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# Programming immaterial labour

Stefano HARNEY

Singapore Management University, [sharney@smu.edu.sg](mailto:sharney@smu.edu.sg)

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# Programming Immaterial Labour

*Stefano Harney*

In an interview about a special section of the influential new journal *Multitudes* called “Creativity at Work”, Brian Holmes recently explained that:

the basic notion of immaterial labour is that the manipulation of information, but also the interplay of affects, have become central in the contemporary working process even in the factories, but much more so in the many forms of language-, image- and ambiance-production. Workers can no longer be treated like Taylorist gorillas, exploited for their purely physical force; the “spirit of the worker” has to come down onto the factory floor, and from there it can gain further autonomy by escaping into the flexible work situations developing on the urban territory. (Von Osten 2004)

Language, image, and ambiance production used to go under the sign of cultural labour. Today, these increasingly gather under the banner of immaterial labour. It is this part of cultural labour, a part of cultural labour most explicitly projecting itself as labour, that I want to discuss in this article.

Rather than shying away from the category of labour as much cultural labour does, immaterial labour proclaims itself the source of all wealth. Autonomist Marxism, emanating from Italy with important and different movements in the United States, South America, and South Africa in the first instance, names a reading of Capital that emphasizes the living labour as the source of wealth. Such labour today is increasingly marked by the way it combines the bodily and the machinic in an intensified production of commodities that derive from information, communication and cybernetics, on the one hand, and affect, taste, public opinion, consumption, and art, on the other. Thus this labour is immaterial not because it is less material than any other labour, but because it is more social. One of its key theorists, Maurizio Lazzarato, speculates that this kind of social labour will allow “a location of radical autonomy of productive synergies” (Lazzarato).

One such synergy has been with the “movement of movements”. Tom Mertes, editor of a collection bearing this title, calls autonomist authors Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri “the Northern movements’ most widely read theorists” (2004, 10). The autonomy of the immaterial worker provokes a politics of possibility for labour writ large and synergistic with the movement of movement’s insistence that capital-centric thought should not imprison its potentialities. The efforts to

value the environment, indigenous cultures, art and performance, and affect and emotion differently see in immaterial labour the resistance of all these realms to capitalist valorization, and a potential power in this socialized resistance. Of course Hardt and Negri's emblematic works of autonomist Marxism has also been thoroughly and not always productively criticized, as has been catalogued in another online edition of *Multitudes* (Penguin 2004) But the notion of a new potential in immaterial labour continues to attract attention in the nexus of new journals, online political communities, and social justice movements.

There is a temptation no doubt to portray such a politics as a new Gotha Programme and to accuse it of faith in the "supernatural creative powers of labour", as Marx said in his response to this programme. His *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (Marx 1966) was written as a set of critical marginal notes on a proposed political programme proposed by Ferdinand Lasalle and his followers in the German workers movement. Marx's notes were later taken up by Lenin (1943) for what they said about the state and about a future communist society. But Marx himself also circulated these notes. They were originally intended to dissociate Marx and Engels from a planned unity conference of two factions of the German workers' movement at which LaSalle was to present this programme. Marx's opening retort "labour is not the source of all wealth" once enjoyed canonical status on the Left. Marx went on in that first marginal note to remind Lasalle and his faction that:

the bourgeois have good grounds for fancifully ascribing supernatural creative power to labour, since it follows precisely from the fact that labour depends on nature, that the man who possesses no other property than his labour power must, in all conditions of society and culture, be the slave of other men who have made themselves the owners of the material conditions of labour. He can only work with their permission and hence only live with their permission. (1966, 3)

Do claims for the wealth-making capacity of immaterial labour today risk ignoring the material conditions of such labour? There are at least two good reasons not to make such an accusation too quickly. The first and more obvious is that the concept of immaterial labour attempts to materialize communication and affect it in ways that would seem to break down a strict distinction between labour and its means, and even between living and dead labour. But a second and perhaps more speculative reason to resist such a scepticism is to see what might be done with the optimism generated by such a concept.

For those practicing critique and activism within the international division of cultural labour, placing immaterial labour within the history of cultural labour also places it within suspicion. Cultural labour has a history of forgetting itself as labour, and forgetting its labour as productive of political economy (Maxwell 2001) Tiziana Terranova's (2004) convincing recent critique of cyberterians comes to mind here. It might also subsequently be tempting to propose an intervention in cultural policy as a way to open up the conditions of production of immaterial labour. Policy might offer the chance to influence the conditions making this worldview possible (Miller and Yudice 2002).

As useful as these interventions might be, perhaps with a cultural labour that knows itself as labour, a different approach is in order. This article will presume that there is reason to respect the excitement of autonomist Marxism and its allies in the movement of movements and reason to wonder whether the intensifying encounter between labour and culture on the grounds of this intensive materialism might indeed hold something more, something worth encouraging.

But what can bring this into focus? Or perhaps more directly, what can be made of this excitement. I will suggest—perhaps against the grain of both the movement utopias and theorists of critical cultural policy and the political economy of cultural labour—that its potential might be brought to view and developed by something I will want to call *a socialist programmatic*. I use the term *programmatic* to pay attention to the *problematic* of capitalism out of which might emerge a socialist *programme*. This problematic will be understood specifically as Marx understood it, as a socialization continually undermined by the general equivalent and the prevalence of the commodity form. Thus by way of a critique of the capitalist general equivalent and the commodity form, a socialist programmatic offers itself as an experiment in socialization by throwing itself up as a different societal fetish.

To the extent that the tendency to immaterial labour intensifies and speeds this socialization and its undermining, it ought to be sympathetic to programming. It ought to be sympathetic to critique of the commodity form as the structure through which the general equivalent sorts social semiotics. It ought to be sympathetic to a critique that seeks a form that can do more than sort for comparison, that can mobilize social semiotics differently. And it may be that immaterial labour is not just susceptible to a socialist programmatic, but helpful to it. Michael E. Brown (2005) says that social labour is “critical not because it or its representatives articulate a plan for a better society or a different mode of production, but simply by virtue of *being* essentially social under conditions in which privately accumulated wealth provides no means to support it which do not undermine capitalist relations of production”.<sup>1</sup> Those conditions of privately accumulated wealth draw near to the spirit of the worker in immaterial labour, and a sociality without support comes clearly into view. Labour must sell what it does not own but has in common as affect and communication. Immaterial labour might help a programme to recognize that social wealth lies precisely in this common dependence of affect and communication, and that more social wealth might lie in the expansion of this interdependence of affect and communication. A critique leading to a programme of sustaining this interdependent sociality should come easily here. At least, that will be the supposition of this reading.

1. This article draws its inspiration from the recent unpublished circular by Michael E. Brown (2005) called “A Modest Proposal”, in which he puts forward the idea of a specifically socialist programme in the context of contemporary American politics under a “state of permanent emergency”. That programme has three elements: a renewed critique of capital, support for American Leftist institutions, and reckoning with the Leftist past that frees itself of an anti-communist legacy.

We might begin by recalling that Marx made his marginal notes on the Gotha Programme not because he did not care about programmes, but because he did. It is worth looking closely at the letter Marx wrote to Wilhelm Bracke in 1875 making his notes available to the German worker parties. “Every step of real movement is more important than a dozen programmes,” he said in his letter (Marx 1966, 34). But he went on to tell Bracke that the movement would have been better remaining with the Eisenach Programme, created by the Social-Democratic Worker’s Party and affiliated with the First International, which Marx and Engels helped to found. He believed the Gotha “Unity Programme” offered by LaSalle and his followers would “demoralise the party”. He went on to complain to Bracke that “by drawing up a programme of principles (instead of postponing this until it has been prepared for by a considerable period of common activity), one sets up before the whole world a landmark by which the level of the party movement is measured” (Marx 1966, 35). He told Bracke that he and Engels would publish their own “altogether remote” position after the Unity Congress was held. Far from rejecting programmes, Marx is here arguing for his own programme and insisting that programmes are mediated by common action. But this is only the first level of mediation. In fact, as we will see, what Marx does in *the Critique of the Gotha Programme* is to theorize the programme as the mediation of representation, the place where a new societal fetish is worked out. Gayatri Spivak famously reads the two-fold character of representation in Marx’s *Eighteenth Brumaire* (Spivak 1988). Representation is a political term, where one proposes to act for others. But representation is also a social term, where one interprets others. Spivak notes that this two-fold character of representation cannot hold. To interpret others becomes to act for them, and to act for them is just that—an act, an act of interpretation. Or, as Spivak calls it, the relational contrast “between a proxy and a portrait”. A socialist programme recognizes this unstable two-fold character of representation against the capitalist general equivalent and the commodity fetish that ensure their stability through moments of separation or collapse. But more than that, Marx’s critical notes *as a nascent programme* continually enact this instability of representation without succumbing to collapse or separation.

### Common Action

Immaterial labour brings this two-fold social character of representation closer, but at first it appears that immaterial labour precisely insists on separation or collapse—it separates in its appeal to spirit, affect, and creativity, and collapses in its mourning of the commodification of these capacities. In either case the risk is that immaterial labour forgets what it permits others to do for it and with it, forgets its conditions of reproduction, and what might be gained from seeing how one is represented through these conditions and how one might represent them and be represented by them, programmatically. It is no doubt true that

trumpeting labour's new power risks repeating "bourgeois phrases (that) cause the conditions to be ignored that alone give them meaning" (1966, 3).

Take for instance a prime example of the immaterial labourer, the business school student. Of course this example is less common and perhaps less recognized than more frequently cited examples of the software programmer or the designer of advertisements. But for producing communicative and affective commodities, for concentrating on the organization of their own social production of these commodities, the business school student is the immaterial labourer *par excellence*. And the standard curriculum of the contemporary business school reflects this condition. Far from being a defence of capital, this curriculum is a celebration of labour and its supernatural creative power. Although each business school programme is briefly interrupted by a module in accounting that insists at least on counting dead labour, for the most part students are repeatedly exhorted to see the limitless possibilities of their own labour as leaders, team-builders, change agents, and creative competitors. It might therefore serve as a caution to any new celebration of immaterial labour to hear such echoes in the corridors of the contemporary business school. (And this leaves aside a fuller account of management itself as the first immaterial labour.) Yet the massification of the business school suggests that those who fill these corridors have come for "permission to live" (1966, 3). The curriculum is addressed precisely to such labour, a labouring class that has no access to the material conditions that put it to work.

In other words, this echo might instead remind us of the common predicament of business school students and the movement of movements. Both "possess no other property than (their) labour power". And both remain "the slave of other men who have made themselves the owners of the material conditions of labour" (1966, 3). Yet the opposite must also apply. The rise of the business school, no less than the rise of the movement of movements, suggest a subtle but important shift in the relations of production, a shift that is also acted out in this first paragraph of Marx's critique. Because Lasalle in fact writes "Labour is the source of all wealth and all culture", Marx retorts only that "Labour is not the source of all wealth". Culture is dropped here and only introduced later in the paragraph—not as the product of labour, but as a material condition. In this later sentence Marx writes "that the man who possesses no other property than his labour power must, in all conditions of society and culture, be the slave of other men who have made themselves the owners of the material conditions of labour" (1966, 3). Marx here understands society and culture not as mere product whose fruits should be distributed more fairly as the Lasalleans will argue, but instead he hints at a "General Intellect", as he calls it in the *Grundrisse* (Marx 1973), that is a force of production; one that he predicted in that text would allow labour to stand to the side of production, and indeed, he added although it is not much remarked, stand to the side of each other.

It might be, then, that the reason both the business school student and the activist in the movement of movements feels the power of his/her labour is indeed because of this tendential shift in the material base of production and the

chance to stand beside such production and even to stand beside each other and to feel the possibilities of representation by others, and to others. If so, perhaps this is why Marx is not content in his critique either with policy or political economy, but announces that he wants “a socialist programme” to realize the implications of this tendency in his day. So far, we have not left the very first paragraph of Marx’s critique. It is worth continuing.

## Networks

Marx goes on directly to challenge the second and third parts of the opening point in the LaSalle programme. And it would at first appear that Marx has gone back on his intuition that culture and labour might be on the same side of the equation opposite wealth. It might appear that his insight into the General Intellect and the encounter of labour with conditions of production neither fully inside nor outside of itself has been withdrawn. He writes: “In proportion as labour develops socially, and becomes thereby a source of wealth and culture, poverty and neglect develop among the workers, and wealth and culture among the non-workers” (Marx 1966, 5). Not only does this statement appear to backtrack on a notion of immaterial labour, but it also runs against the sensibilities of contemporary cultural studies. Yet we should not read it too hastily.

Marx is in the first instance substituting this sentence for the next lines of the Gotha programme, which here continue with “Since useful labour is only possible in and through society—the proceeds of labour belong undiminished with equal right to all the members of society” (1966, 4). Marx notes that this statement places the maintenance of society at the heart of its logic. He charges that “this proposition has at all times been made use of by the champions of the prevailing state of society” (Marx 1966, 4). The state and various kinds of private property make their claims for the primacy of their own reproduction to preserve and maintain society. But behind this critique lies a more general caution. Social labour contains two contradictory social aspects: the prevailing state of society on the one hand, and the society of producers on the other. Not all the conditions of sociality of labour are to be welcomed. One has to be able to imagine in other words an asocial sociality. Surely this is the missed lesson of fordism in post-fordism and particularly in the promotion of network societies. It is presumed by many in the movement of movements today precisely what was presumed by Lenin and Gramsci in their day and in their moment of capitalism—that taking the conditions of production out of the hands of capital would allow the sociality of fordism or post-fordism to be put to work for the society of producers. To free the network is the goal of open source programmers and Global South NGO alliances. The problem of socialism is reduced here to the problem of ownership and control. The same movements that would never contemplate “taking over the state” are content to take over the conditions of production and to maintain society, and indeed to develop it. What we need, we hear, is more networks, just as once we needed more factories.

What gets lost is the production of society itself, not its maintenance, by social labour. The capacity of social labour is not only in its ability to form an assembly line or an online community, but to consider such forms through a socialist programmatic of what else labour “might want to do together”, as Randy Martin (2002) says. This last links Marx not only to a more capacious immaterial labour, but also to a more robust cultural studies. The experience of making wealth and culture for others needs to be considered in thinking about making it otherwise, or indeed in thinking about making it otherwise for others. One does not seek a collapse or separation in portrait and proxy in cultural studies but an elaboration of these for all, based on a critique of their previous restriction, which is what Marx meant by a socialist programme.

### Distributive Politics

Next, in his third point Marx elaborates a critique of distribution perhaps more important today than even in his time. It is a critique that forces a distinction between a politics of the conditions of production and a politics of what we might call the conditions of the conditions of production. In forcing this distinction, Marx also opens up a discussion of how the term equality might move from having fixed meaning to a programmatic meaning. But we will leave that aside temporarily.

Marx takes aim against the phrase “cooperative regulation of the total labour with equitable distribution of the proceeds of labour” (1966, 6). But he is really rehearsing a critique of the classical political economists. As Louis Althusser noted, Marx understood, as Smith and Ricardo had not, the double aspect of the circuits of capital (Althusser 1970). Marx saw that each circuit was both itself and at the same time produced by the specific relations of production. Thus distribution had a double aspect. It produced a distribution of goods and services destined for consumption by individuals, but it also reproduced a distribution of the conditions of production. Distribution also meant the distribution of property, machinery, tools, knowledge, and the distribution of the laws and conventions such a distribution might provoke. This was the distribution of distribution, or the conditions of the conditions of production. Marx writes, “the distribution of the means of consumption at any time is only a consequence of the distribution of the conditions of production themselves” (1966, 10). Smith and Ricardo ignored the distribution of conditions in favour of what Marx called the distribution of the means of consumption. And so too today is any politics of distribution liable to be only a politics of the distribution of the means of consumption, not of the distribution of distribution. The resurgence of the appeal of the guaranteed annual income, the Tobin tax, or lower-income country debt relief, reasonable as non-socialist common action, come to mind.

In this section of notes Marx wants to suggest such non-socialist common action; such “equitable distribution of the proceeds of labour” falls short on two accounts. First it is not programmatic enough, does not recognize the socialism



that already happens, to borrow from deconstruction, in the midst of such a bourgeois right. But his second point will also go on to question the innocence of such non-socialist common action, and the reason a programme might be helpful to participation in common action. But such a programme would have to be equal to the task.

LaSalle's programme calls for workers to get back an equitable distribution of all proceeds of labour. But this principle of equitable distribution is deceptive. Marx asks: what about what is needed to replace the conditions of production, to expand production, to provide insurance, to provide schools and health and unemployment aid, and the "general cost of administration not belonging to production". How will these social needs be ensured? They are, as Marx said, "in no way calculable by equity" (1966, 7). Thus even as this Lasallean programme tends to reconstitute a general equivalent through a model of equilibrium, what makes possible the contemplation of this simple distribution is not itself subject to such calculation by equity. Something more programmatic is necessary here to grasp what is already at work—a project of the whole making distribution possible. This requires what Engels called returning the whole to the whole.

Rather than taking over conditions of production but retaining the general equivalent through this "equitable distribution", an engagement with the "total social product" confronts the conditions of the conditions of production, which are always somehow beyond the general equivalent. Or in other words, the general equivalent is never general. It is, as Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000) says in the context of the development of capitalist social relations in India, always realized in historically specific ways, always dependent on an indigestible difference at the heart of its generality.

What this means in the first instance is that calls for the distribution of the product of labour but not the conditions of labour, such as calls for guaranteed annual income, contribute to masking the two-fold character of the general equivalent. Indeed Marx realizes that a simplified notion of distribution not only hides distribution's socialism, but also supports a simplified notion of the general equivalent. Since the two-fold character of the general equivalent is precisely its weakness as a societal fetish—it cannot compare without resort to what Giorgio Agamben (2004) calls the state of exception—then calling on this fetish to deliver distributive equity is then not only to uphold the equivalent in its weakness but also even to call upon this state of exception.

A socialist programmatic might at least suggest that labour could do something with this immense wealth of the General Intellect other than parcel it out equally, summoning the sovereign violence of setting out the measure, and leaving the distribution of conditions of production to similar powers. Instead, by critiquing such sovereignty and its exceptions, labour might make the two-fold character of the general equivalent subject to a programmatic ambition. Immaterial labour ought to offer something here. Such commodities as produce communication and affect should be unstable when submitted to the general equivalent, and, to use an old term, such commodities should produce a certain heightened contradiction in the form, one that social labour might use to escape

any general equivalence that does not admit of its own difference. Rather than excluding all exchange in favour of use in a moment of LaSallean utopia, a moment with us again in certain programmes of the movement of movements, exchange might be intensified under a socialist programmatic. One could read off Marx's critique of distribution a socialist exchange that made both the means of production and the means of consumption legible to each other. On the other hand, excluding exchange from a socialist programmatic risks the collapse into use-value of the two fold aspect of representation and raises the question of how one would be useful to others. Marx's example of this dilemma in the *Critique of the Gotha Programme* is his ridicule of the phrase "useful labour", which he notes might include a lone human slaughtering an animal in isolation from society (1966, 4).

Here again immaterial labour offers openings through its concrete instance. The immaterial commodity is communication and affect for others. But as feminist scholars working in technoscience have noted, there has been a half-century of effort to make such commodities more measurable by turning affect into communication, for purposes of both profit and control. Here communication stands for exchange-value as affect for use-value. Yet these scholars take the disturbing of communication with affect and of affect with communication, and they embrace it as an opportunity to disturb nature and culture divides and look to the conditions of production that throw up such divisions. As commodity labour becomes itself more imbricated in immaterial labour, Patricia Clough writes that the resulting bodies "are in excess of the historicity of capitalist capture" (2004, 13) Any exchange of values among such bodies must assuredly provoke a programme open to being surpassed by new existential productions.

Felix Guattari captured something of this in his phrase "stock exchanges of value". He wrote in his most programmatic work:

What condemns the capitalist value system is that it is characterized by general equivalence, which flattens out all other forms of value, alienating them in its hegemony. On this basis we must if not oppose, at least superimpose instruments of valorization founded on existential productions that cannot be determined simply in terms of abstract labour-time or by an expected capitalist profit. The information and telematic revolutions are supporting new "stock exchanges" of value and new collective debate, providing opportunities for the most individual, most singular, and most dissensual enterprises. (Guattari 2000, 65)

For dissensus to be an enterprise rather than only an excess of capture exchange must open up to its internal inequality, must depart from the capitalist programme of the general equivalent. As Marx reasons, "if the material conditions of production are the cooperative property of the workers themselves, then this likewise results in a different distribution of the means of consumption from the present one" (1966, 11).

## Equality

Perhaps this is why Marx wants to avoid putting “the principal stress” in a programme on all that “fuss about so-called distribution” (1966, 10). He senses that the conditions of consumption resulting from only one aspect of distribution, and leaving aside the distribution of the conditions of production, help contain the excessive bodies of social labour as mere subjects and citizens. He notes again the dangers of this stress on so-called distribution—that under the simple exchange of the Lasallean programme, these subject and citizens appear now rational because in such a programme of equitable distribution, where the means of production are held cooperatively, there is no longer any conflict in “principle and practice”. But they are still subject and citizens and they are still “made with an equal standard, labour” (1966, 9). Still are they based on the general equivalent and the commodity form (here in its aspect as abstract labour). The abolition of subjects and citizens, as Fred Moten (2005) has argued, remains the task. And we thus turn here to what was once often rehearsed issue on the Left, however unsatisfactorily—equal rights. Equal rights as a fixed term has already been undermined in Marx’s critique of the means of consumption as the sole aspect of distribution and his attention to distribution’s second, internal aspect of socialism.

Here Marx notes that if workers have a right to get back what they put in but have differing levels of ability, then what they get back will not be equal. And indeed no “equal right” can avoid this problem because:

right by its very nature can only consist in the application of an equal standard; but unequal individuals (and they would not be different individuals if they were not unequal) are only measurable by an equal standard in so far as they are brought under an equal point of view, are taken from one *definite* side only, e.g. in the present case are regarded *only as workers*, and nothing more seen in them, everything else being ignored. (, 9)

This is often taken as Marx’s post-structuralist moment, the moment where he ab-uses, as Gayatri Spivak says, the Enlightenment dream of equality. Tellingly, this post-structuralist programmatic serves as the bridge in fact from Marx’s socialist programme to his communist society. And indeed it is actually the preliminary move to the bolder post-structuralism *avant la lettre* at the heart of Marx’s critical notes.

“In the higher phase of communist society,” he famously continued, when “all the springs of co-operative wealth flow more abundantly—only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be fully left behind and society inscribe on its banners: from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!” (1966, 10). This phrase has been badly read from Lenin onward. Lenin read it as teleology—as the gradual falling away of compunction in labour. Others have read it as a kind of principle of charity and as a moral statement. The lens of

immaterial labour suggests it might be read otherwise. Indeed, even the lens of the business school might focus us differently. Marx reverses in this phrase necessity and freedom. In the business school one must work hard to achieve the freedom of money and what it can buy. One moves from necessity to freedom. In immaterial labour one works hard but the freedom is stolen by the cultural and technology industries. One wants to reverse and start with freedom in immaterial labour, but instead one starts with necessity and hopes for the freedom of success. Andrew Ross's book on Silicon Alley chronicles software workers efforts to start with the freedom of their creative impulses in a "humane workplace". They end up in the grips of necessity.

But for Marx it is the very notion of an equation that must be overturned, the very notion that a bargain can be made, a bargain that requires agreement on a common measurement. Instead he places freedom first, from which flows a surplus of necessity. From each according to his ability should be read in the context of the potential Marx describes flowing from the General Intellect. Marx envisions social labour here as pleasurable, as "the prime necessity", as what people want to do together; in other words, as freedom. To work according to ability becomes the pleasure of life and leads to the production of countless new social needs. The more a society needs under these circumstances of the unequation, the better. These social needs are then taken up in the second half of the unequation to give support more freedom and more production of social needs. Impossible to know what one puts in, what comes out is socially determined after the moment of freedom, and picked up according to excessive social needs to make more freedom. Far from a moral claim or a teleology, Marx here anticipates the social life possible when socialization frees itself of the incessant comparison and flattening of the general equivalent and the commodity form.

Before he finishes his critical notes, Marx confronts the narrow use of the term state by the Lasalleans to mean government apparatus—a sleight of hand that persists today in fields such as public administration, social policy, and business and management studies. And in this section he makes one final comment of note for a consideration of the potential of immaterial labour.

Even vulgar democracy, which sees the millennium in the democratic republic and has no suspicion that it is precisely in this last state form of bourgeois society that the class struggle has to be fought out to a conclusion – even it towers mountains about this kind of democratism within the limits of what is permitted by the police and what is logically impermissible. (Marx 1966, 19)

It is not too much to suggest that the very vulgarity of contemporary democracy is its reduction of the excess of social necessity produced by immaterial labour to mere representation. Could a socialist programmatic represent more?

## A Socialist Programmatic

Everyone who has been involved with the organized Left knows the legacy of sectarianism, and it is certainly possible to sense in some of Marx's vitriol a foretaste of such divisiveness. But if immaterial labour stands for anything it is the way labour and its material conditions are forced together in a programme. Immaterial labour is said to result from the directly productive qualities of social reproduction. As Marx predicted, the programme of capital today enters the spirit of the worker as surely as that spirit descends to the workplace. And, confronted with this programme, workers of course want to find a position "altogether remote" from it. This prime division between labour and capital and its rancour has, as Michel Foucault noted, "only intensified". And if it is true that this invasion of the worker's body and spirit by capital must have a long legacy for Foucault to have traced biopower in the first place, it is nonetheless possible that the optimism in the networks known as the movement of movements and in the critical tendency of autonomism marks a new potential to engage capital programmatically. Any invocation of Foucault, however, reminds us of bio-techno-scientific dangers to immaterial labour if this optimism is not joined to a socialism.

And perhaps here one begins to see the potential usefulness of an explicit socialist programmatic. Hardt and Negri propose the guaranteed annual income programmatically and understand very well Marx's critique of distribution. They have it in mind to break social equivalencies of income and work imposed in the first instance by what Marx called that "miserable base", the wage. But because distribution is part of both socialism and capitalism, this distribution of the means of consumption needs a principle of association that nurtures socialism. In other words, it needs realization in networks that pursue the freedom of social wealth by intensifying and expanding what they need from each other. Only this kind of network that deepens as it grows approximates Marx's "revolutionary combination, due to association".

*University of Leicester, UK*

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