (54=211)²⁵

If he proclaims something to be beautiful, then he requires the same liking from others; he then judges not just for himself but for everyone, and speaks of beauty as if it were a property of things. That is why he says: The *thing* is beautiful... (55=212)

In three steps, then, Kant shows us that aesthetic judgments on the whole are subreptive slippages, deflections in which an indeterminate psychic condition "takes place," as it were, *as if* objectively: Since (a) the subject's experience of an object arrives with a pleasure which *is referred to* him from beyond his private proclivities and interests, he cannot help but think, indeed he finds it "reasonable" to think, both (b) that the *object* contains a set of properties which, added up, determine his pleasure from outside and thus (c) that since this pleasure is apparently not subjectively but objectively caused, it should be referred to anyone and everyone who properly perceives and conceptualizes the object.

²⁵ When Kant here says "no transition," he doesn't mean, as we shall see, that a *secretly* transitional process, to be located in the object as a transitional object, is not possible. On the contrary.

Fantastic Objectification: Of Sense and Supersensibility

If Kant has shown that aesthetic judgment proceeds by way of an “activity” which is not simply located in the subject’s self-activity, and that in fact the pleasure and displeasure of judgment are actively referred *to* the subject from beyond herself such that she can only experience her pleasure and displeasure *as if* these were cognitively determined, then what can be said about this other- or more-than-subjective activity? What, in other words, does subreption point to as lying “behind” experience and our experience of objects?

In my judgment, Kant’s best response to these questions appears in his second (and his preferred) Introduction to the *Critique of Judgment*. After having finished the *Critique* per se, he wrote this Introduction to synthesize his critical project as a whole, to bridge the gap between his first and second *Critiques*, as he puts it.²⁶ One could thus say that the concept and actuality of subreption point to fact that this philosophical gap is not merely philosophical and not merely a gap. There is a gap but subreption provides what might be called the “transitional material” with which to plug or bridge that gap. This, then, is why Kant tells us here that the third *Critique*’s basic worry stems from the fact that human experience is both made possible *and* perpetually put at risk since it exists within a *divide* between nature (the cognition of which the first *Critique* specified) and freedom (the ideal reality of which the second *Critique* theorized as beyond nature in its

²⁶ Kant produced two Introductions to the third *Critique*. He wrote the second Introduction in 1790 — on the heels of the first and just prior to the *Critique of Judgment*’s first publication — since he found the first to be too long and peripheral. While the second Introduction has been the standard and better introduction, then, the first was eventually published in 1914, such that both are available today in the Pluhar/Hackett edition.

purity). This divide is where the problem of beauty and health begins. As he puts this in section II of the (second) Introduction:

[U]nderstanding and reason have two different legislations on one and the same territory of experience. Yet neither of these legislations is to interfere with the other. For just as the concept of nature has no influence on the legislation through the concept of freedom, so the latter does not interfere with the legislation of nature... Why do these two domains not form *one* domain? This is because the concept of nature does indeed allow us to present its objects in intuition, but as appearances rather than as things in themselves, whereas the concept of freedom does indeed allow us to present its object as a thing in itself, but not in intuition... Hence, an immense gulf is fixed between the domain of the concept of nature, the sensible, and the domain of the concept of freedom, the supersensible, so that no transition [*Übergang*] from the sensible to the supersensible (and hence by means of the theoretical use of reason) is possible, just as if they were two different worlds.... (13-14=175)

After building and wrestling with this issue throughout the Introduction, Kant brings it to a head in the ninth and last section:

The understanding legislates a priori for nature, as object of sense, in order to give rise to theoretical cognition of nature in a possible experience. Reason legislates a priori for freedom and for freedom's own causality — in other words, for the supersensible in the subject — in order to give rise to unconditioned practical cognition. The great gulf that separates the supersensible from appearances completely cuts off the domain of the concept of nature under the one legislation, and the domain of the concept of freedom under the other legislation, from any influence that each (according to its own basic laws) might have had on the other. The concept of freedom determines nothing with regard to our theoretical cognition of nature, just as the concept of nature determines nothing with regard to the practical laws of freedom; and to this extent it is not possible to throw a bridge from one domain to the other. And yet, even though the bases that determine the causality governed by the concept of freedom (and by the practical rule contained in this concept) do not lie in nature, and even though the sensible cannot determine the supersensible in the subject, yet the reverse is possible (not, indeed, with regard to our cognition of nature, but still with regard to the consequences that the concept of freedom has in nature); and this possibility is contained in the very concept of a causality through freedom, whose *effect* is to be brought about in the world [but] in conformity with the laws of freedom. It is true that when we use the word *cause* with regard to the supersensible, we mean only the *basis* that determines natural things to exercise their causality to produce an effect in conformity with the natural laws proper to that causality, yet in

accordance with the formal principle of the laws of reason as well. Though we have no insight into how this is possible, the objection that alleges a contradiction in it can be refuted adequately. (35-6 = 5:195)

Instead of suggesting that supersensibility simply and directly causes effects in the sensible world, which would make it a cause among other natural causes — and which by bringing freedom and nature into immediate connection in the same “domain” would be the easy way of declaring both that we have free will and that aesthetic judgment is guided not purposively but by means of determinate purposes — Kant here indicates that freedom’s causal power produces effects which, as *appearances*, are *not connected to* but rather merely “in conformity with” or “in accordance with” freedom, which cannot of itself appear. Freedom’s phenomenal *effects* are disconnectedly connected to their noumenal condition. This, then, is a version of what has come to be known as Kant’s compatibilism, his view that supersensibility and sensibility, or the a priori and the a posteriori, are divided off from each other but compatibly accordant. They are “accordant” since the causal springs of supersensibility are reflected in the sensible effects which we live in and as experience. They are merely “compatible” and not of the same domain, however, since these supersensible springs can never be directly intuited in or by sensibility, given the gulf between them, just as one cannot kill a pure idea by means of a bullet, supposedly, given the gulf between them. To the degree that the subject has a free will that can act reasonably and dutifully, however, the effect of the will appears in nature. The subject can resist natural desires, then, if the will is what moves him, even if when moving he is a natural body too. Thus, whereas supersensibility — like the condition of hypochondria vaga or of sublimity’s or beauty’s *causality* — is properly *objectless*, sensibility senses *objects*. This means in turn,

however, that Kant's desire "to throw a bridge" over the "great gulf" which separates sense and supersensibility is, or at least could be, a bit misleading. One cannot literally build a bridge — which, as an object, is always somewhere — from somewhere (in sensation) to nowhere (beyond sensation), from objects to objectlessness, or the reverse.²⁷

If, however, we speak both metaphorically and literally at the same time — and we always so speak this way, despite emphases, as we shall emphasize in Part Two on Marx — we can say that supersensibility can nonetheless be *subreptively* presented, (mis)presented sensibly. Objectlessness can always be presented *as if* objectively, thus "bridging," making a "transition" between, or making compatible and accordant, these realms which remain divided nonetheless. Kant does not explicitly mention subreption here, just as he did not offer an explicitly subreptive analysis in the analytic of beauty. Still, just as subreption nonetheless *subtextually* structures the analytic of beauty, so it structurally appears here, and in fact with more understated specificity. Subreption is sly, after all.²⁸ For here Kant claims that the *reverse* of a sensible determination of the supersensible in the subject *is* possible; but this "determination" is a subreptive one. It marks a secret aesthetic reflection of a priori conditions *in and as* the subjective experience of objects. This supersensible determination does not, indeed cannot, determine the objectivity of objects in the cognitive, which is to say subsumptive, sense of "determine" (for here concepts aren't already provided); and yet, it does condition objects such that nature as *appearance* and freedom's consequences, as *appearances*,

²⁷ As Kant presents this idea in his analysis of the sublime: "If we speak literally and consider the matter logically, ideas cannot be exhibited" (127=268). Let us say "sic" to the degree that Kant is here, of course, like myself, exhibiting ideas on paper.

²⁸ Understatement and subtextuality are meant here not simply metaphorically or analogically but literally as well. Indeed, critically speaking, this is so insofar as subreption is the secretive form of the formation of symbolization, a process that takes place "between the lines" or, better, "within and beneath the surface" of cognitive judgment.

affect (and then seemingly effect) each other in experience. The objects of our experience are (but) distorted reflections of their supersensible causality, of a *primary or noumenal process* in and behind *secondary phenomena*. As Kant puts this in a footnote to the last sentence of the above quote:

One of the various supposed contradictions in this complete distinction of natural causality from the causality through freedom is given in the following objection to it. It is held that when I talk about nature putting *obstacles* in the way of the causality governed by the laws of freedom (moral laws), or about nature *furthering* it, I do after all grant that nature *influences* freedom. But this is a misinterpretation, which is easily avoided merely by understanding what I have said [sic]. The resistance or furtherance is not between nature and freedom, but between nature as appearance and the *effects* of freedom as appearances in the world of sense.... It is this causality's *determination* whose basis is contained, in a way not otherwise explicable, in the intelligible that is thought of when we think freedom.

Now, despite Kant's guarded claim that this supersensible causality's determination is "not otherwise explicable" beyond its being contained in intelligibility, and indeed, despite his similar cautioning in the main passage that "we have no insight into how this" compatibilist "determination" "is possible," if we look to yet another footnote (this one in section III of the Introduction), we see that although it may not be possible to merely *cognitively* explicate "how" this determination is possible, we can still explicate it further transcendently, which is to say, critically. Kant offers a theoretical self-warning against *merely cognitive* theorizations of objectivity, in other words, but at the same time he nonetheless makes room for the possibility of *subtextual* and *subcognitive* critique. "Critique," then, investigates that which lies beneath experience as its condition or conditions, which makes subreption the key "concept" for understanding the strange relation and movement between the conditions of experience and the (mis)experience of (secretly conditioned) objects. We shall investigate this footnoted

material from section III in detail, then, on the presumption that subreption implies a subtextual relation to textuality, and to meaning-making more generally, just as subtextuality implies the secretive work of subreption. Footnotes stand out as text (and not merely beneath the text) in this regard. Indeed, as if he were doing this to *perform* this presumption and as if to avoid overcognizing how subreption works, Kant here adjusts the lens through which the causal determination of supersensibility is said to be directed: Instead of casting judgment, a seemingly only intellectual exercise, as the connecting disconnection between reason and understanding, and instead of naming freedom as judgment's regulative ideal, he here casts the *feeling of pleasure and displeasure* as the connecting disconnection between the cognitive power and *desire*.

This is, well, significant, indeed, the making of significance. By displacing an intelligible category (freedom) with this isomorphic but more *primitive* category (the power of desire), Kant doesn't so much cognize the subreption of objectivity as he begins to perform it critically, subcognitively, and subtextually, on the way to "symbolically." Just as subreption points to a power beneath cognition, in other words, so does desire point to something beneath Kant's usual praise for freedom. Indeed, as we read this footnote below we should recall that one of Kant's crucial problems in the "Sheer Resolution" essay concerns the hypochondriac's understanding of his *desire* as a power causally (if ambiguously) productive of objects: The hypochondriac wants the cause of his anxious experience to appear *beyond his wishing*, his desire, for such a cause — he wants an objectivistic determination of his illness in the name of health — but at the same time he worries and even expects that the appearance of any objective cause will not be "objective" so much as wishfully produced in and as an at least partial hallucination.

He's worried that his fantasy will invariably color the "reality" he experiences, thus anxiously problematizing the real. His disease, then, he thinks, consists in his cognitive inability to distinguish the subjectively wishful from the objectively non-wishful causes of health. But this also means that he thinks that objects *can* appear disconnected from wishes, that there is such a thing as wishless objectivity, or "reality." But here, as opposed to much of his analysis in the "Sheer Resolution" essay, Kant *critically* explicates the causal power of desire, of wishing, precisely as an, perhaps *the*, objectifying power:

If concepts are used as empirical principles and there is cause to suppose that there is a kinship between them and the pure a priori cognitive power, then it is useful to attempt, on account of that relation, to give a transcendental definition of them.... This procedure follows the example of the mathematician, who leaves the empirical data in his problem undetermined and only brings the relation they have in their pure synthesis under the concepts of pure arithmetic, thereby universalizing his solution to the problem. I have been reproached for following a similar procedure (Preface to the *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*), namely, for defining the power of desire as the *power of being the cause, through one's presentations [Vorstellungen], of the actuality of the objects of these presentations*. The criticism was that, after all, mere wishes are desires too, and yet we all know that they alone do not enable us to produce their object. That, however, proves nothing more than that some of man's desires involve him in self-contradiction, inasmuch as he uses the presentation by itself to strive to produce the object, while yet he cannot expect success from it. Such is the case because he is aware that his mechanical forces (if I may call the nonpsychological ones that), which would have to be determined by that presentation in order to bring the object about (hence to be the means for it) are either insufficient or perhaps even directed to something impossible, such as to undo what is done (*O mihi praeteritos*, etc.), or as being able, as one is waiting impatiently for some wished-for moment, to destroy the time which remains. In such fanciful desires we are indeed aware that our presentations are insufficient (or even unfit) to be the *cause* of their objects. Still, their causal relation, and hence the thought of their *causality*, is contained in every *wish* and is especially noticeable when that wish is an affect, namely, *longing*. For since these desires alternately expand the heart and make it languid, thus exhausting its forces, they prove that these forces are repeatedly tensed by presentations, but that they allow the mind each time to relapse into weariness as it considers again the impossibility. Even prayers that ask for the deflection of some great and, as far as we can see, unavoidable evil, and also various superstitious means aimed at achieving purposes unattainable through nature prove the causal relation of these presentations

to their objects; and this relation is such that even an awareness [[i.e. in cognition or consciousness]] of its insufficiency for producing the effect cannot keep it from striving for the effect. But why our nature was given a propensity toward desires of whose futility we are aware is an anthropological-teleological question. It seems that if we had to assure ourselves that we can in fact produce the object, before we could be determined by the presentation to apply our forces, then our forces would remain largely unused. For usually we do not come to know what forces we have in the first place except by trying them out. Hence the deception contained in vain wishes is only the result of a beneficent arrangement in our nature. (17=178)

It might seem that what Kant here calls the “deception” of vain wishes refers to the fact that they are empirically futile, that their lived fulfillment is impossible. Vain wishes “deceive” because they cannot be actualized “objectively,” which is to say, beyond the status of a “mere wish.” This, at any rate, is what Kant’s *critics* insist, critics, one would have to guess, who don’t consider themselves hypochondriacal. Since a wish, they suggest, is but a mental and subjective presentation, a merely internal psychological thing, wishes on their own can never actualize or present their object, which is (it seems) external. *Mere* wishes are causally inert or impotent.²⁹ If a wish is not to be deceptive, then, it will require means and mediations—certain “mechanical” and “nonpsychological” forces, such as somatic causes, for instance.

Kant agrees with this common sense empirical claim up to a point, the point where the empirical shows that its funding actually rests in meta-empirical conditions. In addition to the empirical point of view adopted by these critics, then, there is another “point of view,” namely, that of the *supersensible* (thus primary or noumenal) relation of desire to its objects. This, then, is the critical framework which is missing in the “Sheer Resolution” essay, or rather, if this framework is there it is regarded only ambiguously and anxiously: Whereas empirically speaking, mere wishing is causally powerless to

²⁹ Contemporary empirical biopsychiatry still bases its entire sense of “science” on thoughts such as this one.

produce its object, transcendently speaking, as the formal power of desire, this wishing is a *causal superpower*. Desire, says Kant, is “the power of being the cause, through one’s presentations, of the actuality of the objects of these presentations.” By transcendental definition, in other words, to wish or desire is to “objectify” the world *immediately and directly*, “prior to” or “behind” the specification of nonpsychological or mechanical means. The fact that we can have impossible longings which *tense* the heart and empirical mind (making them *anxious*, for instance) despite the futility of the longing thus “proves” that there is a kind of wishful power beneath this or that empirically framed or motivated wish. For even if cognition is “aware” that the wish *is futile*, the wish *persists*, proving that there is something *driving* our actions, as it were, despite our otherwise reasonable intentions and wishes. Anxiety is thus proof, in a critical sense, of the a priori.

This, however, seems to rub up against and perhaps contradict one of Kant’s staple formulations—that, namely, of the imaginative formation of objects. When Kant elsewhere defines the imagination’s relation to its world, after all, he doesn’t suggest that *imaginative* fantasy presents its objects in their *actuality*. Imagination, he says, can be original and productive, on the one hand, or recollective and reproductive, on the other hand; in either case, however, the productive capacity of imagination is not one which can, *alone*, produce its objects in actuality merely by presenting them. Rather, since the play of imagination is fictive or fictitious, the imagistic and representational world it creates is only *psychically* but not *objectively* real. As Kant had put this in the *Anthropology*: “The imagination, insofar as it produces imaginings involuntarily... is called *fantasy*.... The imagination either engages in *fiction* (i.e. it is productive), or in

recall (i.e. it is reproductive). But this does not mean that the productive imagination is *creative*, i.e. capable of producing a presentation of sense that was *never* before given to our power of sense; rather, we can always show from where the imagination took its material” (VII, 167-68). The power of *desire* to which he is pointing, then, is much more *radical*. It is at and of the *root* of humanization. It is not just productive or recollective of images but creative of what we might call worldliness. It is thus also the unseen, the buried root of imaginative capacity. Indeed, since the latter produces or reproduces images, it is a part of or at least partially *cognition*, the cognition of nature as *appearance*. A priori desire, on the other hand, causally actualizes its objects *without* imaging them beforehand. It is the conditioning source of cognitive images and imaginings. If the power of desire can be said to “image” an object, then from a non-cognitive “point of view” this “image” is actually not an image at all but rather, in a dreamlike fashion, the actuality of the object. And this insight has tremendous significance, especially when seen in “reverse”: From the “point of view” of the supersensible power of desire, a perspective prior to the development of perspective, whatever appears is not an appearance but just is, and indeed, it is caused simply and immediately by wishing it so. The appearance of any object, then, transcendently *implies* — as if through a screen of the developmental forgetfulness of the power of noumenal desire — its unmediated wishful localization, a merely desirous objectification from out of an objectless plenum, in and despite the fact that the emergent subject can’t directly experience, and is not usually aware of, this wishful happening.³⁰

³⁰ As Žižek puts it, it’s like subjective experience “itself” gets in the way of experiencing this power as condition.

But if this is so, what might Kant mean when he claims that there is deception contained in vain wishes? We seem to have two contradictory accounts. From the point of view of Kant's critics and of ordinary common sense, vain wishes are deceptive since they constantly propose their actualization (this is why they are wishes, empirically speaking) and yet, given the "mechanical" impossibility of actualizing them, they also invariably remain unactualized (this is why they are vain, empirically speaking). According to Kant's transcendental figuration, on the other hand, vain wishes are never merely vain since a wish, a presentation, is causally identical to its actualization. *Identity with its object is the transcendental meaning of desire as a causal power.*³¹ But, again, if "futile" wishes unfailingly and unmediatedly produce their object in and despite the lived experience of their futility, and so if they are anything but futile from the supersensible "point of view," and indeed are quite the opposite of futile, what does Kant mean here by "deception"?

My suggestion is that the deception contained in mere wishes is the *subreption* which nonetheless *takes place objectively* (placing the thing-itself into objectivity as it were), between supersensibility and sensible experience, or, as Kant hints half-way through this crucial footnote, between causality and empirical causes. We have already seen in the passage defending Kant's compatibilism that in and despite the divide between these "domains," they remain subreptively accordant. A "great gulf" separates supersensibility from sensibility, which means that we cannot directly understand or cognize the wishful causality from which our experience of objective causes, as an effect, dawns. And yet, a *causal indirection* based on the sub- or pre-empirical identity of

³¹ This, then, is why I described desire as belonging to a "plenum" above. For if subject and object are yet to be distinguished, the preworldly world is like one great "place" without places, without borders and gaps for instance.

supersensible causality and sensible object remains consistent both with this great gulf and with the effect we call our experience of objects: Though it remains invisible to us in itself, supersensible desire can be said to have simultaneous effects (in the world of sense) which, as appearances, mix with the mechanistic and nonpsychological aspects of nature cognized as appearance. It is thus possible to think, indeed to critically notice, that our power of wishing is an objectifying super-power — that there is no such thing as a “mere wish” — despite the fact that the origin of all objects can be explained without including the element of human wishing. That is, speaking pre- or un-critically, objects can be said to appear simply (a) in merely physical or natural fashion, in terms of mechanical forces (Newtonian, quantum, or otherwise), and/or (b) in cognitive fashion, in terms of the subsumption of particulars beneath the understanding’s schematizing sieve of categories and concepts.³² Indeed, in (b) here, we would have to include ordinary psychological and/or behavioral forms of causality, those which typically don’t understand or conceive of the transcendental difference between noumena and phenomena, for instance.)

And this brings us to our point about deception: The deception belonging to so-called vain wishes is *not only* their vainness, their actual and supposed unactualizability, but also the fact that despite and in — “contained in” — their empirical vainness there is nonetheless a causally “fanciful” actualization, a *fantastic objectification* (as I will call it). What *in experience* seems to be a *mere* fantasy or wish, in other words, is nonetheless actualized at the level of transcendental desire to the degree that it is even thought, pictured, imaged, expected, hoped for, etc. Our supersensible power of instantaneous

³² If, like Kant, one sometimes includes moral categories such as goodness or duty within the range of the term “objectivity,” if not within the range of “objective appearance,” then one can add a third explication here, namely, (c) that moral objectivity can be practically intelligibilized as a meta-cognitive idea of reason.

wishful causality, then, *is subrepted* into and as our normal, cognitive experience of objects and objective causes. Insofar as objects appear at all, they point to their *secret* wishful condition. We pointed to this earlier when we suggested that the persistence of the wish despite its cognitively registered futility proves that there is a form of desire driving our actions, as it were, despite our otherwise reasonable intentions and wishes.

Kant does not leave this paradox of a noncausal causality hanging in merely theoretical suspension, however. Rather, he also offers us a couple of subtly clarifying examples. Indeed, it is these examples which, if critically interpreted, return us to our tripartite hypothesis that health and illness are aesthetic practices, that as an aesthetic practice a regimen mediates the difference between its necessary condition and the experience of objectivity, and that this objectivity is best conceived as a transcendental sort of placebo effect. The objectification of the world of objects arrives not without its pleasures and displeasures. Indeed, we can now say that the mediation an aesthetic regimen introduces is a specifically subreptive mediation and that the placebogenesis of health must be understood along critical lines as a subreptive placebogenesis.

How does this “fantastic footnote” reveal all of this? Let us suggest that it does so by subtly, somewhat secretly, introducing four aspects of desire’s activity — somatization, magical ritualization, symbolic enculturation, and cognition — which together manufacture and cumulatively comprise Kant’s *developmental theory of health*. Since Kant introduces the movement from somatization to magical ritualization to symbolic enculturation to cognition more or less *subtextually*, however, we would be incorrect to suggest that he examines health and illness merely cognitively or empirically. Just as his critique of aesthetic representation is not merely representational or about

representation, so his articulation of the process of enculturation is not just cognitively advanced and is not just about cognition. Similarly, while cognition may be the first “obvious” stage of desire’s actualization of health, this doesn’t mean that the development of cognition is healthiest when merely cognitively understood. Indeed, to understand only the experience of health objectivity without understanding the latter’s subreptive conditions would, from this critical perspective, be to be less than objective, less than scientific. Further, as if he had these last thoughts somewhere *in mind in the text*, Kant here presents his analysis of health somewhat *performatively*.³³ And this implies a lesson about health: It’s as if cognition were healthiest when it examines and represents not just its history but when it subreptively-aesthetically references and presents its *prehistory*. Kant’s methodology, then, whether he exactly intended this or not, is a *performatively* subreptive production of healthy cognition. And this insight, in turn, informs both our object and methodology: To the degree that Kant’s object is not simply cognition and culture but the secretive objectification of cognition and culture, we too must dig beneath cognition and culture to understand their roots. Following Kant, then, we shall here present and analyze what we might call an *archaeology of cognition and culture* through the aesthetic objectification of beauty. The fantastic footnote will mark and symbolize this process, this development: For, again, it performs how the illusory prehistory of aesthetics is *forgotten in and as* cognition, but by cognitively tracking *and* performatively showing this forgetting, it also produces an analysis that is self-critical if not always perfect, logically correct, or moral. Cognition develops, and develops not as sickness or disease but as health, then, along a path we’ll here track and

³³ He shows us as well as telling us. But this showing is subtle, beneath and in the surface of things, as it were.

analyze: It develops when supersensible and non-cognitive conditions are subrepted into a somatic and pre-cognitive background, subreptively complementing a symbolic ritualization, which, where favorable conditions prevail, is subreptively developed into cognitively self-critical, and so scientific, forms of enculturation.

Somatization

Kant's suggestion that longing indicates that vain wishing nonetheless causes the actuality of its object is on first sight, of course, a ridiculous suggestion. Since we typically long when, wish as we might, we *cannot* satisfy this wish, longing of the most intense kind appears to be an experience which precisely *cannot* exemplify the claim that vain wishes nonetheless actualize their object. Kant calls these "futile wishes," after all, and even wishes, he says, which are "directed to something impossible." Indeed, a description of intense longing, and of the impossibility of actualizing all-too-ideal wishes, sounds more than just a little like the account Kant gives of hypochondria vaga in his "medical" texts, especially insofar as he contrasts h. vaga to localized hypochondria: In the "Sheer Resolution" essay, h. vaga is described as a condition where wishes are causally *powerless* to produce their desired object, so much so, in fact, that the sufferer's experience begins to anxiously cycle within this supposed powerlessness and objectlessness. Felt anxiety and depression are the effects. So dominated is the vaga sufferer by what she takes to be her impossible wishing that she finds nothing of interest in the world of actual and sensible objects. Her pure wishing even feels to her like a kind of wishlessness, or at least eventually so. Her despair piles upon longing to build a despair virtually beyond longing. Talk about melancholia. This is hopelessness.

We must recall, however, that although Kant offers this account of melancholia, and although he distinguishes h. vaga from localized hypochondria — naming the former an objectless longing and the latter a disturbed wishing which has a somatic cause — our own critical analysis of Kant’s account revealed a double set of *slippages*. His descriptions of hypochondria vaga slipped, we recall, both objectively and subjectively, and probably unintentionally, into descriptions of localized hypochondria. In fact, in the “Sheer Resolution” essay, Kant takes *his heart* as the merely physical cause of a tendency toward morbid wishing, a wishing, he says, which once made him almost weary of life, and thus of wishing. Given the textual slippages between h. vaga and localized hypochondria, however, *we* came to suspect that Kant had not *discovered* his *Herzbequemung* to be the cause of his anxiety so much as he had *somatized* this ailment, conflating a kind of cause and its effect as if to make this anxiety sensible, thereby making sense of it by (mis)giving it an object, an objective cause. Indeed, we will recall that Kant indicated that the “reasonable human being” does something like this — that reasonable people make objectifying mistakes of judgment — when faced with an incessant anxiety, an anxiety, no less, about the apparently merely wishful source of this anxiety!

In providing a subtle theory of the relation of subreption to somatization, on the other hand, the fantastic footnote critiques this particular ambiguity. The note does not merely consist in Kant commenting philosophically on the objectifying power of desire, as may first appear. Mentioning the *heart* — and by thus suggesting indirectly that there has been a displacement of the stomach disturbances of his so-called “silent decade” — Kant also points, both in and despite his own awareness, to his own “hidden” desire and

its objectification in terms of health and illness.³⁴ This, then, is the point: Since the appearance of any objective cause implies a causally identical wish for this object's actualization, the appearance of a languid or oppressed heart implies that its condition as an object is the objectifying power of desire.

At first this may appear strange, but upon reflection the reference makes good sense. After all, “since these desires alternately expand the heart and make it languid, thus exhausting its forces,” these futile desires are not “effect-less,” which means that they are never completely futile or empty. Rather, the exhaustion of the heart itself, and so all the anxiety that this process entails and is, comes together with the supposed “futility.” Thus, even what must seem to a “rational” mind to be a completely futile wish — to reverse time so as to overcome loss and replace it with non-loss, for instance — proves that there is a fantasy of causality built into wishing. But more than this, Kant's more subtle and radical point is that this fantasy is not mere fantastic, imaginary, or fictional but is, rather, a very force, *the* very force, of producing worldly “effects.” Wishing against loss, longing, *proves* that behind our empirical experience of desire and its limits there is a form of desire that cannot be limited even if its effects appear to be.

Let's approach this puzzle with the notion of health up front. On the one hand, the point is that empirical objectlessness — the experience of loss, temporary mourning, or especially lasting melancholia — transcendently implies an *objectified* fantasy of and for objectlessness. The melancholiac will always produce *overlooked* objects of anxious reification — what we now call *symptoms* — despite his or her experience of objectlessness. On the other hand, however, the point is that melancholia sits beneath

³⁴ So while the text may be “about” something (i.e. representationally), it also is a world-creation (i.e. a presentation).

and within *any* somatic illness. The implications of this idea are, well, fantastic. To say that the languid heart has been “tensed by presentations” is to say, consistent with the analysis, that this object has been *wishfully produced*. And since this example exemplifies a wider rule, indeed, a transcendental power, it suggests a lesson about health and illness in the manner of a subreption: Transcendentally understood, the “discovery” of *any* somatic illness object implies this object’s wished-for creation. That is, somatic illness objects always implicate themselves as melancholic, as what Kant calls “self-devised illness.” Since these objects, these symptoms, indicate a desire for their actuality, the discovery of any somatic cause of illness necessarily implies a wish to make ourselves ill.³⁵

And yet, none of us wishes ourselves ill, do we? Isn’t this an “insane” thought? But Kant is not saying that the healthy person, perhaps as opposed to the melancholiac, *empirically* wishes herself or himself ill. Although the appearance of an object of experience implies that this object was produced by a wishful causality, this causality, since supersensible and so *divided off* from sensible causes, is an activity, we must again recall, which is *not* properly located in the subject’s self-activity and self-experience. We can become critically and thus indirectly aware of the symptomatic effects of this wishing but we can’t see, experience, or manipulate the wishing directly since it is a form of desire, the formless form, beyond our particular empirical desires. Critically speaking, then, the pleasure or displeasure involved in the somatized production of an oppressed stomach or heart is a pleasure or displeasure referred to the subject from a wishful causality (in and) beyond himself. This is why the object *looks* merely naturally

³⁵ Contemporary biomedicine has largely forgotten this fantastic thought, it seems.

produced and why the mode of its presentation seems cognitive or merely external, not aesthetic.

Entailed in this analysis is a paradoxical concept on which we should now focus, namely, that of *causal simultaneity*. The somatic illness object is not just the delayed consequence or effect of this or that mechanical cause, although empirically speaking this is exactly and perhaps only how things appear. Transcendentally speaking as well, however, this object is the *simultaneous* effect of a *persistent* supersensibility. Since supersensibility is divided off from appearances, “it” does not directly appear in terms of the inner forms of intuition—time and space.³⁶ And yet, its power distortedly comes along together with, indeed, in and as spatiotemporal, and so mechanistic, appearances and intuitions. This is subreption’s trick of making the merely intelligible or supersensible intuitable. As Kant had put this general idea in the first *Critique*: “[I]f the conditioned is given, the whole series of conditions, . . . a series which is therefore itself unconditioned, is likewise given, that is, contained in the object and its connection” (A307-8/B364). As what we might call a “simultaneous background” causality, then, supersensibility (mis)appears precisely in and as cognized object, which means that *the subject will experience this object as if it had nothing to do with wishing*. The reason Kant’s insight into our wishful morbidification of illness doesn’t mesh with our everyday experience of falling prey to illness, in that case, is that *our creative transcendental wish for illness cannot reach our awareness precisely insofar as we subreptively and creatively “find” and “discover” empirical causes of illness*. Indeed, if we are judging these causes cognitively, we cannot help but experience some of them objectivistically, as if they came to us merely from the outside.

³⁶ This is of course related to how and why Freud will later describe the unconscious as “timeless.”

And as we've seen, this seems to be what happens to Kant himself in his overtly medico-confessional analysis, at least from the point of view of the fantastic footnote. Since he describes the experience of his tendency to self-devised illness without the aid of the notion of subreption, his very analysis emits a *symptom*, namely, the textual slippages not between the *critical* notions of aesthetic-sensibility and super-sensibility but between the *cognitive* notions of subject and object, mind and body, and cause and effect. These symptomatic slippages perform a placeboic and precritical disavowal: Even as he describes melancholia as "self-devised," Kant comes to understand his illness object — once his stomach and now his heart — as if it were produced merely naturally and mechanistically. Critically and subreptively understood, however, this object is identical to a nonobjective desire for it. This then is why despite Kant's attempts to fully distinguish *h. vaga* from localized hypochondria the former necessarily slips, both textually and empirically, into appearances of the latter. One simply *cannot* be directly aware of the supersensible (or what we might now call the unconscious). Critically speaking, the divisions and conflations between subject and object, mind and body, and cause and effect are symptoms of the causal simultaneity of supersensibility's subreption into and as our experience. Here, then, is the strange, almost scary point: Although we actively seek out and often discover the empirical causes of our illnesses in an effort to remedy them, and although we are right to do this, we have also desired ourselves ill, behind our backs and melancholically, as it were, every time we find ourselves ill in terms of subject and object, mind and body, and cause and effect. And so, for Kant illness is not merely cognitive, bio-naturalistic, empirical, behavioral, or psychological, *and not even primarily a combination of these*, as many interdisciplinary health theorists

would now suggest.³⁷ Rather, for him, illness, and health too, are *first* of all relations of our supersensible desire to our sense of objectivity.

Although the first part of Kant's response to his critics is easy to overlook, it defends and details this point. When he suggests that vain wishing indicates transcendently not (so much) that these wishes are futile but "that some of man's desires involve him in self-contradiction, inasmuch as he uses the presentation by itself to strive to produce the object, while yet he cannot expect success from it," he indicates that it's our melancholically not being able to "expect success" regarding our wish's actualization (in what is called "the real world") which produces conflict with this wish. But to say that in such cases we desire *self-contradictorily* is to say that we have not just one but two or more incompatible wishes. This is a crucial insight. Transcendentally speaking, in futile wishing *one wish* arrives as a desire to produce an object merely by wishing this object's existence, as if the "presentation by itself" were enough.³⁸ The other wish, on the other hand, arrives as the supersensible form of purposiveness, as a form of desire which empirically looks like a reasonable expectation that the first wish shall *not* be actualized, especially insofar as it is too ideal.³⁹ One wish is too optimistic and ideal while the other is too pessimistic and even destructive. But this conflict in wishes, *or the simultaneous empirical "result" of their supersensible conflict*, proves

³⁷ See the work, for instance, of George Engel and Arthur Kleinman. These theorists are pluralistic, showing us how health and illness are combinations of various empirical legislations of nature, psychology, physiology, genetics, environment, etc. And this is very helpful. But in my judgment they don't recognize the developmental relation between these legislations and what Kant is calling the presentational power of desire. Their analyses, while helpful and interesting, aren't critical, cognitive of the necessary and ineliminable pre-empirical and precognitive aspects of our experience and cognition of health and illness.

³⁸ If one knows one's wish to be impossible and wishes it nonetheless, this wish would *have* to be wished as if it were a causal superpower beyond the experience of its causal powerlessness. This, it seems to me, is Kant's point.

³⁹ And indeed, technically it is incorrect to call one wish "first" and the other "second" since Kant's point here is that they are in mutual and *simultaneous* conflict.

symptomatically that there must be a subreptive relation between the supersensible causality of wishing, on the one hand, and our experience and expectations of the limits of wishing, on the other. Although one wish causally desires the immediate actualization of a (vain) object and the other causally wishes against the actualization of this object — which may be to say that it wishes for objectlessness, even for lack — the objective symptom which is produced nonetheless is a sign that the *determinative incompatibility* of these wishes in-themselves is *reflectively compatible*.⁴⁰ The somatic illness object thus (mis)actualizes the incompatibility between a futile wish and perfect desire by presenting these in and as a sensible object of longing. The only way to “prove” this, however, is to read the symptom backward towards its “source” in transcendental desire. Does not the heart skip or feel a constriction in deep, partly-conscious longing? In any case, transcendentially speaking, the longing and somatic symptoms, including the futility to which they point, simultaneously “exemplify” that they were wished-for. This will become clearer as we proceed.

Magical Ritualization

After Kant names the languid heart as critical and objective proof of desire’s noncausal power of causality, he repeats this “proof” but with an exteriorizing difference. The object at hand is now (it now appears) outside the body, as an obvious social ritual, rather than being merely a somatization: “Even prayers that ask for the deflection of some great and, as far as we can see, unavoidable evil, and also various superstitious means aimed at achieving purposes unattainable through nature prove the causal relation

⁴⁰ We could say that such objects are compromise formations initiated in and through the somatization of the difference between inside and outside.

of these presentations to their objects; and this relation is such that even an awareness of its insufficiency for producing the effect cannot keep it from striving for the effect.”

Why would Kant turn to superstitious and religious objects as another critical proof of desire’s transcendental power?

His final remarks in the footnote round off the idea that human longing always produces a developmental fallout. The key point, however, concerns the secret persistence of origins. To say that “we do not come to know what forces we have in the first place except by trying them out” is to suggest that *in the first place*, that is, when we are youngest, and perhaps even before and when we are born, we don’t know anything about ourselves and our forces in relation to a world. This is readily imaginable though no one can directly remember it. We have no subjectivity or objectivity as yet, and so no sense of worldliness. Indeed, to say that we “come to know” what forces we have — where technically for Kant “forces” are to be distinguished from a priori “power” — is to say that we develop our subjective forces and relations to objects from an initial non-cognitive but indirectly analyzable power, that of transcendental desire, in the direction of cognition and knowledge.

Kant’s reference to this “first place,” then, should be taken in a number of senses, including that which highlights Kant’s references to primitive superstition. Indeed, what he seems to have in mind here is primitive human life in general, and perhaps especially that belonging to individual development.⁴¹ Think for instance of a mother’s dotting care

⁴¹ As we shall see, I do not by “primitive” mean to disparage any group or individual, as was done for instance when racist and ethnocentric anthropologies used this term. The primitive is not just the early or the ancient and certainly not the backwards or the vicious, or at least isn’t *merely* these. For the primitive includes an impulse to development; not just a regressive impulse but a progressive one as well. As we shall see, then, the primitive is the originary and persistent and therefore exists in all kinds of less *and more* developed social formations. This is paradoxical or paralogical, of course, but as such it generates — as Kant and Winnicott know well, for instance — an impulse toward understanding.

and a baby whose *desire* is met by this mother (almost) instantly, as soon as or even before the baby's desire expresses itself. Indeed, let's look at this relationship from two basic points of view. From outside the baby's perspective, we see a causally active and beneficent mother doing everything she can to care for a helpless newborn babe.⁴² Indeed, when we call the latter "helpless," we mean that he is, well, incapable as yet in the world. He cannot talk, he cannot use his body, he cannot do anything, it seems, but fumble around, mouth, and leave us stinky presents.⁴³ From this perspective, the baby is more or less "powerless," so to speak, to be the cause of worldly objects; he must somehow come to *develop* his forces, as Kant says, but in the meantime is completely dependent upon the mother. Given his mother's constant and meticulous doting, in fact, it is not he but almost entirely she who does everything for him, she who presents the "objects" he comes into contact with. It is not he but she who gratifies and actualizes his wishes so quickly that he cannot as yet develop a firm awareness of them as subjective things distinct from the objects of their actualization.

But this last bit already hints at what the baby's "perspective" must be like. Since all he "experiences" near the beginning of life is something tending toward an instantaneous actualization of his wishes, it is not or not just powerlessness and helplessness which he lives. On the contrary, what is lived is something on the order of or approximating a "godlike" capacity for fantastic actualization. From the baby's earliest nonperspectival perspective, in other words, wishing and actualization arrive so

⁴² For sake of expedience, in most cases where I am referring to a mother and child I will, given the biological sex of female mothers, refer to the child as "he" in order to make the distinction in the example at hand easy to follow.

⁴³ Kant's suggestion in the "Sheer Resolution" essay that "some sort of unhealthy condition (such as flatulence or constipation) may be the source of [melancholia]" derives its weight here, that is, when we realize the give and take of the earliest objectivities.

intimately undifferentiated that neither stands out, subjectively for the first, objectively for the second. This baby is about to sense his desire or need, for instance, and something which seems to fulfill it arrives simultaneously, or virtually so. Thus, to say that newborns are powerless is not, *transcendentally speaking*, to say that they are *ineffective*, or indeed, that they lack an a priori desire whose power is manifestation, phenomenalization, objectification. On the contrary, a baby's so-called powerlessness is fully *compatible* with a formally causal superpower of wishing, where causality and its effects are or would be simultaneous. Do we all not begin this way? Of course, on the other hand, and again from an outside, socialized perspective, since no mother is faultless enough to meet a baby's wishes perfectly — and who knows what is first wanted? — even if this presupposed power of desire were something we could think of as being there at the “ground zero” of birth, so to speak, it is also something which will have to be given up, or rather, as we shall see, *developmentally subrepted* so as to appear that it has been given up or even never actually was.

Before this developmental forgetfulness of perfect wish actualization dawns cognitively, indeed as cognition, however, there is a mediate, in fact a *magically* mediating, step.⁴⁴ How so? Let us remember that in the baby's eyes — as the seed of hallucination and dreaming — the mother doesn't just seem to be but *is*, as his only worldly “object,” and indeed as his whole “world,” *all-important, fully significant*. The mother and what she brings, we could say, are not just representationally but, prior to and with this, presentationally sacred. This sacredness, however, is a developmental first

⁴⁴ Although I will focus with Kant here on individual development, by “development” I also mean historical (r)evolution over generations. Indeed, we can't have ontogenesis without the phylogenesis, as Kant will suggest in his work on symbolic enculturation. The building of culture distances and separates generations in the destruction and building of the (natural but humanly distorted) world.

step, a movement of sacralization which is intimately tied up with an alternately necessary desacralization. The mother is, after all, imperfect and cannot — and developmentally speaking, she should not — be there to fulfill her child's every wish. Why? Growth requires both obstacles and routines mutually developed to meet these obstacles. At first, these routines develop primitively: As the baby comes to find that his gratifying "object" is *not* under perfect wishful control, he develops the thought of an "outside/inside" distinction, one, however, which arrives in a surprisingly conflated or alternately divided form. Indeed, my suggestion here is that the object becomes sacred precisely to the degree that primitive desire, fantastic objectification, becomes subreptively and empirically crossed-up, simultaneously divided and conflated, in and between an "inside" and "outside," the one reflecting the other in the presence and absence of this all-important thing:⁴⁵ If the baby's wish is not immediately met, he is prompted — indeed, *sublimely* prompted if we recall Kant's introduction of the notion of subreption — to develop rituals and discovers forces (a power in himself, which in the baby is exhibited as screaming and crying, for instance) which can be used to maintain, strengthen, or diminish what also then appear as various desired effects. But again, from the emergent perspective of the baby, inside and outside are not that distinct or, alternately, they're all too separate, at least at first.

Thus, following upon, maintaining, and subrepted from out of the conditioning illusion of transcendental desire (the causal identification of "wish" and "actualization") comes the experience of magic. Magic appears in the ritual crossing of wishing with the

⁴⁵ I would say, for instance, that what we now call autism is the site of magic in its clearest developmental form. See Bettelheim, 1972, especially the chapter on Laurie.

relative indistinction or seemingly total separation of inside and outside.⁴⁶ It pivots on the objective force of subjects to the degree that some thing, in signifying a sacred intimacy, can be used to influence a now-distinct subject, for better or worse. Birth exposes the need for magic. Take the breast in early feeding: At first the baby cannot be said to know if, let alone when, it will return. Thus, if it is sensed to have disappeared, to be gone for good for instance, the wish and movement which conjures it forth will be seen as magical to the degree that a sacred relation is reborn with these. This influence over that which seems to have disappeared, then, is “magic.” Indeed, once the thing has been brought forward for satisfaction, it can be wished away through yet another ritual. We thus have a full cycle, one routinized, regimented, ritualized soon enough: The baby longingly wishes for the thing, and behold, together with some fanciful ceremonials, it soon appears; when he wishes that it go away and performs yet another rite, the thing moves away, destroyed or at least magically warded-off yet again. The thing is conjured forth and away in turn, in other words, through cycles of wish-infused objective ritual.

But let me add a point of clarification: The baby doesn’t perform these rituals thinking that it is the screaming and crying and not really her “mere wish” which conjures her “sacred object” forth or away. On the contrary, in the earliest infancy there is no such thing as a mere wish. For the appearance or *disappearance* of any object will have been, even if only retrospectively, wishfully infused. This is “because” the baby’s desire is not yet clearly differentiated from “objects,” or alternately is all too surprisingly differentiated. Nonetheless, a developmental aspect emerges in the comings and goings of satisfaction: Whereas we must presuppose that there was once a complete identification of inside and outside, and wish and object, it’s *now* more that the baby

⁴⁶ Perhaps this crossing is what Merleau-Ponty describes in his work on “the chiasm.”

thinks her wish *is* this noise (this screaming and crying, for instance) which is almost, or related to, or connected to, the forth- or away-conjured sacred thing.⁴⁷ In short, then, the subreption of fantastic objectification corresponds developmentally to the losing and finding by the primitive human of an ability to more *or less* instantly actualize a wish in the form of a *deeply significant* object, which means that the developmental fallout of our most needy and primitive longings retains the formal rule of fantastic objectification, in the form of ritualized magic and magical thinking, if not exactly fantastic objectification's perfectly undifferentiated content and its perfectly conflated personage. *Magic appears experientially and experience must appear as magic when wish is in the process of being distinguished from object but that process remains pupal to the point where "mere wishes" can still be identified with practices so as to generate — or from the point of view of fully developed cognition, so as to seem to generate — some empirical influence over what appears.* This influence, as we shall see, is symbolic, the work of *symbolization*.

Notice in this regard that prior to his more cognitive referencing of superstition and prayer in the fantastic footnote, Kant first refers, symbolically as it were, to what we might call a superstitious moment in Vergil's *Aeneid*. As Pluhar's footnote indicates, "O mihi praeteritos, etc" refers to the *Aeneid* passage at viii, 560, "*O mihi praeteritos referat si Iuppiter annos,*" which in English can be translated "if Jupiter would only restore to me those bygone years." What is the significance of this reference? The main transcendental point is that, given our "propensity toward desires of whose futility we are aware," superstitious and religious rituals — which Kant here identifies — fulfill for us a

⁴⁷ Here we can see what empirically begins to appear in "constant conjunction." Wish and object become "connected" through the pre- or sub-dialectic between illusion and disillusion.

wish to have our vain and failing desires “actualized” *nonetheless*, both insofar as we have, *and* despite, a growing awareness of their empirical impossibility.

Kant’s admission that this is an anthropological-teleological question, and thus a developmental one, is correct in this respect. Despite his personal and critical support of Pietism specifically and Christian rationalism more generally, he is not offering a theological analysis here but, on the contrary, a *philosophical archaeology of magico-religious thinking and practice*. This archaeology will include what Kant calls symbolization and cognition in developmental turn. Given the development of the passage as a whole, the point of the reference to Jupiter is that since magical practices grow out of the fact that as wishers we wish beyond our worldly means *and in doing so* create rituals to mediate this overextension which somehow “gratify” our wishes nonetheless — say, as consolation — Jupiter, as the supposed ruler of gods and worlds, archaeologically (mis)reflects our *own* transcendental power of fantastic objectification. The “gods” arise for us developmentally and historically, in other words, on the back of our *own* impossible-to-cognitively-remember capacity to wishfully create the world. The “gods” meet our need, which is also to say our wish, to immediately fulfill unfulfillable wishes.⁴⁸

“We moderns” have come to call certain beliefs or practices “superstitious,” after all, whenever they grant not a cognitive, mechanical, or natural but a supposedly animistic, magical, or supernatural causation of this or that object. In a similar way, Kant here uses the word “superstition” (*Superstition*) to remind us of the magical feel, the aesthetic sense, of the falling-out of primitive “supersensibility” (*Übersinnlichkeit*) into and toward objectivity, even into and toward the objectivity of science: To stand-over

⁴⁸ In Part Two, we will occasionally analyze Winnicott’s work to specify these developmental structures.

something in awe, as “superstition” etymologically denotes, is to be awe-struck by a power which apparently lies both in and beyond this object’s obviously natural and cognitive properties — the magic is said to be the object’s “aura,” “mana,” “qi,” “energy,” etc — just as, according to Kant, a beautiful object, which is always sensible, refers us subreptively to a supersensible pre-objectivity as its hidden condition. Similarly, “ob-ject” etymologically signifies a being thrown-out, as into sensibility.

Thus, magical and religious objects and practices are subrepted externalizations.⁴⁹ They are wishes and contain wishes, true, but to the degree that they’re an extension of a radical power of actualization, they’re *never* mere or vain wishes. Rather, as both symptoms and forms of consolation, they are effective to some degree even when they seemingly fail. This, then, is Kant’s basic archaeological point: Since we produce superstitious rituals as if to satisfy certain vain desires despite the otherwise apparent impossibility of satisfaction, this means, *critically speaking*, that magic and religion actually reflect human dependencies and idealizations. Gods and idols, in other words, are *anthropomorphisms* unrecognized up to the point of a critical self-examination of our development, an examination which shows them to be productions stemming from the context of primitive need, desire, and desire’s wishful failure to fulfill need immediately. For even in failing, gods and idols symptomatically prove desire’s *secret* work of our wanting to be godlike, to escape loss and its travails. Indeed, from another, more primitive, but nonetheless Kantian perspective, we wishfully develop such rituals and,

⁴⁹ For now, we need not distinguish magic from religion. When we turn to Marx, however, this distinction will stand out as important.

behold, the divinities who would fulfill our wishes become the actual objects of these rituals.⁵⁰

Symbolic Enculturation

In the last sections of the critique of aesthetic judgment, Kant expands and clarifies this process of magical experience by articulating two developmental structures the first of which, symbolization, extends the ritualization of longing we have been examining and the second of which, cognition, marks the symbolically transformative forgetting of *primitive* symbolization. At stake in both symbolization and cognition, then, as section fifty-nine “On Beauty as the Symbol of Morality” perhaps best exemplifies, is the *objectification of a sensible object* from out of something formal:

All *hypotyposis* (exhibition...) consists in making a concept sensible, and is either *schematic* or *symbolic*. In schematic hypotyposis there is a concept that the understanding has formed, and the intuition corresponding to it is given a priori. In symbolic hypotyposis there is a concept which only reason can think and to which no sensible intuition can be adequate, and this concept is supplied with an intuition that judgment treats in a way merely analogous to the procedure it follows in schematizing; i.e. the treatment agrees with this procedure merely in the rule followed rather than in terms of the intuition itself, and hence merely in terms of the form of reflection rather than its content. (226=351)

When Kant suggests that symbolizing or symbolization agrees with the procedure of schematizing or schematization “merely in the rule followed rather than in terms of the intuition itself,” he is referring immediately backwards to his suggestion that concerning ideas of reason, which are supersensible, “no sensible intuition can be

⁵⁰ After Kant’s hint, both Hegel and Nietzsche remind us that for the early, and especially for the pre-Socratic, Greeks, a statue of a god was both the symbolic clue of this god’s power *and* the symbolic actualization of the god, who was then supposedly there, alive. The aesthetic object, in other words, both represented *and* presented “the god” whereas for “we moderns” such a statue likely just seems to represent such a god. This is why the object could now be called “magical.” See Hegel, 1993 and Nietzsche, 1999.

adequate.” To say that these two kinds of judgment are analogous, then, is to say that while the procedures agree in terms of the “rule followed” or the “form of reflection” since they *both supply form with intuition*, only in schematization is the given intuition sufficient, indeed, already sufficient in terms of this form. Indeed, this material refers back to Kant’s guiding problem in the Introduction. Since there is no “great gulf” between understanding and imagination preventing such direct correspondence, an intuition can be said to “correspond” a priori to a concept of understanding. And since understanding and imagination are faculties of cognition and are part of the same domain, they can and do play harmoniously in claims of taste concerning beautiful objects. Correspondence and play before this *same* object of taste cannot be said to exist, however, between an idea of reason, as supersensible, and the sensible intuition which the imagination gives to “exhibit” this idea.

When two paragraphs later Kant provides an example of symbolic objectification, however, something strange happens, or has already happened, as if by textual slippage. He has just defined symbolization and analogy not as the making differently sensible of some already sensible and schematized object but as the making sensible *in the first place* of an idea of reason which, as supersensible, is in itself unfit for sensibility or schematizing; and yet the example he gives to explain his definition takes two already sensible objects (a constitutional monarchy and an absolute monarchy) and symbolizes these with yet two other sensible objects (an animate body and a mere machine), respectively:

Symbolic exhibition uses an analogy (for which we use empirical intuition as well), in which judgment performs a double function: it applies the concept to the object of a sensible intuition; and then it applies the mere rule by which it reflects on that

intuition to an entirely different object, of which the former object is only the symbol. Thus a monarchy ruled according to its own constitutional laws would be presented as an animate body, but a monarchy ruled by an individual absolute will would be presented as a mere machine (such as a handmill); but in either case the presentation is only symbolic. For though there is no similarity between a despotic state and a handmill [for instance], there certainly is one between the rules by which we reflect on the two and on how they operate [in terms of] causality. (227=352)

Thus, it's as if a critical gap had slyly opened up in the text. What was just two paragraphs before a transcendental analysis of the symbolic objectification of a supersensible and nonobjective condition is now suddenly what seems to be a merely empirical exemplification where one empirical object symbolizes another object. Why might Kant have done this? In his fine reading of Kant's third *Critique*, Henry Allison notices this discrepancy which most other Kant commenters fail to notice.⁵¹ According to Allison, Kant's analysis here is "cryptic." There is, he says,

...an important question with which Kant does not deal explicitly, namely, how can the mere reflection on a sensible intuition, which *ex hypothesi* is not governed by a determinate concept, be viewed as formally analogous to the explicitly rule-governed reflection on the corresponding intellectual object? This question does not arise in the case of Kant's examples, since they each involve a reflection based on determinate concepts (of a handmill and an organism), whereas this is precisely what is supposedly lacking in the mere reflection of taste. (256)

Allison is right — at least in a sense — that by reflecting determinate concepts and empirical objects against each other, Kant's symbolization examples fail to reflect the *indeterminacy* of supersensibility and as such *misexemplify* his initial definition of symbolization where what is symbolized, and indeed, what requires not schematization but symbolization insofar as there can be no adequate or corresponding intuition of it, is supersensibility in itself. Finding this a bit cryptic and inexplicit, Allison turns away

⁵¹ Allison, 2001.

from any immanent critique of this discrepancy and endeavors to justify the link between taste and morality by tracking what he suggests is an “isomorphism” of form between aesthetic ideas and rationally moral ideas. This is a legitimate move. Indeed, his suggestion, following Kant, that aesthetic ideas prompt indeterminate thoughts and thereby enable the judge of taste to consider aspects of the object which transport her beyond her initial concerns in the gratifying allure of the object’s charms toward something indeterminately supersensible is helpful.

We, on the other hand, shall here suggest that there is something secretly but developmentally significant about this discrepancy. Although Allison is right that Kant’s examples misexemplify his initial definition of symbolization, we shall suggest that these examples are also *performatively* correct insofar as their very failure to explicitly reflect the supersensible symbolizes the development towards cognition that is here at stake. What Allison sees as a simple mistake in Kant’s analysis, in other words, we shall examine for its subtextually symbolic and performative precision as a slip, as a performative symptom. Allison’s description of Kant’s text as “cryptic,” in this regard, is more telling than one would think. Indeed, my suggestion is that Kant’s writing is subreptive here of the symbolization which is at stake. Kant’s writing is a “cryptography,” in other words, to the degree that it does not just tell us but also performatively shows us, through the non-recognition of *its* mistakes, how symbolic code develops. *We need* to express loss and disillusion in a *meaningful* way, don’t we? How, then, do we begin to do this, and why? Kant’s idea includes the fact that our experience and memory only give us part of the story, and that stories develop as life is challenged. Indeed, since what is at stake in symbolization is precisely a non-recognition or

disavowal of its own indeterminate (although not indeterminable) supersensible condition, Kant's examples perform this developmental process of disavowal. As such, his archeology of cognition is only understandable in its widest sense if one reads it subreptively, tracking fantastic objectification, by means of a code of magic and superstition — a fetishistic hieroglyphics as Marx will articulate it — into the realm of symbolic disavowal.

It is no accident on my reading, for instance, that in the many places in his work where Kant tackles the process of symbolization, he almost invariably uses as his example an analogy between “God” (or this being's supposed power) and “humanity” (or one of our forces).⁵² A page after offering his analogy (in the third *Critique*) between types of monarchy and types of causality, for instance, and after commenting briefly on the symbolism involved in basic philosophical language — thus symbolically articulating his self-awareness of his own writing and capacity to write in a distant connection to longing — Kant makes the following suggestion: “If a mere way of presenting something may ever be called cognition (which I think is permissible if this cognition is a principle not for determining the object theoretically, as to what it is in itself, but for determining it practically, as to what the idea of the object ought to become for us and for our purposive employment of it), then all our cognition of God is merely symbolic” (228=353).⁵³ Similarly, discussing symbolization in the *Prolegomena*, Kant distinguishes between *dogmatic* anthropomorphism, which he rejects since it attributes

⁵² Ever the workhorse, Pluhar provides a list of these places in a footnote (number 31, 226=351).

⁵³ See also the critique of teleological judgment, 347=456.

human predicates to God as he would be in himself, and *symbolic* anthropomorphism which “concerns language only and not the object itself.”⁵⁴

It is in two footnotes from this section of the *Prolegomena*, in fact, where Kant offers what are perhaps his most telling — subtextually telling — suggestions concerning symbolization. Seen in combination, these notes reveal the transcendental cryptography be-longing to empirical symbolization. By secretly exhibiting our power to fantastically fulfill wishes, indeed longings, symbols point to and bear (the forces of) human development. According to Kant:

By means of ... analogy I can obtain a notion of the relation of things which absolutely are unknown to me. For instance, as the promotion of the welfare of children (= a) is to the love of parents (= b), so the welfare of the human species (= c) is to that unknown character in God (= x), which we call love; not as if it had the least similarity to any human inclination, but because we can suppose its relation to the world to be similar to that which things of the world bear one another.

and

I may say that the causality of the Supreme Cause holds the same place with regard to the world that human reason does with regard to its works of art....⁵⁵

When Kant suggests in section fifty-nine that symbolic judgment “performs a double function,” the analogy he offers between an absolute monarchy and a machine on the one hand and a constitutional monarchy and an animate body on the other hand, as we’ve seen, omits the symbolic procedure his definition had made explicit, namely, the

⁵⁴ See Kant, 1988, 222. Notice here that Kant apparently fails to see the critical relationship between the symbolic framing of our basic philosophical language and the relegation of the notion of God to “language only.” It’s as if he could see that “God” is a false cognition of the process of magical ritualization and symbolization, but he cannot bring himself to say this cognitively. He thus only implies it by means of symbolic reference as if he were bearing in mind the fact that verbal language is *sensible*—as ink on paper, for instance.

⁵⁵ Kant, 1988, 223-224. These are the first two footnotes of section 58. However, because Beck’s edition translates “works of art” in the second footnote merely as “products,” I’ve taken the translation of the second footnote here from an internet translation, copyright James Fieser, 1997 (<http://eserver.org/philosophy/kant-prolegomena.txt>).

falsely making sensible and intuitable in the first place of a *supersensible* condition. In this first footnote from the *Prolegomena*, however, Kant doesn't obscure judgment's double function as much as he does by means of the third *Critique's* examples. He combines judgment's first or a priori function of objectifying supersensibility and its second function of applying the "mere rule" of this first function to an "entirely different object": He first casts the causality of transcendental desire as if it belonged to the *object* here named "God" and then "God" is again symbolized (in "language only") by casting his supposed relation to the human species (in terms of love, which is *eros*, which is the power of *desire*) as if it were like the empirical relation between two sensible objects, namely, parents and children. We thus see how the critical slip which Allison rightly finds "cryptic," and which most scholars don't acknowledge, actually secretly works archeologically and performatively: Any empirical symbolization of one object or pair of objects by another object or object-pair always also *secretly* symbolizes the magical objectification in the first place of the condition of supersensible desire. By concentrating on the causality of autonomous versus heteronomous governance, Kant's examples in section fifty-nine do not *explicitly* reference the supersensible in itself, true. This, however, is the point. Symbolization (reveals as it) hides supersensibility in and as sensible objects. Indeed, it develops precisely out of our failing desire to be godlike or perfect in our wishing. *All symbolization in this regard is a process of longing and, indeed, of mourning primitive loss.*

Indeed, this same point is "revealed" in the second footnote from the *Prolegomena*. When Kant says "that the causality of the Supreme Cause holds the same place with regard to the world that human reason does with regard to its works of art," he

can be understood in a religious and idealistic sense as naming “God” as the creative cause of the human world. The *cryptic* phrase “causality of the Supreme Cause” would thus mark a power of world creation which belongs to “God” as his primary attribute. All “God” has to do is wishfully desire the world or any of its objects and without delay or mediation the world and its objects are fantastically actualized. Or at least so goes the theological account of omnipotence. If we remember, however, that in the fantastic footnote Kant both (a) distinguishes “causality” from “cause” as a transcendental condition is developmentally distinguished from its empirical appearance and (b) casts religious and superstitious practices in general as developmental substitutions of our own transcendental power of fantastic objectification, then we can critically understand the phrase “*causality* of the Supreme Cause” as designating not what belongs to a putative divinity but rather to ourselves, to the cryptic within us, as artistic creators of a world developmentally populated with absconding magical beings and sacred objects. Subreptively understood, in other words, what determines the “Supreme Cause” is not an objective cause, supreme or otherwise, but the transcendental causality which religious and superstitious rituals developmentally harness and symbolize. Indeed, we would do better to suggest that these rituals (mis)symbolize this causality insofar as all *objective* symbolization necessarily presents, and so simultaneously mispresents, its *non- or pre-objective* pre-history. A symbol is thus a metaphorical representation of supersensible desire which is simultaneously a secret literal presentation of this desire. Whereas representation re-presents something with and through another thing, showing the second thing to be “about” the first thing, presentation *is* this first thing. Representation has been mediated whereas presentation as yet is not. But re-presentation contains presentation in

the way that for Freud, for instance, the secondary processes will secretly contain primary processes, as if beneath the surface. Presentation is thus the subtext of representation.

This refers us back again to the first footnote. Kant's suggestion that the promotion of the welfare of children is to the love of parents as the welfare of the human species is to that unknown character in God which we call *eros* is not, critically speaking, a suggestion that the empirical parent-child relationship symbolizes a more primary or primitive erotic relationship between "God" and the human world. Rather, it is the reverse of this. The supersensible and primary relation here is not the god-human relation but the desirous parent-child relation before it has been made "understandable" by and for the child *by means* which begin in ritualized codes of objective *superstition*. And this refers us back yet again to the second footnote. The suggestion that the relation between human reason and artworks is like the creative relation between God and the world critically indicates that the relation between human reason and artworks is actually and most deeply like the relationship between parental reason (and repressed desire) and childish desire (and inchoate reason), namely, an *aesthetically developmental and subreptively educative relationship*.

How does the symbolization we call art enable development? Let's work toward an answer by suggesting first of all that Kant offers us a clue early in the *Critique* when he declares that *hunger is not the best sauce*, that is, that we don't *aesthetically* appreciate an object if crudely sensuous desire is merely what drives our liking (52=210). Allison, too, provides a clue for answering this question, but he does not himself pursue the lesson this clue offers. He reminds us that in one of Kant's notebooks Kant links what we are calling the ritualization of longing to the relationship we find between mothers and

babies. This, then, is why we felt justified earlier in performing this analysis from a Kantian perspective. In this apparently innocuous remark, in fact, Kant brings together all of the elements of our analysis. He subreptively links and divides a priori objectification to and from the externalizations we call longing, somatization, magical ritualization, and symbolization. Indeed, his claim firmly places the aesthetic link between sense and supersensibility within the developmental vicissitudes of desire: “Beautiful objects and beautiful representations of objects,” he states, and I emphasize, “*wean* the mind from the mere satisfaction of enjoyment and bring it closer to morality.”⁵⁶

What does a primitive human being — what do we all — want? According to Kant, the objects we most archaically desire we like sensuously, at least for the most part. We like them because they are “agreeable,” because they “gratify.” This is not to say, however, that the primitive person lacks *taste* for these objects or, more broadly, that aesthetic judgment doesn’t rest upon gratification. Taste, however, isn’t reducible to gratification. On the contrary, and as Kant slowly but eventually makes clear over the course of the *Critique*, taste is something which must be *developed* in subreptive *remove* from mere sensuousness and mere gratification. When the experience of beauty dawns, he says in section fifty-nine, “...the mind is also conscious of being ennobled ... above a mere receptivity for pleasure derived from sense impressions” (228=353). Or, as the final sentence of this section puts it: “Taste enables us, as it were, to make the transition from sensible charm to habitual moral interest without making too violent a leap; for taste presents the imagination as admitting, even in its freedom, of determination that is

⁵⁶ Kant, 1902, vol 15, p. 354.

purposive for the understanding, and it teaches us to like even objects of sense freely, even apart from sensible charm” (230=354).

Given the “great gulf” which always threatens to turn abysmal between sense and supersensibility, however, what is it about symbolization which makes this transition possible? Kant’s entire analysis in the third *Critique* of the intersubjectivity belonging to *sensus communis* could be said to address the issue of broadening judgment and, in developing a broader, more cosmopolitan perspective, (mis)bridging this gulf. *Sensus communis* is what enables us to establish and hold ourselves accountable to norms for the communication — like the communication of a beneficent disease — of the pleasure of judging. To judge by *sensus communis* is to abstract to some degree from the limitations and biases of one’s own sensuous proclivities and needs to judge an object as all others would judge under a presumed similar, developmental abstraction. As Kant puts it in his section on *sensus communis*: “We must here take *sensus communis* to mean the idea of a sense shared by all of us [*gemeinshaftlichen*], i.e. a power to judge that in reflecting takes account (a priori), in our thought, of everyone else’s way of presenting...” (160=293). If we abstract from our private and empirical interest in a given object, however, what we are left with is our most primitive way of presenting, namely, our *shared* power of objectifying objects whatsoever from out of a non-objective plenum through transcendental symbolization. Symbolization, then, is what stands between supersensibility and sense and what enables a transition between these poles precisely by *reflecting* one in and as the other, in and despite the great gulf. Sense can thus appear as more than mere sensuousness, as a partially developed maturity. Or we could say that the

supersensibility of morality can (mis)appear in feelings of pleasure, the pleasure of sharing human (a)social life.

Kant's clearest statement on this issue appears not in his sections concerning *sensus communis*, however, but in his final statement on symbolization in the critique of aesthetic judgment in section sixty, an "appendix":

It seems that for all fine art, insofar as we aim at its highest degree of perfection, the propaedeutic does not consist in following precepts but in cultivating our mental powers by exposing ourselves beforehand to what we call *humaniora*, the humanities; they are called that presumably because *Humanitat* means both the universal *feeling of sympathy*, and the ability to engage universally in very *intimate communication*. When these two qualities are combined, they constitute the sociability that befits our humanity and distinguishes it from the limitations characteristic of animals. There were peoples during one age whose strong urge to have sociability under laws, through which a people becomes a lasting commonwealth, wrestled with the great problems that surround the difficult task of combining freedom (and hence also equality) with some constraint (a constraint based more on respect and on submission from duty than on fear). A people in such an age had to begin by discovering the art of reciprocal communication of ideas between its most educated and its cruder elements, and by discovering how to make the improvement and refinement of the first harmonize with the natural simplicity and originality of the second, finding in this way that mean between higher culture and an undemanding nature constituting the right standard, unstatable in any universal rules, even for taste, which is the universal human sense. (231=355)

What is communicated in beautiful art and in the experience of beauty? The idea that the refinement of the more-educated can be made to harmonize with the originality of the less-educated by means of "the art of reciprocal communication of ideas" is suggestive of what we just uncovered in Kant's phrase *gemeinschaftlichen*, which Pluhar translates as "a sense shared by all" and which Meredith translates as "public."⁵⁷ Both translations are useful to the degree that Kant definitely wants to indicate not just a common capacity to judge but also a sense of what is materially shared, and indeed, of

⁵⁷ See Allison, 388, note 61.

what is shareable in and by means of objects, and so by means of objectivity. Notice, then, that in both of these phrases — “the *art* of reciprocal communication of *ideas*” and “the *idea* of a *sense* shared by all” — the supersensible, as an indeterminate ideal, is balanced by reference to something crudely non-ideal. What is communicated in art like a beneficent disease is neither solely sensuous nor solely ideal but a (mis)presentation of both of these such that the crude (babies, for instance) and the more-reasoned (many adults, for example) come to be able to relate to each other developmentally by means of the symbolizations a *shared, educative art of pleasing* offers.⁵⁸ Since the crude develop from out of the mere charm of sensuousness through the symbolic introduction to ideas and since the refined have become so enamored of ideas but still must materialize ideas to a more or less obvious degree if they are to communicate socially and intimately — there is no such thing as a telepathic exchange of ideas, despite the claims of the childish adult — what serves to mediate these groups and enable a *mutually* developmental interaction are pleasing aesthetic objects together with the art of communication. To the degree that it tends toward the creation of sympathy and intimacy (together), art becomes the transmissive and cultivative means of individual and historical development. Philosophy remains an art, for instance, to the degree that it cultivates and communicates an intimate feeling of sympathy between oneself and others.

This means that beautiful objects enable *development* by subreptively (mis)presenting gratification as a *pleasing resistance to mere gratification* on the one

⁵⁸ Ideas must have some sort of constraint if they are to be communicated, after all, and it is beautiful art which offers this constraint in the form of a pleasing and intersubjective objectivity: “It is advisable to remind ourselves that in all the free arts there is yet a need for something in the order of a constraint, or, as it is called a *mechanism*. . . . Without this the *spirit*, which in art must be free and which alone animates the work, would have no body at all and would evaporate completely. This reminder is needed because some of the more recent educators believe that they promote a free art best if they remove all constraint from it. . . .” (171=304).

hand and by subreptively (mis)presenting pure reason as *a sensible anticipation of morality's non-sensuousness* on the other hand. Identity with nature or, alternately, with reason is transformed here at least to some small degree into a *relationship* between developing subjects, a *sensus communis*. In order for this process to take place, however, pure ideas need an objective place to be “taken.” What is needed is not pure gratification nor absolute categorical demand but a claim of sympathy — for the old were and remain somewhere young, do they not? — a pleasing *object between* the crude and the refined concerning the loss and gain each must suffer or has suffered in growing up. Symbolizing both the loss of merely sensuous intimacy and the maintenance of mutual subjectivization, the beautiful object helps to manage the insult of discontinued gratification and the guilt-inspiring ideality of merely moral command. When culture is historically able to communicate individuality by means of art, it lives at least one more generation. For it is aesthetic experience which helps us manage what otherwise wearies us of life.

This, then, and again, is why Kant can round off the fantastic footnote with the seemingly absurd claim that the deception of futile and impossible wishes is the result of a *beneficent* arrangement in our nature. *Too much immediate wish-fulfillment, like too much moral guilt, inhibits development.* Indeed, if desire did not at some level and in the first place *fail*, and if rather than deceiving us desire was always already and perfectly “met” in nature, our objectivity — in the aesthetic, theoretical, and practical senses, in this logical if not temporal order — could not develop at all. Objectivity begins and grows, and continues to grow *toward* science and morality, in other words, when primitive desire causally presents some thing not just perfectly, as by fantastic

objectification, *but imperfectly, in aesthetic objectification*. The growth of such objectivity, in turn, is and encourages the growth of culture. As Kant says in section forty-one, “we judge someone as refined if he has the inclination and the skill to communicate his pleasure to others, *and if he is not satisfied with an object unless he can feel his liking for it in community with others*” (164=297, my emphasis). The emphasis on community here is crucial. Taste just is the building of mutually likeable community, in and despite our sensuous interests and moral demands, in the course of being educated.

Cognition

The link Kant makes between magic and symbolization as conditions for the cultivation of objectivity apparently cuts against the progressivist and certainly the triumphalist Enlightenment tendency to cast “objectivity” as the complete overcoming of fantasy and illusion. In the triumphalist tradition, for instance, the experience of magic is not said to be an ingredient in but the *opposite* of objectivity. Magic is “heathen” or “backward,” like so much polytheism. Talk about guilt! Indeed, at times, or at least according to certain interpretations, Kant himself seems to fall into a merely progressivist (anti-regression) camp. In *What is Enlightenment*, for example, he famously tells us from the start that “[e]nlightenment is man’s release from his self-incurred tutelage” (8:35)—as if enlightenment were liberation from passive obedience to external imperatives and norms.⁵⁹ And yet, of course, as the essay proceeds Kant argues that pure liberty and the sheer overcoming of superstition are precisely not what he has in mind. Public citizens can develop a *cosmopolitanly objective* perspective not when freedom is extended universally to everyone but by limiting freedom in order to maintain and develop it. Just

⁵⁹ See Kant, 1988, 462.

like everyone else but *moreso*, for example, state or government workers must adhere to many behavioral rules in their domestic or civil roles: “Many affairs which are conducted in the interest of the community require a certain mechanism through which some members of the community must passively conduct themselves with an artificial unanimity so that the government may direct them to public ends or at least to prevent them from destroying those ends” (8:37). Indeed, “here is shown a strange and unexpected trend in human affairs in which almost everything, looked at in the large, is paradoxical. A greater degree of civil freedom appears advantageous to the freedom of mind of the people, and yet it places inescapable limitations upon it; a lower degree of civil freedom, on the contrary, provides the mind with room for each man to extend himself to his full capacity” (8:41). Enlightenment and enlightened cognition, then, are not so much the result of freedom as they are achievements of *reasonably guided educational constraints*.

We find a similar argument at work concerning the development of cognition in the third *Critique*, especially in sections V and VI of the Introduction and as defended by Kant’s solution to the antinomy of taste. What’s at stake is not exactly the above paradox, that *political* cognition develops by means of restricted freedoms, but still, a similar, indeed a wider, paradox is at play. Kant’s point here is that *objective cognition in general* develops out of non-cognitive conditions and pre-cognitive means. To understand both nature and human nature objectively, he says, we must presuppose in the first place not a distinct *purpose* of judgment, since in this case judgment would teleologically belie the subreptive relationship between the conditions of experience and experience, but rather an as-yet *unspecified purposiveness* which experience comes to

mark derivatively and determinately with purposes and concepts. According to Kant, “the principle of the purposiveness of nature (in the diversity of its empirical laws) is a *transcendental* principle. For the concept of objects, insofar as they are thought as subject to this principle, is only the pure concept of objects of possible empirical cognition in general” (21=181).

Kant was apparently deeply worried — even anxious — about this particular problem! No fewer than seven times in the Introduction’s small section V does he highlight the deep human need, a wish for sociability, which the a priori supposition of purposiveness fulfills. Given that our experience, and *especially primitive experience*, is faced with “a diversity of empirical laws” which we would not otherwise be able to organize to form “cognition in general,” we must suppose this purposiveness as an organizing principle of experience and cognition. Purposiveness, in other words, is the principle through which our world, the social and human world included, can come to make sense, any sense. It is the condition of possibly having a world which at least partly coheres. As Kant puts this:

Now this transcendental concept of purposiveness of nature is neither a concept of nature nor a concept of freedom, since it attributes nothing whatsoever to the object (nature), but through [it] we only think of the one and only way in which we must proceed when reflecting on the objects of nature with the aim of having thoroughly coherent experience.... A principle like this is expressed in the following propositions..., [for example,] that, while *initially* it seems to our understanding unavoidable to assume as many different kinds of causality as there are specific differences among natural effects, they may nevertheless fall under a small number of principles which it is our task to discover.... For it is quite conceivable that, regardless of all the uniformity of natural things in terms of the universal laws [of a priori understanding], without which the form of an empirical cognition in general would not occur at all, the specific differences in the empirical laws of nature, along with their effects, might still be so great that it would be impossible for our understanding to discover in nature an order it could grasp—i.e. impossible for it to divide nature’s products into genera and species so as to use the principles by which

we explain and understand one product in order to explain and grasp another as well, thereby making coherent experience out of material that to us is so full of confusion.... This law could be called the *law of the specification of nature*.... (23-5=184-6, my emphasis on “initially”).

Kant’s anxious insight in this section, then, is that while the formal understanding provides a categorical sieve for the subsumption of empirical particulars, no possible human sense could be made of the particulars — they could not be cognized objectively — were we not to presuppose their purposiveness. We could perceive them and manage them through instinct and inclination in the animalistic sense, but we could make no culturally *useful* sense of them. Developmentally speaking, then, cognitive objectivity doesn’t just depend on the formal mechanics of subsumption Kant had examined in the first *Critique* but also and more importantly, as he *now* realizes in his old age, on the supposition that our initial pre-objective confusion, our lived conflationary split between morality and nature,⁶⁰ can be ordered into coherent experience where purposes are possible, where subjects are distinguishable from objects, and where wish and actuality are not alternately torn and miraculously healed but are more or less predictably related, mediated well-enough. My emphasis on “initially” has this idea of developmental mediation in mind. Indeed, Kant ends section V by noting explicitly that cognition is a *later* development which arises out of aesthetic judgment. “Only to the extent that this principle [i.e. purposiveness] has application,” he says, “can we make any headway in using our understanding in experience and *arrive* at cognition” (26=186, my emphasis). Cognition, consciousness, and the scientific knowledge which arises out of the growth of

⁶⁰ “Confusion” here should also be taken in the sense of indicating a “fusion” of subjectivity and objectivity which can’t be objectively or subjectively understood.

these, are achievements, historical developments from and out of a prior symbolic prehistory.

Indeed, in section VI Kant extends and recasts the paradox that cognition develops out of non-cognitive conditions and pre-cognitive means to suggest that cognition *cannot be aware*, outside of critical crises and despite being the faculty of awareness, of its fragmented symbolic beginnings. “It is true that we no longer feel any noticeable pleasure resulting from our being able to grasp nature and the unity of its division into genera and species that alone makes possible the empirical concepts by means of which we cognize nature in terms of its particular laws. But this pleasure was no doubt there at one time, and it is only because even the commonest experience would be impossible without it that we have gradually come to mix it in with mere cognition and no longer take any special notice of it” (27=187). The key element in this phrase is “that we no longer feel any *noticeable* pleasure” in “mere cognition,” as if the aesthetic pleasures which are means to cognition — think of rewards in a pedagogical system, for instance — nonetheless *persist* despite our non-awareness of them in and as cognition. Our experience is a testament to this aesthetic persistence and its developmental disavowal.

Kant has this same idea in mind when he tracks what he calls “aesthetic illusion” in his solution to the antinomy of taste. The antinomy of taste, we recall, consists in the fact that judgments of taste seem subjective and objective at once. Thetically, they are “subjective” since they are not based on concepts of the understanding and therefore cannot be decided by means of objectivistic proofs. Antithetically, they are “objective”

since otherwise one could not legitimately lay claim to another person's assent, which means that they must be based on concepts (211=339). Now, according to Kant,

What is needed to solve an antinomy is only the possibility that two seemingly conflicting propositions are in fact not contradictory but are consistent, even though it would surpass our cognitive power to explain how the concept involved is possible. Showing this consistency will also allow us to grasp the fact that and the reason why this illusion is natural and unavoidable for human reason, and why this illusion remains so even though it ceases to deceive us once we have resolved the seeming contradiction. (213=340)

Kant's well-known solution, of course, is that it is the concept of purposiveness which allows us to hold taste's contrasting propositions as mutually consistent, as a paradox, then, but not as a contradiction.⁶¹ We need only to specify the *type* of concept at hand in the thesis and antithesis. Purposiveness is *indeterminate*, not teleological, which satisfies the subjective requirement that taste be disinterested; and yet purposiveness is an indeterminate *concept* of reason, which satisfies the requirement that taste be objectively determinable if not already determinate. Though the antinomy is "solved" by this move, however, there is something else at stake. Kant's deeper *developmental* point is that aesthetic illusion *remains* an illusion and therefore remains aesthetic even when we have come to understand the object cognitively and are no longer misled by it. Philosophy remains an art, for instance, even when and after it supersedes what is usually understood as art. So again, illusion persists in the development of subjectivity in and by means of objectivity, and vice versa. And again, by objectivity we here have in mind the cognitive ability to analyze as well as the things of culture and taste.

Thus, even when we parcel out our subjectivity from our objectivity quite distinctly, and so even when we judge an object apparently non-aesthetically —

⁶¹ Looked at in the large and in terms of the contours of objectivity almost everything is paradoxical.

scientifically naming it, logically analyzing it, philosophically explaining it, or morally esteeming it, for example — there remains in our judgment a kind of subjective objectivity, an illusion. This illusion can be maintain in and as pleasure. This means that just as aesthetic symbolization is the subreptive distortion of fantastic objectification so cognition is the subreptive distortion of aesthetic symbolization. Cognition works with symbols, whether it avows this or not, and symbolizes insofar as it works, even though this symbolism works through illusion and even if this illusionism is discovered to be illusory *and effective* by critical analysis. Cognition is the empirical (mis)presentation of supersensibility *further* organized and further objectified than in symbolization alone. We could say that it is symbolization developed to the point of abstraction. Although cognition, or at least a certain precritical form of cognition, takes itself to be an *overcoming* of the illusions of superstition, magic, and fantasy, this cognitive archaeology of cognition reveals that it is also the subreptively continued *presentation* of superstition, magic, and fantasy. As Kant says, the term *enlightenment* indicates not that cognition is already enlightened but that it has become critical and that critique does not escape and nullify its creative and illusional roots. Science is not scientific on this view, then, unless it is creative of a more mutually developmental community by means of an art of communication.

This reflects on the passive kind of judgment which Kant famously calls “tutelage.” Although tutelage is in some respects *self-incurred* by fear and laziness, as he says, such that superstition and magic appear as the necessary but abandonable preconditions of cognition, it is just as important here, indeed more important, to stretch Kant’s terminology to include what his theory strategically and objectively implies,

namely, that tutelage is not just self-incurred but *self-incurring*, self-developmental when pedagogically guided by the subjective universality of taste. Since taste is reflective of both reason and sense, “self-incurring” implies that the self develops, indeed, can only develop, by taking up an embodied, thoughtful, and self-critical perspective concerning its own illusional development. This doesn’t make taste merely cognitive, moral, and incapable of mistakes but, on the contrary, cognitive of the fact that self-development as self-incurrence of tutelage is an intersubjective practice of growing out of a primitively structured state of things, namely, the conflational splits of and between subject and object, sense and supersensibility, wish and fulfillment.

CHAPTER III

PLACEBOIC HEALTH

When Kant says that in our initial fragmented “experience” of the world there are “as many different kinds of causality as there are specific differences among natural effects” and says further that this is an incoherent state, at least according to our understanding and current experience, he makes a link, knowingly or otherwise, between this proto-developmental state and the manner in which it would persist “developmentally” were it not ordered and unified purposively and transcendently. Recall that according to Kant’s characterization of causality in the fantastic footnote this “endless diversity” of empirical laws is secretly *structured* in terms of the transcendental principle of supersensible desire, which means that what *understanding* initially takes as causal incoherence *desire* simultaneously takes as causal perfection, the identity of “wish” and its “effect.” But this again sounds like the ambivalence of hypochondria as either a nonobjective or locally objectified “condition” or “disposition.” (Indeed, if Kant is right, it is *not* by accident that we encounter hypochondria as a kind of secret background of taste, the ability to judge beauty.) Since hypochondria is a disturbance which both conflates and splits the subreptive relation between the causality of desire and the causes of understanding, Kant’s analysis of a link between causal wishing and the multiplication of empirical causal laws, in and despite the gap between these, sounds like a program for the manufacture of health and illness which includes acknowledgment of the links and breaks between childhood and adulthood. While illness is a displeasing

subreptive mediation of and between the position of perfect desirous causality and the position of multiplying causes and effects, what health seems to require is a *pleasing* subreptive mediation of and between these positions.

But this, we have learned, just is symbolization. Since symbols (mis)present supersensible causality (the fantastic causal power of wishing) in and as causes, pleasing symbols indicate that the emergent subject is digesting, in and as the appearance of culture, the conflation of and split between too much wishful causality (where every “object” seems to arrive as by perfect actualization) and too little wishful causality (where what is felt is lack of a power of coherent world objectification). In other words, since we both *transcendentally* assume that desire is “the power of being the cause, through one’s presentations, of the actuality of the objects of these presentations” and *empirically* “assume [that there are] as many different kinds of causality as there are specific differences among natural effects,” the aesthetic fallout of transcendental causality into an experience of symbolic and magical causes enables us to begin to recognize, albeit minimally, stutteringly, and pre-cognitively, that some of these causes are “inside” us and some “outside” us, that some are wishful “self” causes while some are causes “external” to wishing, and indeed, that some are causes somatically “attached” and some somatically “detached.” Our initial state of confused dependency is to this degree purposively enabled to live with purposes. Here we begin to arrive at selfhood, egohood. Indeed, if what enables this transition is (a) supersensible desire, (b) nature’s failure to instantly meet this primitive want, *and* (c) the objectification of an object which is taken to be the cause of a pleasure the emergent subject feels, then what she needs in order to develop is not just direct access to gratifying objects, nor unrelenting loss or reminders of

loss only, but a *regimen of symbols* which enables her to digest both object presentation and object loss, both an apparently wishful power and the apparent loss of this power.

So here again we can turn to the fantastic footnote. When Kant suggests that prayer and other superstitious rituals exemplify the *causal* relation of transcendental desire to its objects, he isn't just focusing on the fact that magic can and must (effectively) work or seem to work (causally); he is also suggesting that *rituals* are rudimentary *regimens* which enable emergent subjects to manage the conflation of and gap between supersensible causality and so many sensible causes. When rituals work, they work not because they supernaturally do what nature cannot do but because they constitute an organized rhythm and intersubjective balance between pure desire (say, an immediate "being" with nature) and the natural objectification of the loss of "pure" nature. They are communal and artistic. They undertake an intimate communication with what is most important, but they also "present" this communication in and as the objects around which they pivot. These objects are both the means of communication *and the communication* in and despite the fact that some partly unfathomable thing, what we call "nature," is in fact lost. The symbolic objectification of *beauty*, then, is a ritualistic conjuring of pleasant, partially coherent intersubjective effects, effects distinct and transitionally developed from the scramble and myopia of instant gratification in relation to mother nature. Taste, a pleasing sense of practicing and sharing the task of growing up, thus enables our constant confrontation with nature to dawn objectively, eventually cognitively, as if beyond hypochondriacal disorder, and on the way to morality. This, in short, is a developmental and cultural experience.

The fact that enculturation requires a creative regimen of beautiful symbolization, moreover, helps return us to support what might be the most provocative aspect of our thesis, namely, that since our experience of beauty's pleasure seems *objectivistically* determined but is actually first made possible through the disavowal of the persistent causal illusion which Kant calls "subreption," we can say that health dawns not simply as an effect mechanically, efficiently, directly, or teleologically produced from these or those causes but as an effect of a transcendental *placebogenesis* which makes those causes *possible*. Indeed, our experience of time enters here, in the judgment of the object as containing beauty, and so being the "cause" of the pleasing "effect." And this in turn hinges on subreption. For subreption means that while an object of beauty is transcendently identical to desire as a causal power such that the "object" is indistinguishable from the "subject's" desire for it, this same object will dawn experientially and cognitively not as an immediate effect of desire but rather, again, as the cause of the pleasure the subject feels before it. Placebos and culture are thus linked in the experience of magic. While the roots of the object are wishfully "magical," these roots are transformed above ground, in and as the field of more or less coherent subjective experience, into the flowering of objects the magic of which, in the light of the moral sun alone, can't be seen. The roots remain buried, and yet their extension is the stuff of our experience. So what seems like a simple *cause* of health or illness is actually, critically speaking, a *placeboic* cause of health or a *noceboic* cause of illness, a pleasure or pain steeped in secretive illusion. The causal object of health is not "always already" but prehistorically already an aesthetic, developmental placebo.

When a medical doctor gives a modern patient medicine, for example, whether this object is biomechanically causal of specific somatic effects or not, the patient invariably stands before the doctor and his objects as someone both dependent (say, like a child) and desirous of a certain outcome. Whether the patient is aware of this or not, then, the “objects” the doctor prescribes invariably (mis)present certain illusions, hopes, and fantasies which the patient brings to the communication. We will have to wait until we analyze Marx’s and Winnicott’s theory of development to further investigate this situation. I can suggest in anticipation, however, that the relation the modern patient has to both the medical doctor and his prescriptive objects is subreptively linked to the relation a “traditional” or “tribal” patient has to both his witchdoctor and to the fetishistic objects this doctor prescribes. In *both* the “modern” and the “pre-modern” cases, I suggest, the object is most primitively an aesthetic object even if it is not recognized in this way. Economics, for instance, appears with the supposed disappearance of cultures of the fetish.

In fact, to conclude, let me present a tripartite example, an object that for me remains wondrous: A sick tribal man contacts a witchdoctor who, in turn, performs dances, invokes the patient’s ancestors (the gods) in song, and in an exchange with these gods and upon departure, gives the patient a magical amulet. A sick modern man contacts his doctor who, in turn, checks the patient’s vital characteristics, asks the patient a series of questions, and in exchange for payment and upon departure, issues some pills to be taken at home. In the first case we are presented with a “magical” social ritual, some words, and a charm. In the second we are presented with what we could in Kantian terms call a cognitive social ritual, some words, and, say, a prescription. Let us ask

ourselves not just how the “magical” objectivity of the “premodern” health situation developmentally relates to the “cognitive” objectivity of the modern health situation—although let’s not forget to ask this either. But let us also ask how each of these cases developmentally relate to the following: A sick baby cries for her mother who, in turn, feeds, holds, and pampers her, plays a simple game with her, and in exchange and upon departure, gives her baby a reflective object which the latter finds puzzlingly beautiful. What is the significance of the object here in terms of what has been lost and gained?

PART TWO

MARX, VALUE, AND THE PRIMITIVE ACCUMULATION
OF DEVELOPMENT

CHAPTER IV

THE FURTIVE FETISH

Choose safe, age-appropriate toys. Many toys come equipped with choke tubes to test whether the toy is safe for your child to use.... As a general rule: Don't let your child play with marbles, coins, balls or other items smaller than 1 3/4 inches in diameter.

—Mayo Foundation
Infant Health Notice, 2004

[The] money-form of commodities is, like their form of value generally, quite distinct from their palpable and real bodily form.... Although invisible, the value of iron, linen, and corn exists in these very articles: it is signified through their equality with gold, even though this relation with gold exists only in their heads, so to speak. The guardian of commodities must therefore lend them his tongue, or hang a ticket on them, in order to communicate their prices to the outside world. (Savages and semi-savages use the tongue differently. Captain Parry says of the inhabitants of the west coast of Baffin's bay: "In this case they licked the thing represented to them twice to their tongues after which they seemed to consider the bargain satisfactorily concluded.")

—Marx, *Capital*, 1867

In chapter one of volume one of *Capital*, Marx titles the famous subchapter on fetishism not simply "The Fetishism of the Commodity" but more specifically "The Fetishism of the Commodity and its *Secret*."⁶² So what is fetishism, especially concerning this so-called secret? On a standard reading, Marx's analysis dovetails with

⁶² Marx, 1977, my emphasis. Volume I of *Capital* was originally published in German in 1867; volume III in 1894 (as edited by Engels after Marx's death in 1883). I will specify which volume we are referring to per occasion, but generally we will work with volume I.

the “labor theory of value,” at least to the degree that he starts with the classical political economic premise that labor creates and informs value. From about 1857 onward, he regularly suggests both that labor is the “content,” “measure,” “substance,” and “source” of value and that value “is determined by” labor. He occasionally mentions that nature gives the thingly substrate, what most of us call the “raw material,” upon which socially organized labor works, but for the most part his focus is on labor. So while it’s true that in *Capital* he distinguishes between abstract labor and concrete labors, between labor power and particular useful labors, and between socially necessary labor time and heterogeneous labor intensities (albeit infrequently and sometimes in footnotes), he nonetheless often refers to “labor” in a generic (and so abstract) way when these distinctions apparently aren’t necessary for a particular argument or reference.⁶³ Take the famous “third thing” argument from the opening pages of *Capital I*. This passage is often cited as if to ground Marx’s value theory precisely in the labor theory of value. When Marx asks himself “what does the equation” of two or more commodities in exchange “signify?,” he responds with the following reasoning, a calculative kind of logic:

It signifies that a common element of identical magnitude exists in two different things, [for example] in 1 quarter of corn and x cwt of iron. Both are therefore equal to a third thing, which is itself neither the one nor the other.... This common element cannot be a geometrical, physical, chemical, or other natural property of commodities. Such properties come into consideration only to the extent that they make the commodities useful, i.e. turn them into use-values. But clearly the exchange of commodities is characterized precisely by its abstraction from their use-values.... If then we disregard the use-values of commodities, only one property remains, that of being products of labor. (127)

⁶³ See Marx, 1977, 137, footnote 16, for example. In a technical sense, if Marx uses the term “labor” while discussing capital or capitalism, he need not refer to concrete labors or particular kinds of labor but will always mean abstract labor, labor power, to the degree that this is precisely how labor is treated, objectified, and thought of in an everyday or bourgeois sense under capitalism.

While Marx thus agrees with Smith and Ricardo that labor creates and informs value, however, we should stress that it's Marx who emphasizes that value doesn't just instantiate and express but also *conceals* this labor, together with labor's sociality, its relations, in the "form of appearance" of commodities and money. Circulation and consumption are thus *interwoven* with production to the degree that each is *social*. Society is the commingling of these arenas to the degree that they have been developmentally distinguished, though never completely separated both between themselves and from what Marx calls "nature" or "natural production." Value, however, "conceals" the sociality of labor, the realm of production in general. Describing the "simple" or "elementary" form of exchange early in *Capital*, for instance, Marx suggests that "the relative value-form of a commodity, linen for example, expresses its value-existence as something wholly different from its [physical] substance and properties, as the quality of being comparable with a coat, for example; this expression [of commensurability or equivalence of "value," despite differences] itself therefore indicates that it conceals a social relation" (149).⁶⁴ Or, as we read a bit later, in a footnote: "When Galiani said [that] value is a relation between persons..., he ought to have added: a relation concealed beneath a material shell" (167). Or, in a passage just a couple of pages beyond this, to which we'll return later, we hear that

it was solely the analysis of the prices of commodities which lead to the determination of the magnitude of value, and solely the common expression of all commodities in money which led to the establishment of their character as values. It is however precisely this finished form of the world of commodities — the money form — which conceals the social character of private labor and the social relations between the individual workers, by making those relations appear as relations between material objects, instead of revealing them plainly. (168-9)

⁶⁴ Trade implies a developed difference between need and production as well as distance between "community" members. Trade implies non-communal community.

On our standard reading, then, and especially given the suggestion here that the social relations of commodity trade can or could be revealed “plainly,” it would appear that money, as the finished commodity form of value, *simply* conceals labor and its sociality. Indeed, from this perspective, this is supposedly where the notion of fetishism dovetails with the labor theory of value: We fetishize commodities and money to the degree that prices, profits, the satisfactions of consumption, and especially exchange-value and money blind us to the labor and labor relations which together produce commodities in the first place.

If we scan Marx’s mature texts we find that he constructs three general categories for this concealment; or rather, he shows us that the concealment of labor and labor relations by commodity consumption and exchange takes one or more of three basic forms in popular and scholarly understanding and practice: We fetishize commodities to the degree that we “see value” inhering (a) in the commodity itself (as the vulgar political economists believe, especially of “precious” substances like diamonds or gold), (b) in the commodity’s exchange relation to other commodities (as the physiocrats believe of land and as nearly all political economists hold with regard to money, such that “price” is said to measure value), and/or (c) in the commodity’s use-value (prioritizing individual judgment, consumption, and technological satisfaction, as many mainstream and all neoclassical economists suggest).⁶⁵

⁶⁵ “Mainstream” usefully refers to a standard, more or less empirical-positivist range of explanation which combines the microeconomic insights of neoclassical and rational-expectation economic theory with an additional (sometimes Keynesian) emphasis on macroscopic (state) regulatory mechanisms. It strives to show how the management of “demand” by government and/or a central bank can improve the efficiency of supply in competitive and fluctuating markets. The presumption, of course, is that only an efficient market which grows *quantitatively* is a healthy one. Mainstream can be contrasted to “heterodox” economics.

Marx thus finds himself in the fetishism subchapter in a position to link this *concealment* belonging to the commodity form with fetishism's *secret*. As he puts it in an important passage to which we will continue to return:

Men do not bring the products of their labor into relation with each other as values because they see these objects merely as the material integuments of homogeneous human labor. The reverse is true: by equating their different products with each other as values, they equate their different kinds of labor as human labor. They do this without being aware of it. Value, therefore, does not have its description branded on its forehead; it rather transforms every product of labor into a social hieroglyphic. Later on, men try to decipher the hieroglyphic, to get behind the *secret* of their own social product: for the characteristic which products of utility have of being values is as much men's social product as is their language. The belated scientific discovery that the products of labor, insofar as they are values, are merely the material expressions of the human labor expended to produce them, marks an epoch in the history of mankind's development, but by no means banishes the semblance of objectivity possessed by the social characteristics of labor. (166-7, my emphasis)

Fetishism thus includes a distinct element of non-awareness: "by equating [our] different products with each other as values, [we] equate [our] different kinds of labor as human labor. *[We] do this without being aware of it.*" This non-awareness marks a fetishization to the degree it implies a "conversion," "substitution," "reflection," etc, between things and persons. Fetishism is thus an objectification and (false) naturalization: We treat money as if it "naturally" measured "value," or we even treat "value" as naturally consisting in this or that thing. As Marx puts it, "the mysterious character of the commodity-form consists... simply in the fact that the commodity reflects the social characteristics of men's own labor as objective characteristics of the products of labor themselves, as the socio-natural properties of these things. Hence it also reflects the social relation of the producers to the sum total of labor as a social relation between objects, a relation which exists apart from and outside the producers. Through this

substitution, the products of labor become commodities...” (164-5). In sum, to the degree that we are captivated by the “sociality” of the things and objects of circulation and consumption, we tend to disavow, to *make secret* both the labor and sociality belonging to persons.

On a standard progressivist reading, this secrecy implies a “falsity” which is often highlighted to criticize the capitalist valuation of “profits over people.” The progressivist goal, of course, is to reverse this valuation, to value “people over profits.” But for many on the left, fetishism is reifying and regressive to the degree that a presumed qualitative and intersubjective sociality of production is expressed, or rather, *mis*-expressed, reduced and covered over, in our enthrallment to both quantitative abstractions and a semblant, and so merely false, sociality. One of the basic implications of this critique, then, is that commodity and money fetishism are *only* deemed bad, socially regressive.

Lukács and Geras, for instance, have suggested that by “fetishism” Marx means something on the order of the false-representation of a purely human and intersubjective sociality.⁶⁶ According to Lukács, when fetishism predominates in both the center and periphery of a society, that society has become capitalistic and stultifying: “The essence of commodity-structure...is that a relation between people takes on the character of a thing and thus acquires a ‘phantom objectivity’, an autonomy that seems so strictly rational and all-embracing as to conceal every trace of its fundamental nature: the relation between people” (83). Every trace? Hmmm. Further, “this rational objectification conceals above all the immediate — qualitative and material — character of things as things; when use-values appear universally as commodities they acquire a

⁶⁶ See Geras, 1971, 69-85 and Lukács, 1971, 83-89 (especially at 86-7), for instance. This idea largely corresponds to Engels’s emphasis that ideology is false consciousness.

new objectivity, a new substantiality which they did not possess in an age of episodic exchange and which destroys their original and authentic substantiality” (92). Similarly, for Geras the wage-form is “pure appearance” (80) and since “pure,” it tends to hide a “reality” or “essence” which lies detached “behind” it (70). The strength of these readings is not just their clarity but also their highlighting of the rationalization and abstraction processes at stake in modernization. And yet, since social relations *between persons* are cast as “fundamental,” “original,” or “authentic” while social relations *between things* are occasionally cast as a “pure appearance” which can even “destroy” this fundament, Lukács and Geras also thereby deem fetishism *anti-developmental*. Subjectivity and objectivity are or should be clear and distinct from the start, they suggest, but have since been fetishistically corrupted, as if from some fall. Contemporary writers on money such as James Buchan have extended this idea to the point of declaring that human society can only redeem itself if it does away with money and its fetishization—as if money and not capital were the menacing object of danger and destruction.⁶⁷ On my reading, these sometimes classical, usually progressivist, labor-theoretical interpretations constitute a first step in understanding fetishism, but they typically don’t sense or indicate that Marx had already developed a more sophisticated, *critical* account (an account forming the first steps in the Kantian *subreptive* tradition).

This, then, shall be our task, namely, to motivate and explore Marx’s casting of fetishism not simply as a negative or regressive social process within which the “concealment” of labor by money and commodities produces this or that false naturalization of value but, in a much more complex way, to cast fetishism as a grand historical process, a movement of *historicization*, indeed, as world-historical

⁶⁷ See Buchan, 1997, especially the final chapter.

enculturation. For again, while it's true that Marx often focuses on labor or on production in general as the "source" (etc) of value, there's nonetheless both more to labor and more to the seeing of the eye which perceives labor giving birth to value than meets the focused eye. There's not just a perspectivism to be uncovered and understood beyond this focus on production; rather, both the focus and even the perspectives beyond it can be shown to be conditioned by a necessary *developmental scotomization*, one enabling historicization and human enculturation.

But let's start small, with some particulars and a roadmap. First, take the sentence, indeed the clause, which ends our key passage above. The suggestion is that even when the classical political economists, and by implication even when we ourselves, have finally become aware that value doesn't consist naturally in "precious" substances, relationally in exchange-value, or instrumentally in the marginal utility of use-values but, more deeply, that it consists in the productivity and sociality of the labor necessary in their making, this cognition and insight *cannot abolish* the "semblance of objectivity," the fetishism, possessed by labor and its sociality.⁶⁸ One would think that such insight, which Marx elsewhere and here calls *scientific*, would dissolve or at least enable us to begin to dissolve the fetishistic appearance, this semblance of objectivity, to reveal the essence behind the appearance, the objectivity behind the semblance—but it doesn't. The secret of this objectification persists, is necessary, both in and despite this legitimate, even scientific, understanding; and it persists at least in part in and as this "semblance."

Žižek's essay "How Did Marx Invent the Symptom" is keen and helpful in this regard: "The unmasking of the secret," he says, "is not sufficient.... Classical economy

⁶⁸ As we'll see, in and behind labor there is always this problematic of "possession", in the many senses of this term, indeed, as these many senses primitively overlap and develop.

is interested only in contents concealed behind the commodity-form, which is why it cannot explain the true secret, not the secret *behind* the form but *the secret of this form itself*" (15).⁶⁹ According to Žižek, although Freud was to discover the relation between the latent content and the dream-work of dreams in the 1890s, Marx had already discovered this relation (as the unconscious structural effectivity between the labor content of the commodity and the formation of its form) in the 1860s. He therefore points to a schematic "homology," as he calls it, between Marx and Freud:

Freud proceeds here in two stages:

- First, we must break the appearance according to which a dream is nothing but a simple and meaningless confusion, a disorder caused by physiological processes and as such having nothing whatsoever to do with signification. In other words, we must accomplish a crucial step toward a *hermeneutical* approach and conceive the dream as a meaningful phenomenon, as something transmitting a repressed message which has to be discovered by interpretive procedure;
- Then we must get rid of the fascination in this kernel of signification, in the 'hidden meaning' of the dream — that is to say, in the content concealed behind the form of a dream — and center our attention on this form itself, on the dream-work to which the 'latent dream-thoughts' were submitted.

The crucial thing to note here is that we find exactly the same articulation in two stages with Marx, in his analysis of the 'secret of the commodity-form':

- First, we must break the appearance according to which the value of a commodity depends on pure hazard—on an accidental interplay between supply and demand, for example. We must accomplish the crucial step of conceiving the hidden 'meaning' behind the commodity-form...; we must penetrate the 'secret' of the value of commodities....
- But as Marx points out, there is a certain 'yet': the unmasking of the secret is not sufficient.... Classical bourgeois political economy... is not able to disengage itself from this fascination in the secret hidden behind the commodity-form, [and so] its attention is captivated by labor as the true source of wealth.... In spite of its quite correct explanation of the 'secret of the magnitude' of value', the commodity remains for classical political economy a mysterious, enigmatic thing—it is the same with the dream: even after we have explained its hidden meaning, its latent thought, the dream remains an enigmatic phenomenon; what remains unexplained is simply its form, the process by means of which the hidden meaning disguised itself in such a form.

⁶⁹ Žižek, 1989, chapter one.

We must, then, accomplish another crucial step and analyze the genesis of the commodity-form itself. (14-15, Žižek's emphasis)

Now, as we'll see in more detail later, although Žižek's own analysis of the "genesis of the commodity form" is largely structural (that is, it's not a developmental theory so much as a theory of the unconscious pivoting on the Lacanian *structures* of the real, the symbolic, and the imaginary), and so while his analysis is also sometimes hermeneutical in the way he describes and criticizes here, his insight, following Althusser,⁷⁰ that fetishistic secrecy is *symptomatic* is both insightful and helpful. One of our goals here then will be to expand and develop this idea into wider developmental theory: We will focus not simply on "the symptomatic," nor simply on symptoms as forms of illness, but on the *process* of *symptomization* as illness *and* health together, indeed, of the *developmental* health and illness belonging to the formation and procession of culture.⁷¹ This approach is novel and outstrips the Lacanian-Žižekian procedure, then,

⁷⁰ See Althusser and Balibar, 1977, 28.

⁷¹ Admittedly, it may be difficult to see that Marx offers us a theory of health. Whereas historical materialism is often recognized as one of his broadest objects and inheritances, issues of health and illness tend to appear in his work — both explicitly and for the most part — only in piecemeal, empirical, and descriptive fashion. When he uses the term "health" in *Capital*, for instance, he's usually referring us to what we might understand today, in a rather uncomplicated way, as physiological well-being. He also typically paints the opposite of health not so much as "illness" but as "disease" or "injury". We therefore observe in various descriptions from parts three and four of *Capital I* what Engels had already largely identified and published in 1844 in *The Condition of the Working Class in England*: Industrial production regularly exposes a wide variety of workers to this or that toxic pollutant, to physical exhaustion and "torpor", to noxious fumes or particles, to various contagious diseases, and/or to mutilation or even death by heavy machinery. In this era of the birth of statistics, moreover, Marx quotes reports and data compiled by doctors and factory inspectors regarding the diseases, mutilations, and rates of death "circulating" in the partially hidden abode of factory and mill production. We learn about the physical degeneration of whole worker populations, as among the potters of North Staffordshire, for instance. Marx quotes a doctor here: "The potters as a class, both men and women, represent a degenerated population.... They are, as a rule, stunted in growth, ill-shaped, and frequently ill-formed in the chest; they become prematurely old....; they are phlegmatic and bloodless, and exhibit their debility of constitution by obstinate attacks of dyspepsia, disorders of the liver and kidneys, and by rheumatism. But of all diseases, they are especially prone to chest disease, to pneumonia, phthisis, bronchitis, and asthma.... That the 'degenerescence' of the population of this district is not even greater than it is, is due to the constant recruiting from the adjacent country" (355). We will address this last bit about "recruiting" as we proceed. For "recruiting" here is a kind of

to the degree that we shall attempt to link the psychoanalytic insights “invented” (articulated through and discovered) by Marx to the *meaning* of the *development* of history and culture.

But Žižek’s analysis sets up this possibility. Ordinary “hermeneutical” analyses can “get behind” Marx’s most obvious texts and claims to exhibit their *concealed* meanings and contents. Behind, on top of, and developmentally through such interpretivist readings, however, a richer and more valuable interpretation, a symptomatic reading — where concealment shows itself to be closer to and dependent upon primary repressions — can be teased out and then, once teased, found to be already, albeit secretly, at work in Marx’s wider historical project. Our basic idea in this regard is that Marx tackles the object of fetishism precisely insofar as he’s slowly discovering that the problem of value which the political economists treated and continue to treat as a quantitative and technical problem, or rather as a useful disavowal of history and its meaning, is much more deeply a problem of the significance of the developmental vicissitudes of desire in the production and destruction, in the making and loss of human culture and cultures.

Take the passage on the “money form” which we analyzed above, but this time in wider context: Money is a great social and labor-relational concealer, to be sure, but there is also something to be said about the fact that we only *discover* this, scientifically unveiling the modern labor theory of value for example, well *after* the object which we

“accumulation”; and for Marx it is on the vicissitudes of accumulation that development and social health hinge.

call “money” has been generalized, indeed *globalized*, to appear as “universal equivalent.”⁷² As Marx puts it:

Reflection on the forms of human life, hence also scientific analysis of those forms, takes a course directly opposite to their real development. Reflection begins *post festum*, and therefore with the results of the process of development [*Entwicklungsprozesses*] ready to hand. The forms which stamp products as commodities and which are therefore the preliminary requirements for the circulation of commodities, already possess the fixed quality of natural forms of social life before man seeks to give an account, not of their historical character, for in his eyes they are immutable, but of their content and meaning. Consequently, it was solely the analysis of the prices of commodities which lead to the determination of the magnitude of value, and solely the common expression of all commodities in money which led to the establishment of their character as values. It is however precisely this finished form of the world of commodities — the money form — which conceals the social character of private labor and the social relations between the individual workers, by making those relations appear as relations between material objects, instead of revealing them plainly. (168-9)

If we analyze this passage with care, we see that once labor and its social relations are obscured by money, value appears to be something which names and measures “magnitudes,” something which is therefore objectively quantifiable (like prices), something which therefore takes on the fixed (and therefore countable, measurable) quality of a natural form of social life, and so something which appears to be more or less universal (to the degree that seemingly everything has its price). This is fetishism as naturalization, indeed, as dehistoricization to boot: With the generalization of money, not only is labor concealed, but so also is *history*, the processes and movements through which commodities and money are formed and arrive at a form of appearance, to become a normalized and normative part of social life. Notice again, however, that money doesn’t *simply* conceal. It must be fully developed, a “finished form” of the world of

⁷² To recognize that ideologies in general and fetishism in particular are historically conditioned in material processes is one thing, but to recognize that development *hinges* on something like *fetishism*, with its fantasy content, is quite another, as we’ll see.

commodities, a third thing facilitating trade between this product and that product, before reflection upon it, upon its concealing aspects, and upon its history as a mechanism of historical concealment, becomes not so much possible but actualizable. In other words, it is precisely despite *but also in and through* its character as a mechanism of concealment that money becomes not just a fetter but also a kind of “secret agent” facilitating reflection, even of scientific reflections like this one. Today money seemingly represents *gain*, or at least its possibility, for instance, such that the more money one has the more one stands to gain, such that money is seen as “naturally” valuable. But money marks gain, as we shall reveal in our analysis of fetishism, by means of repressed (and so secretive) primitive *losses*, almost unfathomable losses which provoke the need for culture, for developing a significant human world. We can put this abstractly for the moment and return to it later: Losing mother nature is difficult, to say the least, and culture is the presentation of that primitive loss and difficulty in symbolic and sublimated form. Thus, the historical movement to be critiqued here (which Marx takes up as an analysis of money and monetization in chapters two and three of Capital I) is no simple process within which the events of history follow each other merely sequentially and linearly. Rather, at stake is the movement of an almost natural *prehistory* in and beneath the surface of the modern and modernizing cultures which disavow it. Characterizing fetishism as a form of disavowal which produces history and development in and as objects of value, Marx himself secretly inherits Kant’s notion of developmental subreption.

This being so, and supplementing and digging beneath Marxian historical materialism, my goal here is to develop what might be called a developmental theory of

the *persistence of prehistorical materialism*. My basic idea concerning the relation between fetishism, its secret, and these developmental processes, in other words, can be said to pivot on how the disavowal and even the repression of prehistorical loss necessarily appears — distortedly — in and as objects of historical *meaning* and, as Marx emphasizes concerning the birth of modernity, of *value* in general. Indeed, more broadly, I want to suggest that human development takes place as *progress and secret regress bound together*, bound precisely in the objects and values of exchange, especially and most visibly in cross-cultural exchanges between speakers of different languages, that is, between persons from what will at first appear as wholly different cultures. For in such cross-cultural exchange value is more fluid and less ossified than it is within this or that single culture, and as such the objects which apparently bear value communicate as much about past, indeed archaic, development as they do about the present exchange.

One of our passages above provides what we shall take as our guiding and principal clue in this regard. We shall return to this idea repeatedly: “Value,” says Marx, “transforms every product of labor into a social hieroglyphic. Later on, men try to decipher the hieroglyphic, to get behind the secret of their own social product: for the characteristic which products of utility have of being values is as much men’s social product as is their language.” Now, we have already detailed one of the ways in which this process of disavowal works, that is, the process in which history arises, eventually coming to historical self-consciousness, *through the disavowal objectified in value*. Recall that revealing the secret of fetishism doesn’t simply consist in discovering the hidden quantitative and labor-relational content of value. We can now specify more carefully why this is so, at least as a hypothesis: This secret remains secretive despite our

uncovering of its latent content, we shall suggest following Marx's "hieroglyphic" hint, to the degree that our products don't just represent an economic, more or less modern language of "labor," "labor power," "use," and "exchange". Rather, more deeply, fetishism remains a secret to the degree that these products, as commodities, are and remain, despite appearances, prehistorical ciphers, *hieroglyphs* which are not reducible, as Žižek rightly points out, to their hidden content. They are *inscriptions*, as we shall discover, of an archaic form of marking, a division of the human social body into *class* formations. Our job, then, is twofold. We aim to decipher, to make sense of Marx's claim that value is hieroglyphic and we also aim to relate this sense to his grand theory of historical materialism.

Žižek doesn't note or comment upon Marx's notion of the hieroglyph, but he's nonetheless right to cast Marx's notion of fetishism as anticipating the psychoanalytic notion of the symptom. After all, although it is doubtful he knew that he was following Marx in this regard, Freud calls dreams the "hieroglyphics" of the ego.⁷³ The choice of term here is no accident. Dreams are the ego's basic symptom and they're hieroglyphic to the degree that they "speak" not just imagistically or representationally of a persistent conflictual primitivity but also *presentationally* and *inscriptively* as this primitivity in action. Through primitive eyes and understanding, in other words, a hieroglyph doesn't just represent some non-present idea. Moreso, it also *is* that "idea" in material, effectual form. So while Žižek doesn't really offer a developmental account, he nonetheless

⁷³ In "The Claims of Psychoanalysis to Scientific Interest" of 1913, Freud suggests that in psychoanalysis "speech" must be understood not merely to mean the expression of thought in words but to include the speech of gesture and every other method, such as writing. . . . It is even more appropriate to compare dreams with a system of writing than with a language. In fact, the interpretation of dreams is completely analogous to the decipherment of an ancient pictographic script such as Egyptian hieroglyphs" (see Freud, *SE* Vol. XIII, 176-7).

provides us with a helpful structural formula for researching the “source,” “genesis,” or “origins” of fetishism in its cultural productions and vicissitudes. His suggestion, one that we will follow but expand developmentally, is that the *critical* analysis of dreams and symptoms, and of ideology in general, must proceed not on two but on three levels: the most primitive plane of which, since constitutively repressed, is never directly accessible to conscious knowledge. Žižek thus draws a “parallel” or “homology,” as we’ve seen, between this and the Freudian analysis of dreams. Here, then, is part of his articulation:

If we seek the ‘secret of the dream’ in the latent content hidden by the manifest text, we are doomed to disappointment: all we find is some ‘entirely’ normal — albeit usually unpleasant — thought, the nature of which is mostly non-sexual and definitely not ‘unconscious.’ This ‘normal’ conscious/preconscious thought is not drawn towards the unconscious, repressed simply because of its ‘disagreeable’ character for the conscious, but because it achieves a kind of ‘short circuit’ between it and another desire which is already repressed, located in the unconscious, *a desire which has nothing whatsoever to do with the ‘latent dream-thought’*.... It is this unconscious/sexual desire which cannot be reduced to a ‘normal train of thought’ because it is, from the very beginning, constitutively repressed (Freud’s *Urverdrangung*)—because it has no ‘original’ in the ‘normal’ language of everyday communication, in the syntax of the conscious/preconscious; its only place is in the mechanisms of the ‘primary process.’ This is why we should not reduce the interpretation of dreams, or symptoms in general, to the retranslation of the ‘latent dream-thought’ into the ‘normal’, everyday common language of intersubjective communication (Habermas’s formula). The structure is always triple; there are always *three* elements at work: the *manifest dream-text*, the *latent dream-content* or thought, and the *unconscious desire* articulated in a dream. (12-13, emphases in original)

The desire which animates a dream is not so much the dream’s preconscious thought, the hidden or latent particular wishes which are translated into and found within the dream’s manifest imagery; rather, most basically, the desire is the unconscious action of the dream-work, the process whereby a *primitive* power of wishing takes imagistic form *as if* the dream’s particular wishes were constituted *simply* in the relation between

two kinds of content (manifest and latent). Thus, while the “work” of the dream-work consists in part in erasing its own laboring, this “erasing” also consists in the work of *invisibly piggy-backing unconscious primitive wishing* onto and as a relation between particular preconscious and conscious wishes. Thus, while the meaning of a dream may seem only to be about one’s current activities, enjoyments, struggles, and worries — some obvious (conscious), some more distant (preconscious) — the dream form of these wishes, the significance of their being limned and *dreamed* at all, both embodies and is the activation of an unconscious, infantile, and specifically *pre-verbal* wishing, even while words and other verbal and syntactical arrangements might otherwise appear in the dream in spoken or alphabetic form. These higher symbolic forms need “deciphering,” to use Marx’s term. The point, in fact, is that the pre-verbal is developmentally distorted — through what Freud specifies in the *Interpretation of Dreams* as condensation, displacement, symbolism, “representation,” and secondary revision — into verbal significance, at least upon waking and interpretation. Because this is so, however, we can come to partially understand the historical development of the dreamer if we properly engage in dream interpretation. We must start, then, with the relation between manifest and latent content, working our way backward by reading (i.e. “unwriting,” de-ciphering) the work of symbolic distortion employed by the dreamwork. Indeed, the manifest and latent verbal significances will invariably bear traces of pre-verbal impulses stemming “originarily” from what we will discover to be the lost unity of the dreamer’s primitive identification with his or her mother, a lost unity that correlates in Marx’s developmental scheme, as we’ll see later, to his conception of the loss of our immediacy with mother nature.

Where and how, then, does *Marx* think “unconscious desire”? In short, and to anticipate our results, he frames this desire both as our archaic immediacy with nature and as the persistence of its dissolution and loss. Indeed, it is precisely the loss of this immediacy that prompts the rise of culture in a first moment of development, in the form, the mode of production, of primitive communism. But to the degree that primitive communism remains susceptible to archaic dissolution in turn, it also necessarily undergoes dissolution and so takes on a new form of development; indeed, it is both this communism and its dissolution which continue to haunt and, as I interpret it, to motor history (like a specter haunting Europe).⁷⁴ For Marx, then, unconscious desire is the primitive and persistent tension between our archaic drives toward community-building and community-destruction, a pair of drives developmentally distorted into distinct prehistorical and then historical modes of production which undergo dissolution and transformation when the forces of production (which are forces of destruction distorted by forces of community, appearing as forms of society) are outstripped by forces hidden in *symbolic* relations of production (which are forces of community mixed with destructive elements), enabling social crises and recovery, although recovery is never guaranteed.

Agreeing with and expanding Žižek’s tripartite structural formula, then, my idea is that we can frame *Capital’s* analysis of capitalism developmentally in the following way: To the degree that the commodity’s value, *manifested* especially in and as modern *money*, conceals the labor and labor-power lying *latent* in and behind it, the relation between manifest value and latent content obscures and yet strangely embodies a deeper

⁷⁴ In addition to Marx’s *Communist Manifesto* (in Marx, 1978), see Derrida, 1994. Derrida, however, has very little to say about primitive communism and so, despite his interesting analysis, fails to specify, even if he partially comprehends, the communal and agonistic sources of this spectral haunting.

primitivity yet, one which Marx names not just as the secret of fetishism but, relatedly, as the *secret of primitive accumulation*. Primitive accumulation is the unconscious destructive force of historicization and so of development. *This, then, is my thesis*, an idea we will set up in the next two chapters and then carry through in the remaining chapters of Part Two: Primitive accumulation, I will suggest, is the repressed and repressing unconscious motor of history, the secret mechanism of historicization, but only insofar as it nonetheless, despite *and in* its power of repression (and here of community), appears (as in Kantian subreption) in the form of objects of value which both disavow it and yet at the same time distortedly and so developmentally preserve it. Žižek is not correct in this last respect to suggest that the manifest and latent content of symptoms have “nothing whatsoever to do” with the conflictual desire that short-circuits behind them. For this desire is not just behind them but in them too—just as Kant’s fantastic objectification, the power of transcendental desire, is not just behind but also subreptively active in aesthetic value.

But these insights and hypotheses also motivate how we’ll organize our investigations. In large part, and especially at first, we shall follow Marx, road-mapping our argument by the development of his in *Capital*. Marx’s argument, however, has not gone uncriticized. Critics and scholars including Althusser, Žižek, and David Harvey, for instance, have noted, often with more than a hint of exasperation, that Marx wrote volume one of *Capital* “backward,” at least in a sense. For rather than *beginning* with the material on so-called primitive accumulation, where capitalism can be seen to derive its force of origination (no matter how one reads this material), Marx *ends* the volume with this material and its analysis. And rather than ending volume one with an investigation

into how money as value-incarnate is shaped as if through circulation and exchange to manufacture capital, Marx begins his examination here—in the territory of fetishism and appearances. Based on what we have discovered already, however, there are good reasons for this. It's certainly possible that Marx himself only came to understand the importance of primitive accumulation (especially as primitive accumulation prompts and can developmentally demand fetishization) long after he had studied money, exchange, and the capitalization of money in the field of political economy. And in fact this seems to be Marx's argument for a kind of phenomenological start, as the very opening sentence of volume one of *Capital* names: We cannot arrive at a *greater* scientific and historical understanding of capitalism until we have critically worked our way through how it *first presents itself* to us, manifestly and ideologically, and so fetishistically, both in society and in the science of political economy.⁷⁵ In fact, I am in large part drawing this lesson from Marx's claims above: "Reflection on the forms of human life, hence also scientific analysis of those forms, takes a course directly opposite to their real development. Reflection begins *post festum*, and therefore with the results of the process of development ready to hand." Similarly, value "does not have its description branded on its forehead; it rather transforms every product of labor into a social hieroglyphic. Later on, men try to decipher the hieroglyphic, to get behind the *secret* of their own social product: for the characteristic which products of utility have of being values is as much men's social product as is their language." We, like Marx, then, must start with symptoms, with hieroglyphs, working carefully in a first step to analyze their manifest and latent content; for only then will we be ready to make the second step towards an

⁷⁵ Žižek tackles this problem in *For They Know Not What They Do* (1991, 209-222), but his analysis is both complex and overstated.

analysis of the *formation* of the *form* of these contents in a more-than-hermeneutic critical analysis aiming to uncover and make use of the *archaic*, or what Marx and I will call the *primitive*, forces which have been disguised in and as objects of “value” the content of which seems to regulate social power.

This, then, is how we shall proceed: I will first analyze the manifestly economic status of modern money to show that it is the symptom, indeed the primitively literal *trace*, of earlier, archaic, extra-economic forces. Under analysis, we shall discover that money’s roots are “magical.” Indeed, this explains why Marx uses the term fetishism to investigate and name our modern relation to value and why too he casts value as hieroglyphic: The *hieros* of value is a kind of *sacredness* which premodern cultures of various sorts access through objects revered as magical. Fetishes serve various purposes in premodern cultures, of course, but they can broadly be construed as magical to the degree that they serve as sites for the embodiment and distribution of social and individual power and health. With a socially sanctioned “fetish,” I can heal the injured or ill, or I can damage the otherwise healthy. Or, in any case, one can make others do things they would not necessarily otherwise do. Thus, with the term fetishism, Marx is simply noting that and how this “power” is retained in commodities and especially in modern money, an object secretly, which is here to say unconsciously, “revered” for its apparent wish-fulfilling properties.

But if “fetishes” can do their social and individual “work” only within cultural norms situating and framing them as “powerful,” doesn’t this mean that specific “fetishisms” are culturally relative, that is, relative to the norms — and nothing else — of individuated, distinct cultural histories? This is the question I take up in chapter six to

begin to show that while Marx's account takes this cultural relativism seriously, it goes deeper by not jettisoning the moment and necessity of material *objectivity*. As in our Kant chapters, "objectivity" here designates both a thingly and instrumentalist concern to the degree that it references *things*, in and after a process of objectification, as *objects*. But as in our Kant chapters as well, objectivity also implies the widening, and so the development, of a subjective, intersubjective, and epistemic purview, a movement toward the cognitive and scientific understanding of the object world, albeit through illusions, fantasy, myth, and their partial failure. In the present context, for instance, we will analyze gold for its "magical" qualities. For despite initial appearances, gold isn't just valued in European culture but, at least to some degree, in all human cultures, at least now. But despite modern appearances, this is not simply because it's metallically soft, uniform, and incorruptible, and therefore useful economically as a medium of exchange. Marx thus demands that we examine the social scene and movement of globalization — though of course he doesn't yet use this term — to investigate what happens and is exchanged between cultures, in their "interstices," to better understand just in what this "objectivity" consists. To do this, I cull material from Tzvetan Todorov's dynamic examination of the initial contacts and exchanges between the native Americans and Columbus and his crew. And later we turn to Cortés and his crew's encounter with Montezuma and the Aztecs. What we notice first of all, then, is that while Columbus and the "Indians" cannot communicate verbally, they make what appears at least to the Indians to be a series of magical, almost sacred exchanges. So at this point I fine-tune my hypothesis to suggest that whatever else Marx means by relating development to fetishism, the latter's "objectivity" *secretly embodies* the exchange of what I call pre-

dialectically communicative forms of development, the development, for instance, from magical thinking and practices toward modern, cognitive understanding and economic practices. But we cannot, as yet, understand *why* gold plays the developmental role that it does, since for this we need to tackle what makes this secretive symbolic development *possible*. We need to analyze, albeit through its symptoms, the primal scene of human development.

I therefore then examine what Marx means, both explicitly and implicitly, both obviously (in chapter seven) and more “secretly” (in chapter eight), when he suggests that capitalism begins with “primitive accumulation” *and* its “secret.” It’s as if the making of capitalism depended necessarily on the making-secret of its sources. Chapter seven should be fairly straightforward for most Marxian scholars in this regard. Since capitalism hinges on the wage-relation between more or less propertyless workers, on the one hand, and owners of the means of production, on the other hand, the *formation* of capitalism requires that all prior property-relations — where peasants, plebes, journeymen, vassals, and even serfs have had limited continuous access to and use of various means of production — be dissolved, destroyed in this or that way. The now-generalized “worker” must be, is, made “free” in the famous “double sense” of the term: free as an individual with rights of non-interference and the like, but also “free” of owning most forms of property, and especially free of having what Marx will sometimes call “possessive” — which is to say premodern, *pre-contractual*, but symbolically and customarily guaranteed familial, clan, or common — use of means of production. So here I highlight the fact that “primitive accumulation” is Adam Smith’s term, a euphemism *covering over* the fact that much of the history of the formation of capitalism

is a violent, horrible, bloody, expropriative, colonizing, imperialistic, militaristic, murderous, sad disaster. “Appropriating” peasants and other “common” workers of their customary resources and (especially their) lands has been the pivotal move in the *invariably partly forgotten history* of primitive accumulation, whether this has been accomplished through brute force or through so-called “fair exchange.”

Chapter eight thus critically analyzes the idea that this invariably significant forgetting of the *violence* of primitive accumulation ends up both representing and presenting “itself,” referencing *and embodying* “itself,” in and as objects of capitalist private property, such that fetishistic objectivity marks a disavowal “taking place” in the birth of “universal” and “ideal” objects of value like money and especially capitalized money. Here a giant social melancholia is “forgetfully” transformed into mania for value, to be sure,⁷⁶ but what interests me in particular is the manner that the *expropriation* of the premodern worker’s access to means of production and the common lands is “remembered,” and so largely mis-remembered, as in Smith’s account and in bourgeois society in general, as a more or less positive *appropriation*. The wage-relation stands out in bourgeois circles, for example, as economically and functionally feasible, as if it were a merely positive leap beyond the violences of serfdom and slavery: Since the free worker isn’t bound to the soil, both tribute and payments in kind are obviously less appropriate, useful, and fair than using money as a wage in the contracted, and so apparently mutually agreeable, relation between owner and worker. What is disavowed and yet “shown” in the value of modern money, then, is class historical domination. But this means in turn that the *violence* of primitive accumulation is not simply covered over

⁷⁶ We can note here that this follows the same developmental structure of objectification named in Kantian subreption: An apparent “objectlessness” is transformed subreptively into a form of useful value. Here, however, the placebo is just as often a nocebo.

by money; rather, the object “itself,” as a fetish, both subreptively represents and presents, both secretly refers us to and embodies, primitive violences. In short, as (pre)historical repression, primitive accumulation injures and uproots, but in doing so it also makes another repression, in the sense of a historically productive *forgetting* of prehistory and its persistence, in the form of the effective illusion of objective value, both possible and actual.

This insight demands in turn that we take a critical look at the development of the various prehistorical and historical modes of production together with their respective forms and objects of symbolization and fetishization. What is the relation between violence, primitivity, symbolism, development, and class power? Accomplishing much of the historical work to tackle this broad question in chapter eight, I return to the example of “gold” in chapter nine, but now armed with insights into the repressive and repressively productive power of primitive accumulation. We are thus prepared to see not just how but to some degree even *why* value, both in and despite cross-cultural exchange, can be both useful in the modern economic sense and yet also primitively violent *and*, at least at times, objectively developmental. Why, for instance, would the Lenape Indians of what is now Manhattan Island trade the entire island for a chest of beads, bangles, coins, and other variously “reflective” materials? The complex and difficult key to our analysis here is to recognize that, in and through primitive “eyes,” symbolization divisively conflates the *literal* and the *metaphorical* by *aesthetically reflecting* subjectivity and objectivity against and upon each other through what might be thought of as “mirrors of value.” Because this insight is complex, however, we again analyze and borrow insights from Todorov’s cross-cultural investigations and then turn to

Freud's and especially Winnicott's theories of the relation between enculturation, objectification, splitting, and reflection. With our deepened understanding of the brutal *and* symbolic, the destructive *and* productive, aspects of the repression of primitive accumulation now at hand, however, we can make a lot more of our earlier questions and insights (from chapters five and six, for instance) concerning the relation between value, objectivity, and development. In fact, we can usefully and finally return to Marx's idea that value is hieroglyphic. What we discover with all these tools at hand is that modern value is the persistent distorting of an originary dividing up of nature and "individual" pregnant mothers, which is then to say "historically" in and as epochs and "individually" in and as stages, respectively, but as both of these processes imbricate and identify as a *symbolizations* marking and embodying the growth of the "human family." *Our belly buttons nicely express this*, and then the symbolization moves to clothes and jewelry, to various kinds of more and then eventually less magical objects of trade, and then eventually to kinds of commodity, as if this magic were now gone in some larger secularization process called "economics." What "traditional" cultures seem largely, mythically and illusionally, to recognize, then, is that localized value is embodied human historical meaning. And yet we only know and can know the traces of the sources of this meaning and history. Marx is right in a number of ways to call value hieroglyphic in this regard. Indeed, what are we remembering and forgetting in money and capital? And what would we remember with the elimination not of the first but of the second? My suggestion is that something like socialism becomes possible only when we can make use of value as a memorial, a cenotaph, a memento the total meaning of which cannot be

finally determined but which certainly has to do with human love and hate, and family, community, and development.

And wouldn't development require that hate be eliminated, or at least sublimated or transformed into more gentle and perhaps even enjoyable forms, such that it wouldn't be felt as hate but say, a power to paint, to play a sport, to share a funny story—any number of forms of aesthetic practice and judgment? This is where objectivity as a concern of and for health meets objectivity as a concern of and for symbolism. Here then are the principal concerns of my argument: Somewhat as I did with Kant, I examine the relationship between Marx's health, his personal finances, and his writing. My concern is with inscriptive development. With the help of Todorov and Derrida, I suggest that commodities arise historically not just with money but, generally speaking, with alphabets. What does alphabetization have to do with the development of (and developments perhaps beyond) capital? To the degree that alphabets are the legacy of iconography, I would want to write, they develop aesthetically as forms of communication, a communication however not just of meaning but of wishing. For alphabets develop out of and secretly embody the magical influence of prior glyphic forms. As a form of presentation, for instance, glyphs prove that iconographies bear power. For glyphs, as scars, are signs. Indeed, in what ends up being my final inquiry into the relation between human developmental health and objectivity, I suggest that development is born and borne in a glyphics of cultural meaning the goal of which we can create in terms of social and communal health. And for this we need to talk about justice and happiness as ideas and ideals.

CHAPTER V

DAZZLING VALUE TRACES

So, why does Marx suggest that “the characteristic which products of utility have of being values is as much men’s social product as is their language”? Why language? The first thing to notice is that he both draws and draws upon this suggestion on a number of occasions. Take the following helpful passage:

The value of the commodity linen is expressed by the bodily form of the commodity coat, the value of one by the use-value of the other. As a use-value, the linen is something palpably different from the coat; as value, it is the same as the coat, and now has the appearance of a coat. Thus, the linen acquires a value-form different from its physical form. . . . We see, then, that everything our analysis of the value of commodities has already told us, is told by the linen itself, as soon as it comes into communication with another commodity, the coat. Only it betrays its thoughts in that language with which alone it is familiar, the language of commodities. In order to tell us that its own value is created by labor in its abstract character of human labor, it says that the coat, in so far as it is worth as much as the linen, and therefore is value, consists of the same labor as the linen. In order to inform us that its sublime reality as value is not the same as its buckram body, it says that value has the appearance of a coat, and consequently that so far as the linen is value, it and the coat are as like as two peas.”⁷⁷

Clearly Marx wants to create a kind of “analogy” here between commodity exchange and language, at least to the degree that we can understand and show them both to be, as we might put it today, “social constructions.” Indeed, we can read this passage as if Marx were speaking “tongue in cheek,” that is, as if he were creating an analogy by holding back the merely literal tongue in the name of sheer realism: While commodities

⁷⁷ See Marx, 1978, 317. I have chosen to quote the *Marx-Engels Reader* translation since the references to commodity “communication” are more obvious here than in Fowkes’ translation. Indeed, here, in Tucker’s translation, you get what you pay for when you name two things as peas in a pod, encouraging regression.

cannot and could never literally “speak,” they’re nonetheless *like* language to the degree that they’re “social products,” as Marx specifies in our hieroglyphic passage. This logic is extendable *a la* Lukács: It’s “we humans,” “we persons,” after all, who exchange these “things” and not the reverse, nor even partially the reverse, at least to the degree that we humans are really alive, active, and social while these things are really dead, passive, and asocial. What could be more “obvious” than this?⁷⁸ The idea here, in other words, is not that commodities and money “really” do speak but that, *were* they capable of this, they would declare their value as the value of and belonging to exchange-value: “If commodities could speak, they would say this: our use-value may interest men, but it does not belong to us as objects. What does belong to us as objects, however, is our value. Our own intercourse as commodities proves it. We relate to each other merely as exchange-values” (177). This “if” can thus be said — humanly, of course — to remain merely hypothetical; for it indicates and signifies metaphorically: again, since commodities don’t “really” speak, Marx must be speaking “tongue in cheek.”

And yet, on the other hand, while the hypothetical “if” leads the way, the point is also, if also taken literally, more or less than hypothetical, and more or less than metaphorical too: If commodities could speak, their value would not just be spoken of *beyond* exchange (by “we humans”) but spoken *in and as* their exchange. It would be “proven” in and as the “object intercourse” we now call sales and purchases. We thus stumble upon a Dr. Seussian type of problematic: What ventriloquizes who and/or who

⁷⁸ Marx (1977) introduces the fetishism subchapter in just this way: “A commodity appears at first sight”, he says, “an extremely obvious, trivial thing. But its analysis brings out that it is a very strange thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties” (163). Again, we will return to the “sacred” (and so “metaphysical” and “theological”) aspect of commodities later. And yet, we should also say here that it’s not that “the hieratic” and “the glyphic” are separate; indeed, primitively speaking, they are intimate beyond distinction — writing is a “relief”, yes? — though here for the moment we shall treat them distinctly.

ventriloquizes what here? And why should “who” and “what” be so distinct and/or alike? The fetishistic conversion, it seems, runs in both directions at once, in and between who and what.

This difficulty, in turn, helps us understand why Marx ends the fetishism subchapter with a reference to Shakespeare. Here he reminds us of a “vulgar” economic belief. The “vulgar” economic theorists believe both that value inheres in commodities, indeed, in naturally “precious” substances themselves (such as gold, pearls, and diamonds) and that commodity utility belongs to human culture. What’s interesting, however, says Marx, is that these theorists believe this even though they occasionally *also* admit that “the use-value of a thing is realized without exchange, i.e. in the direct relation between thing and man, while, inversely, its value is realized only in exchange, i.e. in a social process.” Marx therefore follows this (apparent?) contradiction with a question, a reference from Shakespeare’s *Much Ado about Nothing*: “Who would not call to mind at this point the advice given by the good Dogberry to the night-watchman Seacoal? ‘To be a well-favoured man is the gift of fortune; but reading and writing comes by nature’” (177).⁷⁹ Now, how should we understand this reference?

One interpretation stands out quickly. When Dogberry informs Seacoal that reading and writing devolve “by nature,” clearly he’s doing the same thing in comic fashion that the vulgar fetishists do in all seriousness concerning modern value: He’s reifying a social relation as if this relation were given merely by nature. So clearly Marx here means to critique the dual fetishistic belief that “value” is natural while “utility” is social or cultural. Indeed, for Marxist critics who are constantly concerned with false-naturalizations and desocializations, this critique should be obvious.

⁷⁹ See Shakespeare’s (1959) comedy *Much Ado About Nothing*, Act 3, Scene 3.

But what about this reference to reading and writing, spoken by Dogberry and written by Shakespeare and Marx? Let's note first of all that Dogberry belongs to the lower classes. He's likely a laborer or yeoman.⁸⁰ In fact, over the course of *Much Ado*, it becomes clear not only that Dogberry cannot read and write but that he has an exaggerated reverence — a fetishistic anxiety signified in and through his grandiose speeches and minor malapropisms — for those who can. So this is likely why he has sought out Seacoal to serve as part of the town Watch: As various scholars have noted, the name “Seacoal” refers to the coal which is brought to market by ship, which means that while Dogberry belongs to the laboring class and is illiterate, Seacoal is a commodity merchant and in all probability educated. He's associated with money, profit, and commodities and — “at the same time” — he's able to read and write, to make “notes” or “noting” out of “nothing” as the title of the play indicates.⁸¹ Why, then, does Shakespeare so clearly and yet secretly associate class with the problem of literacy? And how and why does Marx follow him here?⁸²

Following from our critique in the prior chapter, I want to suggest that the object we have come to call “money” plays an important role here. Indeed, let's look at a summary, from the end of chapter two of *Capital I*, concerning the formation of money out of what is typically called “barter.” Regarding money's formation, says Marx,

what appears to happen is not that a particular commodity becomes money because all other commodities express their values in it, but, on the contrary, that all other commodities universally express their values in a particular commodity because it is [already] money. The movement through which this process has been mediated vanishes in its own result, leaving no trace behind. Without any initiative on their part, the commodities find their own value-configuration ready to hand, in the form of

⁸⁰ English yeoman, not Czech.

⁸¹ See Shakespeare, 1959, 96.

⁸² Marx often spent time with his family, his daughters especially, playing with and reading Shakespeare.

a physical commodity existing outside but also alongside them. This physical object, gold or silver in its crude state, becomes, immediately on its emergence from the bowels of the earth, the direct incarnation of all human labor. Hence the magic of money. Men are henceforth related to each other in a purely atomistic way. Their own relations of production therefore assume a material shape which is independent of their control and their conscious individual action. This situation is manifested first by the fact that the products of men's labor universally take on the form of commodities. The riddle of the money fetish is therefore the riddle of the commodity fetish, now become visible and dazzling to our eyes. (187)

When Marx claims here that the historical movement through which monetization has been mediated “vanishes in its own result, leaving no trace behind,” he could be read — non-archaeologically, non-hieroglyphically — as declaring that this process is over, end of story. To disappear and leave no trace behind is to *completely* disappear. Indeed, by most people's lights, it is precisely *barter* which *disappears without a trace* with the appearance of *money*. In a pecuniary economy, after all, exchange doesn't take place by swapping commodities in a single transaction (C-C, in Marx's shorthand). Rather, we “buy” and “sell” commodities in *distinct* transactions precisely by means of the object which money *is* (C-M-C). Since we don't trade commodities “directly” but purchase and vend them “indirectly” through money, money is a means, nay, it's now more or less *the* means of exchange. It is money as “means” or “medium of exchange,” in fact, which takes precedence in economic and political economic explanations of its historical emergence. In his otherwise non-historical *Theory of Money*, for instance, Walter Newlyn tells us from the start that “the essential function, the performance of which enables us to identify money, is very simple: it is that of acting as a medium of exchange. The necessity of having something to perform this exchange function lies in the fact that, in the absence of such a medium, exchange requires a double coincidence of wants.”⁸³

⁸³ Newlyn, 1962, 1.

What is this “double coincidence of wants”? The theory is that for two persons to barter they must each want what the other both has and is ready to part with. Required first of all, then, is commodity superfluity or surplus. To make an exchange, each person must have in hand some commodity or other in excess of her own needs. But of course there’s a second condition (to which the term “double coincidence” actually refers):

When you and I meet as traders, as barterers, you not only have to have what I want (when I want it) but also have to want what I have (when I happen to have it in excess of my needs). If this double coincidence isn’t met, if one of us doesn’t want what the other is trading just when this other is ready to trade it, then trade between us becomes...difficult. The economic historian Arthur Monroe suggests that it was the second century Roman jurist Paulus who first articulated this “double coincidence” difficulty. According to Paulus, “since occasions where two persons can justly satisfy each other’s desires are rarely met, a material was chosen to serve as a general medium of exchange.”⁸⁴ It was Adam Smith, however, who first began to develop a monetization theory, one involving the “division of labor,” based on this concept. As he puts it in the *Wealth of Nations*:

When the division of labor first began to take place, this power of exchanging must frequently have been very much clogged and embarrassed in its operations. One man, we shall suppose, has more of a certain commodity than he himself has occasion for, while another has less. The former consequently would be glad to dispose of, and the latter to purchase, a part of this superfluity. But if this latter should chance to have nothing that the former stands in need of, no exchange can be made between them.... In order to avoid the inconveniency of such situations, every prudent man in every period of society, after the first establishment of the division of labor, must naturally have endeavored to manage his affairs in such a manner as to have at all times by him, besides the peculiar produce of his own industry, a certain quantity of

⁸⁴ This is somewhat profound, of course, but not necessarily, or at least not as deeply, under the presumption of barter. See Monroe, 1966, 10.

some one commodity or other, such as he imagined few people would be likely to refuse in exchange for the produce of their industry. (I.4.2)⁸⁵

While it's usually suggested that classical theory locates value in production and labor whereas neoclassical, marginalist, and most mainstream economic theory locates value in circulation, consumption, and utility, and so while these two basic forms or epochs of analysis are almost invariably contrasted, we see here that by casting money as an object which rationally facilitates the efficiency of exchange, even Smith is already utility-marginalist in orientation, at least in regard to money. So this is why Marx suggests that we "find that economists who are entirely agreed that labor time is the measure of the magnitude of value have the strangest and most contradictory ideas about money, that is, about the universal equivalent in its finished form" (174, footnote 34). Marx doesn't specify this contradiction but we can. In Smith the contradiction pivots on the fact that while he seeks to reduce value to labor, he nonetheless represents money as deriving not from production (or even from that which lies behind the need to produce) but from a need located in circulation and consumption, indeed, from *a rational need to maximize utility and "profit" through exchange*.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ With this in mind, both Smith and Jean-Baptiste Say (who largely inherits Smith's account) end up proposing scenarios like the following: A village butcher needs bread and so wants to trade with the baker. But what if the baker doesn't need any meat? Since this is barter, the butcher is simply out of luck, at least temporarily. Indeed, this situation of non-coincidence can run further still. For the baker, needing sheets for his bed, wants to barter his bread for the linens produced by the weaver. But the weaver doesn't currently want bread, which means that the baker too is out of luck, and so on. While Menger and especially Jevons fine-tuned this account in the late nineteenth century, little has been written on the double-coincidence theory since. This is not, however, because scholars aren't interested in it. Rather, it's because few think the theory is problematic. According to the historical purview of Milton Friedman and monetarism, for instance, the double coincidence idea remains a presupposition. See Jevons, 1875 and Menger, 1892, 239-55. For recent accounts, see especially Wallace, 1997, 2-20; Kiyotaki, and Wright, 1989, 927-54; and Mishkin, 1986, 22. For this idea in monetarism, see Friedman, 1962, 14.

⁸⁶ The link between monetary functionalism and monetary utility begins in Aristotle. When Schumpeter says that Aristotle's theory of money "prevailed substantially until the end of the nineteenth century and even beyond", he's referring to Aristotle's basic idea (*Politics*, I 8-10, and *Nicomachean Ethics*, V 6) that money's adequacy and convenience for trade inheres in its ability to make unequal products or works

Like the political economists, and as we noted earlier, Marx highlights money's suitability for facilitating exchange and the natural appropriateness of silver and especially gold for becoming the first substances of modern "world" money. Like them, he suggests that money is a tool, a means of modernization, especially with regard to labor and its pay. Note the following passages:

Only a material whose every sample possesses the same uniform quality can be an adequate form of appearance of value, that is, a material embodiment of abstract and therefore equal human labor. On the other hand, since the difference between the magnitudes of value is purely quantitative, the money commodity must be capable of purely quantitative differentiation, it must therefore be divisible at will, and it must also be possible to assemble it again from its component parts. Gold and silver possess these properties by nature. (183)

Money necessarily crystallizes out of the process of exchange in which different products of labor are in fact equated with each other, and thus converted into commodities. The historical broadening and deepening of the phenomenon of exchange develops the opposition between use-value and value which is latent in the nature of the commodity. The need to give an external expression to this opposition for the purposes of commercial intercourse produces the drive towards an independent form of value, which finds neither rest nor peace until an independent form has been achieved by the differentiation of commodities into commodities and money. At the same time, then, as the transformation of the products of labor into commodities is accomplished, one particular commodity is transformed into money. (181)

The need for [the money] form first develops with the increase in the number and variety of the commodities entering into the process of exchange. The problem and the means for its solution arise simultaneously. Commercial intercourse, in which the owners of commodities exchange and compare their own articles with various other articles, never takes place unless different kinds of commodities belonging to different owners are exchanged for, and equated as values with, one single further kind of commodity.... The universal equivalent form comes and goes with the momentary social contacts which call it into existence. It is transiently attached to this or that commodity in alternation. But with the development of exchange it fixes itself firmly and exclusively onto particular kinds of commodity, i.e. it crystallizes out into the money-form. (182-3)

commensurable. For justice can only spring from and exist in such commensurability. This commensurability, in turn, hinges on what Aristotle describes, although without our modern terminology, as money's role as medium, measure, and store. See Schumpeter, 62.

So, like the (other?) political economists, Marx informs us that gold and silver possess certain chemical and physical properties which make them more trade-functional (as “equivalents”) than other natural substances. There are always differences of quality within any given “primitive money” or “general equivalent,” for instance, but notice that this is *not* the case with these “precious metals,” the first global moneys. Some cows are fatter than others, some feathers more colorful, some teeth sharper, some shells stronger, etc. Once gold and silver are mined and isolated, however, they are always sheer and everywhere chemically identical. Since they are each isolatable and homogenous, qualitatively speaking, as well as highly divisible, quantitatively speaking, they are “ideal” substances, as it were, for the abstraction which modernization both is and requires.⁸⁷ Moreover, gold is typically found in nature unmixed with other metals and minerals; it is therefore relatively easy to isolate and purify; it is also often directly siftable from rivers in a pure state; it does not oxidize in air; and it’s insoluble in acids other than *aqua regia*.⁸⁸ Although silver is often mixed in nature with other metals and minerals and is generally more difficult and dangerous to mine, it’s nonetheless much more plentiful than gold and can typically be found in larger deposits. Both gold and silver, however, are readily transformed from coin, from raw material, or from their use

⁸⁷ As Marx puts it in *Capital I*, “the truth of the statement that ‘although gold and silver are not by nature money, money is by nature gold and silver’ is shown by the appropriateness of their natural properties for the function of money” (185). Further, “because universal labor-time itself can only display quantitative differences, the object to be recognized as its specific embodiment must be able to express purely quantitative differences, thus presupposing identical, homogenous quality” (*Contribution*, 153). Marx thus favorably quotes Galiani’s suggestion that “a peculiar feature of metals is that in them alone all relations are reduced to a single one, that is, their quantity, for by nature they are not distinguished by differences in quality either in their internal composition or in their external form and structure” (*ibid*).

⁸⁸ The earth’s gold was *first* created, today’s physicists tell us, in the collisions and explosive deaths of neutron star pairs. Only in these collisions which form *black holes* are neutron-rich heavy metals such as gold and platinum both created and then released into space to cool into solid form. Gold is an element born of the death and objectification of light, as we shall see. Indeed, it is “reborn”, as it were, when it extrudes from, or is extracted from beneath, mother earth’s surface. See <http://apod.nasa.gov/apod/ap050515.html>.

in ornaments, into bullion and back again. Further, silver and (especially) gold are soft in comparison to bronze, iron, and most steels and alloys. Gold is the softest solid pure metal and silver is highly malleable too. This last fact is crucial, for it tells us that these metals are largely superfluous in consumption and especially in production and to that extent are more “ideal,” as it were, for playing a specifically circulatory or economic role. As Marx says of gold and silver in the *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* of 1859, “any quantity of them can thus be placed at will within the social process of circulation without impairing production and consumption as such. Their individual use-value does not [much] conflict with their economic function” (154).⁸⁹ Our overall point here, then, is that neither Marx nor the political economists in general ignore the “material shell” of value when analyzing why gold and silver became the first substances of modern money. Far from it: Insofar as the value which they are and signify is abstract, the substances of money will have to exhibit qualitative uniformity together with quantitative divisibility and recombability. Only in this way and with these substances is trade first centralized, made more efficient, and globalized.

Marx's account of gold and silver's historical rise as money, however, does not *reduce* to their functional, technological, and utilitarian ability to facilitate trade. Indeed, he's careful not to describe money's role in commerce in etiological and/or teleological terms. He doesn't use the word “because” at crucial moments in the second and third passage above, for instance, but the word “with.” He does *not* say that “the universal equivalent form comes and goes *because of* the momentary social contacts which call it into existence” but rather that “the universal equivalent form comes and goes *with* the

⁸⁹ In *Capital*, Marx refers us to the *Contribution* repeatedly for his more detailed analysis of money. See Marx, 1970.

momentary social contacts which call it into existence.” And he does *not* say that “the need for this form [of value] first develops *because of* the increase in the number and variety of the commodities entering into the process of exchange” but rather, and significantly, that “the need for this form first develops *with* the increase in the number and variety of the commodities entering into the process of exchange.” So while Adam Smith and so many other theorists of marginal utility indicate that the problems of barter precede and announce the need for money such that money is nothing but the solution for those problems, here we have at least a negative indication of what Marx means when he says that “the problem and the means for its solution arise *simultaneously*”: Concerning the origins of money, he is not attributing primary or monocausal force to the rational-economic interest that trade be made to function efficiently, in instrumentalist fashion, amidst a growing multiplicity of products.

Let’s return to our “dazzling” passage (above) in this regard. If we read this passage with care, we begin to see that although Marx could be, or even *is*, saying that money is functional, utilitarian, and efficient for trade, he’s nonetheless also offering a more subtle account. So let’s look again: The fact that bourgeois economics portrays “what appears to happen” as happening in money’s movement does *not* mean that this appearance *fully* conceals some completely-lost process. The lost process, the movement prior to monetization, does not altogether vanish. Rather, it vanishes, as we’ve already begun to see, as Marx says here, and as we shall stress, *in its own result*, namely, in and as the object which “money” has become. This may seem to be but a sly sort of difference, but in fact, as sly, as subreptive, as secretive, it makes all the difference. On a merely “economic” and so typically “modern” reading, the conditions for money’s

existence disappear without a trace when money as rational measure and facilitator overcomes and replaces these “irrational” and “inefficient” conditions. What’s left behind, as if the past were merely or simply past, is something which everyone thinks of as being a market economy of commodity exchange before money. They call it “barter”:

I produce this object in isolation; you produce another object in isolation; and when we meet we can trade these products if our needs are doubly coincidental. As Marx phrases the problem here, however, money is not just a rational object of value invented for exchange but is also an indication of its own movement’s apparently “leaving no trace behind.” Again, the conditions for commodity and money exchange don’t simply vanish but vanish, Marx says, *in their own result*. Money is thus a *trace*. But of what?

Marx brings a clue to the surface in this same passage. Money is an objective trace of *magic*, indeed, as we shall see, it’s a riddling and dazzling trace — a rebus as cipher — of its own lost conditions in *primitive* magic. Take here the central concept of “fetishism.” Marx borrows the term from European ethnology, which of course is emerging as a science in the 19th century. And for the ethnologists, fetishism is a principal aspect of the so-called “primitive religions” which belong to so-called “tribal cultures.”⁹⁰ It is through an almost religious form of fetishism, then, that the *glyphics* of money and commodities speak also of their *hieros*, a sacredness, of which magic is an elaboration. But magic is the practical enterprise of religion and historically precedes religion if by the latter we have in mind the various monotheisms. Magic roots — it is a central root of — commodity value.

These relations will become clearer as we go. This is why we find Marx “riddling” various early passages in *Capital* with strange references to the animistic or

⁹⁰ See Pietz.

mysterious power “in” or “of” commodities and money. Chapter two on “The Process of Exchange” opens, for instance, with a reminder that commodities aren’t alive and social: “Commodities cannot themselves go to market and perform exchanges in their own right. We must, therefore, have recourse to their guardians, who are the possessors of commodities. Commodities are things, and therefore lack the power to resist man” (178). Not only is this reminder strange to the degree that it’s a “reminder” — for who would think otherwise, right? — but as soon as Marx has seemingly clarified that commodities are asocial and thingly and therefore lack the power to resist man, he virtually, mysteriously backtracks. In the next sentence we read that “if they [commodities] are unwilling, he [the guardian] can use force; in other words he can take possession of them.” So again, while the hypothetical “if” leads the way, and despite apparently being mere things with no cultural, social, or subjective power, commodities might still “will” a form of social resistance to human will.

Did Marx say “possession”? On the next page, we read the following: “A born leveler and cynic, [a commodity] is always ready to exchange not only soul but body with each and every other commodity, be it more repulsive than Maritornes herself” (179). Indeed, some pages later this object has become money, gold in particular. And as gold, money is more attractive, more dazzling we might say, and yet more stubborn and difficult, too: “We see then that commodities are in love with money, but that ‘the course of true love never did run smooth’” (202). Thus, “in order . . . that a commodity may in practice operate effectively as exchange-value, it must divest itself of its natural physical body and become transformed from merely imaginary into real gold, although this act of transubstantiation may be more ‘troublesome’ for it than the transition from necessity to

freedom for the Hegelian ‘concept’, the casting of his shell for a lobster, or the putting-off of the old Adam for Saint Jerome” (197).⁹¹ We will return later to this idea that value has difficulty in shedding its shell, or more precisely its “skin,” to become really embodied in gold as exchange-value. We can point cryptically to the difficulty, however, if in and behind the metaphor of value’s desirous need to shed its skin there lies something literal, something, then, which verges upon and enacts a transubstantiation identifying body and soul in a sacred act of exchange. For as we’ll see when we analyze the Aztec ritual of the “smoking mirror,” what’s at stake isn’t just modern possession (i.e. the form of modern ownership) but possession of a prior sort. When gold becomes money and money becomes gold, both become the “trace” of this priority.

But we can take a less cryptic approach, too: When I pay a taxi driver twenty dollars after he’s taken me to my specified destination, money has apparently “done,” or at least has enabled me to do, what I could not have done without *it*. As with any “charm,” with money my “natural” somatic powers are further socially extended, elaborated. I have temporary practical “control” over both the driver and the vehicle, for instance, whereas otherwise, without money, I would not usually have this “control,” this ability to “possess” other persons and things. Of course, this can be looked at and understood positively or negatively—a difference in orientation made possible in part through money’s historical emergence, or rather, through the money-relation of credit and debt. In any case, we can see here precisely why Marx motivates the notion of the fetish to examine money’s magical properties: While an ethnological “primitive fetish” is any object which, whether crafted, found, or exchanged, has a preternatural, as if

⁹¹ The current (early 2009) alquidity in the world market exemplifies the difficulty of this attraction, for instance, to the degree that we can do little about it. It’s as if the market were working “behind our backs” despite the fact that value seems to agree with price on our “foreheads.”

supersensible, ability to protect, aid, or harm its possessor or recipient — or so this object practically appears and “works” from the cultural “inside” — this is how “we moderns” treat and use money. We treat it like “its” powers inhered in it animistically.

But while Marx structurally links the fetishism of trade to the fetishism of religion, he also notes the *developmental* trajectory of this structure’s coming to be. In bourgeois society, religion exists in two general forms:

For a society of commodity producers whose general social relation of production consists in the fact that they treat their products as commodities, hence as values, and in this thingly form bring their individual, private labors into relation with each other as homogeneous human labor, Christianity with its religious cult of man in the abstract — more particularly in its bourgeois development in Protestantism, Deism, etc — is the most fitting form of religion. In the ancient Asiatic, Classical-antique, and other such modes of production, the transformation of the product into a commodity, and therefore men’s existence as producers of commodities, plays a subordinate role, which however increases in importance as these communities approach nearer and nearer to the stage of their *dissolution*. (172, my emphasis)

Foreshadowing Weber’s detailed analysis in the *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Marx’s point is clearly and correctly that Protestantism’s social individualism, its idea of an absconding monotheistic God, and its universalistic abstraction of “man in general” make it the “ideal” religious form for the abstraction of value and history which appears with global commodification. But notice, too, how the transformation of precapitalist forms of trade into generalized commodity trade marks and is simultaneously marked by the transformation from pre-Christian into Christian religion. The ideology of religious thought is inseparable, in this regard, from the praxis of economic objectification, here the making of the form of money. Indeed, this latter praxis, since more obviously material, will disavow its universality precisely in and as particular objectifications. While gold announces itself as universal or world money in

its generalization and production during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, for instance, we also encounter here a repression of the magical notion that gold is divine (and specifically divine shit for some religions). In any case, with the “dissolution” of various “ancient” modes of production, we also find the dissolution of primitive religion and the rise of Christian universalism. Recall Marx’ claim in this regard that, although political economy has discovered that labor hides behind and within commodities as values, the political economists have *not* been able to understand, nor even to ask, why labor takes the shape, specifically, of commodities:

Political economy has indeed analyzed value and its magnitude, however incompletely, and has uncovered the [labor] content concealed within these forms. But it has never once asked the question why this content has assumed that particular form, that is to say, why labor is expressed in value, and why the measurement of labor by its duration is expressed in the magnitude of the value of the product. These formulas, which bear the unmistakable stamp of belonging to a social formation in which the process of production has master over man, instead of the opposite, appear to the political economists’ bourgeois consciousness to be as much a self-evident and nature-imposed necessity as productive labor itself. Hence the pre-bourgeois forms of the social organization of production are treated by political economy in much the same way as the Fathers of the Church treated pre-Christian religions. (174-5)

In the footnote attached to the end of this passage Marx reminds us that the Christian church fathers he has in mind resemble the political economists of his critique to the degree that both groups hold that there are “only two kinds of institutions, artificial and natural... [The church fathers believe that] every religion which is not theirs is an invention of men, while their own is an emanation of God. Thus there has been history, but there is no longer any” (175). Marx thereby links fetishistic abstraction not simply to Christianity but also to what he specifies as “tribal religion”—although “religion” may be a bit misleading here to the degree that it’s magic which is at stake in and beneath

religion, polytheism in and beneath monotheism. In any case, commodity fetishism's *deepest* roots are "reflected" in the primitively magical, as we'll continue to see:

Trading nations, properly so called, exist only in the interstices of the ancient world, like the gods of Epicurus in the intermundia, or Jews in the pores of Polish society.... They are conditioned by a low stage of development of the productive powers of labor and correspondingly limited relations between men within the process of creating and reproducing their material life, hence also limited relations between man and nature. These real limitations are reflected in the ancient worship of nature, and in other elements of tribal religions. (173)

The above-mentioned "dissolution" of these "ancient communities" and "modes of production" hinges, then, on *how* these "interstices" are reflected, magnified, and reduced in the *objects of sacred value* borne and exchanged between trading nations and communities of the ancient world. Trade spreads culture, in other words, and in definite, if general, ways. More specifically, commodity trade has an abstracting affect on polytheism, magic, and eventually even on monotheism, although this isn't to say that the sacred is totally effaced. As Marx puts it in chapter two on "The Process of Exchange":

things are in themselves external to man, and therefore alienable. In order that this alienation may be reciprocal, it is only necessary for men to agree tacitly to treat each other as the private owners of those alienable things, and, precisely for that reason, as persons who are independent of each other. But this relationship of reciprocal isolation and foreignness does not exist for the members of a primitive community of natural origin, whether it takes the form of a patriarchal family, an ancient Indian commune, or an Incan state. The exchange of commodities begins where communities have their boundaries, at their points of contact with other communities, or with members of the latter. However, as soon as products have become commodities in the external relations of a community, they also, by reaction, become commodities in the internal life of a community. Their quantitative exchange relation is at first determined purely by chance. They become exchangeable through the mutual desire of their owners to alienate them. In the meantime, the need for others' objects of utility gradually establishes itself. The constant repetition of exchange makes it a normal social process. In the course of time, therefore, at least some part of the products must be produced intentionally for the purpose of exchange. From that moment the distinction between the usefulness of things for direct consumption

and their usefulness in exchange becomes firmly established. Their use-value has become distinguished from their exchange-value. (182)

While this passage is quite straightforward and helpful, and indeed, while it describes the formation of what Marx calls the “normal social process” of commodity exchange, it presents us nonetheless with a couple of question sets. First, what does it mean to say that “as soon as products have become commodities in the external relations of a community, they also, by reaction, become commodities in the internal life of a community”? What is this “reaction”? And whence does its apparent necessity arise? Second, and relatedly, we can imagine all sorts of scenarios where things are exchanged between individuals or groups where there is *already* “tacit agreement to treat each other as the private owners of those alienable things.” “We” do this all the time, for this is our practice—we imagine a more or less individualistic trade of more or less private properties whenever we trade in any market society. But what happens, and what is happening, when this “tacit agreement” *doesn't yet exist*, has not yet appeared, or is only in the process of appearing? Indeed, what does it mean to say that “this relationship of reciprocal isolation and foreignness does not exist for the members of a primitive community of natural origin”?⁹²

⁹² Although Marx (and myself, too) sometimes refers to “nature” as if it were some thing which could stand out intelligibly for us as an object “in itself,” since fetishism is our object, any idea of “nature” we might have has already been historically and practically situated by our modern, capitalist mode of production. But this doesn't mean that referring to “nature” somewhat plainly cannot be useful. After all, part of Marx's argument is that fetishism makes historically situated objects, like nature, appear merely natural. So long as we know this, then, we needn't be anxious about using the term in an ordinary and useful way.

CHAPTER VI

PRIMITIVE ENCOUNTER I: OBJECTIVE INTERCOURSE

To help us answer these prior questions, let's examine some "primitive" cultural encounters as offered, for instance, by Tzvetan Todorov in his excellent *Conquest of America*.⁹³ Indeed, since it is precisely in the "long sixteenth century" confrontation between Europeans and native Americans that the process of modernization may be said to coincide with the actuality and practicality of globalization, we can investigate this encounter as a privileged site for studying the birth of capitalism and "the market." Or, as Todorov puts it,

the discovery of America, or of the Americans, is certainly the most astonishing encounter of our history. We do not have the same sense of radical difference in the 'discovery' of other continents and of other peoples: Europeans have never been altogether ignorant of the existence of Africa, India, or China; some memory of these places was always there already—from the beginning.... At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Indians of America are certainly present, but nothing is known about them, even if, as we might expect, certain images and ideas concerning other remote populations were projected upon these newly discovered beings. The encounter will never again achieve such an intensity, if indeed that is the word to use: the sixteenth century perpetrated the greatest genocide in human history. (4-5)

This passage bears a number of assumptions that we will want to clear up—concerning ancestral and cultural memory, and concerning the understandably controversial and to a certain degree offensive idea of the European "discovery" of America, including the idea that this encounter is "our" encounter, for instance. For now, however, I simply want to take up the line of inquiry which Todorov himself first takes

⁹³ Todorov, 1984.

up, a line concentrating on the so-called “beginning” of this encounter, that is, when the world, like a skin, was first *broke open* into what are still sometimes called “Old” and “New.” The question this “example” highlights, then, is on the one hand the question of modernization, a process coincident with a literal historical globalization; but on the other hand it’s also a question of *all* entrances into “history” from “prehistory.”⁹⁴ Indeed, a crucial caveat of this opening of and to history is that the age of scientific, and so “objective,” understanding is also the age that births *capital*. This should be familiar territory for any critical theory of modern culture: Capitalization and enlightenment arise together, and necessarily so, at least at first. For while reflection dawns *post festum*, it also seems to require the feast, a primitive accumulation, even as it dawns.

So, what happens between the Europeans and the Amerindians when Columbus and his crew spot and then land on a small island in the Bahamas on October 11th and 12th, 1492? Let’s note first of all that because the Taíno or Arawak Indians who Columbus and his crew first meet don’t have an “obvious” system of writing beyond a few petroglyphs, and reciprocally, because the Europeans bring with them a system of phonetic-syllabic or alphabetic writing, a lot of what “we” now “know” about these “first contacts” — that is, a lot of what we are cognizant of — stems from Spanish records such as Columbus’s journals.⁹⁵ Indeed, as Todorov notes, it turns out that the first thing Columbus does when he approaches the island is to get his paperwork in order:

Disembarking into a small boat with the royal banner at hand and with a royal notary

⁹⁴ As we’ll see, an epoch or culture can be understood as “historical” to the degree that it produces and marks its development self-reflectively and self-consciously using abstract, alphabetically materialized concepts, whereas an epoch or culture remains “prehistorical” to the degree that it communicates and understands its development pictographically. This will become materially clear later.

⁹⁵ Actually, Columbus’s journals were eventually lost but not before much of their content was quoted, transcribed, and/or summarized by Las Casas, the famous priest who, in his history of the Americas, eventually and vigorously defends the rights of the Indians against conquest and mistreatment. See, for example, Columbus, 1969.

armed with an inkwell, Columbus demands that a *deed of possession* be drawn up. Standing before the Indians who continue to hail him from the shore, he formally “appropriates” the island for the Spanish Crown in the name of Christ.⁹⁶ He concretizes this formality in an act of inscription.⁹⁷

When Columbus and his crew actually meet this first Amerindian group moments later, however, this is what happens: Noticing to some degree that they cannot understand each other verbally, the two groups supplement their respective chatter with physical gesturing and, more importantly, at least for the Indians, they begin to *exchange various small objects*. They begin to communicate “tacitly,” in other words, if not yet under the agreement of reciprocal relations of private property. In Maussian terms, they exchange, they present each other with *gifts*. As Columbus puts it: “As I saw that they were very friendly to us...I presented them with some red caps, and strings of beads to wear upon their necks, and many other trifles of small value, whereupon they were much delighted, and became wonderfully attached to us. Afterwards they came swimming to the boats, bringing parrots, balls of cotton thread, javelins, and many other things which they exchanged for articles we gave them, such as glass beads and hawk's bells; which trade was carried on with the utmost good will.” (Oct 12, 1492, Cohen p55).⁹⁸ Indeed,

⁹⁶ Similarly, although Columbus soon learns that the Indians call this particular island “Guanahani”, he “officially” dubs it “San Salvador”.

⁹⁷ Further, Columbus and his crew are astonished, as they continue to be with each such early encounter, at the Indians’ lack of clothing. According to Las Casas (in Columbus, 1969), the first contact starts with this observation: “Presently they saw naked people” (Oct 11, 1492). And this continues with each new encounter: “They all go naked, men and women, as the day they were born” (Nov 6, 1492). “This king and all his people went naked as their mothers bore them, and their women the same, without any shame” (Dec 12, 1492). Etc. It’s thus as if writing and clothing are linked, as cultural objects of a development beyond “mere nature.” We should note, however, that, excepting children, the Indians rarely went around purely naked. They sometimes wore loin-cloths and almost always wore certain “charms” and “adornments” of a “magical” sort. Despite the observations of the Europeans, then, it’s as if the rudiments of clothing performed the same function as the earliest form of writing, as we shall see.

⁹⁸ Also see “Christopher Columbus: Extracts from His Journal, 1492,” online at <http://www.vlib.us/amdocs/acolon.html>.

encountering different groups of Indians in the next days, weeks, and months, this rather beatific scene tends to repeat itself in a general way, at least for some time — before a certain horrific disenchantment takes place — whenever the Europeans meet a new Indian group on a different island. On Oct 22nd, for instance, Columbus writes that “they carried spears and some of them brought balls of cotton thread. These they exchanged with some of the sailors for bits of glass from broken bowls and fragments of earthenware. Some of them wore pieces of gold hanging from their noses, which they happily exchanged for bells of the kind made for the feet of a sparrow-hawk and for glass beads, but the amount was a mere trifle. Indeed, however small the things we gave them, they still consider our coming a great marvel” (72). Or, on Oct 16th, he writes that “they brought us water and something of all they had. I ordered presents to be given to all of them, that is to say, strings of ten or a dozen small glass beads and some glass clappers...and some leather tags, all of which they value very highly” (63). Indeed, as Todorov points out, Columbus is surprised and even astounded, especially on the first voyage, by the generosity of the Indians: On Oct 13th, Columbus writes for instance that “all that they have they give for any trifle we offer them, so that they take in exchange pieces of crockery and fragments of glass goblets.” Or on Dec 13th: “For anything at all we give them, without ever saying it is too little, they immediately give whatever they possess” (Todorov, 38).

What, then, is happening here and what are some of the lessons to be culled from these scenes of “the gift”? Focusing on Columbus’s general “medievalist” and “finalist” mentality, as he calls it, Todorov initially suggests that these exchanges point to the *social relativity* of value, or more accurately, the social relativity of *valuation* between

vastly dissimilar cultures. Recall Todorov's assumption that "nothing is known" — by whom, and in what lineage? — "about [the Indians], even if, as we might expect, certain images and ideas concerning other remote populations were projected upon these newly discovered beings." Although he will eventually withdraw it, or rather, emend it developmentally, then, Todorov's *initial* interpretation pivots almost exclusively on cultural *difference*: "Columbus unceasingly praises the generosity of the Indians, who give everything for nothing; it sometimes borders, he decides, on stupidity: why do they value a piece of glass quite as much as a coin, and a worthless piece of change as much as a gold piece?" Indeed, from this, he draws a lesson, a thesis about value and about Columbus's failure to understand value normativity: "No more than in the case of languages does Columbus understand that values are *conventional*, that gold is not more precious than glass 'in-itself', but *only* in the European system of exchange. Hence..., we have the impression that...a different system of exchange is for him equivalent to the absence of system, from which he infers the bestial character of the Indians" (38, my emphasis).

I tend to agree with the *sympathies* of this assessment, of course, for who now wouldn't recognize that Columbus, like so many of his followers, was constantly failing to understand Amerindian cultural norms. We must always insist in this regard that colonialism and imperialism stem from this general inability to recognize others in their difference and differences. This inability is exaggerated with Columbus, to say the least. In the very first encounter with the Indians on October 11th and 12th, for instance, Columbus cannot even be sure that the Indians are *speaking*, even though he himself speaks at least four different European languages! He writes in his journal that "at the

moment of my departure I shall take from this place six of them to Your Highness, so that they may learn to speak”; but various translators of this passage have been so shocked or confused by it that they “correct” it as if Columbus had said “so that they may learn to speak *our language*,” which is in fact *not* what Columbus said (30). And yet, by concentrating only on Columbus’s general inability to recognize the Indians in their difference, Todorov doesn’t reach a deeper insight, as yet; he can only put forward a few brief ideas focusing on cultural normativity. But nonetheless this already brings us to the heart of things: One of the specific details he offers is that there is *nothing objective* about the values being traded between these groups. What we see is simply value *relativism* (at least until Todorov widens his thesis developmentally much later in the book). Gold for instance, as we’ve seen, “is not more precious than glass ‘in-itself’, but *only* in the European system of exchange.”

Marx’s emphasis, on the other hand, is not simply on the difference and relativity of cultural valuation — such that feathers, bark, beads, quartz, copper, gold, bronze, and iron will be valued “differently” in distinct cultures, for example — but also on the *objective* development of valuation *and* value.⁹⁹ One can’t have cultural growth, in other words, without the simultaneous and linked development of objectivity. Indeed, we can now better link this with Marx’s suggestion that the “characteristic which products of

⁹⁹ To better discern where I am going with this, one could ask both (a) why the stone age precedes the age of metals and (b) why so-called “proto-writing” and the earliest forms of pictography emerge in the Neolithic age while logogrammatical, ideographic, and hieroglyphic “true-writing” emerge in the Bronze (including also the Copper [Chalcolithic] and Gold [Chrysolithic]) age, while alphabetic-phonetic writing emerges more or less only in the Iron age. As we shall see, this is not simply an issue of technological progress but a question of the *symbolic development* of humankind, in both progress and regress together, coincident with technological discovery such that *techne* cannot be dissociated from magic; and magic may even precede the age of technology as we understand the concept of “technology” today. If humanization and enculturation is our concern, the study of development must concentrate upon reflective technologies (mirrors of the necessity of human conflict) which express their birth when *mythos* is repressively sublimated into *logos* through “immemorial” primitive accumulations.

utility have of being values is as much men's social product as is their language": When we treat value as if it inhered in certain objects, we make a *partial* secret, true, since we thereby hide human labor behind these objects as discrete "values." The *more* secretive point, however, is that even while labor is being transformed into a secret (in the form of objectified value), and so even while "value" apparently doesn't communicate this secret, it nonetheless communicates something *like* linguistic significance. This "like," on the other hand, doesn't simply indicate "communicability." Marx employs the language of "secrecy," after all, since in and through commodity exchange something is also bound — above and beyond the fact that value conceals labor — *not* to be communicated in them. Before children communicate verbally, for instance, they communicate through gesture and object-exchange.

What, then, is being exchanged in the "first contact" between the so-called "Europeans" and the so-called "native" populations of America from the sixteenth century through the present? My thesis is contained in the following answer, namely, that here *objective forms of development and anti-development are being exchanged in a subdialectics of primitivity embodied in hieroglyphic traces of prehistorical accumulative redistributions*. What do I mean by this complex statement? First of all, by "objective forms of development" I largely have in mind what Marx means by "modes of production." A mode of production is the relationship between an culture's spatiotemporal *productive forces* (including human labor and such means of production as equipment, tools, buildings and technologies, natural resources, and improved land) and its distinct social and technical *relations of production* (including the property, power, and control relations, often codified into norms, customs, or laws, governing this

society's productive assets, the cooperative work relations and forms of association, the relations between people and the objects of their work, and the relations between social classes). I emphasize that the modes of production which meet and are exchanged here, however, are "objective" to the degree that the relations of production are always embodied and symbolized in fetishized *objects* of value, some of which are certainly more technically powerful than others. And since these objects are symbols and fetishes of power, and since power is a relation borne through exchange, the exchange of objects of "value" between quite distinct cultures is never neutral. Rather, a given object of exchange will be reinscribed with new meanings and forces. Indeed, to the degree that *valued* objects secretly refer to what is "primitive" in a given culture, the exchange of values also secretly entails an exchange of forms of development and regression. A culture's ability to adapt to disillusion or to the persistence of illusion, for example, will here, in exchange, be put to the test. When a relatively isolated culture meets an "other" culture which for thousands of years has been much less isolated, as is the case here, for instance, their mutual contact and exchange can be developmentally "shocking," especially for the *former* group.

Indeed, to the degree that two cultures meet without a common verbal language, their communication will consist in "preverbal" forms of interchange embodied in objects of "value." This, then, is why such exchanges are and should be labeled "predialectical," on my view; for if the exchanges are not yet made at a mutually intelligible level of abstraction, where the cultures *understand* how each both represents and presents its highest values, what secretly gets exchanged in and through the preverbal objects of significance at hand are some primitive assumptions *and forces* regarding cultural

“others.” While the Amerindians often *sacralized* their European visitors such that the latter were taken to (and so *placeboically* did) have power over the former, for instance, the Europeans falsely supposed in turn that the Amerindians lacked culture and also that the latter’s magic was altogether different from their “own” monotheistic religious forces.

The war that breaks out between these groups and the conquest that befalls the Amerindians, then, is not something merely or purely “new.” Rather, this tragedy recalls and to some degree *repeats* various long-forgotten (and so *prehistorical*) tragedies which had split apart and mutually isolated these two cultures, thus *making* them distinct cultures, in the first place. The human family began long, long ago in Africa, after all, such that what when we refer to distinct or even isolated “cultures,” we already imply that there had once been a split between them in our buried, mutual pasts. And as we shall see, this is precisely what Marx means by the term “primitive accumulation.” Primitive accumulations are the latent suspicions, hatreds, and intimacies of and towards “others” which rest upon forgotten prior unions, splits, and wars, which means that when two relatively “isolated” cultures meet as if for the first time, the exchange of objects between them secretly revivifies their capacity for suspicion, hatred, and intimacy with the “other.” Modern money, for instance, retains premodern “magical” forces even though it appears to be a merely secular “economic” object, as we shall continue to see.

CHAPTER VII

PRIMITIVE ACCUMULATION I: VIOLENT EXPROPRIATION

Early in *Capital*, Marx frames capitalist history almost economically, in an economic “form,” indeed, in the formula for surplus-value. Surplus-value, in turn, can be traced to the formation of value, which of course can be traced to fetishism and, well, its secret. Thus, in part one, Marx points to the secret of the value fetish, as we’ve seen, in part by suffusing his apparently simply political economic analysis with strange and subtle references to primitivism and magic. Indeed, linking primitive magic to money, he suggests that money plays a significant role in the process of capitalization, as we’ll continue to see. In part two, he then locates capitalization, at least formulaically, in the transformation of money, understood as value “incarnate,” into surplus-value: This “surplus” is a “valorized” or increased amount of money, represented by the apostrophe or prime in the formula $M-C-M'$. Money purchases a commodity which is then sold, in turn, for the original amount of money plus a surplus. Surplus-value, and therefore capital, thus appears to arise solely in and through exchange, as discussed and theorized in much bourgeois political economy.

Indeed, according to most political economists, surplus-value is formed by selling something at a price higher than its value (where the latter is understood in terms of what are called “costs of production,” costs which include labor, which has a price).¹⁰⁰ *Capital*

¹⁰⁰ There has thus arisen a debate between Marxist and non-Marxist economist over the identity and difference, the relation and possible transformation, between price and value. Part of this debate is thus called the “transformation problem”. The basic economic (non-Marxian) theoretical reference for the “transformation problem”, which comes with a large survey of sources, is Samuelson, 1971.

is thus the accumulation of *profit*, it is said. This, however, is not Marx's view, at least to the degree that he wants to distinguish "profit" from "surplus-value" by linking the former simply to circulation while tracking the latter back to production and beyond. Indeed, for Marx, unregulated market exchange, whether capitalist or not, *is* fair and equivalent *at the level of circulation* to the extent that to make an exchange is to signify, to *represent* by the very act of exchange embodied in its objects, the equal value of these traded objects. As he puts it, in exchange "each enters into relation with the other, as with a simple owner of commodities, and they exchange equivalent for equivalent" (280). That is definitional, although merely so at the level of circulation. In this circulatory situation "if equivalents are exchanged, no surplus-value results," and so no capital results (266).

The free market logic behind this should not be hard to follow. Indeed, this logic is, it has become, more or less "obvious" in market societies to the degree that commodities and their movement embody the logic as a form of appearance of things past but forgotten: If one enters a market with a sum of money, for instance, one can choose to buy or not to buy any of the products one can afford. One finds this or that commodity ready for purchase or ready to leave behind. Indeed, this is where most capitalists and the economists smile brightly. And like I said, Marx does *not* disagree with them if we worry only about this point, or this aspect of the point: Since purchases and sales tend to exemplify fair-exchange at the level of circulation, thus exhibiting mutual consent, equity, and choice (even freedom of choice), it is only cheating which can make commodity exchange morally, legally, or formally unfair; it is only something

on the order of robbery, a dispossession, which interrupts or destroys the possibility of what, hypothetically and merely formally speaking, would truly be “fair exchange.”

What, then, distinguishes “profit,” which is the general term for increases in money that result from sales, from “surplus-value”? While Marx sometimes conflates the two terms even in *Capital*, as we’ll see below,¹⁰¹ the latter hinges on and specifies the *exploitation of labor* by capital through wage-relations, especially through subsistence wages. In general, “profits” are made and gained through opportunistic salesmanship. They depend on calculative and sometimes “lucky” acts of buying cheap and selling dear, but by strict Marxian definition they *don’t* hinge on exploitation. Indeed, this is why Marx motivates the term and idea of surplus-value. He doesn’t want the notion of exploitation to be confused with profit through exchange. Of course, in a complex market it is often, in fact almost invariably, difficult to tell the difference since so many products, large and small, simple or complex, hinge at bottom on exploitation. If I’m trading stocks, for instance, the “stock” isn’t directly produced by a wage-laborer. And yet, several removes away, the corporate power which the stock financially represents typically does hire and use wage-labor, a form of labor, that is, the owner of which doesn’t own means of production but is paid a wage for working those means (which are owned and controlled by a capitalist) into values, and indeed, by creating amounts of value greater than his or her wage reflects. Thus, looked at from the point of view of the *whole* of society, profits cancel each other out even while the total value (and money) in

¹⁰¹ Many of these terms were only being more or less scientifically specified between the writing of the *Grundrisse* (in 1857) and *Capital* (published in 1867) and beyond, which means that although Marx is developing scientific categories and structures, these are often partially unclear or conflated.

the whole of society (and of all societies combined) continues to increase.¹⁰² So on the one hand there is equilibrium of profit and loss, and yet, on the other hand, capital continues to grow. As Marx puts this, although here at first misleadingly calling “profit” by the name of “surplus-value”:

In this case [e.g. where an object of, say, \$100 in value is sold at \$110] the seller pockets a surplus-value [i.e., more properly, a *profit*] of 10. But after he has sold he becomes a buyer. A third owner of commodities now comes to him as a seller, and he too, for his part, enjoys the privilege of selling his commodities 10 percent too dear. Our friend gained 10 percent as a seller only to lose it again as a buyer. In fact, the net result is that all owners of commodities sell their goods to each other [say, on average] at 10 percent above their value, which is exactly the same as if they sold them at their true value.... The formation of surplus-value [here properly termed], and therefore the transformation of money into capital, can consequently be explained neither by assuming that commodities are sold above their value, nor by assuming that they are bought at less than their value. (263)

Marx specifies this further in the following footnote which ends chapter five, a footnote, as we’ll see, which also illustrates how the famous “value controversy” debates of the twentieth century, especially those concerning the “transformation problem” between “values” and “prices,” are largely, if not completely, red-herrings. Once we look at market society as a whole, and/or over a long period of time, prices and value tend to look a lot alike:

The formation of capital must be possible even though the price and the value of a commodity be the same, for it cannot be explained by referring to any divergence between price and value.... The manufacturer knows that if a long period of time is considered, commodities are sold neither over nor under, but at, their average price. If, therefore, he were at all interested in disinterested thinking, he would formulate the problem of the formation of capital as follows: How can we account for the origin of capital on the assumption that prices are regulated by the average price, i.e. ultimately by the value of the commodities? I say ‘ultimately’ because average prices do not

¹⁰² See *This American Life*: “Episode 355: The Giant Pool of Money” (May 9, 2008), radio program: http://www.thisamericanlife.org/Radio_Episode.aspx?sched=1242.

directly coincide with the values of commodities, as Adam Smith, Ricardo, and others believe. (269)

Perhaps the clearest articulation of this problem, however, comes from Engels.

As he puts it in part II, chapter 7 of his *Anti-Dühring* of 1877:

Whence comes this surplus-value? It cannot come either from the buyer buying the commodities under their value, or from the seller selling them above their value. For in both cases the gains and the losses of each individual cancel each other, as each individual is in turn buyer and seller. Nor can it come from cheating, for though cheating can enrich one person at the expense of another, it cannot increase the total sum possessed by both, and therefore cannot augment the sum of the values in circulation.... This problem must be solved...: how is it possible constantly to sell dearer than one has bought, even on the hypothesis that equal values are always exchanged for equal values?¹⁰³

As Marx occasionally reminds us, if we disregard differences of risk, market power, localized technological innovation, trade restrictions, and so on, we see that prices differ from their values here, there, and almost everywhere in modern market economies because of fluctuations in the relations between production, on the one hand, and supply and demand, on the other.¹⁰⁴ So while prices and value rarely exactly converge, they do, or rather, they would tend to converge where market exchange and production are allowed to grow and expand in a more or less unimpeded way. That is, if a commodity is produced and traded in what, hypothetically, would be open and free competition, it's this *competition* which generates what Marx calls an average price, which means that the product's costs of production eventually tend, on average, to converge just below its

¹⁰³ See <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1877/anti-duhring/ch19.htm>.

¹⁰⁴ Marx thus does not ignore supply and demand, as is often said. He tells us in "Value, Price and Profit" (Marx, 1969), for example, that "it suffices to say that if supply and demand equilibrate each other, the market prices of commodities will correspond with their natural prices, that is to say, with their values as determined by the respective quantities of labor required for their production" (chapter vi, paragraph 14). See <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1865/value-price-profit/ch02.htm#c6>.

average price. Products are sold at prices higher than the costs of production to make profits, of course, but prices and costs of production both have averages. Thus, when someone is temporarily making more money from sales, someone else would be making less. Further, since on this understanding prices are subtended by average labor-time and by average costs of production, the convergence between average labor-time and average price becomes more and more common the more products are mass produced and mass distributed. As Marx puts it in the fetishism subchapter, “in the midst of the accidental and ever-fluctuating exchange relations between the products, the labor time socially necessary to produce them asserts itself as a regulative law of nature” (168). Because the labor time socially necessary to produce commodities asserts itself in market societies as a regulative law of nature, value understood in terms of average labor (and what else does a wage measure?) eventually converges with and so transforms quite normally into average commodity price. This is especially the case, again, when labor and price are functionalized and proportioned “on average,” “in the long run,” and “on the social whole.” What *really matters* for Marx, then, as opposed to these “economic” debates, is not whether and how values and prices can be transformed into each other.¹⁰⁵ What matters, as we just saw him put it above, is the formation of *surplus-value*, “the transformation of money into *capital*” (263, my emphasis), capital being the historical *class* relation of a particular form of domination and subordination.

So, where does Marx most explicitly do this? As it turns out, this is quite a secret in Marxian studies. Only in part eight, chapter twenty-six, some 700 pages beyond his

¹⁰⁵ Thus, the famous so-called “transformation problem” between value and price which occupies so much debate in twentieth century analytic Marxist literature is already based on a fetishistic understanding of value—even though Marx himself tangles himself up in this derivative and misleading web of discussion in chapters eight to ten of Capital III! It’s as if he had forgotten something.

introduction to fetishism, do we find Marx tracking circulation not simply back to production but to something even *prior* to production. As chapter twenty-six opens, in fact, we find him taking stock of the analytic situation he has developed by noting how his investigation, even after hundreds of pages, *still* portrays capital's start in a causal or apparently causeless circularity. Even after surplus-value is traced back from circulation to production and found to reside not simply in the buying and selling of commodities but in the specific buying and exploitative use of the worker's capacity to create both value and surplus, Marx admits that capital's origins remain *unexplained* as yet in their fetishistic totality:

We have seen how money is transformed into capital; how surplus-value is made through capital, and how more capital is made from surplus-value. But the accumulation of capital presupposes surplus-value; surplus-value presupposes capitalist production; capitalist production presupposes the availability of considerable masses of capital and labor-power in the hands of commodity producers. The whole movement, therefore, seems to turn around in a never-ending circle, which we can only get out of by assuming a primitive accumulation (the 'previous accumulation' of Adam Smith) which precedes capitalist accumulation; an accumulation which is not the result of the capitalist mode of production but its point of departure. (873)

This is an astonishing admission, and one rarely acknowledged by critics. Only after twenty-five chapters of analysis has Marx traced the *formation* of capital back to something which apparently lies outside the realms of capitalist circulation and production. The patient reader is thus rewarded with a second start, so to speak, in the textual end. Indeed, noticing this, Althusser suggests in his *Lenin and Philosophy* that all but the most experienced of critics should read *Capital* in more or less *reverse* chapter order. Or rather, for Althusser, it's because Marx's early examination of fetishism is so dangerously "Hegelian" that it should be read not first but last; and indeed, as Althusser

puts it, it should be “read with infinite caution.”¹⁰⁶ Whether Althusser is right about this “Hegelian” danger or not, however, clearly one of Marx’s goals in *Capital* is to draw the political economists into the discussion early on so as to provide an immanent, almost subreptive, critique of their presuppositions. And this is done best, of course, by borrowing from and partially speaking “their language” even while pointing to the fetishism which that language and those presuppositions necessarily entails but does not cognitively notice. Thus, following Althusser but partially reversing his pessimism, our idea is that Marx presents the beginning and end of volume one of *Capital* as mirroring — if imperfect and distorted — “bookends.” This brings us to our point: The *secret* of fetishism which initially belongs to commodity trade, and which includes its objectively semblant persistence beyond the political economic discovery that labor informs value, is simultaneously and also *another secret*, namely, as the title of chapter twenty-six has it, “The Secret of Primitive Accumulation.” What, then, is the secret of primitive accumulation? According to Marx, and at length:

Primitive accumulation plays approximately the same role in political economy as original sin does in theology. Adam bit the apple, and thereupon sin fell on the human race. Its origin is supposed to be explained when it is told as an anecdote about the past. Long, long ago there were two sorts of people: one, the diligent, intelligent and above all frugal elite; the other, lazy rascals, spending their substance, and more, in riotous living. The legend of theological original sin tells us certainly how man came to be condemned to eat his bread in the sweat of his brow; but the history of economic original sin reveals to us that there are people to whom this is by no means essential. Never mind! Thus it came to pass that the former sort accumulated wealth, and the latter sort finally had nothing to sell except their own skins. And from this original sin dates the poverty of the great majority who, despite all their labor, have up to now nothing to sell but themselves. (874)

[A]s soon as the question of property is at stake, it becomes a sacred duty to proclaim the standpoint of the nursery tale as the one thing fit for all age-groups and all stages

¹⁰⁶ See Althusser, 2001, 35.

of development. In actual history, it is a notorious fact that conquest, enslavement, robbery, murder, in short, force, plays the greatest part. (875)

In themselves, money and commodities are no more capital than the means of production and subsistence are. They need to be transformed into capital. But this transformation can itself only take place under particular circumstances, which meet together at this point: the confrontation of, and the contact between, two very different kinds of commodity owners; on the one hand, the owners of money, means of production, means of subsistence, who are eager to valorize the sum of values they have appropriated by buying the labor-power of others; on the other hand, free workers, the sellers of their own labor power, and therefore the sellers of labor.... The process, therefore, which creates the capital-relation can be nothing other than the process which divorces the worker from the ownership of the conditions of his own labor; it is a process which operates two transformations, whereby the social means of subsistence and production are turned into capital, and the immediate producers are turned into wage-laborers. So-called primitive accumulation, therefore, is nothing else than the historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production. It appears as 'primitive' because it forms the prehistory of capital, and of the mode of production corresponding to capital....Hence, the historical movement which changes the producers into wage laborers appears, on the one hand, as their emancipation from serfdom and from the fetters of the guilds, and it is this aspect of the movement which alone exists for our bourgeois historians. But on the other hand these newly freed men became sellers of themselves only after they had been robbed of all their own means of production, and of all the guarantees of existence afforded by the old feudal arrangements. And this history, the history of their expropriation, is written in the annals of mankind in letters of blood and fire. (875)

The starting-point of the development that gave rise both to the wage-laborer and to the capitalist was the enslavement of the worker. The advance made consisted in a change in the form of this servitude, in the transformation of feudal exploitation into capitalist exploitation.... In the history of primitive accumulation, all revolutions are epoch-making that act as levers for the capitalist class in the course of its formation; but this is true above all for those moments when great masses of men are suddenly and forcibly torn from their means of subsistence and hurled onto the labor-market as free, unprotected, and rightless proletarians. The expropriation of the agricultural producer, of the peasant from the soil, is the basis of the whole process. The history of this expropriation assumes different aspects in different orders of succession, and at different historical epochs. (875-6)

As if to annihilate Smith's belief in an "invisible hand" of economic accumulation, Marx here translates and transforms the latter's term "previous" into *ursprüngliche* — more on this later — and declares that "so-called primitive accumulation" is steeped not in the parsimony of the hard-working but in the *brutal*

violence levied upon premodern workers of various sorts, especially the common peasant and former serf. The “so-called” thus draws attention to the fact that “accumulation,” which covers both the possession and increased *appropriation* of private property, hinges upon an *expropriation*, a *dispossession*, a *deprivation*, and so a *destruction*.

Whereas former serfs, peasants, and guild-workers had produced many of their use-values or goods by means of *their* tools and through direct, feudally tenured access to arable or otherwise useful land, and whereas they once exchanged some of their own goods “in-kind” with other producers to meet other needs (and so did not typically require much money, even if money existed in the pores of society like gods in the *intermundia*), groups of emergent capitalists in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries largely confiscated these lands and tools, *forcibly* evicting the prior tenants. These latter populations were thus *proletarianized* and compelled to take up what — then and there, in massive farms and urban industries — *first emerged* as wage-labor and labor-power. As opposed to parsimony, then, this is more like a feast, a *festum*.¹⁰⁷

Marx first describes the “enclosure acts” or, to avoid the euphemism, the forcible confiscation and eventual privatization (through a new but growing network of contractual law) of the English feudal *common lands* (where mother nature is held and used in common) by proto-capitalists and sundry former lords.¹⁰⁸ In a footnote at the beginning of chapter twenty-seven, for example, we are reminded that “we must never forget that even the serf was not only the owner of the piece of land attached to his house, although admittedly he was merely a tribute-paying owner, but also a co-proprietor of the

¹⁰⁷ We will turn to the forgetfulness and legacy of the after-feast momentarily.

¹⁰⁸ What happens in Western Europe at this time, however, doesn’t happen in Eastern Europe until the nineteenth and even twentieth centuries, at least for the most part. Indeed, it’s now (again) happening, albeit through monetary means, in Russia. See, for instance, Kramer, 2008: <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/31/business/worldbusiness/31food.html>.

common land” (877). Thus, even the *serf* owned various (albeit usually meager) means of production and reproduction — and in particular the land to which he or she was “tied” or “bound” — through a hereditary feudal tenure steeped in the quasi-religious rituals of tribute.¹⁰⁹ Further, in the main passage to which this footnote is attached, we are reminded that “in England, serfdom had disappeared in practice by the last part of the fourteenth century. The immense majority of the populations consisted then, and to a still larger extent in the fifteenth century, of free peasant proprietors, however much the feudal trappings might disguise their absolute ownership” (877). Thus, in either case — as a serf or, after various peasant revolts and the dissolution of feudal orthodoxies, as a free peasant — the agricultural producer possessed both land and other means of production and, further, s/he had additional useful access to the common lands, the lands possessed by none and all.¹¹⁰

So, what happened? The short version of the story, for England at least, is that a great many peasant tenements, whole small villages in some cases, were razed in the creation of giant sheep walks and pastures. Marx quotes an official Act of Henry VII in 1489 (one later renewed by Henry VIII), for example, which laments among other things the fact that “many farms and large flocks of cattle, especially of sheep, are concentrated in the hands of a few men, whereby the rent of land has much risen, and tillage has fallen off, churches and houses have been pulled down, and marvelous numbers of people have been *deprived of the means wherewith to maintain themselves and their families*” (880,

¹⁰⁹ Of course, as indicated above, this “ownership” was not bound in legal contract. It was bound in the symbols of allegiance and the obligations of paying objective “tribute” with goods in kind. The goods thus (re)presented, indeed, communicated the (gradually less sacred) relation between serf...and *lord*. What is tribute? Today it is (mis)objectified in the exchange of labor power for cash.

¹¹⁰ See Hilton, 1973; Thompson, 1991; and Dobb, 1963, especially chapter VI.

my emphasis). Marx here also cites Harrison's documenting of "of townes pulled downe for sheepe-walks, and no more but the lordships now standing in them" (879).

Besides "enclosure," however, there were other, similar forms of deprivation and dispossession. First and foremost was the concurrent "spoliation of church property," that is, the privatization of Catholic domains. "The process of forcible expropriation of the people received a new and terrible impulse in the sixteenth century from the Reformation" (881). The Church domains were largely "given away [both] to rapacious royal favorites" and to speculating farmers when Protestant reform dissolved many Catholic monasteries in the sixteenth century. Linked with church "spoliation" and common land "enclosure," there was also the "clearing of estates," the "thefts of state lands which had hitherto been managed more modestly. These estates were given away, sold at ridiculous prices, or even annexed to private estates by direct seizure" (884). In short and in all, "the spoliation of the Church's property, the fraudulent alienation of the state domains, the theft of the common lands, the usurpation of feudal and clan property and its transformation into modern private property under circumstances of ruthless terrorism, all these things were just so many idyllic methods of primitive accumulation. They conquered the field for capitalist agriculture, incorporated the soil into capital, and created for the urban industries the necessary supplies of free and rightless proletarians" (895).¹¹¹

The secret of capital, of surplus-value, of wage labor, and of commodity fetishism to boot, then, *here* rests on what Marx calls "brutal" or "forcible" dispossession, a "ruthless terrorism" centered on the "direct seizure," the "theft," of land and other means of production and subsistence. Indeed, there is no need to mix words here, at least in this

¹¹¹ Notice here that *mother earth* is "directly" *incorporated* into capital.

first interpretation of the story. This was violent, physical expropriation. “If money, according to Augier, ‘comes into the world with a congenital blood-stain on one cheek’, capital comes dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt” (926).

CHAPTER VIII

PRIMITIVE ACCUMULATION II: THE SECRET OF EXCHANGE

But what, on a *hieroglyphic* reading, are blood and dirt? Indeed, what are commodities and money in relation to this blood and dirt? Our idea, which we will pursue to the end, is that money and commodities are the traces of bloody primitive destructions which took place “long, long ago” at the dawn of humanization — say, in Africa — destructions which in turn, since prehistorical, are necessarily lost and forgotten, as if vanishing completely, only to “reappear” in their *results*, that is, in both (a) the epochal revolutions transforming one mode of production into other, more developed and abstract modes and (b) the (economic) objects of appropriation and domination which circulate as (gradually more secretive) memorials of these bloody revolutions.

In themselves, of course, this blood and dirt could never prove developmental. In themselves, they are significant only in a negative sense, as mere effects of a simply forceful destruction; but as *symptoms*, they are significant and meaningful. Why? A symptom relates, tells, in some way communicates a “story”; it “speaks” in and as an objective precognitive code; and so it has more than merely natural worth; it has and signifies the problematics and developmental obstacles of cultural value. Symptoms here are mythic. They enact and are a “sacred duty” to tell a “nursery tale” about the communal possessions and especially about the destructive expropriations of early human life, about the identifications and divorces of and from (mother) nature. We need these

stories to “cope,” to manage loss, to move, to (partially) forget, to develop, as a baby, for instance, must leave the womb and begin to fantasize and forget about the utopias and disasters of having been literally and *metaphorically* one with and then divorced from mother (nature).

Observe in this regard that when Marx speaks of accumulation in Part Eight, he rarely reminds us that he “really” means *so-called* “accumulation,” that is, expropriation, deprivation, or dispossession. Of course, we could easily chalk this up — externalizing the idea on paper, for instance — to the fact that once he has pointed to the insufficiency of Adam Smith’s term “previous accumulation,” he would not want to or have to repeatedly make this “so-called” explicit. As soon as he has specified the brutal evictions in the transitional period out of feudalism, in other words, it would be understood that whenever he says “accumulation” in the context of the primitive he actually means “expropriation.” But even if this is true, we still have to wonder why Marx *keeps* and occasionally uses the term “accumulation” and why he doesn’t rather abandon it completely as misguided and Smithian, replacing it with “expropriation,” “dispossession,” etc. Why call expropriation “accumulation”? Why mix words?¹¹²

Notice, for instance, how Marx uses the term “force” in a passage from chapter thirty-one:

These methods [of primitive accumulation] depend in part on brute force, for instance, [on] the colonial system. But they all employ the power of the state, the concentrated and organized force of society, to hasten, as in a hothouse, the process of the transformation of the feudal mode of production into the capitalist mode, and to shorten the transition. Force is the midwife of every old society which is pregnant with a new one. It is itself an economic power. (915)

¹¹² What form of language unifies the antagonism of opposing notions into the same word? Who speaks of night and day or life and death with the same term, for instance? It turns out that “archaic” cultures do: See Freud, “The Antithetical Meaning of Primal Words,” *SE*, Vol. XI, 153-162.

“Force” here is first equated with “brute force,” and so presumably indicates physical power, a physical or brutal violence, for instance, that can spill blood or kill. But by the end of the paragraph this same “force” is equated with “economic power.” The “itself” in the last sentence, especially, then, gives the impression that Marx is not so much distinguishing socioeconomic influence from physical brutality — and thereby adding a fiscal part to a forcible part to account for capital’s origins — but that he’s *identifying* socio-economic influence with physical force despite and even within prior claims. What is the significance of this? Why might these two “forces” be identified or identifiable even when for us they are so obviously distinct? The idea that we will continue to exhibit and analyze is that, primitively speaking (where speaking primitively necessarily involves a force of inscription), these forces, like body and mind for the preverbal baby, are not (yet, cognitively) distinguishable; further, and just as importantly, it is from this primitive identification of physical force and symbolic influence — *where things “speak” and where symbols physically “act,”* for instance — that Marx both develops the notion and points to the immemorial source of capital’s modern power, its *hegemony*.

When Marx suggests in chapter twenty-seven that “we leave on one side here the purely economic driving forces behind the agricultural revolution; we deal only with the violent means employed,” clearly this claim is consistent with part eight’s emphasis on expropriation and, indeed, on the brutality of the force and the physical force of the brutality which dispossessed the (Western) European peasantry in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. And yet, a few pages *before* this he indicates that the impulse which

kicks off this kicking of the yeomanry off the land was, as he puts it, a “direct” economic impulse, namely, a rise in the price of wool. Higher prices, and thus the allure of money — where money previously didn’t seem to have this strong an allure, to be in this much demand, since feudal goods were mostly traded “in kind,” such that money played an only occasional role — here suddenly “inspires” the English proto-capitalists to undersell the wool-producers on the continental mainland and to “make a killing,” as it were. As Marx says,

Although the royal power, itself a product of bourgeois development, forcibly hastened the dissolution of these bands of [serf] retainers in its striving for absolute sovereignty, it was by no means the sole cause of it. It was rather that the great feudal lords, in their defiant opposition to the king and Parliament, created an incomparably larger proletariat by forcibly driving the peasantry from the land, to which the latter had the same feudal title as the lords themselves, and by usurpation of the common lands. The rapid expansion of wool manufacture in Flanders and the corresponding rise in the price of wool in England provided the direct impulse for these evictions. (878)

Thus, while in part eight Marx obviously wants to suggest that precapitalist brutal expropriation conditions specifically capitalist economics as well as the bourgeois conceptual justifications which would deny the “notorious facts” of “conquest, enslavement, robbery, [and] murder,” his subtler indication — one that begins to show how this denial is made possible and which must seriously consider Marx’s continued use of the term “primitive *accumulation*” together with his signifying of “force” as brutality and economy *together* — is that violence and trade, assault and exchange, in short, expropriation and appropriation are and remain intimately linked, difficult to untangle, and are even *reflectively identified*, as we shall see in the next sections, in a primitive yet

potentially developmental way. Money, moreover, plays an ideal material role in this regard.

There are hints, or more than hints, of this early in *Capital*, as in chapter five, where Marx is both clear *and* ambivalent at once about the link and/or relation between the origins of capital and circulation:

We have shown that surplus-value cannot arise from circulation, and therefore that, for it to be formed, something must take place in the background which is not visible in circulation itself... Capital cannot therefore arise from circulation, and it is equally impossible for it to arise apart from circulation. It must have its origin both in circulation and not in circulation. We therefore have a double result... The money-owner, who is as yet only a capitalist in larval form, must buy his commodities at their value, sell them at their value, and yet at the end of the process withdraw more value from circulation than he threw into it at the beginning [thus the formula M-C-M']. His emergence as a butterfly must, and yet must not, take place in the sphere of circulation. These are the conditions of the problem. *Hic Rhodus, hic salta!* (268)

Indeed, let's jump now, exploring this "double result" with its problematic "conditions." The fact that capital cannot arise "from circulation" should now be clear: Understood *cognitively*, partially disavowing their primitive identification, expropriation is not circulation — whew! — but rather the interruption or destruction of exchange by violence: by robbery, by theft, by military invasion, even by murder. This violence is brutal, physical, or, as Marx often terms it, "forcible." But notice that Marx also says here that "it is equally impossible for [capital] to arise apart from circulation." Indeed, most strangely and significantly, he suggests that capital "must have its *origin* both *in circulation* and not in circulation." Not just the capitalistic results, then, but even the origin of capital, its *Ursprung*, is doubled in its primitivity, in its *ursprünglichkeit*.

Take, further, a passage from chapter three. Here Marx suggests that "with the development of circulation, conditions arise under which the alienation of the commodity

becomes separated by an interval of time from the realization of its price” (232). Given the greater geographical (and especially latitudinal and altitudinal) distances over which trade is accomplished over time, for instance, “one commodity-owner may therefore step forth as a seller before the other is ready to buy,” such that

the role of creditor or of debtor results here from the simple circulation of commodities. The change in its form impresses this new stamp on seller and buyer. At first, therefore, these new roles are just as transient as those of seller and buyer, and are played alternately by the same actors. Nevertheless, this opposition now looks less pleasant from the very outset, and it is capable of a more rigid crystallization. However, the same characteristics can emerge independently of the circulation of commodities. The class struggle in the ancient world, for instance, took the form mainly of a contest between debtors and creditors, and ended in Rome with the ruin of the plebeian debtors, who were replaced by slaves. In the Middle Ages the contest ended with the ruin of the feudal debtors, who lost their political power together with its economic basis. Here, indeed, the money form — and the relation between creditor and debtor does have the form of a money-relation — was only the reflection of an antagonism which lay deeper, at the level of the economic conditions of existence. (232)

Notice the *ambivalence* here. Historically speaking, debt, and the subordination that debt is and signifies, can arise in fierce class struggle *or* in regular trade over temporal and spatial distances, in commodity “generalization” as Žižek calls it. These seem like alternatives. We can imagine a situation where a farmer’s experience with drought, for instance, forces him into a debt relation with someone else. Or perhaps, not understanding the practice and concepts of exclusivist ownership, he makes what retrospectively turns out to be a rash trade.¹¹³ Or we can discover through certain texts how the plebes, to use Marx’s example, resisted the Roman patricians through *secessio plebis*, but only to have the patricians, with their army, revolt violently, that is, with physical violence in turn. In any of these cases, however, the transformation of what

¹¹³ This is the situation we will analyze in the following sections.

Marx calls “elementary” exchange, where money is not yet present or only incipiently developing, into a monetary-debt relation, where money has become a “means of payment” and “store of value” and so an object of debt and credit, is also apparently dependent — and this is the key here — not simply on money as a means of exchange but, as Marx specifies, on “*an antagonism which lay deeper*” than elementary exchange. It lies “at the level of the economic conditions of *existence*.” Indeed, notice that trade between debtor and creditor is here described as being not even as *economic* as this antagonism is!¹¹⁴ Or even if trade is economic, as is now obvious in modernity, it is so, perhaps, in virtue of this specifically *primitive* antagonism.

Of crucial importance here, then, are the possible meanings of *ursprünglich* and, more specifically, the meanings that are set in motion when Marx uses *ursprünglich* in ways which problematize its most obvious meaning as “original.” As we’ve mentioned, Marx motivates *ursprünglich* not so much to translate Smith’s “previous” but to dislocate the suggested singularity of temporal antecedence implied in “previous.” Primitive accumulation “appears as ‘primitive’,” we recall, “because it forms the *prehistory* of capital and of the mode of production corresponding to capital.” But “prehistory” is not necessarily, and certainly not only, the series of *historical* modes of production which are previous to and culminate in capital. It must *also* be a mode which is more literally, albeit persistently, *prehistorical*, a mode prior to the cognitive “record” and “recording” of history, but also, then, latent (and largely irrecoverable) within that recording.

And this brings with it a powerful lesson. Despite and even in the records of bourgeois economics (despite and in the generalization of credit-money, for instance), *capitalism doesn't even have its own proper origin*. Indeed, for Marx this remains the

¹¹⁴ This is not chapter 13 of *Capital* for Marx, but we get the point.

case even if we can locate an apparently “original” violence, an apparently distinct origin, in the brutally expropriative processes of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The problem is that the origins of capital are split and so doubled, but also that the origins, since split, persist not just as that which originates but also as that which splits or puts into crisis as antagonism. This has its practical implications for science, the history of science, and for scientific method: Even as bourgeois historians try to tell the story of capitalism’s beginning, they reproduce *myths*, or what Winnicott and Kant would call illusions, about capitalism’s “essential” difference from earlier forms of violence. The history of fetishism thus births the history of the differences and confluences of and between science and ideology. The bourgeois historians suggest that capitalism frees the worker from slavery, from the social paternalism of the guilds, from the domination of the serf by his lord, for instance. Capital becomes the reward of the virtuous, the hard-working, the parsimonious. Partially but not fully against this, then, we want to suggest that the differences between capitalist violence and earlier forms of violence are not essential but developmental. The unities *and* violences belonging to prehistorical community condition the formation and development of historical society and, indeed, they continue to condition it such that global community, in the form of a mature communism, always remains possible. More than original, then, *ursprünglich* means *originary* — the directly-inaccessible prehistorical condition of history which continues to inspire epochal formations and revolutions together with the traces, symptoms, and objects of value — although the term “primitive” may suffice if we remember that with this term Marx is referring not just to tribal, aboriginal, clan, or so-called preliterate cultures but also to ancient, feudal, *and capitalist* cultures (so far). Let us recall with new

emphasis in this regard that for Marx “in the history of primitive accumulation, *all revolutions are epoch-making* that act as levers for the capitalist class *in the course* of its formation; but this is true above all for those moments when great masses of men are suddenly and forcibly torn from their means of subsistence and hurled onto the labor-market as free, unprotected, and rightless proletarians. The expropriation of the agricultural producer, of the peasant from the soil, is the basis of the whole process. The history of this expropriation *assumes different aspects in different orders of succession, and at different historical epochs*” (876). Capital’s origins are many, in other words, and point retrospectively to an originary but (im)memorial violence against and within primitive community.

In the background of all of this, then, lies Marx and Engels’s full historical materialist project, including their theory of the “making” and development of the various epochal modes of production which have together — in an overlapping way, as Frederic Jameson has noted — ended up producing the possibilities of socialism and communism. Marx first develops historical materialism, we recall, after 1844. By 1846 he is less concerned with the internal alienation structure of the worker’s relation to capital — which doesn’t mean that he later drops the notion of alienation, as Althusser suggests — than he is with investigating the world-historical formation of *class*.¹¹⁵ In the *German*

¹¹⁵ In the 1844 *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, Marx warns us against tracing capitalist production back to some “primitive” origin, at least in the manner of certain political economists and uncritical philosophers. He offers instead a philosophically-surmised “economic fact”, as he calls it, one which apparently explains capitalist “alienation” in terms of circulation and production, on the one hand, and in terms of the structural relation between workers (as laborers) and capitalists (as owners of the means of production), on the other hand. There is no investigation into the historical and especially *prehistorical* origins of capitalist production; the form of production is taken for granted; and similarly there is nothing about the worker’s status as being necessarily related to a *primitive injury*: “Let’s not go back to a fictitious primitive condition as the political economist does when he tries to explain. Such a primitive condition explains nothing. He merely pushes the question away into a grey nebulous distance. He assumes in the form of fact, of an event, what he is supposed to deduce — namely, the necessary relationship between two

Ideology's first section, for example, he suggests that what he is calling a "mode of production" corresponds by a different terminology to "various stages of development in the division of labor." These stages or modes are in turn "just so many different forms of ownership, i.e. the existing stage in the division of labor also determines the relations of individuals to one another with reference to the material, instruments, and product of labor" (151). History and prehistory *together* thus constitute, and can be understood as and within, the development of *modes of property and property relations*. Indeed, conceptually speaking, what I'm calling history begins with the emergence of fetishized private property to the degree that the latter both marks and is marked by the emergence of commodities.¹¹⁶

Marx therefore broadly outlines four forms of ownership which his and others' scholarship have been able to uncover and, to some degree, to differentiate, namely, (a) the "tribal-communal ownership" of "primitive" societies, (b) the "slave" or "ancient communal or state ownership," as in Greek and Roman societies, (c) the "feudal or estate property" characterized by systems of "serf," "vassal," or other kinds of "retainer," and (d) "modern bourgeois" or "capitalist" private property. In other texts we learn that the "oriental" or "Asiatic" mode of property is a first, partial development out of the "tribal-communal" mode. Socialist property would be a fifth or sixth form, of course, one which finally dissolves the practice of property distributed and used on the basis of *class* and

things — between, for example, division of labor and exchange. Theology in the same way explains the origin of evil by the fall of man; that is, it assumes as a fact, in historical form, what has to be explained. We proceed from an actual economic fact. The worker becomes all the poorer the more wealth he produces, the more his production increases in power and range. The worker becomes an ever cheaper commodity the more commodities he creates. With the increasing value of the world of things proceeds in the direct proportion the devaluation of the world of men. Labor produces not only commodities; it produces itself and the worker as a commodity—and does so in the proportion in which it produces commodities generally" (Marx, 1978, 71). This last bit, of course, resembles Žižek's analysis.

¹¹⁶ We began to see this earlier, when we examined Columbus' and the Europeans' first contacts with the Amerindians. Indeed, to specify this further, we will return to this example in the next sections.

domination. *Non-class* social formations, communism in its prehistorical past and therefore potentially future forms, would thereby stand as “bookends,” as it were, within a full singular cycle of human development the middle of which is filled out by class “history.” Important in this regard is the overlapping difference Marx spells out in and between divisions of class and divisions of labor. But again, it is not the overlaps or the differences which are crucial so much as the developmental story these express. Since divisions of labor are more primitive than divisions of class, we only get divisions of class when we mix prehistorical divisions of labor with primitive accumulation.

Marx’s grand story thus goes something like this: Tribal (or if you prefer, kinship, clan, or aboriginal) forms of property and sociality are communal, based on the unity of the common, a co-unity, to be sure, and yet they are also undoubtedly hierarchical and even divisive in terms of labor and authority to this or that developed degree. In pre-class social organizations there are authorities and obedient; there are matriarchs and/or patriarchs; there are military chiefs and “intellectual” shamans or witchdoctors; and of course there are many “manual” workers of this or that type. All this is to say that within primitive communisms of this or that type there is a hierarchy the social and productive structures of which constitute a division of labor. Does violence exist in this hierarchy? Undoubtedly. Primitive communism is no picnic with the gods, or even if it sometimes is — where strawberries might be served, for instance, as we’ll see — “the gods” are far from uniformly benevolent even if they are always giving. Has there ever been a human group incapable of war, without war in its “background conditions,” without being capable of going to war if injured or attacked? Or, at a different level, why do tribal communities invariably perform the social rituals of

scarification, tattooing, and wounding, especially in developmental, indeed transitional, rites of passage? Why is sacrifice in various forms a common element of primitive “religion”? Why exogamy? What is exorcism? Sorcery? In any case, violences of various (particularly inscriptive, sacred, and therefore symbolic) kinds mark groups off from both outside “spirits” and outside “other” groups while also internally differentiating its individual members. Violence is a mechanism of differentiation, indeed the basis of all differential forms, from and out of primitive unity. But the important thing to notice here is that these violences do not divide archaic *communities* internally into two basic groups (and therefore a society) with one group owning property and means of production and the other working that property and those means in the production of a surplus accumulated by the elite group. Indeed, for tribal communities, there is as yet no such thing, notion, or practice of what we would call private property. Marx occasionally recognizes this, although by no means consistently, by distinguishing in his work between “possessions” (which, while “owned” or at least fetishized by an individual or group to some greater or lesser degree, are not *exclusively* owned or fetishized) and “private property” (within which ownership is clear and exclusive to the point where various non-owners are not allowed *to share* in that ownership).¹¹⁷ For now, then, we should stress that although there are clearly various forms and levels of “rank” or “status” in these primitive societies, these forms and levels have not yet been widely or firmly established through an exclusivist form of ownership of the properties, means, and symbols of production, which means that although forms of violence pervade the community, the social whole is not *split through* by violence. Violence is here a

¹¹⁷ See for example Marx, 1973, especially the notes on “Forms which precede capitalist production”, 471-513.

mechanism of differentiation but not necessarily a mechanism of division, separation, permanent wounding, and domination. Thus, in these communities there is less social abstraction, atomization, and, most crucially, there is also as yet no class rigidity. That said, there are no doubt many cultures past and present which exhibit social structures fitting or seeming to fit somewhere between pre-class communities and class societies. And certainly both pre-class and class social forms vary greatly within these categories depending on geography, encounters with foreign “others,” trade routes, etc. With the determinate leap in globalization which takes place around 1492, for instance, and as we’ll continue to see, individual “communities,” “cultures,” and “societies” become harder to distinguish or individuate.¹¹⁸

Recall Marx’s statement from part eight, above, that class societies typically begin as *slave* societies: “The starting-point of the development that gave rise both to the wage-laborer and to the capitalist was the enslavement of the worker” (875). On the one hand, this means that capitalism will always be linked to its heritage and reflection in slavery, even *and especially* when slavery is “forgotten,” when it’s become a thing putatively only of “the past.” As Marx points out explicitly, the bourgeois revolution was not limited to Europe but was also intimately tied up with the colonization of India, Africa, and the Americas:

¹¹⁸ When, where, and under what social encounters and conditions, for instance, are caste systems class systems, and vice versa? When today are socialist social forms not already partially compromised by capitalist influences? Is the United States, for instance, with its great systems of public roads, parks, and libraries, more or less socialist than, say, Cuba, with its bifurcated dollar-convertible peso (CUC) and original peso (CUP) economies? Are the latter *class* economies? Why do a great many Cuban youths prefer to work in tourist hotels than in Cuban education? Although I won’t respond specifically to these questions, my wider point is that it is through the study of class and class division that we can see not only cultural difference and cultural identities in history but also how these differences and identities implicate, express, and demand historical *development*. Is socialism or communism in all our lineages?

The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement, and entombment in mines of the indigenous population of that continent, the beginnings of conquest and plunder of India, and the conversion of Africa into a preserve for the commercial hunting of blackskins, are all things which characterize the dawn of the era of capitalist production. These idyllic proceedings are the chief moments of primitive accumulation. Hard on their heels follows the commercial war of the European nations, which has the globe as its battlefield. (915)

But on the other hand the idea that the institution of slavery is an early stage, the “starting-point of the development” of capitalism, indicates just that, namely, that slavery is not just a regressive social form but *also* a form of *development*. To say this is not to justify it retrospectively in the least. On the contrary. Slavery in this or that form is domination, by definition, an objectification of the other without a concomitant acknowledgment of subjectivity. Thus, while slavery is obviously a kind of “fall” from primitive communism, it is a “fall” that should not be idealized. Insofar as this or that “primitive accumulation” expropriates the primitively communal worker and transforms her into an object of private ownership, slavery as an institution “falls out” of primitive community when violence *rips* that community *apart*. As an owned *object*, the slave is then dominated and brutalized as in no other form of property or production; that is, she is typically *subjected as nothing more than an object* in the production of a surplus produce accumulated by the owners of the means of production, who at this very point become an elite *class*.¹¹⁹ Marx notes in this regard that “men have often made man himself into the primitive material of money, in the shape of the slave...” (183). Indeed,

¹¹⁹ I think that a comparison of the “historical” (phylogenetic) formation of “archaic” forms of slavery with the “individual” (ontogenetic) formation of what Melanie Klein has called the paranoid-schizoid position in infants would prove interesting and productive in this regard. Klein’s attention to the “schizoid”, and thus the necessary splitting of a primitive unity in and for development is precisely what I am finding at play in the history of human development. Indeed, my idea is that the splits and violences between subject and object here are *both* phylogenetically *and* ontogenetically necessary *and* imbricated. History is thus the uniting and dividing of generations through the transmission of the archaic in distorted forms of object production.

since the slave is a person now suddenly treated as a thing which speaks, she is the first class-fetishistic symptom, a communicative “thing.” We’ll have more to say about his momentarily when we turn to Žižek’s structural analysis of two forms of fetishism.

But world-historical development is not always or just a fall, of course, though it invariably hinges, apparently, on the necessary dissolution of primitive communism.

When slave societies of various types give way to (what Marx calls) feudal societies of various types, the slave is at least partially emancipated, if not from domination, then at least from being *owned*. He or she becomes a “retainer” of some sort, and is typically “bound” to the soil or to other means of production (to this or that part of mother nature), but he or she is no longer a “pure” object of instrumental use or a “purely” instrumental object; surplus extraction continues, but the worker is granted a *partial independence*; she or he has thus *become*, however incompletely, a *subject*, someone perhaps on the way to a more developed and secure form of subjectivity; this part-subject can even use communal means of self-production and own private means of self-provision to some degree. And for Marx, as it should be for us as well, this is no merely superficial or superstructural gain. Owning private property and means of production just is the representation and presentation of development to the degree that class relations are relations between the propertied and the dispossessed. Thus, to redistribute property more widely and equitably is also to redistribute means of subjectivity, the means to a healthier, more just and equitable society. This is not to say that redistribution would “solve” social asociality, the antagonisms of post-communal living. Since culture is deeply at issue, it is not simply redistribution but also recognition, and more precisely education, which must play various significant roles in overturning relations of class

domination. In any case, given the lost history of dispossession, the redistribution of property is important to the degree that it more or less directly addresses the archaic wounds which comprise the dissolution of community into society.

A great many anti-Marxists and Marxists have misunderstood this point, however. They think Marx simply wants to abolish private property, all of it, in the name of some pure or grandiose communal property, that he wants to destroy all forms of “property” as if to return to *primitive* communism. What these critics fail to see or remember, however, is that for Marx the development of the “individual” (ontogenetically, as specific single persons) and the historical “subject” (phylogenetically, as the abstract “subject” arising principally in “modernity”), if I can put it this way, depends on the use and ownership of *both* communally shared *and privately owned* means of production and property. In the last chapter of volume one, Marx points out that “political economy confuses, on principle, two different kinds of private property, one of which rests on the labor of the producer himself, and the other on the exploitation of the labor of others” (931). Marx deeply values the first kind. Indeed, this form of property is developmental in practice even if development might eventually spring from laboring against the obstacle which the second kind is. This means in turn, however, that the two are sometimes difficult to tell apart. Take the issue of money in a family, for instance. Why don’t parents today typically charge their children for food? And what is the history of this family relation? Why do we charge each other money for goods in society but not typically within a family? How is the modern “family” related to the “tribe,” “clan,” etc? Was not the human species “originally” a family, large or small? Indeed, we should ask, further, in this regard: Does the earth belong to anyone more than anyone else? When we are born,

aren't we without property *and* individuality? How, then, have forms of inheritance become so differentially and, in particular, *class* distributed? (We should recall in this regard that for the Greeks, "economy" is the place and work of the home, a place only later transformed into a larger social institution steeped in commodities and markets.)

In any case, the *object* that property is "interrelates" *subjects* in their associations and distinctions, and so in their development as "independent" individuals. Property becomes the site of both antagonism *and* protection. Indeed, when something becomes exclusively mine for the first time, it can be used not simply to distinguish me from you in and through the exclusivity attached to it; but this thing also represents the first *opportunity to share* that which is "mine." The subject comes to be, she develops, then, in using and producing the world through owned and jointly owned means of production. The artisan is more truly an artist when he both owns and jointly owns the tools and products of his and others' art, as opposed, for instance, to the case where he can only rent the use of those tools in exchange for a wage (a wage which arrives later). Moreover, if the latter case is a part of a typical capitalistic wage-relation, this worker produces objects which he cannot usually keep unless he buys them on the market like everyone else, such that, in working the means of production and buying on the market, he thereby augments the capital (the power of command and control) of his employer, rigidifying his position as mere worker, a non-owner. But against this, as Marx says, "the private property of the worker in his means of production is the foundation of small-scale industry, and small-scale industry is a necessary condition for the development of social production and of the free individuality of the worker himself" (927). This is the Marx that almost everyone forgets. Indeed, the emphasis should not be placed here on "small-

scale,” for Marx was supportive precisely of worker owned large-scale corporations and industry. Everyone would be included, except, of course, those too young or violent to share in the production of culture, and these people would “simply” have to be educated or re-educated.

Thus, we should not presume that when Marx demands the end of capitalism and the eventual birth of communism that he is demanding the abolition of just *any* kind of private property. Since *self-realizing* private property is necessary together with communal (i.e. public) property in the production and maintenance of the *health* of self *and* society, Marx in fact wants private property *reestablished*, even *widened*. But property should not be based on *class* or be used as a form of *domination*. This is the key. Rather, it should be generalized and distributed as fairly as possible — where the rules and norms of distribution take into account the utility of property in self and social development — together, of course, with a generalization of public forms of property. Too much property, or rather, too much exclusivist property, and we become spoiled, like spoiled children, to the degree that our property prevents us from understanding the value of sharing and community. And yet, if we were to simply deprive the wealthy owners of their property and of the means of production they own, we would be doing the same thing, that is, we would be taking away their opportunity to understand the value of community and sharing. Indeed, to deprive the wealthy of their property and means in the name of redistribution would be, since a de-privation, but a repetition of primitive accumulation—for once deprived, the wealthy would be vengeful and without means to sublimate their very real pain. It is thus by *educating* the poor *and* the wealthy alike — the current workers and owners of the means of production — that *sharing* is often

(although not always) better than excluding, and that sharing is and can be an enjoyable learning and growing experience, at least to the degree that the self is *not overrun* (even if challenged) with always having to share, that can prove developmental.

Thus, even the capitalist form of private property which emerges as a distortion — or as we'll soon see Žižek characterize it, as a “displacement” — of the feudal form of private property is not completely anti-developmental, as much as infantile Marxists would like to paint it — almost pictographically — this way. So while this is something acknowledged by Marx with deep ambivalence and worry, we should acknowledge that he did recognize it: When we turn from feudalism to capitalism, the worker *is* further freed in the sense that he or she is certainly not owned (like the slave) and is no longer even bound to the soil and retained (like the serf). In fact, under the principles of democracy and enlightenment which emerge with the “democratic” or “bourgeois” revolutions, the worker, whether a CEO or manual laborer, gains *rights*. This is significant. While neither slave nor serf can simply quit his “job” without great physical risk to limb and life, for instance, the wage-worker who seeks to move socially and economically “upward,” or at least away from a bad job, can, and in fact has, the ability to quit a vocation. And under capitalism this freedom, a new kind of “independence” comes into existence, even if the freedom is won by socialistic effort. Indeed, we earlier saw that Marx even calls this an “advance,” albeit, again, a deeply ambivalent one:

The immediate producer, the worker, could dispose of his *own person* only *after he had ceased to be bound to the soil*, and ceased to be the slave or serf of another person. To become a free seller of labor-power, who carries his commodity wherever he can find a market for it, he must further have escaped from the regime of the guilds, their rules for apprentices and journeymen, and their restrictive labor regulations. Hence, the historical movement which changes the producers into wage laborers appears, on the one hand, as their emancipation from serfdom and from the

fetters of the guilds, and it is this aspect of the movement which alone exists for our bourgeois historians....The starting-point of the development that gave rise both to the wage-laborer and to the capitalist was the enslavement of the worker. The *advance* made consisted in a change in the form of this servitude, in the transformation of feudal exploitation into capitalist exploitation.... (875, my emphases)

Our point, then, is to recognize with Marx that while capitalism is in part regressive, it is also simultaneously in part progressive, at least in this regard. Similarly, in chapter thirty-two, Marx suggests that the developmental potential of the feudal system, including the relations of property-tribute between lord and serf, is very limited, or at least became so after so much internal stasis:

This [feudal] mode of production presupposes the fragmentation of holdings, and the dispersal of the other means of production. As it excludes the concentration of these means of production, so it also excludes co-operation, division of labor within each separate process of production, the social control and regulation of the forces of nature, and the free development of the productive forces of society. It is comparable only with a system of production and a society moving within narrow limits which are of natural origin. To perpetuate it would be, as Pecqueur rightly says, ‘to decree universal mediocrity.’ At a certain stage of development, it brings into the world the material means of its own destruction. (927-8)

Notice that Marx here gives *capitalism* the credit, as it were, it is due: As compared to feudalism, capitalism concentrates work and industry, it organizes labor into co-operating levels and distinctions, it controls and regulates the forces of nature, and indeed, it enables the development of the productive forces, the technological means, of society, a development which outstrips the quasi-religious (serf and “lord”) and small-scale (manorial, e.g.) relations of production.

We know very well, however, why and how this “advance” is *deeply* compromised in the *class* relations born(e) with and through primitive accumulation:

While the worker is perhaps “free” to seek this or that form of work, this freedom arrives in the famous *double sense*: The worker is freed from the soil (in serfdom) and from the status of pure objecthood (in slavery), but to the degree that he suddenly (again) owns very few or perhaps even *no* means of production, he is also free only, and so only “free,” as it were, to sell his labor power to others, to others who now happen, who are “lucky enough,” to *exclusively own as a class* the great majority of the means of world- and self-production. The average, low-wage worker thus has little or no *effective* freedom. He remains uneducated, and often uncultured, un-self-reflective to this or that degree, and steeped in the problems and dangers of just getting by. Without means of self-production and self-provision, his self is emptied into the *all too lost objectivities* coincident with the pure subjectivity of labor-power. *This is capitalism as social melancholia*. And this insight brings with it a powerful lesson: Under this developmentally troubled lens, world history is the progressive emancipation of forms of “the worker” in terms of rights and subjectivity in and despite the regressive loss of the communal and (to some degree) private property which would make those rights, emancipation, and subjectivity more than only partially effective.

Žižek’s “Symptom” essay is helpful in this regard. To understand how Marx “invented the symptom” we must, he says, investigate “the way Marx conceived the passage from feudalism to capitalism” (23):

What we have [between feudalist and capitalist society] is a parallel between two modes of fetishism, and the crucial question concerns the exact relationship between these two levels...; commodity fetishism occurs in capitalist societies, but in capitalism relations between men are definitely *not* ‘fetishized’; what we have here are relations between ‘free’ people...; two subjects meet, their relation is free of all the lumber of veneration [i.e. free of the fetishization] of the Master, of the Master’s

patronage and care for his subjects; they meet as two persons whose activity is thoroughly determined by their egoistic interests....

The two forms of fetishism are thus incompatible: in societies in which commodity fetishism reigns, the 'relations between men' are totally defetishized, while in societies in which there is fetishism in 'relations between men' — in pre-capitalist societies — commodity fetishism is not yet developed, because it is 'natural' production, not production for the market which predominates. This fetishism in relations between men has to be called by its proper name: what we have here are, as Marx points out, 'relations of domination and servitude'—that is to say, precisely the relation of Lordship and Bondage in a Hegelian sense; and it is as if the retreat of the Master in capitalism was only a *displacement*: as if the de-fetishization in the 'relations between men' was paid for by the emergence of fetishism in the 'relations between things'....

This is why one has to look for the discovery of the symptom in the way Marx conceived the passage from feudalism to capitalism. With the establishment of bourgeois society, the relations of domination and servitude are *repressed*; formally, we are apparently concerned with free subjects whose interpersonal relations are discharged of all fetishism; the repressed truth — that of the persistence of domination and servitude — emerges in a symptom which subverts the ideological appearance of equality, freedom, and so on.... [quoting Marx:] 'Instead of appearing at all events as their own mutual relations, the social relations between individuals are disguised under the shape of social relations between things'—here we have a precise definition of the hysterical symptom, of the 'hysteria of conversion' proper to capitalism. (25-26)

Here we have a “latent” content hidden behind and in a “manifest” object: In already developed capitalist societies we are formally, which is to say ideologically or manifestly, “concerned with free subjects whose interpersonal relations are discharged of all fetishism.” These subjects are “equal” and can atomistically pursue their “own” business, at least so long as this pursuit doesn’t restrict the business, freedom, or rights of others to do the same. Capitalist exchange thus pivots on the famous doctrine of negative liberty, rights of non-interference, the dictum and principle of liberalism. For again, so long as each person in an exchange agrees or consents to make a trade, the act of exchange *thereby manifests* “freedom” and “equality.” It proves its content “ideally” in

this practice.¹²⁰ According to Žižek, however, as an ideal in practice, “free exchange” short-circuits itself to conserve and perpetuate unfreedom at *another level*. When it is the specific exchange between capitalist and laborer (of wages for abstract labor power, respectively), this specific kind of exchange, though “free” and “fair” according to both the norms and laws of market society, conceals and preserves — it slyly reproduces in another form — a domination and servitude which “previously” belonged to feudal property relations.

And of course, Marx does articulate these two levels. The circulatory process and all of the fetishism it is and contains enables a “repression.” In hiding exploitation in and behind the use and dazzle of money, this repression also hides the persistence of “feudal” (and we should say it, since Žižek doesn’t say it, *all* precapitalist forms of) domination. Domination has a history of forms. The interesting thing, however, is that these forms are forms of appearance, and that these appearances affect the very “psychology” of the individual. Modern fetishism, for example, while a microscopic phenomenon hinging on the development of the money and banking systems at large, together with the reach of the “world market,” nonetheless conditions the beliefs and structures of belief (in individuals). Here, says Marx, we encounter the “exclusive realm of Freedom, Equality, Property, and Bentham.” But it is only when “we *leave* this sphere of simple circulation or the exchange of commodities, *which provides the ‘free-trader vulgaris’ with his views, his concepts, and the standard by which he judges the society of capital and wage-labor*” that “he who was previously the money-owner now strides out in

¹²⁰ But don’t tell this to the Lenape Indians who traded away Manhattan Island, for instance.

front as a capitalist [while] the possessor of labor-power follows as his worker” (280, my emphasis).¹²¹

This *repression* of dominance and servitude is thus *exhibited* through forms of *forgetting*, forgetting *in and as* the objects, or what Žižek calls symptoms, which arise alongside and are attached to these “independent” subjects. The symptomatic object both repeats and yet also hides primitive injury. What “happened” in the fifteenth century as a sudden and violent expropriation, for instance, soon becomes repeatable but in a mediated and *less-obviously violent* form, namely, in the form of capitalist legislation and trade. Repressive state apparatuses are hidden behind ideological state apparatuses. Indeed, as if to “remind us” of what lurks behind and in them, Marx calls the new privatization and trade laws of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries a “bloody legislation.” These laws are “forcible.” Indeed, it is this new legal force, in the name of an exclusivist form of property, which allows us to forget prior bloody dispossessions *while yet still enacting them*: “Communal property... was an old Teutonic institution which lived on under the cover of feudalism. We have seen how its forcible usurpation, generally accompanied by the turning of arable into pasture land, begins at the end of the fifteenth and extends into the sixteenth century. But at the same time the process was carried on by means of individual acts of violence against which legislation, for a hundred and fifty years, fought in vain. The advance made by the eighteenth century shows itself in this, that the law itself now becomes the instrument by which the people’s

¹²¹ Marx adds here something of inscriptive significance, as if to indicate (in an almost Foucaultian sense) that the production of types of subjectivity hinges upon a destruction laid upon the body, upon an inscriptive subjection: “The one smirks self-importantly and is intent on business; the other is timid and holds back, like someone who has brought his own hide to market and now has nothing else to expect but—a tanning”. We shall keep this notion of bringing one’s own “hide to market” in mind when we later examine the Aztec Xipe Totec ritual.

land is stolen” (885).¹²² Bloody dispossession by whip, brand, and sword (or by guns, germs, and steel, for instance) has become “possession” by legal hegemony.

What is it in the transition from feudalism to capitalism, then, that is, as it were, unconscious? How does Marx think this transition? What does he “see” in it? On a first reading, it looks as if what is here unconscious is actually what is here and only here *made* unconscious. Forced into repression is not only feudal domination and feudal craftwork but also the bloody expropriations of both the feudal peasantry in their transformation into wage-laborers and the feudal commons. According to Marx, “by about 1750 the yeomanry had disappeared, and so by the last decade of the eighteenth century had the last trace of the common land of the agricultural laborer” (883). Further, “by the nineteenth century, the very memory of the connection between the agricultural laborer and communal property had, of course, vanished” (889). This reading is not incorrect.¹²³

¹²² And not just the laws of “free trade”, but its “theory”. According to Perelman’s (2000) simple but useful extension of Marx, for instance, most eighteenth and nineteenth century bourgeois historians disavowed primitive expropriation not simply by misunderstanding it — that is, by failing to read the annals of fire and blood — but by manipulatively miscasting it, by actively denying and repressing it, *only* as “accumulation”.

¹²³ We now know, however, that for Marx the primitive doesn’t vanish so much as it vanishes in its results. Communal property has not quite “vanished,” then, but more accurately has been forced to appear symptomatically both in capital’s “freedoms” and its domination. For example, when hurricane Katrina recently overwhelmed the U.S. gulf coast and flooded New Orleans, the great majority of those who had evacuated the city prior to the storm’s arrival were residents who had private means to leave. There was basically no communal or public evacuation plan. What this means is that in times of crisis to have private means is to have the means to escape horror, trauma, and death. “Homeland Security” is in this respect security for the already at least moderately secured. Note in this regard that on FEMA’s webpage one of the first pieces of advice is, after a hurricane, to contact one’s (needless to say private) insurer. FEMA’s own charge of helping the poor and at-risk is largely disavowed in this sentence alone. Further, among the poor and/or black who stayed behind in New Orleans and survived, some looted and occasionally became violent. Responding to a reporter’s questions in the middle of emptying some goods for himself out of an abandoned store, for instance, one looter shouted that the store’s goods were “everyone’s property”, but instead of staying and sharing this property with others, the man quickly absconded to wherever he could now hide away and privatize these supposedly social “goods.” The president chimed in on the radio the next day to insist that everyone must work together in the moment of crisis and demanded that police bring all looters and price-gougers to justice. The governor of Louisiana seemingly granted shoot to kill orders to prevent mass looting. Meanwhile, one of the president’s first steps after the disaster was to promise and

Regarding primitive accumulation, then, we might suggest that one of Marx's principal insights is that *repression, in the sense of primitive uprooting and injury, makes another repression, in the sense of a historically productive forgetting of prehistory and its persistence — in the form of the objective illusion of value — possible and actual.* Indeed, what is forgotten is not simply feudal domination and servitude, nor simply the exploitation of the worker, but the perpetuity of primitive violence and primitive community in their tension *and* overlap. This, then, is our principal discovery in this chapter: Primitive accumulation isn't simply the physically violent fifteenth and sixteenth century origin of capital which is then hidden behind the circulation of commodities, money, profits, laws, and institutions in capitalist society. Rather, this bloody injury, this specific origin, points to an *originary* "unconscious desire" of human community and human violence in their partial indiscernibility. The fact that feudalism was already a class system which had absorbed prior and wider forms of common property, for instance, indicates that for Marx the violence of this *specific* primitive accumulation is a *repetition*, albeit with differences, of prior, more deeply unconscious violences. Marx typically only "indirectly" articulates this thought of repetition. But if it's true that feudal violence and community are repressed in the transition to capitalism and also true that feudalism is itself a historically developed form of class society, then

extend low-interest loans to the gulf's oil corporations. So on the one hand he simply equated all small scale "looters," whether these persons were gathering food and water or whether they were gathering less necessary goods, as criminals, and on the other hand he quickly moved to insure that capital would remain strong, and so that the class system would remain intact. Even if capital moved around horizontally, then, it would not move vertically. Thus, the more *private* means of production and provision you own, the more "public government" will protect you. This has again happened with the giant savings and loan bailouts. At a distant level, then, there is some truth to what the looting-man was saying, at least ideally. *The earth belongs to everyone.* And yet to some more than others, at least in current practice. So long as there is a difference between children and adults, this is how things have to stand. Indeed, things are not always so easy: *Accumulation and expropriation are far from being easily differentiated, especially in times of crisis,* given the fact that while the poor resent the rich, the rich are already paranoid about encountering the poor. We will more deeply investigate this idea in the next sections. The point for now, however, is that crisis reveals a sense of communal property that was formerly repressed, that is, in unconscious abeyance.

what's "unconscious" in the transition from feudalism to capitalism cannot be said to be merely specific to that transition. This unconsciousness must also derive from prior events and epochs, that is, from the history *and prehistory* of class-formation on the whole, beginning, say, if we limit ourselves to the advent of the human as *homo sapiens*, two to five hundred thousand years ago.

Thus, for Marx there are not simply structures of trauma and symptom but, more accurately, structures of trauma and symptom in cultural development, in the localizable development of culture. *Culture is traumatological, but it is also developmental.* This brings us full circle, then, albeit beyond a simple hermeneutic circle. *Ursprünglich akkumulation* is the *prehistorical* tendency, persisting as both violence and community in tension and overlap, which divides primitive communism and hierarchy, whatever the details of this communistic form, to produce and reproduce *history* as *class* history, which means that *capitalist* accumulation is the developmentally distorted repetition *and* development of this directly inaccessible primitive communism and hierarchy at the cusp of its necessary persistence *and* break-up.¹²⁴ Thus, for "definitional" purposes, we could say that *history* is the series of evolutionary transformations in the fetishism and ownership of means of production and property, both of which together bear and manage *prehistorical* community in and despite its revolutionary destructions. Let's return once

¹²⁴ One of our methodological suppositions is that we can learn something about the development of "world history" as a single object both by casting our distinctions flexibly and by nonetheless marking the transition from prehistory to history by means of the notion of class. For "class" characterizes social forms within which a subservient group systematically provides a separated-off dominant group with labors which end up in the dominant group's hands in the form of produce, value, and social distinction and which are used to thereby reproduce the social divide at hand. If Marx didn't often reserve the term "exploitation" for the specifically capitalist mode of extracting surplus-labor and surplus-value from the modern wage-laborer, we could say that class societies consist most basically in a developing split between exploiters and exploited, at least by and large. But we would also want to emphasize that these classes didn't "choose" to end up where they did. "Choice" or "freedom", as we've seen, arrives only in modernity as the symptom of a violence lying both beneath and within its apparently nonviolent circulatory surface.

again to our sentence from chapter 26 in this regard: If “in the history of primitive accumulation, *all* revolutions are *epoch-making* that act as levers for the capitalist *class* in the course of its formation,” we should here take seriously Marx’s combination of the concepts of “all,” “class,” and “epoch-making.” We should include as primitively accumulative not just modern, feudal, or ancient revolutions but also those revolutions which make possible all transitions from pre-epochality to epochality, from prehistory to history, and from pre-class communities to class societies *and beyond*.

It is no accident in this regard that in his famous 1859 “Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*” Marx does not simply assume that history is what has been. Rather, in the sense that development is the repetition and transformation of primitive injury which does not simply disappear when its symptoms appear but, on the contrary (and at first almost “naturally”) forces its way into (and as) such cultural phenomena as class-consciousness and identity politics, history is that which we finally have the opportunity to *enter*, to *wake up to*, as it were, as if from a dream, a dream embodied in our intersubjective exchange of objects as commodities:

[M]ankind always sets itself only such tasks as it is able to solve, since closer examination will always show that the task itself arises only when the material conditions for its solution already exist or are at least in the process of formation. In broad outline, the Asiatic [primitive], ancient, feudal, and modern-bourgeois modes of production may be designated as progressive epochs in the economic development of society. The bourgeois relation of production is the last antagonistic form of the social process of production—antagonistic not in the sense of individual antagonism but of antagonism that emanates from the individuals’ social conditions of existence; at the same time the productive forces developing in the womb of bourgeois society create the material conditions for the solution of that antagonism. This social formation brings, therefore, the *prehistory of human society to a close*. (5, my emphasis)

In short, against the common interpretation that Marx locates the causes of both fetishism and capitalist domination in what is usually and simply called *production*, our analysis problematizes the sheerness and productive consistency of production.¹²⁵ Marx is usually thought to understand “production” as the realm of labor and assembly, as the gathering and manipulation of raw materials, as the employment of wage-labor (at least since the fifteenth century) in the making of various forms of value (including surplus-value), that is, as all those uses of labor and labor-power which, when combined with natural materials, produce goods as commodities, the worker as a class-worker, the capitalist as structurally beholden to domination. Production is usually thought to be the “background,” as we’ve seen, “which is not visible in circulation itself” (268) but which supplies circulation with its structural conditions. It is the realm, then, where exploitation takes place, if under the cover of circulation and exchange. And this interpretation is right—when we fetishize and trade commodities and money, we hide or veil production, and so the object of exploitation, to focus instead upon an objectified form of value. We have seen here, however, that Marx also, albeit secretively, suggests that production *is driven by primitive destruction*, indeed, that forms of production *require destruction* as the *constitutively repressed condition* for their epochal or historical standing and development. What fetishism points to, then, is not simply the productive labor and sociality behind circulation but more deeply and crucially the *creative-destructive prehistory* which “comprises the world’s history” including, of course, the world-historical opportunity to develop a modern sense of community and sharing in and through communal *and* private property. Perhaps historical materialism would be better understood as prehistorical materialism in this regard?

¹²⁵ Baudrillard (1981) offers a similar criticism in *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*.

CHAPTER IX

PRIMITIVE ENCOUNTER II: REFLECTIVE MOURNING

As we've seen, in *Capital* Marx suggests that gold and silver are functional as “money” to the degree that they're qualitatively homogenous and quantitatively divisible. Since soft, these metals are “negatively superfluous” in consumption and especially so in production. One doesn't drive a steel nail with a golden hammer, for instance. In the *Contribution*, however, Marx also explicitly links the “value” of gold and silver to their *aesthetic* qualities. Indeed, regarding exchange-value, superfluity of consumptive and productive function derives from a superfluity of wealth which is inseparable from what might be called wealth's developmental *reflection*. But “reflection” here, as we'll see, must be taken in at least a double sense—not just as a physical reflecting of light and visual images but also as a “mental,” “social,” or what we'll see Marx call a “suprasensible” mirroring, a making equivalent in relation to difference, or at least a relating by means of semblances.¹²⁶ For over 2500 years humans have valued the recombability and uniformity of gold and silver, as well as their relative scarcity, to perform what we recognize today as their “economic” function; but this functional history is necessarily connected to and even coexistent with these substances' more or less forgotten *aesthetic* roots:

¹²⁶ This is an aspect of Marx's overall “object”, namely, the mirroring of the development of human community in objects of value which symbolize the persistence of both our social and asocial reactions to this community's primitive dissolution.

Gold and silver are not only negatively superfluous, i.e. dispensable objects [in modern production], but their aesthetic qualities make them the natural material for pomp, ornament, glamour, the requirements of festive occasions, in short, the positive expression of supra-abundance of wealth. They appear, so to speak, as solidified light raised from a subterranean world, since all the rays of light in their original composition are reflected by silver, while red alone, the color of highest potency, is reflected by gold. Sense of color, moreover, is the most popular form of aesthetic perception in general. The etymological connection between the names of precious metals and references to color in various Indo-European languages has been demonstrated.... Nature no more produces money than it does bankers or a rate of exchange. But since in bourgeois production wealth as a fetish must be crystallized in a particular substance, gold and silver are its appropriate embodiment. (154-5)

What is the significance here of light, color, and especially reflection? And why does Marx link “popular forms” of perception to the fact that the names of the precious metals can be traced *not* to their pecuniary-functional qualities but, more deeply, to their aesthetic qualities, to traits which are therefore more archaic to the degree that etymology is the logos of roots?¹²⁷ This seems clear enough for now: For Marx, aesthetic ornamentation is somehow and for some reason the midwife between the labor that digs gold and silver up from the “bowels” of the earth and the authoritative power in hierarchical (including class) societies that would stand above a common identity. We saw a glimmer of what is at stake here already, in fact, when Marx suggested earlier that “the riddle of the money fetish is...the riddle of the commodity fetish, now become *visible* and *dazzling* to our eyes.”

Indeed, *Capital's* first chapters are simply filled with references to how a given commodity or money-object “reflects” or “mirrors” the value of other commodities. In the description of the movement from the elementary to the expanded form of value, for instance, we read that “the value of a commodity, linen for example, is now expressed in

¹²⁷ Soon enough we'll also ask why it is significant that gold and silver are light-reflecting substances which are also “raised from a subterranean world” and connected to “festive occasions”.

terms of innumerable other members of the world of commodities. Every other physical commodity now becomes a *mirror* of the linen's value" (155, my emphasis). But this is already at stake in the elementary form: "By means of the value-relation, the natural form of commodity B becomes the value-form of commodity A; in other words, the physical body of commodity B becomes a *mirror* for the value of commodity A" (144, my emphases). Marx uses this language repeatedly.

Let's examine what might be Marx's most famous description of fetishism in this regard. For here the relation between fetishism and reflection is explicitly laid out in and as an "analogy," or at least as an analogy which becomes developmentally possible, in the link between visibility and fantasy, between image and imagination, we might say; and yet, even as he does this, Marx also "literalizes" this "analogy" while also drawing a similarly literalized "analogy" between fetishism and religion. None of these elements can be ignored. The implication, on my reading, is that there is a kind of *literal metaphors* in the connection between reflection and primitive religion which speaks, precisely, to what makes fetishism a developmental phenomenon. For, the reflection of the literal in the metaphorical, and vice versa, is precisely that from which the first forms of communication are cut; or rather, this reflection arises with this cutting. According to Marx,

The mysterious character of the commodity-form consists therefore simply in the fact that the commodity *reflects* the social characteristics of men's own labor as objective characteristics of the products of labor themselves, as the socio-natural properties of these things. Hence it also *reflects* the social relation of the producers to the sum total of labor as a social relation between objects, [as] a relation which exists apart from and outside the producers. Through this substitution, the products of labor become commodities, sensuous things which are at the same time suprasensible or social. In the same way, the impression made by a thing on the optic nerve is perceived not as a subjective excitation of that nerve but as the objective form of a thing outside the eye.

In the act of seeing, of course, light is really transmitted from one thing, the external object, to another thing, the eye. It is a physical relation between physical things. As against this, the commodity-form, and the value-relation of the products of labor within which it appears, have absolutely no connection with the physical nature of the commodity and the material [*dinglich*] relations arising out of this. It is nothing but the definite social relation between men *themselves* which assumes here, for them, the fantastic form of a relation between things. In order, therefore, to find an analogy we must take flight into the misty realm of religion. There the products of the human brain appear as autonomous figures endowed with a life of their own, which enter into relations both with each other and with the human race. So it is in the world of commodities with the products of men's hands. I call this the fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labor as soon as they are produced as commodities, and is therefore inseparable from the production of commodities. [165, my emphases]

The term “themselves” seems to indicate that there really does or could exist a *sociality* between human subjects or selves (where “you” and “I” would communicate with each other as, say, fellow humans) which is not or at least not yet mediated by *things*, by “external” physical objects. The “sociality of objects” is therefore easily read as false or derivative to some degree, is it not? For again, as we “discovered” earlier, objects and things can't talk or communicate, and so aren't “really” social, right? They're dead. Right? And yet, the indication here is also that human sociality *cannot* be separated from objects of exchange, and so from physical things. The passage is doubled in this tension. Note the idea for instance that in the process of commodification “sensuous things...*are at the same time* suprasensible or social.” The invisible (or supersensible) sits “within” the visible (or sensible) just as the “causality” of magic (or what Marx here calls religion more widely) sits within and even roots itself upon the technical-functional use of money as an economic instrument. So this “at the same time” deprioritizes what we might call the idea of a “purely human sociality.” The social does not arise except through objective mediation, in other words, where subject and object are first set into distinguishable relation, and are no longer an identity, as we will see

especially when we turn to Winnicott. For now, though, let's simply take the "reflect" in the opening sentence. The character of the commodity-form is mysterious since two forms of appearance — the social and the physical — exist in one and the same object which is itself a form of appearance, a commodity. So where is the social, this sociality? It is reflected in a relation between the objects of exchange which to some degree disavow the labor that makes them: "The mysterious character of the commodity-form consists therefore simply in the fact that the commodity *reflects* the social characteristics of men's own labor as objective characteristics of the products of labor themselves." Neither subject nor object "comes first" here to the degree that the sociality, the intersubjectivity, of labor is already reflectively objectified in and as the commodity-form of value;¹²⁸ indeed, in a practical way, the "already" indicates that subjects "work" or "labor" themselves and their sociality into existence precisely in creating an objective human world — a *culture* — which, in its objectivity, always partially (mis)expresses their deepest subjective needs and wishes. The objects mediate intersubjectivity by misexpressing that which is left behind.

But this "at the same time" doesn't just act synchronously or, say, simply structurally. For Marx here articulates a *developmental* structuring which pivots, as with Kant's critique of judgments of value, on the relation between value and enculturation. Indeed, as with Kant, the concern here articulates a line of development mediated by what both Kant and Marx, and soon enough by what Freud and the psychoanalytic tradition, call *fantasy*. The key here is that fantasy is *never* purely inward, never merely fantastic. There is no "mind's eye" for Marx, for instance, without there also, at the same

¹²⁸ For Marx the term "form" always indicates, is shorthand for, "form of appearance"; and an appearance is always something distinct; it is that which stands-out or exists, as a semblance of objectivity, from a "background" from which, we might say, it is distinguished. This is the "nature" of human relief.

time, being a somatization steeped in reflection, as with Kant: Here we find an “eye,” an “optic nerve,” for instance, which is an extension of the “brain,” just where we might expect to see (or is it not to see?) a “mind” or “spirit.” For even mental activity and thoughtful work both are and are correlated with somatic, muscular, and neural pathways, though of course they are not only (correlated with) these. The eye of someone who sees, a seer — a prophet, for instance — moves as if following the image or illusion she sees. This somatization hinges, in turn, upon a difficult and sometimes tortuous process of disillusion within which the primitive illusion of communal oneness, of primitive unity, both dies and survives, like a ghost. We begin to see and wish together, in cultural ways, in other words, to the degree that a primitive division and illusion persists in the form of shareable objects which are saturated, elaborated, and distorted with compromise; which is here to say with *conscious* wishes and needs.¹²⁹

Let’s look at the “objectivity” of objective illusion in this regard, but keeping in mind (and in brain, and so in the extension of the brain that is our eyes) that and how objectivity grows out of somatization. Indeed, this somatization (coincident with the putative interiority of fantasy) is here extended, as it were, into an “external” object of fantasy, a relative and incomplete differentiation of *res cogitans* and *res extensa*. This

¹²⁹ Marx’s written material (in Marx, 1978) on the history of the humanization of the senses in the *1844 Manuscripts* is apposite here, although we should recognize that he eventually and rightly overcame his naïve “essentialism”. For here he describes the relation between development and *aesthetic* appreciation. And again, as with Kant, hunger is *not* the best sauce for understanding the world through a maturing human sense: “The eye has become a human eye, just as its *object* has become a social, *human* object—an object emanating from man for man. The senses have therefore become directly in their practice *theoreticians*. They relate themselves to the thing for the sake of the thing, but the thing itself is an objective human relation to itself and to man. . . . The forming of the five senses is a labor of the entire history of the world down to the present. The sense caught up in crude practical need has only a restricted sense. For the starving man, it is not the human form of food that exists, but only its abstract being as food; it could just as well be there in its crudest form, and it would be impossible to say wherein this feeding-activity differs from that of animals. The care-burdened man in [too much] need has no sense for the finest play; the dealer in minerals sees only the mercantile value but not the beauty and the unique nature of the mineral: he has no mineralogical sense. Thus, the objectification of the human essence both in its theoretical and practical aspects is required to make man’s sense human” (87, 89).

movement begins as a tremendous swinging back and forth, a divided conflation, between unity (or identity) and division. As a presupposed unity finds itself within this divided conflation, the root of fantasy necessarily begins to take on somatic significance, one located in the route from mouth to stomach, as we'll see, in the case of the individual, or from natural production to primitive communal to various forms of asocially social production, in the case of cultural groups. This is a process of externalization, then, but to be more accurate we should say that it's an externalization of the difference between internal and external. The object reflects subjectivity in and as a social relation to and an exchange with others. Thus, as the passage at hand proceeds, we see a movement from the brain and eyes to *objects*, to things which can be both touched and manipulated, dropped and returned or thrown away. Freud's infant grandson would be proud, as we will soon see: "There [and here] the products of the human *brain* appear as autonomous figures endowed with a life of their *own*, which enter into relations both with each other and with the human race. So it is in the world of commodities with the *products* of men's *hands*." One doesn't produce the world only with thoughts, after all, or at least this is now the thought that dawns for Marx in the form of a magico-religious objectivity, a fetishism "which attaches itself to the products of labor as soon as they are produced as commodities." So while thinkers such as Habermas rightly point to the *demythologization* involved in this movement — where the evolution from primitive community and violence toward a more scientific knowledge of human development requires a long, difficult resistance to and critique of religion, to the degree that science is not merely myth and magic — we shouldn't forget that Marx also focuses on how and why myth and magic both partially constitute and persist in the rise of modern forms of

knowledge and production, forms which are sedimented in the institutional frameworks of a society.¹³⁰

Now, while probably not directly aware that Marx casts value as a hiero-glyphic process, Winnicott and Todorov can help us see, expand, explain, and justify these initial insights to the degree that they both explicitly and ingeniously link the *hieratic* to the *inscriptive* as the developmental working-through of primitive accumulative schism and its after-effects. Before we turn to Winnicott, however, let's finish this thought about Freud's infant grandson. As Winnicott mentioned at a couple of points in his career, his thoughts on transitional objectivity derive more or less directly, scholastically speaking, from Freud's famous analysis of the *fort-da* game in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Observing the behavior of his infant grandson, Freud had noticed that this boy had developed, like all children do to some degree and in some way, a more or less serious kind of play. The boy would take a yo-yo-like toy spool attached to a string and throw the spool away, out of sight, only to bring it from invisibility back to visibility by pulling on the string. And in fact, from this artifact of play, Freud develops what I would not call a "minor" theory of *enculturation*. As he conceives it, the spool and string (together with the fantasy overlaying and undergirding them, in the constitution of the object's objectivity) represents the mother or father, on the one hand, as well as the *loss* of a certain "ideal" relation with the mother and/or father, on the other hand. Freud calls the boy's use of the toy a "great cultural achievement" (15) in this regard and notes that his grandson created this common game precisely when and as he became able *not* to cry when his mother, or later, in a more elaborate version, when his father, went away. His earlier somatic exteriorization of primitive loss as screaming and crying (where screams

¹³⁰ We'll examine a couple of important claims from Habermas below.

and tears signify that this activity belongs to a pre-playful anguish) gets *sublimated* here into the activity of playing, a playful fetishization of the thing as an object of *value*. A prior attachment is cancelled, distorted, and yet preserved in the cultural use of the thing. The “thing” is “objectified” in this way, to transfer this idea into a common Lacanian vocabulary.

Winnicott’s notion of transitional objectivity extends Freud’s analysis, then, or at least supplements it, by highlighting the identity and difference between the developmental process of meaningful *representation*, on the one hand, and what, following the Kantian, Marxian, and Freudian (in)distinction between *Darstellung* and *Vorstellung*, might be called the *presentation* of meaning, on the other. For Winnicott, when a baby is born, his or her inchoate experience is conditioned by a state of (nearly or as if) perfect wish-fulfillment, or, as he terms it, by something on the order of “omnipotence,” “primitive identification,” or “primary creativity.” Omnipotence implies the irony of ironies in this regard, for since we all seem to think that babies are simply “powerless” to get along in the world, especially as newborns, we pithily deem them “helpless.”¹³¹ But looked at from the “perspective” of the pre-subjective or pre-egoistic baby whose subjectivity or ego is yet to congeal in an organized way (and so, not looked at merely from the perspective of the forgetful adult, where forgetfulness is part of the transitional, which is to say developmental, process), newborns only need to *wish* for something on the order of fulfillment and, *voilà*, does not the pre-objective thing of that

¹³¹ In what follows, I’ll again conform to the convention of making the “example” baby male to be able to more clearly distinguish “him” from “her”, that is, from his mother—after all, I don’t want to fall into the identification which each and every baby is born with! “God” forbid!

satisfaction appear *as if by mere wishfulness*?¹³² Omnipotence, in other words, suggests that the baby's *wishing* is met so immediately by the mother's capacities and availability that the baby cannot as yet discern a firm difference or even (theoretically) a distinction between his so-called "interiority" and the world which you and I know, but which he does not yet know, to be provided by the mother's so-called "external" activity. In short, from the baby's incipient preconceptual "perspective," *the behest of wishing is simultaneously what happens just as what happens is simultaneously the behest of wishing*, which implies as well that need (or wishing) and what happens (or appearance) are one. While Winnicott tends to put this less succinctly and abstractly than I have done here, his analysis is typically helpful. In the "Transitional Objects" essay, for instance, he suggests that "the mother, at the beginning, by an almost 100 percent adaptation, affords the infant the opportunity for the illusion that her breast is part of [and so indistinguishable from] the infant. It is, as it were, under magical control" (TPP 238).

And yet, while instantaneous wish-fulfillment may sound enchanting and gratifying for some, the "perfect" parenting that would be necessary for such fulfillment doesn't provide the baby with health so much as it establishes a problem of and for health, for *developmental health and illness*, namely, the task of "giving up" the presumption of omnipotence for what I am here, following Winnicott, calling "objectivity." I mean "objectivity" in many, indeed in all its senses—as that significant appearance which has been distinguished, in a mutual reflection, from the appearance of

¹³² Referring to our earlier sections, Kantians may here want to think of "omnipotence" as the a priori conditions of experience, especially as these conditions are articulated in the *Critique of Judgment*. By distorting and yet participating in those conditions, the object of *taste* is not just a vehicle for a subject's gratifications but, as Kant suggests, a developmental mediation between pure sensuousness and pure morality. With a taste for objects of *beauty*, the subject grows in relation to the world in developmental remove from the pure gratifications of instantaneous consumption. The "best sauce" for a hungry baby's development may appear to be hunger and the edible object of satisfaction, but again, as Kant insists (52/210), this does not mean that *aesthetic* pleasure corresponds to the perfect fulfillment of need and wish.

the subject, as a widening perspective or ability to understand, and thereby as the more or less “disinterested” foundation for science (even and especially for the science of development and culture), etc.¹³³ In any case, development assumes the status of something objective, just as objectivity becomes developmental, precisely as children and then adults cope with their mothers’, their parents’, and then the widening social world’s *disillusioning failure* to immediately meet their illusions, wishes, or needs. Objectivity is borne of (dis)illusion, we might say or write, of wishes not perfectly met or completely unmet but wishes partially met, of a pleasing-enough admixture of illusion and disillusion. So what does a “good enough mother” do when she cannot be there, or knows she shouldn’t be just there just yet, to satisfy her baby’s wishes? She presents this baby with an appropriately fetishistic third thing, as Marx would call it, a tasteful aesthetic object, as Kant might call it, or a sublimated externalization of the reality principle, as Freud might describe it. In any case, this object is a *failing gift*; it’s something which appears to us, on the “outside,” to be simply “thingly,” a mere objectivist not-me, but which for the baby — and here’s the key to understanding Winnicott, on my reading — both represents *and presents* both (m)other *and* self at the same time. If the object is “good enough,” the baby develops the sense that he or she creatively produces and partakes of — is an artist within — the world, albeit in a more or less limited fashion. (At first this limit is very disturbing, even “totally” shocking, though this shock is

¹³³ Indeed, as we shall see, omnipotence must be placed “underground” for the development of both objectivity and subjectivity together. I will not emphasize the development of subjectivity here, but it should not be forgotten that by “objectivity” we imply the simultaneous, linked, and overlapping appearance of “subjectivity”. We can’t develop one (the subject) without the other (the object) to the degree that they arrive in the splitting of omnipotence into unconsciousness and omnipotence (underground) and consciousness and a sense of and need for limits (overground). So this means that the key distinction that I’m making here is not between subjectivity and objectivity but rather between subjectivity and objectivity together as “experience”, on the one hand, and so-called omnipotence, or what we’re also calling primitive identification, as the condition for the possibility of experience, on the other. See the prior footnote.

typically forgotten precisely in and as the formation of the organizational memory and forgetting system we call consciousness or experience, a system symbolically borne in and through this objectivity.) As Winnicott suggests, the object is a *symbol* of the union *and* separation, of the difference *and* identity, of the baby *and* the mother, of both a new communicability *and* the loss of an intimacy supposedly prior to onset of communicability.¹³⁴ Indeed, if we take the idea of omnipotence seriously, the object memorializes an immemorial closeness, a prehistorical identity, a non-place prior to the violent separation and (then, eventually) the mitigated separation, and so the distinction, a mediation, between subject and object.

This, then, albeit somewhat secretly, is why the transitional object implies and bears a relation to death, to the sacred, and, as we shall continue to see, to inscription, the making of meaning as world-objectification. Let's take death first; indeed, let's take it first as that which precedes and follows, while never actually leaving, life. The key insight here consists in this: If for the newborn baby wishing is "what happens" while what happens is "wishing," and so if need can't be distinguished from appearance, then for the baby not just the presence of the mother but also her *absence*, when she goes away, and so her apparent *destruction*, especially since she is devoured and incorporated in an aggressive act of feeding, *will have been wished*. And not just "will have been wished," but, in a sense, will have been "actual," presentationally actual. Since omnipotence implies a primitive identification between subject and object (before they emerge distinctly as subject and object) and between mother and baby (to the degree that

¹³⁴ As he says in "The Location of Cultural Experience" (in Winnicott, 1971), the transitional object is the first symbolic possession, on the way to private property: "This symbol can be *located*. It is at the place in space and time where and when the mother is in transition from being merged in with the infant and alternately being experienced as an object to be perceived rather than [as-if simply] conceived of" (96).

they are primitively and fantastically indistinguishable in the moments prior to birth), the mother's disappearance, her complete and literal detachment, will dawn in the baby's first, pre-experiential experiences not just as *her* death or destruction but also as *his* death or destruction, as pre-developmental death or destruction, neither here nor there (not *da* in the form of an object, as yet) since we're talking, after all, about destruction.¹³⁵ In short, to the degree that omnipotence implies both creative *and* destructive wishes, both the conjuring forth *and* demolition of the entire "world," the first practically *transitional* object instantiates an emergent subject in an emerging *and merging* relationship to a magically *surviving* — even *resurrected* — object. The object is conjured, ritualized, sacrificed or killed, and then, if it survives, it survives resurrectedly, magically returning from *fort* to *da*! This is a pre-memorial emergency become emergence, the event of an experiential distinction between subject and object, a developmental transition from, within, and out of the inchoate experience of swinging back and forth between total intimacy and total devastation. Indeed, this process is repeated until the imago, the fantasy, of the mother "lands," as it were, in the use of the object, the object subjectively symbolized and now partially distinguished. Omnipotence goes *underground*, then, precisely as cognition and consciousness emerge historically above-ground, that is, as the

¹³⁵ See "D.W.W.'s Dream Related to Reviewing Jung" (in Winnicott, 1989): "The dream can be given in its three parts: 1. There was absolute destruction, and was part of the world and of all people, and therefore I was being destroyed. (The important thing in the early stages was the way in which in the dream the pure destruction got free from all the mollifications, such as object-relating, cruelty, sensuality, sado-masochism, etc.) 2. Then there was absolute destruction, and I was the destructive agent. Here then was a problem for the ego, how to integrate these two aspects of destruction? 3. Part three now appeared and in the dream I awakened. As I awakened I knew I had dreamed both (1) and (2). I had therefore solved the problem, by using the difference between the waking and sleeping states. Here was I awake, in the dream, and I knew I had dreamed of being destroyed and of being the destroying agent. There was no dissociation, so the three I's were altogether in touch with each other. I remembered dreaming I(2) and I(1). This felt to be immensely satisfactory although the work done had made tremendous demands on me. I now began to wake up. What I first knew was that I had a very severe headache. I could my head split right through, with a black gap between the right and left halves. I found the words 'splitting headache' coming and waking me up..."(228-9).

beginning of objective historicization, the beginning of development in a significant common ground—but a common ground conditioning the possibility of private property, we might note to join this idea to our Marxian developmental thesis, to the degree that the child becomes attached to this “mother” or “father” object as if it were his. As Winnicott (1971) playfully puts it in his late essay on “The Use of an Object”:

After ‘subject *relates* to object’ [i.e. after pre-subject relates to pre-object] comes ‘subject destroys object’ (as it becomes external); and then may come ‘object survives destruction by the subject.’ But there may or may not be survival. [In which case pre-subject and pre-object remain primitively identified. With survival, however,] A new feature thus arrives in the history of object-relating. The subject says to the object: “I destroyed you,” and the object is there [*da*] to receive the communication. From now on the subject says, “Hullo object!” “I destroyed you” [fort]. “I love you.” “You have value for me because of your survival of my destruction of you.” “While I am loving you I am all the time destroying you in (unconscious) fantasy.” Here fantasy begins for the individual. The subject can now use the object that has survived. (90, my additions in square brackets)

Now, how else does this link up, as by a string, with our Marxian developmental thesis? It seems clear, of course, that there can be no simple “paralleling” of individual development with social, cultural, and indeed, human world-historical development. Individual histories can be said to be limited to a single life experience while the socio-cultural development of, say, peoples, regions, nations, and even hemispheres are multigenerational, shifting, and permeable, undergoing migrations, evolutions, revolutions. Similarly, social groups cannot be said to have “experiences” in the same way that individual’s do. So ontogeny (individual development) and phylogeny (cultural development) should neither be simply identified nor naively paralleled. That said, we can still point out that, and continue to examine how, ontogeny and phylogeny are necessarily and intimately imbricated through the objective symbolization of the

primitively accumulative. Between individual and cultural growth is the crossing over of objectivity and intersubjectivity, the reflection of the one in the other. Thus, individuation requires symbolic socialization (where symbols join and separate individuals in their distinction) just as forms of social organization hinge upon symbolically mediating the antagonisms and identifications (which, primitively speaking, can't be firmly distinguished) between individuals. And as our basic cultural rites of passage, our daily emotional changes and developments, as well as our potential for personal crises make clear, individuals certainly experience more or less private shifts, permutations, and even revolutions in relation to the "objects" of their attachment and detachment. No adult has failed to fall in and out of love, managing this experience in this or that way through inherited tendencies distilled through prehistorically immemorial conflicts and partial resolutions. Thus, while it can still be said that cultures don't have "experiences," they nonetheless embody tendencies and limits — experienced as customs, then as laws, then as this or that kind of state, for instance — which limit and channel the kinds of experiences which are possible for each culture. Reciprocally, while it still can be said individuals aren't themselves comprised of multiple individuals, they nonetheless coalesce as individuals only through the somatization and objectification of their primitive fragmentations, the latter being the symptoms of the necessary dissolution of primitive unity.¹³⁶ Notice in our account from Winnicott in this regard that the individual ego is not just punctuated but even originates, as it were, in and through an objectively (*in*)visibilized destruction, a *primitive accumulation*.

¹³⁶ Schizoid symptoms such as multiple personality disorder are possible, on this view, to the degree that every individual is made of up a multiplicity of primitive aspects of self, a multiplicity which can coalesce, when the parents are regarded by the child as "good enough", in the child's use of objects, his or her creative and cultural activity. Schizoid symptoms can appear when the parents are regarded as not good enough.

What is birth? It is a literally and metaphorically bloody detachment, at least at first—where this blood (and the danger of dirt, too) symbolizes the loss of something impossible to experience which, nonetheless, can eventually be conceptualized, under scientific maturation, as primitive identification. Indeed, in relation to Marx we should notice that Winnicott here links the creation of *value*, and thus the impulse for finding value in objects of exchange between self and (m)other, in a seemingly and not-so-seemingly total divorce, a split that isn't so much consciously remembered as it's *lost and preserved* or, to use a more recognizable psychoanalytic term, as it's *sublimated* into objective value form. As an object of value, the breast comes first, together with and as lost by the mouth. But then there is the thumb, the pacifier, stinky gifts, toys, and all sorts of other cultural objects of communicative value — such as the picture book, the commodity, money, the alphabet, etc — all of which are both expansions of and removes from this primitive identification and destruction. These objects meet needs, in other words, by partially distorting, and so forgetting — by tucking into unconscious fantasy — the deathly elements of primitive life. Value thus (mis)presents, it presents while misrepresenting (and vice versa), a perfection and destruction, an accumulative splitting of primitive unity which, in and as an emergent objectivity for building or attacking community, goes the way of and remains a communicative *trace*. It is and remains a trace, a cipher, however, as we'll continue to see, to the degree that this objectivity can only ever signify that primitive accumulation is something now apparently not present. In short, total destruction “vanishes,” true enough, but, as we saw Marx show with regard to money, it vanishes in and as its *results, in and as objects of sacred inscriptive value*.

Cultural and social life arises out of “death” in precisely this way, such that the world takes on meanings that are partially forgetful of primitive identity and its destruction.

But we can also put this more simply, focusing for the moment on the *hieroglyphics*: The object is sacred, even if and when we have trouble seeing or remembering this, precisely to the degree that, for the baby, especially at first, the *entire world* is at stake in the presence and absence of the mother, and eventually, in and as this or that more or less pacifying object. Indeed, this sacredness is necessarily interpreted in the direction of what we would now call “religion” to the degree that the initial process of distinguishing between internal and external, between subject and object, pivots on the mother’s survival beyond “death” and “destruction.” This is no doubt why Winnicott, following Freud, uses the term “omnipotence” to describe primitive identification. The term refers to the sacred as a *power* of wishing the first *particular* wishes of which will pivot on resurrecting the dead in this or that reflective commonplace, making magic and religion possible as objective forms of historical fantasy. The transitional object is mediated and mediating, then, despite and in the destruction of omnipotence—where the “of” in this phrase “destruction of omnipotence” must again be taken in the double sense of the genitive, namely, as the destruction which kills omnipotence, and yet also as a power of destroying which *belongs* to an omnipotence which *remains*. The sacred is both of these at once. It both *represents* the destruction of omnipotence and at the same time, in a perhaps more primitive sense, it still *presents* this destruction which — if especially Winnicott and Todorov are right — hinges on the incantations of *primitive feeding and sacrifice*.

Indeed, in considering the birth of “modernity” as a process of literal and metaphorical globalization, Todorov offers in his *Conquest of America*, by examining the “causes” of the Spanish conquest of the Aztecs, what we hope to show to be both a “Winnicottian” and “Marxian” developmental thesis. Todorov first considers a now-familiar series of factors or “causes,” all of which are important: Important first of all in the conquest of Mexico is the military aid the Spaniards receive from the Tlaxcaltecs and other tribes who are resentful of their brutal Aztec overlords; there’s also the *melancholic* and indecisive behavior of Montezuma II, the Aztec emperor, as we’ll mention below; and, again, and especially, since no one fails to mention these, there’s the biological and technical military advantages enjoyed by the Europeans over the Amerindians. These various factors are neatly summarized and analyzed by Jared Diamond (1999), for example, who also examines the development and fall of other cultures in relation to “the West,” in his book *Guns, Germs, and Steel*. By the end of *Conquest of America*, however, Todorov has shifted his focus from what he calls a “typological schema,” or what I would call a merely structural schema, to a “developmental” and “symbolical” analysis. Indeed, to the usual question concerning the fall of the Aztec, Mayan, and Incan empires — how did a few hundred Spanish soldiers (in the first and third cases, especially) defeat these civilizations with their standing, trained armies of hundreds of thousands of men? — Todorov adds another question and prioritizes it well beyond the interests of Diamond and others: “Did the Spaniards defeat the Indians by means of signs?” (62).

His implied and argued answer, of course, is, largely, yes. The irony, however, is that this response of “largely, yes” is also, in a very particular sense, the response the

Indians give. Indeed, while Todorov doesn't put it exactly in these terms, he argues that there is something *hieroglyphically significant* about the modernity which emerges with the literal movement and instantiation of globalization. According to Todorov:

I shall not attempt to deny the importance of these [traditionally rehearsed and studied] factors, but rather to find a common basis for them which permits us to articulate and understand them, and at the same time to add many others of which less account appears to have been taken. In doing so, I tend to take literally one reason for the conquest/defeat that we find in the West, doubtless being regarded as a purely poetic formula. The testimony of Indian accounts, which is a description rather than an explanation, asserts that everything happened because the Mayas and the Aztecs lost control of communication. The language of the gods has become unintelligible, or else the gods fell silent....The Maya book *Chilam Balam* reiterates this piercing question, which can no longer receive an answer: "Where is the prophet, where is the priest who will give the true meaning of the language of this book?" (24). As for the Aztecs, they describe the beginning of their own end as a silence that falls: the gods no longer speak to them. "They asked the gods to grant them their favors and the victory against the Spaniards and their other enemies. But it must have been too late, for they had no further answer from their oracles; then they regarded the gods as mute or as dead" (Duran, III, 77). [Todorov, 61-2]

Notice that Todorov himself is here concerned to point out that what he's focusing on is bound to be taken by many readers — readers, say, of alphabets — "as a purely poetic formula," as merely metaphorical, while yet *he* tends to take *literally* the Mayan and Aztec description of the silenced or dead gods and oracles (without necessarily believing in these gods, oracles, or in God!). Metaphor and literalness are thus again at issue in and through a magical sacralization, as they were more subtly in Marx. Indeed, this concern itself maps onto the apparently divided communicative realms belonging, as if exclusively, to these respective cultural hemispheres. Todorov thus asks: "Would it be forcing the meaning of 'communication' to say, starting from this point, that there exist two major forms of communication, one between man and

man, the other between man and the world, and then to observe that the Indians cultivate chiefly the latter, the Spaniards the former?" (69).

The Aztecs are constantly communicating with and through nature, that is, through natural objects, through the "ghosts" that inhabit nature, through its signs, its gifts, its auguries, its sacred animals and totems, its crazed and benevolent ancestors. Destiny, omens, and prophecy play a special and prominent role, as we'll see. Politically speaking, there is an elite caste or "class" of rulers and priests; their status, however, is guaranteed not through the civic consent of all adults but through the patriarchal and continued recitation of honored oral traditions. These traditions are commanded and obeyed, for the most part, in and for the order and maintenance of society. Indeed, the partly-divine "emperor" is strict and brutal, the head of a line of elite authoritarian priests. Indeed, regarding the gods, their rule is often especially brutal. The sun-god, for instance, as we know, is thought to demand the sacrifice of human victims. We should notice, however, that state command does not appear in a merely oral or verbal sense but through a combination of oral tradition and command, on the one hand, and the interpretation of *symbolic texts*, on the other. So this moves us back into the territory of the *glyphic*, the process of inscription which makes territory something worth living and dying for in processes of deterritorialization, as Deleuze and Guattari might put it. In Aztec inscription, pictography (drawings which picture things) blends with ideography (drawings meant to picture ideas), but there is not as yet a glyphic approach to symbolizing the *sounds* of verbalized speech. "Hieroglyphics," by the way, usually refers to the form of writing which is both pictographic and yet incorporates rudimentary elements of inscribed speech-sounds (phonemes). We'll return to this later.

In any case, and developmentally and philosophically speaking, the *glyphing* of meaning in Aztec writing is still largely “literal,” that is, it’s literal to the degree that the pictography is often *carved* into stone, gold, and other materials in the form of reliefs, icons, and idols; and in this sense the glyph doesn’t just depict the world but is an inscriptive part, a powerful marking of the world, of the *world as sacred*. That is, these symbolic objects aren’t simply “representational” of some other story or sociality, a sacredness “beyond” but, since literally sacred, they are fetishized as if they “themselves” possessed a divine or at least spiritual power of world-destruction and world-construction. They are of course linked to a sacred oral tradition, for instance — in the songs and chants and stories passed down through priestly lines and training — but they are also linked to everyday religious objects, dreams, auguries, and signs; indeed, they are linked to celestial objects, to the sun and moon as guardian gods, for instance, and so to the architecture, the textures and hollows carved into mother earth as shelters and sacred spaces, which the sun and moon have already determined and “designated,” as it were, in and through their paths of light and shadow.¹³⁷ The sacred texts don’t just

¹³⁷ While this can be said of the Maya and Aztec worlds as well, the Anasazi Indians of Chaco Canyon are perhaps the best example of how an Amerindian culture took its *cues* for building society from nature, and specifically the movement of celestial bodies. The very location of Chaco’s regional cities and sites, let alone its places of worship (Kivas) and even its housing, its objects, even the very windows of its buildings and structures, were all “determined” by the play and movement of light and shadow upon the landscape as cast by the sun and moon. See the film by: Sofaer, Anna, 1999, *The Mystery of Chaco Canyon*, 56 minutes, ISBN: 1-56029-812-X, The Solstice Project. As Sofaer (1997) has put it, “in many Pueblo traditions, the people emerged in the north from the worlds below and traveled to the south in search of the sacred middle place. The joining of the cardinal and solstice directions with the nadir and the zenith frequently defines, in Pueblo ceremony and myth, that sacred middle place. It is a center around which the recurring solar and lunar cycles revolve. Chaco Canyon may have been such a center place and a place of mediation and transition between these cycles and between the worlds of the living and the dead”. Quoting Broda and Aveni, she observes, further, “that ‘the coordination of space and time in the Mesoamerican cosmology found its expression in the orientations of pyramids and architectural complexes’ and in the relationships of these complexes to outlying topography and buildings. Ceremonies related to the dead and timed to the astronomical cycles occurred in Mesoamerican centers. In central structures of the ceremonial complexes, light markings commemorated the zenith passage of the sun. Certain of the ceremonial centers were organized on axes close to the cardinal directions”. See also <http://www.solsticeproject.org/primarch.htm>.

narrate, in this regard, but *are* a significant *and signifying* part of a giant cyclical cosmological script; like the sun casting shadowy signs upon the earth, determining architecture, the pictographs also carve the world up into signs and marks which *foretell* movements and events, both natural and social (to the degree that these aren't clearly distinguished).

The Aztec calendar is incredibly important in this regard. Running in cycles of fifty-two years, each cycle, determined “as it were” by the celestial orbits of the sun, moon, and stars, is thought to be a reduplication of a prior cycle, a cycle which to this degree isn't exactly “past” but, since part of a series of repetitions, is already *foretold*. But it is not just foretold in thought and belief. Here the Aztecs practice what Žižek calls the “objectivity of belief.” The “future” becomes predictable, and necessarily so, to the degree that it has in some obscure (or all too clear) way already happened in the form of objects amidst a fantastically meaningful causal influence. Everyday social life ends up being a giant network of mantic symbolizations:

Chief among these is cyclical divination (of which, among us, astrology is an example). The Aztecs possess a religious calendar of thirteen months of twenty days; each of these days possesses its own character, propitious or unlucky, which is transmitted to actions performed on that day and even more to the persons born on it. To know someone's birthday is to know his fate.... [Todorov again quotes Durán:] “When a boy or girl was born, the father or relatives of the babe immediately went to visit the astrologers, sorcerers, or soothsayers, who were plentiful, begging them to state the destiny of the newborn boy or girl [...]. Once the character of the day had been seen, prophecies were uttered, lots were cast, and a propitious or evil fate for the babe was determined by the consultation of a paper painted with all the gods they adored, each idol drawn in the square reserved for him.... One could learn whether the child was to be rich or poor, brave or cowardly, a priest or a married man, a thief or a drunkard, abstemious or lustful—all these things could be found in those prophetic pictures” (Durán II, 2). [Todorov, 63-4]

Thus, mother earth's body is inscribed and redesigned according to the ceremonial cycles of the union and separation of mother moon and father sun, as it were.

The calendar, then, plays a “causal” role in this determinative influence. In our language, the pictographs don’t just “represent” what will happen as by mere “illustration” but also, more primitively, and as an illustration, they present the possibility of this happening in the form of an illusion looking for objective appearance. And the objective appearance happens quasi-naturally, for nature is distorted in the making of culture. The rock is carved, opened up together with the social body. To “interpret” the pictograms is in this way not simply to *read* the past but to *write* the future as well, to bring about that which must happen since it has already *been inscribed* a number of times, apparently, and so is “bound,” as it were, to happen yet again.¹³⁸ This weighs on the “psychology” of its cultural participants, then, like a stream carries a motorless boat. Again, since the pictograms don’t just narrate but help to *cast the world* as if through a concretizing and productive *spell*, the Aztecs, for their part, “know” when something is approaching its end, demanding a new beginning. This is self-fulfilling prophecy of a sort, that isn’t relegated to self but, much more powerfully as yet, is already determined in the movement of “social” objects. With the power to determine, some of these “things” are actually sacred, alive with the power of good and/or evil, health and/or sickness, life and/or death. (What’s being recycled here, as we shall see, is primitive accumulation, the end, beginning, redevelopment, and redestruction of the world, and of its loves and hates.) As Todorov elaborates:

To this preestablished and systematic interpretation, which derives from the fixed character of each calendar day, is added a second, contextual kind of divination, which takes the form of omens. Every event the least bit out of the ordinary, departing from the established order, will be interpreted as the herald of another event, generally an unlucky one, still to come (which implies that nothing in this

¹³⁸ Indeed, this is a common trait of archaic cyclical calendars, of which the Aztec is quite advanced (much more advanced than Greco-Roman astrology, if I understand this correctly).

world occurs randomly). For instance, that a prisoner should become depressed is an evil omen, for the Aztecs did not expect any such thing [!]. Or that a bird should cry out at a specific moment, or a mouse run through the temple, or that one might make a slip of the tongue, or have a certain dream. Sometimes, it is true, these omens are phenomena that are not only rare but distinctly supernatural. . . . The [soothsayer] replies by resorting to one of his habitual techniques of divination: by water, by grains of corn, by cotton threads [threads attached to a spool?]. This prognostication, which makes it possible to know whether an absent person is living or dead [*da* or *fort*], whether or not a sick person will recover [will be *da* or *fort*], whether or not an unfaithful husband will return to his wife [*da* or *fort*], continues in the form of actual prophecies, and we find the great Aztec leaders regularly consulting soothsayers before undertaking any important activity. Further still, without their being asked, various individuals declare they have been in communication with the gods and proceed to foretell the future. The whole history of the Aztecs, as it is narrated in their own chronicles, consists of realizations of anterior prophecies, *as if the event could not occur unless it has been previously announced*:¹³⁹ departure from a place of origin, choice of new settlement, victory or defeat. Here only what has already been Word can become Act. The Aztecs are *convinced that all such divinations come true*, and only very rarely attempt to resist the fate declared to them; in Maya, the same word signifies ‘prophecy’ and ‘law’ And such things *indeed come to pass*, since *men do their best to bring them about*; in other cases the prophecy is all the more accurate in that *it will be formulated only in a retrospective fashion* Hence, it is society as a whole — by intermediary of the priests, who are merely the repository of social knowledge — that decides the fate of the individual, who is thereby not an individual in the sense we usually give this word. (65-67, my emphases, my square brackets)

Of course, this “world communication” of objective prophecy and magic differs greatly from the more or less utilitarian and secular “inter-human” communication (to borrow Todorov’s vocabulary) which is practiced — more self-reflectively and linearly at least — by the European visitors. Indeed, according to Todorov, inter-human communication is initially “victorious” in this confrontation to the degree that it is much more improvisational, spontaneous, strategic, linear, utilitarian, aggressive, and certainly more technologically and individualistically oriented than the “world communication” of pre-modern mantic symbolization (i.e. of fetishism). “Victory,” however, does not imply any European communicative superiority. For democide is not to be valued:

¹³⁹ This sounds strangely familiar to me.

This victory from which we all derive, Europeans and Americans both, delivers as well a terrible blow to our capacity to feel in harmony with the world, to belong to a preestablished order; its effect is to repress man's communication with the world, to produce the illusion that all communication is inter-human communication; the silence of the gods weighs upon the camp of the Europeans as much as that of the Indians.... The victory was already big with its defeat; but this Cortés could not know. (97)

Following Marx first of all, but now with Todorov and Winnicott as allies, I want to continue to explore the meaning of "primitivity" as it's passed between cultures of mutual "otherness." In what sense, if it all, can we say that development, and in particular the development of modernity and of modern individuality (with its individualism), necessarily hinges on the destruction and symbolic effectivity of primitive accumulation? And is it right to suggest that destruction can always, from another perspective, be an "accumulation," an appropriation with developmental potential? I certainly don't want to throw out the notion and actuality of victimization. In the conquest of America, which really was and is a conquest, the native Americans are its victims. What is it, something like 20 to 30 million Indians who die in the conquest? The numbers are staggering when one feels what they represent. But more widely, my idea is to show that victimage doesn't rest on aggressive intent and technologically produced injury alone, nor simply on historically "obvious" and obviously "historical" factors like the presence and use of "guns, germs, and steel." Rather, more critically, which is to say more deeply, widely, and meaningfully, I want to emphasize that and how this tragedy is secretly conditioned through the mutual inheritance of a prehistorical, which is to say preverbal and to this degree a pre-dialectical, "accumulation": In the confrontation between the Europeans and the Amerindians, the Europeans are so

aggressive and democidal since they *repress their primitivity* in their technological and monolithic (mis)understanding of objectivity; on the other hand, the Amerindians, who are isolated from European, African, and Asian symbolism *and* war for upwards of 30,000 years, are symbolically and so practically underprepared to resist such a repression. The Indians are largely decimated not simply through “guns, germs, and steel,” then, but through a sub-dialectics of primitive accumulation (conditioning the cultural production of guns, germs, and steel) which exists *between* themselves and the Europeans, both. Modernity is not just borne out of European imperialism and *Amerindian* primitivity, in other words, but, more accurately and widely, more objectively, out of the conflict between *European* primitivity (in its monotheistic *denial* of magic) and Amerindian primitivity (in its magic-saturated structures of thinking). Both sides “act” like children, we might even say, at least with respect to each other, even if the actors are principally adults in their own society. Thus, more specifically, I hope to show, more still, that this crisis pivots precisely on a clash and exchange of cultural objectivities the “objective” character of which hinges on inscriptive miscommunications regarding the illusion and disillusion of the sacred.¹⁴⁰ The modern commodity and modern money, which develops out of this clash and exchange, is, again, the *hieroglyph* of untold primitive accumulations which have divided *and*, through the commodity and money, also united human cultures since the early epochs of humanization hundred of thousands of years ago.

And yet, this is something we must stress as well: It is in the “nature” of “traumatological” development that there can be no “direct cognitive evidence” for these

¹⁴⁰ This will be difficult for positivists and behaviorialists to see in words spelled and cast through alphabetic inscription, but I must say it nonetheless, hoping as I am to make a mutually educative exchange.

conclusions, drawn and pictured as they are, and only can be, in, of, and from *traces*, from the hieroglyphs of early human development.¹⁴¹ Since primitive accumulation is the secret condition of and for history, and since its roots *remain* underground to some degree even when they are dug up in their golden “telling” splendor, this means that even when *historical self-consciousness* arrives, in the form of enlightenment philosophy for instance, it will never be fully able to “grasp” the primitive, to positivistically relegate all history to knowledge and all knowledge to the historical. For the primitive only arrives in shards and residues, as we’ve seen, and indeed, on this theory, the mature and the developed are seasoned and distorted forms of primitivity. The world is born(e) of ruins, of gaps, of distances and “first contacts,” and so of prehistorical encounters the scientific evidence for which there are only various clues.¹⁴² So what do these strange and disparate marks mean?

Let’s analyze the supposed Aztec deification of Cortés and his band of conquistadors, a highly contested area of research, in this regard: How can we “prove” that this supposed deification, and others supposedly like it, “actually happened”? Indeed, how do we “prove” this thesis in the face of the criticism that the Europeans themselves propagated this idea to further their imperialist agendas? Obeyesekere

¹⁴¹ See our Conclusion, below.

¹⁴² When Freud moves his initial discussion of trauma in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* into a discussion on children’s play, he marks this transition with a gap, a short break in the text. So while on the one hand there seems to be *no* connection between trauma and play — Freud says he is “leaving” trauma behind to study play — I read this as Freud showing us that there is a *kind* of connection, albeit a secret, submerged one: Since the object of play sends the most primitive of destructions into unconsciousness, those destructions always lie latent, as it were, both behind *and in* the object; so while the object puts a gap between it and the trauma of destruction, it also marks that destruction, and so is “connected” to it through this marking. That is, there is a kind of connection between objectification and trauma but this “connection” cannot appear in a positivistic form of “evidence” for the unconscious since this “evidence” is not just of a connection but largely of a gap, a necessary missing link to primitive destruction. The empirical world of the objects of experience, we might say, is “itself” precisely the sign that consciousness has left some unknowable X behind, and that this X is now directly inaccessible precisely “because” of this consciousness. Consciousness gets in its own way in producing evidence of the unconscious, as it were.

famously argues against Marshall Sahlins, for instance, that the idea of Indians apotheosizing Europeans is a myth invented by the *Europeans* as an ideological justification for, and indeed a weapon of, colonial imposition and violence. To suggest that certain Polynesian, native American, or various other indigenous groups “revered” the European explorers is to paint the former groups as in need of “civilization,” which “need” can be used to justify colonialization, to impose it.¹⁴³ By contrast, a number of anthropologists, archaeologists, and historians, such as Christopher Miller, George Hamell, Bruce Trigger, and Dorothy Hosler, as well as Sahlins, have unearthed various clues which support, in their view and in mine, the deification thesis. Miller and Hamell mention a report, for instance, *written* by a sixteenth century Moravian missionary. This missionary was told a story, *verbally* of course, by “aged and respected Delawares, Momeys, and Mahicanni of the first Europeans’ arrival at Manhattan Island. Their ancestors had originally mistaken the Europeans’ approaching ship as a large fish, but as it got closer they concluded ‘it to be a large canoe or house, in which the great Manito *himself* was, and that he probably was coming to visit them” (320).¹⁴⁴ Salutations, sacrifices, and various magical ceremonies were thus prepared. A similar tradition tells us that these natives took the first ship they saw “for a walking Island, the Mast to be a Tree, the Saile white Clouds, and the discharging of Ordinance for Lightning and Thunder... they manned out their cannowes and goe and picke strawberries there” (320).¹⁴⁵ Indeed, Todorov himself also mentions the apparent deification of Columbus,

¹⁴³ Obeyesekere, 1992.

¹⁴⁴ Miller and Hamell, 1986, 311-328.

¹⁴⁵ For more on this general notion of apotheosis or deification of the Europeans, see Sahlins, 1981 and 1995. Also see Clayton (1996) regarding the natives of Nootka Bay, near present-day Vancouver Island: “In 1792 Native people told a Spanish botanist that they thought the Spanish ship was “Quautz” (a deity), who was coming ‘to punish the misdeeds of the people.’ Fear eventually gave way to curiosity, however, and there was some trade between the two groups. These Native perceptions might usefully be put together

most obviously at “first contact”: On Oct 12th 1492, in and despite the difficulties involved in verbal communication between his crew and the Indians, the constant gesturing of the latter to the firmament leads Columbus to suggest that “I think they believe we come from the sky” (Todorov 72).¹⁴⁶

Thus, while we cannot “prove” that these deifications happened — in the positivistic sense of being able to repeatedly produce them in experiments! — our idea is to show that and how something on the order of deification is a necessary part, a stage, of the human developmental process, a process hinging, in Winnicottian terms, on omnipotence and then on the disillusion of omnipotence, making sacralizations and deifications possible in the prehistorical development of “objectivity.” Thus, while it is certainly and horrifically true that the Europeans used and exploited this myth of deification to justify their colonization of “the other” around the globe, this doesn’t mean that this *myth* is not *also* something which happened *objectively*. Objectivity is born and

with other ethnographic fragments dealing with the arrival of [captain James] Cook’s ships. In the early twentieth century, Chief Geore of Nootka Sound related a story about how, one day, the tops of three sticks were seen on the horizon. The sticks were soon identified as a watercraft, and people thought that Haitelik, the lightning snake, was propelling it. Others considered it a salmon changed by magic. Two chiefs thought it was the work of Quautz. As the craft got closer ‘all the men and women grew very much afraid,’ and people were advised to hide. ‘A woman doctor named Hahatsaik, who had power over all kinds of salmon, appeared with a whalebone rattle in each hand; she put on her red cedar bark cape and apron and sang, saying that it must be a salmon turned into a boat.’ She called out: ‘Hello you, you spring salmon, hello you dog salmon, hello you coho salmon.’... In a Native account related by Winifred David, the Native people of the Sound ‘didn’t know what on earth’ was approaching. Two canoes of warriors were sent out to see, and thought it was a ‘fish come alive with people.’ The warriors took a good look at the men on deck. One of them, with a hooked nose, was thought to be a dog salmon. A hunchback sailor was in Native eyes a humpback salmon. The warriors reported home that this thing contained fish ‘come here as people’” (106-8).

¹⁴⁶ Similarly, according to Las Casas (chapter 31) in early December 1492, “while the sailors were fishing on the shore, three Christians set out through the woods, where they met a group of Indians.... As soon as these natives saw the Christians approaching them they ran in terror to the thickest of the woods unhindered by any cloak or skirts. The Christians ran in pursuit hoping to have speech with them.... The next day [Columbus] sent nine men ashore well armed, who found nine leagues away a village of more than a thousand houses scattered about a valley. When the inhabitants saw the Christians, they all rushed out of the village and fled into the woods. But the Indian interpreter from San Salvador, who was with our men, went after them and shouted words of encouragement, saying much in praise of the Christians and affirming that they had come from the sky. The natives then returned, and in awe and wonder they placed their hands on the heads of our men as a mark of honor and took them off to a feast, giving them everything they asked for without demanding anything in return” (85-86, *The Four Voyages*).

borne of illusion and disillusion, in gradual expansion and circumscription of objectivity. Indeed, an analysis of the *objects* of value in prehistorical exchange will prove most useful to us in this regard.

According to Todorov, for instance, because the Europeans appear so alien (and yet somehow familiar as well), the Aztecs are unable to incorporate their arrival into Aztec codes for understanding *human* otherness and communication, or rather, if we are to be more specific than Todorov is here, for understanding *living* human otherness and communication. A *particular* form of object exchange results by default:

For Montezuma, differences between Aztecs, Tlaxcaltecs, and Chichimecs exist, of course, but they are immediately absorbed into the internal hierarchy of the Aztec world; the others are those who are subjugated and among whom are recruited the sacrificial victims. But even in the most extreme cases there is no sentiment of absolute strangeness; of the Totonacs, for instance, the Aztecs say both that they speak a barbarous language and that they lead a civilized life—i.e. one that can appear as such to Aztec eyes. Now, the otherness of the Spaniards is much more radical. The first witnesses of their arrival hasten to report their impressions to Montezuma: “We must tell him what we have seen, and this is a terrifying thing: nothing of the kind has ever been seen” (Florentine Codex, XII, 6). Unable to integrate them into the category of the Totonacs — whose alterity is not as radical — the Aztecs, faced with the Spaniards, renounce their entire system of human otherness and find themselves obliged to resort to the only other device available: the exchange with the gods. (76)

How, then, can we “justify” this interpretation? The key is understand why and how, as Todorov suggests here, this encounter is both *radical* and, in this radicality, posits a sacralized world. We can return to Marx in this regard: If Marx is right that fetishism is linked, secretly of course, to primitive accumulation, then his linking of commodity and money fetishism to divine figures and figurations should also be taken seriously, and taken, moreover, not merely analogically. To the degree that presentation hides behind *and in* representation, the fact that commodities and money appear as

“autonomous figures endowed with a life of their own, which enter into relations both with each other and with the human race” means that, at a level of thinking “we moderns” can perhaps barely remember, money bears the sacred within it. Money is a fetishized objective power to organize society, for instance. Indeed, how soon we forget that “money” was regarded and treated, that it was *ritualized* as magical not just in “other” parts of the world but also in *Europe*, especially in peasant societies, prior to its modern secularization. Money was at least a quasi-magical object everywhere. It is not Montezuma but Columbus, as we’ll see a bit later, who tells us that gold “can even enable souls to enter Paradise.” This is not to say that peasant cultures treat gold and other money-like elements and objects like we treat modern money. Rather, these objects serve as obligatory gifts of reverence and influence, especially in relations like that of king and subject, and of lord and serf.¹⁴⁷ According to the art historian Henry Maguire, for instance, “in the early Middle Ages, as in the late Roman period, coins had value not only in the physical world of human exchange but also in the invisible world of spirits and demons. Their ability to act in both places derived from the general medieval tendency to invest precious substances, such as gold, silver, and gemstones, with value in both the earthly and spiritual realms” (1039).¹⁴⁸ Indeed, Maguire points out that coins were worn during this period as charms, as apotropaic talismans, and found in Christian *graves* alongside various religious paraphernalia—thus linking gold to “spirituality” and “divinity,” to magic and religiosity, quite directly. But this also points, then, to a developmental process of (dis)illusion in the transition of the use of premodern “money”

¹⁴⁷ We should remind ourselves that “lord” is not a secular term even if the relation it designates alongside “serf” seems to be but a political and economic relation. The authority of the “lord” is not merely a “metaphorical” authority—that is, it isn’t in a presentational sense.

¹⁴⁸ See, for instance, Maguire, 1997.

into modern money: What begins as a sacred (illusional) gift of communicable exchange, sacrifice, protection, and reverence develops through necessary failures — through the disillusion and primitive accumulations of intercultural contact — into the secular object we call “money” with its abstract “value.” Gold becomes “representational” of abstract value to the degree that it’s soon discovered that the cultural “other” is *far* from divine.

Indeed, related to the discovery that coins served as magical devices in Christian graves — coins here embodying meaning and health, love and memory — Hamell, Miller, Trigger, and Hosler each point out that in Amerindian mythical contexts, as in tribal or magical societies in general, the gods are rarely simply “divine” or “otherworldly”; rather, they are almost invariably and precisely *relatives*, more or less distant *ancestors* — Hamell and Miller call them “great grandparents,” following various Indian lores — belonging to this or that line of kinship. Later on, we’ll examine Hamell and Miller’s important examination of post-contact Indian grave objects. For now, however, we need only to see that to the degree that these polytheistic and tribal gods are not all-powerful, rarely exhibit perfection, and invariably demand cyclical symbolic exchange with their flock, with their *living* relatives, they are more like what we would call “demigods” or “epic heroes.” Todorov reminds us in this regard that the Aztecs often deemed Cortés and his band “*teules*,” which in Nahuatl means “demigods,” “celestial messengers,” *and* certainly “revered ancestors.” More particularly, Cortés himself is often thought by the Aztecs, as some of the cyclical legends and fifty-two year calendars hint in this or that inexact way, to be Quetzalcoatl, an important demigod, returning from the firmament in the east. Actually, it is more complicated than this. It is not known whether Cortés is just Quetzalcoatl or if he’s a former Toltec ruler (*usurped*

by the Aztecs long ago to form the current empire, and so another kind of god) in the form of Quetzalcoatl, now looking for revenge after hundreds of years.¹⁴⁹ And of course Cortés doesn't let this "Toltec" anxiety and deification go unnoticed and unrewarded, especially in his communications (now rendered by La Malinche and other translators) with Montezuma. He exploits the myth to full advantage as he mercilessly attacks the Aztecs, their army, their institutions, and their sacred sites, all while expropriating their cultural riches, their land, and their gold. Such "conveniency"!

In any case, when we recognize that the social elite and especially the rulers in many so-called magical cultures are revered as divine themselves; when we understand that these elite rulers derive their power of rule through kinship lines; when we see that the dead ancestors of legend are invariably revered as "sacred" to the degree that they have (in a Winnicottian sense) *survived death*, that they continue to have influence over nature and society (even and especially from the land or realm of the dead); when we see that they are protective and/or dangerous in this or that way, demanding communicative exchange in this or that sacrificial ritual, promising intervention in the affairs of men, often as beasts, in this or that way; when we recognize that for these peoples the world is *filled with divine symbols*, signs, events, auguries, omens, and promises; when we recognize all this, the idea of an Indian apotheosis of the Europeans isn't as shocking as it might first seem. Indeed, the Indian gods are a lot like the Epicurean gods of the *intermundia*: They are thought to occasionally visit, crossing between overworld and underworld, traveling within and beyond the world's rim into the "potential space," as it

¹⁴⁹ The Aztecs are *haunted* by their prehistorical inheritance, after a world accumulative conquest of their own, it turns out.

were, between the living and the dead.¹⁵⁰ In short, if one's entire cosmology, one's very "world," is steeped in divine symbology, in ancestral prognostication, in mantic favor and demonstration, and if these "great-grandparents" invariably send messages of what happened in the past, and in relation to the past "determine" what is *actualizable* as a future happening, leaving traces of their prior visits in the form of sacred determinative signs (in the very play of light and shadow, as we'll continue to see), then why wouldn't they return (*da*) from the land of the dead (*fort*) to call upon their kin? For this lies in the nature of things. If one goes for hike deep in the woods, breaking trail, for days or for weeks, one soon sees significance in (the significance of) natural forces, of animals and their signs, of certain natural objects.

As soon as the Spaniards arrive, Montezuma knows (through a terrestrial network of spies and communicative relays) of their every move, of their encounters with this or that tribe, and of their becoming aware of the Aztec empire and of the "emperor" or "lord" Montezuma himself. Thus, as soon these "beings" arrive, Montezuma and his priestly network begin their interpretation of the vast series of pictographs, the various traditional lore. Who are these *teules*? Why are some of them seemingly four-legged beasts, or attached to beasts? (Horses, it turns out.) And how did they arrive as from out of the sea, this great mother of things? What is that craft? How do they transform other tribes so quickly into their vassals? What do they want? Why are they here? Questions such as these are asked...but...but what? The divine symbols are conflicting and confusing; indeed, the omens are ill; quite often, they don't seem to say anything. They are, as we've seen Todorov mention, mute; or at least retrospectively, after the conquest,

¹⁵⁰ See Hamell, 1992. Let us add to this, however, recalling our Winnicottian analysis: Don't the gods, like mom and dad, always return? Or better: When they return, are they alive or dead?

in yet another temporal fabulation, they're mute. Montezuma's behavior is emblematic in this regard. According to Todorov,

During the first phase of the conquest, when the Spaniards are still close to the coast, the main message sent by Montezuma is that he does not want any exchange of messages to take place! He receives his information clearly, but this does not please him...: "Montezuma lowered his head, and without answering a word, placed his hand upon his mouth. In this way he remained for a long time. He appeared to be dead or mute, since he was unable to give any answer" (Duran, III, 69)... Montezuma is not simply alarmed by the content of the messages; he shows himself literally incapable of communicating, and the text establishes a significant parallel between "mute" and "dead"... "And when Montezuma had heard that earnestly he was inquired after and asked about, that the gods urgently wished to behold him before their eyes, he felt torment and anguish in his heart" (*Florentine Codex*, XII, 89, p26). According to Duran, Montezuma's first reaction is to want to hide in a deep cave. According to the conquistadors, Montezuma's first messages declare that he will offer them everything in his kingdom, but on one condition: that they renounce any desire to come and see him. (70-1)

We have the feeling that the gods stopped speaking and communicating, well, as soon as the "two sides" entered into battle, into "physical" conflict. Key here is to understand that the Aztecs battled the Europeans with what we would call "conventional" spears, arrows, and shields, but that they *also* battled the Europeans with *magic* and *magical objects*, with symbolic warfare "techniques." True, these spears, arrows, and shields are themselves magically elaborated. They are marked with this or that sacred significance. But the Aztecs also employ what to us will seem like "non-utilitarian" items. In an early effort meant to prevent Cortés from marching towards Tenochtitlan, for instance, the Aztecs employ some "sympathetic" magic. They commission one of their artist-scribe-priests to paint a portrait of Cortés. Once the portrait is ready, it is framed in gold and "wielded" against the conquistadores. Indeed, in another confrontation, they confront Cortés with an Aztec chief who is adorned to look (and *does*

look) *a lot* like him (88). This magic of resemblances for purposes of war proves futile, of course, especially since so many of the “magical” objects that the Aztecs put to use — we should mention it again — are made of gold.¹⁵¹ Similarly, in the *Florentine Codex* — which is a huge pictographic text of Aztec life, scribed by elder Aztec “wise-men,” commissioned by the Spaniards following the fall of Tenochtitlan, and then partially translated into Spanish by scribes on both sides who had who had survived the initial year of war — in this text, a large chapter is devoted to the numerous magical ornaments and techniques used by the Aztec generals and warriors in warfare (see also Todorov 88-90).

The research of Dorothy Hosler is important here. As Hosler shows, the Aztecs and Tarascans, among others, used metal to create “magical” sounds as an element in war and other primitive accumulative ceremonies.¹⁵² This is a warfare, then, or at least a form of defense in warfare, by gongs and, well-anti-musings, a practice which was somewhat effective, apparently, at least until the arrival of the Spanish:¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ See Davies (1987): “The commodities of long-distance trade consisted mainly of luxury products such as quetzal feathers, jade, obsidian, turquoise, gold products, and various kinds of elaborately designed articles of clothing.” Davies describes these goods as “necessary luxuries” in the sense that they were indispensable symbols of social status. They also played an important part in Aztec warfare: “The warriors’ costumes, laboriously confected out of precious feathers and other costly items, were not exactly a ‘luxury’. ...these costumes served the practical purpose of striking terror into the enemy. Established convention and respect for the gods demanded that leading warriors should enter the fray thus gorgeously attired. Had they denied themselves this indispensable finery, the outraged gods would have granted not victory but defeat” (135).

¹⁵² As Hosler (1995) puts it: “Here I explore the meaning of bell sounds and the colors of gold and silver in an effort to explain why these sounds and these colors played such key roles in shaping this prehistoric metallurgy. The importance of metallic colors, especially of gold and silver, in myth, shamanistic performance, cosmological schema and political ideology has been demonstrated for the central Andes and Colombia.... The West Mexican experiment is unique in that artisans achieved these culturally required golden and silvery colors through the unusual technical expedient of using the high-arsenic and high-tin bronzes. Although the mechanical properties of these alloys were required by the design characteristics of the objects, their colors were a matter of choice, accomplished by adding the alloying element in high concentrations. By generating metallic sound and these metallic colors, this ancient technology served primarily as a visual and auditory system that symbolically defined elite and sacred spheres of activity” (102).

¹⁵³ Before we simply assume that the Spanish were totally unaffected by Aztec “magic”, however, let’s recall, as Todorov does, that in his declining stages, and as success seems to have abandoned him,

West Mexican metallurgy developed between AD 600 and the Spanish invasion. Laboratory evidence shows that metalworkers used a variety of metals and alloys, including copper-tin and copper-arsenic bronze, to craft both tools and status items. Nonetheless, *the primary technical focus* was on two *non-utilitarian properties of metal*, its sound in bells and its golden and silvery colors in bells and sheet metal ornaments. Ethnohistoric and linguistic evidence indicates that the sounds of the bells offered protection in war and structured rituals that celebrated fertility and regeneration. Metallic colors, especially of gold and silver, were associated with the solar and lunar deities and a shimmering sacred paradise. In focusing on metallic sounds and metallic colors, this metallurgical technology in large measure constituted a system of visual and aural symbols that created and recreated the experience of the sacred. (100, my emphasis)

Notice how Hosler deems this use of sound both a “technical” and “non-utilitarian” process together. This is the use of a “natural” substance in a “social,” “physical,” and “mental” way at once, all of which are overlaid within a shared “illusion,” I am suggesting, of a fantastic magical causality. For whom the bell tolls here, we might say, the bell is social, mental, physical, and objectively magical, in a powerful way. Indeed, the body is susceptible to many fantastic influences; but in traditional societies magic predominates, by developmental necessity, whereas magic has been disillusioned, which is to say repressed to this or that degree, in modern societies. But of course this isn’t to say that magic has completely disappeared.

Gold is especially “telling” in this regard. For the Aztecs, gold and silver are literally divinities or aspects of divinity: “Golden” and dazzling, gold is the sun or an aspect of the sun (appearing as Huitzilopochtli, but also, before this, as Tezcatlipoca, Quetzalcoatl, Tlaloc, Chalchiuhtlicue, and Tonatuih, depending on the cycle and the queried priestly lineage), while silver is the moon or an aspect of the moon. But gold is especially important because it’s a residue — in fact, it’s the feces, the first internal stuff

especially in his travels in Honduras, Cortés begins to believe in the power of Indian omens, no doubt like he once believed in the fates of the nursery tales of his youth.

made external, as we shall see — of the sun-god’s movements as he dies each evening in the west, traveling eastward beneath the soil through the land of the dead, where, after arriving on the eastern horizon, he is reborn each morning, that is, *if* he is satisfied with the exchanges and sacrifices offered by his privileged human flock, the Aztecs. Gold is thus a *trace* of the sun, or a *visitation* by the sun. When discovered and transformed into a statue, a grand calendar, an idol which doesn’t just represent but presents the sacred, for instance, gold brings light to the dark and life to the crops. It “(re)presents” the sun’s “presence.” Indeed, much as Freud (in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*) understands *eros* to have been birthed from *thanatos*, gold is associated with the birthing, the preverbal birthing as shitting, of life from death.¹⁵⁴ As such, gold is good and bad, an ambivalent gift from and for the gods. “Like” the sun, it can heal or disease, feed or burn; it is a distilled, principal *pharmakon*, a placebo and nocebo (in our vocabulary) at once or in alternation. Indeed, the sacred pictographic inscriptions will sometimes “depict” the gods eating each other’s excrement, in the form of gold, or eating gold, rendered to look like excrement, as offered by humans in sacrificial exchange. Holy shit! Holy eaters of shit!¹⁵⁵

Now, while Todorov doesn’t research the various “powers” attributed to gold in ancient Aztec culture at length, he succeeds in marking the ironic misunderstanding between the Europeans and Aztecs as this emergent relation is mediated, precisely, through the “exchange” and “consumption” of this “object.” For instance, while Montezuma and the Indians constantly offer gold to Cortés and the Europeans as a gift of

¹⁵⁴ While the Aztecs “know very well” where babies come from, they retain a myth that links birth not simply to genital but to alimentary destruction and production. We will see this “same” myth at work momentarily as we return briefly to a case-study offered by Winnicott.

¹⁵⁵ See Klein, 1993.

extreme, which is to say sacred, value, this value is filled with contradiction or at least with paradox; for while of great worth, it's also offered as a gift of resistance, deferral, and defense, at least to the degree that, through it, these *teules* are supposed to *return (fort)* to their proper place in the cosmos as soon as they accept the gift (*da*): “Indeed, most of the Indians’ communications to the Spaniards are notable for their ineffectiveness. In order to convince his visitors to leave the country, Montezuma sends gold each time: but nothing is more likely to persuade them to remain” (87). Since gold is literally an object of sacred consumption, it is fit only for the stomachs — indeed, it also *comes* from the stomachs — of the gods. It is the material of the divine digestion of experience and as such, should only be handled with extreme care by trained, priestly specialists: “The Spaniards behavior seems incomprehensible to them: ‘Why do they want this gold? These gods must *eat* it; that could be the only reason they want so much.’” (96, Todorov here cites the *Relación de Michoacán*, III, 26).

Adult humans, then, will not eat gold, at least directly— see our opening epigraph — but will transform it, in a Kantian sense, into an object of *taste*. Indeed, let’s look at the second epigraph in this regard. Notice that Marx himself does not fail to notice that various tribal groups taste the gift objects they are given in their earliest exchanges with the Europeans.¹⁵⁶ First, fetishism is framed as a form of what Todorov is calling “world communication” but which we might more accurately call “object communication”: “Although invisible, the *value* of iron, linen, and corn exists in these very articles: it is signified through their equality with gold, even though this relation with gold exists only in their heads, so to speak. The guardian of commodities must therefore lend them his

¹⁵⁶ Something the legacy of which is probably the biting, by Euro-American miners, of pieces of gold to determine their purity.

tongue, or hang a ticket on them, in order to communicate their prices to the outside world.” On the one hand, value is communicated — or as we’ve been suggesting, it is “represented” — through these objects’ equivalence with gold. On the other hand, since the relation with gold exists “in the heads” of the *objects* and since these objects certainly lack tongues, this value is and remains otherwise “invisible”; it is presented “inside” the gold; except that, in another sense, as if to match, measure, and represent the value of these objects for ourselves cognitively, *we speak* for the objects in the form of what we call “price.” *My* point, however, is that while our notion of price does this mathematically in and for cognition — “in terms of imaginary gold,” as Marx says, and so at a more developed level of communicative abstraction — gold invariably *also* does this prehistorically and sacredly, as it were. In what Derrida would call the indeterminacy of its status as a transcendental signified, value remains invisible and indeterminable. “Indeterminable” isn’t quite right, though, to the degree that gold “speaks” of this value by reflectively incarnating or embodying it in a “social” and “fantastic” relation with other objects. Gold’s worth thus ends up being reflectively “determined” in and through a play of indeterminates. Thus gold “becomes” a signification, and so a kind of *articulation*, of this sacred “invisible” value. It is the articulation of a primitively sacred meaning; it’s an *external sacred tongue*, both “as it were” and “really.” For it bears the social force of what Lacan would call the real or what Hegel might call reality.

To this account, as we know, Marx attaches the following footnote: “Savages and semi-savages use the tongue differently. Captain Parry says of the inhabitants of the west coast of Baffin’s bay: ‘In this case they licked it (the thing represented to them) twice to

their tongues after which they seemed to consider the bargain satisfactorily concluded” (189). While Marx doesn’t “explicitly” articulate this idea, we might say that for him the tongue *develops* (like a theoretician, a world interpreter, indeed, as a kind of world discoverer) in the role it assumes not so much in direct feasting or consumption but, first of all, in and through a kind of “feeding by artifice” which “tastes” its object or object-substitute, in quite the Kantian sense, through an art of partial consumption, a non-pretentious pretend tasting. This is how *cultural* feeding-activity begins. It is cultural in part because it lies in and beyond animalistic feeding-activity (which Marx refers to, we recall, in the *1844 Manuscripts*).¹⁵⁷ This exchanging and tasting of goods is more thoughtful or reflective, then, than the sheer consumption of stomachic need. Indeed, in the way that this incorporation by licking is largely *ceremonial*, so are the feasts which mark the standard “first meetings” of the Native Americans and Europeans. After a number of such feasts, of course, there is eventually a sorting out of foods “proper” to each culture, items of consumption which explain, make, and maintain differences. *It is not just eating, but the ceremonials accompanying both eating and not eating, not eating but sharing, not eating but playing, but building, etc, from which culture develops and in which development gets located.* This is culture surviving consumption. What’s taking place here, then, is an initial distinguishing between literal and symbolic consumption, in and as the sacred object of cultural exchange. This is another form, another root and route, of primitive accumulation.

Marx thus continues the footnote: “In the same way, among the Eastern Eskimo, the exchanger licked each article on receiving it. If the tongue is thus used in the North as the organ of appropriation, it is no wonder that in the South the stomach serves as the

¹⁵⁷ We should recall in this regard that in many tribal societies the gods are animals, totems.

organ of accumulated property, and that a Kaffir estimates the wealth of a man by the size of his belly. The Kaffirs know what they're doing, for at the same time as the official British Health Report of 1864 was bemoaning the deficiency of fat-forming substances among a large part of the working class, a certain Dr. Harvey (not, however, the man who discovered the circulation of the blood) was doing well by advertising recipes for reducing the surplus fat of the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy" (190). What's interesting for our purposes is not only the double "analogizing" of North and South with mouth and stomach and with England and (South) Africa — a double analogization which at least with regard to the link between consumption and surplus-fat is again both metaphorical *and literal* at the same time, for while the workers are undernourished the bourgeoisie are fattened with a surplus — but important as well is the fact that the somatic symbolization of wealth among the Kaffirs is both repeated and *supplemented* in England, for in England it is not just "the body" but *money*, an apparently merely "external" object which, symbolizing wealth and elite status, the status formerly called "lordship" (as we'll see), is also linked to fat, as if money weren't merely external to the "the body." Indeed, in a presentational sense, money is not simply "external," as the belly of every starving or overfed person may in part "tell" us. (For who is to say, as well, who is overfed and underfed, to the degree that this has largely been conditioned by the dynamics of each of our preverbal "experiences" with breast feeding.)

Indeed, this is no doubt why maize, since golden yellow, and since the Indians' basic unit of food, since sustaining of life like the sun itself, and since directly dependent on the sun and its gifts, is associated with gold, which is, again, both a nutrient *and* waste product of the gods. Here we again encounter the fact that different groups have their

different tastes, apparently. The Aztec sun, in fact, is hungry *like a human baby* and must be *fed human flesh* — as from a breast — to be appeased, to keep active and motile, indeed, to remain “alive” during the journey through the land of the dead every night. Gold, then, is an elaboration and indirection of this direct consumption; it symbolizes and enacts a differential social production. Indeed, in a very specific and literal sense, it is dug up from, carved out of, mother earth’s body and is then, eventually, exchanged as the stuff of life, first of all in sacrificial and sacred exchange but then, through further primitive accumulations, in ordinary socioeconomic exchange.

Let’s return to Winnicott in this regard as we continue to explore the idea that cultural development proceeds both ontogenetically and phylogenetically together, as the imbrication and mutuality of individual and social conflict and objectification. In Winnicott’s excellent book *The Piggle*, for instance, Gabrielle is a little girl (aged two through five over the course of the book) who occasionally visits Dr. Winnicott for play therapy to help her manage and treat her worries. One of the basic “objects” of these worries is an “imaginary” figure she calls “the black mummy,” a figure she usually meets at night when she’s sleeping — while the sun is traveling underground from west to east, as it were — but who often plagues her thoughts and even her vision during the day. Later, however, with Dr. Winnicott’s help, she learns that the black mummy is “a dream”; indeed, through the use of the toy objects in Winnicott’s office she learns both conceptually and, more importantly, experientially, about the difference between the objects of waking and dreaming. This is an ordinary developmental-illusional process, but since for Gabrielle the process has been troubled and so delayed a bit, what is normally a distinctly preverbal form of development we here get to witness both more

“objectively” and verbally to the degree that Gabrielle can talk about her prehistoric worries. She has been regressed in trauma, we might say, but for this trauma to remain one, it would not develop. In any case, the black mummy is a fantasied primal imago belonging to a troubled weaning and mourning process that began with the sudden loss of her mother when her baby sister was born. The black mummy substitutes for and covers over the shock of this loss, as if to rebuff, or rather, precisely to deny the loss instead of remembering and symbolizing it through normal “objective” — which is here to say seriously and shareably playful — pathways. As Winnicott puts it, the “black mummy [is] a split-off version of mother, one that does not understand babies, or one who understands them so well that her absence or loss makes everything black” (120), such that “here black is partly a defense, i.e., it is not seeing me when I am absent instead of remembering me in my absence” (153). The black mummy arrives, then, *before* Gabrielle has developed a distinct and useful memory system, a system where meaning is inscribed as the externalizing and external complement of ego experience.

Where do we put our memories, especially our “prehistorical” memories? And what would the transformation of bad memories into good-enough memories look like? What if these bad memories are pre-memorial and archaic? A response to these questions which cannot deny the persistence of the primitive should emphasize, I believe, a movement from darkness to enlightenment, not just metaphorically or analogically, while also noting that, how, and where this transitional movement “takes place.” For example, after Gabrielle in prior sessions has begun to differentiate between waking and dreaming to some degree, in a new session with Winnicott something appears which is significant to our account of objective value in primitive encounters. Playing among Winnicott’s

toys, she takes a stuffed toy faun and begins to disgorge it of its sawdust filling from the inside out. And while doing this she tells Dr. Winnicott the story of a dream—now clearly a dream where earlier she would have told such a story, likely about the black mummy, as if this dark “object” belonged to her waking experience. And in a sense it always was a part of her experience to the degree that both could “see” it and voice it, tell us about it. While the first illusion (of seeing a “black mummy”) belongs to her fantasy and denial of the memory of the loss of her mother, the second illusion is shared with us, and is to this degree more objective. We see in this session, then, both a transition and an objectification, a transition in and through a (mis)objectification of dark and light wishes:

Gabrielle: One evening I had a bad dream. It was about... I shut my eyes. I saw a beautiful horse. It was called Stallion. It had gold on its ears and on its mane. It is so very beautiful. Gold, nice shiny gold [she put her hand between her legs]. The beautiful horse was coming and trampling on the wheat [she explained that wheat is a sort of corn].

Winnicott: You are describing a picture of daddy on mummy making new babies, something to do with love.

Gabrielle: Yes. (127)¹⁵⁸

...Gabrielle: He [the stuffed faun] is doing his brrrrrh [meaning feces].

and she emptied the sawdust, as much as she could, out of the faun’s belly.... (130)

While Gabrielle is no Aztec, here we witness part of a larger movement, through an accumulative destruction, from prehistorical to historical consciousness. Seeing signs of this development in an earlier session, Winnicott had then predicted that “one can expect the black phenomena [principally the black mummy] *also to become aspects of objects in the actual world external to herself*, and separate from her. Persecutory black belongs to the residues of merging regressively, in organized defense” (96). Indeed, in

¹⁵⁸ The ellipses and brackets here are Winnicott’s.

relation to the destructive externalization of the faun's bowels, he suggests that "this marks [for Gabrielle] the flight from intestinal fantasy to the idea of adults and their capacity to give birth to real babies, i.e. acceptance of what is inside, between eating and defecation" (130). So here Gabrielle is finally capable of digesting the disruption initiated with the sudden loss of her mother and the simultaneous arrival of her sister. She is presenting this loss not simply as a fantasy but, now more objectively, also as a gift of golden shit, some fantasy elaborated sawdust, something between her mother (or father) and herself. There are of course all sorts of other elaborations and fantasies involved in this destruction and transition. Primal scenic and oedipal elements abound here, as Winnicott helps make clear, but for our purposes at a more general level the important thing is that Gabrielle's primitive accumulation of the black mummy — as with Freud's grandson's need to cry when his mother disappeared — disappears precisely as she produces an object of value. Emptying the faun of its stuffing, she transforms the internal-somatic darkness of an indigestibility into an objectified, dazzling value. Hullo object! Will this object be accepted? Can it be shared? As if enacting the fate of Huitzilopochtli every evening or that of the sacrificial victims (human and animal) required for Huitzilopochtli's travels, Gabrielle *destroys* the faun but thereby produces an object of value from the *inside out*, "like" a proper feeding and digestion. The transformed object is thus a useful *residue*, a dazzling and reflective *trace* of now, suddenly, right here (*da*), a *partially forgotten* destruction (*fort*). Her focus on the black mummy is here beginning to fade, and she will begin to remember the lost good enough mother with some *longing*. Indeed, in a Kantian sense she sees this material — where *mater*, again, is the root for mother — as something "very beautiful." She has thus made

a transition from a “darker” mode of world-objectification, apparently simply of destruction, to a more “productive” and “enlightened” mode, as it were. Interesting in this regard is the fact that during her dream she *shuts her eyes* where normally, deeper in her illness, she would have kept them open and “seen” the black mummy in a very real sense—“real” in the Lacanian sense. But now, as the very movement of therapy, she joins the *voiced* descriptions and interpretations of her dream (oral tradition and interpretation, as we’ve seen) to a ritualized *carving out* of mother nature’s insides (like an animal sacrifice or the work of mining, as we shall see). In any case, here we can again reiterate our earlier Winnicottian lesson, namely, that objective values are secretly layered in darkness and destruction to the degree that destruction goes “underground,” as it were, precisely when the object is brought “above-ground” to visibly reflect the light of the sun. Plato would be proud of this developmental movement in and out of “the cave,” as it were.¹⁵⁹

Indeed, aspects of the magical priority and necessity of this developmental process are “recorded” historically, indeed archaeologically, in gravesites world-wide. In his analysis of the 6000 year old “Varna” cemeteries in Serbia, for instance, the archeologist Colin Renfrew examines the transition from the symbolization of death by *stone* to its symbolization by copper and then, eventually, by gold.¹⁶⁰ This developmental symbolization coincides, it turns out, with the birth and amplification of “class” or at least of a social hierarchy with clear divisions between “elite” and “common” groups. One of Renfrew’s basic points is that while the use of copper in burial ceremony at Varna is associated with older, more egalitarian — and so more *communal* — societies, the later

¹⁵⁹ See Mitchell, 1986.

¹⁶⁰ Renfrew, 1986.

use of gold clearly signals, and in fact it embodies, the emergence of social hierarchies, each headed by an elite group of men. The point of emphasis, however, is that it is not simply the “physical” or “technical” use of metals but especially their “aesthetic,” “magical,” and “symbolic” use that coincides with (and in this sense perhaps helps to produce) stratification, such that the stratification which arrives with the dissolution of primitive community is born(e) in some obvious sense *through* the magical use of gold and later metals, a use steeped in aesthetic judgment. Renfrew thus reiterates a lot of what we learn from Marx, Hamell, Miller, Hosler, and David Graeber.¹⁶¹ Gold is used as a personal adornment in close — even in inscriptive — proximity to the body, and especially around the face and genital areas. It is often associated with and adorns such revered symbols of power, prominence, and prestige as scepters, rods, spears, and crowns. In archaic societies, the rulers, are “divine” to the degree that they can produce or procure gold; they live and die with gold; indeed, they are thought to keep living in part by means of it; thus, as it is for the moderns, I would say that it’s a kind of Holy Grail, to, a glittering incarnation of an innermost principle of life, for the ancients too, or rather, or at least for the elite rulers. By contrast, in the graves of the more common folk at Varna, gold is often dissembled; that is, other materials such as “fools gold” are used and manipulated in such a way as to imitate gold, whereas gold is never imitated in the elite graves and is never used or mixed so as to imitate copper or stone (two “older” symbolic substances).

Renfrew’s basic point, however, is that the “magical” and “prestige” uses of the “precious” metals precedes, or at least coincides or comes together with, these substances’ more or less distinctly “technological” use. Again, development is the

¹⁶¹ See Graeber, 1996 and 2001.

symbolic mediation of violent disillusionment. It is useful in the Winnicottian sense, where use and symbol cannot be separated. Magic and technology aren't strictly at odds or separated, then, to the degree that the former already "overlays" the latter until a disillusionment occurs which forces technology to appear as if it has arrived or could have arrived without having been grown within, say, a magical skin. Only "special" and "new" technologies seem to us still to have an "aura" of "magic." In any case, Renfrew uses an almost "hieroglyphic" analysis to elucidate this process: "What we appear to be seeing in each case is the very early use of metal in contexts that at the same time are *documenting* the emergence of personal ranking, *reflected* in what may have been *individually owned goods, buried with the deceased* in the grave. Copper and gold clearly afford in each case a new vehicle for *the expression of ranking*, and thus in this sense a new channel of *communication*. Indeed, it may be suggested that...the ownership and display of these valuable objects may have *constituted* an essential part of the *prominence of their owner* and have contributed significantly to his or her prestige" (156, my emphases). This is "evidenced" by the fact that the symbolic use of these metals, or at least the "prehistorical" metals, always precedes their more "obvious" technological use. According to Renfrew: "In most cases *early* metallurgy appears to have been practiced primarily because the products had novel properties that made them attractive to use as symbols and as personal adornments and ornaments, in a manner that, by *focusing attention*, could attract or enhance prestige. It is striking [sic, like a "tanning"] that copper had such a key place in the prestige systems of North America. In the Old World we find iron in the early phases always as a material of great worth, whose context in rich burials and in other finds indicates a prestigious status. Only much later was it

used to make productive tools, and at the same time it became *commonplace*” (146-7, my emphases). Part of our point, however, is that the more *primitive* commonplaces, the commons themselves, the pre-private forms of primitive communal “property,” are “privatized” precisely in and through the “magical” power and use of these metals. The metals mark, as by a *strike*, the dissolution of primitive communism. Thus, it is a misconception, Renfrew says,

to regard the inception of copper/bronze metallurgy, and later of iron working, [and the inception of gold as well] as technologically and productively significant events in their own right. In most cases...it was centuries after the basic [metallurgical] techniques were explored and understood that they became of economic and productive significance. The same observations hold for iron working. Iron was known and valued in the Near East for centuries *before* the iron age began. Similarly, there are not-infrequent finds in Mycenaean Greece at least two centuries *before iron weapons* begin to be seen in appreciable numbers. (145)

This, then, is a basic lesson for us concerning these discoveries: Before they emerge as technical and technological substances of productive value in “manufacture,” shiny metals already represent *and present* the prehistorical *formation* of rank and even of a kind of class. We might put it this way: He who “wields” gold in these prehistorical eras also wields authority, say, over a militia or set of guardian servants, or even an army, and so who is to say that it’s merely the military and military technologies that are “effective” here in the primitive accumulative sense of cultural encounter, war, and accumulation? Authority requires a politico-religious relation to subjects, but this relation is mediated by all sorts of symbols, symbols which therefore “have” a kind of causality in relation to the always risked maintenance of that authority. But there is a “mysterious” correspondence, here, between the rise of gold and the disintegration of primitive communism. We’ll put it this way: In marking the rise of an elite, this very

marking influences this disintegration into the (pre?)formation of class societies. (It is perhaps a bit like the black slab, and not simply the humanizing bone that is used as a weapon, in Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, if this reference helps. It is not merely the physical violence but the *intimidation* the bone is and represents [and that the slab embodies] that guarantees the rise and development of the human.) In any case, in marking difference while reflecting identity (as we will continue to see), gold makes communication necessary by (further) breaking the group apart and marking the maintenance of this break. This marking is gold's "magic," its power to sway or influence—especially the masses who lack access to it. True, at this level of development it's forgotten that this power is "socially constructed"; but our point is that this power is not merely socially constructed but is also *objectively* and *developmentally* constructed along destructive routes of identification and disidentification, routes requiring a "reflection" of cultural insides and outsides and of life and death. For to lose control or gain full control over the boundary of inside and outside would be to risk death.

Indeed, one of our basic ideas here, to put it in a long, ugly sentence, is that because these "first contacts" are not simply primitively destructive but symbolically accumulative as well (which is to say that they're layered in the sacred ceremonial performance of *community*), the objects of exchange and value that resonate in and especially *after* these encounters — as soon as these ancestors board their magical craft and return, apparently, to the land of the dead, or wherever they've come from — these objects will be taken, at least by the Indians, and rightly so in my judgment, as objects of *mourning*, the mourning of a sacred intimacy the communal legacy of which loss,

however, is not totally lost to the degree that an exchange has been made. The objects are *mementos*.

Regarding the oral tradition we mentioned earlier of the meeting between the Europeans and (perhaps Lenape) Indians of Manhattan Island, for instance, Miller and Hamell write that

this tradition also recorded that their ancestors had admired the white skins of the men who landed on shore in a small boat, particularly that of a man in “red clothes which shone” who gave them presents, “to wit, beads, axes, hoes, stockings, &c.” The Europeans then departed, promising to return. . . . Meanwhile, not knowing their utilitarian functions, the Indians suspended the axes and hoes on their breasts as ornaments and used the stockings as tobacco pouches. It was not until the following year, when the ship returned, that the Indians were taught the practical function of these objects by the greatly amused Europeans.

So, again, on our view, the Indians suspend these “utilitarian” objects around their necks as ornaments as reflective memorials of a sacred encounter with the living dead. Perhaps this is a once in a lifetime, a once in a world cycle, event, as it seems. Hamell and Miller point to an especially significant funerary discovery in this regard: In post-contact Indian burial sites, archaeologists sometimes find sacred Indian items made of such native materials as (native) copper, quartz, and flint, but they also sometimes find *European* objects or object fragments made of glass, glass beads, ceramics, iron, steel, etc. The European objects are here being used, then, precisely as sacred objects of mourning.¹⁶² One of the lessons, here, I want to suggest, consists in this: *Shiny* objects are especially valued precisely to the degree that they *reflect* the “souls” or “spirits” of the dead—the fleeting, ghostly sub- and/or extra-human images that gather *as if within*

¹⁶² Thus, aren't two losses being mourned here?

them and through them. What does one see in a murky mirror? As Hamell and Miller put it,

this incorporation of novel [European *produced*] materials is readily apparent in protohistoric Iroquois mortuary practices, in which [European] glass beads appear to have been preferentially disposed along with [native] shell beads.... In 1699, a “bottle and the foot of a glass which they guarded as very precious” were observed in a Taensa temple, which also had preserved within it some pieces of native crystal.... Glasswares and glazed European ceramics were among the Tunica’s “treasures” placed with the dead during the early eighteenth century.... Further archaeological and linguistic information confirms that glass was also incorporated into the native thought-world as a replacement for traditional divining implements. Traditionally, water and crystal were widely used for such purposes, as were polished free-state metals, metallic-ore mosaics, muscovite mica, and perhaps water- or grease-slicked polished stone surfaces, *in which a spirit or soul was reflected*. In 1643 Roger Williams noted that the Narrangansett Algonquians’ word for soul had an affinity “with a word signifying a looking glasse, a cleare resemblance.” Nearly three-hundred years later, in his study of the Naskapi Algonquians, Frank G. Speck observed that the same linguistic and conceptual linkage between “soul” and “mirror” was found over much of the Algonquian-speaking area of North America. (316-7, my emphasis)

What we see here, then, is what might be called a kind of “mirror stage” of phylogenetic development, a reflection of our own idealized communal image, but an image and community lost, fragmented, divided, cut into parts, and yet also — this may be where Lacan does not tread, but certainly it’s where Winnicott and Marx do tread — *preserved* to some degree in the object which remains, as a fetish and cipher, of value. For Lacan, at least on my reading of his “Mirror Stage” essay, this stage, cast in ontogenetic terms to describe individual development, is purely specular, hinging only upon a play of images, and specifically the baby’s identification with his or her mirror image which identification, in forming the root of the ego but since stemming from an overdetermined image, forms the ego only ever as alienated, fragmented, lacking in self-

foundation.¹⁶³ While this may be, however, for Winnicott and Marx this identification is also significantly objectified such that play and its primitive work, a play which can join two into “one” in the “object,” is then not subsequently ignored. What is important about the mirror (and for Winnicott of course the mother’s face is the first mirror, conditioning the baby’s seeing himself in something like an aluminum mirror) is that there is something alive and creative “in” it, something that reflects the loss of supposedly prior intimacy, and so to the possibility of its recreation under different terms, at least eventually, as community, *in part by and through the lost object*.¹⁶⁴

The things archaeology uproots!¹⁶⁵ Indeed, Marx seems to be aware of this thought in *Capital*. In the sections on fetishism, he recognizes the necessity of funerary ritual, for instance, together with the exhumation of the sacred relics of the dead that belongs to modernity and, in a very direct way, to *capitalist* development. We will recall that he describes the virtual enslavement of the Indians in the American mines, for instance, as an “entombment” (915), but an entombment, of course, meant to dig something else “up,” to bring some shiny dirt above ground, as if this latter thing were as valuable as the sun itself. These ironies would make Plato proud, would they not? Meanwhile, a parallel disinterring is happening in Europe. The secularization and economization of value as gold and of gold as value in modernity, it seems, pivots precisely on the destruction, *on the literal uprooting of the archaic relation to the sacred*.

As Marx puts it in a footnote:

Henry III, *roi tres chretien*, robbed monasteries, etc, of their relics and turned them into money. It is well known what part the despoiling of the Delphic temple by the

¹⁶³ Lacan, 1977.

¹⁶⁴ Winnicott, 1971, chapter 8, 111-118.

¹⁶⁵ I, like the Indians, haven’t appreciated all the uprootings.

Phocians [sic] played in the history of Greece. Among the ancients, temples served as the dwellings of the gods of commodities. They were ‘sacred banks’. With the Phoenicians, a trading people *par excellence*, money was the transmuted shape of everything. It was, therefore, quite in order that the virgins who at the feast of the goddess of love gave themselves to strangers should offer to the goddess the piece of money they received in payment. (229)

Money is again here sacralized, as the fulfillment of desire, a primitive desire of orgy and feasting, in fact, for what is lost (like virginity). But reflection dawns *post festum*, as we know. Thus, to the degree that feasting can produce something reflective, this most Christian of Kings raids the *darkness* of the *old tombs* of Europe in a movement which symbolizes the *birth* of the age of *enlightenment*. For us, the lesson is this: These violent repressions (despoiling of the Delphic temple, the entombment and repression of the Indians at large—all the primitive accumulations of “history”) also involve, precisely, an unrepression the desirous hopes of which has come to be embodied “secularly” in money. This secularization is in scare quotes, though, to the degree that the persistence of the sacredness of primitive accumulation persists, as it must. Indeed, Marx basic lesson, on my creative reading, is that capital is made possible and, in the repetitive destruction of the commons over the last five centuries, actual, to the degree that the destruction borne with this objectification of money persists in all its religious fervor, in all its dirt, blood, and fire.

My God do we *miss* those with whom we are or have been close to but have lost, don’t we? And so, if we are not *only* to lose them, where do we “find” them, when we do, in and despite their loss? Certainly in our dreams, most proximately. But do we stop dreaming when we are awake? The lesson here, I think — a lesson that Gabrielle learned late, during her verbal stage, helping those of us who’d forgotten it in preverbality to

remember it now — is that we don't stop dreaming when we're awake; rather, if development is taking place, some wishes will go "underground" to appear as dreams in our sleep while some wishes will rise "above ground" into consciousness to "take place" in and as objects of value, a value secretly presenting, and in some cases secretly mourning, primitive "accumulation." Indeed, in the cases mentioned by Hamell and Miller, since the reflective objects of value are found precisely in graves, they also "suggest" the necessity that their objective sacralization corresponds to a subjective one, a sacralization of subjects, of those we've lost. Thus, to the degree that human-like "souls" or "spirits" can (still) be "seen" in them, both literally and metaphorically, the dead and the lost are to this degree both distanced and yet contactable (as if through a sacred language) through the fetish. Thus, like the transitional object, these "objects" contain, both receptively and creatively, a there within a here, an inside in an outside, a gain and a loss, reflecting both self and other at once, and therefore, if and when they do their work, they help the living to keep underground the most difficult aspects of death.

Indeed, let us ask again, as seriously as possible: Why do we tell children, together with ourselves, "nursery tales"? And why do we tend to understand the telling of such tales as a "sacred duty," as Marx puts it, we recall, in the first chapter on primitive accumulation? One way to get at this is to point out that while fetishism belongs to polytheisms and monotheisms alike, it is within the development of latter — and the latter's development arrives and begins later — that the sacred becomes much more "absolutist." Monotheism is absolutist to the degree that it claims a monopoly on the sacred in the form of its "God," the illusion of highest value. It is generally well-known, for instance, that whereas the Indians who the exploring Spaniards and Europeans

meet are typically willing to “accept Christ” as one deity among others who live in the realm of the dead (with various other gods), the Europeans generally and often quite ferociously demand that the Indians *fully renounce* their “heretical” pantheons.

I think it’s no accident in this regard that Marx invokes Columbus in chapter three *precisely* as he links the formation of capital to the supposed *wish-fulfilling* properties of *gold*, the first substance of global or “*world* money.” Explaining that “the lust for gold awakens” with “the extension of commodity circulation,” which extension implies an “increase in the power of money,” he adds that this is also the moment when gold becomes, as he puts it, an “*absolutely* social form of wealth which is always ready to be used” (229, my emphasis). That is, money is “absolutely social” if and when it has much more *literally* become the “universal equivalent,” that is, when it’s as if it can be transformed into anything. This happens both literally and metaphorically, together, both objectively and illusionally at once. Indeed, since the world is now apparently round and limited and yet has also now been extended into a new, apparently edenic universe, gold’s wish-fulfilling properties should extend all the way through and indeed, more than ever before, beyond the world as it is known. Indeed, the ejection of “god” from the underworld and from the earth itself in various religions strangely corresponds to the movement of gold from its subterranean concealment, to the earth’s surface, upward (even beyond the sun!) into the “heavens.” As Marx puts it, “this contradiction between the quantitative limitation and the qualitative lack of limitation of money keeps driving the hoarder back to his Sisyphean task: accumulation. He is in the same situation as a world conqueror, who discovers a new boundary with each country he annexes” (231). My idea is that Marx is again not merely drawing an “analogy” here between the

ideology of monetary acquisition and the discovery of “new worlds.” Rather, the material discovery conditions the new idealization and vice versa, such that the *old* ideology of *wish-fulfillment* gets instantiated by, and indeed, mirrored in particular (often shiny) objects. Here the “discoverer” lets his highest hopes run wild for money; indeed, he re-invests these hopes, as it were, in speculative practical activity, a kind of war against relative, non-absolutist values. Gold becomes, or rather, it remains, as it is in many polytheistic cultures, a vehicle or conduit, a symbol, of divine communication between worlds, as we’ll see; but here suddenly with the one-directional “discovery” of an entirely “new” world, the Christian saturates gold with wishes for an eternal blessed life here on earth. Gold is to be carved out of mother earth as if in perfect denial of the fact that that’s where we all end up in the end. Talk about conveniency!

With the possibility of keeping hold of the commodity as exchange-value, or exchange-value as a commodity, the lust for gold awakens. With the extension of commodity circulation there is an increase in the power of money, that absolutely social form of wealth which is always ready to be used. ‘Gold is a wonderful thing! Its owner is master of all he desires. Gold can even enable souls to enter Paradise’ (Columbus, in his letter from Jamaica, 1503). Since money does not reveal what has been transformed into it, everything, commodity or not, is convertible into money. Everything becomes saleable and purchasable. Circulation becomes the great social retort into which everything is thrown, to come out again as the money crystal. Nothing is immune from this alchemy, the bones of the saints cannot withstand it, let alone more delicate *res sacrosanctae, extra commercium hominum*. Just as in money every qualitative difference between commodities is extinguished, so too for its part, as a radical leveler, it extinguishes all distinctions. But money is itself a commodity, an external object capable of becoming the private property of any individual. Thus the social power becomes the private power of private persons. Ancient society therefore denounced it as tending to destroy the economic and moral order. Modern society, which already in its infancy had pulled Pluto by the hair of his head from the bowels of the earth, greets gold as its Holy Grail, as the glittering incarnation of its innermost principle of life. (229-30)

Recall, then, to make the point in a scientific form that even some of today's economists will recognize, that in chapter six of *Capital* Marx finishes comparing the C-M-C circuit of ordinary commercial exchange to the M-C-M' circuit of specifically capitalist exchange. He reveals that the special and specific commodity at the heart of the capitalist circuit, the *labor-power* of the wage laborer, is the only modern commodity which *creates value*. This is in part because labor-power has craft and labor, and so creativity, behind it. But its also because labor-power is the abstract capacity to labor, which corresponds then not exactly to the production of use-values but to the production of the modern capitalist abstraction called value. The capitalist buys labor-power (M-C) and this power creates commodities which can then be sold by the capitalist for more money (C-M') than he or she invested at the beginning of the circuit in labor-power.¹⁶⁶ We thus have M-C-M' where the first M represents a money-wage, where C represents labor-power, and where the prime (') indicates that the money initially forwarded has been increased, grown in quantity. In other words, since the amount of surplus-value a worker produces under conditions of wage-labor is the difference between the value he or she produces (which is then owned by the capitalist) and the value of his or her labor-power (which takes the shape of a money-wage), surplus-value takes the form of appearance of money or, more specifically, of *more* money in the capitalist's wallet than was originally put forward. The capitalist invests, the worker labors, and value grows abstractly, the surplus of which is appropriated not by the worker but by the capitalist. So for the "investor," this takes on the appearance of money making money! How magical!

¹⁶⁶ From this perspective, the value of the materials which are gathered and worked so as to enter into the final product also reduce to the value of the labor-power needed to acquire and prepare them.

Capital and its movement, however, take this magic religiously, or at least “monotheistically,” seeking value as if *absolutely*.

In chapter four, moreover, Marx more fully suggests that in capitalist exchange money takes on a “character” which is *qualitatively different* from its role and use in non-capitalist, precapitalist, or *even commercial* exchange. It is not markets which are the problem, but capital. In the commercial C-M-C circuit of exchange, as Marx puts it, money’s form of appearance

does nothing but mediate the exchange of commodities, and it vanishes in the final result of the movement [that is, in a commodity which is then used, consumed]. On the other hand, in the circulation M-C-M both the money and the commodity function only as different modes of existence of value itself, the money as its general mode of existence, the commodity as its particular or, so to speak, disguised mode. It is constantly changing from one form into the other, without becoming lost in this movement; it thus becomes transformed into an automatic subject.... By virtue of being value, it has acquired the occult ability to add value to itself. It brings forth living offspring, or at least lays golden eggs.... It differentiates itself as original value from itself as surplus-value, just as God the Father differentiates himself from himself as God the Son, although both are of the same age and form, in fact one single person; for only by the surplus value of \$10 does the \$100 originally advanced become capital, and as soon as this has happened, as soon as the son has been created and, through the son, the father, their difference vanishes again, and both become one, \$110. (255-6)¹⁶⁷

Against Godelier, who takes this material, truncates it, and suggests that for Marx capital and commodity fetishism are of *apiece* since they both exhibit a “religious” obfuscation of the labor which constitutes value, Marx actually (if quite subtly and not always consistently) suggests that the religiosity of *capital* has a particular tendency to *outstrip* magic and fetishism, namely, to deny the value of particular objects (as use-values *and* as exchange-values), at least insofar as capital moves, reproduces, and grows

¹⁶⁷ Fowkes’ translation is different from Godelier’s. Also, perhaps this is not a fair exchange, but I’ve here changed pounds to dollars.

beyond the will of individual social actors:¹⁶⁸ As opposed to the comportment of the ordinary C-M-C circuit where money bears the burden, as Marx says, of “mediating the exchange of commodities” — where commodities require object-equivalents and these object-equivalents require other commodities in and for trade — within the *capitalist* M-C-M’ circuit money bears an *unconditional* aspiration to accumulate and augment *fully abstract value*. If a capitalist has transformed \$100 into \$110, for instance, then if the capital “in” this person is consistent, “it” will try to do the same, through him, with this \$110, *etc, etc, etc*. The goal of capital may seem to be the accumulation of money, in other words, but paradoxically this accumulation *can serve no need*. As Marx puts it:

If...we are concerned with the valorization of value, the value of the \$110 has the same need for valorization as the value of the \$100, for they are both *limited* expressions of exchange-value, and therefore both have the same vocation, to approach, by quantitative increase, as near as possible to *absolute* wealth.... The simple circulation of commodities — selling in order to buy — is a means to a final goal which lies outside circulation, namely, [in] the appropriation of use-values, the satisfaction of needs. As against this, the circulation of money as capital is an end in itself, for the valorization of value takes place only within this constantly renewed movement. The movement of capital is therefore *limitless*. (252-3, my emphases)

Thus, while Godelier casually and seamlessly links these passages to the passages we peeked at earlier where Marx suggests that commodity exchange begins as a limited abstraction of and from nature worship, and thus is a kind of fetishism, Marx is here clearly qualitatively distinguishing commodities and money from *capital*, and so a *limited* ideological *expression* (which can still fall under the name of fetishism) from an *apparently unlimited* ideology (for which fetishism would be a misnomer, even if Marx once or twice speaks in volume three of *Capital* of the fetishism of capital). We will recall from part eight of volume one in this regard that money and commodities, which

¹⁶⁸ See Godelier, 1977, chapters 6 and 7 especially.

are produced historically well before capital, are not capital, although they can be transformed, repressively desublimated, as it were, into the latter: “In themselves, money and commodities are no more capital than the means of production and subsistence are. They need to be transformed into capital.... The capital-relation presupposes a complete separation between the workers and the ownership of the conditions for the realization of their labor” (874). This complete separation is won not just “militarily” but ideologically, through a religiously monotheistic comportment to loss and the misobjectification of loss. Capital is absolutist. Whereas commodity fetishism hides the content of value in and as limited, albeit abstract, *objects* and can be *satisfied to some degree* with these objects in their fetishistic use, capitalist exchange apparently bears an *unlimited* desire for value *beyond objectivity*. Capitalism is therefore the *melancholia* of history, set up through repeated “untold” prehistorical accumulations. No object of use or exchange of any quality or quantity can satisfy capital as capital. So while the money piles up, more is wanted still, to the point that the movement of capital becomes something *extra commercium hominum*, a religious mechanism perpetuating a deep social *split*.

CHAPTER X

INSCRIPTIVE SOCIAL HEALTH

If capital is absolutist, and to this degree a mechanism for the perpetuation of social illness, if it's a socio-political melancholia hinging upon and perpetuating class splitting, what does Marx want to say about the health and illness "efficacy" of commodities and money?

Here is my simple response to this question: Whereas many Marxist and non-Marxists alike presume that Marx treats commodities and money, especially in their fetishism, as objects of social illness — and presume thereby that he denounces all competitive "markets" or "the market" in general — our idea is that Marx understands commodities and money to be socially *ambivalent* objects, the causal effect of which is *placeboic and/or noceboic*, objects the use of which can be either productive or destructive, or both at once, depending on the relation of that object to primitive needs. Typically, under capitalist production and exchange, the productivity and destructivity of commodities and money are difficult to distinguish. Is any "investment" of money where the money apparently "makes money" destructive (to the degree that somewhere down the line a surplus is being drawn from the productivity and creativity of stultified wage-work)? Is the average land-lord a capitalist if his renters are wage-workers? Is the average worker perpetuating a social illness when she asks for a pay raise but doesn't fight for a workers' union? Shouldn't she be working against the class split that makes her a "mere" wage-earning worker and non-owner of the means of production?

Regarding this last question, my response is that social health, which pivots principally on the principle of social justice, requires that she be allowed and encouraged to do *both* of these, to seek more personal money and yet can and perhaps should fight for unionization, or at least for the overcoming of the class violences between owners and workers; which means that while she, like everyone else, needs and fetishizes money and commodities, her asking for more money, hoping to purchase more commodities, is not necessarily illness. Perhaps it's illness if her need for commodities and money damages her social life with family, friends, co-workers, social others, and even with her employer. But to need or want money and commodities to make one's life better, more satisfying, and in fact more pleasurable is no crime, indeed, is no social illness. What is and remains a social illness, on the other hand, is the splitting off of workers from any resources of self-production and self-transformation in and through the means of production. Does this mean money is a means of production? I think the answer can only be that yes, money can be. It is a symbolic, indeed, an *objectively* symbolic *force*. Thus, only in those circumstances where and when it becomes clear that money and commodities are being used or leveraged as a form of *capitalization* — which is to say, as a form of social domination which preserves or increases class splitting — would it be appropriate to deem their use or fetishization an “illness.” So again, while the wage-relation in general may be a symptom of illness to the degree that it marks and perpetuates a social split between owners and non-owners of the means of self-production and transformation, the need that this or that worker expresses for his or her paycheck ought not to be deemed ill. Of course, things are never simple, but hopefully this characterization is useful.

It is similar, and indeed this process is imbricated, with child's play: To the degree that the child's use of an object enables or helps him or her to "grow" in relation to others (becoming not simply independent but more abstractly dependent, which is to say not just "physically" and "fantastically" dependent but more objectively dependent and so seemingly independent) the object and/or relation to that object is a healthy one. But to the degree that the object and its use stultify the child (perhaps he or she uses the object to avoid socializing with others, even when such socializing would be good for her, for instance) it has become a symptom or object of illness. The same can be said of money and its uses, and I think that when Marx gets it right, he says nothing more complicated than this. Money is "placeboic" to the degree that it is made transitional, that it is used for purposes of social and self growth.

And yet, of course, and again, health and illness are more complicated than this, as Marx and Engels both know, which brings us to our more complicated response: While commodities and money are objects of ambivalence in terms of their participation in and effects upon health and illness, at a critical level of understanding this ambivalence, in both its participation in and effectivity upon health, stems from money's roots in *primitive inscription*. If we want to understand what modern money, this point should not be ignored. Take, for instance, Habermas's examination of Marx's notion of commodity fetishism in *Knowledge and Human Interests*. Here Habermas casts the "objective illusion" belonging to fetishism as a *mere* illusion, as but a fetter to what he calls "undistorted" or "reflective" communication, as if illusion could be completely overcome or extinguished, without a trace, and as if reflection weren't itself precisely a distorting of the identifications of a presupposed primitive unity with nature. By contrast,

we hope to have shown here that to the degree that communication is born(e) of primitive “accumulation” and thus, at least in part, of destruction, it always bears within it, in its various forms of development, reflections and indeed traces of this destruction, and that to this degree illusion always situates and infects communication—even the communicative forms and techniques of modern science and self-consciousness.¹⁶⁹

Nonetheless, Habermas is right *on the mark*, so to speak, to cast the grand world process of fetishization (as historicization) as a “struggle” and “process of reflection *writ large*,” as he puts it. For this is precisely what we, with the help of Winnicott and Todorov, have

¹⁶⁹ Here are a couple of dynamic and helpful passages on Marx’s project from Habermas (1971): “Marx, confronted with contemporary capitalism, analyzes a social form that no longer institutionalizes class antagonism in the form of immediate political domination and social force; instead, it stabilizes it in the legal institution of the free labor contract, which congeals productive activity into the commodity form. This commodity form is *objective illusion*, because it makes the object of conflict unrecognizable for both parties, capitalists as well as wage laborers, and *restricts* their communication. The commodity form of labor is ideology because it simultaneously conceals and expresses the suppression of an unconstrained dialogic relation. . . . [And this] institutionally secured suppression of the communication through which a society is divided into social classes amounts to fetishizing the true social relations. Thus, according to Marx, the distinguishing feature of capitalism is that it has brought ideologies from the heights of mythological or religious legitimations of tangible domination and power down into the system of social labor. . . . The system of social labor develops only in an objective connection with the antagonism of classes; the development of the forces of production is intertwined with the history of revolutions. The results of this struggle are always sedimented in the institutional framework of a society, in social *form*. Now, as the repeated dialectic of the moral life, this struggle is a process of reflection *writ large*. In it the forms of class consciousness arise: not idealistically in the self-movement of an absolute mind but materialistically on the basis of objectifications of the appropriation of an external nature. This reflection, in which an existing form of life is convicted of its abstraction and thereby revolutionized, is prompted by the growing potential of control over the natural processes objectified in work. The development of the forces of production at any time augments the disproportion between institutionally demanded and objectively necessary repression, thereby making conscious the existing untruth, the felt disruption of a moral totality” (59-61, my emphases except for “form”). Again, in and despite this great summary, Habermas’s mistake is to characterize objective illusion as only “restrictive” or “distortive” of a communication that could otherwise, apparently, be *pure*. In Marx’s articulation, however, and as we’ve begun to see, communication rests on a primitive accumulation — the archaic dividing of a prior unity, making communication both possible and necessary — which means that communication is precisely reliant, to be communicative at all, on the violences and distortions which enable a distancing of actors in and from their primitive identity. Again, Marx knows very well for instance that there is no getting rid of money to produce a “pure” socio-economic relation between subjects. Subjects require and will continue to require the fetishistic use of some partially violent “third thing”, whatever shape and substance money will acquire in the future, to mediate and indeed to *form* their sociality. Against this, however, just a few sentences after the above remarks, Habermas suggests that “the knowing subject can only cast off the traditional form in which it appears to the degree that it comprehends the self-formative process of the species as a movement of class antagonism mediated at every stage by processes of production, recognizes itself as the result of the history of class consciousness in its manifestations, and thereby, as self-consciousness, *frees itself from objective illusion*” (61, my emphasis).

been suggesting, that is, if by “writ” we mean the literal symbolization of the loss of an immemorial immediacy with mother (nature), a significant carving up of primitive identity (the omnipotence of wishing), and so a reshaping of this identity and its carving, together, in and as *culture*.

Let’s look in this regard at a series of examples, some of which we will analyze more than others. I’ll move from an important passage in Marx and Engels’ work to the example of Marx’s writing itself, then eventually to some phylogenetic historical examples pivoting on primitive rituals. Indeed, if in the prior section we concentrated on the hieratics of the development of value, here we need to emphasize the *glyphics* of that development.

In the 1888 English edition of the *Communist Manifesto* (copies of which can be purchased at bookstores or found online), not Marx but Engels adds a comment to what Marx, who died in 1883, had offered in 1847 as the essay’s opening, and perhaps basic, supposition.¹⁷⁰ Whereas Marx had famously claimed that “the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles,” Engels attaches the following footnote at the word “society”:

That is, all *written* history. In 1847, the prehistory of society, the social organization existing previous to recorded history, was all but unknown. Since then, Haxthausen discovered common ownership of land in Russia, Maurer proved it to be the social foundation from which all Teutonic races started in history, and by and by village communities were found to be, or to have been the primitive form of society everywhere from India to Ireland. The inner organization of this primitive communistic society was laid bare, in its typical form, by Morgan’s crowning discovery of the true nature of the *gens* and its relation to the *tribe*. With the dissolution of these primeval communities, society begins to be differentiated into separate and finally antagonistic classes.¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ Engels is writing here, then, in memory of his lost best friend.

¹⁷¹ Marx, 1978, 473. Engels’s emphasis.

Why does Engels here emphasize *written* history? Noting that Marx and Engels were influenced by these ethnologists,¹⁷² Engels's point seems singular and obvious: If it's true that various primitive communistic societies had organized their collective life without any practice or conception of "private" land ownership or of exclusive land "ownership" whatsoever, then Marx's original *Manifesto* claim would have to be specified and emended. Historical materialism would now have to include the claim that class is not a trans-historical rule of sociality so much as it's something historically emergent, something developed both after *and in* the transition out of what we are calling prehistory.

This helpful interpretation agrees with the only other reading of Engels's footnote that I've been able to locate. In Bottomore's *Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, the entry for "class conflict" tells us that "Engels modified [Marx's famous sentence] to refer to written history in order to take account of the early communal societies in which class divisions had not yet emerged. Subsequently Kautsky argued that some of the class struggles mentioned in the *Communist Manifesto* were in fact conflicts between status groups, and this view conformed with Marx's and Engel's own observation in the same text that pre-capitalist societies were all characterized by 'a manifold gradation of social rank.'"¹⁷³ This of course again brings up a series of questions about the difference and relation, both historically and prehistorically, between social rank and class and/or between social and class rank, but by and large we shall let these questions remain questions.

¹⁷² Engels used Marx's ethnological notebooks, for instance, to help him write *The Origin of the Family*. See Krader, Lawrence, editor, *The Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx* (Assen, Van Gorcum).

¹⁷³ See Bottomore, 1983, 78.

Minimally, however, we should recall that Marx and Engels both use the term “class” in a variety of ways. Class is clearly an economic category which designates and distinguishes the owners from the non-owners of the basic (or the majority of the) means of production in this or that epochal mode of production; but then again, both “economy” and “means of production” are themselves terms the objects of which contain social, superstructural, and/or ideological elements, that is, seemingly meta-economic and meta-instrumental elements. For instance, despite Marx’s helpful suggestion in chapter forty-seven of *Capital III* that “it is always the direct relation between the owners of the conditions of production and the direct producers which reveals the innermost secret, the hidden foundation, of the entire social edifice,” it is generally unclear in his writing to what degree “class” ownership or lack of ownership of the conditions of production can be separated or even distinguished from “social” authority and subordination, respectively.¹⁷⁴ Class brings with it the persistence of rank, while rank is symbolized and guaranteed through the use and ownership of elite vs. commonplace objects.¹⁷⁵ In any case, part of our goal is to show how and why private (as opposed to social and especially to communal) ownership of the means or conditions of production symbolically guarantees the social subordination, and often the domination, of the “directly producing” masses. Material history is class history, in other words, which is the development in stages of a surplus privatization of the “natural” world, of its resources, of the instruments of production created out of “nature,” and of the inorganic and organic means by and in

¹⁷⁴ “Prestige” would be an important concept to investigate in this regard.

¹⁷⁵ Writers like Bourdieu have made their living on insights such as this, albeit without clearly acknowledging the primitive accumulative and its necessity.

which we contest and produce culture—which means that “class” is both the reified expression and the largest social mechanism of these processes of development.¹⁷⁶

Though accurate, important, and useful for us, however, this explanation does not yet begin to answer or even to ask why Engels emphasizes *written* history. But clearly there is something to this emphasis, even if Engels, like Marx before him, isn’t fully aware of it. After all, would he have emphasized the importance of “*written* history” in the first sentence only to forget about the transitional relation between what he calls “prehistory” and “recorded history” in the next sentence? What, then, to ask this question again, is a “record” in relation to both “prehistory” and “history”?

Well, for one thing, it should be easy enough to see that this transitional relation is ambivalent and doubled. On the one hand, “written history” seems to show and tell us that “history” is made of class struggle and conflict, of clashes that leave marks *and* forms of relief that “record” those clashes for remembrance and recall, for historical consciousness. The marks remain available to “tell the story” of their origination, their significance. They tell the story of the present, moreover, by recollection of a past which is not merely past to the degree that the marks remain *marks*. So here it would seem that “writing,” “history,” and “class” are equiprimordial: Class is inscriptive *and* inscribed *as* history, as historiography, we could say. So this is why “the history of all hitherto existing society is the [written] history of class struggles.” And yet, on the other hand, the footnote as a whole refers us to something subtextual, that is, pretextual, both with *and against* the writing of self-recognition and history; we are referred to the primitive

¹⁷⁶ Let us remember again, however, that class is not the same as privatization. Class relies on the continued duplication of an *exclusivist* privatization (a reproductive monopoly) of a surplus value “appropriated” by an elite group. So whereas privatization need not breed resentment, exclusivist privatization does.

communisms (re)discovered by modern ethnologists and archaeologists in just this regard. The development of these primitive communities, in other words, at least insofar as we have any record of them at all, cannot not be a *cipheric* event. These societies leave records of their daily living and so too of their social structures, but these records are fragments of social consciousness and not yet conceptually self-reflecting; their form of self-reflection (which includes the fact that mirrors are not yet aluminum, for instance) is as yet quite *literal*, which is to say that this reflection isn't as abstracting and forgetful of the primitive as the historical records of class (and especially modern) societies.¹⁷⁷ Engels's claim is socially and historically performative, then, to the degree that it demands as a historically self-conscious text, a *text self-conceptualizing its "link" with prehistory*, that we not simply repress, that we re-recall in graphic form, the promise of primitive community, a community whose futural form could not remain merely primitive. But this in turns demands that we understand that there is something like a "link," or at least an unexplored necessity of simultaneity, between historiographic and in fact *archaeological* activity and the development of class relations in relation to the losses of primitive accumulation (again in the double sense of the genitive "of"). For when this "link" is discovered — this is crucial — it points both backward *and* forward to the possibility of social life *beyond class*, to a maturing community, then, although not, if properly understood, to social life beyond hierarchy, struggle, work, competition, and even antagonism and violence. It's this simple: There are better (class-less) and worse (class) ways of dealing with the global necessity and persistence of primitivity and

¹⁷⁷ Remember, for instance, that Adam Smith and the political economists in general largely deny the root of violence that belongs to capitalization. This denial is not just an abstraction but a capitalized abstraction, the religious wish to believe that capital can be non-violent. So here the abstraction is an active form of repression.

primitive violence. Violence can be transformed, for instance, into play, into sports, into art, into festivals, into work, into science, and so into various cultural intercourses of a quasi-productive sort. What's at stake in fetishization, then, is the ability of human society to record and bear its violent roots, to distort this violence significantly in and for remembrance *and* a more or less mutually productive kind of forgetfulness, for recollection with as little direct repetition of direct physical and psychical violence as possible, and thus to provide something like a *marked transition from prehistory to history*.¹⁷⁸

We might put it this way: Class emerges not simply as the gradual distributing but also, at least at first, as the splitting and carving up of the immemorial unitary (perfectly intimate) body, the presumed sacred body of unity with nature. In general, then, there is something like a link, or at least a necessity of simultaneity, between history as historiographic production and activity, on the one hand, and the social (r)evolution of class formation and reformation, as the moving apart and coming together of lineages of people through symbolic clash, loss, and problematic reunion, on the other hand. Thus, as Marx says, capitalism brings the prehistory of human society to a close, as if repressing this prehistory. Socialism, in turn, remains the promise of primitive communism, but unlike primitive communism, socialism would have to become more and more aware of its developmental scars, and of the sadly irrecoverable losses these scars both represent, as if they were past, and present, knowing they persist.

How, then, is this socialism produced? Indeed, how is it communicated and developed? Well, it takes commodities and money — this we hope to have shown clearly enough — but these aren't the only means to produce a world of *richer and deeper*

¹⁷⁸ Again, it is a split society, not an ambivalent one, which is the basic and corrupting problem.

meaning. Commodities and money must be used to build social bonds. Let's examine the example of Marx's work, his vocation as a writer, in this regard. Indeed, as with Kant, Marx's personal activity (re)presents this problematic quite explicitly and aesthetically, or at least it can for readers of culture whose eyes are attuned to the hieroglyphic aspects of historical formation. For ontogeny here recapitulates and inscribes phylogeny. Indeed, to help us understand Engels' suggestion that there is an interconnection between historical writing and class-conflict, let's turn to Marx's letters, for as it turns out, his correspondence is filled with admissions and information concerning the strange relationship between his health and health difficulties, on the one hand, and his own writing and writing difficulties, on the other hand, both hands here being connected somehow to how his access to money marks and guarantees his class position.

The fact that it was Engels and not Marx who emphasizes that the history of class conflict is limited to written history is interesting since Marx's own writing, and especially his more than twenty-year effort to write *Capital*, was itself constantly born of deep, primitive conflict. (Indeed, here we find a kind of stutter mixed with silence which is much longer than Kant's stuttering eleven year "silent" decade.) Marx opens the first preface to *Capital*, for instance, by mentioning that the book took him so long to write "because of an illness of many years' duration which interrupted my work again and again" (89); and yet the brevity and nonchalance of this admission are misleading. For, as Engels puts it in a letter to a friend after Marx's death, "whenever the state of Marx's health made it impossible for him to go on with [his writing], this impossibility preyed

heavily on his mind, and he was only too glad if he could find out some theoretical excuse why the work should not be completed.” Theoretical, indeed, in practice.

Moreover, like Kant, as Marx grew older he underwent an increasingly intolerable series of illnesses. But if Kant, say, endured the less than soundless maladies of his silent decade, to be exacting we should say that Marx agonized for well over a decade in coming to complete what was of course but volume *one* of *Capital*.¹⁷⁹ As Francis Wheen writes in her recent Marx biography, “even in the full vigor of youth, before poverty, sleeplessness, bad diet, heavy drinking, and constant smoking had taken their inevitable toll, [Marx] was a fragile specimen.”¹⁸⁰ He was often sick with colds and fever when a professional obligation came due and especially when this obligation was to publish a piece of writing.¹⁸¹ And of course this meant that his greatest such obligation was in constant danger of being sidetracked: Explaining why his “economic shit” (*Capital* in its earliest stages, before it was titled) was overdue to a publisher in 1846 (!), he chalked the delay up to a need to catch up with the meaning and details of his own writing.¹⁸² The catch-up of the 1840’s, however, was soon replaced by what he himself had “caught” or at least had come down with. In the fifteen or so years prior to the publication of *Capital* Marx suffered his usual relentless insomnia but he also suffered from acute headaches, catarrh, eye inflammations, lung abscesses, pleurisies, bronchitis, rheumatism,

¹⁷⁹ Some scholars even say this was a three decade project, depending on when we think Marx first conceived the idea to write a multi-volume “Critique of Political Economy”.

¹⁸⁰ Wheen, 14. Also see “Health” under “Karl Marx” in the book’s index. I borrow from Wheen’s book for much of the following small portrait of Marx’s health.

¹⁸¹ Just as he was about to begin his regular column for the *New York Daily Tribune* in 1851, for example, he fell ill and begged Engels to take over. Months later, when asked to contribute to the periodical *Die Revolution*, he took to bed for a week.

¹⁸² Is it any wonder that Marx equates his writing here with “shit”? Perhaps this had to do with his trouble digesting the material at a primitive level, where once again the literal and metaphorical are as yet indistinguishable: “Since the all but completed manuscript of the first volume of my book has been lying idle for so long, I shall not have published it without revising it yet again, both as regards matter and style. It goes without saying that a writer who works continuously cannot, at the end of six months, publish word for word what he wrote six months earlier”. (Letter to Leske, 1846) See Wheen, 2000.

toothaches, hemorrhoids, a nasty liver condition, and lastly, in the months just prior to finishing, from vomiting spells.¹⁸³ His worst and most painful ailment, however, was certainly the cycling series of shingled boils which began their constant eruptive appearance in and on his *skin* in 1860. Persisting until he died in 1883, these carbuncles were soon the literal and socially invisible rot, the undigested primitive death, of his existence. This example nicely recalls, then, both the *somatization* and *literal metaphors* of primitive development which we emphasized earlier.

Not accidentally, but in the meantime, *Capital* as a text remained somehow and in some way just underway. Or rather, it was obviously now, after the 1840's, Marx's ill-health which slowed his writing. In February 1858 he told his new prospective publishers in a letter that although he had "just started" it — this is probably more than ten years into the project! — the first of his proposed six volumes of *Capital* would be ready in three months, that is, in May of 1858! Indeed, he also proposed that the second volume would follow a few months thereafter, the third a few months after that, and so on. By April, however, instead of black ink on white sheets — shadows of spirit reflected upon a bright surface? — Marx was producing, well, what was probably a black colored bile *under* his skin, not yet over it. As he put it in a letter to Engels: "I've been so ill with my bilious complaint this week that I am incapable of thinking, reading, writing, or indeed, of anything. My indisposition is disastrous, for I can't begin working on the thing for Duncker until I'm better and my fingers regain their vigor and grasp." Marx's wife Jenny was not surprised. "The worsening of his condition," she wrote to Engels, "is largely attributable to mental unrest and agitation which now, of course, after

¹⁸³ Padover, 1978, 639. As gathered from Marx's and Jenny Marx's letters, Padover offers a four-page list of Marx's illnesses from 1860 through 1866. See also F. Regnault, "Les maladies de Karl Marx", *Revue Anthropologique* (Paris, 1933, XLIII, p. 293 ff).

the conclusion of the contract with the publisher, are greater than ever and increasing daily, since he finds it impossible to bring the thing to a close.”

Thus, although it undoubtedly would have deeply insulted him to suggest that he was making excuses for his delays, Marx, Jenny Marx, and Engels alike all recognized that Marx’s ailments were somehow “largely attributable to mental unrest” and, indeed, were at some level psychosomatic productions. Marx would sometimes remark that “my sickness always originates in my mind” and that “there is only one effective antidote for mental suffering and that is physical pain.”¹⁸⁴ But this is not all, and indeed, it is not quite right. Marx himself would prove the truth, or rather, the reality and power, the this-sidedness of his thinking about suffering in practice soon enough. To Engels’ remark that Marx “was only too glad if he could find out some theoretical excuse why the work should not be completed,” we must add two incidents which appeared as Marx finally, after decades of sickness and struggle, brought *Capital* to a close. The first thing worth pondering over is a joke which Marx and Engels began to exchange concerning the significance of Marx’s carbuncles. The second concerns the brief reversal (or should we say transition?) from ill-health to an extra-rigorous health that Marx experienced, at least for a month, upon finishing *Capital* and traveling to Germany to initiate the book’s official publication.

Our thought, then, is that Marx’s carbuncles appeared (personally if not publicly, for he covered them up like so much labor under capitalist conditions of production) whenever his theory could not be written on paper or as if to prevent him from writing (writing at least in alphabetical form, as we’ll see). Indeed, as the manuscript for *Capital* neared completion these nasty boils became quite acute. Since the text *was* nearly

¹⁸⁴ Wheen.

finished, this time for real, however, the eruptions could inspire a joke in and despite their painfulness: According to both Marx and Engels, when Marx's theory finally did officially make its way to sheets, it was *thereby* also somehow "marked" or "inscribed" by his carbuncular condition just as his carbuncles were somehow "theoretical" illness entities. (This again is the significance of primitive inscription, an objectification, extending from the body, through the hands, into the object, in a mode of self-reflection, as we saw earlier and will see in more detail as we conclude.) According to When:

Marx was plagued by his usual physical ailments through the winter of 1866-7 but even they could no longer thwart his determination to finish volume one of *Capital*: He wrote the last few pages of volume one standing at his desk when an eruption of boils around the rump made sitting too painful. (Arsenic, the usual anesthetic, "dulls my mind too much and I needed to keep my wits about me.") Engels' experienced eye immediately spotted certain passages in the text "where the carbuncles have left their mark," and Marx agreed that the fever in his groin might have given the prose a rather livid hue. "At all events, I hope the bourgeoisie will remember my carbuncles until their dying day," he cursed. (294)

It is hardly surprising in this regard that after decades of illness Marx's health apparently suffered a brief but complete reversal, at least for a month, from the moment he officially finished his beast of a manuscript in March 1867. With the "precious" text of volume one in hand, he left London within a week for his publishers in Hamburg not simply feeling well but feeling *really* well, perhaps all too well. Although months earlier he had suggested to Engels that he might truly *die* while finishing *Capital* and although some of his illnesses had augmented themselves as the text neared completion, his trip to Germany initiated, as Padover's biography has it, "one of the happiest months of his

life.”¹⁸⁵ As Marx himself had put it in a letter to Engels upon leaving London, he suddenly found himself feeling “as voraciously fit as 500 hogs.”¹⁸⁶

Waiting for the printer’s proofs in April, he spent the month in Hanover meeting and then lodging with the family of a distinguished gynecologist, the socialist Ludwig Kugelmann. Full of respect for Marx’s scholarship, which at the time was certainly not widely known, and in fact having collected more of Marx and Engels’ writings than the authors themselves owned, doctor and frau Kugelmann fanatically and unabashedly fussed over their distinguished guest. And Marx himself, having become ever more reclusive and defensive as the years in London piled up, was suddenly charming and open. He and the Kugelmann’s nine year old daughter Franziska, not so strangely, were soon good friends, at ease, and in mutual admiration. They hit it off. As Franziska described this encounter years later, Marx was “full of youthful freshness” in their home, sort of like the child herself. Between Marx and Franziska, then, it was “youth” playing with youth, animal with animal, and even “god” with “goddess.” According to Padover and Wheen, respectively:

He would get up early for breakfast, join the Kuglemann’s at the coffee table and chat for hours. Dr. Kugelmann, not wanting to miss a word that came from the lips of his hero, could hardly tear himself away to attend to his medical chores. Marx became a part of the family to such an extent that he gave the Kugelmanns nicknames, an addiction he could never resist. Franziska became “Madamchen,” [etc].... Marx, in turn, reminded Kugelmann of *Zeus Ostricolus*, of whom he had a bust in his music room. Everybody agreed that Marx, with his powerful head, splendid brow, and thick hair resembled the Olympian god.... [At the Kugelmann’s bourgeois dinner parties,] Marx impressed everyone with his *Kultur*. He could talk with assurance about all the major topics—art and music, science and philosophy, classic history and great literature.... After a long decade and a half of the bitter and pinched life of a London exile, Marx, enjoying carefree days in a cultured home, was at his best—a superbly

¹⁸⁵ Padover, 350.

¹⁸⁶ Princess Mononoke be damned.

educated and entertaining *Herr Doktor* in the great German tradition of erudition. (Padover, 352)

No wonder he was so chirpy. He was in excellent health, with no carbuncle daring to show its ugly face and not even a trace of liver trouble in spite of boozy dinner parties every night. The sleepless years of sickness, squalor, and obscurity were consigned to the dustbin of history. "I always had the feeling," Engels wrote on 27 April, "that that damn book, which you have been carrying for so long, was at the bottom [sic] of all your misfortune, and you would and could never extricate yourself until you had got it off your back [sic]." Marx wrote Engels in response that "I hope and confidently believe that in the space of a year I shall be made, in the sense that I shall be able to fundamentally rectify my financial affairs and at last stand on my own feet again." *Again?* There had never been a moment in his adult life when Marx didn't need hand-outs. As he admitted in a letter to Engels, "Without you I would never have been able to bring the work to a conclusion, and I can assure you it always weighed like a nightmare on my conscience that you were allowing your fine energies to be squandered and to rust in commerce, chiefly for my sake, and into the bargain, you had to share all my *petites miseres* as well." Only a few sentences later, however, angst and despondency began their nagging chorus once more. The publisher expected delivery of Volumes Two and Three before the end of the year [and] his creditors in London were waiting to pounce as soon as he returned. (Wheen, 297-8)

So how are we to understand this set of affairs? How did Marx understand it?

Let us note first of all that as soon as Marx finished *Capital*, or even before this, he began to treat the text in large part like a *commodity*. And in one respect, of course, it *was* suddenly a commodity. It certainly had and still has its price. It was to be put on sale in the book-sellers' markets of Europe in as wide a range as possible depending on the success of marketing, reviews, word of mouth, etc. It is clear, however, that for Marx the bringing of *Capital* from the realm of production to the realm of exchange also meant something profound for his immediate personal health (he was hungry, in need of consumption, but now of a *more cultured* sort), so profound in fact that he could both psychologically and physically *forget*, "consign to the dustbin of history," his "sleepless years of sickness, squalor, and obscurity," as Wheen puts it. Indeed, when Engels joked that the text was somehow "marked" by Marx's carbuncles, Marx responds by pointing

out that he now hoped that the *bourgeoisie* would *remember* his “carbuncles” to their dying day, as if these livid marks on the border of the inside and outside of his body were marks, precisely, of social and socialist significance. So in part the joke is about communicating a “disease,” in the form of a *Marxian commodity*, to those who would seem to be most in need of it, that is, to those who take the commodity-form as a “natural” basis for social interchange and indeed for social health.

But here again, as always, the phylogenetic is imbricated with the ontogenetic. When Marx brings *Capital* forward as a value to be sold on the market, it becomes a means of transmitting and transforming, of revolutionizing, both social history in terms of health (to the degree that what it demands is social justice and the historical overcoming of class) *and* his personal health history (to the degree that his hypochondriacal noceboic somatizations can now be slowly transformed, to some degree, into placebos, into objects of art, culture, and science). Or at least this is the objectified hope, the ontogenetically Marxian placebo effect. Talk about transitional objectivity! Indeed, we learn here that and how Marx fetishized *Capital* as a *text* in his personal life in very much the way he describes money and commodities as *hieroglyphs* in that text. Notice in this regard that insofar as he presumes that the book’s sales would go well and, indeed, since he thinks that this is finally a real opportunity “to fundamentally rectify [his] financial affairs and at last stand on [his] own feet,” a process “making” him in the space of a year, Marx treats *Capital*, perhaps the greatest critique of political economy ever written, as *money in the bank*. *Capital* is thus a set of wishes the objectification of which, since involving a necessary disillusion of prehistorical need, condenses and distorts those wishes into this or that partial, and so partially failing, solution. Indeed, it is precisely despite *and in* this

failure that we see how commodification as a hopeful monetization need not be considered sickness. We see ambivalence. As forms of cultural power, commodities and money *can* have their *uses*. Marx can eventually put some kinks in the crippling cycle of his debt, for instance, and can actually buy his girls the proper clothes they need for school. His family life becomes less chaotic. He can repay his friends not simply with money, then, but with a deeper sociality that here comes together with money. He can begin to partially relax. Indeed, my suggestion is that this coming together of health and commodification is no accident in Marx's case, or rather, that it's no accident *even if* Marx was rarely explicitly aware that his written idea that commodities and money are hieroglyphs is itself hieroglyphic of his "own" primitive, sacred, and glyphic struggles to be communal and promote community. Was it merely an accident in this regard that the Kugelmanns compared Marx to Zeus — *O mihi praeteritos*, etc — precisely when his preverbal, somatized glyphics, the carving of his skin in both carbuncles and their lancing, had been transformed into a more abstract textual form, a form of value?

The point here is that these "accidents" appear through an unknown and only mediately knowable accident, an "emergence" of forms of value and violence, of sacredness and inscription, secretly conditioned by a necessary primitive emergency. But the point is also that this hieroglyphic textuality of marks on Marx (and vice versa) speaks, as it did in and for Kant, of a *subtext* of *health and development*. Take the following example. In volume one, while Marx thrice mentions the unhealthy, horrible labors of working in a nineteenth century rag factory, the first instance encapsulates the whole. Here we read, in a footnote no less, that some mill owners had been accused in court, given the testimony of some factory inspectors who'd witnessed these events, of

endangering and overworking some of their young employees by not allowing the latter their (now, after various Factory Acts) legally-mandated work breaks. These owners, says Marx,

were accused of having kept five boys between 12 and 15 years of age at work from 6am on Friday to 4pm on Saturday, not allowing them any respite except for meals and one hour for sleep at midnight. And these children had to do this ceaseless labor of 30 hours in the ‘shoddy hole’, the name for the hole where the woolen rags are pulled to pieces, and where a dense atmosphere of dust, shreds, etc, forces even the adult worker to cover his mouth continually with handkerchiefs for the protection of his lungs! The accused gentlemen affirmed in lieu of taking an oath — as Quakers they were too scrupulously religious to take an oath — that they had, in their great compassion for the unhappy children, allowed them four hours for sleep, but the obstinate children absolutely would not go to bed. The Quaker gentlemen were fined £20. (351-2)

So, in the first place, this footnote is a good example of Marx’s most “obvious” understanding of health and illness, especially the latter, to the degree that it emphasizes how capitalist production both produces and ignores its conditioning of disease and physiological debilitation.¹⁸⁷ Occupational health in the medical sense is a socialistic goal. But the reference is also a good example of the goal of occupational health in the social sense and so of Marx’s critique of social “disease.” There’s an exemplification and implicit criticism of an exploitative class relation (the workers are simply overworked while the owners lie about it), of the manipulation of youth by a presumed “maturity” (the workers are children, while it’s the “adults” who lie or dissimulate), and

¹⁸⁷ In the third reference to rag-factory work, we read that “it is well known that Great Britain, apart from its own immense store of rags, is the emporium for the rag trade of the whole world. They flow in from Japan, from the most remote States of South America, and from the Canary Islands. But the chief sources of their supply are Germany, France, Russia, Italy, Egypt, Turkey, Belgium, and Holland. They are used for manure, for making bedflocks, for shoddy, and they serve as the raw material of paper. The rag-sorters are the medium for the spread of small-pox and other infectious diseases, and they themselves are the first victims” (592).

of “religious” hypocrisy (this dissimulation, since or while not under oath, belies what such an oath is apparently supposed to do).

But there are more primitive, hieroglyphic, subtextual elements worth noting here, too. First, the children work deep in a hole, such that the “metaphorical” point could be said to be that the above-named forms of exploitation and manipulation hinge upon a “literalized” repression, that is, a placing *underground* of both capitalist exploitation and its avowal. Indeed, just as interesting is the partial avowal that Marx could be said to be making by *making note* of this story in the first place. There is much ado about noting (and its production) here. Were it not for the factory inspectors working for the state to oversee factory production, the inspectors being a product of socialist work and politics, these children’s story — *another* kind of nursery tale — might *never have been told*. Were it not for the inspectors, Marx himself would not have been able to bring it up, even in a footnote, in *Capital*. And so we as readers wouldn’t necessarily have access to this sort of horror of factory life.

Second, the “making note” of this story is particularly hieroglyphic and subtextual to the degree that Marx could be said to be secretly pointing to himself and his work in his reference to it, that is, in his objectification of the story as a story worth noting and remembering. For as we learn later in the second and third references to rag-factory work, what these children are doing by tearing up woolen rags deep in a hole is helping to produce, among other things, *paper*, a material which Marx uses on a daily basis. Indeed, the ironic connection is deeper still. As we know, Engels often supported Marx with the profits and surplus-value the Engels family made in textile mills. Thus, to this degree, Marx was being fed in a fairly direct and literal way, not just with paper but even with

food, by the work of children in such shoddy holes! The point is not simply that there is irony in all this, that Marx, like all of us moderns, relies both directly and indirectly on this or that form of exploitation in daily life. The point is also — whether Marx himself was “aware” of this or not — that these relations, these various connections between his own work and the boys’ work, could be said to be hieroglyphic, both sacred and inscriptive, to the degree that Marx is *writing* to remedy *the class inscription upon these boys*. Everything we buy is a commodity, but while there is always distantly blood and dirt, some commodities are dripping in more blood and dirt than others. The point is that we can do something about it. We can educate, work, and play to sublimate the persistence of what this blood and dirt signify. Indeed, and again, it is interesting in this regard to note how part eight of *Capital on primitive* accumulation constantly but subtly refers to the exploitation of *children* in the *birth* of capital and capitalism.¹⁸⁸ It’s as if Marx wanted to emphasize that it is the elite owners of the means of production who are the “children,” the immature, of society. For they and their surplus accumulation (their “feasting”) are precisely dependent (“like” children) on the (as if “parental”) work of their workers. So it’s “as if” — in fact, it’s not just as if — the relation of dependent and (seemingly) independent were reversed under conditions of capitalist production. Our goal, then, in the face of this, is the pedagogical building of culture. We aim to destroy the supposed need to say “never mind,” to fabricate “nursery tales” of “insipid childishness,” as if upon a “sacred duty,” in the face of the fact that force is not just “the midwife of every old society which is pregnant with a new one” but persists in all social relations.

¹⁸⁸ See also, for example, Marx’s emphases on “child-slavery” during the “period of infancy” of large-scale industry, 922-926.

Indeed, our central concern pivots on the idea that symbolization on the whole is a process of the development of meaning, inscribed on the forehead of the (social or individual) body as this or that form of illusionally abstracted value, but is also secretly an articulation of both primitive loss and the need to (mis)understand and (mis)communicate this loss, a loss which, if we are right, cannot “in the beginning” be differentiated from a lived kind of death. This need, then, is precisely what births symbolization as culture and valuation as enculturation—although by no means does this insight allow us to equate development or enculturation with *progress*, unless we insist that progress necessarily includes distorted and abstracted elements of *regress* and *violence*. As Derrida (1976) puts it in *Of Grammatology*, “writing carries death...” (292) perhaps especially when the writer writes on topics which apparently have nothing to do with death. Algebra is apparently for the living, for instance! So writing is also a *pharmakon*—not just poison but treatment, and vice versa: “Plato already said that the art or technique (*technè*) of writing was a *pharmakon* (drug or tincture, salutary or maleficent). And the disquieting part of writing had already been experienced in its resemblance to painting. Writing is like painting, like *zoographeme*, which is itself determined... within a problematic of mimesis; resemblance is troubling” (292). Here Derrida is calling mimesis what we have been calling reflection or, even more deeply, primitive identification. Primitive reflection, in the form of a phylogenetic and ontogenetic “mirror stage,” becomes, with the persistent recurrence of primitive “accumulation” and with the objects of forgetfully remembering this “accumulation,” forms of symbolic significance, the transitional and cultural inscriptions of history. Commodities are carved out of a loss which breaks the world open into self and other.

This is and remains so, in fact, to the degree that writing, as the inscription of meaning in whatever obvious or non-obvious form it takes, always indirectly communicates, indeed reflects, something of its primitive roots even if its purposes are no longer, well, aware of these roots.

Following up on many “suggestions” that we and Marx have already made, one way to think this thought more thoroughly is to acknowledge that archaic forms of sacrifice are invariably bloody, where blood in particular is and marks something of extreme value. Blood is a, perhaps the, primitive signifier. Indeed, related to this thought, I want to very briefly mention three phylogenetic examples of presentational and literal (and not simply representational and metaphorical) inscriptive encounter, three encounters, then, of what might be called the inscription of sacred exchange. The first example concerns Francis Drake’s initial contact with the “indigenous” Indians of Northern California (perhaps somewhere near San Francisco) in 1579. As Drake understood it, this was perhaps the first encounter these Indians had had with Europeans. In any case, according to the account of the trip’s historiographer:

When they [the Indians] came unto us, they greatly wondered at the things which we brought... In the mean time, the [Indian] women remaining on the hill, tormented themselves lamentably, tearing their flesh from their cheeks, whereby we perceived that they were about a sacrifice...” (465). The common sort of the people leaving the king and his Guardes with our Generall, scattered themselves together with their sacrifices among our people, taking a diligent viewe of every person; and such as pleased their fancie, they inclosing them about offred their sacrifices unto them with lamentable weeping, scratching, and tearing of the flesh from their faces with their nayles, whereof issued abundance of blood. But wee used signes to them of disliking this, and stayed their hands from force, and directed them upwards to the living God (466)....¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁹ See Quinn, 1978, 475, for the Indians’ great desire to be “cured” of their ailments by these “sacred” (European) beings.

The second example is told by the Spanish Historian Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo. Oviedo tells us that the indigenes in Haiti and on the Central American mainland develop a black soot and powder from the pines growing there:

They enclose this powder in leaves, making a lump a palm and a half long and as thick as the wrist. The quantity of powder fixes the prices. They take it to the markets and barter it for other goods. It is their money. It is used to mark Indians as slaves, and devices their masters desire, and also for tattooing others for ornament. The manner of using it is cutting with razors of flint the face or arm lightly, which they wish to mark, as between the skin and flesh, and powder the cut with this soot (*humo*) when the cut is fresh, and soon it is well, and the drawing (*pintura*) black and very pretty, and the drawing is perpetual for the days which one lives, just as it is branded (*herrado*). [The tattoos, moreover, are] images of their demons (which they call *cemi*).¹⁹⁰

Todorov himself briefly examines our third example, which concerns the Aztec sacrificial flaying ritual of and for their god Xipe Totec, as relayed to us by the Dominican friar and historian Diego Duran.¹⁹¹ According to Duran's lengthy account, a great number of victims, usually slaves and captured enemy soldiers, are sacrificed in the usual Aztec manner, their hearts cut from their bodies and offered to the East where the sun, the giver of life, is born each morning after dying each night, passing underground from west to east through the underworld of the dead to be reborn again each morning—that is, this rebirth happens *if* the Aztec sacrifices have properly enabled it. In this Xipe ritual, however, the victims are also *skinned*, flayed from neck to toe with razor sharp obsidian, the stone resembling a “smoking mirror” (the name for Xipe Totec).¹⁹² The skins are immediately dawned and worn by the city's beggars, the lowest strata or caste

¹⁹⁰ Sinclair, A.T., 1909. “The Tattooing of the North American Indians,” *American Anthropologist* 11(3), New Series, 365-6.

¹⁹¹ Duran, Diego. *Book of the Gods and Rites of the Ancient Calendar*, trans. Fernando Horcasitas and Doris Heyden (Norman: U. of Oklahoma Press, 1971) 172-184, cited in Todorov, 158-60.

¹⁹² It is probably no accident that the term “mirror” occurs in this god's name, as we shall see.

of Aztec society, as various incarnations of the god and his lineage. Further, upon the skins the beggars wear various forms of divine insignia which determine which incarnation they have become. But this is most important for our purposes: According to the Aztecs, when they dawn these skins, the beggars don't simply represent but presentationally embody, they "become" one of the gods. As Todorov puts it, "the prisoner literally becomes the god: he receives the god's name, appearance, insignia, and treatment; for in order to absorb the god, his representative must be sacrificed and consumed" (158). Indeed, at this point the gods begin to wander the city as they did long ago — as mortals, before they became gods — but now obtaining gifts of various sorts from the city's elite. Among the many other significations and uses of this ritual (where signification and use are still not very distinguishable), then, there is here a temporary redistribution of wealth, an exchange of positions between lower and higher classes or castes, between the dependent and apparently independent. At the same time, however, this ritual is a way for the living Aztecs to visit their lost dead relatives—those who supposedly created the world, for instance, or fought in legendary wars and were then destroyed with the world in one of its previous cycles. Indeed, the issue of being related through lineages, and thus *through blood*, is brought back in the end, as it were, for at the end of forty days of ritualized gift-giving these "gods" are themselves sacrificed and eaten. Such a catholic ritual!

Indeed, as we know, a similarly literal metaphoric of sacrifice and consumption is practiced in the West. It is on precisely this issue, in fact, that Winnicott, in a version of his "Transitional Objects" essay, seeks to clarify the difference between what we have been calling presentation and representation. For while the sacrament of incorporating

the gods is in some sense catholic, it is not simply Catholic or simply symbolic in the Catholic sense. Indeed, we can learn something about developmental historicization precisely through this *necessary* mechanism of the sacred meal, of the eating of the “flesh of the god(s).” According to Winnicott,

the term transitional object, according to my suggestion, gives room for the process of becoming able to accept difference and similarity. I think there is use for a term for the root of symbolism in time.... It seems that symbolism can only be properly studied in the process of the growth of an individual, and that it has at the very best variable meaning. For instance, if we consider the wafer of the Blessed Sacrament, which is symbolic of the body of Christ, I think I am right in saying that for the Roman Catholic community it *is* the body, and for the Protestant community it is a *substitute*, a reminder, and is essentially not, in fact, actually the body itself. Yet in both cases it is a symbol. A schizoid patient asked me, after Christmas, had I enjoyed eating her at the feast. And then, *had I really eaten her or only in fantasy*. I knew that she could not be satisfied with either alternative. Her split needed the double answer. (TPP, 233-4)¹⁹³

The average modern observer might at this point speak up to deny the possibility that, were he even to have had the thought at his Christmas dinner, Winnicott had “really” eaten his patient. This patient was surely “mad” or “schizoid,” yes, for clearly our good doctor had only eaten his (turkey or whatever) dinner. He surely hadn’t *really* eaten his patient; or if the thought had somehow crossed his mind at the Christmas table, then surely he had only “eaten her” in fantasy. Right? Indeed, this brings up the entire “modern Western” relation to magic. Does not scientific understanding assume its position as *scientific* precisely to the degree, at least in part, that it has overcome “magical” forms of thinking, that reality (or what we have been calling objectivity in both the ontological and epistemological senses) can be distinguished from fantasy? *The*

¹⁹³ Winnicott, 1992, 233-4. This passage does not appear in the *Playing and Reality* version of the “Transitional Objects” essay. I don’t know if Winnicott or the editor excerpted it, but in any case the image is provocative. Indeed, notice how this example links the western Christian tradition to the “primitivity” of other sacrificial traditions..

Kantian and Winnicottian response to this, of course, is that no, actually, objectivity is born(e) not just out of disillusion, and so not just out of a snuffing out or extinguishing of magical wishes and fantasy, but out of a disillusion within which illusion persists, and so is alive and awake, not just underground, but also necessarily above ground insofar as the fantasy or wishes are partly satisfied in and as the object or symptom. Scientific objectivity is born(e) out of the primitive (mis)objectification of fantasy through a continuing, gradual (dis)illusion of that fantasy. Helpful here is the Freudian distinction (which is not a simple separation) between the primary and secondary processes. The primary processes are the stuff of fantasy. Here, there is no experienced difference (as yet, if we are thinking developmentally) between fantasy and reality, between the metaphorical and the literal. Secondary processes, on the other hand, distinguish, have achieved a kind of differentiating, between fantasy and reality and the metaphorical and the literal, between illusion and disillusion, between wish and object, etc. Thus, on this model, all Winnicott is pointing to is the fact that development “takes place” to the degree that while the secondary processes are enabled and allowed to grow through a process of graduated and gradual disillusionment (say, in the positivistic or hard sciences, in our daily “truth-seeking” activities, whenever we are searching for positive empirical evidence, etc), the secondary process always secretly bear within them primitive wishes and illusions. Indeed, to the degree that these primitive wishes and illusions more or less predominate in our primitive life, it is *scientifically and developmentally incorrect* to suggest that “magical thinking” of any sort is simply *false*. Before scientific objectivity can arise, there needs to be a prehistorical *reality* of magical thinking and magical objectification. To the degree that the secondary processes are achievements it is

incorrect to call magic incorrect or false. There is a secretive magical illusion still alive and real, as it were, in every scientific enterprise.

CHAPTER XI

GLYPHIC TRANSITIONS

This magical illusion, in fact, is alive and real (at least in its effects) in Marx's enterprise: As we've seen, throughout the early chapters of *Capital*, Marx is constantly slyly "describing" commodities and money as if from a "primitive" perspective. Here a commodity is dead, a mere thing, and yet "wills" or even "speaks." There a commodity sheds its skin in an act of transubstantiation as if becoming pure (perhaps even divine) value. Indeed, in the middle of the fetishism subchapter, Marx offers an especially helpful passage. In modern, bourgeois market society,

the labor of the private individual manifests itself as an element of the total labor of society only through the relations which the act of exchange establishes between the products, and, through their mediation, between the producers. To the producers, therefore, the social relations between their private labors appear as what they are, i.e. they do not appear as direct social relations between persons in their work, but rather as thingly relations between persons and social relations between things. (165-6)

Both sentences here are fascinating — fantastic even — but especially the second. Indeed, this is not a naïve or merely secondary signification. When Marx indicates that social relations in modern trade "*appear as what they are*," namely, as "thingly relations between persons and social relations between things," he's not here merely suggesting that money and commodities are just metaphorically, or, say, analogically "social." Nor is he suggesting that money and commodities are asocial signs which signify a signified ("sociality") which is not really or already there in their activity as signs and signifiers. That is, he's not simply suggesting that money and commodities *represent* sociality (but

“really” aren’t social). He *is* suggesting that commodities represent human sociality, true, but he’s *also* suggesting that in their relations both with “each other” and with us commodities and money *are* social, that is, they are not merely representationally but are also *presentationally* social. Presentation, then, isn’t real except “together with” representation and vice versa. The two always come together, though it is in the modern era, after money has achieved a kind of “universal” validity as exchange-value, that the two become distinguishable. Commodities and money are “social” in exchange whereas we are social, as it were, *only*, as Marx here says, “through their mediation.” We cannot be or become social, say, in the verbal sense, without the *pre-verbal* mediation of objects of social value—where this “of” must yet again be taken in the sense of the double genitive.

Žižek’s analysis of the work of Alfred Sohn-Rethel, a friend of Adorno and the Frankfurt School, is helpful here. Sohn-Rethel’s thesis is fantastic in all the senses of the term, for it shows us how the use of the form of money in market societies fantastically conditions the appearance of modern individuality, “the modern subject.” Marx’s basic insight regarding money, Sohn-Rethel suggests, was to see in its circulatory movement through the social body a kind of *reversal* of the usual understanding of Kantian transcendentalism. Where Kant is usually understood to suggest (although not by me in this dissertation) that the *subjective* form of transcendental thought supplies the conditions for the possibility of our experience of both objects and modern scientific objectivity, Sohn-Rethel reads Marx as suggesting — in subreptive Kantian fashion, I’d say — that the circulation of commodified objects secretly supplies the conditions for the possibility of the emergence of modern subjectivity and of modernity’s abstract-scientific

form of thought. As Žižek puts it in his “Symptom” essay, summarizing Sohn-Rethel’s interpretation:

Before thought could arrive at pure *abstraction*, the abstraction was already at work in the social effectivity of the market.... Before thought could arrive at the idea of a purely *quantitative* determination, a *sine qua non* of the modern science of nature, pure quantity was already at work in money, that commodity which renders possible the commensurability of value of all other commodities notwithstanding their particular qualitative determination.... And Sohn-Rethel demonstrated the same about the relationship of substance and its accidents, about the notion of causality operative in Newtonian science—in short, about the whole network of categories of pure reason. In this way, the transcendental subject, the support of the net of a priori categories, is confronted with the disquieting fact that it depends, in its very formal genesis, on some inner-worldly, ‘pathological’ process—a scandal, a nonsensical impossibility from the [usual subjectivist] transcendental point of view. (17)¹⁹⁴

While Sohn-Rethel calls this conditioning movement of circulatory exchange the “real abstraction” belonging to commodities and money, Žižek calls it “the objectivity of belief.” The “reality” and “objectivity” of commodities and money-substances does not simply consist in their physical, tangible properties, that is, in the sense that these properties determine or comprise their use-value of objects. As Marx says, when we treat a commodity (merely) as a use-value, we aren’t abstracting from it but using and consuming it: “So far as it is a use-value, there is nothing mysterious about it” (163). *Abstraction*, then, arrives in the act of — or as Žižek puts it, in the “effectivity” and “objectivity” of — exchange. Before the modern subject is an I that thinks, this distinguishing of the I has been secretly accomplished in the exchange of goods, especially with the universalization of money. When we consume a use-value that we own, we use it. On the other hand, when we stop using it and instead seek to *trade* it for another object, we overlook its particular physical and tangible characteristics; we

¹⁹⁴ Žižek, 1989.

abstract from its utility and instead see it as an exchange-value, as something the value of which appears in and through its alienation, in and as another commodity. It comes here to reflect a price. As Marx puts it a bit later: “What initially concerns producers in practice when they make an exchange is how much of some *other* product they get for their own: in what proportions can the products be exchanged?” (167, my emphasis). Thus, in consumption it’s simply use-value that matters whereas in exchange we ignore the utility of our object to some degree and begin to think in terms of “proportional” and “categorical” relationships. And so this is why the “semblant objectivity” of the fetishism of commodities cannot be abolished whether we don’t believe *or do believe*, in classical Marxian fashion, that labor is the basic source of value: The abstraction which is the modern, which is the liberal individual, the transcendental subject of self-reflective conscious historical awareness, the foundation of scientific knowledge of the world and its orders, all this is already conditioned as if by the secretive causality which we call “the economy.” As Žižek puts it, “philosophical reflection is thus subjected to an uncanny experience...: there in the external effectivity of the exchange process, is your proper place; there is the theatre in which your truth was performed before you took cognizance of it” (19). *Our* insight, however, is that this unconsciousness of the commodity form itself has a secret: this fantasied immutability of money and of the force of the market at large can be traced back to magical practices and wishful world objectifications, to the production of ideological worlds to meet newly human needs which themselves point to primitive accumulations. Indeed, we have seen that it is precisely the aesthetic materiality of money which, in reflecting this wishfulness *hieratically*, serves as a trace for this tracing. Indeed, to the degree that this trace is an inscription, something carved

out of a previously uniform body, our insight also consists in seeing how this process of abstraction which produces the modern subject is also, and more deeply, a process of the *glyphic* development of the significance of the human.

This brings us back, then, to Todorov, whose insights here nicely supplement Derrida's similar work in this area. The advantage which Todorov gives us, however, is that he, more than Derrida, sees that the history of human meaning-making hinges on a prehistory which both happens and persists in the form of accumulative exchange, the building of culture with the first exchange of objects across temporalities, territories, and oceans. In *Conquest of America* one of Todorov's concerns is to link the relative destruction of the three great Amerindian civilizations to how their different but related understandings of sacredness and their different but related forms of inscriptive literacy prepare or underprepare them for their respective encounters with the Europeans and their forms of sacredness and inscriptive literacy. As he puts it,

That the [relative] absence of writing [in these Amerindian cultures] is revelatory of symbolic behavior in general, and at the same time of the capacity to perceive the other, appears to be illustrated by another fact. The three great Amerindian civilizations are not located on precisely the same level of the evolution of writing. The Incas are the most unfamiliar with writing (they possess a mnemotechnical use of braided cords, moreover one that is highly elaborated); the Aztecs have pictograms; among the Maya we find certain rudiments of phonetic writing. Now, we observe a comparable gradation in the intensity of the belief that the Spaniards are gods. The Inca firmly believe in this divine nature. The Aztecs do so only during the initial period of exposure. The Mayas raise the question to answer it in the negative; rather than "gods," they call the Spaniards "strangers." (80)

Todorov mentions the phonetic, syllabic, alphabetic writing system of the Spaniards and Europeans as a fourth gradation or development, of course. His focus is on the initial "shock" experienced by each Indian group, especially the Aztecs, upon

encountering the Spaniards and Europeans at large. The goal is not just to investigate these groups' linguistic "difference" or "differences," however, but to track their cultural development in the course of their inscriptive-symbolic exchanges. The exchanges are not "obvious" events. They become meaningful only if we understand what each culture brings, we could say, "as its world," such that the meaning of human culture is in contest and development precisely as the gift-objects produce their effects. But what a culture brings as its world it brings also as an immune system, as it were. By the time they encounter the Spanish, for instance, the Maya, as distinct from the Aztecs, have already begun the transition from pictogrammatical and ideogrammatical world symbolization to what is technically called hieroglyphic writing, a script characterized in part by the use of *phonemes*, units of written language representing *sounds* in spoken language.¹⁹⁵ The Maya are half-way, as it were, to alphabetic inscription. And predictably enough, given their struggles, it is only the Maya (as opposed especially to the Inca) who understand that the Europeans aren't gods but human others.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁵ Pictograms are drawn or illustrated pictures which, for intracultural participants, mimetically resemble what they signify, while ideograms are symbols which represent ideas. Historically speaking, ideograms develop later. A (silhouetted) crosswalk sign showing some kids crossing the road with an adult is an example of a pictogram. Money symbols such as those for the dollar and euro — \$, € — are ideograms. Here is an example of both:



The illusion of the dog is pictographic while the circle/slash image, indicating the idea of "prohibited," is ideogrammatical. But notice this, too: Is this not also a symbol of a distinct cultural *development* in and beyond many ancient forms of totemism? The cynic in us cannot be happy about this development, but some of us probably will be.

¹⁹⁶ In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida (1976) rightly sees four major forms of writing, with links and revolutions between each: There is pictographic inscription and painting (based, in its most universal form, on visual mimesis); there is ideogrammatical and hieroglyphic inscription (the former employing conceptual abstractions of the visual, the latter finally beginning to inscribe phonemes, guiding vision toward sound, if rudimentarily, in the form of *rebus*; in our current discussion, this is where the Maya were); there is phonetic, alphabetic, and syllabic writing (where phonemes abstract as if "completely" from visual mimesis; letters refer to word-sounds not to visual images); and there are scientific languages like algebraic signs which, while remaining ideogrammatical, have abstracted from the phonetic to represent ideas as if only through an orthography, a system of representational rules). But whereas Derrida does not develop a terribly explicit *developmental* account of these forms — continuing to think them "types" as

There are a couple of points to note in relation to this before we conclude: First, since phonetic and alphabetic writing *abstracts* from pictography (and from such artifactual iconographies as pottery, idols, and amulets, for instance) to communicate instead through visual signs representing sounds, this form of writing is much more readily used to communicate words from another language and/or for foreign names; indeed, alphabets (following abjads) can be used to write the speech of foreign language. They are thus functionally adequate to encounters with diverse cultural *others*, to *bridging* cultural gaps, and so to building an intercultural system of communication. Indeed, alphabets have typically developed in ports and sites of cross-cultural trade, where various languages are spoken. But as Derrida notes, quoting Rousseau, this is due both to their phoneto-syllabic functional adequacy as well as to the development of their ability to abstract *value*. Alphabets cannot be detached from relations of power embedded now in what we would call the “economy”:

One may thus borrow graphic signs, make them safely emigrate outside of their culture and their language of origin. ‘But though the Greek alphabet derives from the Phoenician, it does not follow at all that the Greek language derives from the Phoenician’ [Rousseau]. This movement of analytic abstraction in the circulation of arbitrary signs is quite parallel to that within which money is constituted. Money replaces things by their signs, not only within a society but from one culture to another.... That is why the alphabet is commercial, a trader. It must be understood within the monetary moment of economic rationality. (300)

Thus, second, we can return to Marx who had already articulated this thought by calling the pecuniary form of production and exchange *hieroglyphic*. The power that money and the economy at large embodies speaks of an originary (*ursprüngliche*), which is to say prehistorical, differentiation of primitive human community into *hierarchical*

much as part of an historical unfolding of human meaning in the face of cultural conflict — we shall emphasize the developmental here.

structures and strata, into forms of priestly rule, for instance, forms and hierarchies which eventually become classes with the rise of money in all its speculative forms. Derrida follows Marx here to suggest that speculation is conditioned by the specter, the specter of communism. But futural communism cannot escape its past in the persistence and breakdown of primitive communism.¹⁹⁷ Thus, the economic is a distorted image, a secret developmental legacy, of this prehistorical sacred legacy, a legacy passed down generation to generation precisely in and through the objects which survive when people do not. The people, however, inhabit these objects to the degree that that the objects speak of the past, of “what happened.” The memorial object of value speaks like a ghost because it is a kind of ghost, a specter through which we can speculate, distributing the power of death in the distributions of social life under capital.

Note, for instance, that in pre-alphabetic social formations a golden crown or scepter, to use an obvious example, doesn’t simply represent the authority of a king and/or god. Rather, it also *is* the king’s and/or god’s authority. It affords opportunity for the lived, real *illusion* that it is part of and so indistinguishable from the king’s and/or god’s potent body. Indeed, as the king’s and/or god’s authority, the thing has that much more “direct” force. And as a force, it is inscriptive. Indeed, under this gaze, the object’s apparent author-ity is a force of author-ship. It *marks subjects* (subjectifying and channeling impulses) quite literally (as we see in the case of Drake’s expedition) as beholden to a form of authority. Children need their gods, and no one who lives is not

¹⁹⁷ It would be interesting in this regard to compare Nietzsche’s genealogy of priestly and elite rule to our Todorovian and Winnicottian archaeology. Nietzsche links the development of priestly, ascetic ideals, after all, to transformations in language and symbolization—from the judgments of “good” and “bad” to the subreptive counter-judgments of “evil” and “good.” The presentational force of teeth and claws, for instance, is eventually displaced by the re-presentational force of cognitive value judgments. We can still fight tooth and nail with words, after all. Indeed, this revaluation of values hinges upon a forgetting or repression.

still somewhere a child, even if the gods don't exist. Thus, in Foucauldian language we could say that the object (in a glyphed relation to the subject emerging together with it, as the legacy of a social split) *disciplines*. Primitive tattoos exemplify this beautifully as well, for they are typically sacred markings that either differentiate one group from another or mark a developmental rite of passage into a stage of subjectivity, into puberty or adulthood, for instance. They also appear precisely at the border between subject and object; they are not yet jewelry or amulets, for instance. Indeed, to the degree that subject and object cannot be firmly distinguished in them, so too are signifier and signified not easily or firmly distinguished. Similarly, the Aztec Xipe ritual exhibits this indistinction to the degree that the participants are not simply "acting as if" or "representing" the divine. Rather, in a more primitive sense, they "are" the divine, even if the divine doesn't exist outside of these glyphs, these skin carvings. They are worshipped and showered with gifts for instance. This, then, is our point: The "gifts," relics, and signs at play here *are* the symbols, and so *are* the writings, that both represent *and bear* that power. Society lives or dies, apparently, on how the rituals of exchange go, on the effects of communicative inscription in exchange. Indeed, this is where Todorov himself develops a *developmental* story. Reflecting on the confrontation between Aztec sacrificial prophecy and the global vision of Christian monotheism, for instance, he suggests that

this discussion of the characteristics of the Aztecs' symbolic conduct leads me to observe not only the difference between two forms of symbolization, but also the superiority of one over the other; or rather and more precisely, to turn from typological description to discuss a developing schema. Do I thereby adopt purely and simply the inegalitarian position? I do not believe so. There exists a realm in which development and progress are beyond doubt; this is the realm of technology. It is incontestable that a bronze or iron ax cuts better than one of wood or stone; that the

use of the wheel reduces the physical effort required. Now these technological inventions themselves are not born of nothing: they are conditioned (without being directly determined) by the evolution of the symbolic apparatus proper to man, an evolution we can also observe in certain social behavior. There is a “technology” of symbolism, which is as capable of evolution as the technology of tools, and, in this perspective, the Spanish are more “advanced” than the Aztecs..., even if we are here concerned only with a difference of degree. (159-60)

Indeed, this “advance” consists precisely in recognizing deeper and more abstract differences between the literal and the metaphorical. These abstract differences, however, turn precisely on having *forgotten* that representational inscription turns on and develops out of presentational inscription. The abstraction in this case is a repression of the memory of magic. As Todorov puts it, a hundred pages after mentioning Xipe:

Cortés affords us a splendid example of this, and he was conscious of the degree to which the art of adaptation and of improvisation governed his behavior. Schematically this behavior is organized into two phases. The first is that of interest in the other, at the cost of a certain empathy or temporary identification. Cortés slips into the other’s skin, but in metaphoric and no longer a literal fashion: the difference is considerable. Thereby he ensures himself an understanding of the other’s language and a knowledge of the other’s political organization (whence his interest in the Aztecs’ internal dissension, and he even masters the emission of messages in an appropriate code: hence he manages to pass himself off as Quetzalcoatl returned to earth. (248)

Let’s explore the transition from hieroglyphic to alphabetic writing down two paths in this regard. First, recall that Freud always insisted that to best understand the significance in dreams of spoken words or speech, the “vocal” appearances or meanings of these images should be translated *backwards* into visibly inscribed appearances or meanings, images the significance of which would then include their presentational force in *and despite*, and despite *and in*, their representational status as “reminders.” The words should be translated backward into rebuses, in other words, where the rebus

“speaks” of things that the spoken words hide in themselves. This interpretive method recognizes and leaps across a gap, then, to uncover significance of the primary process in and behind the scriptive indications of the secondary process.

Indeed, secondly, we can perform this same kind of analysis in and despite the historical gaps in the formation of the Latin alphabet. These gaps are necessary, after all, in and for the development of symbolization. Or rather, symbols spring precisely from an originary splitting of the primitive social body, as our Xipe, tattoo, and Drake examples show. Thus, in the case of the letters of the alphabet — which are supposed to help us “draw pictures” without actually being pictographic — the letters can be traced backward to various prehistorical pictographic, and fetishistic, images. The Latin letter “G,” for instance, derives from a Phoenician graphic sign which derives ideogramatically from the symbol “^” which is supposed not just to represent but also magically present a camel, or rather, the hump of a camel—for the camel is a sacred animal, a divine totem with such and such powers. Indeed, the camel is an ancient relative, an early god such that those of the camel clan are of a lineage with their sacred foods and food prohibitions. Our phonogramatically abstract letter “G,” in other words, derives through various removes and gaps in its historical evolution from an image presenting the contours the language of sacrifice.

What, then, in conclusion, can we say about the origins of culture? This must be brief, but on my developmentally oriented view culture is that which mediates without actually destroying what could be called the violence of the primitive loss of both “mother” and “mother nature” together. Culture is thus the trace, the mark, of a secretive and necessary loss, for as well as memorializing it, it puts this necessary loss into

forgetfulness, as a scar often proves to be the site of a former and current healing. Culture develops, then, as that which communicates by partially repressing, or we could say sublimating, the baggage of the past. What remains above ground in, as, and for consciousness is at least a modicum of objectified pleasure, something that it is not death incarnate but rather a mark, a symbol of having survived death. Communicating this or that in exchange, and eventually coming to represent this or that, the *object buries death* such that death persists in it. Thus, the creation and development of culture begins and is maintained in memorial objects, in mementos, for instance, which, however and again, link and separate generations—the individual body imbricated with, as well inscriptively detached from, the primitive social body.¹⁹⁸ Ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny, and vice versa, in other words, to the degree that generations are both bridged and gapped in the object which culture becomes within any historical epoch, mode of production, or stage of development.

In his play-therapy sessions with disturbed or ill children, for instance, Winnicott would often sit on the floor with the kids and *share* in some drawing with them. He called this the squiggle game. Either he or the child would start the game off with a little doodle or squiggle on a piece of paper. The other's job was then to finish or add to the inscription by turning it into some other — a transformed — shape. Meanwhile, Dr. Winnicott would ask the children about the drawings, about their dreams, and, if the conversation lead there, about their general thoughts on life, death, and loss. And indeed, this latter material would often come up *on paper*, somewhat cryptically in and as the

¹⁹⁸ We each literally inherit a physical part of our parents, and their parents, etc, to the degree that egg and sperm form the first cell, which divides repeatedly to become the living unit of mother-child, which eventually splits to become the individual "body", itself an elaboration of the *physical residue*, the combined originary seed, of the parents.

drawings, *before* it would come up subjectively or consciously. And as if magically, that is, if and when a bond could be established between old and young, between one generation and the next through the shared art of discussion and the general “drawing of pictures” in both a literal and symbolic way, this pair of persons would mutually create a world where sad and terrible things were transitionally if not finally understood and communicated. What would grow in and through this shared aesthetic creation was a place, a common-place, for development and meaning. A place for letting go.

CONCLUSION

TRAUMATOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

To conclude this dissertation I'd like to paint a fairly specific picture, black on white, of how I understand the interrelationship between health, objectivity, and development. In the course of the dissertation I examined this interrelationship by developing three tactics. First, I examined the relation between health and development in what I take to be two of its most profound (socially) *scientific* analyses, namely, in Kant's critical aesthetics and in Marx's theory of fetishism. Second, I occasionally looked to psychoanalysis to examine how human historical development pivots on what might be called the prehistorical differentiation of subject and object. Third, and armed with the discovery that the primitive is the (distortedly) persistent, I asked larger questions about the relation between individual and historical development. Does ontogeny recapitulate phylogeny, and vice versa? I have suggested that they do and that they do so in the realm of "value" through the symbolic and/or symptomatic transmission of the archaic. I have therefore traced value to its secret heritage in the magic and fetishism of both premodern cultures and preverbal infancy. The lesson I drew was this, namely, that there is something important to be learned about human health, development, and their relationship by studying the promise *and* necessary disavowals belonging to valuation.

To help recap some of these earlier lessons *here*, however, I want to examine the interrelationship between health, objectivity, and development by means of a new distinction, or rather a distinction I now need to examine more explicitly. The distinction is between *trauma* or the *traumatic*, on the one hand, and the *traumatological* funding of both trauma *and* development, on the other hand. Here I am inheriting the basic Kantian distinction, fed through Marx and psychoanalysis, between the pre-experiential conditions of experience and the phenomenal experience of objects, between the a priori and the a posteriori, the noumenal and the phenomenal, but with an important twist. This twist begins in Kant's subtle, almost invisible emphasis on *subreption*, an idea which becomes more explicitly articulated as fetishization in Marx, and then as sublimation and transitional objectivity in Freud and Winnicott respectively.

As we've seen, for Kant the subject's experience of objects and objectivity is funded through hidden conditions which end up mis-appearing in and as the objects of experience. So while we only have phenomenal access to the objects of experience and therefore can't know or access either them or their conditions in themselves, directly, or noumenally, we can nonetheless learn something about these conditions *indirectly*, at least to the degree that phenomenal objects subreptively reflect them. Subreptively understood, all contemporary objects, all modern cultural things, reflect something not just about modern culture and its history but also about its prehistory. This prehistory is important, I shall to argue, to the degree that we cannot expect to bring therapy to modern forms of social injustice and illness — to various forms of capitalist domination, for example — without addressing the root(s) of the problem. If modern class divides and capitalist domination are weeds that don't just add to the human garden's productivity

and beauty but smother much of this garden by blocking the sunlight that could otherwise be shared to some greater degree in mutual (and yes mutually competitive) growth, then we can't simply cut these weeds off at the surface. It's this simple and yet terribly difficult: We have to dig deep into ourselves, our culture, our historical relation to other cultures, our entire history of globalization, to reveal and address our deeply unified and divided roots.¹⁹⁹ But since these roots are not just unified, not simply a co-unity of primitive community, but are also archaically marked by division and destruction, we also need to accept that the roots of illness and injustice will never be completely excised. This is what I mean when I suggest that the traumatological makes possible both development *and* trauma. To the degree that we continue to bring children into the world and that death continues to bring sadness, longing, and (sadly) even anger, and so also to the degree that we fail to understand the beauty of the work of raising children and the value of feeling sad about death and loss, there is and remains, will necessarily remain, plenty of work to be done.

Thus, the distinction I want to make between trauma and the traumatological inherits the basic Kantian distinction between (a) the objects and (b) the conditions of experience; but it also takes into account features of these conditions which Kant had only hinted at but which are then more deeply investigated, acknowledged, and specified by Marx and then by psychoanalysis—especially, I would say, by Winnicott. As Marx teaches us, the hidden conditions of experience, and more particularly of the series of modes of production which frame historical experience epochally, are not simply given as a priori static structures; rather, these structures have a history, indeed a prehistory of violent accumulation which secretly informs each historical mode in turn. But of course

¹⁹⁹ I am a global citizen.

this in-forming is not fully secretive. Rather, to the degree that violence saturates the roots of culture, this formative process leaves traces and symptoms which to some degree disavow this violence and hide prehistorical rooting *in and as* historical objects of value, indeed, eventually in and as the “universal” modern object of value—money. Thus, to the degree that objectified values reflect not just the maintenance but also the coming to be of class schisms, their study also suggests that archaic human life — the stuff no one directly remembers but which, upon scientific investigation, has clearly had lingering formative influence on who we’ve become and where we may be headed — is characterized by social identifications and divisions as well as by a cyclical swinging back and forth between these forces in the process of world formation, of globalization. My suggestion, following Kant and Marx as two secret forefathers of psychoanalysis, then, is that human development becomes possible and actual to the degree that it necessarily disavows and extends, mis-presenting the persistence of, its traumatological roots. Development is a distortion, a subreptive (mis)placing into merely historical memory of its nonviolent and violent prehistory.

By *traumatological*, then, I will be referring to the originary unities and destructions which (paradoxically) make human production and development possible and actual to the degree that the destructions (at least) are partially disavowed (and, paradoxically once again, partially survived, despite being destructions) in a sub-dialectic of illusion and disillusion. This sub-dialectic, in turn, produces a *relation* between subject and object and therefore also the possibility of developing a more or less objective, even scientifically objective, relation to the world. To the degree that *logos* supersedes *mythos* but partially preserves the latter within its objectivity, we will

continue to insist that objects and objectivity never appear in themselves but must first be objectified, indeed, that they can *only* appear through the productive disavowal of their nonetheless persisting traumatological conditions. It is only through the partial destruction of the purest form of what Kant, Freud, and Winnicott often call illusion, or what Marx, Freud, and Winnicott often call fantasy, that scientific analyses — such as this one? — can grow. For if and when the purest of illusions or fantasies — what we called for Kant “fantastic objectification” and what Winnicott calls “omnipotence” — is destroyed and yet is also survived, the *purity* of the illusion is sent “underground” thereby creating a difference or distinction between consciousness and unconsciousness, between experience and what is forgotten (i.e. what is now forgettable), between historical values and the traces of prehistorical destruction.

But if science must acknowledge the role of its persistently primitive traumatological conditions if it is to be developmentally *objective*, then it must also acknowledge that the destructive and divisive aspects of primitive creation and production make *trauma* both possible and, at times and in places, actual. Trauma is the worst of things. Partly distinct from the traumatological, it is destruction of already (at least partly) integrated culture; it is a disintegration of already objectified lines of development. It is the cutting off of (at least some) productive roots. Indeed, if we recall that development hinges on the necessary disavowal and extension of traumatological conditions, we can say that trauma “develops,” or rather that it dawns, when the closure, experience, and history this disavowal implies are violently opened up. This opening is invariably felt as a *wounding*, or at least it is felt this way *nachträglich* to the degree that any opening up of *pre-experiential* and *pre-historical* conditions *within experience and*

history cannot be immediately “experienced” or understood. This is why (the symptoms of) traumas appear in delay and deferral. For upon wounding, archaic and prehistorical — and so, for historical consciousness, largely unrecognizable — destructions and identifications are “unrepressed” and released. They are secretly reactivated, forcing themselves onto current experience even when they are not recognized as archaic. Trauma is thus almost unimaginably painful at times, if we are to believe the stories and symptoms of the traumatized, which we must, I say, if we want to work for developing more justice and beauty in the world. For trauma is violation and breach, a *forced* regression to preverbal or precognitive states where inside and outside (and mind and body, too) are either more or less indistinguishable or, alternately, almost fully dissociated.

This, then, should help us understand why the “causality” of trauma is so slippery and strange. To the degree that the structures of *primitive* identification and division which had made experience possible are brought forward and reactivated to mix with current experience and the conscious content of its memories, it is difficult to tell whence the wounding had come. The trauma will almost certainly *seem* to be *only* current and to come solely from *outside*. A car accident, for example, does occur in the present. Whatever intrusions and shocks are sustained, these *are* intrusions and shocks. They happen in and as a contemporary event. The psychoanalytic suggestion here, however, is that if these intrusions and shocks end up dawning *traumatically* — which means that the sufferer may suffer from the delayed, uncontrolled repetition of nightmares, hallucinations, psychosomatic disturbances, and/or various other symptoms of ego disintegration, and that he or she will not begin to recover even when most people would

expect him or her to have recovered; rather, for him or her the accident will have become a persisting and recurrent crisis — then “the” event is not singular at all; it does not *just* happen as a “current” event the cause of which came merely from “outside.” Rather, while trauma predominantly and certainly at first *appears* as a contemporary and singular event caused by a shocking intrusion of outside objects or events — an empirical set of objects or events in the Kantian sense of “empirical” — it is also a more or less secret opening up and reawakening of *forgotten primitive* happenings, structures, and emotions, of the *traumatological conditions* of identity and division which had made and invariably make objectivity, experience, history, and development possible and, in good-enough environments, more or less actual. Recalling our earlier “metaphor,” we could say in this regard that trauma is a violent uprooting and at least partial destruction of developed and so previously buried roots.

Human rooting, however, is complex. More obviously than in the case of other animals and especially of plants, for instance, our “rooting” takes place precisely through something on the order of an originary “uprooting.” Human birth, after all, is a necessarily bloody dislodging, a literal un-anchoring, a primitive *dividing* of a *unity* or *identity* into that which can then begin to relate as subject and object, here and there, inside and outside, mind and body, etc. Indeed, following Freud in such works as *Totem and Taboo* and *Civilization and its Discontents*, my suggestion has been that we can say something like this not just of individuals but also, to the degree that ontogeny and phylogeny are imbricatedly recapitulative, of the species. What I want to do in what follows, then, is to accomplish two tasks, namely, on the one hand, to show how and why my emphasis in this dissertation concerning the vicissitudes of human development has

been on the relationship between objectification and *destruction* and, on the other hand, to articulate how and why this root of destructive objectification is also the root of illness and health. In general, I want finish by stating as clearly as possible why I think development “moves forward” only to the degree that various forms of division, splitting, and destruction are to some degree disavowed, preserved, buried, and yet raised in and as symbolic objects of meaning and shared value. These objects are objects of health if and when they help us to mourn current, historical, and prehistorical destructions and losses. Here they are placebos. They are objects of illness, or nocebos, on the other hand, if and when they present primitive destructions and losses in more or less isolated and melancholic repetition. Many objects, however, are not so easily or neatly distinguished, or they vacillate between these poles depending on circumstance and environment. Thus, to exhibit the complex relation between placebos and nocebos, together with the importance of the relation between the traumatological and the traumatic within the former relation, I here want to revisit some pivotal, indeed critical, problematics as these are brought forward and examined by Freud, Winnicott, Marx, and then, to come full circle, by Kant. What I hope to have developed here in conclusion, then, is not just a theory of trauma but a useful integration of a psychoanalytically based trauma theory with a distinctly modern philosophical theory of developmental health.

Let me begin, then, with what many scholars, including Winnicott and myself, consider to be one of Freud’s most insightful examples and analyses of development, namely, once again, the *fort-da* game from the second chapter of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Recall that Freud here links the peek-a-boo and hide-and-seek structure of children’s play to the advent of *cultural* processes in general. The *object* of early play, he

suggests, is culturally developmental to the degree that the renunciation of instinctual (i.e. natural or immediate) satisfaction which “takes place” in it nonetheless arrives with a modicum of pleasure.²⁰⁰ This renunciation of instinct is therefore an extension and distortion of what Freud calls the pleasure principle into what he then calls the reality principle. The pleasure principle is here turned back on itself in the objectification of reality much like presentation is turned back on itself, as I have articulated and used these terms, in representation:

The child cannot possibly have felt his mother’s departure as something agreeable or even indifferent.... It may perhaps be said in reply that her departure had to be enacted as a necessary preliminary to her joyful return, and that it was in the latter that lay the true purpose of the game. But against this must be counted the observed fact that the first act, that of departure, was staged as a game in itself and far more frequently than the episode in its entirety, with its pleasurable ending.... We are

²⁰⁰ “Object” could here be understood variously as “goal,” and/or as the physical thing of the child’s attention, as the gift of the mother and/or father, as the presentation of the mother or father, as the child’s external memory, as the site where conflicting wish-fulfillments persist, as the site of the child’s growing sense of objectivity or (to use Freud’s phrase) of reality, etc. The notion of “objectivity” that pivots on all these understanding of “object,” then, is richer and deeper, I would suggest, than the interpretivistic or objectivistic notion of objectivity. By reducing the possibility of understanding the world and its objects to perspectives shared *within* this or that intersubjective grouping, interpretivism more or less abandons the notion of objectivity. For if “objectivity” is limited to cultural perspectives and if cultures can be *utterly different*, as many interpretivistic theories suggest, then world understanding becomes limited to interpretations *within* a culture. See the work of Peter Winch, for instance. As a kind of positivism, on the other hand, objectivism presumes that objectivity can be achieved as if beyond perspective. In presuming that subjects can have direct epistemic access to things or objects “in themselves,” in other words, objectivism fails to account for the subjectivity and in many cases even the intersubjectivity involved in world understanding. From my perspective, then, we need an account that not only balances the exaggerations of these two versions of objectivity but, more importantly, one that shows how we develop both perspectives and our sense of encountering objects directly. So this is why I follow Kant’s lead. Further, throughout this dissertation I have been suggesting on the one hand that objectivity is something of instrumental concern, that is, it’s about the *means* by which subjects and objects come to appearance *as* subjects and objects. Subjects with their perspectives and objects *as if* in-themselves appear through instrumental objectifications. Therapeutic objectivity, in this respect, concerns both the psychosocially constructed beliefs, hopes, and fears (the interpretivistic or hermeneutic objects) as well as the biomechanically active objects (the objectivistic or biological objects) we incorporate as means to health. On the other hand, however, objectivity is something of epistemic concern, a way of *understanding* the vicissitudes of health and illness coherently, cosmopolitanly, broadly, that is, as objectively as possible while still being limited to the constraints of intersubjectivity and something else. Inheriting Kant’s and Marx’s insights on this issue, however, psychoanalytic theory attempts to track and promote developmental health through the age- and stage-appropriate use of objects and reflective objectivity. Indeed, it is the primitively *destructive* aspect of what I just called “something else,” then, which escapes many, indeed most theories of objectivity and which marks this one as unique and, dare I say, more objective.

therefore left in doubt as to whether the impulse to work over in the mind some overpowering experience so as to make oneself master of it can find expression as a primary event, and independently of the pleasure principle. For in the case we have been discussing, the child may, after all, only have been able to repeat his unpleasant experience in play [by throwing the toy spool away, *fort*, “ooo”] because the repetition carried along with it a yield of pleasure of another sort.... It can also be observed that the unpleasurable nature of an experience does not always unsuit it for play. If the doctor looks down a child’s throat or carries out some small operation on him, we may be quite sure that these frightening experiences will be the subject of the next game. (15-16)

Notice that Freud here describes the child’s experience with the doctor as “frightening.” This description is quite interesting but especially so if we recall that just before he turns to children’s play as a cultural practice apparently *not* beyond the pleasure principle, Freud had described *fright* as one of two factors characterizing the strange etiology of the traumatic neuroses, of events and desires perhaps *beyond* the pleasure principle. There is a puzzle here, then, related to the fact that the “shell-shock” experienced by many soldiers in WWI devolved upon some of them well *behind* the front lines as well as upon some *about to return* to the trenches from a leave of absence. Indeed, this puzzle also relates to the fact that these affected soldiers didn’t just exhibit psychological symptoms (like stuttering, depersonalization, memory loss, emotional swings, and especially serial nightmares) but *also* somatic symptoms (such as neuromuscular tics and tremors, chronic pain, sight disturbances, balance issues, and localized paralyses). We thus learn that trauma is a complicated disorder the causality of which is distinctly, indeed specifically, strange:

In the case of the war neuroses, the fact that the same symptoms sometimes came about without the intervention of any gross mechanical force seemed at once enlightening and bewildering. In the case of the ordinary traumatic neuroses, two characteristics emerge prominently: first, that the chief weight in their causation seems to rest upon the factor of surprise, of fright; and secondly, that a wound or

injury inflicted simultaneously works, as a rule, against the development of a neurosis. (10-11)

Here then is our puzzle, circumspectually oriented but focused for the moment on fright: In the case of the boy, fright seems to push him to act out his experience in a rather monotonous form of play which, though somewhat repetitive, is a developmental distortion of a prior state, and so which is also a mark of his growing up, his very enculturation. For Freud this play is *developmental* to the degree that it replaces the boy's prior crying fits, fits he would "throw" when his mother or father wasn't available at his demand, upon his desire. In the case of the embattled soldier, on the other hand, fright pushes him toward *trauma*, toward personal disintegration. Indeed, this is a helpful way of seeing (how) the oppositional direction of the movements here (relate). In the case of play, fright catalyzes a more or less healthy and integrating response whereas, again, in the case of war it catalyzes disintegration. *Or rather*, in the latter case it does so as a rule, says Freud, if the fright is *not adequately objectified, for instance, in the somatic form of a bloody breaking of skin*. So what is going on here? What lessons might we learn about the relationship, including a possible link, between development and trauma?

On the one hand, there would seem to be no link. As soon as he is finished examining shell-shock, for instance, Freud inserts a break, a gap in the text and then turns, quite deliberately, as if to change the subject and object of analysis to children's play:

At this point I propose to leave the dark and dismal subject of the traumatic neuroses and pass on to examine the method of working employed by the mental apparatus in one of its earliest normal activities—I mean in children's play.

On the other hand, however, as we've already begun to see, Freud gives a number of hints that play might secretly contain various "dark and dismal" elements, factors resembling those of the shocks of war. We have already mentioned the first of these hints, namely, that being suddenly frightened is a principal ingredient, a kind of catalyst, both in trauma *and* in early, primitive development. Fright thus seems to be a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for both trauma and enculturation. We could read the above passage with its break or gap *subreptively* in this regard, that is, we can suggest that despite and in appearances, various dark and dismal elements are not simply *passed over* by play, as if play escapes, nullifies, or overturns their influence, but rather that these elements are secretly "passed on" *to* play, *into and as* the play which has thereby *already* sublimated them, tucking them "underground" such that they remain presentationally alive, albeit in fantasy. Play is never, after all, without its violences.

Similarly, in the next chapter, Freud himself seems to "link" culture (and play) to trauma (and war) by examining another important ingredient which is apparently or perhaps common to both, namely, what he calls here the (non-pleasing or meta-pleasing) compulsion to repeat, or repetition. He introduces repetition by noting how some persons fall into the "same" cryptic relational patterns, even while exhibiting a complete passivity toward these patterns; they thus seem to be ruled by a "fatality" (24) or "compulsion of destiny" (25). One of the examples Freud gives is of a woman "who married three successive husbands each of whom fell ill soon afterwards and had to be nursed by her on their death-beds" (24). Thus, "if we take into account observations such as these, based upon behavior in the transference and upon the life-histories of men and women, we shall

find courage to assume that there really does exist in the mind a compulsion to repeat which overrides the pleasure principle. Now too we shall be inclined to relate to this compulsion the dreams which occur in traumatic neuroses and the impulse which leads children to play” (24). So, against the “obviousness” of Freud’s suggestion that he was “leaving” the subject of trauma and “passing on” to play and enculturation, he here again “links” trauma and culture at least *indirectly*, as through a thick mirror.

Or should we emphasize that he *seems* to link trauma and culture? After all, if we read this statement with care, the meta-pleasing compulsion to repeat is *not identified* with what is here called play but rather, more specifically, with “the *impulse* which *leads* to play.” Play — and with it what we might call objective cultural development — is not coincident or identical to the impulse and compulsion — *these* are related — to repeat, for play is what is *lead* to through the compulsion and impulse. How, then, in *human* development does something which is apparently pre-cultural — a mere impulse — lead to enculturation? What we must insist here is that even if the impulse is a mere force or mechanism of biological continuity, the playful effect to which this impulse leads is not *simply* a mechanism or force. Nor is it strictly continuous with biological continuity. Rather, it is something like the metaphorization, the distortion and disavowal, of that which leads to it or, perhaps more accurately, had lead to it.²⁰¹ In the terminology of this dissertation, I have often called this metaphorization process “symbolization.” As a symbol, the object of play is neither the effect of a mechanical cause nor a moment in a biological continuity. Rather, as Kant would put it, there has here been a check to the vital forces, now deployed as play between imagination and understanding. Indeed, it is

²⁰¹ As we shall see momentarily, this is omnipotent illusion turned upon itself, creating a break and marking the latter in its own enlivening capacity.

this check that the symbol signifies as both loss and gain (among many other dualisms we will highlight and examine momentarily), and so as *meaningful*. Not just the “spool” but the soldier’s “wound” too, then, *makes sense* of the world in the face of an incredible surprise or shock. Of course, this brings up yet another question: Isn’t there an important difference to recognize here between surprise and shock? And if so, where and when is this difference made?

Let’s recall at this point that for Winnicott a transitional object is precisely symbolic, and even the siting of the power of symbolization, to the degree that it both merges and separates the child and parent as well as representing this merger and separation. It can be developmental, in other words, when in symbolizing the loss of what is then presupposed as a prior unity with the mother it also helps to *create a relation*. For again, as he says in “The Location of Cultural Experience,”

This symbol can be *located*. It is at the place in space and time where and when the mother is in transition from being merged in with the infant and alternately being experienced as an object to be perceived rather than [as-if simply] conceived of. The use of an object symbolizes the union of two now separate things, baby and mother, at the point in time and space of the initiation of their state of separateness. (96-7)

Winnicott says here that these things are “now separate” as if this was *simply* the case, but actually a page later he clarifies this matter by highlighting the necessary paradox that this separation isn’t just real or objective but *is and remains illusional*. This is a difficult but important point to understand and we shall take our time here to convey it. It is difficult because it suggests that the archaic illusional perspective of the child is not simply false. It is illusional, not delusional. Similarly, this perspective doesn’t just represent an emergent reality, but also presents it, we could say. When the child has the

illusion, in and through the object, that he and his mother are still literally connected, as if both were together continuous and not merely contiguous parts of a greater fluid plenum for instance, this illusion *is as good as real*, for it is objective, illusion objectified. Indeed, despite suggesting above that the object symbolizes two “now separate things,” Winnicott soon suggests that this object “is the place that I have set out to examine, the separation that is not a separation but a form of union.” So on the one hand the object symbolizes (represents and presents) a separation and on the other hand it symbolizes (presents and represents) a union of mother and child. So my point here is that neither this separation nor union is more real than the other, at least when by “transitional object” we are referring to the first not-me possession. For “possession” means here to be possessed by the thing but also to own it as a commonplace.

How so? Recall that for Winnicott before union or separation there is what we must presuppose to be identity, or what I like to think of as an undifferentiated unity, an *undifferentiatedness* that must be divided through repeated constitutive violences into places, into this and that. Undifferentiation is carved up, in other words, making words and concepts possible, into what first then appears as a *world* to the degree that an inchoate subject here begins its emergent relation to inchoate objects. This is world-objectification and, like the writing that eventually develops from out of it, it is very significant, for it is the birth of the need for signification amidst the violence of birth. Birth is the uprooting root of signification. The state of developmental potential which is uprooted here in and for the actualization of human rooting is called omnipotence or omnipotent illusion. The term omnipotence is used to specify, as Kant is perhaps the first to specify (in the third *Critique*), that wish and actualization are one. Imagine a baby in a

mother's womb. As yet, this baby may not have *distinct* wishes, but certainly he has a capacity of and for wishing, a *power* of fantastic objectification in the Kantian sense. This power of illusion, however, cannot as yet be distinguished from its effects or non-effects, from *any* worldly appearances. Thus, for the baby, significance hasn't arisen on and despite various biological compulsions and happenings. Indeed, even after birth and plenty of development and maturation, this hypothesized power of illusion cannot be said to have disappeared without a trace, that is, *without objects and symptoms in fact being its trace*, as we shall see. In any case, as yet, before language predominates, illusion is the rule. As Winnicott puts it in the "Transitional Objects" essay, "the mother, at the beginning, by an almost 100 percent adaptation affords the infant the opportunity for the *illusion* that her breast is part of the infant. It is, as it were, under the baby's magical [wishful] control.... There is no interchange between the mother and the infant. Psychologically, the infant takes from a breast that is part of the infant, and the mother gives milk to an infant that is part of herself" (11-12).²⁰² This, in turn, can be boiled down to the bidirectional (even "bipolar") illusional structure we specified earlier: Since the behest of wishing is simultaneously what happens just as what happens is simultaneously the behest of wishing, omnipotence implies that need (or wishing) is identical to what happens (or appearance) *and vice versa*.

²⁰² Or as he puts it more accessibly elsewhere: "Imagine a baby who has never had a feed. Hunger turns up, and the baby is ready to conceive of something; out of need the baby is ready to create a source of satisfaction, but there is no previous experience to show the baby what there is to expect. If at this moment the mother places her breast where the baby is ready to expect something, and if plenty of time is allowed for the infant... the baby "creates" just what is there to be found. The baby eventually gets the illusion that this real breast is exactly the thing that was created... and after a while the baby may be creating something like the very breast that the mother has to offer.... A thousand times before weaning the feeling has existed that what was wanted was created, and was found to be there. From this develops a belief that the world can contain what is wanted and needed, with the result that the baby has hope that there is a live relationship between inner reality and external reality, between innate primary creativity and the world at large which is shared by all." See Winnicott, 1992, 90.

Development, however, as we know, requires that omnipotence be “checked” and then “mediated,” that it somehow “fail” and in failing give birth to distinctions and worldliness. Similarity and difference must be born(e) out of undifferentiatedness. But how might *this* be possible? How does one limit omnipotence? Indeed, if omnipotence implies that what happens happens at the behest of wishing, then isn’t everything that happens omnipotently wished for?²⁰³ Winnicott’s suggestion that paradox is both necessary for, and must be tolerated in and for, development is helpful here. For here is the point: In order for such distinctions as subject and object, self and not-self, wish and object, here and there, etc, to arrive, to first emerge and then develop, in order for the world to open up *as* a world, omnipotence must be destroyed and yet the thing which is destroyed in this destruction must also somehow survive. Let’s revisit, then, one of Winnicott’s most interesting and famous articulations of this paradox:

Should the philosopher come out of his chair and sit on the floor with his patient, he will find... that after “subject relates to object” comes “subject destroys object” (as it becomes external); and then may come “object survives destruction by the subject.” But there may or may not be survival. A new feature thus arrives in the theory of object-relating. The subject says to the object: “I destroyed you,” and the object is there to receive the communication. From now on the subject says: “Hullo object!” “I destroyed you.” “I love you.” “You have value for me because of your survival of my destruction of you.” “While I am loving you I am all the time destroying you in (unconscious) fantasy.” Here fantasy begins for the individual. The subject can now use the object that has survived. (Winnicott 1989, 222)

There are a number of important lessons to learn here: First, if Winnicott is right about the legacy or fate of illusion in this primal scene, then we can say that despite *and in* the goals of the positivistic or natural sciences, disillusion is never complete, even when we’re being scientifically objective—for objectivity both is prompted and, at a

²⁰³ Recall that this question lies at the heart, and so the *eros*, of Kant’s hypochondriacal worrying.

hidden level, even *contains* illusion. Both against *and in* disillusionment, in other words, illusions and wishes are kept *radically alive*, active, and even fulfilled “beneath” consciousness — but here’s the Kantian subreptive rub — right *when and where* external objectivity takes place. Objectivity and illusion aren’t exactly or fully contraries, then, despite the history of positivistic science and its theories. On the contrary, objectivity *requires* illusion to persist somewhere, in order *to appear* at all. In short, even with and upon violence and disillusion, *illusion secretly persists in and as objectivities of various sorts*. The baby first has to learn, after all, that he or she is emerging as a self to be developed, that two comes out of what can then be retrospectively presupposed as a prior oneness (a prior undifferentiated plenum), and that this self must be distinguished but can never be fully divided-off from (or identical to) others and/or objects. The object can “signify” something like this, moreover, if and to the degree that it helps to symbolize loss, indeed, to *contain destruction* in a gain and production of another sort, in something liked and useful if also quite imperfect. Of course, the object can also fail to contain the destruction, and in such cases it becomes a symptom, not so much a symbol. There is a continuum of better and worse, of more and less communally social possibilities for objectivity.

Relative to its hypothesized *pure* state, however, the *initial mediation* of omnipotence is more like a gigantic destruction, a total world catastrophe of pure impotence, than what can later come to appear as plain old mediation. For no one given their womb-life, after all, could possibly be prepared for the splitting, divisions, blood, and labors of birth. Talk about surprise! This is the surprise belonging to and persisting in all future surprises. Imagine again, then, a neonate just out of the womb. This creature

is ready to attack and devour something fit to be attacked and devoured. And imagine that the thing — the breast — is already there and that the attack happens. My suggestion is that this feeding will both prolong and “remind” the baby about something he couldn’t possibly directly remember, namely, the omnipotent undifferentiatedness of womb-life. But imagine then this scene after various repetitions of feeding (attachment and identity) and the end of feeding (detachment and separation). Suddenly we have what Marx calls a *post festum* state, a situation wherein the breast has gone missing, *fort*. Indeed, imagine that the breast is “wished for” but doesn’t readily appear, as is custom. Regarding the absent breast, does not the baby here not just think but literally *live* something verging on “I destroyed it.” For what happens must have been wished for, right? Or is this now just being realized? What? There might be an inside *and* an outside, wishing *and* a world, a world *and* wishing? And wishing doesn’t actualize its objects? This is a sign of experience, something to be tested out via the object.

On a different tack, why do neonates at times scream “bloody murder”?²⁰⁴ What does a screaming baby want? What did/do we want? What, similarly, but at one developmental remove from screaming, does a crying baby want?²⁰⁵ And a baby playing with a spool or pacifier? Perhaps we should reverse this question and point to something that this last baby, at least, apparently *doesn’t* want. In his play with the transitional spool, after all, the boy of our example throws the object away, as if angered, disgusted, or frustrated: *Fort!* But under a Winnicottian lens this already points not simply at a pre-experiential destruction but also at production, at objectification. Indeed, to the degree

²⁰⁴ In the beginning. . . .

²⁰⁵ I learned just the other day something I imagine myself to have known much longer, namely, that neonates only begin to cry tears after a couple of months. At first their crying is tear-less. I like to think of tears, in this regard, as internally produced mourning paint or ink.

that the mother and her entire technique of holding and feeding *is* for the newborn baby the *entire world*, this production is sacred world-production. It is (destructive) world-making. As Winnicott puts it, “*if all goes well* the infant can actually come to gain from the experience of frustration [of wishing but not immediately receiving], since incomplete adaptation [by the mother] to [the infant’s] need makes objects real, that is to say hated as well as loved” (11). The pre-world is here made into a world; it is objectified as worldly, even if the world is as yet one object, say, a breast, thumb, or pacifier.

This *hate*, however, is related to the sense that the breast, and thus the world, is *destroyed* when it’s out of wishful reach.²⁰⁶ This destruction, however, is paradoxical all the way down — like turtles — such that it is not simply we observing adults who see this matter objectively. Rather, objectivity is born(e) of (and by) a meeting of both perspectives, archaic and mature, in the object placed there by the mother for the baby’s use. As Winnicott puts this delicate point, “it is not only that the subject destroys the object because the object is placed outside the area of omnipotent control. It is equally important to state this the other way round and to say that it is the destruction of the object that places the object outside the area of the subject’s omnipotent control” (90). Or put in more traditional language, but just as concisely: “It is generally understood that the reality principle involves the individual in anger and *reactive* destruction, but my thesis [with which this writer agrees] is that *the destruction plays its part in making the reality*, placing the object outside the self” (91, my emphasis). This is the crucial point we have been building up to, namely, that not simply production but archaic destruction is the secret condition of the worlding of the world, to borrow a Heideggerian formula and give it more meaning.

²⁰⁶ A war-zone of sorts.

In my current terminology, I would call these archaically destructive makings of reality and objectivity *traumatological*. They are traumatological but *not traumatic* to the degree that, even while it plays a principal role in the course of events, destruction is here not *simply* destructive but is also secretly and *predominantly* put into the service of a more or less social and communal world-objectification. The destruction destroys the object and omnipotence to boot. That is, paradoxically, it destroys *omnipotence* by sending it underground, *fort*, but now — suddenly, in a great surprise appearance — in and as the appearance of the thing *as* an object. Voila! Ta-daa! In Winnicott’s terminology, the thing is thereby no longer merely a subjective object.²⁰⁷ It is an emergently objective object, even if barely so, quite temporarily so. Indeed, this emergence via emergency is and marks the subreptive rub: In making the object appear, the destruction is and remains something *livable*, something *sustaining*. *Originary loss enables growth*. We can’t enter culture without being weaned. We wake up, as it were. *Trauma*, on the other hand, is *predominantly not* productive of something mutually sustaining, of something supportive of mutuality, even if produces symptoms and even if it may end up requiring (or perhaps even eventually being?) a renewal of traumatological productions.²⁰⁸ (On the contrary?...). As forced regression, as a destruction of already-achieved cultural symbolizations, trauma tends toward world-destruction even if the

²⁰⁷ Winnicott’s terminology here is of course a bit misleading to the degree that there are no developed forms of subject or object as yet, that is, prior to this first destructive objectification which is simultaneously a subjectification.

²⁰⁸ I am arguing here against a tendency in much of the Lacanian literature or, for instance, against Judith Butler’s (1997) suggestion in *The Psychic Life of Power* that melancholia, like mourning, is *constitutive* of subjectivity. Like various Lacanians, Butler seems to conflate archaic traumatological destruction (which is productive of culture, subjects, and objects in its division of primitive undifferentiation) and trauma (or here melancholia, both of which are destructive and regressive). For in the *latter* what is divided and destroyed is not just a presupposed archaic unity but also *already*-developed cultures, subjects, and objects. Especially for those who experience trauma, moving backward is not the same thing as moving forward, even if the two are “linked” in archaic destruction. I think it is *critically* important not to conflate these, then, for history and its understanding, after all, are at stake.

world that belongs to its decay had been newly nascent and can, with work, love, and play be rebuilt.

This is not to say, however, that the borderline between trauma and the traumatological is not fuzzy. Both, after all, hinge on destruction, indeed, on a persistent archaic destruction. The traumatological conditions of prehistorical life are brought forward, are unrepressed, in historical trauma. Further, if trauma is survived, it may well then appear as if it was a necessary traumatological, and hence (potentially) world-productive, series of events all along. Similarly, we wouldn't want to deny that destruction is more or less explicitly required for and is part of any and all major historical or "life" transitions. To build one must take something apart, rework it. To build a home, one must destroy some trees as well as one's life as a mere child. Similarly, albeit perhaps in a different way, if someone has been traumatized, the traumatological destructions that are released as symptoms in him or her still produce a "world" of sorts. As self-cutters, injured soldiers, and various tribal peoples well know, for instance, the somatic wound can be an anchor, a site not just for disintegration but even one for integration! And yet this wound can be used to attack, as well.²⁰⁹ Let us be clear, then, that there is no firm or clear dividing line between symptoms and objects, between destructive worlds and productive worlds. Thus, similarly, I am not saying that the borderline between the traumatic and the traumatological is always, or even often, clear and distinct. This line is the difference, respectively, between cultural disintegration and ~~dis~~integration. Omnipotence is destroyed as total destruction is destroyed in the making of the world of tension and/or symbiosis between me and not-

²⁰⁹ No suicide attempt is not also a murderous attack of the "other."

me. Nonetheless, and again, while trauma and its destructive regressions *may* make something like rebirth possible, trauma *in-itself* — whatever this would be besides being a hypothetical non-experiential “pure culture” of death — is destruction definitely *not*, or not yet, in the service of making *culture*. As usual, Winnicott has a profound and profoundly simple way of putting all this, so I will let him and his mature youthful perspective speak here at length. I do, however, have one suggestion for reading the following paragraphs. To better understand or recall what it is like to be a neonate or to be regressed, we might think the phrase “the livable world” wherever “the mother” appears:

It is perhaps worthwhile trying to formulate this in a way that gives the time factor due weight. The feeling of the mother’s existence lasts x minutes. If the mother is away more than x minutes, then the imago [which the baby has built up of her through incorporations] fades, and along with this the baby’s capacity to use the symbol of the union ceases. The baby is distressed, but this distress is soon *mended* because the mother returns in $x+y$ minutes. In $x+y$ minutes the baby has not become altered. But in $x+y+z$ minutes the baby has become *traumatized*. In $x+y+z$ minutes the mother’s return does not mend the baby’s altered state. Trauma implies that the baby has experienced a break in life’s continuity, so that primitive defenses now become organized to defend against a repetition of ‘unthinkable anxiety’ or a return of the acute confusional state that belongs to disintegration of nascent ego structure.

We must assume that the vast majority of babies never experience the $x+y+z$ quantity of deprivation. This means that the majority of children do not carry around with them for life the knowledge from experience of having been mad. Madness here simply means a *break-up* of whatever may exist at the time of *a personal continuity of existence*. After ‘recovery’ from $x+y+z$ deprivation a baby has to start again permanently deprived of the root which could provide *continuity with the personal beginning*. This implies the existence of a memory system and an organization of memories.

By contrast from the effects of $x+y+z$ degree of deprivation, babies are constantly being [restored] by the mother’s localized spoiling that mends the ego structure. This mending of the ego structure re-establishes the baby’s capacity to use a symbol of union; the baby then comes once more to allow and even to benefit from separation.

Now, in Part II of this dissertation my suggestion has been that Marx develops a traumatological theory of historical development the destructive and productive ambivalence of which is conditioned by an archaic series of expropriations of the means, especially of the common means, of world production. The primitive civilizing process leads, at least, up to its current discontents in capitalist accumulative crises. The capitalistic world has grown like a plant, perhaps a weed, from what we can presuppose as the seed of our prior unity with nature, a seed split, divided, destroyed in its seediness to become a not merely natural primitive community which mediates the soil and material of nature, “distancing” itself from nature in the production of culture. Marx and Winnicott thus clearly agree on a great number of things. They clearly agree, for instance, that trauma is disintegrative, deprivational, and expropriative. For both, to deprive someone or a group of a means of their world production is to strip them of it, even if there are no protections or laws as yet through which we could ideologically condemn or prosecute such acts. So even though the American Indians didn’t “understand” property as *exclusive private* property, this doesn’t mean that the arriving European explorers and especially the colonizers didn’t deprive them of the land and various other means, including various institutional structures.²¹⁰ The land, mother earth herself, however, was primary. This mix of prehistorical and historical deprivation must not be forgotten, for it is tragic and horrible, and although both sides now suffer in different ways, this is much more debilitatingly so for the Indians. This is something that still needs to be addressed with care, grace, and maturity. But this primitive accumulation didn’t just happen in the Americas, of course, and on my reading it has been happening since the first moments of the destructive making of objective culture

²¹⁰ Marx, 1973, 477.

hundreds of thousands if not millions of years ago. In any case, we should not be at all surprised that Marx offers a plainly Winnicottian interpretation *avant la letter* of the development of English capitalism: Paraphrasing Thornton late in volume one of *Capital*, he declares that “the English working class was precipitated *without any transitional stages* from its golden age to its iron age” (879, my emphasis).²¹¹ The free land- and tool-owning yeomen, after all, were kicked off their lands in various ways, forced to urbanize, thereby becoming the proletariat, a workforce with *no means of symbolic self- and world-production* other than those “rented” from the capitalists through wage-for-labor-power exchanges and purchased as commodities.

One of the keys to understanding the above $(x+y+z)$ passage from Winnicott, then, lies in realizing that whatever trauma is, it is something *partially experienced*, which is to say that the ego or culture at hand has developed to some degree and is therefore able to undergo, and to some degree experience, disintegration. Disintegration requires prior (individual and cultural) integration. As a disintegration, however, trauma is also something *partially not-experienced*. Recall that the traumatic process opens up and recalls traumatological, which is to say *pre-integrated* (possibly integrating), destructions. Since these traumatological destructions are first undergone before ego- or cultural-development (and can secretly form ego- and cultural-development to the degree that they happen together with archaic incorporations and identifications), they are to this degree never directly experienced and so cannot be remembered in the ordinary sense of the term.²¹² In other words, current, historical, or empirical *traumas* are invariably

²¹¹ We should recall here too that the movement from gold-production and use to iron production and use is not merely a technical history. See Renfrew.

²¹² Being on the front lines of a war, or in a traffic accident, or in an intense broken love, or in a relation of complete dependence on one's parents, etc, must and will have some resemblance to archaic world

funded in, although not wholly determined by, prehistorical conditions which themselves don't, indeed cannot, directly appear.²¹³ In this regard trauma is not just representationally but presentationally *a gap in life*, a gap *happening* in life as a *break* in the continuity of *experience* with one's roots and heritage, which means that trauma can and will be experienced if it "happens," but only in and as an experiencing *after the fact* of something that is *in-itself* inexperienceable, even *unlivable*. Winnicott articulates this thought in a concise, profound, and forceful way: In the traumatic process, he says, "*again, it is the death that happened but was not experienced that is sought.*" I can think of no scientifically or philosophically better formula for understanding traumatic repetition than this.

And yet, and again, even if trauma "in-itself" is inexperienceable or indigestible in and despite its happening, is it not also, as a conjuring forth of the traumatological conditions of human living, symbolizable, that is, (mis)symbolizable as culture? In order for trauma to be symbolized, however, it must be *survived*. Thus, for Winnicott, because it is possible that "while I am loving you I am all the time destroying you in (unconscious) fantasy," the objectification of hate can appear precisely as conscious mediated love. In loving the mother through what *we* recognize as a pacifier, for instance, the baby has his secret aggressions, his murderous fantasies.²¹⁴ But of course,

dissolution. For there is division of erotic identification and/or an uprooting from a primitive intimacy involved in all these scenes.

²¹³ Who, after all, remembers their birth, that wake-up call from nothing, as it were?

²¹⁴ Winnicott relates one of the more important dreams of his "adult" life to all of this material in some notes which were eventually published alongside the above material on objectifying destruction. Indeed, although we will not analyze this aspect of it, notice how the dream resembles the movement, in a certain psychoanalytic and Marxian way, to the Hegelian dialectic: "The dream can be given in its three parts: (1) There was absolute destruction, and I was part of the world and of all people, and therefore I was being destroyed. (The important thing in the early stages was the way in which in the dream the pure destruction got free from all the mollifications, such as object-relating, cruelty, sensuality, sado-masochism, etc.) (2) Then there was absolute destruction, and I was the destructive agent. Here then was a problem for the ego,

this symbolizational process can happen in more or less healthy ways. The hate can be dreamed instead of acted out. In fact, dreams are necessary for this. This baby can play with his or her toys, consciously forgetting the disaster which had lead him to scream or cry bloody murder. Another baby, however, has not found the mother and her attention or inattention good enough, and so may “play” with too much aggression, an aggression that therefore isn’t shared in a common place where the mother and baby “merge” but is “bottled up” inside and then expressed outside in cyclical revolts.

Marx, too, highlights the symbolic disavowal of primitive violence in and as forms of value, but symbolism is here called by other names, including especially fetishism. Recall for instance that sixteenth and seventeenth century Western European “accumulation” was largely “carried on by means of individual acts of violence against which legislation, for a hundred and fifty years, fought in vain. The advance made by the eighteenth century shows itself in this, that the law itself now becomes the instrument by which the people’s land is stolen” (885). Here the earlier explicit act of brute violence, of thug expropriation, is repressively sublimated, as it were, into a “soft” *legal or hegemonic* violence. So while the more primitive violence is disavowed, it also persists in a higher or suspended form.

how to integrate these two aspects of destruction? (3) Part three now appeared and in the dream I awakened. As I awakened I knew I had dreamed both (1) and (2). I had therefore solved the problem, by using the difference between the waking and sleeping states. Here was I awake, in the dream, and I knew I had dreamed of being destroyed and of being the destroying agent. There was no dissociation, so the three I’s were altogether in touch with each other. I remembered dreaming I(2) and I(1). This felt to be immensely satisfactory although the work done had made tremendous demands on me. I now began to wake up. What I first knew was that I had a very severe headache. I could see my head split right through, with a black gap between the right and left halves. I found the words ‘splitting headache’ coming and waking me up...” See “D.W.W.’s Dream Related to Reviewing Jung” in Winnicott, 1989, 228-9. Winnicott’s dream, we should remember, can also be lived out in waking life to some unfortunate extent.

Bourgeois ideology produces and is the production of a similar amnesiac softening. While “in actual history, it is a notorious fact that conquest, enslavement, robbery, murder, in short, force, play the greatest part,” well, “in the tender annals of political economy the idyllic reigns from time immemorial” (874). Talk about a reversal of hate and love. Indeed, this reversal is embodied in a practical relation between production and exchange together with a fetishistic symptom. The wage-form of exchange between worker and capitalist facilitates and marks exploitation by cloaking the extraction of *surplus-value* from workers. Thus, the surplus-labor of workers comes to appear as a profit made by the capitalist through his investment of resources, including the resource of labor-power. The money-wage thus marks *where* the worker and society as a whole have forgotten that the working class once had but no longer has *possessive* forms of *access* to various familial, clan, tribal, and in any case to more or less communal means of production. Indeed, it is here forgotten that “long, long ago” human societies existed free of class divide, where elite groups did not appropriate social surpluses on the backs and through the work of the commoner. So while bourgeois ideology sees, defends, and touts fair exchange, and while the worker does get the fair exchange his wage-contract stipulates as the price of labor, this same exchange and contract disavow the primitive expropriation which had made the wage-relation possible and actual in the first place. What is forgotten is the cyclically returning deprivations of commoners of lands and tools in the name of exclusive privatization and monopolization. Thus, like Winnicott, for Marx “primitive” doesn’t just mean first, early, or previous but also necessarily marks the *forgetting*, in and as an objectification, of a prior and persistent uprooting.²¹⁵ Indeed, at times Marx puts this in almost Winnicottian terms, as we’ve

²¹⁵ Marx, 1973, 304, 459-61.

seen: “How does the transition from landed property to wage labor come about?” The basis of Marx’s answer in the *Grundrisse* is that the newly hatched landed proprietors “clear” the land

of its excess mouths, tear the children of the earth from the breast on which they were raised [the agricultural land], and thus transform labor on the soil itself, which appears by its nature as the direct wellspring of subsistence, into a mediated source of subsistence, a source purely dependent on social [money and contract] relations.... Only in this way is the application of science possible for the first time, and the development of the full force of production.²¹⁶

The word “purely” here, of course, is not helpful or accurate, but the point remains helpful. The developmental process hinges on an uprooting which is then, as if merely by reaction, mediated socially into something differently, *developmentally* productive, albeit in a perpetually conflicted sense to the degree that the primitivity of this accumulation rests on the ineliminability of its violent elements. Indeed, the ambivalence here is palpable. It can be put in one’s wallet, for instance, or perhaps it will be accounted for at the level of the body if it can’t be placed in one’s wallet.²¹⁷ Not only is the “child of the earth” uprooted from the soil of nature, but it is precisely this uprooting which, strangely enough, also makes money *and science* possible—presumably science has its *funding* in archaic accumulations of symbolic objectivity. Money is *hieratic*, then, because it is near the source of human beginnings. It is first of all a non-alienable sacred object. But then, in the meetings of various cultures, it gets disillusion at some level, becoming a general then universal medium of exchange and measure of

²¹⁶ Marx, 1973, 276.

²¹⁷ Money is social power, so lack of it will often mean insecurity, and if insecurity has been there from “the start,” it may need to be registered as a congenital ailment. Whatever else it is, in other words (and as a kind of speaking, a writing under the skin), physical illness is always also a production borne of a primitive symbolic injury, an archaic *nocebo*.

value. As value, however, it retains a trace of the sacred. Thus, on the one hand, the uprooting of the agricultural laborer is clearly disintegrative of various peasant, feudal, yeomanic, and/or guild communities and forms of organization in various times, places, and ways; the history of peasantry must be an interesting one. The uprooting will thus also have its indirections, its metaphorized “productions,” its symptomatic objects which, when put to use as part of capitalist production, can be put to use, as it were, in the reorienting and even reintegrating of the dispersed elements. Crises mix things around not just horizontally, but vertically as well. So yes, the uprooting casts symptoms in various socially negative but also in various *positive* ways. In my judgment, this is why Marx still occasionally calls primitive expropriation “accumulation.”

Take capital. Capital is the perhaps the modern era’s nastiest, far-reaching symptom. It is and instantiates domination. It is the mark of prior and current class schisms, of a series of *breaks* in the continuity of human world community. In this respect, capital appears as social paranoia (“we” hate “them” and “they” hate “us” to the degree that we’ve forgotten our common roots), the speculative financial fevers of fictitious wealth (take the current bank and mortgage crises, where fictitious capital was allowed to grow without any monitored tethering to real hard work, to labor in production), as war (in the middle east, for instance, as if “we” hated “them” and vice versa), and as class, international, and corporate hegemonies of various sorts. This is sordid stuff the evidence of which is piling up.²¹⁸ And yet at the same time, the movement and growth of capital has enabled tremendous growth in technical forms of

²¹⁸ See the whole of David Harvey’s (2006) *Limits to Capital* for very fine synthesizing of many of Marx’s mature texts in a theory of the relation between capitalistic crisis and globalization. Harvey has tremendous insight into the developmental ambivalence of the capitalist mode of production. He also pays due attention to devaluation (which requires the destruction of capital), fictitious capital (which is an extension of primitive fantasy), and the creation of capitalist crashes (economic trauma).

cooperation, in the forces and instruments of world-production, in instrumentalized hierarchical relations, *as well as* in various “progressive” cultural forms such as public parks, schools, and libraries, in the advance of human and individual rights, and in the expansion of modern education (the moneyed alphabet) to what Marx once infamously called “rural idiocy.” A reading peasantry may prove necessary, as the peasantry themselves come to understand. In and despite its obvious atrocities, then, capitalist production, Marx will occasionally say, has a “civilizing influence” as well.²¹⁹

Marx of course knows that in general wage-labor is a much more just and developed social-relation than slave-labor, for instance, even if the latter was and occasionally still is secretly used to promote capitalist accumulation. But this isn’t a transhistorical statement. Rather, it’s a statement belonging to the objectivity of development and the development of objectivity.²²⁰ It’s another aspect of the symbolic “softening,” the metaphorization, the remaking in symbolically productive form, of primitive destruction. As money mediates sacredly, for instance, it is a type of developmental *glyphics*. It marks, under capital, not just exploitation, but exploitation as a development beyond direct brute domination. Thus, the relation of worker to employer is no longer so strictly *or literally* a relation of bondage and lordship, and this counts for a lot. I take it as obvious that it is good that the worker is no longer merely an object himself but is partially a subject. Perhaps he is a transitional subject-object on the way to socialism? In any case, while capitalism is often brutal, especially at its edges,

²¹⁹ See especially his work on India in Marx, 1968. For a defense of capitalist progress as this is supposed linked to democracy, see Fukuyama, 1992. For a strong critique of Fukuyama through Marx, see Derrida, 1994.

²²⁰ Science thus lives in history, as a form of history becoming self-aware not just of the fact that we are forgetful but that history moves on the basis of a forgetting, the gaps in its continuity, some of which can be partially understood by reading the traces of the forgetting and gaps.

destroying the “outer world” as if to rebuild it imperialistically in its own self(-image), it is not, at least more internally and closer to its center, a system of slavery or even feudal bondage. In *Capital*, we read about how the wage-laborer has developed new powers of adaptability and flexibility. Marx shouldn’t say “fully” in the following passage, but nonetheless, the modern worker is and has a general industriousness that didn’t previously exist; he or she is “the fully developed individual, fit for a variety of labors, ready to face any change of production, and to whom the different social functions he performs are but so many modes of giving free scope to his own natural and acquired powers” (488).²²¹ And of course this civilizing influence reaches well beyond the individual worker. This is world-cultural development under high anxiety. Under capitalism’s accumulative *drive*, steeped archaically in destructive-accumulative repetitions, production and consumption must be constantly increased to as if to stabilize “growth,” which means that together with the destructions of capitalization we *also* find a developed legacy of primitive community. We find:

exploration of all of nature in order to discover new, useful qualities in things; universal exchange of the products of all alien climates and lands, new (artificial) preparation of natural objects, by which we are given new use values. The exploration of all the earth in all directions, to discover new things of use as well as new useful qualities of the old; such as new qualities of them as raw materials, etc.; the development, hence, of the natural sciences to their highest point; likewise the discovery, creation and satisfaction of new needs arising from society itself; *the cultivation of all the qualities of the social human being, production of the same in a form as rich as possible in needs, because rich in qualities and relations* — production of this being as the most total and universal possible social product, for, in order to take gratification in a many-sided way, he must be capable of many pleasures, hence cultured to a high degree — is likewise a condition founded upon capital.²²²

²²¹ International Publishers version.

²²² Marx, 1973, 409, my emphasis.

Now, while Kant may not have understood himself to be any kind of socialist, his aesthetic theory rightly locates the heart of human world developmental processes in a power of desire which, while split, and because antagonistic, *demand*s the work and play of and toward the *commonplace* of culture. It is this root of a demand of and for the commonplace, then, that links Kant, albeit atavistically, to Marx, Freud, and Winnicott alike. The power here is a power of actualizing our wishes as if instantly while the demand stems from our need, indeed our drive, to survive the fact that these wishes often miserably fail, at least until we are able and fortunate enough to wish less contradictorily and more in the direction of the common.²²³

Why the commonplace? For Kant, the beautiful object is a site of common sense, an actual shared sensibility. As an object, though, it is something given and taken. But this taking is also a mis-taking: Recall that when a subject judges an object as beautiful, the pleasure she feels is *taken* to stem either from the object or from her merely subjective preferences. And yet this judgment, we recall, is secretly made possible through the *disavowal* of a nonetheless persistent archaic *illusion*. Kant calls this disavowal of illusion “subreption.” So while the object “itself” appears beautiful and will thus seem to some degree to be the cause of the subject’s pleasure, this causal sense hinges on a secret placeboization, as I have called it, a primitive conflict in wishing which is (mis)objectified. Indeed, for Kant, to the degree that a judgment of taste is not merely empirically determined, it becomes the site for debate and reflection such that it also instantiates and demands the development of *culture*. If one can not fight over it, it

²²³ What is the relation of fortune as destiny and fortune as cashflow? At the very least, this is an archaic relation which shows how religious temples both precede and are (kinds of) banks.

is a site for cultural building. Indeed, part of the *objectivity* of the beauty here is the *not fighting* over it. Thus, in all these sly ways, beauty (mis)objectifies the healthy development of human (a)sociality.

And of course, Kant's other term for this process, following upon an initial somatization, is symbolization. And this too is why we can here again speak of symbols as *placebos* and/or *nocebos*, as sites of commonplace health and illness. Since symbols (mis)present an archaic causality in and as causes, pleasing symbols mark the place where the emergent subject is *making self-secretive use*, as the appearance of culture, of the conflation of and split between me and not-me. The sense of causality, too, is important. The split between too much fantastic causality (where every thing seems to arrive as by perfect actualization) and too little fantastic causality (where what is felt is lack of a power to produce anything) is mended, as Winnicott puts it, through *the commonplace of wish and object*. In other words, since we can transcendently assume that desire is "the power of being the cause, through one's presentations, of the actuality of the objects of these presentations" (16=177) and empirically "assume [that there are] as many different kinds of causality as there are specific differences among natural effects," (24=185) the aesthetic fallout of transcendental causality into symbolic, which is to say significant, causes enables us to begin to recognize, albeit minimally and through repetitive rituals, that some of these causes are "inside" us and some "outside" us, that some are wishful "self" causes while some are causes "external" to wishing, and indeed, that some are causes somatically "attached" and some somatically "detached." Our initial state of confused dependency is to this degree purposively enabled to live with

purposes, that is, to the degree that health and development are linked through *our objectification* of valued (archaic) objects.

By contrast, if we look at health science in institutions such as biomedicine and cognitive-behavioral therapeutics, we find the guiding assumption that health and illness are invariably produced only by at least hypothetically knowable, locatable, mechanically efficient causes, by what a Kantian might call empirical causes. To the degree that the causes of health and illness, whether these are somatic, psychological, or behavioral, are invariably believed to be empirical, then what is ruled out in the contemporary health sciences is a philosophy of health which takes note of and theorizes the role of precognitive and unconscious elements in health and illness. For example, when someone goes the doctor in need — whether this need is predominantly psychological, physical, or a combination of both — my idea is that because the doctor stands in a relation of authority to the patient's disorder and dependency, this relation between need and authority *secretly* replays and engages the intense relation between need and authority which was initially structured and developed in the patient's infancy. Thus, my thesis is that while every object of health (or illness) is causally and cognitively registered at one level, it is more accurate and thoughtful, and so more scientific, to judge these objects as *placeboically* causal to the degree that unconscious wishes are covertly at play in relations of need and power. Further, to the degree that prehistorical wishing secretly influences how historical objects appear, it turns out that health and sickness are also secretly indices of development, of regression and progression in tension.

Kantian taste, then, is a kind of life-long weaning process. Indeed, as I hinted above, it's a rather socialistic symbolization process: As the site of and for the education

of a pleasing art of communicating and sharing need, where carnal demand is confronted with moral imperatives, the Kantian symbol is a place to grow up, to build a partially, hopefully largely, shareable world.²²⁴ Indeed, if what enables this transition is (a) archaic, pre-experiential desire, (b) nature's failure to instantly meet this desire, and (c) the objectification of an object which is taken to be the cause of a pleasure the emergent subject feels, then what she needs in order to develop is not just direct access to gratifying objects, nor unrelenting loss or reminders of loss only, but a *regimen* of work, play, and *symbols* which enables her to digest both object presentation and object loss.

This helps us understand why art therapy often helps the traumatically disturbed: While such therapy may involve "higher" cognitive functions such as philosophical or conceptual narrative, alphabetic writing, and adult forms of representation — what Freud might class under the title of the higher "secondary processes" — it also certainly involves plenty of pre-conceptual, pre-alphabetic, pre-representational, and so presentational or primary processes. So, while the therapy reaches down deep into archaic presentational (illusional) processes, it also partakes of early *forms of representation* and so can help the sufferer externalize and symbolize his or her damage. The damage doesn't simply repeat as a presentation, then, but is developed into a representation "containing" the presentation, and this begins to make a difference. Sigh.

And this in turn brings us back full circle: Imagine that a womb, like a breast, like a blanket, like a teddy bear, like a mom and dad, like a brother and sister, like a house full of people and things, like a neighborhood, like a public event, like the whole

²²⁴ This is why Marx cites various Eskimos touching gold to their tongues to test the terms of a trade. Rather than eating the Europeans or their goods, they "taste" them.

earth full of people and things, is a livable world.²²⁵ Is not every newborn baby faced, in and through birth, with the threat of disaster and loss “just like” the soldier? My suggestion is “yes.”²²⁶ The soldier’s wound *can be significant*, can make a whole *world* of significance, to the degree that the whole “world” was just threatened. This is what the battlefield can be like for those in it. It’s “as if” death were present — which means: no desire, or desire’s instant fulfillment, or desire’s complete impotence — but suddenly gives birth to life. How did I survive that? I am not that! This is the significance of having a world birthed here.

And yet, on the other hand, since this archaic destruction, since archaic, happens before subject and object are clearly distinguished (it is not experienced directly), the site of this destruction will not just appear with the sudden appearance of the object and its external objectivity. Since his omnipotent illusion has yet to go firmly underground and become unconscious destructive fantasy in and as (the survival of) the object, the baby still cannot as yet firmly distinguish inside from outside and himself from his mother’s comings and goings, which means that her failure to survive — if she retaliates, for instance — must dawn world-apocalyptically *not just “for her” but “for him” as well*. If the hungry neonate could signify with words at this point instead of, say, with her

²²⁵ Can anyone know this, actually, about a womb?

²²⁶ But whence comes the possibility for disaster and destruction if child and mother are yet still identified as one, or if the pre-human is one with mother nature, in the womb? Is birth a division? A destruction? That will first depend — will it not? — on the child’s relationship with the breast — an all-significant relation, and thus a sacred one — or rather on how the whole feeding and holding technique of the environment stands *in relation* to the judgment of the now-distinct if not self-identifying neonate. And yet! And yet, as Freud says, “the child cannot possibly have felt his mother’s departure as something agreeable or even indifferent.” How does one judge prior to concepts, prior to words? Nature first arrives or first departs? In any case, pleasure and displeasure become *significant* in the form here of an objectified world, a world distinct from self. The embattled soldier just missed — or did he? — becoming once again identified, one, with the world, with mother nature. When do departures begin? When is a departure not a departure but the beginning of a relation? In any case, the division of the mother’s body is bloody, visceral, and quite the ordeal. Was it not? *How are we to make meaning of this?* Let us create the world anew. But how to begin?

pacifier, she might say: What is happening? There is want. What is this wanting to do? Now (with the breast) there is pleasure, satisfaction. Now (with the breast's disappearance) there is destruction..... Then again, there is want... Still wanting.... There is *hunger*. What has happened to the thing? Is it dead? Did *I* destroy *it*? Indeed, if I'm not distinct from it, *am I dead*?

My point here, then, boils down to recognizing two alternative fates for the objectivity of death: The fact of being born, of having to live intersubjectively, and of *apparently* having to live completely without omnipotent illusion, dictates that *death happens* not just metaphorically or representationally but also quite literally or presentationally in every severely mentally ill person's daily life, in some people's early life, and all the time in every normal adult's unconscious life. Indeed, it secretly happens all the time "in" and "as" objects of value. What happens to death's happening — how it evolves and whether it is "survived," "experienced," or not — thus depends foremost on how the earliest relationships proceed over the years, and especially at first. If a person has never been able and enabled to (mis)present or (mis)experience death into and as a transitional object, that is, into and as any socially useful and sunny object, this happening will remain for him quite undigested, dark, and in need of repetition. Here we have the reverse of transitional objectivity or what might be called less-than-transitional objectivity, or, say, autism in its varying degrees of severity. Here objects are often *nocebos*. They symbolically injure. Since his attempts to (mis)objectify the death that happened to him into a transitional experience have repeatedly come up empty-handed, as it were, a deprived infant, child, or traumatized individual will have the tendency to more or less strictly *present and incorporate* death, the break in life's continuity, as if it

could be “purely experienced” and digested. Here, I think, we have the “source” of any and all suicidal tendencies. On the other hand, in Winnicott’s sunny “Use of an Object” vignette as well as in the *fort-da* game, we find that if a primitive wish is enabled through good enough care to present death’s happening in and as an object, this externalization allows the wisher to *misrepresent and excorporate* death more strictly, as if death could never even appear or misappear in life. This person thus creates needs other than the obsessive need to make death the “object” of his concern literally and repeatedly. In other words, by producing death in its consciously “forgotten” form, that is, in and as an aesthetically pleasing or beautiful *object*, morbid *symptoms* are put to good use and in fact “hidden” away. Voila value. Freud releases *play* from his quest for a presentation of the death drive in “pure culture,” we recall, since playing with an object expresses pleasure over pain. On our account, then, play also sublimates death into radically alive unconsciousness.

So this is how force or mechanism becomes symbolic.²²⁷ In short, as a symbol, the object allows us to at least *partially understand* “what happened” even if it can’t fully explain it. To the degree that both objects — “spool” and “wound” — help to “contain” the breaking apart and destruction of the experienced world, they make sense of, give “objective” meaning to, they *sublimate* world-catastrophe to the point that the catastrophe is now less “directly” *presented* — in the child’s screams or the soldier’s dreams, for instance — than re-presented, distorted into *representational* form. The “catastrophe” —

²²⁷ I am not one for violent world revolution but for recognizing that one can revolutionize the world through symbolic inscriptions—such as writing to communicate the value of living and sharing life and the means of life. And what is *not* a means of life? War, I suppose, or at least *trauma*. What about birth for the neonate? And what about the disappearance of the first breast? The irony here is that while the child’s merely natural sustenance — say, in mother’s milk — seems to be departing (at least when we try to conceptualize this event) in the breast’s disappearance, new means of life become available, and these have a *wider meaning*, to the degree that same and different arise here; or is it there?

now in scare quotes — is here at least rudimentarily re-presented; it is “externalized” at least to the surface of the skin, if not beyond it. “It” has been symbolized.

Thus, for Freud, Marx, Kant, and Winnicott, culture is a developmental and developing extension of the need to make some sort of *aesthetically shared sense, a mutual symbolization, of the loss both of merely natural mothering and of the identifications and divisions be-longing initially to birth and then later still to social life*. Human development is enculturation, and yet enculturation is a form of rooting, as we’ve said, the point of departure of which, paradoxically, *is* a departure from merely natural rooting. If we say that biological development is merely natural *growth*, for instance, we should say that cultural development is our *growing up* on top of this, even despite this. In short, then, human development is and remains complex and conflicted, marked by antagonism, to the degree that it isn’t just built with or upon (mother) nature but also in and through a splitting-off from what must be presupposed as an immediacy or primitive identification with nature.

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