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To Have Done With Forgiveness:
Capitalism, Christianity, and the Politics of Immanence

A Thesis
presented to
the Faculty of Arts and Humanities
University of Denver

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Timothy Snediker
June 2016
Advisor: Prof. Carl Raschke

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Abstract

This essay seeks to formulate a critical account of the genealogical link between capitalism and Christianity by interrogating the ontology and the processes of subjectivization which subtend these two apparently disparate social and political formations. To this end, I make use of the philosophical thought of Gilles Deleuze, in particular his readings of Spinoza, Foucault, Nietzsche, and Sacher-Masoch. The central themes of the essay—the identity of God and money, and the vicissitudes of the creditor-debtor relation—culminate in a theory of a *theodicy of money*, which deploys an apparatus of forgiveness in order to obscure and displace the stakes and the site of the game of guilt and innocence. In short, to produce, by means of the Christian logic of forgiveness, a subject of forgiveness capable, not only of standing guarantor for herself, but as the ground of the formal freedom and formal equality required of liberal democracy and the capitalist mode of production.

Acknowledgements

One of the beautiful contradictions of writing an essay which centers on a critique of the creditor-debtor relation is that, at some point, one must acknowledge one's debts, a circumstance which perhaps testifies to a human relation irreducible to that which is investigated herein—and one should be grateful for that. There are many—human and nonhuman—without whom this essay would have been inconceivable. The first of these is Sean Capener, whose friendship and critical advice truly made the tiny germ of this essay flourish. I am grateful to the faculty who have guided and encouraged me from the outset of this project to its final form: Carl Raschke, Thomas Nail, Sarah Pessin, and Robert Urquhart (with special thanks to Gregory Robbins, who was willing to take part in the committee without any prior knowledge of the project). Additionally, this work would never have been completed without the material, emotional and spiritual support of my family—especially Steve and Marcia—who love without condition. And to my partner in life and in crime, Elyse: thank you for your love, and for putting up with me these last few months.

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It is a question of belief and desire. Belief and desire are everywhere. Even is no one really wants money—it is always a means, never an end—everyone believes in money, everyone desires money, or, rather, money is the reality, the interiority of belief and desire in which we dwell. It is not we who desire money; it is money that desires in us.

— Philip Goodchild

*When you will have made him a body without organs,
then you will have delivered him from all his automatic reactions
and restored him to his true freedom.*

*Then you will teach him again to dance wrong side out
as in the frenzy of dance halls
and this wrong side out will be his real place.*

— Antonin Artaud

Preface

God or Money. One can read this phrase, with Christ's dictum in mind, as an imperative to alternatives, a choice between two incommensurable devotions: "You cannot serve both God and money." *God or Money.* In this first case, it is a matter of purifying, rectifying, or redirecting one's desire. Here desire is that which expresses one's lack; desire names an object one needs to fill the lack. Hence desire is not only eschatological and soteriological, it is existential and ontological; desire is orientation of one's being toward this or that: this is the Good, that is Evil, and so on. More precisely: one should not desire money. One should desire God, even, and especially if, this communion with God requires jettisoning all hopes for prosperity, security, happiness—all of the rewards that money promises. A pure asceticism, perhaps, where every thought of worldly gain perishes or disappears into the beatitude of the 'highest' poverty. Or perhaps there is some middle ground one can find, where the accumulation of money (not to speak of its circulation) might be a means towards charity, towards righteousness. Perhaps God is the end to which money is a means; perhaps desiring is worshiping and one can worship God *with* money. Perhaps the converse is true: God a means to money,

faith a function of desire. Perhaps, in drawing near to God, money draws near to us. When one speaks of God and money, registers of meaning multiply and invert themselves; sense gets fractured. One can never be sure of where one is, or what is up and what is down, except for these two words—God *and* money—which wait like lighthouses in the murk, or sing like sirens, or both.

One can read this phrase in yet another register, where the conjunction is a sort of desultory equivocation, God or money or whatever; or still yet another register, where a loose identification takes place—God, or money, God (or money)—said as if in a whisper, apologetically, as if the Christ we mentioned above were leaning in, eavesdropping on the secrets of desire—may God forgive us. Still another register, though it is for us the final register: *Deus sive Monēta*.¹ Spinoza groans and turns in the earth, in a Christian cemetery in the Hague. Christ winces. God or money, God = money, God is money: in its cruel literality each and every iteration of this perverse Spinozism sends our better angels running; one feels the air go out of the room; one feels a certain disgust. From the perspective of a certain piety, nothing could be further from the truth. Yet from the point of view of *another* piety—the piety with which this essay is

¹ I have chosen the Latin term *Monēta* for this perverse rendering of Spinoza's *Deus sive Natura* for two reasons, or rather, because of two goddesses: Mnemosyne and Juno, each of which bears *Monēta* as an epithet. In the latter case, Juno gained her epithet by virtue of her role as the protector of the funds stored up in her temple, testifying already to the link between divinity, money, and finance. The former case, which is in my opinion the more interesting one, the divine personification of memory, Mnemosyne, also takes the name Money, *Monēta*. That there is a decisive link between money and memory is yet to be demonstrated, but let it suffice to say that inasmuch as one always begins with a memory, one is always already implicated in money, as if a fold in a field, or a wave on the sea.

concerned—this is perhaps the most common, albeit unconscious, thought. Not a vulgar declaration of money as one’s god, one’s personal, particular god; rather the impersonality of the simple, unadorned faith of a living being in the altogether unremarkable promise and power of money. Rather than speaking of faith in this or that, one should rather speak of faith in general—a *general credit* that has purchase, so to speak, everywhere, in and for everything.

All of this is to say—simply, finally—that the subject of this essay is money. Or God, if you’ll pardon the expression. *Pace* Nietzsche, it will be necessary to inquire how and to what extent the rumors of God’s death have been exaggerated. One should rather ask whether God, rather than dying, having been dead, being dead, has been transformed into money.² And what are the thresholds or critical points in God’s transformation. And whether or not God has been money all along and what it would mean to say such a thing. And how could God forgive God for it all, for everything, forever and ever, amen.

² Giorgio Agamben, “God didn’t die, he was transformed into money.” (Interview) URL: <https://libcom.org/library/god-didnt-die-he-was-transformed-money-interview-giorgio-agamben-peppe-sav%C3%A0>. Accessed June 4th, 2015.

Chapter 1 – Introduction: Capitalism and Christianity

1.1 That capitalism is a religion is perhaps not readily or immediately apparent. One speaks rather of ‘elective affinities’ between capitalism and Protestantism—according to Max Weber, of course, and to a certain Adam Smith. A whole literature, by turns sociological and economic, rises up under the aegis of capitalism, attesting to its natural history: capitalism is a *culmination*, natural and even beautiful; it is the harbinger of freedom to the same extent that it was, or is, inevitable. Yet Walter Benjamin, in an early, enigmatic fragment, manages to say something different. “Capitalism,” writes Benjamin, “is a purely cultic religion, perhaps the most extreme that ever existed.”³ Despite the unpolished, provisional character of his reflections, Benjamin manages to isolate several crucial features of the religion called capitalism. Rather than atonement, it creates guilt, or debt.⁴ It puts an end to the transcendence of God. Rather than killing God

³ Walter Benjamin, “Capitalism as Religion,” *Selected Writings, Vol. 1*, ed. Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 288.

⁴ Benjamin refers to the “demonic ambiguity” of the German word *Schuld*, which signifies in two registers: guilt and debt. Nietzsche had already pointed this out in the second essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals*. For my part, I consider this demonic

off, capitalism incorporates God into human existence. It is a pure concretization of religion, a pragmatics or a utilitarian faith. Benjamin even goes so far as to directly refute Weber's thesis, albeit without mentioning the latter by name, when he claims that "[t]he Christianity of the Reformation period did not favor the growth of capitalism; instead it transformed itself into capitalism."⁵ Benjamin's thesis is as succinct as it is radical: capitalism is not just any religion, or merely one religion among others—it is *the* religion, Christianity.

Numerous theorists have written on the question of the links between capitalism and Christianity—even Marx himself—so it is by no means novel to proclaim that there exists a privileged link between the two. Yet Benjamin's argument is of another order: he insists upon the *identity* of Christianity and capitalism, rather than a relation of analogy or a mutual reinforcement. The present essay should be read as an attempt to think through this identity—to think it *through*—with a view toward our present dilemma, namely, the material conditions of neoliberal capitalism. The method pursued herein is loosely genealogical, understood in the sense that Foucault gives to this term: what is at stake is a history of the present.⁶ I cannot replicate Foucault's erudition, nor the astonishing breadth

ambiguity decisive for a critique of forgiveness, and will be incorporating the semantic slippage throughout the text. As a procedural note, then: despite the fact that there are real differences between the registers of debt and guilt (and one should not simply seek to collapse them), the reader is advised to take into account their ambiguous connections.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 289.

⁶ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 31.

and depth of his research. Nevertheless, I appeal to the genealogical motif in order to explore, to the extent it is possible in an essay of this size, the crucial importance for our own time of the emergence of capitalism *in* history as a certain transformation, not only of Christianity, but of God. Giorgio Agamben has perhaps said it best, apropos of the incessant proclamations and repetitions on the theme of the death of God: “God didn’t die, he was transformed into money.”⁷ It is not that God existed before money, and ceased to exist in being transformed into money; nor is it the case that money did not exist before God became money, as if one could point to a date on a calendar when this fateful metamorphosis took place. It is rather that God and money have always been implicated in one another (in this regard, the prescience of Nietzsche’s thesis in *On the Genealogy of Morals* is decisive). The emergence of capitalism marks the beginning—which should not be confused with an origin—of a process by which money, so to speak, becomes adequate to its idea. The latest development, which should not be confused with a culmination, of capitalism into its neoliberal, financialized forms marks yet another transformation of God into money. It is to this neoliberal ‘present’ in which we live that this essay addresses itself—specifically to the primacy of the creditor-debtor relation, which supplements and subtends the capitalist-worker relation. Yet in order to make such an address, one must investigate the ground upon which neoliberal capital emerged. It has thus been necessary to incorporate some cautious historiographical notes into the text,

⁷ Agamben, “God didn’t die, he was transformed into money.”

specifically with regard to the conditions of possibility of the emergence of the capitalist mode of production as such.

This essay is conceived as an intervention in at least two registers. The first recognizes and wishes to build upon the exigency and importance of the recent work of Gil Anidjar, who has responded to the preponderance of so-called critical work on religion by raising what he refers to as ‘the Christian question.’ I treat Anidjar at greater length below (Chapter 5), but for now let it suffice to say that his project aims to determine—if not once and for all, then at least in service of political critique of contemporary discourse—whether it makes sense to speak of Christianity as a religion. In Anidjar’s view (shared, *mutatis mutandis*, by Talal Asad, Tomoko Masuzawa, and others) Christianity is *not* a religion—not quite. The ‘category’ of religion, especially ‘world religions’ is rather a stratagem of secularization, of a certain self-overcoming by which Christianity dissimulates itself, disguises itself as secular, and establishes religions as its others. One must be open to the possibility that discourse *on* religion is a Christian discourse, that one should speak of the Christianity *of* religion. Against the twinned tendencies with which scholars of religion address their object—to find, on the one hand, what is essential or *sui generis* in it, or, on the other hand, to reduce religion to social construction, false consciousness, and so on—against this Anidjar proposes an alternative: one must raise the Christian question. This involves positing the following paradox:

Either Christianity is a religion and there are no others (because without Christianization and the globalization of Christianity, none of the so-called ‘world religions’ would have been identified as religions, nor would they have had to

refer to themselves as such). Or, there are religions in the world—according to one definition or another—but Christianity is not one of them.⁸

Part of the burden of this essay is to untangle the labyrinthine relations and transformations that the terms *religion*, *capitalism*, and *Christianity* undergo on their way to, and in, the present. Hence the first register of the present essay seeks to ascertain how, and to what extent, one can speak univocally of Christianity and capitalism, of God and money. The second register follows from the first, and concerns the question of forgiveness—that is to say, the political economy of forgiveness. One cannot grasp the nature of the identity of God and money without this decisive reference to forgiveness. In this regard, there are certain misconceptions about forgiveness that need to be dispelled at the outset, even if they can only be fully substantiated at the conclusion.

One should speak of forgiveness as *a* history. Yet one speaks rather of a history *of* forgiveness; or of forgivenesses, in the plural, so as to respect the internal differences of this concept (which is not merely a concept): forgiveness asked of another, or of oneself; forgiveness with or without conditions; forgiveness with or without any economic consideration. In this regard, Jacques Derrida's provocation, in his short essay, "Literature in Secret," seems exemplary of a novel thought of forgiveness—it announces or introduces the possibility of a *political* reading of the history that is forgiveness. This provocation arrives apropos of a certain reading of the Noahic event, in which God's

⁸ Gil Anidjar, "Of Globalatinology," *Derrida Today*, 6.1 (2013): vii, ed. Nicole Anderson and Nick Mansfield, 14. Note also the more robust, if labyrinthine, critique in Anidjar's most recent monograph, *Blood*. The exigency of the Christian question there assumes an intensity scarcely thinkable. See Gil Anidjar, *Blood: A Critique of Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

double retraction or repentance for creating “humans who are evil in their hearts,” and for the Deluge intended to erase that mistake, precipitates a scene of forgiveness that implicates, first and foremost, the very God who would ostensibly dispose of, or dispense, forgiveness. Derrida thereby suggests the following: “forgiveness is a history of God. It is written or addressed to the name of God. Forgiveness comes to pass as a covenant between God and God through the human.”⁹

I propose a political reading of forgiveness in light of the contemporary crises of neoliberal capitalism, specifically the ascendancy (or more precisely, the perseverance) of the creditor-debtor relation, and the power to forgive that is the truth of this relation. (This essay is an exercise of theory, but my hope is that it will have practical implications for the ongoing debt resistance movements, which have assumed a pivotal and tactical position in the struggle against neoliberal austerity. Debt may well be the lever by which the fortresses of capital are overturned. I will address the specifics of these political movements in the Conclusion.) As I said above, in order to effect this political reading of forgiveness I have had recourse to a claim espoused, to varying degrees, by various theorists (Jacques Derrida, Philip Goodchild, Giorgio Agamben, even a certain Karl Marx): that God, far from having deceased in the 19th century, has rather been transformed into money. This identity of God and money is not simply speculative; it is rather a self-masking or strategy of secularization by which capitalism reproduces itself as a religion, and in which God and money are continually absolved. This is why Deleuze

⁹ Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death and Literature in Secret* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 148.

and Guattari can claim that Nietzsche's insight in the second essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals* describes not only the "stroke of genius" of Christianity, but of capitalism itself: money as a self-valorizing transduction or circulation, where the body of the human serves as transductor or conduit. Human beings qua debtors are the material condition of forgiveness—the immediate elements of God's self-satisfaction, or auto-absolution.

My central claim is that forgiveness is a strategy or apparatus of power which captures the body—the very existence—of the debtor as the *material of forgiveness*. It is not we who need, desire or undergo forgiveness, it is God who forgives God in us. Inasmuch as God is money, inasmuch as capitalism is the religion par excellence, any possible critique of capitalism will inevitably find itself confronted by, and implicated in, a *theodicy of money*. To wit, any future critique of capitalism must effect a general reversal. It is not ideology which grips us and causes us to see and to speak, it is rather theodicy that names the ventriloquism which we undergo, consummate, and perform.

1.2 The essay is divided into two parts. Part I begins by pursuing two separate, yet integrally related, courses. The first course is an inquiry into the *objective* nature of political economy, drawing on the univocal ontology of Spinoza and the laws of general economy, the latter which were explicitly formulated by Georges Bataille. At stake in Part I—which temporarily brackets the critique of forgiveness—is the possibility of conceiving a pure plane of immanence upon which all of the circulations, transformations, and relations 'take place.' Chapter 2 attempts to articulate a materialist

theory of immanence by reading Bataille and Spinoza together via Lucretius and the ancient atomists. Chapter 3, the second course, is an inquiry into the *subjective* nature of political economy, namely, the processes—and I emphasize the plural here—of subjectivization that accompany, and provide a crucial political and economic feedback into, the movements of the general economy. I confess that my central concern lies with the latter course: my aim is to elucidate the conditions under which an *indebted subject* or a *subject of forgiveness* can be constituted; though it should go without saying that, inasmuch as this work is a materialist account of the nature of money and subjectivity, the former course—the objective, material conditions of political economy—must in a real sense determine the latter. In the last instance, there are not two separate natures, but two sides of a single process which nevertheless possesses in itself a directionality, or more precisely an imperative to consumption, a will to power, a volatile, productive entropy. The subject is not a separate being which undergoes the operations of an apparatus or the general movement of an economy; the subject is the *expression* of these operations. The investigation, in Part I, of these two ‘natures’ (general economy as the thought of pure immanence, or an ontology of power; the apparatus as a modulation of power, a machine for the production of subjects) will enable us to proceed to a critical theory of money qua credit-debt differential and finally to a critical-constructive theory of subjectivity qua forgiveness (Part II).

Agamben’s *very broad* definition of the apparatus—the generality of which owes to his ambitious, perhaps too ambitious, project of theological genealogy—will have to suffice for now. “I wish to propose to you,” writes Agamben,

nothing less than a general and massive partitioning of beings into two large groups or classes: on the one hand, living beings (or substances), and on the other, apparatuses in which living beings are incessantly captured. [...] I shall call an apparatus literally anything that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviors, opinions, or discourses of living beings.¹⁰

We will have cause to attenuate this description of apparatuses below, according to Deleuze's reading of Foucault's theory of power. In the meantime there are several points of which we should take note:

1. An apparatus is not properly a thing; it is rather a constellation or diagram of power relations, which has the dual effect of capturing living beings *and* producing subjects in or alongside these living beings.¹¹ The key point here is that there is not a diachronic progression of capture which eventually gives way to subjectivization: subjects are produced *as* captured, as they are captured, inasmuch as they are captured.

2. The term 'apparatus' and the term 'economy' are interchangeable (or more precisely, are in relation to one another) only on the condition that 'economy' refers, *a la* Bataille, to a *restricted economy*. In other words, the *general economy* is *not* an apparatus—it is rather the processual totality out of which a particular apparatus emerges and to which every apparatus returns. General economy is the thought of a pure plane of immanence (Spinoza's infinite substance) which is expressed by degrees of power.

¹⁰ Giorgio Agamben, "What is an Apparatus?," in *What is an Apparatus?*, trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 13, 14.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

Hence, one can consider *money* an apparatus inasmuch as money is a system which directs and redirects flows of energy, and which produces a subject.

3. In what follows I will consistently attempt to push money *out* of the register of an apparatus and into the register of general economy money as generic, as a general credit, or as the plane of immanence upon which apparatuses appear. The apparatus that will consume most of our attention is, for reasons that will be laid out below, *the apparatus of forgiveness*. Forgiveness understood as a means *of* money, rather than an escape from it. Forgiveness conceived and performed as a spectacular, lavish, hyperbolic means of maintaining a paradoxical equilibrium, and of producing a subject to live in this tenuous equilibrium, and to work for it without end.

Why this emphasis on forgiveness? What's wrong with forgiveness? Moreover, what does forgiveness have to do with money?

1.3 At first sight, not much. A fully-developed, robust answer to these questions will only be possible at the conclusion of this essay. Whereas Part I brackets the question of forgiveness in order to lay out a plane of immanence or ontology of power, Part II resumes, or commences, the investigation of forgiveness beginning with a reading of Nietzsche's second essay in *On the Genealogy of Morals*. In terms of introducing the content of Part II, let it suffice to mention three of the manners in which one might think the relation of forgiveness and money.

The first is somewhat obvious (though, as we will see, in its very clarity it tends to obscure its most important elements): debt forgiveness. The forgiveness of debts, whether

personal debts, sovereign debts, student debts, or any other sort of debt is a fundamentally economic affair that nevertheless refers to an outside of economy. Less obvious is the fact that forgiveness is, under this rubric, supposedly that which escapes economy; forgiveness is aneconomic, and in a certain sense it is that to which all economy refers itself, a limit-concept or an exception.

The second relation between forgiveness and money is less intuitive, but it follows from the formula *Deus sive Monēta*: only God forgives. There is a certain religious or theological register in which forgiveness obtains, or becomes adequate to, its concept. In order to grasp the manner in which Christianity and capitalism mutually reinforce one another—or what is more, the literal *identity* of the two—one must investigate the structure and genesis of money. The upshot of this investigation is two-fold: first, that Christianity, far from being one religion among others, is better understood as a political economy (conversely, capitalism is a religion); second, that money, aside from its *function* as medium of exchange, store of value, and unit of account, is essentially and fundamentally *credit*. I note in passing that this investigation, rather than refuting the Marxian conception of money qua general equivalent, will confirm it and push it, from its position in the concreteness of exchange, into a transcendental register.

The third relation between forgiveness and money is in a sense a synthesis of the first two: at the limit of the creditor-debtor relation is forgiveness. Whether possible or actual, the *power to forgive* is what ultimately distinguishes the creditor from the debtor (the creditor himself may be in debt to another creditor, and so on). A specific distribution of subjectivity results from this. The term ‘subject of forgiveness’ harbors a

double genitive: the subject of forgiveness is at once the personal subject who asks for forgiveness or receives it as a ‘free gift’ (the debtor) and the impersonal or trans-personal *giving* of forgiveness (the creditor). Or, to put it in Nietzsche’s terms, the subject of forgiveness refers to both man and God, debtor and creditor, and above all to the figure that links them inextricably: *Christ*, God-man, general equivalent—or even, at the limit, capital itself, since Christ effects a return greater than that which was invested. To be Christ-like, then, is to position oneself as the central conduit of the circulation of forgiveness, site of exchange, or means of payment of the debt. To be Christian is not only to be forgiven, but to have the power to forgive.

1.4 This essay is situated squarely in the context of late capitalism, especially vis-a-vis the veritable explosion of discourses regarding the financial collapse of 2007-2008. Various volumes have appeared in the wake of the financial crisis, including, but not limited to Philip Goodchild’s *Theology of Money*,¹² Maurizio Lazzarato’s *The Making of Indebted Man*¹³ and *Governing By Debt*,¹⁴ David Graeber’s *Debt: The First 5,000 Years*,¹⁵ Philip Morowski’s *Never Let A Serious Crisis Go To Waste*¹⁶—all of which,

¹² Philip Goodchild, *Theology of Money* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009).

¹³ Maurizio Lazzarato, *The Making of the Indebted Man: An Essay on the Neoliberal Condition*, trans. Joshua David Jordan (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2011).

¹⁴ Maurizio Lazzarato, *Governing by Debt*, trans. Joshua David Jordan (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2013).

¹⁵ David Graeber, *Debt: The First 5,000 Years* (New York: Melville House, 2011).

among the many others, have contributed to the formulation of the present work. The project of formulating a concept of money as credit-debt has never been more germane to radical politics. In the context of late capitalism and the twinned neoliberal projects of financialization and governmentality, the creditor-debtor antagonism has replaced the formerly ascendent capitalist-worker struggle. As Lazzarato puts it:

Neoliberal capital imposes and governs an asymmetrical class struggle. There is only one class, reconstituted around finance, the power of credit money, and money as capital...The working class is no longer a class. Workers do indeed have an economic and sociological existence: *they form the variable capital of the new capitalist accumulation*. The ascendancy of the debtor-creditor relation has marginalized them politically once and for all.¹⁷

In addition to the contemporary interventions mentioned above, two giants of the 19th century play an essential role in what follows, both of whom have been mentioned already: Karl Marx and Friedrich Nietzsche. I take as axiomatic Marx's description of capitalist accumulation through expropriation of surplus value, as well as his concept of money qua general equivalent. I wish only to nudge the concept of money into a slightly (though the implications of this shift are radical) different register, as prompted by Nietzsche's path-breaking second essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals*, in which he provides perhaps the first counter-argument against the anthropological theory of money's genesis or origin in exchange. That money is essentially credit remains to be demonstrated, of course—not to mention its specific structure and mode of production,

¹⁶ Philip Mirowski, *Never Let a Serious Crisis Go to Waste: How Neoliberalism Survived the Financial Meltdown* (New York: Verso Books, 2014).

¹⁷ Lazzarato, *Governing By Debt*, 12. My emphasis.

which is, as Sean Capener has shown, analogical.¹⁸ This essay is in some ways a response to the reactivation of the centuries-old Scholastic debate between univocity and analogy, where a radical Spinozism (typified by Deleuze) faces off against a so-called Radical Orthodoxy (of which theologian John Milbank is the exemplar). It should be clear that I locate myself squarely on the side of univocity (or immanence). In any case, one can say that in the case of money, it is less a question of whether or not money is good or evil, than between a political theology of money conceived in all of its ambiguity, and a capitalist theodicy of money which affirms and enacts the cruelty of the status quo: pantheism versus monotheism.

Inasmuch as the capitalist mode of production requires the creditor-debtor relation in order to emerge and late neoliberal capitalism requires debt to function, we will say that capitalism deploys, or is, an apparatus of forgiveness. Has this always been the case? Or is the creditor-debtor relation a novelty in the history of capitalism? My preliminary claim is that capitalism inherited, or rather parasitized, the creditor-debtor relation from Christianity: there is not an ‘elective affinity’ between Christianity and capitalism, *a la* Weber, but rather—following Benjamin’s radical claim—strictly *literal* identity of the two. Capitalism inaugurates a sort of apotheosis of money: God becomes money, not in the sense of a culmination or a *telos*, but at the level of the everyday experience of the

¹⁸ Sean Capener, *The Literality of Credit: Anselm, Analogy, and the Production of Damnation*. URL: https://www.academia.edu/15021238/The_Literality_of_Credit_Anselm_Analogy_and_the_Production_of_Damnation (Accessed April 19th, 2016).

capitalist subject, who is not only in debt, but is, qua subject, always subject to forgiveness. Benjamin expresses this situation perfectly:

It adds to our understanding of capitalism as a religion to realize that, to begin with, the first heathens certainly did not believe that religion served a ‘higher,’ ‘moral’ interest but that it was severely practical. In other words, religion did not achieve any greater clarity than about its ‘ideal’ or ‘transcendental’ nature than modern capitalism does today. Therefore it, too, regarded individuals who were irreligious or had other beliefs as members of its community, in the same way that the modern bourgeoisie now regards those of its members who are not gainfully employed.¹⁹

The piety invoked above, in the preface, has precisely to do with this practicality. Money is a praxis before it is a theory, though this fact should by no measure be taken to mean that theory is irrelevant or doomed to banal description. Everything depends on whether it is we who practice money or money which practices us, with us, for itself. We will have to determine the extent to which our praxis (which is to say our freedom) is tied up with a theory of money, and to what extent the concept of a general credit—a faith common to all things, human or not—can illuminate the conditions of our enslavement, to which we are party, and of which we are a part. I have opted to pursue this determination through an inquiry into the conditions and operations of the apparatus of forgiveness, whereof the human is, as the material condition of forgiveness, the very relation between God and God. Guilt cries out to guilt: the human is the echo of this eternal howl.

Perhaps, in the end, it is inevitable that one attaches oneself to a thinker or to an image of thought, in which and from which one thinks. It will become clear that this

¹⁹ Benjamin, “Capitalism as Religion,” 290.

essay owes much of its theoretical instruments and impetus to Gilles Deleuze. Whatever the strengths and weaknesses of such a decision, I have set out to write an essay, not *on* Deleuze, in the style of a philosophical biography or history, but rather *with* Deleuze—with his concepts and his image of thought. I will address this methodological problem at more length below (Interlude), but let it suffice to say that the proper name “Deleuze” refers, for me, not to a doctrine or an *Urdoxa*, but to a *problem*. At the risk of recursion, I can only point the reader to Deleuze’s *Difference and Repetition* (especially Chapter 4), in which he insists that it is always problems and questions that make us think, force us to think. The positivity and the intensity of a problem—which *charges* the thinker with a responsibility to think, *charges* the thinker with thought—against the tired and neutered labor of a proposition: this is one of the choices that must be made at the outset of any theoretical undertaking.

Our problem is forgiveness. In order to address this problem, to answer the imperatives of its questions, it is necessary to begin by laying out the plane of immanence upon which the inquiry, so to speak, takes place. I therefore turn first to Spinoza’s theory of substance (Chapter 2) and to Foucault’s theory of power and subjectivity (Chapter 3). Once the ontological and subjective stakes have been laid out, the question of the apparatus of forgiveness will be taken up in Part II (Chapters 4 and 5). This preparatory work is essential, and, when the time comes, it will throw the complex of concepts—money, credit-debt, forgiveness—into sharp relief.

Part I
God or Money

Chapter 2 – General Economy (Materialism)

2.1 Perhaps it is strange to begin an essay on money and forgiveness with a meditation on Bataille and Spinoza—not to mention Lucretius. Nevertheless, this chapter will lay the groundwork for understanding what, precisely, is meant by the expression *material of forgiveness*. That such a groundwork must necessarily appeal to metaphysics need not imply that the analysis is lost in abstraction, hence a failure to grasp the concreteness of economy and subjectivity, but rather the contrary: everything to come depends on whether or not one can conceive economy *in general*, that is to say, in terms of pure immanence.

The concept of general economy was first formulated by Georges Bataille in 1949, with the publication of the first volume of his treatise on political economy, *The Accursed Share*. The work marks a pivotal attempt to overturn the prevailing economic doctrines of the time, and to a large extent its import has been unappreciated by economists. This state of affairs may stem from the fact that, as Bataille himself admits, the book

did not consider the facts the way qualified economists do, that I had a point of view from which a human sacrifice, the construction of a church or the gift of a jewel were no less interesting than the sale of wheat. In short, I had to try in vain

to make clear the notion of a ‘general economy’ in which the ‘expenditure’ (the ‘consumption’) of wealth, rather than production, was the primary object.²⁰

In other words, it is perhaps too much to ask for an entire profession to drop what they are doing and submit to a foreign, seemingly contradictory economic paradigm. For what it is worth, I myself am neither a qualified economist, nor even an unqualified one. My interest in Bataille’s theory is experimental and, so to speak, adventurous: inasmuch as the concept of a general economy allows for a critical examination of the nature of money and forgiveness, I intend to pursue this adventure to the end, and cannot evaluate Bataille’s theory strictly according to its ‘theoretical’ merits. Others, more or less qualified, will have to judge whether or not my own deployment of Bataille’s theory is of any worth, or if on the contrary, the whole effort is a waste.

Bataille, for his part, is clear that what matters most is, precisely, waste. And he is clear about the stakes involved in his theory. They are, in a manner of speaking, cosmic: “Changing from the perspectives of *restrictive* economy to those of *general* economy actually accomplishes a Copernican transformation: a reversal of thinking—and of ethics” (25). A theory of general economy is an attempt to think outside of any particular economic activity, such as an exchange, and to take account (though even this language does not suffice, since ‘accounting’ is always the abstraction of a given situation from the total movement of energy) of the whole. A theory of general economy incorporates the rather simple truth that all particular activity on earth is a moment or modulation of the

²⁰ Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share, Vol. 1, Consumption*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York, Zone Book, 1989), 9.

cosmic movements and transformations of *superabundant* energy—in our case, solar energy (28). It is not at all that we lack energy. Quite the contrary: there is too much energy. Against any reference to scarcity as the driving economic force, Bataille substitutes the fact of extravagance, surplus, and ebullition:

The living organism, in a situation determined by the play of energy on the surface of the globe, ordinarily receives more energy than is necessary for maintaining life; the excess energy (wealth) can be used for the growth of a system (e.g., an organism); if the system can no longer grow, or if the excess cannot be completely absorbed in its growth, it must necessarily be lost without profit; it must be spent, willing or not, gloriously or catastrophically. (21)

From the perspective of a restricted economy, which is finite and particular, one can speak endlessly of ‘economic necessities.’ For example: the imperatives of austerity politics, promulgated by creditor institutions, which always require ‘restructuring’ of debtor nations; their budgets and social services must be cut in order to respond to the ‘necessity’ of managing to pay the debt. A nation that *lacks* the liquid assets to make good on their payments must submit to the ‘necessities’ of managing the global economy. (Later, we will highlight the vapid moralism of this ‘necessity’). Bataille, on the contrary, will insist that from the perspective of a general economy, there is never such a lack, but rather an abundance of energy which must nevertheless be dissipated in one way or another—whether by spending (paying the debt, or issuing new debts) or by squandering (canceling the debt). Inasmuch as the difference between creditor and debtor nations is entirely contingent (especially since the debt was taken on precisely in order to compensate for a so-called lack), and their situations could easily be reversed, this

necessity is revealed to be more a strategy of power rather than an implacable necessity—though one detects the presence of an ‘iron hand’ in either case.

What interests us now is precisely the fact that, from the perspective of general economy, lack is a *product* rather than a pre-existing material condition or a transcendental condition. No doubt, scarcity is a reality, as those in poverty and those with ample means alike will attest. Nevertheless, scarcity or lack only appears as such, in all of its reality, from the perspective of a restricted economy, with respect to specific means and ends. “We know very well where lack and its subjective correlative come from,” write Deleuze and Guattari, consciously echoing Bataille, “Lack is created, planned, and organized in and through social production.” Lack “is never primary; production is never organized on the basis of a pre-existing need or lack.” Rather “it is lack that infiltrates itself,” taking itself for or presenting itself as a fundamental *factum* from which all economic calculation proceeds. In a vulgar sense, one need only look at who is lacking for resources and who possesses (or disposes of, which amount to the same thing) an abundance of resources: “The deliberate creation of lack as a function of market economy is the art of a dominant class.”²¹

Contrary to the assumption that lack or scarcity is natural (and pervasive)—an assumption that marks, moreover, an entire orthodoxy, featuring so many priests of capital divining the rational movements of the market—Bataille insists that the problem is not *use* but *waste*. It is true that it is a matter of one’s point of view; Bataille admits as

²¹ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), 28.

much: “From the *particular* point of view, the problems are posed *in the first instance* by a deficiency of resources,” whereas “they are posed *in the first instance* by an excess of resources if one starts from the *general* point of view” (39). But note that Bataille immediately adds: “Doubtless, the problem of extreme poverty remains in any case.” Which is to say, raising oneself to the perspective of general economy is by no means a magical cure-all, a fix for all economic issues forever. Rather, the general point of view is a way of thinking differently, of posing problems differently, and if the perspective of general economy does not promise a solution from the first instance it is because *in the last instance* there is no solution—since every last instance is but the first instance of a new problem. The global movement of energy is not somehow blocked or generated by the newfound perspective of general economy; it is a real which is newly problematized, newly apprehended.

2.2 The fact or truth of general economy is that once a given system reaches the limits of its growth (and it will have reached this limit via its production and development of its surpluses) the only option left to it is to destroy or squander the abundant wealth of energy that *always remains*. The surplus “must be dissipated through deficit operations,” or, what amounts to the same thing, by consumption (22). The problem, Bataille claims, with economic science is that it

merely generalizes the isolated situation; it restricts its object to operations carried out with a view to a limited end, that of economic man. It does not take into consideration a play of energy that no particular end limits: the play of *living matter in general*, involved in the movement of light of which it is the result. On the surface of the globe, for *living matter in general*, energy is always in excess;

the question always posed in terms of extravagance. The choice is limited to how the wealth is to be squandered. (23)

That Bataille emphasizes perspectivism, or multiple points of view onto economic activity is not an argument for relativism. It is not that the general and restricted points of view are two independently true perspectives which take the same object and maintain their truth autonomously, but rather that general economy *is the truth of restricted economy*, the latter which nevertheless maintains or guarantees its particular truth inasmuch as it is an abstraction from the general. One could speak of the two ‘forms of appearance’ of economic activity as being mutually exclusive, but we should rather, following Deleuze, insist that “there is no longer either invariable form of variable point of view on to a form. There is a point of view which belongs so much to the thing that the thing is constantly being transformed in a becoming identical to point of view.”²² The point of view to which we attach ourselves, with which we identify, is that of separate beings who alternately undergo the movements of energy and in certain cases dispose of the means to redirect or redistribute the energy. Again, it is not that this point of view (of ourselves) is *not true*, but that it obtains its truth in light of the general truth that humanity—the separate beings that we are, taken together—is but the most intensive, most developed dissipative system in history. History itself is the catalogue of our

²² Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 146.

destructions and consumptions *through which* we make ourselves, and are unmade (“Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please”).²³

As Bataille says:

Man is not just the separate being that contends with the living world and with other men for his share of resources. The general movement of exudation (of waste) of living matter impels him, and he cannot stop it; moreover, being at his summit, his sovereignty in the living world identifies him with this movement; it destines him, in a privileged way, to that glorious operation, to useless consumption. (23)

One should perhaps qualify this ‘destining,’ since it can also be a condemning, or damning. The difference between comprehension and incomprehension of the general economy does not change or nullify the final outcome (dissipation or squander of surplus energy). “We can ignore that fact that the ground we live on is little other than a field of multiple destructions,” writes Bataille. “Our ignorance only has this incontestable effect: it causes us to *undergo* what we could *bring about* in our own way, if only we understood” (23). This is necessity, but in a wholly different register than that of the moralizers: necessity *of nature*, rather than economic necessities which are incessantly *naturalized* in late capitalism. This is why Bataille claims that, in addition to implying interventions into public affairs (i.e. massive redistributions of wealth without reciprocation), the exposition of general economy aims firstly at humanity’s *consciousness*, which is determined by being (or the movements and transformations of

²³ Karl Marx, “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte,” available at marxists.org. URL: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/18th-brumaire/>

energy), but which can, in becoming self-consciousness of its position as “a roundabout, subsidiary response to the problem of growth,” realize the profound truth that

just as the herbivore relative to the plant, and the carnivore relative to the herbivore, is a luxury, man is the most suited of all living beings to consume intensely, sumptuously, the excess energy offered up by the pressure of life to conflagrations benefiting the solar origins of its movement. (37)

This state of affairs, or rather this general condition of humanity, has important political implications, some of which we hinted at above. The question, in essence, is how it is possible for us to become adequate or identical to the point of view of general economy; or, in another, ethical register: *how do we become worthy of what happens to us?* How do we become worthy of the wealth, the circulations and surpluses of energy—some of which are transformed into money—that are bestowed upon us? The fact that Bataille continually refers to the surplus of energy to which we are subject as ‘wealth’ cannot be written off as a metaphorical or figurative use of language. We must insist on the literality of this *wealth* of energy: not all energy is money, *but all money is energy*, albeit transformed or produced under certain conditions yet to be determined. Suffice it say that what is at stake is the extent to which money *plays*, and the conditions under which it inherits this capacity or ability to play from the “play of living matter in general.” Moreover, one should recall the apparatus of money—or more precisely, of forgiveness—that accompanies the conservative posture of humanity at present: to maintain economic and political order by producing increasing amounts of total debt with no real hope of expiation (or, in Bataille’s terms, destruction), and to produce indebted subjects who work endlessly to pay the debt, and thereby never ‘learn’ to play. The

business of humanity is too serious. To the question—how can we become worthy of what happens to us?—I can only provide a provisional answer. That we are implicated in a game that is beyond our control is without question; hence the imperative to challenge not only this or that rule of the game, but to call the game itself into question, and thereby to invent a new game.

Bataille offers us an inkling of what such a game might consist of:

Man's disregard for the material basis of his life still causes him to err in a serious way. Humanity exploits given material resources, but by restricting them as it does to a resolution of the immediate difficulties it encounters (a resolution which it has hastily had to define as an ideal), it assigns to the forces it employs an end they cannot have. Beyond our immediate ends, man's activity in fact pursues *the useless and infinite fulfillment of the universe*. (21, my emphasis)

Lest we become confused, Bataille observes in the endnote to this passage that “*fulfillment* designates that which *fulfills itself*, not that which *is fulfilled*,” and “*infinite* is in opposition both to the limited determination and to the assigned *end*” (191). And if we remain confused, it is perhaps because, as Bataille admits, “the materiality of the universe” is never anything but a “beyond of thought” (*ibid.*), echoing, as we will see, and at the very outset of his project, the fundamental problematic of the ancient atomists.

“The beings that we are,” claims Bataille,

are not given once and for all: they appear designed for an increase of their energy resources. They generally make this increase, beyond mere subsistence, their goal and their reason for being. But with this subordination to increase, the being in question loses its autonomy; *it subordinates itself to what it will be in the future*, owing to the increase of its resources. In reality, the increase should be situated in relation to the moment in which it will resolve into a pure expenditure. But this is precisely the difficult transition. (190, my emphasis)

Difficult indeed. Bataille describes this transition to a self-consciousness which has nothing as its object as a transition to “pure interiority.” However, and this is the wager of this chapter, one could name this ‘consciousness of nothing’ otherwise. One could see in this for-nothing a *pure exteriority*, or what Foucault and Deleuze refer to as *the outside*, which in fact destroys the interior-exterior distinction; the outside which is not the subtraction of objects from the subject’s consciousness, leaving behind an empty subject, but rather the dissolution or dissipation of the subject-object distinction altogether—a transcendental field, or a plane of immanence, in which there is pure play, but no players to speak of.²⁴

This brings us to Spinoza.

2.3 In his own way, Spinoza revives the Epicurean tradition of materialism.²⁵ This is not to say that Spinoza simply repeats the dictums of atomism; rather, Spinoza retrieves and affirms the thought of Epicurus and Lucretius, pushing atomism and materialism to their limits, which is to say, to infinity. We saw that Bataille referred to the materiality of the universe as a “beyond of thought.” I want to suggest that we avoid thinking (*pace*, perhaps, Bataille himself) of this beyond as a transcendence. On the contrary, the materiality of the universe is that which is closest to thought, its utmost concern: not a beyond *for* thought, but a beyond *of* thought. At the turning point of Book

²⁴ I will return to the crucial concept of the outside in Chapter 3 below.

²⁵ I owe this insight, and the inspiration for the claims made in this section, to Thomas Nail.

II of the *Ethics*²⁶ (IIP13: its lengthy scholium and the resulting Postulates), Spinoza gives an account of the “simplest bodies” (*corporibus simplicissimis*), or what amounts to the same thing: of atoms.²⁷ At the risk of transgressing the absolute separation of the Spinozan parallelism (e.g. the attributes of Thought and Extension are parallel to one another but have no causal connection to one another; see IIP1-6), perhaps we can see in Spinoza’s radical propositions regarding simple bodies echoes of the theses of the atomist materialism of Lucretius.

Spinoza claims that “the first thing which constitutes the actual being of a human Mind is nothing but the idea of a singular thing which actually exists” (IIP11). (Spinoza will not cease to insist on this predicate of ‘actual existence.’) He makes a decisive move in P13: “The object of the idea constituting the human mind is the body, *or* a certain mode of extension which actually exists, and nothing else” (IIP13). Spinoza clearly means to indicate the human body when he refers to this ‘certain mode of extension which actually exists,’ but there is, in fact, no reason whatsoever that one cannot read this term, ‘body,’ in the register of the simplest bodies, which, as we will see, turn out to be properly *unthinkable*. The human body, after all, is a composite body, or a conjugation of simple bodies which lie upon one another or communicate their motions to one another

²⁶ Benedict de Spinoza, *A Spinoza Reader: The Ethics and Other Works*, ed. and trans. Edwin Curley. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994). All references to this volume throughout the present essay will be made in-line, according to the scholarly conventions of citations of Spinoza’s *Ethics*.

²⁷ Though, as we will see as the argument progresses, inasmuch as the term ‘atoms’ always refers to relation of motion, *atoms* should be understood as *flows of matter-energy*.

“in a certain fixed manner,” such that these bodies “compose one body *or* individual” (IIP13A’ Def.). The simple bodies which make up a composite body are “distinguished from one another only by motion and rest, speed and slowness” (IIP13A’), rather than by virtue of a *substantial* distinction (since all bodies are precisely bodies or parts *of* a single substance, or God). According to IIP26, “the human mind does not perceive any external body as actually existing, except *through the ideas of the affections* of its own body” (my emphasis). The upshot of this is that the mind, though it is radically distinguished from the body, *requires the body as the condition of perception of these simple bodies*. The mind does not perceive these simple bodies directly or adequately since, according to the parallelism, it can only perceive these bodies via its idea of its affections; hence the corollary proposition, “Insofar as the human mind *imagines* an external body, it does not have adequate knowledge of it” (IIP26Cor., my emphasis).

What is it to imagine? Spinoza puts it this way:

The affections of the human body whose ideas present external bodies as present to us, we shall call *images of things*, though they do not reproduce the [external] figures of things. And when the mind regards bodies in this way, we shall say that it *imagines*. (IIP17S, my emphasis)

Hence, the human mind cannot directly perceive simple bodies via the affections of the body, but only their aggregates or composites, and these only by way of *images*.

Likewise, thought cannot think these simple bodies except by forming inadequate ideas of them, yet they nevertheless *actually exist*. How is this so? Whether or not humans sense the simple bodies or the atoms, and whether or not the mind can adequately think the simple bodies or the atoms, the simple bodies or atoms are, according to IP15, *sensed*

and *thought* by God (“Whatever is, is in God, and nothing can be or be conceived without God”). Inasmuch as God is a single infinite substance, of which all bodies and ideas of bodies are modes—viewed from the perspective of the attributes of Extension and Thought, respectively—God both *is* and *has* in itself an adequate idea of the simple body; and inasmuch as the union of the human mind (attribute of Thought) and the human body (attribute of Extension) are *in* or *of* God, the simple bodies or atoms actually exist *for the mind and the body*, even if the mind does not possess an adequate idea of them. Despite being imperceptible and unthinkable, the simple body or the atom is *for* thought and for sense only on the condition that it is *of* God, which is to say, *of* Thought and Extension.

Here we reach the point of trespass of the parallelism, if it is indeed a trespass at all, as described by Deleuze in his essay on Lucretius:

The atom is that which must be thought, and that which can only be thought. The atom is to thought what the sensible object is to the senses: it is the object which is essentially addressed to thought, the object which gives food to thought, just as the sensible object is that which is given to the senses. The atom is the absolute reality of what is perceived. That the atom is not, and cannot be perceived, that it is essentially hidden, is the effect of its own nature and not the imperfection of our sensibility.²⁸

The atom is not the sensible object, but to each of these corresponds a ‘minimum’ which constitutes their nature. “The indivisible atom is formed of thought minima, as the divisible [sensible] object is composed of sensible minima.”²⁹ As is well known, in Epicurus, an infinity of atoms fall through a infinite void, straight down, as it were. Yet

²⁸ Gilles Deleuze, “Lucretius and the Simulacrum,” *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester with Charles Stivale (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 268.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

Lucretius manages to say something different: “in their fall the atoms collide, not because of their differing weights, but because of the *clinamen*,” or the reason for the collisions or relations between atoms.³⁰ In the void all atoms fall at an equal velocity, and in a sense, if this were to remain the case in the absence of the *clinamen*, one could effectively say that nothing whatsoever *happens* in the void: the atoms merely fall, infinitely, at the same speed, with no differentiation or action, no thought. Yet the *clinamen* does intervene. (Note that the *clinamen* had already been postulated by Epicurus. Nevertheless the *clinamen* in Lucretius does not come upon the atoms in the void as if from the outside, but is *internal* to the motion of the atoms. It is in the nature of these ‘first-beginnings’ to swerve.)³¹

We have seen that the atom belongs to thought, but more profoundly it is the necessary condition of thought: “the atom moves ‘as swiftly as thought,’” or is the very movement of thought. Deleuze expresses this determination of thought as follows:

In the void, the velocity of the atom is equal to its movement *in a unique direction in a minimum of continuous time*. This minimum expresses the smallest possible term during which an atom moves in a given direction, before being able to take another direction as the result of a collision with another atom. There is therefore a minimum of time, no less than a minimum of matter or a minimum of the atom. In agreement with the nature of the atom, this minimum of continuous refers to the apprehension of thought. It expresses the most rapid of briefest thought: the atom moves ‘as swiftly as thought.’³²

³⁰ Ibid., 269.

³¹ See Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, ed. Jeffrey Henderson, trans. W.H.D. Rouse (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), p.113, lines 216-224.

³² Ibid.

Yet thought would not think without collision or differentiation. Thought requires a synthesis or an originary direction that would serve as its sufficient condition. If the movement of thought (or of atoms) occurs in a minimum of continuous time, the synthesis of thought must necessarily be accomplished “in a time smaller than the minimum of continuous time. This is the *clinamen*.”³³ Spinoza’s radical innovation is to conceive of the atom and the sensible as *immanent to a single infinite substance or process* (analogous to the ‘procession’ of atoms in the void). The dualism of atom (Thought) and sensible object (Extension) is rendered, in Spinoza, as a difference of attribute *but not of substance*. The simple body in Spinoza is the unity of atomic thought and sense perception: formally distinct, but *materially or substantially one*.

This will have crucial implications for our analysis of debt and forgiveness below, but for now let it suffice to say that the infinite, absolute Spinozan substance is—in Thought and Extension, atom or object—purely material. Or rather that “attributes are like points of view on substance; but in the absolute limit these points of view are no longer external, and substance contains within itself the infinity of its points of view upon itself.”³⁴ Matter is not the ‘brute stuff’ of experience; it is inseparable from movement, speed, always in varying degrees of infinity. In this regard, one should speak of flows of matter-energy rather than of discrete, particulate atoms. This is why it was necessary to begin with Bataille’s account of the *movement and flow of matter-energy*, so as to set the

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Gilles Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Zone Books, 1992), 22.

stage for a reading of Spinoza that neither falls victim to a banal atomism, nor to an idealism in which Thought is privileged over Extension (Spinoza's greatest contribution was to have insisted upon a pure plane of immanence or substance in which, or on which, everything is ontologically equal).

2.4 On the one hand, in order to understand our contemporary situation, in which God has become money, it is necessary to insist on the fact that there is but one *substantial economy*, understood as an infinite, infinitely modified, substance, or what amounts to the same thing—the *immanence* of every restricted economy. If a given economy or system appears transcendent to another it is precisely because one has not considered the whole, from which every economy emerges and to which it returns. On the other hand, the only chance of reaching a coherent theory of Spinozan chance (the paradox of our freedom) is to insist on the *identity* of spontaneity (*clinamen*) and necessity (immanent causation).

No doubt, the Epicureans resisted a simple reduction of the *clinamen* to either contingency or necessity—in any case, the disagreement between the Stoics and the Epicureans concerned causality and destiny, rather than chance and necessity.³⁵ Nevertheless, Deleuze highlights a potential obstacle for the identity we have just proposed: the *clinamen* manifests “the irreducible plurality of causes or of causal series, and the impossibility of bringing causes together into a whole.” In what sense can one

³⁵ See Deleuze's discussion of the differences between the Stoics and the Epicureans on this question in Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 270.

speak of a synthesis of Spinozan necessity (and the implied Whole that would express the unity of causes) and an irreducible plurality of causes? Spinoza himself provides us with a clue in IP18, where he claims that “God is the immanent, not the transitive, cause of all things.” A transitive cause is a cause in which the effect is outside of the cause, it leaves the cause or is distinguished precisely by the fact that it is forced outside of the cause by the cause (this is the case in Neo-Platonic emanation). By contrast, a cause is immanent

when its effect is ‘immanate’ in the cause, rather than emanating from it. What defines an immanent cause is that its effect is in it—in it, of course, as something else, but still being and remaining in it. The effect remains in its cause no less than the cause remains in itself.³⁶

Hence, God—according to Spinoza’s claim in IP25S—qua immanent cause “must be called the cause of all things in the same sense in which he is called the cause of himself.” And moreover, “particular things are nothing but affections of God’s attributes, *or* modes by which God’s attributes are expressed in a certain and determinate way” (IP25Cor.). The triadic structure of Spinoza’s *Deus sive Natura* comes into full view only when considered in terms of pure immanence: substance is nothing other than the unity that is *said* of its modifications, the latter which are infinite, determinate, and affective. Immanence is “a theory of Being in which Unity is only a property of substance and of what is.”³⁷ Which is to say, *what is* is different, difference itself, equivocal but equal: “pure immanence requires as a principle the equality of being, or the positing of equal

³⁶ Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, 172.

³⁷ Idid., 173.

Being: not only is being equal in itself, but it is seen to be equally present in all beings.”³⁸

Immanence is the *literal* equality of being, of all beings inasmuch as each being is differentiated qua mode but remains in God; conversely, God, inasmuch as God is affected or modified by the modes God expresses, is a field of individuation or self-affection as much as God is a nomination of unity.³⁹

This, then, is how one should read Deleuze’s clarification on the nature of the *clinamen*, with a view toward a theory of Spinozan chance:

The *clinamen* or swerve has nothing to do with an oblique movement which would come accidentally to modify a vertical fall. It has always been present: it is not a secondary movement, nor a secondary determination of the movement, which would be produced at any time, at any place. The *clinamen* is the original determination of the direction of the movement of the atom. It is a kind of *conatus*—a differential of matter and, by the same token, a differential of thought...⁴⁰

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ In a decisive passage of *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze describes the manner in which Spinozan substance must be thought in order to render it a pure plane of immanence, where being is said *of* its constitutive differences. “With Spinoza, univocal being ceases to be neutralized and becomes expressive; it becomes a truly expressive and affirmative proposition. ... Nevertheless, there still remains a difference between substance and the modes: Spinoza’s substance appears independent of the modes, while the modes are dependent on substance, but as though on something other than themselves. Substance must itself be said *of* the modes and only *of* the modes. ... Nietzsche means nothing more than this by eternal return. Eternal return cannot mean the return of the Identical because it presupposes a world (that of the will to power) in which all previous identities have been abolished and dissolved. Returning is being, but only the being of becoming.” See Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 40-41.

⁴⁰ Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 269.

Note that the *clinamen* is not God; the swerve is not simply another name for substance. Nor is the *clinamen* an attribute or a mode of substance. It is not a property of substance. The *clinamen* is *power*, it is the infinite differentiability of power. It is the materiality of the modes. With the *clinamen* qua power expression is already re-expression, repetition, desire, differentiability: a *conatus* of immanence in which Spinozan necessity and Epicurean contingency coincide (where ‘*conatus*’ signifies, as in Spinoza, a ‘striving to persevere in one’s being’ [IIP6], but where ‘being’ is becoming—as Deleuze says, “the being of becoming”⁴¹). The *clinamen* does not come from outside in order to modify immanence, but names the movement proper to immanent causality, which proceeds neither from the cause to the effect, but gathers the cause and effect together in immanence. A torsion, a swerve, or a folding *of* immanence, qua immanence.

We will therefore call transcendence any concept or operation in which a *hierarchy* of being is naturalized, where transitive or emanative causality holds sway. Whether the naturalization operates according to a serial, analogical relation to a supereminent or supernatural term, or whether it functions by ostensibly ‘immanent’ criteria, in which beings ‘more or less’ resemble one another—all of this is transcendence, all of it analogy.⁴² Opposed to transcendence is immanence, though the opposition is by no

⁴¹ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 41.

⁴² For a discussion of two central forms of analogy, see Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), esp. 233-237. The scholastics defined two central forms of analogy: analogy of proportion, and analogy of proportionality. In the case of the former, one defines a series of terms (*a* resembles *b*, *b* resembles *c*, and so on) where each term refers in turn to a supereminent term. In the

means dialectical, since transcendence is in fact *produced* by immanence as a transcendental illusion (and we will see that money is the site of such an illusion).

Immanence is immanent to immanence alone; it is not immanent to something, but is immanent to nothing.

An economy, taken in the restricted sense, is a totality or a whole. But from the general point of view an economy is a dissipative system, and even then only one system among others. In truth, there is an economy or dissipative system wherever there is an individual or a self—each ‘local’ dissipative system being considered transcendent or separate from another, working sometimes in unison, sometimes not. We reach the general point of view only when we consider each instant or *clinamen* in terms of its modification of the whole (by IIP11). Even a cell is a dissipative system, as is any composite body. Nevertheless, a composite body such as a cell, even if its rate of growth, plateau and dissipation of energy are prodigious relative to its mass (or even to the sum of its parts, the simple bodies of which it is composed) cannot approach the cruel efficiency of human beings in terms of a power of consumption or destruction. That the human is the being most capable (on the Earth—a crucial qualifier) of growth and the dissipation of excess wealth is enough to indicate a fundamental relation between the transcendental

latter case, one defines a structure (*a* is to *b* as *c* is to *d*) where each relationship between terms “realizes after its fashion the perfection under consideration: gills are to breathing under water as lungs are to breathing air.... As Deleuze and Guattari insist, “This problem [of analogy] is in no way behind us” (235), and we should pay careful attention to the analogies produced on our plane of immanence, particularly those relations which parasitize immanence itself, the literal equality of being. The Christian-capitalist analogy, with which this essay concerns itself, is precisely such a parasitization (See Interlude below).

illusion of money—which foists a false necessity on us, increasingly in the most intimate dimensions of our life—and the blissful myopia of economic science: a radically hierarchical and inequitable distribution of wealth results from our unique power to redirect and dissipate energy through labor, whether psychic or material.⁴³

A human being is a conduit of energy, but is not separate from that energy, is not different in kind. The human is a “certain and determinate way” that energy (or flows of matter, since the difference is negligible from the perspective of immanence) is accumulated and dissipated—a mode or modification of the whole. The prospect or possibility of growth results from the capacity of human beings to form larger, more complex composite bodies (or assemblages), in which are invested increasing amounts of matter-energy, and from which can be extracted increasing amounts of wealth. However, and here Bataille and Spinoza are in agreement, growth is never growth *in fact*, if by growth we mean an increase or improvement upon the perfection or total volume of the Whole. “If one considers life as a whole,” writes Bataille, “there is not really growth but a maintenance of volume in general.” Rather than growth there is “a luxurious squandering of energy in every form.”⁴⁴ By the same token, if in Spinoza immanence is

⁴³ See, for instance, the recent article, which makes the point better than I can in the present essay: Alan Jay Levinovitz, “The new astrology,” in *Aeon Magazine*, URL: <https://aeon.co/essays/how-economists-rode-maths-to-become-our-era-s-astrologers> (Accessed April 19th, 2016).

⁴⁴ Bataille, *The Accursed Share, Vol. 1*, 33.

the Real, the *all* of reality, then one cannot transcend, increase or improve upon reality, since reality equals perfection (IID6).⁴⁵

It is an integral feature of the capitalist mode of production to deny this absolute fact: to insist that growth can be, and is in principle, unlimited; to conjure *ex nihilo* a surplus value from its workers, inevitably subtended by a disavowal of the time and labor—the matter-energy expended—required for production; to subordinate the present to the transcendental illusion of a future of pure accumulation without expenditure; to produce, as a condition of its very survival, subjects qua debtors who work endlessly, rendering up their very existences, to securitizing and indemnifying this future; all the way down to the point at which the difference between creditor and debtor is naturalized, moralized and substantialized, where the creditor is endowed with a sovereign power to forgive and debtor is rendered powerless to refuse. The debtor qua *material of forgiveness*, reduced to an object *for* power. There exists a strategy of power or an apparatus of forgiveness, which neither adds to nor subtracts from immanence, but which in its good conscience and essential moralism considers itself, in spite of itself, in terms of a perfect, unconditional grace. The essentially Christian dimensions of the apparatus of forgiveness will become apparent below, in conjunction with its fundamental importance

⁴⁵ This is not to say, as Voltaire assumed Leibniz had said, that the world is perfect and needs no improvement. On the contrary, the world is a modulation or hallucination of immanence, and is always subject to progressions, regressions, and digressions. To say, with Spinoza, that reality (that is, immanence) is perfection, is to say that the materials for our liberation and our repression are *already in immanence*: we need only seek out their respective conditions of possibility and impossibility.

for the emergence of the capitalist mode of production and the production of capitalist subjects.

According to the Spinozan theory of substance, each mode does not merely refer to, but *is* a degree of power. Hence, the question of subjectivity must be posed in terms of power. The following chapter takes up this problem: how is a subject constituted *in the given*? What is the process by which a subject is produced in and by immanence? And what illusions (whether transcendental or empirical) accrue to this subject which takes itself for a transcendent object, or a transcendental ego, resembling a pre-eminently transcendent God? Whatever the case may be: the fact that the subject is a patient of the power relations which constitute it, that the subject is only active to the extent that it expresses its relations, does not necessarily mean that the subject is powerless. Powerlessness is in fact a power in itself, on condition that powerlessness is understood as precisely that which can be raised to the highest power.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 200. “This is precisely what Nietzsche meant by will to power: that imperative transmutation which takes powerlessness itself as an object (be cowardly, lazy or obedient if you wish! on condition that ...)—that dice throw capable of affirming the whole of chance, those questions with which we are infused during torrid or glacial hours, those imperative which dedicate us to the problems they launch.”

Chapter 3 – Power (Subjectivity)

3.1 Foucault's theses on power are well known, if often misunderstood. Power: neither locus nor turgescence, rather circulation and production; not the sovereign State or the form of the law, but the always mobile and multiple apparatuses of discipline and surveillance, statistics and internment, sexuality and knowledge. It is not that the State has no power, or that the law is not characterized by the power it exerts in its formality and emptiness, it is simply that these are the terminal forms of power—they are *produced*. Power, insists Foucault, “must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization.” Power as multiplicity of forces, process, struggle, serial supports, disjunctions and contradictions, isolations and conjunctions, and—crucially—*strategies*, in which power is effected, “whose general design or institutional crystallization is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, in the various social hegemonies.” Hence there is no center to power and it is neither centrifugal

nor centripetal; there is rather the “moving substrate of force relations” which produce or generate *states* of power that are irreducible, local, and unstable.⁴⁷

One of Foucault’s most radical and provocative moments is precisely the point at which he declines to continue with an analysis of power at the homogeneous register of ideology and law, the master and the family, the State and the subject. Foucault’s move has the merit of rendering absolutely untenable any theory of power (and by association, any politics) which would attribute to power the status of a totality or a supreme unity. Power is rather the most common—absolutely common in its very heterogeneity, disparity and omnipresence. Power is a name before it is a thing, even if in being named it assumes the appearance or crystallization proper to a thing (institutions, enclosures, guillotines, etc.). One can speak of the “omnipresence of power,” writes Foucault,

not because it has the privilege of consolidating everything under its invincible unity, but because it is produced from one moment to the next, at every point, or rather in every relation from one point to another. Power is everywhere, not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere. . . . One needs to be nominalistic, no doubt: power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society.⁴⁸

The immediate danger here is to posit power as something exterior to a society, or to the bodies of which society is said. Foucault insists that power is *not* something that can be acquired or shared, accumulated or dispensed, “relations of power are not in a position of exteriority with respect to other types of relationships,” such that one cannot

⁴⁷ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. I: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 92-93.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 93.

say that power ‘comes upon’ a mind or a body or a society, but is always immanent to its relations—power is this multiplicity of relations and nothing besides. One *attributes* power to a situation inasmuch as one names power, but power is not itself an attribute. “Power has no essence,” writes Deleuze, following Foucault, “it is simply operational. It is not an attribute but a relation.”⁴⁹ What is called power “is characterized by immanence of field without transcendent unification, continuity of line without global centralization, and contiguity of parts without distinct totalization: it is a social space.”⁵⁰ Yet if power is social it is nevertheless irreducible to subjects. “Power relations are both intentional and nonsubjective,” which is to say relations of power ‘lack’ a subject, but are nevertheless intelligible and imbued with calculation, always exercised in terms of a series of aims and objectives. Yet no *one* ultimately chooses or decides: “the logic is perfectly clear, the aims decipherable, and yet it is often the case that no one is there to have invented them,” hence the essential anonymity of strategies of power.⁵¹

Anonymity is not negative theology. Nor does it signify a pardon for those ‘persons’ in ‘positions of power.’ On the contrary, the brilliance of Foucault’s “profound Nietzscheanism” is to have put to death forever the idea of an absolute Subject or God who pulls the strings of society. Appealing to the anonymity and impersonal nature of power relations does not buttress the identity of a transcendence which would guarantee

⁴⁹ Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, trans. Sean Hand (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 27.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*, 95.

power in its deployment. The point is neither to apologize for God nor to attack God, but to show the void of the non-place where God was supposed to have been. Likewise, it is by no means the case that by insisting on the anonymous and nonsubjective ‘being’ of power one is giving cover to those persons who reside at the privileged nodes of power. It is simply to suggest that those persons who occupy ‘positions’ are mastered by power just as much as they are masters of power (power, after all, “passes through the hands of the mastered no less than through the hands of the masters”)⁵². It is precisely by attending to power relations as the movements and concatenations of energy and force on an impersonal transcendental field (prior to any subject) that one can begin to refuse the transcendence of God and masters alike, since every subject, human or divine, is *produced by power*. And this holds for social or political classes as well as the subjects that populate them, since “power flows through the ruling class no less than through those who are ruled, in such a way that classes result from it, and not the reverse.” The State and Law are crystallized forms of power; they merely effect the integration of power.⁵³

Hence, one should identify relations of power and analyze them in terms of their differentiation and heterogeneity—a search for immanent causes—rather than in terms of global effects—the State, or Law (even the police, which are the corporeality of the latter

⁵² Deleuze, *Foucault*, 71.

⁵³ Gilles Deleuze, *Two Regimes of Madness: Texts and Interviews 1975-1995*, ed. David Lapoujade, trans. Ames Hodges and Mike Taormina (New York: Semiotext(e), 2007), 249.

and pure violence of the former).⁵⁴ Foucault's method of this pursuit is *diagrammatic*. A diagram is simply a map that doubles the social field, "a cartography that is coextensive with the whole social field."⁵⁵ Yet if it doubles the social field it is not in order to represent the social field, but rather to produce a new kind of reality, to render speech and sight possible: the diagram makes intelligible—or is the intelligibility *of*—the continually varying and innumerable anonymous strategies of power. Foucault's celebrated example of the diagram is Bentham's infamous Panopticon, but Foucault does not merely refer to the Panopticon as a mechanism or field of visibility and invisibility (he does say this, but more profoundly locates in the Panopticon a pure *function*). "The panoptic mechanism," he writes, "is not simply a hinge, a point of exchange between a mechanism of power and a function; it is a way of making power relations functions in a function, and of making a function through these power relations."⁵⁶

There is a reciprocity here that is proper to immanence: the multiplicity of power relations become functions *in a function*, but this function is nothing other than the execution or effectuation of the power relations which constitute it. Deleuze notes that

the diagram acts as a non-unifying immanent cause that is co-extensive with the whole social field: [this] abstract machine is like the cause of the concrete

⁵⁴ See Derrida's important meditations on the police as a spirit of violence in Jacques Derrida, "Force of Law: The Mystical Foundation of Authority," *Acts of Religion*, trans. Gil Anidjar (New York: Routledge, 2010), esp. 180-181.

⁵⁵ Deleuze, *Foucault*, 34.

⁵⁶ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 206-207.

assemblages that execute its relations; and these relations between forces take place ‘not above’ but within the very tissue of the assemblages they produce.⁵⁷

This is why Foucault can maintain that there is a diagram for every social field, whether distinguished by geographical position, cultural difference, temporal distance, or historical process. A Greek diagram of the gymnasium and the *agora*. An Alexandrian diagram of conquest and expansion. A medieval diagram of the king’s body. A modern diagram of the State. It will become clear that we are interested not only in the specificity of diagrammatic functions and the forces embodied in them, but in the *specific* relations of power immanent in the diagram of late capitalism, to which the name creditor-debtor relation corresponds, without thereby exhausting the possibility of naming strategies of capital.

The creditor-debtor relation, according to Nietzsche, is the first truly *social* relation, inasmuch as it inaugurates a relation in which one can measure oneself against another.⁵⁸ Yet it would be a mistake to say that this relation has *always* existed as the primary relation of power, undisturbed or without transformation, throughout history, as if one could trace a continuous, immutable line through the accidents and vagaries of a historical continuum. The genealogical method which Nietzsche invented or discovered, and which Foucault picks up (as one picks up an arrow, shot by one thinker, and fires it further) and puts to his own use, does not consider the history of morality (or any history)

⁵⁷ Deleuze, *Foucault*, 37.

⁵⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufman and RJ Hollingdale, *Ecco Homo*, trans. Walter Kaufman (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 70.

as a matter of linear development or continuity of evolution, which one could trace back to an unequivocal origin. Rather, genealogy identifies and analyzes points of emergence, discontinuities or events irreducible to culminations or final destinations (“the eye was not always intended for contemplation, and punishment has had other purposes than setting an example”⁵⁹). Emergence is “always produced in a particular state of forces,” the struggles or conflicts between forces, struggles *of power*.⁶⁰ Hence, morality emerges in the Nietzschean schema as a particular technique of ‘accounting for’ the human being in terms of its sociality—a subject emerges as the unique capacity to either dispense punishment (injured creditor) or to endure pain (insolvent debtor). Perhaps this ‘genesis’ of morality *qua* credit-debt relation subsides as early societies codify social relations and rituals, or disappears entirely as monotheism emerges, yet resurfaces in Christian theories of atonement. This is one dimension of the question raised in Part II: to what extent does Christianity repeat, simplify, or modify the creditor-debtor relation?

In any case, I am concerned precisely with the emergence, or intensification, of the creditor-debtor relation in late capitalist society. Yet this society is not the same society as those from which this power relation sprang. One must account not only for the formal nature of a power relation, but also for its historical transformation and appearance-disappearance. There is an absolute heterogeneity of forces, multiplicities which take

⁵⁹ Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” *Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1985, Volume Two: Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. James D. Faubion, trans. Robert Hurley, et al. (New York: The New Press, 1998), 376.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

only other multiplicities as their object (“force is never singular but essentially exists in relation with other forces, such that any force is already a relation, that is to say power: *force has no other object or subject than force*”),⁶¹ but in addition to the variation and complexity of this field of forces there is, or are, perceivable—or at the very least nameable—trends in the dispersion and dissemination of these forces: regimes, or apparatuses, of power. Before we can further explore the manner in which relations of power constitute a social field (not to mention the relation of this hypothesis to a Spinozist materialism) *and* produce a subject *of* that field, it will be necessary to explore these apparatuses and their (provisional) periodization. It will become apparent that one can perceive the credit-debt relation in each of these regimes, but to varying degrees and with more or less clarity.

3.2 Foucault outlines three distinct apparatuses—or modalities—of power.⁶² The first apparatus is characterized by the juridical or legal code, the ancient or medieval *society of sovereignty*, “which consists in laying down a law and fixing a punishment for the person who breaks it,” where the sovereign power, be it the impersonality of the early bureaucratic State or the monarch who embodies the State, maintains an absolute power over the criminal’s (the subject’s) death. The second apparatus is Foucault’s infamous

⁶¹ Deleuze, *Foucault*, 70. My emphasis.

⁶² Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-1978*, ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2007), 4-9 and *passim*.

disciplinary society, characterized by surveillance, internment, enclosure, distributing bodies in time and space so as to organize productive power: power *qua* discipline, where discipline refers both to the production of individuals and to their ordering and organization. Discipline, considered in terms of the problem of crime (as with sovereign power above), is a sort of set of preventative measures or prophylactics of power, deployed at the level of the individual as measure or unit of a multiplicity. Foucault refers to the third apparatus by different names depending on the volume one consults: here it is *security*, there it is *biopower* (Deleuze, as we will see, follows William S. Burroughs, calling this third apparatus *control*). Nevertheless, this third apparatus, defined loosely, operates at the register of populations rather than discrete individuals. It is not that there are no longer any individuals to speak of, but that power is deployed as an inoculative measure; power ceases to concern itself entirely with producing a moral or disciplined individual and comes to address the problems of immunity, criminality, and insolvency in terms of probability—a statistics of power. The *rate* of crime becomes the subject of power, rather than the criminal himself, or the adjudication of a sentence for his particular crimes.

Or take Foucault's example of the plague: sovereign power operates by binary divisions and exclusions (one is either a leper or one is not; the former are thrown out of the city); disciplinary power operates by enclosure and surveillance (parts of the city are quarantined, homes subject to inspection); but security or biopower operates by immunization and prediction (smallpox vaccinations in the eighteenth century, and today

medical campaigns that emphasize the importance of washing one's hands).⁶³ Yet despite the somewhat obvious periodization of these three apparatuses (ancient/medieval, modern, and contemporary), Foucault insists that there is not a "series of successive elements, the appearance of the new causing the earlier ones to disappear. There is not the legal age, the disciplinary age, and then the age of security."⁶⁴ It is rather as though all of these apparatuses co-exist in superposition. No doubt, disciplinary mechanisms could only emerge as a novelty in light of the 'prior' techniques of sovereign power, and the same would hold vis-a-vis security and discipline. "For example," says Foucault,

you could perfectly well study the history of the disciplinary technique of putting someone in a cell, which goes back a long way. It was already frequently employed in the juridical-legal age; you find it used for debtors and above all you find it in the religious domain.⁶⁵

One apparatus or another will emerge, or find itself cast in relief, standing out amidst the mechanisms and techniques of the other apparatuses, but in doing so it makes use of or appropriates certain features of these others.

Rather than a banal historicization or naive periodization, one should insist, according to the genealogical method, that apparatuses emerge according to the problems they are more or less capable of addressing. That is, a regime of power is organized according to an immanent problematic field, rather than according to an eternal or

⁶³ Ibid., 9-10.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 8.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

transcendent dictum.⁶⁶ Deleuze takes the term ‘control’ from William S. Burroughs to characterize the society or regime of power that ‘succeeds’ discipline without thereby taking leave of the latter. One should insist on the novelty of control societies without falling into the error of imagining discipline is gone for good; on the contrary, discipline gets re-deployed, re-imagined and re-expressed in terms of *dividuals*, continuous and varying modulations of power relations and the subjects produced therein, rather than the discontinuous or exclusionary processes of the ‘previous’ regimes. “Confinements are *molds*, different moldings, while controls are a *modulation*, like a self-transmuting molding continually changing from one moment to the next, or like a sieve whose mesh varies from one point to another.”⁶⁷ Likewise, in accordance with the emphasis of control on populations, “we’re no longer dealing with a duality of mass and individual. Individuals become ‘*dividuals*,’ and masses become samples, data, markets, or ‘*banks*.”⁶⁸

Strikingly, Deleuze suggests that money functions a privileged site of this transformation:

⁶⁶ Foucault himself confirms this in an interview: “...I understand by the term ‘apparatus’ a sort of—shall we say—formation which has as its major function at a given historical moment that of responding to an *urgent need*. The apparatus thus has a dominant strategic function.” See Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, trans. Colin Gordon, et al. (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), 195.

⁶⁷ Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 178-179.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 180.

Money, perhaps, best expresses the difference between the two kinds of society, since discipline was always related to molded currencies containing gold as a numerical standard, whereas control is based on floating exchange rates, modulations depending on a code setting sample percentages for various currencies. If money's old moles are the animals you get in places of confinement, then control societies have their snakes. We've gone from one animal to the other, from moles to snakes, not just in the system we live under but in the way we live and in our relations with other people too. Disciplinary man produced energy in discrete amounts, while control man undulates, moving among a continuous range of different orbits.⁶⁹

A host of mechanisms, techniques, and assemblages accompany these transformations, or are produced precisely as this transformation. Deleuze here keys in on a crucial point: the systemic changes are not *merely* abstract or formal, but effect novel, concrete social relations, and produce subjects which are grounded only in the shifting relations of power from which they spring. We are mistaken if we assume that there are pre-existing subjects upon which an apparatus acts. A subject—however insolvent—is as much a solution to a problem as is the apparatus that produces it; a subject is a solution to the second degree, or is the 'result' of a strategy, which always refers back to a diagram of forces which maps the contours or the singular points of a problem.

In an expression that is not only infamous, but which also has ramifications for the present essay, Deleuze claims that "control is short-term and rapidly shifting, but at the same time continuous and unbounded, whereas discipline was long-term, infinite and discontinuous. A man is no longer a man confined but a man *in debt*."⁷⁰ My aim here is not to adjudicate as to which regime of power the creditor-debtor relation belongs. In

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 181. My emphasis.

fact, it ‘belongs’ to each of the three outlined above. In the same way that Foucault decries any accusation that he is attempting to formulate a *general* theory of power, and insists instead upon examining the particular, local and singular points in which, upon which, and at which power is applied or is expressed, so does my own analysis aim at isolating a *particular apparatus* that asserts itself (the apparatus of forgiveness) in terms of both the problematic field or milieu in which it arises (industrial and now neoliberal capitalism) and the specific subject it produces (the indebted or forgiven subject). The theory of a *general* credit is by no means a *general* theory of credit.⁷¹ The analysis of this apparatus of forgiveness—its effects, affects, and the subjectivity that it produces—is the subject of Part II. Yet before this analysis can be undertaken it is necessary to specify the conditions under which an apparatus emerges, the operations by which it effects its movements and processes, and the effects it produces—namely, the production of a subject.

⁷¹ One of the differences between Foucault’s account of power, and Deleuze’s *account of* Foucault’s account of power, is that the former categorically refused to offer a general theory of power, whereas Deleuze has no qualms about deploying Foucault’s analyses toward precisely that end—a *general* theory of power (in a sense, Deleuze’s corpus could be read as such a general theory power). I confess that my own method is closer to Foucault’s: my account here of a *general* credit does not exhaust the idea of credit *in general*. There are other theories of credit, existing credit-systems, financial mechanisms of credit, and so on, to which I do not have the time or space to address myself. My intent is simple: rather than a general theory of credit and money, I wish simply to isolate and interrogate the manner in which a theory of money qua credit can illuminate and accentuate the stakes of our contemporary situation vis-a-vis debt resistance and neoliberal austerity. How does a general credit—our collective faith in God or money—effect the stratagems of an impersonal and invisible apparatus of forgiveness?

Before moving on I should note that I will henceforth reserve the term *regime* to refer to the periodization of the *dispositifs* discussed above: a *regime* of sovereignty, of discipline, and control or security. Apparatuses proliferate infinitely within regimes of power, as well as in their interstices, and each apparatus varies in itself according to the material conditions of its milieu; the only limit is *the outside*, from which apparatuses spring and to which they return. Hence, an apparatus can be as insignificant as a social network or a credit scoring system, or as comparatively prominent as a Constitution, a declaration of martial law, or a religious tradition. The essential character of the apparatus is preserved, even if it is multiplied indefinitely: an apparatus is a constellation of power relations which acts as an (always provisional) organizing principle of a given society and produces subjects as avatars and conduits of its constitutive power relations. Processes of subjectivization are inseparable from the concrete, seemingly impersonal, relations of power that define a milieu.

3.3 Foucault himself recognized the difficulty of defining the term apparatus, which is due less to any specifically mystical or mysterious occlusion of the apparatus, but rather due to its generality. He refers to this difficulty in an interview:

What I'm trying to pick out with this term is, firstly, a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions—in short, the said as much as the unsaid. Such are the elements of the apparatus. The apparatus itself is the system of relations that can be established between these elements.⁷²

⁷² Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 194.

Giorgio Agamben has observed that the term *dispositif* is not only a crucial technical term for Foucault, but is a general term of analysis opposed to the ‘universals’ such as the State or Law. According to Agamben, apparatuses are “what take the place of universals in the Foucauldian strategy: not simply this or that police measure, this or that technology of power.”⁷³ What the term *apparatus* refers to is precisely the networks or diagrams that can be ‘drawn’ or ‘mapped’ onto a differentiated and heterogeneous social field. The generality of apparatuses becomes a privileged and incisive instrument with which to probe the networks of relations of power which, in themselves, defy all generalization.

In his essay, “What is an Apparatus?,” Agamben proposes to further expand the “already large class” of apparatuses:

I shall call an apparatus literally anything that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviors, opinions, or discourses of living beings. Not only, therefore, prisons, madhouses, the panopticon, schools, confession, factories, disciplines, juridical measures, and so forth (whose connection with power is in a certain sense evident), but also the pen, writing, literature, philosophy, agriculture, cigarettes, navigation, computers, cellular telephones, and—why not—language itself, which is perhaps the most ancient of apparatuses—one in which thousands and thousands of years ago a primate inadvertently let himself be captured...⁷⁴

This expansion has the great merit of refusing to fall into a dogmatic position vis-a-vis Foucault’s description of the three historical *dispositifs*, in which one would insist that power is either sovereign *or* disciplinary *or* biopolitical, and that analyses of power are exhausted in these categories. Apparatuses proliferate, and subjects with them. The move

⁷³ Giorgio Agamben, *What is an Apparatus?*, 6-7.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

that accompanies this expansion of the class of apparatuses, however, seems to compromise some of the strength of the term. In the same essay, Agamben proposes a particular genealogy of the term apparatus, the *continuity* of which stretches back two millennia to the dawn of Christian theology.

The trinitarian Church Fathers, claims Agamben, were faced with the problem of accounting for *both* the immutability and ipseity (i.e. the being) of God *and* the divine government of the world, the effectuation of salvation history and so on (i.e. God's activity). They had to appease the monotheists or 'monarchians' in their midst while affirming the deity of Christ. Their solution, which was in any case ingenious, was to make strategic reference to the Greek concept of *oikonomia*, which signified the administration or management of the household. Their argument, according to Agamben, went something like this:

“God, insofar as his being and substance is concerned, is certainly one; but as to his *oikonomia*—that is to say the way in which he administers his home, his life, and the world that he has created—he is, rather, triple. Just as a good father can entrust to his son the execution of certain functions and duties without in so doing losing his power and his unity, so God entrusts to Christ the ‘economy,’ the administration and government of human history.”⁷⁵

The upshot of this turn of events is that *oikonomia* entered the Christian faith, referring not only to the worldly power of the Church (which dispenses God's justice and grace) but also to the eschatological notion of an ‘economy of salvation,’ which grinds onward through history like a machine toward a certain, predetermined end. The link between the *oikonomia* of the early Church and the French term *dispositif* is an etymological one (one

⁷⁵ Ibid., 10.

can perceive here Agamben's often overt reliance on a Heideggerian hermeneutic of Being, which tends to over-privilege both etymology and the 'destiny' of certain enunciations of Being): the Latin translation of *oikonomia* was, and is, *Dispositio*.⁷⁶

This is certainly not the end of the story. Agamben has, in fact, given a much more detailed account of the historical transformations this term has undergone in *The Kingdom and the Glory*,⁷⁷ which traces seemingly every mutation of *oikonomia* throughout Western history—to which the short essay I have been citing refers only in passing. The issue with Agamben's theological genealogy, as Alberto Toscano has recently pointed out,⁷⁸ is that—contrary to Foucault's insistence on the discontinuity and fundamental emergent genesis of apparatuses of power—for Agamben, the historical transformations of *oikonomia* and *dispositio* all refer back to a purportedly continuous Christian lineage. Underneath it all—all of the historical formations of power—it is just Christianity, always Christianity, which becomes therefore the truth—however occulted—of every history.⁷⁹ As much as Agamben wishes to depart from Carl Schmitt's notion of secularization (the infamous claim that “all significant concepts of the modern

⁷⁶ Ibid., 11.

⁷⁷ Giorgio Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory: Toward a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government*, trans. Lorenzo Chiesa with Matteo Mandarini (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011).

⁷⁸ Alberto Toscano, “Divine Management: Critical Remarks on Giorgio Agamben's *The Kingdom and the Glory*,” *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* (2011), 16:3.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 128.

theory of the state are secularized theological concepts...”),⁸⁰ the danger here is that Christianity becomes the transcendent term to which all power refers.⁸¹ In Agamben, the apparatus is not *too general*; on the contrary, it is too specific, too narrow, too Christian.

I will raise this problem of historiography and genealogy again in Part 2, with regards to the question of the genealogical links between Christianity and capitalism in terms of the creditor-debtor relation. I locate my own analysis somewhere between Agamben and Foucault (inasmuch as one can grant the distance between them according to Toscano’s critique). That there is indeed a specifically *Christian* genealogy of power should not lead us astray: Christianity is itself an emergent, historical formation, but it by no means provides us with an unqualified continuity or a universal history with which to proceed. For now, however, I merely want to take from Agamben the notion that one can conceive of any number of apparatuses, which are indeed infinite in principle, and which must always *produce a subject* in response to a given exigency, be it social or political, religious or economic. Agamben’s insistence on the production of subjects by apparatuses stems, per usual, from the fact that the trinitarian split between God’s being and God’s action: “Action (economy, but also politics) has no foundation in being,” the latter which, inasmuch as it is the being of God, must remain separate and immutable.

Hence,

⁸⁰ Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 36.

⁸¹ My thanks to Sean Capener for not only pointing me to Toscano’s critique, but for calling into question the wisdom of conferring upon Christianity such a transcendent status as index or signature.

the term ‘apparatus designates that in which, and through which, one realizes a pure activity of governance devoid of any foundation in being. *This* is the reason why apparatuses must always imply a process of subjectification, that is to say, they must produce their subjects.⁸²

Contra Agamben, one must insist on the radical immanence of action and being, power and being. Agamben appears here to fall victim to a certain analogical conception of being. There is indeed (an) analogy at the heart of apparatuses, particularly the creditor-debtor relation and its apparatus of forgiveness, but a genealogy should concern itself not with apparatuses *as they appear*—rather with the *conditions* of their appearance and production.

3.4 A subject is always a subject *of* power. That is to say, in the same way that power is not exterior to social relations, but immanent to them and constitutive of them, the subject is constituted by power. We saw above that a diagram doubles every social field by investing it with power relations. The diagram is to the apparatus as the abstract machine is to the assemblage in Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus*: one can think the heterogeneity and disparity of apparatuses or assemblages by assigning to their networks of relations a certain immanence, by mapping analytically the various investments, deployments and coagulations of power in terms of a diagram which can, in a provisional manner, render the ‘invisible’ relations visible according to forms of knowledge: “The diagram or abstract machine is the map of relations between forces, a map of destiny, or intensity, which proceeds by primary non-localizable relations and at

⁸² Agamben, *What is an Apparatus?*, 11. My emphasis.

every moment passes through every point.”⁸³ And with regard to the reciprocal relation of power and knowledge, Foucault himself insists that “there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations.”⁸⁴ We will see that power and knowledge, while integrally related, are not perfectly reciprocal, since knowledges are precisely integrations of the differentiability of power.

In any case, power is a relation between forces, and these forces have nothing but other forces as their object. Deleuze notes, no doubt under a Spinozan influence, that “spontaneity and receptivity now take on a new meaning: to affect or be affected.”⁸⁵ The question of affect is inseparable from an analysis of power, not only because of the obvious advantages of the language of affect for describing relationality, but because of the crucial legacy (retrieved by Deleuze) of Spinoza’s theory of affect. The degree of power of a given being (or mode of being) is determined by its capacity to be affected (IHD3), hence Deleuze’s quip, “tell me the affections of which you are capable and I’ll tell you who you are.”⁸⁶ Affections are what a given being undergoes or dispenses with,

⁸³ Deleuze, *Foucault*, 36.

⁸⁴ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 27.

⁸⁵ Deleuze, *Foucault*, 71.

⁸⁶ Gilles Deleuze, Lecture Jan 14th, 1974. “To make this more concrete we say that to each degree of power corresponds a certain power of being affected. Its power of being affected is what reveals the degree of power of a thing.” URL:

but affects are transitive, pre-personal, separate from a given subject. Affects are mobile intensities or becomings, transitions and passages. We saw above that there is a certain materialism latent in Spinoza's *Ethics*; we should therefore take Deleuze seriously—which is to say literally—when he says that “the power to be affected is like a *matter* of force, and the power to affect is like a *function* of force.”⁸⁷ Deleuze pushes Foucault's analytics of power and knowledge towards a topology of power and subjectivity. Affects, forces, relations of power are the *movements of matter-energy* on a plane of immanence, which must be conceived henceforth as a pure surface.

This surface has but one side (which Deleuze calls the *outside*, for reasons which will become clear); this single side is structured like a Möbius strip, where a torsion produces the *effect* of multiple sides—giving rise to the illusion of a dualism of minds and bodies enjambed in or by a soul, subjects and power opposed to one another, the illusion of transcendence and the ‘universals’ which are supposed to explain transcendence.⁸⁸ Hence, there are three things to note about the structure of this surface.

<http://www.webdeleuze.com/php/texte.php?cle=176&groupe=Anti%20Oedipe%20et%20Mille%20Plateaux&langue=2> (Accessed April, 24th 2016).

⁸⁷ Deleuze, *Foucault*, 71-72.

⁸⁸ Note that I have chosen to speak of an ‘absolute’ outside when referring to this surface of being and the topology of the fold. One could just as easily say, however, that there is in fact no absolute outside, but only relative insides and outsides. The latter description has the benefit of refusing any autonomy or existence to a transcendent ‘beyond,’ but the former goes somewhat further so long as one maintains that the outside is *not* a beyond, but the pure, single-side of an infinite surface, on which the relative insides and outsides appear or exist as folds of the infinite surface or substance. I will attempt to elucidate this further below. In addition, I have written about this topology of the pure surface of being elsewhere. See Timothy Snediker, “The Autonomy of the Now: Christianity, Secularism,

Heterogeneity of power and knowledge: whereas the latter concerns, and is constituted as, strata (substances and formalized functions, forms of exteriority, i.e. sayability and visibility), power is, on the other hand, diagrammatic and distributive; power relations are non-localizable and constitute “anonymous strategies” which, though they differ in kind from stratifications of knowledge, are primary in relation to the latter and constitute the latter, effecting thereby the general organization of the social field in which the forms of knowledge are located.⁸⁹ *Ventriloquism of power*: “No doubt power, if we consider it in the abstract, neither sees nor speaks...But precisely because it does not itself speak and see, it makes us see and speak.”⁹⁰ *Self-affection of force, or the fold*:

Force is what belongs to the outside, since it is essentially a relation between other forces: it is inseparable in itself from the power to affect other forces (spontaneity) and to be affected by others (receptivity). But what comes about as a result [of the fold] is a relation which force has with itself, a power to affect itself, an affect of self on self.⁹¹

Apparatuses do not depart from the field that generates them; they are the self-modulation or self-affection of the field, an immanent integration of the purely differential matrix of the outside.

Subjectivity,” *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory* vol. 12 no. 1 (Fall 2014): 123-142. For Deleuze and Guattari’s account, which more or less resembles the former description of relative insides and outsides, see Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 59-60.

⁸⁹ Deleuze, *Foucault*, 73.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 82.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 101.

It is crucial to understand that when power is said to come from the ‘outside,’ this does not imply a beyond or a transcendent plane upon which power struggles play out, and of which our own knowledge and struggles are mere reflections or representations. Power *is* the formless form of the outside: “The relations between forces, which are mobile, faint and diffuse, do not lie outside strata but *form the outside of strata*...it is each stratified historical formation which refers back to a diagram of forces as though it were its outside.”⁹² Deleuze insists on this dimension of Foucault’s thought: force refers to an irreducible outside, “an outside which is farther away than any external world.”⁹³ The two forms of exteriority (sayability and visibility) are external to one another and heterogeneous, which is to say that seeing and speaking do not converge on a given object (this is Foucault’s transformation of phenomenology into epistemology). There is necessarily a disjunction between speaking and seeing. Seeing and speaking are forms of knowledge, but “thinking addresses itself to an outside that has no form.”⁹⁴ We said above that affects and forces are movements *on* a plane of immanence, but this risks a certain misunderstanding: affects, forces, and relations of power are not movements *on* the plane so much as they are movement *of* the plane—the “infinite movements caught within each other, each folded in the others, so that the return of one instantaneously

⁹² Ibid., 84. My emphasis.

⁹³ Ibid., 86.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 87.

relaunches another in such a way that the plane of immanence is ceaselessly being woven, like a gigantic shuttle.”⁹⁵

The question arises: there is an outside, there is power, there are sets of forces that act upon one another, generating apparatuses, assemblages, non-localizable power relations—but is there, therefore, *an inside*? Deleuze’s reply: “The outside is not a fixed limit but a moving matter animated by peristaltic movements, folds and foldings that together make up an inside: they are not something other than the outside, but precisely the inside *of* the outside.”⁹⁶ This inside of the outside is the subject; the subject is an effect of the folding of the outside. The subject is constituted as the ‘double’ of the outside, or rather the subject is the doubled-over-ness of the outside, as if a living torsion, or a vortex invested by a duration. The subject is not something different than the outside, but is the interiorization of the outside:

[T]he double is never a projection of the interior; on the contrary, it is an interiorization of the outside. It is not a doubling of the One, but a redoubling of the Other. It is not a reproduction of the Same, but a repetition of the Different. It is not the emanation of an ‘I,’ but something that places in immanence an always other or a Non-self. It is never the other who is a double in the doubling process, *it is a self that lives me as the double of the other*: I do not encounter myself on the outside, I find the other in me.⁹⁷

The outside is therefore a beyond, but as we saw above, it is a beyond *of* thought, rather than a transcendent beyond *for* thought, and it is the same materiality *of* the

⁹⁵ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 38.

⁹⁶ Deleuze, *Foucault*, 96-97.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 98. My emphasis.

universe that is *of* the subject. The subject is *material*, forged in the crucible of the struggle of forces and stratifications (apparatuses, power relations). *Even thought is material*: its condition of possibility is the formless form of the outside, pure matter-energy which flows and folds, bifurcates and coagulates endlessly, infinitely. This is the thesis of univocity: the outside is being, but being is said in one and the same sense *of* everything (which is to say, all of its differences) of which it is said. Deleuze said as much in *Difference and Repetition*:

Nietzsche meant nothing more than this by eternal return. Eternal return cannot mean the return of the Identical because it presupposes a world (that of the will to power) in which all previous identities have been abolished and dissolved. Returning is being, but only *the being of becoming*. The eternal return does not bring back ‘the same,’ but returning constitutes the only Same of that which becomes. Returning is the becoming-identical of becoming itself.⁹⁸

Deleuze’s interpretation of Nietzsche is by no means uncontroversial, but what it lacks in consensus it exceeds in intensity: immanence thought not as the totality from which one attempts to escape, but as that which one *is*—is *in*, is *becoming*. Hence the fundamental ambiguity of both Foucault and Deleuze with regards to power, since power is not that which represses or oppresses, but that which *produces*. That power can by turns dominate and invigorate, insist and resist, is precisely its importance. What is essential to understand about power is that it is not separate from the matter in which it is expressed, nor is the subject or subjectivities which are produced by power (*in* and *of*

⁹⁸ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 41. My emphasis.

power) separate or detachable from power. Between one subject and another there are only folds of power, and between these folds of power there are only more folds.⁹⁹

It will have been necessary to lay these groundworks for the analysis of the creditor-debtor relation, and for the investigation of the ‘affinities’ between Christianity and capitalism. It will become increasingly clear that the human being qua subject is the *matter* or *material* in which is invested the *function* of the apparatus of forgiveness. In order to come to terms with our contemporary political situation—in which the forgiveness of debts *appears* as a viable way, perhaps the only viable way, forward—we must learn to see and speak, so to speak, otherwise of forgiveness.¹⁰⁰ Which is to say: we have to rethink, or think otherwise, of God. Or money, if you’ll pardon the expression. Money is first of all power, which is to say it is that plane of immanence upon which we, as subjects—whether indebted or forgiven, or both—are produced, and to which we return. It is only once we grasp the nature of money as that from which we emerge as crystals of value that we can proceed to the standard Marxist critique of money as the form of value.

⁹⁹ Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, trans. Tom Conley (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 10.

¹⁰⁰ I will address the contemporary situation vis-a-vis debt resistance and neoliberal austerity in the Conclusion, but for now let it suffice to say that this essay seeks to demonstrate that debt forgiveness, taken by itself, is not sufficient for an emancipatory project of resistance to capital. It is not that one should, if given the chance of debt forgiveness, refuse that forgiveness. It is simply that debt forgiveness is always a strategy or a theodicy of capitalism: the debt is forgiven, but the underlying structure and conditions of capitalist accumulation thereby go unchallenged.

Interlude (&) – General Credit and the Plane of Immanence

&.1 In “Faith and Knowledge,” Derrida speaks of an “experience of faith, of believing, of a credit that is irreducible to knowledge.”¹⁰¹ Derrida has in mind a certain “messianicity without messianism” in the tele-technoscientific milieu of “globalatinization” in which we live and breathe, and he is rightly famous for these interventions. Yet he goes on to say something else, still in the ambit of a reflection on religion, but verging on a more radical thesis, marking the opening or the appearance of what we will call a *general credit*.¹⁰² Derrida speaks of an “elementary act of faith,” without which “there would neither be ‘social bond’ nor address of the other, nor any

¹⁰¹ Jacques Derrida, “Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of ‘Religion’ at the Limits of Reason Alone,” *Acts of Religion*, ed. Gil Anidjar (New York: Routledge, 2010), 56. Recall that it is *power* to which knowledge is irreducible. Derrida does not thematize this (non-)relation, but we should nevertheless read Derrida’s account of faith and credit as a certain power of being, of which we—the faithful—are degrees.

¹⁰² I owe many of the following insights to Sean Capener, whose ongoing work on Christian-capitalist credit is indispensable for my own work. Neither of us remember which one of us proposed the term ‘general credit,’ but as I will demonstrate, it is a concept that is absolutely crucial for understanding the genealogical and political assemblages of Christianity and capital.

performativity in general” (80). Wherever the critique of *mondialatinization* develops, claims Derrida, wherever one names and challenges the increasingly blurred lines between Christianity and capitalism, liberalism and imperialism—there is confirmed “the fiduciary credit of an elementary faith which is, at least in its essence or calling, religious” (80-81). Derrida notes in a parentheses that this credit is the “elementary condition, the *milieu* of the religious if not religion itself” (81, my emphasis). Hence one speaks “of trust and of credit or of trustworthiness in order to underscore that this elementary act of faith also underlies the essentially economic and capitalistic rationality of the tele-technoscientific” (Ibid.).

This fiduciary credit is actualized *both* in or as the milieu of the religious *and* as the general structure of political economy of late capitalism. Without this elementary act of faith, there is no social bond, no society or sociality; and likewise no institutions, no constitutions, no sovereignty, no law, *no performativity*. One cannot even begin to conceive of agents and patients, actions and passions, positions and performances without reference to this general credit. Belief, faith, and trust are the linguistic indexes of the very sociality of the social. The upshot of this is that it is not one faith that is professed in God and another professed in the rule of law or in one’s neighbor. Certainly, there are determinations of faith which differ by degree and in kind. Yet at the same time there is a sense in which credit is said *of* all of these faiths and trusts in one and the same sense (univocity of money). This is why I went to great lengths in the preceding chapters to articulate and demonstrate the plane of immanence upon which all of our movements and subjectivizations, so to speak, take place. The expression *God or Money* is neither poetic

license nor sophistry—in its perversion of Spinoza it is rather the truth of our collective life. When money becomes God, as I am maintaining, it is henceforth impossible to keep speaking of belief in the same register. One does not believe in money as if money were an object of belief, either somewhere in the exteriority of the world or in the interiority of the soul. One believes *in money* as that which makes belief in general possible. Belief in money now signifies, rather than an opinion or a desire conditioned by a lack (wherein one always wants or needs more money), a *performance* of the death of God.

The death of God, of course, does not signify an historical event, but a *transformation* of God into money. More precisely, the death of God is the performance of this transformation, its consummation and processual repetition in each and every social passion. In this regard, everything depends on whether or not one can affirm a theory of money *qua* credit, and, secondly, whether or not one can articulate a theory of credit *in general*. I will take up the specific determinations of this theory in Part II, but for now let it suffice to say that if money is, in its most fundamental nature, credit, then the primary or fundamental social relation is the *creditor-debtor relation*. As I will demonstrate, credit and debt are reversible: a credit given is a debt received, and a debt received is in turn credit given again. Every gift, every exchange, is a circulation of credit-debt. No doubt, in accordance with the Marxist monetary theory, money is only money in motion, and is that commodity which can be traded or exchanged for any other commodity, *including itself*. Yet one can push money into a further register: money is created *as* debt, *as* credit—money is always a promise of future value, whether it is created as a personal loan, or by a reserve bank. When a person hands over a five-dollar

bank note in exchange for a sandwich, that person is trading another person's debt for the commodity.

Yet if credit and debt are reversible—if money is always credit *and* debt, and the only discernible difference between them depends entirely on one's point of view, since in the abstract one is always a creditor *or* a debtor—by what means can one address the *asymmetry* between creditor and debtor? After all, speaking concretely, the creditor may be a debtor to another creditor, and the debtor may have several creditors. The reversibility of credit and debt is crucial for a theory of money qua credit, but it leaves one without any means of analyzing the *real* difference between creditor and debtor. No doubt one can simply point to the quantitative difference between creditor and debtor, the inequality that characterizes their respective wealth. Yet this still tells us nothing about the *conditions* of the asymmetry that grounds the creditor-debtor relation, and the manner in which the creditor-debtor relation grounds the process of exchange in the capitalist mode of production. My contribution to the vast literature on credit-debt relations is meager, but it aims precisely to address this lacuna. To wit, in accordance with Nietzsche's insight in the second essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals*—what he calls “that stroke of genius on the part of Christianity”¹⁰³—what distinguishes the creditor from the debtor is the power of the creditor *to forgive*.

¹⁰³ Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 92.

In truth, it matters not whether the creditor *actually* forgives the debt or simply holds this power of forgiveness in reserve.¹⁰⁴ In either case, the asymmetry grounded in this power to forgive is the *primum mobile* of the circulation of money, its inner circuit or innermost truth. As Deleuze and Guattari—following Nietzsche’s critique of the anthropological theories of the origin of exchange—realized in the 1970s, the question of the forgiveness of debts is closely related to the politics of the State:

It has often been remarked that the State commences (or recommences) with two fundamental acts, one of which is said to be enact of territoriality through the fixing of residence, and the other, an act of liberation through the abolition of small debts. [...] The abolition of debts, when it takes place, is a means of maintaining the distribution of land, and a means of preventing the entry on stage of a new territorial machine, possibly revolutionary and capable of raising and dealing with the agrarian problem in a comprehensive way. In other cases where a redistribution occurs, the cycle of credits is maintained, in the new form established by the State—money.¹⁰⁵

And as Devin Singh has recently pointed out, debt cancellation is a particularly devious form of a sovereign exception, a bait and switch in which one accepts the cancellation of one’s debts inasmuch as one affirms the sovereignty of the one who forgives. “To be set free from debt obligation,” writes Singh, “is to be set free to continue to serve the sovereign. *A celebration of the sovereign’s debt clearing is simultaneously a consent to be governed.*”¹⁰⁶ The contemporary demands for a massive cancellation or

¹⁰⁴ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 201. “...the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary...”

¹⁰⁵ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 196-197.

¹⁰⁶ Devin Singh, “Debt Cancellation as Sovereign Crisis Management,” *Cosmologies Magazine*. URL: <http://cosmologiesmagazine.com/devin-singh-debt-cancellation-as-sovereign-crisis->

forgiveness of debts (consumer, student, mortgage, etc.) is well-intentioned, but it tends to obfuscate this crucial issue: debt forgiveness renders the debt *infinite*. The fundamental paradox of the credit-debt relation lies in its peculiar double-bind: the subjectivity of the debtor is that of the sinner, whose guilt is infinite and can only be expunged at the mercy of a creditor; but to have one's debts forgiven is to be placed even further in debt, since one can never fully repay the other who forgives. Whereas one's debt was unpayable *de facto* inasmuch as the principle was too great or the rate of interest too high, once the debt is forgiven, the debt becomes unpayable *de jure*. One's debt circulates endlessly: it becomes the object of speculation. If, under neoliberalism, one becomes increasingly identified with one's debts, then we can say that the neoliberal subject becomes an object or a function of speculative financialization. The debt is not meant to be repaid, it is meant to be *managed*. One manages to keep up with one's payments, and one (that is to say, one's debt) is therefore managed by one's creditors, according to an optimal or minimally sustainable level of default. In an economic system built upon an infinitely expanding spiral of debt, the debtor becomes a privileged locus or conduit of the circulation of money.

The investigation of the subjectivity of the debtor—the neoliberal subjectivity par excellence—has been pursued by several authors, but Maurizio Lazzarato's *The Making of the Indebted Man: An Essay on the Neoliberal Condition* stands out both for its brevity and clarity, as well as its synthesis of Deleuze and Guattari's insights in *Anti-Oedipus*

management/?utm_content=buffera4ee3&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com &utm_campaign=buffer (Accessed 3/25/16).

with the ‘facts on the ground’ in the wake of the financial collapse of 2007-2008. Despite the importance of the *indebted* subject to any critique of late capitalism and neoliberal austerity, I insist that one must push the analysis into yet another register: one must interrogate the conditions under which a *subject of forgiveness* is produced, specifically how and in what manner this subject undergoes and performs that peculiar ventriloquism that I have called a theodicy of money. The Christian dimensions of this stratagem of capital, upon which I insisted in the introduction, will become clear once the shift from indebted subject to forgiven subject is made. Chapter 4 takes up the question of the indebted subject, and the general credit which undergirds the apparatus of debt and credit. Chapter 5 continues the analytic shift from debt to forgiveness, and raises the crucial question of theodicy—the manner and the extent to which the subject of forgiveness is the *condition* according to which God or money forgives itself.

&.2 The foregoing analyses of general economy, the materiality of immanence, and the production of subjects as folds of force (or modes of substance, degrees of power) in the various apparatuses of an immanent political-libidinal economy are preparatory work for the investigation of the subject of forgiveness. Yet one thing remains to be clarified before embarking on the critique of forgiveness: the complex and often misunderstood notion of the plane of immanence. The logic of the plane of immanence is most clearly elaborated in Deleuze and Guattari’s *What is Philosophy?*, in which they claim that “the plane of immanence is not a concept that is or can be thought but rather the image of thought, the image thought gives itself of what it means to think, to make use of thought,

to find one's bearings in thought."¹⁰⁷ Concepts populate the plane of immanence, rather than constituting it. The work of philosophy, according to Deleuze and Guattari is always the two-fold procedure of laying out a plane of immanence or an image of thought, and creating concepts with which to populate that plane. "Concepts are like multiple waves," they write, "rising and falling, but the plane of immanence is the single wave that rolls them up and unrolls them."¹⁰⁸

Deleuze insists upon a decisive distinction between *the* plane of immanence (Deleuze's conceptual translation of Spinozan substance) and the *planes* of immanence (or the plurality of images of thought) which a thinker can occupy, and which can be attributed to a given thinker. There is *a* plane of immanence which refers to the proper name "Plato," just as there is a plane of immanence which refers to the name "Kant." A concept or a method corresponds to each and it gives the image of thought its sense or its specificity: 'eidos' for Plato, 'transcendental unity of apperception' for Kant, etc. Deleuze and Guattari themselves recognize the difficulty in claiming that there is an 'ultimate' or 'primary' plane of immanence while simultaneously insisting that each philosopher lays out a plane that is heterogeneous to the plane of another:

But if it is true that the plane of immanence is always single, being itself pure variation, then it is all the more necessary to explain why there are varied and distinct planes of immanence that, depending upon which infinite movements are retained and selected, succeed and contest each other in history.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 37.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 36.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 39.

In the preceding chapters, and in what follows, I assume that there is, in fact, a single plane of immanence (univocity of being, or pure substance said *of* multiplicity) which is nevertheless subject to certain historical and political (not to mention philosophical and theological) determinations, such that one can speak of a ‘late capitalist’ plane of immanence. One of Deleuze’s crucial stipulations vis-a-vis the plane of immanence is that, given a thinker, that thinker *cannot think her own* plane of immanence, her own image of thought. One’s image of thought is necessarily that which one presupposes in order to think. Hence, in order to *think* the late capitalist or neoliberal plane of immanence, one has to presuppose another plane—and this is precisely why I have insisted on the univocity of money.

In contrast to a univocity of money, ‘our’ plane of immanence is dominated by the logic of analogy. Sean Capener has shown convincingly that, while credit is literal (or immanent, univocal—*general* credit), it is nevertheless produced *as* analogy.¹¹⁰ For our purposes, the creditor-debtor relation is the proof case for this claim: the creditor achieves a sort of transcendence inasmuch as the creditor holds in reserve the power to forgive, and this transcendence is said *by analogy* to God, since in the last instance it is always God that forgives. The social is always already analogical inasmuch as sociality begins—in the “prehistoric labor” of humanity—with the credit-debt contract: “it was here that one person first encountered another person, that one person first *measured himself*

¹¹⁰ Sean Capener, “The Literality of Credit,” 7 and *passim*.

against another.”¹¹¹ Hence, at the beginning there is a promise and a memory, since the debtor’s existence is characterized precisely by a labor of memory (“straining toward the future”),¹¹² and remembering becomes both means and end to settling the debt that cannot be expiated: the debtor “cannot ‘have done’ with anything.”¹¹³ There is a privileged relation between transcendence and analogy (and, crucially, a Christian history of this relation). “Transcendence,” writes Capener, “is always parasitic upon immanence; it can only arise by operating on *immanence*. At the same time however, it can only operate by *foreclosing* or *denying* the reality of the immanence upon which it operates.”¹¹⁴ Wherever transcendence *appears* it is always as a parasitization of immanence—a fog thrown up around immanence, which causes us to mistake the one for the other, to analogize, to settle for mere resemblances and to leave off thinking, to attribute to thought an exhaustion which should be said only of ourselves.

Yet one is still confronted with a central difficulty: how to distinguish between *the* plane of immanence and the *planes* of immanence which are so many variations of the pure surface of immanence? How does think analogy if one is always already folded into the analogical plane? Jorge Luis Borges, at the conclusion of “The Library of Babel,” provides perhaps the best image of such a thought. After the librarian-narrator concludes

¹¹¹ Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 70.

¹¹² Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 190.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 58.

¹¹⁴ Capener, 27-28.

his history of the infinite library (itself a stirring image, recalling Cusa and Bruno: “a sphere whose consummate center is any hexagon, and whose circumference is inaccessible”),¹¹⁵ the following footnote is folded into the conclusion:

Letizia Alvarez de Toledo has observed that the vast Library is useless. Strictly speaking, *one single volume* should suffice: a single volume of ordinary format, printed in nine or ten type body, and consisting of an infinite number of infinitely thin pages. (At the beginning of the seventeenth century, Cavalieri said that any solid body is the superposition of an infinite number of planes.) This silky vade mecum would scarcely be handy: each apparent leaf of the book would divide into other analogous leaves. The inconceivable central leaf would have no reverse.¹¹⁶

In a certain sense, the footnote quietly undoes the entire preceding description of the library (which the narrator admits at the outset is a cipher for the universe). On the one hand there is the library, a single sphere whose networks of stairways and hexagonal reading rooms expands infinitely outward. On the other hand there is a single book composed of infinitely divisible pages. The difference between the two is subtle, yet crucial: whereas one can assign the name Hegel to the library, one can assign to the book the name of Leibniz. One ascends or descends in the library, and movement is always relative to an always de-centered center, but one divides in the book, *and movement is always absolute*, since division changes the very substance of the book. One is always within the library; the library is a total interiority. One is always without the book; the book is a pure exteriority. In the library, “the certainty that everything has been already

¹¹⁵ Jorge Luis Borges, “The Library of Babel,” *Ficciones*, ed. Anthony Kerrigan (New York: Grove Press, 1994), 80.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 88.

written nullifies or makes phantoms of us all,”¹¹⁷ but in the book one does not proceed without becoming a phantom capable of infinite sub-division, hence infinite transformation, according to the intensity of the bifurcations, implications and explications. (And note that the book is a *vade mecum*, a handbook or guidebook which one keeps constantly at one’s side—carrying and reading the book is a *practice*.)

The following must be affirmed of *the* plane of immanence: it is that central leaf (unthinkable) which has no reverse (pure surface). The *planes* of immanence are those “other analogous leaves” that divide into one another (“The disjunction has become *inclusive*: everything divides, but into itself; and God who is the sum total of the possible, merges with Nothing, of which each thing is a modification”).¹¹⁸ These analogous planes are ‘apparent,’ they appear as the effects of the movements and divisions of the pure variation of the plane of immanence:

Every movement passes through the whole of the plane by immediately turning back on and folding itself and also by folding other movements or allowing itself to be folded by them, giving rise to retroactions, connections, and proliferations in the fractalization of this infinitely folded up infinity (variable curvature of the plane).¹¹⁹

Given that we find ourselves on *a* plane of immanence dominated by the logic of analogy (and in which God has become money, credit, faith), one must presuppose a multiplicity of planes, each of which “has its own way of constructing immanence,” but each of

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 87.

¹¹⁸ Gilles Deleuze, “The Exhausted,” *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 153.

¹¹⁹ Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 38-39.

which is always *immanent to immanence*, the latter which is immanent to nothing.¹²⁰

Perhaps Deleuze and Guattari have Borges in mind when they claim that “*the plane of immanence is interleaved.*”¹²¹ And *intraleaved*, of course, since the planes not only overlap and envelope one another, but also bifurcate and divide into one another. The powers of the differential and the infinitesimal gain momentum, and when they achieve the infinite speeds (Spinoza) and cross the threshold of the minimum continuous time (Lucretius) they dissolve everything into dissimilitude—including, though by no means limited to, the transcendent identity of the creditor, and the self-memory of the debtor.

&.3 The foregoing analyses of general economy, immanence, power, and subjectivity, were, in this respect, a laying out of the plane of immanence upon which all of our passions and actions ‘take place.’ Our plane—our problem—is inextricable from the analogical production of credit-debt, of which the creditor-debtor relation is the social institution, and to which the power to forgive distributes the fundamental asymmetry of our political economy and our sociality. Analogy, even if it names the particular ontology to which we are subject, arises *from* immanence. Analogical credit depends for its condition of possibility a *general credit*, our common faith and practice, to which we mistakenly attribute so many transcendences, hierarchies and narrative naturalizations. The task of a critique of money (and the scene of forgiveness that subtends and

¹²⁰ Ibid., 50.

¹²¹ Ibid.

consummates it) requires that this derivative plane of analogy be thought through and through. Deleuze and Guattari offer a final methodological imperative:

We will say that *THE* plane of immanence is, at the same time, that which must be thought and that which cannot be thought. It is the non thought within thought. It is the base of all planes, immanent to every thinkable plane that does not succeed in thinking it. [...] Perhaps this is the supreme act of philosophy: not so much to think *THE* plane of immanence as to show that it is there, unthought in every plane, and to think it in this way as the outside and inside of thought, as the not-external outside and the not-internal inside—that which cannot be thought and yet must be thought, which was thought once, as Christ was incarnated once, in order to show, that one time, the possibility of the impossible.¹²²

One cannot think that inconceivable central leaf, but one can perhaps show that it is there, as a principle or an imperative of division and folding—the purely differential surface of the outside.

I turn now to Nietzsche and Marx, and to several of their many interlocutors, in order to isolate the unique power of forgiveness that characterizes the plane of immanence in which we are implicated, the analogical production of credit, and the capitalist and Christian subjects that perform this credit. Make no mistake: analogy always testifies to an immanence that it cannot account for; an immanence which, conversely, can account for analogy, since in immanence everything is equal. The inequalities, asymmetries and hierarchies which are all too evident to us, and which form the relative horizon of our actions and our passions, are neither natural nor ‘simply economic’—on the contrary, they are political and social *and are produced* according to certain conditions which I will articulate below. In any case, acknowledging this state of

¹²² Ibid., 59-60.

affairs means that one must raise once again the Spinozist question: “Why do men fight *for* their servitude as stubbornly as though it were their salvation?”¹²³ The following analyses are an attempt to define the conditions under which such a question can be raised in the age of late capitalism, neoliberal austerity, and the death-spiral of indebtedness to which they give birth.

¹²³ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 29.

Part II
Theodicy of Money

Chapter 4 – *The Indebted Subject*

4.1 One must begin with a promise. Or rather, and paradoxically, one always begins with a memory of a promise, and one—that is, the subject—is in a certain sense nothing but this memory or the maintenance of the memory. This is Nietzsche’s starting point in the decisive second essay in *On the Genealogy of Morals*: the ‘bad conscience’ which he intends to investigate has as its condition a certain cultivation of a memory for, or of, oneself. Opposed to the natural tendency of human beings toward forgetfulness—which appears as a positive or creative faculty of repression, by means of which human beings dwell in their living present—Nietzsche opposes the faculty of memory. This memory functions as an apparatus of conscience or responsibility, with the explicit aim of making the human being calculable and measurable. Why memory? The opening lines of the second essay are justly famous: “To breed an animal *with the right to make promises*—is not this the paradoxical task that nature has set for itself in the case of man? Is it not the real problem regarding man?”¹²⁴ Memory is that faculty that, with respect to a given

¹²⁴ Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 57. Further references to this volume in the current section will be made parenthetically in the text.

promise, narrates or synthesizes the temporality of the human being who promises: preserving the promise itself *in memoriam* and securitizing or guaranteeing the future of the promise. The human being *qua* promising animal lives its present as a labor to maintain and sustain its promises—which is to say, its very being as human, its claim to humanity.

The Spinozan question, “Why do men fight *for* their servitude as stubbornly as though it were their salvation?” here gains a concrete, material referent. The memory that Nietzsche seeks to interrogate is

no mere passive inability to rid oneself of an impression, no mere indigestion through a once-pledged word with which one cannot ‘have done,’ but an active *desire* not to rid oneself, a desire for the continuance of something desired once, a *real memory of the will...* (58)

The subject of memory, the trustworthy human being who promises, is “a dyspeptic—he cannot ‘have done’ with anything” (ibid.). Note that this term, ‘dyspeptic’ refers to the state or experience of indigestion. The dyspeptic, the human being who cannot ‘have done’ with anything, is the human being who cannot ‘pass to the act’—they cannot achieve to the movement which would liberate them.

This memory, which the human animal has “bred in itself,” is effected in a three-fold manner. First, it provides the past with a determinate content and raises narrative, or narration of this past, to the status of a duty (the promise is made). Second, it “ordains the future in advance,” or *creates a future* as essentially promissory, anticipatory and obligatory (the will expressed in the promise *must* be discharged or enacted). Lastly, it determines the promisor to *live in the present* with the past as a bulwark of certainty and

the future as an open field of possibilities. The promising animal is therefore *triplely responsible*: responsible *to* the past in which the promise was made, responsible *for* the future in which the promise will be fulfilled, and responsible *in* the present which assumes the character of an interminable *labor*.¹²⁵

In a sense, this creation of a memory for the human being coincides with, or doubles, the becoming-human of human beings. To be human is to be able to promise. Whatever social organization that existed before the advent of the human qua promising animal represents, for Nietzsche, the *prehistory* of humanity (yet the promise is also a prehistory—its past, present and future). The methods and labors of prehistoric humanity culminate in a singular social relationship, which has not ceased to exercise itself even in modernity (we ‘moderns’ are still human, all too human). This social relationship, as Nietzsche quickly points out is none other than that between the *creditor and the debtor*. Inasmuch as sociality as such requires a minimum of commensurability¹²⁶ between persons, the creditor-debtor relation is in a sense the originary social relation: “it was here that one person first encountered another person, that one person first *measured himself* against another” (70). History and sociality begin with this becoming-responsible of the

¹²⁵ Recall Bataille’s observation about the nature of the human being in relation to the *de facto* promise of future surplus: “But with this subordination to increase, the being in question loses its autonomy; *it subordinates itself to what it will be in the future*, owing to the increase of its resources.” See Bataille, *The Accursed Share, Vol. 1*, 190.

¹²⁶ Though note that this commensurability is only achieved with reference to an analogical concept of sociality: the debtor *resembles* the creditor only inasmuch as the former lacks what the latter gives (and demands).

human being, and Nietzsche's investigation—in spite of its blind spots—¹²⁷is in this sense decisive: society is not, as the liberal consensus has it, based on exchange, but is rather constituted by the proliferation and circulation of debts.

This is why Deleuze and Guattari claim that “the great book of modern ethnology is not so much Mauss's *The Gift* as Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals*,” precisely because Nietzsche “does not hesitate, as does Mauss, between exchange and debt.”¹²⁸ The second essay, to which we have addressed ourselves, is “an attempt—and a success without equal—at interpreting primitive economy in terms of debt, in the debtor-creditor relationship, by eliminating every consideration of exchange or interest ‘à l'anglaise.’”¹²⁹ I will return to the problems with Mauss's (and Derrida's) account of the potlatch, or the gift cycle, below. For now we require two of Nietzsche's most crucial moves in the second essay, which are themselves linked: the “demonic ambiguity” of the German term *Schuld*, which has the sense both of ‘debt’ and of ‘guilt,’ and which we have already seen inflected by Benjamin in terms of the relation between capitalism and Christianity; and the *method* by which a memory was created, and is created, for the human—the cruelty and violence of *mnemotechnics*.

¹²⁷ Amongst these blind spots is the fact that Nietzsche marshals very little anthropological and ethnographic evidence to support his theory. However, for a more recent study that appears to confirm Nietzsche's suspicions, see Pierre Clastres, *Society Against the State: Essays in Political Anthropology*, trans. Robert Hurley with Abe Stein (New York: Zone Books, 1989), esp. 177-188.

¹²⁸ Deleuze and Guattari, 190.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

A memory, to use Nietzsche's phrase, must be *burned in*. "Man could never do without blood, torture, and sacrifices when he felt the need to create a memory for himself," writes Nietzsche, "pain is the most powerful aid to mnemonics" (61). For his part, Foucault takes up the particulars of this method for his own project in *Discipline and Punish*: a whole panoply of punishments, such as stoning, breaking on the wheel, boiling in oil, amputation, flaying alive, and so on. It is by means of this memory-making violence that human beings "as last came 'to reason'" (62). Yet torture alone does not a responsible person make: the major moral concept of *Schuld* [guilt], claims Nietzsche, "has its origin in the very material concept of *Schulden* [debts]" (62-63). The specific memory by which human beings made themselves reasonable and calculable has as its internal logic the equation 'injury = pain,' the idea that an injured party (a jilted creditor, for instance) can recoup his losses by inflicting pain on the debtor who fails to settle the debt—"the idea that every injury has its *equivalent* and can actually be paid back, even if only through the *pain* of the culprit." And this idea draws its power—in prehistory and even today, since, as Nietzsche says, "this prehistory is in any case present in all ages or may always reappear"—from the contractual relationship between creditor and debtor.

The 'prehistory' of which Nietzsche speaks is therefore nothing historical, it rather *doubles* history, trailing behind or before history like a shadow, or lies latent until it is actualized in concrete events. One can see immediately the parallel with the Foucauldian 'diagram' which doubles the social field. Nietzsche's prehistory is such a diagram: implicit in each and every social relation is this relation of the creditor and debtor, whether the relation concerns an explicit contractual agreement (e.g. the disbursement of

a loan) or the implicit debt one owes to society, to the community (e.g. Rousseau's social contract). Society is a system of cruelty. "Cruelty," write Deleuze and Guattari, "has nothing to do with some ill-defined or natural violence that might be commissioned to explain the history of mankind; cruelty is the movement of culture that is realized in bodies and inscribed on them, belaboring them. That is what cruelty means."¹³⁰ As we will see below, forgiveness (not only the act but, decisively, the whole *scene* of forgiveness) is neither an escape from, nor a resistance to, cruelty—it is rather the ground of cruelty, the condition of possibility of cruelty. Let it suffice to say, for now, that Deleuze and Guattari's provocative claim—"There is no ideology and never has been"¹³¹ gains all of its sense from the movements and machinations of this cruelty which takes the body of the debtor as its canvas and scroll.

Recall Agamben's suggestion that the most ancient of apparatuses is language, "one in which thousands and thousands of years ago a primate inadvertently let himself be captured."¹³² In this sense, Deleuze and Guattari's insistence that debt is a matter of inscription on the psycho-material surface of the *socius* also gains its peculiar verve. Apropos of the mnemotechnic system of cruelty described by Nietzsche, they write:

The sign is a position of desire; but the first signs are the territorial signs that plant their flags in bodies. If one want to call this inscription in naked flesh 'writing,' then it must be said that speech in fact presupposes writing, and that it is this cruel

¹³⁰ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 145.

¹³¹ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 4.

¹³² Agamben, *What is an Apparatus?*, 14.

system of inscribed signs that renders man capable of language, and gives him a memory of the spoken word.¹³³

The birth, discovery, or capturing movement of language—or *logos*—coincides with the emergence of the rational animal, the promising animal—the human being as such. The phrase, ‘memory of the spoken word,’ by no means signals that Deleuze and Guattari suppose that writing *precedes* speech in history, rather that speech *presupposes* writing understood as the prehistoric (or diagrammatic) inscription of a memory on the body.¹³⁴ Before it is language, *logos* is laceration. Nietzsche’s repeated question, “to what extent can suffering balance debts or guilt?” (65), is aimed precisely at the seemingly inherent human logic that punishment can resolve a debt—and only by means of a cruel inscription, as if the whole ‘history’ of morality were but an intricate, incessant tattoo, or a network of incisions in the flesh of the mind.

¹³³ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 145.

¹³⁴ Archaeological evidence suggests that the historical origins of writing can be dated to around 3500 BCE, which coincides with the general shift from hunter-gatherer societies to agricultural civilizations. Alphabetic and phonetic writing in fact developed from a method of accounting which proceeded by marking tallies on clay tablets (a system which was itself preceded by a system of tokens which ‘counted’ one’s cattle and one’s sheep). Writing as we understand it today began as a counting mechanism, utilized for maintaining registers of surplus and debts—writing, from its inception, has always been concerned with property and money. For an authoritative account of the token theory of writing, see Denise Schmandt-Vesserat, *How Writing Came About* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996). For a philosophical reading of the aforementioned theory, see Thomas Nail, *Being and Motion* (forthcoming). With regards to my own inquiry, I simply wish to suggest that speech considered *as an act* (i.e. a promise) presupposes the punitive inscriptions described by Nietzsche, even if speech considered simply as communication no doubt precedes such a writing-in-the-flesh.

The ‘history’ of morality, then, with all of its concomitant tortures, lacerations, amputations and inscriptions, has a singular meaning: “to *breed man*, to mark him in his flesh, to render him capable of alliance, to form him within the creditor-debtor relation, which on both sides turns out to be a matter of memory—a memory straining toward the future.”¹³⁵ The debt must be repaid, whether in terms internal to the contract (cash returned for cash dispensed) or in the extreme terms of the unpayable debt—by means of pain imposed by the creditor upon the debtor. The intellectual poverty of exchange as a paradigm for ancient societies is also the intellectual poverty of our own mistaken exchangist theories. The creditor does not receive anything in exchange, but according to Nietzsche *extracts pleasure* from the suffering of the debtor (64-65). There is an incipient sadism, a proto-sadism, at the heart of the creditor-debtor relation. “An eye must be invoked,” write Deleuze and Guattari, an eye that “extracts pleasure from the event,” as if a god who makes a spectacle of the suffering of the debtor. (Later we will see that the scene of forgiveness dramatized by Christianity is in fact a masochism in which God plays both the role of the spectacle and the spectator).

Nietzsche’s theory is decisive for at least two reasons. First and foremost, because it refuses any theory that founds society on the supposed mutuality of exchange, and installs the credit-debt relation at the center of human sociality. Secondly, but no less decisively, by insisting on the importance of the *promissory* as a fundamental category of the credit-debt relation, Nietzsche effectively inaugurates a theory of a general credit,

¹³⁵ Ibid., 190.

even if it remains undeveloped. Taken together, the primacy of the credit-debt relation and the subjectivity that emerges in the promissory render possible a theory of money *qua* credit. The classic credit theory of money was published around the turn of the 20th century, by Henry Dunning Macleod and later Alfred Mitchell-Innes. My inquiry takes up the theory's more recent iterations, notably Philip Goodchild's *Theology of Money*.

4.2 Money emerges *from exchange* as general equivalent, and is in this regard a money-commodity, such as gold or silver. According to Marx, the simple commodity form is the germ of the money-form, and as such money would not encounter commodities as money unless it had previously encountered them as a commodity.¹³⁶ Money as medium of exchange or general equivalent does not possess in itself the power to make commodities commensurable, but rather serves as the measure of the abstract labor which distributes the commodities in exchange,¹³⁷ yet this measure is an ideal measure of value, which always refers to the 'hard cash' of gold and silver coins which lurk within it.¹³⁸ Likewise, money does not properly cause the circulation of commodities, but rather the converse: commodities generate money (*a lá* Feuerbach,

¹³⁶ Karl Marx, *Capital, Vol. 1*, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 162-163.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 188.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 198.

money is a “god among commodities”¹³⁹ and make money the means of their own circulation.¹⁴⁰ Yet as soon as money emerges from the commodity-form, one can no longer consider exchange in isolation: if one trades a commodity for money (selling), one must then postulate a subsequent (or concurrent) exchange of the money received for another commodity (buying). Exchange requires a future, and it is the privilege of money to be that which gives such a future to exchange.¹⁴¹ In this regard, money is already credit, since it promises a future to exchange. Hence, in simple circulation, money is a means to an end, e.g. money as exchange-value makes possible the acquisition of a use-value or a commodity. The transition from simple circulation to capital (C - M - C gives way to M - C - M) effectively renders money an end in itself, where the value of a commodity (determined by the labor-time invested in its production) is divorced from its exchange-value, and the resulting differential is appropriated by the capitalist as surplus-value.

The following analyses are not intended to refute Marx’s analyses in *Capital*. I simply wish to demonstrate that one must also consider money in a different register—as that which makes circulation and exchange possible in the first place. Money is already credit in exchange in the sense that it gives a future to exchange, but money is above all

¹³⁹ Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft)*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (New York: Penguin Books, 1973), 221.

¹⁴⁰ Marx, *Capital, Vol. 1*, esp. 210-213. “Money ... as the medium of circulation, *haunts* the sphere of commodities and constantly moves around in it” (213, my emphasis).

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 207-208.

the transcendental field upon which exchange emerges as the principle social relation in the capitalist mode of production. The empirical function of money in exchange is grounded by its prior transcendental nature as the social and political *milieu* of the credit-debt relation. Money first of all gives a future *as such*, by constituting the indebted subject whose being is determined by the imperative to labor to repay the debt; and, decisively, money is that which *forgives* the debtor, rendering possible the formal equality of all debtors to a single creditor. Money is both general equivalent and general credit. It is to this latter, transcendental, character of money to which this essay is addressed. Note, finally, that Marx himself notes that money must have its own objective social validity: there must be a minimal social consensus on the power of money, and it is the credit-debt relation which provides—or, more precisely, demands—this social consensus.¹⁴² I will explore these processes in more detail below. For now we turn to Goodchild’s account of money *qua* credit.

“Capital is the means of production which has itself been produced,” writes Goodchild. “Since everything has been produced, all means of production are capital.”¹⁴³ For its part, “money is a form of capital” (74), but money “effectively functions by concealing its nature as capital” (79). “Money promises production,” writes Goodchild, “It delivers this promise through the *illusory representation* of exchange value” (79, my emphasis). Beneath exchange lies credit, the being of money as the transcendental

¹⁴² Ibid., 226.

¹⁴³ Goodchild, *Theology of Money*, 73. Further references to this volume in the current section will be made parenthetically in the text.

condition of exchange. Hence there is not an identity of money and capital, but the latter gains its productive capacities from the promise of value effected by the former.

Production always consumes a flow of matter-energy, the source of which, we saw in chapter 2, is the superabundant solar energy emitted by the sun. Capital is therefore the means of production (a productive machine) which consumes or takes hold of produced and productive capital (be it 'natural' capital, in the case of raw materials, produced by stratification and condensation of sunlight, or 'artificial' capital, such as industrial machinery) in order to produce further capital or wealth. Yet the imperative to increase one's wealth—or the wealth of society in which one lives—is unintelligible apart from money. Money is that which gives a future.

Marx was absolutely correct that only human labor-power is capable of *producing* value, but he declined to fully investigate the social relation by which labor is rendered necessary and by which value (the value *of the credit-debt of the debtor*) is *measured*. In this regard, Marxian political economy only stands to benefit from a theory of general credit, grounded in the asymmetry of the creditor-debtor relation. Goodchild has shown that we gravely mistake the nature of money if we remain content to define it simply as medium of exchange or general equivalent. Rather, money has its origins in contractual debt obligations. No doubt, exchange-value is the form of value, but money is that which promises value, and thereby imparts a *social force* to exchange-value: money gives a future to exchange.

Exchange value is formed from imagining a condition in which capital is disassembled and sold. It is constituted entirely by anxiety or anticipation. Exchange value, rather than reflecting past accumulation or present productivity,

embodies a future orientation. If prices are represented in terms of money, then money itself represents anticipations of the future. Money [as exchange value] therefore stands in the place of and represents credit. As the advance that is offered on the basis of credit, money, as the measure of prices, is essentially credit. (99)

Goodchild insists that in order to understand money, one must have recourse to a theological account of economy. This is not to say that one must resort to a mysticism or an argument from transcendence. On the contrary, one must understand the fundamental identity of God and money, in terms of the absolute authority of money in society.¹⁴⁴ No doubt, atheists increasingly populate the public square, and belief in God is indeed diminishing in our so-called secular age. Yet everyone believes in money, and in this sense there are perhaps fewer atheists than one would think, if any at all. The God-like character of money to which we currently address ourselves is its *absolute purchasing power*. This is what is meant by general *credit*—a credit which, as we said above, has purchase in and for everything. By contrast, money as general equivalent—or money in exchange—exercises a *relative purchasing power*. The difference between the two is decisive: in the latter case, that of relative purchasing power, “whatever price is agreed in exchange, relative purchasing power remains unchanged in the act of exchange, since the value of the goods and that of the money are defined as equivalent to each other” (102).

Money is a general equivalent inasmuch as it is that which equalizes or expresses the

¹⁴⁴ In *Theology of Money*, Goodchild not only that “credit is the indispensable source of the creation of wealth, and the source of all political authority” (25), but that money is in fact the political body par excellence: “Property, sovereignty, and credit become united in the body of money. Money participates in and brings together the realms of the nonhuman, the human, and belief and desire. In modernity, money is the political body par excellence” (39).

value of any given commodity. Money is a general credit inasmuch as “it is the power, the potential to acquire value, that makes demands effective.” In terms of absolute purchasing power, “it is a question not of how much value is purchased...but of the power to purchase that much value” (102).

This absolute power to purchase value is essentially a social power. Money is the social power par excellence: it is a promise of value. This is why money may be “best understood through theology rather than economics, for the absolute purchasing power of money consists in the power of a promise. It consists in credit” (102). Moreover, just as one does not possess God but gains access to God through ritual and piety, “it is not essential to possess money; it is merely essential to have access to money” (103), which is to say, *access to credit*. A whole hierarchy of access results, operating according to an analogical conception of value—after the death of God (or, more precisely, as the expression and performance of the death of God) money is the value of values. Money represents itself as a transcendence or an in-itself. Yet one cannot simply say, riffing on St. Paul, that all things are possible with money—one should rather say that all things *that are possible* are possible with money. Money is a sort of reality principle that selects and distributes possibilities and futures:

As the principle that makes demand effective, the supreme means of freedom and power, money is a reality principle: it promises the power to realize all other desires and values. It offers itself as the universal social means. As the supreme means of access to value, money is that which is of most social value. It is the precondition for the realization of all other ends. ... Money thus posits itself as the supreme being, the focus of attention and desire, the principle for the realization of capital projects. *Money posits itself as God*, the principle of all creation. (106, my emphasis)

The foregoing analyses of the material-energetic nature of money (Chapter 2) now gain a new clarity. If one accepts the Spinozist thesis that there is but a single substance, said *of* its modes or modifications (understood as degrees of power) then the social substance of value, affirmed by Marx himself in chapter 1 of *Capital*, points to a certain slippage between the material and the social. Marx refers to the objective character of values in terms of a fundamental break between the physical or sensuous character of commodities (use-value) and the mode of being of the commodity as an “expression of an identical social substance, human labor,” such that their objective character as values is therefore purely social.”¹⁴⁵ The division between use-value and value, internal to the commodity, refers itself to a prior division internal to the money form itself: money is *both credit and debt*. It must be said that Marx’s intent was not to investigate the social as such, but rather the form that sociality takes in the capitalist mode of production (the infamous formula of commodity-fetishism, which is “nothing but the definite social relation between men themselves ... assumes here, for them, the fantastic for of a relation between things.”).¹⁴⁶ Marx excludes materiality from these relations, but this exclusion is perhaps not completely justified.

The slippage which we are investigating, between the material and the social, can only be understood with reference to the status of the debtor—more precisely, the very life, existence and body of the debtor—in the social sphere. No doubt, exchange is the

¹⁴⁵ Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1, 138-139.

¹⁴⁶ Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1, 165.

predominant social relation in capitalist societies, but this social relation is itself grounded in the creditor-debtor relation, and formalized by the apparatus of forgiveness. Markets are not illusions, but they are grounded in an illusion of the formal equality of market actors. This is why Goodchild claims that “The *power* of money is expressed through exchange” (106, my emphasis). Far from being a result of market society, “money makes markets possible.” It is because money emerged in pre-history, in the form of the creditor-debtor relation, that a properly capitalist society was able to develop. Even if money qua credit did not invent capitalism (in the sense that early industrial capitalism was rarely funded by bank loans), capitalism qua social system requires a *socius* that pre-exists it, upon which it operates as a parasite until it achieves the status of a social totality (perhaps with Fordism, but certainly with the advent of globalization, which, not coincidentally, corresponds to the explosion and hegemony of financial capital, where the ascendancy of fiat currency¹⁴⁷ testifies to a certain apotheosis of money

¹⁴⁷ Note that, while gold is not a fiat currency in the strict sense of the term, it is nevertheless the case that gold can only achieve its status as money-commodity on the condition that it is socially validated. No doubt, in moments of crisis, society’s faith in gold as a standard of value resurfaces, but it is always the case that gold *receives* its character as standard of value as a *social determination*. If one wants to isolate a commodity or resource which exists, effectively, in a position of autonomy vis-a-vis social determinations, one should look to oil rather than gold. Oil, after all, is a congealed form of matter-energy which poses *real* limits to economic activity. In his important analysis of the links between fossil fuels and the generalized debt crisis of late capitalism, Goodchild remarks: “It is important to appreciate that the geopolitical significance of oil is not simply that it may yield large profits in the future as prices rise. . . . The vital strategic consideration is economic security, for the size of the global economy is limited by the supply of oil.” See Philip Goodchild, “Oil and Debt—the Collision Between Economy and Ecology,” *Situation Analysis*, Issue 2 (Spring 2003), 8-9. And note the resonance with Bataille’s theses in *The Accursed Share*: resources are indeed scarce, but *only from the perspective of the restricted geopolitical economy of Earth*.

as credit). Society is constituted by exchange in the capitalist mode of production, but “*money is the condition of possibility of society as such*” (106, my emphasis).

Goodchild himself admits that money is not the sole principle of social reality, but insists that in late capitalism, it has a “peculiar dominance, a spectral power” (68). I am inclined to agree, but I want to insist, in turn, that the spectral power of money doubles history and sociality, subtending and grounding social relations and historical consciousness in the manner of a Foucauldian diagram. I am also in cautious agreement with Goodchild’s assertion that

It is no longer sufficient to oppose will and matter, representation and production, being and becoming, the one and the many, transcendence and immanence, for the relations between these dualisms are always mediated by a spectral power [namely, money] that authorizes their realization. (69)

It is only possible to affirm these claims on the condition that each other former terms be collapsed into the latter terms, or, to put it another way, on the condition that each of the former terms *emerges from* the latter terms in the form of a transcendental illusion. This is indeed Goodchild’s approach, and the claims I am questioning are of an introductory sort, pointing toward a more fundamental, ontological nature of money. What matters is that one affirms that will emerges from matter, representation from production, being from becoming, the one from the many, transcendence from immanence, in precisely the sense that we saw in Chapters 2 and 3, where each of the former terms is a crystallization or congealing of flows of energy-matter. Hence the fundamental ambiguity of the phrase *God or money*: on the one hand money is represented as a transcendence, according to the

analogical structure of the credit-debt relation; on the other hand, money is the plane of immanence *on which this structure arises*.

One can grasp this paradox with reference to the processes of subjectivization described in chapter 3. If the credit-debt relation is a certain apparatus which coalesces and captures the human at a certain (even if indeterminable) point in history, namely the advent of language *qua logos*, then money *produces a subject*, and produces this subject precisely as indebted. More precisely, the indebted subject is a differential matrix (or a crystal) of credit *and* debt—the subject is the material conduit of belief and desire. We saw above, in chapter 2, that the Lucretian *clinamen* is power, and this remains true. But power is more profoundly desire, where desire is understood not as that which names what is lacking in the subject, but is rather the objectivity (in the Marxian sense of the term) of productivity, and lacks only the gravity of a debtor to start the machine: “Desire does not lack anything; it does not lack its object. It is, rather, the *subject* that is missing in desire.”¹⁴⁸ The indebted subject is the finite mode or fold in which substance—God or money—invests itself and expresses itself. Marx saw quite correctly that value is always a social production, but the social is desiring in and of itself, as Goodchild expresses in a stunning formulation:

¹⁴⁸ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 26. Deleuze and Guattari’s great innovation is to have formulated a theory of desire as the infinite and heterogeneous flows of matter-energy (or libido) which constitute the surface of the plane of immanence (or the body without organs, in the parlance of *Anti-Oedipus*). In a sense, *Anti-Oedipus* is a full metaphysical rendering of Bataille’s theses in *The Accursed Share*, and it forms the basis of my own theory of money as the differential plane of immanence upon which the human drama plays out like so many crystallizations and congealings, folds and unfolding.

It is a question of belief and desire.¹⁴⁹ Belief and desire are everywhere. Even if no one really wants money—it is always a means, never an end—everyone believes in money, everyone desires money, or, rather, money is the reality, the interiority of belief and desire in which we dwell. *It is not we who desire money, it is money that desires in us.* (69, my emphasis)

Desire is therefore that differential power that totalizes the social and the material, the future and the past, the promise and the memory. The Marxian concept of labor must be said of the living present of the debtor who works to preserve the memory of the promise, and thereby guarantees or securitizes the future. The impersonality of desire produces a subject which labors to pay the debt, to make good on the promise. As Deleuze and Guattari put it: “The truth of the matter is that *social production is purely and simply desiring production itself under determinate circumstances.*”¹⁵⁰ Desiring production, or the differential and heterogeneous flows of matter-energy, is indeterminate in itself. To avoid the pitfalls of representation and the reduction of the social to the act of exchange, it suffices to add the production of subjectivity as *the form of the determinable*, that which is produced as a temporal expression of desire, the pure modulation of desire, the incarnation of money in—or as—the human.

¹⁴⁹ Which is to say, of credit and debt, inasmuch as the former is that *general* faith or credit which makes possible belief in general, and the latter is the essence of, not merely the subjectivity, but the very materiality and embodiment, of the debtor.

¹⁵⁰ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 29.

4.3 The idea of the incarnation of money in the human being must be attributed to Marx himself, found in the 1844 manuscripts.¹⁵¹ Interestingly, the notion of money's incarnation does not appear in *Capital*. I cannot speculate as to the reasons why such a magnificent articulation of the relation between the human being and credit should have been omitted from Marx's masterpiece, but one can nevertheless glean from "Excerpts on James Mill" a concept of credit and debt—that is to say, money—that is in every sense decisive. Central to the theory of general credit is the idea that money must be understood as credit, and that credit must in turn be understood as *reversible* with debt. Credit and debt are purely reversible, yet asymmetrical. Before we can determine the nature of the asymmetry of the creditor-debtor relation, however, we must determine the nature of its reversibility and the specific production of subjectivity that results.

Against the tendency of modern economists to see the progression toward paper money and the banking system as a solution to the trouble of estrangement and alienation of commodity fetishism, Marx insists that the explicit development of money qua credit (which we maintain has always been the case in social systems, albeit implicitly) is rather an illusion of progress. Where Mill and others claim that the organized banking system is an "abolition of estrangement," a "*return* of man to himself and thus to other men," Marx locates a more profound "self-estrangement, dehumanization, all the more *infamous* and *extreme* because its element is no longer a commodity, metal or paper, but the *moral*

¹⁵¹ Karl Marx, "Excerpts on James Mill's *Elements of Political Economy*," *Early Writings*, trans. Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), 259-278.

existence, the *social* existence, the very heart of man.”¹⁵² The commodity fetishism is not overcome in the capitalist credit-debt relation, it is radicalized and raised to the level of subjective production. Lazzarato, reading this same passage, writes: “With credit, Marx tells us, alienation is complete, since it is the ethical work constitutive of the self and the community that is exploited.”¹⁵³ That is to say,

For Marx, the creditor-debtor relation is at once different from and complementary to the labor-capital relation. If we put aside the content of the relation between creditor and debtor (money), we see that credit does not solicit and exploit *labor* but rather *ethical action* and the *work of self-constitution at both an individual and collective level*.¹⁵⁴

Marx himself insists that we “should reflect on the immorality implicit in the *evaluation* of a man in terms of *money*, such as we find in the credit system.”¹⁵⁵ In the credit relationship, the “talent and [the] labors serve the rich man [or the creditor] as a *guarantee* that the money he has lent will be returned,” and one can see here not only the disciplinary apparatus at work, but also an incipient biopolitics, since “the totality of the poor man’s social virtues, the content of his life’s activity, his very existence” are what is at stake: “For the creditor the death of the poor man is the very worst thing that can happen. It means the death of his capital together with the interest.”¹⁵⁶ The debtor must

¹⁵² Ibid., 263.

¹⁵³ Lazzarato, *The Making of Indebted Man*, 57.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 55.

¹⁵⁵ Marx, “Excerpts on James Mill,” 263.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

not only be trustworthy to gain access to credit, he must also be in good health.

Decisively, it is always a matter of *judgement*. In an extraordinary passage which must be quoted in full, Marx clearly recognizes the violence of this judgement:

Credit is the *economic* judgement on the *morality* of a man. In the credit system *man* replaces metal or paper as the mediator of exchange. However, he does this not as a man but as the *incarnation of capital and interest*. Thus although it is true that the medium of exchange has migrated from its material form and returned to man it has done so only because man has been exiled from himself and transformed into material form. Money has not been transcended in man within the credit system, but man is himself transformed into *money*, or, in other words, money is *incarnate* in him. Human individuality, human *morality*, have become both articles of commerce and the *material* which money inhabits. The substance, the body clothing the *spirit of money* is not money, paper, but instead it is my personal existence, my flesh and blood, my social worth and status. Credit no longer actualizes money-values in actual money but in human flesh and human hearts.¹⁵⁷

Amongst its virtues, this passage confirms Nietzsche's account of the creditor-debtor relation. Though Marx will shift, in *Capital*, from the subjective or existential account of money qua credit to an objective or systemic account of the capitalist mode of production, one should not forget that the analyses from 1844 are nevertheless concerned with modern capitalist societies. Nietzsche's 'primitive,' or 'prehistoric' account holds for capitalist societies just as much as our own historical milieu (and note that Marx's infamous claim that we *still live in prehistory* here achieves a newfound clarity)¹⁵⁸. It is in fact in the mode of the production of subjects as debtors that one can most clearly grasp

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 264.

¹⁵⁸ Karl Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy," *Early Writings*, trans. Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), 426.

the reversibility of credit and debt. Money is created *as* debt (in the case of a loan or a promise) but a debt received is a credit deployed.

Note that debt is nearly always conceived of in terms of a lack. This idea makes a certain intuitive sense: a debtor is she who lacks the wealth required for this or that activity and is thereby impelled to take on a debt in order to meet the ‘necessities’ of economic demands upon her. But note also that already the debt is that which ‘fills’ the lack or deficit, such that debt, which is so often thought of as being a lack in itself is rather that which annuls the lack and makes possible any number of economic activities. Credit and debt are *formally reversible*.¹⁵⁹ From the perspective of *both* the lender and the borrower, debt is a credit when extended to a borrower—a credit extended, a credit received; yet a credit is a debt from the singular perspective of the borrower, something which must be repaid; and a credit is a debt from the singular perspective of the lender, something to be recuperated. One can continue the reversals *ad nauseum*. Credit-debt, or money as such, is a matter of perspective, and being a subject is in essence a becoming-identical to a perspective. Credit and debt are *formally reversible*, but *materially unilateral*: the creditor-debtor relation is asymmetrical, it is a relation of power. Interestingly, while we must insist that debt is not equivalent to lack, one can nevertheless *lack credit*—one can be considered untrustworthy, not to be credited. Yet the fact of lacking credit is not explicable by means of economic necessity, but is rather a

¹⁵⁹ I owe this insight to Sean Capener.

matter of *moral judgement*. Money, not content merely to confess a monotheism, is always subtended by a profound moralism.

One of the many paradoxes of debt is that, rather than signifying or realizing a lack, debt is fundamentally *productive*. A single example will suffice for now. Consider student debt: the cost of higher education would be totally unfeasible for the majority of young people, except that these same young people are given ample access to credit, which is to say debt. Debt allows for social production in universities, but note the circularity of the financial aid system in higher education: costs are rising, therefore student debt rises; but the increase in debt is equivalent to an increase of money in circulation *in general*; when this process of increasing debt is paired with the austerity measures leveled against universities today, whereby tuition increases in order to cover the cost of the skyrocketing salaries of administrators, the cost of education can only rise by leaps and bounds. As Goodchild has noted, our “entire economic system functions as a spiral of increasing debt, with individuals, businesses, and governments committed to ever increasing levels of overall debt in the system as a whole.”¹⁶⁰ Debt produces credit and credit re-members debt: or in terms of the formula for capital, *money makes money*. It is said that the formula for financial capital, or $M - M'$, fulfills the prophecy of *The Communist Manifesto*, where “all that is solid melts into air.”¹⁶¹ Yet this becoming-flux of money invites and produces a reflux and a congealing of matter-energy in the form of

¹⁶⁰ Goodchild, *Theology of Money*, 66.

¹⁶¹ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, ed. Joseph Katz, trans. Samuel Moore (New York: Pocket Books, 1964), 63.

the indebted subject. The ‘C’ of the formula for capital *appears* to have disappeared from the objective processes of capital as a result of financialization, but the frictionless and smooth flow of money is in fact impeded and blocked up everywhere and at every moment by the bodies which bear the value in themselves—in their very existence.

Money has, in effect, two faces—a Janus-faced God. On the one hand, credit is virtual, a spectral power that creates a future which much be guaranteed by the actuality of debt. On the other hand, debt is actual, or actualized and productive credit—and if there is a circuit between credit and debt, then it is to be found precisely in the body of the human subject, who must prove herself *worthy* of credit in order to take on the debt that she will then circulate in the form of banknotes or cash. In spite of the ‘subjective’ character of the credit-debt relation one must remember that the memory by which the debtor constitutes herself as worthy of credit is the very material memory of a blinding pain, the cruel affections of a mnemotechnics. Virtuality does not signify any unreality. “The virtual is real inasmuch as it is virtual,”¹⁶² meaning that the virtual and actual together constitute the real, the latter which is opposed to the possible. Virtual money (credit) is actualized as debt, as the obligation to fulfill a promise, and it is always debts that circulate and capitalize throughout the increasingly cloud-like structures of the capitalist mode of production. Together, virtual credit and actual debt *possibilize*, which is to say that they create a future.

¹⁶² Deleuze, *Différence and Repetition*, 208.

In terms of the logic of credit and debt, it is more or less here that Christianity intervenes, providing the theological formulation of the incarnation of money: whereas in capitalism man has become money, in Christianity God becomes man. The Marxian concept of objectification is perfectly expressed by the figure of Christ, the God-man, who in his refusal of the distinction between the interiority and exteriority of the Godhead is the expression of the internal limit of capitalism, from which the capital-Christian assemblage departs and to which it returns as surplus: Christ is capital itself. And if we remain in the image of God but have lost the likeness, this has the effect of installing at the heart of subjectivity a desire to regain the likeness—our debt is immediately mistaken for a lack, rather than the principle of the production of God or money as such. Human existence becomes an infinite debt (though a ‘bad’ infinity, in which one simply lacks the time to settle accounts), and the world is immediately subjected to the moralism of an analogical monotheism: one’s only choice is to labor or to act in accordance with the only righteousness left. One must make money by becoming money. One must be Christ-like. The analogical formula for the production of money is thus: credit in itself is debt for itself.

As Lazzarato remarks,

We are no longer the inheritors of original sin but rather of the debt of preceding generations. ‘Indebted man’ is subject to a creditor-debtor power relation accompanying him throughout his life, from birth to death. If in times past we were indebted to the community, to the gods, to our ancestors, we henceforth indebted to the ‘god’ Capital.¹⁶³

¹⁶³ Lazzarato, *The Making of Indebted Man*, 32.

One of the aims of this essay is to remove the scare quotes from the word god, and to capitalize, so to speak, its first letter. Which is to say that *from the beginning* we are precipitated into an analogical hierarchy of being, in which a supreme being functions as the transcendent model for the earthly creditor, who keeps for himself his collection of debtors, who in turn form the variable capital of his exploits and satisfactions. The creditor is alternately benevolent or malevolent: benevolent when he gives or distributes credit in the form of a judgment; malevolent when he calls in the debt, where failure to pay the debt results in a psycho-material punishment. It is true that, for the moderns, debtors' prisons seem like a distant memory, but capital has no pressing need for such prisons today.¹⁶⁴ Society itself functions, just as much as language, as such a prison. More precisely, as Foucault saw already in *Discipline and Punish*,¹⁶⁵ and as Deleuze observes, the soul itself—the subjectivity of the debtor—is itself a prison.¹⁶⁶ Hence it is not adequate to simply say that we—as debtors—are *in* the credit-debt relation, so much as this relation is *in* us, our sole interiority.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴ Nonetheless, debtors' prisons may be again on the rise. See, for instance: <http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2016/02/debtors-prison/462378/>

¹⁶⁵ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 30. “The man described for us, whom we are invited to free, is already in himself the effect of a subjection much more profound than himself. A ‘soul’ inhabits him and brings him to existence, which is itself a factor in the mastery that power exercises over the body. The soul is the effect and instrument of a political anatomy; the soul is the prison of the body.”

¹⁶⁶ Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations*, 181. “A man is no longer a man confined, but a man in debt.”

¹⁶⁷ Nietzsche himself has said as much: “All instinct that do not discharge themselves outwardly *turn inward*—this is what I call the *internalization* of man: thus it was that

4.4 Credit and debt are formally reversible inasmuch as debt incurred by the debtor is credit in terms of the capacity for the debt to enter into circulation and exchange. My intent in this essay is not to refute the Marxian concept of labor—it is still abstract labor which produces value—but in terms of the subjective production of the debtor, labor under financial neoliberalism takes the form of a work on the self. Hence the neoliberal paradigm of the entrepreneur of the self, where the memory-maintaining and future-making character of the subject takes center stage. The distinction between a relative purchasing power of money and the absolute purchasing power of money, described by Goodchild, is above all a *political distinction* before it is an economic one, though its consequences are precisely economical. Given the reversibility of credit and debt (the ‘demonic ambiguity’ of money itself), it still remains to isolate that which truly distinguishes the creditor from the debtor, aside from the more or less accidental inequality of wealth between them (e.g. The creditor is not prohibited from accumulating her own debt, and in fact is almost always in debt to another creditor. Moreover, as Marx intuited, the creditor is not in fact characterized by a strict autonomy, but depends on the

man first developed what was later called his ‘soul.’ The entire inner world, originally as thin as if it were stretched between two membranes, expanded and extended itself, acquired depth, breadth, and height, in the same measure as outward discharge was *inhibited*. Those fearful bulwarks with which the political organization protected itself against the old instincts of freedom—punishments belong among these bulwarks—brought about that all those instincts of wild, free, prowling man turned backward *against man himself*. Hostility, cruelty, joy in persecuting, in attacking, in change, in destruction—all this turned against the possessors of such instincts: *that is the origin of ‘bad conscience.’*” See Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 84-85.

trustworthiness and labor of the debtor—if the debtor were to die, the variable capital invested in the body of the debtor would be lost without reserve.)

The true distinction between creditor and debtor is a political and theological distinction: the power to forgive. We can approach the structure of this power of forgiveness by means of the subtle yet decisive difference between gift and credit.

The concept of gift, no doubt, was most famously formulated by Marcel Mauss in his anthropological and ethnographic investigation of the practice of potlatch (or gift-exchange) in archaic societies: *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*.¹⁶⁸ More recently, Jacques Derrida published his own reflections on the subject of the gift, in *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*.¹⁶⁹ My approach in dealing with these two texts will be to affirm a certain dimension of Mauss's approach (his categorical denial of the existence of a 'free gift') while at the same time mounting a critique of Mauss's hesitation between the credit-debt relation and exchange, as outlined by Deleuze and Guattari. With regards to Derrida, my approach is similarly equivocal, since, in spite of his effort to do so, Derrida does not escape the gravity of Mauss's presuppositions and even introduces an element of transcendence into the economy of the gift, so as to escape the deadlock of the gift-cycle. I will address Derrida's text in Chapter 5 below. The upshot of the present analysis, which will carry us through to chapter 5 and to the subject

¹⁶⁸ Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. W.D. Halls (New York: W.W. Norton, 1990).

¹⁶⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992).

of forgiveness, is that capitalism *cannot* be understood as a gift economy, and that attempts to transform or reform capitalism into such a gift economy will be doomed to failure so long as the function of the credit-debt relation goes unaddressed. Capitalism is indeed an exchange economy, but it is above all a promising economy.

It is clear enough from even the preliminary examinations of the *kula*/potlatch, or the ritualized gift-exchange practiced by the various tribes referred to by Mauss, that the *kula* is a *political* ritual rather than an economic system. That it should have economic consequences (Mauss goes so far as to claim that “A free market exists between individuals of allied tribes,” where an alliance is constituted by the solemnity and gravity of the potlatch, thereby forming the condition of the so-called free market)¹⁷⁰ is not surprising, but one should be wary nonetheless of attributing an autonomy to these consequences that abstracts from their political nuclei. The *kula* functions to engender alliances and foster associations. The case of intertribal *kula*, Mauss writes, is “merely the extreme case, the most solemn and dramatic one, of a more general system.”¹⁷¹ The *kula* is a sort of opening onto a circle or cycle of circulating gifts, such that “every kind of relationship is established outside the *kula*, which, however, always remains the purpose, and the decisive moment in these relationships.”¹⁷² Decisively, the *kula* is a *contract* that renders exchange in general possible. The central question, according to Mauss himself,

¹⁷⁰ Marcel Mauss, *The Gift*, 27.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 22.

is how to account for the sanction imposed on the insolvent debtor, or the actor who fails to adequately provide a counter-gift in the *kula*: what is the nature of the force behind the obligation to make a counter-gift which equals or exceeds the value of the original gift?¹⁷³

Mauss's descriptions of the three obligations or essences of potlatch are instructive: each has to do with the production and maintenance of subjectivity, with the possession of—the 'status' of—having a face. The three obligations (to give, to receive, to reciprocate) all have the function of establishing the 'worth,' 'value,' or 'identity' of the person in question—in most cases the chief of a given tribe, who, by alternately establishing himself (receiving) and debasing himself (giving) opens the sphere of trade and exchange and sociality for his people. Mauss writes, "to lose one's prestige is indeed to lose one's soul. It is in fact the 'face,' the dancing mask, the right to incarnate a spirit...it is really the *persona*—that are all called into question in this way," and can be gained or lost at the potlatch. One's very identity is at stake. Yet it is the third of these obligations, the obligation to reciprocate, which poses a problem for thought.

"The obligation to reciprocate worthily is imperative," writes Mauss. "One loses face forever if one does not reciprocate, or if one does not carry out destruction of equal value."¹⁷⁴ One loses one's identity by failing to pay the debt, or what amounts to the same

¹⁷³ Ibid., 26.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 42. Moreover, one should recall Bataille's Nietzschean rendering of this Maussian precept: to possess is to consume or to destroy, even if this power of consumption or destruction remains virtual.

thing, by failing to return the gift with interest within the term or time limit specified by either contract or convention. Moreover, Mauss identifies the explicit punishment for failure to reciprocate as debt slavery: “the individual unable to repay the loan or reciprocate the potlatch loses his rank and even his status as a free man.”¹⁷⁵ There is a slippage here between loan and gift-exchange that points to a failure on Mauss’s part. Despite the fact that Mauss’s analysis has the virtue of refusing the idea—still peddled in Mauss’s time by modern economists and historians—that credit stands at the end of a long development of economic life that began with barter, Mauss’s theory still remains on the side of exchange, passing over the *genetic* character of the original, contractual potlatch in favor of a general theory of exchange. For Mauss, as should be evident by now, the point of departure lies in the nature of the gift, which, even if it “necessarily entails the notion of credit,”¹⁷⁶ does not achieve to the *generality of credit* as the promise of value and the concomitant production of subjects qua debtors.

It is unclear whether Mauss would, in the last instance, subordinate the potlatch, with its circulation of gifts and counter-gifts, to a more ordinary conception of the contractual relation between creditor and debtor. To his credit, Mauss actually avoids the mistake that Graeber makes in *Debt*, when he suggests that a debt relation should be considered an exchange that has not yet come to a conclusion.¹⁷⁷ For Mauss, the

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 36.

¹⁷⁷ Graeber, *Debt*, 122. “Exchange encourages a particular way of conceiving human relations. This is because exchange implies equality, but it also implies separation. It’s

‘exchange’ never equalizes, due to the imperative of excessive repayment, but this is *not* due to some inexplicable imperative to ratchet up the ‘terms’ of the exchange by repaying in excess—on the contrary, it is because the debt is infinite and goes, so to speak, all the way down. One is not supposed to repay the debt. One is supposed to manage the debt, and the practice of the potlatch should be understood as a ploy for power and identity, not for equality. In any case, Mauss expresses a certain optimism with regards to the origins of exchange and human sociality (since the potlatch, above all, functions as a mechanism for building solidarity and establishing identity), where by contrast Nietzsche takes the darker, more macabre and pessimistic view of the ascent of the human being to a rational order of sociality and identity. Despite the anachronism, it is Nietzsche who takes up the spear at the point where Mauss left it. To the question, “Whence the force of the sanction against failure to reciprocate?,” Nietzsche puts forward the cruel equation, injury = pain, and the invocation of an evaluating eye which extracts pleasure as a sort of surplus value from the debtor (“pain is like the surplus value that the eye extracts”).¹⁷⁸ Pain and pleasure coincide in the economy of the credit-debt relation.

Let us be clear as to the logic of this form of compensation: it is strange enough. An equivalence is provided by the creditor’s receiving, in place of a literal compensation for an injury (thus in place of money, land, possessions of any kind), a recompense in the form of a kind of *pleasure*—the pleasure of being allowed to vent his power freely upon one who is powerless, the voluptuous pleasure ‘*de faire le mal pour le plaisir de la faire*,’ the enjoyment of violation.¹⁷⁹

precisely when they money changes hands, when the debt is cancelled, that equality is restored *and both* parties can walk away and have nothing further to do with each other.”

¹⁷⁸ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 189.

¹⁷⁹ Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 64-65.

There is a pleasure principle at play in this *jouissance* of the creditor inasmuch as exchange is always oriented toward stasis, yet never complete; it never reaches its desired equilibrium.¹⁸⁰ The obligation to pay the debt, or toward total compensation, is the manifestation of the inner necessity toward an impossible equality: e.g. the inequality characteristic of the distribution of the complex of flows of matter-energy which are harnessed by the respective actors in an exchange that is never consummate. The incommensurability of the human beings in the credit-debt relation grounds the now derivative necessity of exchange. The equality that is manifest in exchange in the capitalist mode of production always refers back to an imperative of commensurability, a commensurability which is achieved in the commodity-form, but remains in excess in the subjective production of the credit-debt relation. Inequality is the foundation of equality, incommensurability the ground of commensurability. The pleasure principle implicit in Nietzsche's image of the evaluating eye is marked clearly by the attempt to close the gap, to collapse the gradient, which, in spite of every claim to formal equality in exchange, remains as a differential and productive difference between creditor and debtor—the 'origin' of the social relation as such.

If money is a reality principle it is such precisely in the sense that it *operates on the excess produced by the pleasure principle*: all things that are possible are possible with

¹⁸⁰ Note that, for Freud, pleasure is not the intensification or amplification of stimuli, but their discharge and displacement: pleasure always aims for equilibrium. See Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, trans. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1961), 4.

money. God or money is the absolute horizon of human possibilities before it is a medium of exchange, the latter which can only 'realize' relative horizons, according to the social production of value and the vicissitudes of human labor. We saw above that social production is desiring production (understood as the totality of the indeterminate flows of matter-energy) under determinate conditions. What is required for an understanding of the manner in which desiring production is determined as social production is the form of the determinable, or *the subject as a temporal fold of power*, with its triple responsibility to past, future and present.¹⁸¹ The dual nature of money: qua credit, the singular power of the promissory to create a future; qua debt, the unlimited power to circulate bodies as values. Taken together as credit and debt, money is the *socius* upon which the potlatch and the capitalist mode of production, their fundamental differences notwithstanding, inscribe their signs and symbols, their peculiar kinetics and circulations, their power and their knowledge.

Finally, it must be observed that it is in the last instance inadequate to say *merely* that there is no society without a promise. No doubt, it is true that inasmuch as they possess a temporality and a subject proper to their mode of production, all societies and all sociality as such are promissory in their nature, but one must nevertheless go further: there is, in fact, no society without a *broken* promise. The social is a sort of scar tissue, the congealed memory of a brand, a laceration, or an amputation inflicted as punishment for insolvency, irrationality, or any so-called asocial behavior. The social is just as

¹⁸¹ For an analysis of the Kantian innovation vis-a-vis the form of the determinable, see Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 85-91.

described by Deleuze in *Difference and Repetition*: “A scar is the sign not of a past wound but of ‘the present fact of having been wounded.’”¹⁸² If revolutionary social antagonism has any aim it is precisely the reopening—the renegotiation or reorganization—of this psycho-social wound, this broken flesh. One must resist the moralism of money, since it is not enough to insist either on *keeping* promises, or *breaking* promises. The horizon of this question lies beyond Good and Evil. What is needed is a theory and practice of *immanent evaluation*, unfettered by the cords of analogy and transcendence.

The decisive difference between gift and credit is temporal: where the gift implies a time limit or a ‘term’ in which the counter-gift must be dispensed, the credit-debt relation is *interminable*, since the cycle is never closed and the contract never ends, precisely because it never properly began. One is *born into* an infinite, interminable debt.

In this regard, the “stroke of genius on the part of Christianity” identified by Nietzsche is in truth rather subtle, but its ramifications are enormous. One could already, prior to Christianity, understand a debt as infinite, but only as what Hegel called a ‘bad’ infinity, which is characterized by simple, linear addition (I owe 5 dollars today, but 6 dollars tomorrow) according to a cardinal temporality and a constant rate of interest. In this regard, the form of the potlatch thus resembles a bad infinity: the gift-debts in themselves remain finite even if they have the capacity to circulate infinitely given an indefinite time. One might fall into a debt which one cannot afford to pay, even given a

¹⁸² Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 77.

whole lifetime, but this ‘infinite’ indebtedness remains accidental. On the other hand, everything changes with the introduction of the Christian doctrine of salvation. The debt is rendered qualitatively or actually infinite: one is *necessarily* infinitely indebted.

4.5 The “stroke of genius” to which Nietzsche refers is the true turning point in the argument against Mauss and the latter’s interlocutors. “The advent of the Christian God,” writes Nietzsche, “as the maximum god attained so far, was therefore accompanied by the maximum feeling of guilty indebtedness on earth.”¹⁸³ Nietzsche nods obliquely to the perceived secularization of Western society, “an irresistible decline of faith in the Christian God,” which corresponds to a “considerable decline in mankind’s feeling of guilt,” and even invokes a potential “victory of atheism” which would free humanity of its bad conscience.¹⁸⁴ Yet he immediately pivots away from this scenario, confessing that despite having spoken as if the moralization of the concepts of debt and their integral connection to the *a priori* indebtedness to a deity had not taken place (that is to say, that “the faith in our ‘creditor,’ in God, had disappeared”), “the reality is, to a fearful degree, otherwise.”¹⁸⁵

The Christian innovation, its stroke of genius—which laid the ground for the parasitization of Christianity by capitalism—is this:

¹⁸³ Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 90.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 90-91.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 91.

God sacrifices himself for the guilt of the mankind, God himself makes payment to himself, God as the only being who can redeem man from what has become unredeemable for man himself—the creditor sacrifices himself for his debtor, out of *love* (can one *credit* that?), out of love for his debtor!—¹⁸⁶

What is worse than being subject to an infinite debt is to having one's infinite debt *forgiven*, since any possibility of repaying the debt is really and absolutely foreclosed by the act of forgiveness. To be forgiven is to have one's debt rendered *absolutely inexpressible*. And it is the power to forgive, which the creditor holds absolutely, which ultimately distinguishes him from his debtor. The creditor stands in an analogical relation to his debtor: the creditor gives—and forgives—but the debtor can never properly give back. Whatever the quantity of repayment the creditor 'receives,' this repayment is

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 92. It should be noted that the Latin doctrine of the Atonement, usually ascribed to Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109 CE) but with roots that go back to Tertullian (160-c. 225 CE), Cyprian of Carthage (d. 258 CE), and Gregory the Great (540-604 CE), does not use language of creditor/debtor. Rather, the language is religious and legalistic. In Tertullian we find the fundamental conceptions of *satisfaction* and *merit*. Both words applied to the ritual practice of penance. Penance is satisfaction, the acceptance of a temporal penalty to escape eternal loss. The idea of merit is associated with the performance of works that go beyond the obligatory (*supererogatoria*). According to Tertullian, these include fasting, voluntary celibacy, martyrdom, etc., Works that go beyond what is commanded earn a *surplus* of merit. The idea that such superfluous merit can be transferred from one person to another is not found in Tertullian; rather the notion is found in Cyprian. This prepared the way for the Latin, Anselmian theory of the Atonement. Cyprian himself begins to apply the principle to the overplus of merit earned by Christ, and to interpret Christ's work as a satisfaction. To this language Anselm weds the claim that satisfaction is owed to God because of human disobedience, a disobedience that has offended God's *justice*. God's justice requires that humans do penance, make satisfaction. But, because of their sinfulness, they cannot make an offering or payment worthy of satisfying God's justice. Their works can never be meritorious enough. Christ, who is sinless, does this on behalf of humankind. It cannot be stressed strongly enough that it was on the basis of the penitential system that the Latin theory grew up. The now classic discussion of the Christian doctrines of the Atonement is found in Gustaf Aulén, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of the Atonement* (New York: Macmillan, 1969)

always infinitely insufficient. The debtor assumes an interminable quest to close the account, to make repayment properly and completely—the debt becomes a debt of existence.

We saw above (in the Interlude) that the State commences or recommences by territorializing or distributing land, and by the abolition of small debts. The two acts are inseparable, but the latter, by design, functions to quash or circumventing economic resistance movements which coalesce around the mounting levels of debt, be they personal, or commercial—a strategy for “raising and dealing with the agrarian problem in a comprehensive way.”¹⁸⁷ Yet “in other cases where where a redistribution occurs,” which is to say in cases where debts are restructured, precisely in the manner which the IMF today ‘restructures’ the accounts of debtor-nations according to neoliberal pushes for austerity, “the cycle of credits is maintained, in the new form established by the State—money.”¹⁸⁸ Whether absolute (total remission) or relative (restructuring, maintenance), the power of forgiveness always serves as the *prima causa* of the circulation of money, since it is always debts that circulate, and congeal to constitute insolvencies. “In a word, money—the circulation of money—is *the means for rendering the debt infinite*.” It is precisely the “abolition of debts or their accountable transformation [which] intimates the duty of an interminable service to the State.”¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 196-197.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 197.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

In language that will by now have become familiar, Deleuze and Guattari observe that

[t]he infinite creditor and infinite credit have replaced the blocks of mobile and finite debts. There is always a monotheism on the horizon of despotism: the debt becomes a *debt of existence*, a debt of existence of the subjects themselves. A time will come when the creditor has not yet lent while the debtor never quits repaying, for repaying is a duty but lending is an option...¹⁹⁰

Everything is reversed with the Christian innovation: money as reality principle is no longer subordinated to the pleasure principle (injury = pain), rather the pleasure principle serves money as an imperative to repay, to sell one's labor for a promise of value with which one can keep one's own promise. Like an increasingly complex web, promises refer to promises, signs to signs, and debts to debts. The totality of society—all of the local solidarities and alliances, filiations and festivals—“finds itself taken up into an immense machinery *that renders the debt infinite* and no longer forms anything but one and the same crushing fate.”¹⁹¹ All that is solid does indeed melt into air, including the body of the debtor, which becomes a spectral existence equal only to its access to credit: the soul becomes a credit-card score—“the earth becomes a madhouse.”¹⁹²

The human being qua subject (of the State, of law, of language) is *produced as indebted*. As indebted, the subject is the embodiment of a temporality which functions, not to conserve the past, but rather to generate, cultivate, and maintain a *memory of the*

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 197-198.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 192.

¹⁹² Ibid.

future.¹⁹³ The creditor possesses the future in advance by securitizing the living present of the debtor, and by extracting the subjective surplus value of pleasure/pain (desiring production) and the objective surplus value of labor (social production). In both of these senses, the human being qua indebted subject is the *incarnation of money*. Yet the infinite debt (thanks) to which the subject *is* subject has the peculiar character of a scene of forgiveness, testifying to the insistence of an apparatus that doubles and subtends the regime of debt. It is to the nature and the structure of this apparatus of forgiveness that we now turn.

¹⁹³ Lazzarato, *The Making of Indebted Man*, 45.

Chapter 5 – *The Subject of Forgiveness*

5.1 It is clear that an apparatus necessarily produces the subjects which populate its surface. We are badly mistaken when we speak of the subject as pre-existing its milieu or existing separately and autonomously from its *dispositif*, just as we are mistaken when we speak of *a* wind independently of the complex of atmospheric turbulence and pressure differentials of which it is composed. It is not that one *cannot* speak of *a* wind, or that speaking of *a* wind would have no sense, but that its condition—the being *of* the sensible—lies elsewhere.¹⁹⁴ The subject is a mode *of* substance, a degree *of* power, a fold *of* being. We have seen the effects of the originary apparatus of the promise (which coincides with or doubles the invention or discovery of language), the manifestation of power in the creditor-debtor relation, and the indebted subject that is produced. The indebted subject emerges out of the system of cruelty and is caught up in the immense machinery of the infinite debt, moving from one apparatus to another in an incessant process of self-affection and subjectification. And yet, as Agamben observes, the

¹⁹⁴ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 140. “It is not a sensible being but the being *of* the sensible. It is not the given but that by which the given is given.”

proliferation of apparatuses in late capitalism tends toward a seemingly opposed operation:

What defines the apparatuses that we have to deal with in the current phase of capitalism is that they no longer act as much through the production of a subject, as through the process of what can be called desubjectification. A desubjectifying moment is certainly implicit in every process of subjectification.¹⁹⁵

This process of desubjectification which doubles and subtends every process of subjectification was already implicit in Marx's "Comments on James Mill," where the becoming-money of the human is inseparable from a self-estrangement and alienation. For Marx, the figure of Christ eminently represents this paradox: "Christ is God *alienated* and *man alienated*."¹⁹⁶ Private property, according to Marx, 'finishes up' in money, and the human being qua indebted subject is a subject only inasmuch as the human being is estranged.¹⁹⁷ As we saw above, under the conditions of neoliberal capitalism, the human

¹⁹⁵ Agamben, *What is an Apparatus?*, 20. This is the sense of the pair of concepts created by Deleuze and Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*: deterritorialization and reterritorialization are doubtless distinct operations or events, yet they are nevertheless inseparable. One does not deterritorialize, or is not deterritorialized, without an immediate reterritorialization. The subject is a territory upon which the combat of forces takes place. This territory does not exist the combat: it is nothing but the to-and-fro of its deterritorializations and reterritorializations.

¹⁹⁶ Marx, "Excerpts from James Mill," 261.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. But see also the passage in the *Grundrisse* where Marx demonstrates the immediate dialectical identity of production and consumption: a product only becomes itself, becomes what it is, in its consumption. See Marx, *Grundrisse*, 91-92. Even more importantly, as an avenue of future research, one would have to take into account the origins of the concept of private property as such (which is in fact not merely a concept), since the very notion of property originates in the Roman institution of *dominium*—which is to say, slavery. Graeber describes this institution as follows: "In Roman law, property, or *dominium*, is a relation between a person and a thing, characterized by the absolute power of that person over the thing," where the personhood of the slave is reduced to a

being qua debtor increasingly becomes identical to their debt (the credit-card soul), and exists qua subject only in order to grease the gears of the flow of financial capital. “What we are now witnessing,” writes Agamben, “is that the processes of subjectification and processes of desubjectification seem to become reciprocally indifferent, and so they do not give rise to the recomposition of a new subject, except in larval or, as it were, spectral form.”¹⁹⁸ *This is the significance of the passage to the infinite debt*: the apparatus of forgiveness transforms the indebted subject into a subject of forgiveness in a recomposition of the subject, a resubjectification or a resurrection. What was decomposed and alienated, a scar tissue on the body of the socius, now assumes the stigmata of a Christian subject: no longer guilty, the subject of forgiveness is *innocent*, which is to say freed from the finite or bad infinity of the system of cruelty, precipitated into the infinite debt, thereby guiltier than ever.

In this regard, the strategy of the apparatus of forgiveness marks a significant advance. The paradox of late capitalism is that it requires this constant negotiation between indebtedness and freedom, between guilt and innocence, desubjectification and

thinghood, and is thereby placed under the total domination and control of the ‘owner.’ The word *dominium* itself turns out to be derived from *domus*, which means ‘house’ or ‘household.’ If the capitalist mode of production requires as its minimal condition a theory or institution of private property, it would seem that capitalism is in fact inseparable from a logic of slavery and domination—and this well before the extraction of surplus value in exchange begins. For Graeber’s discussion of this question, see Graeber, *Debt*, 198-207. For a perspective in which the figure of the African slave replaces the Gramscian figure of the worker as the central subject of capitalism, see Frank Wilderson, “The Prison Slave as Hegemony’s (Silent) Scandal,” *Social Justice*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (92), War, Dissent, and Justice: A Dialogue (2003): pp. 18-27.

¹⁹⁸ Agamben, *What is an Apparatus?*, 21.

resubjectification, crucifixion/torture and resurrection. If assuming one's self and subjectivity as debtor marked the performance of the death of God, the acceptance of forgiveness requires not only the admission of one's guilt (ratifying the terms of the debt in the form of a tacit confession) but also signifies the practical resurrection of God. God's complete transformation into money requires these two complementary movements: the dissolution of the being of God into the kinetics of money according to the reciprocity of the creditor-debtor relation and the society of exchange (to which the indebted subject corresponds as the incarnation of money—a perverse general equivalent or medium of exchange), and the crystallization or reification of God as the creditor who alone can forgive the debt (the double genitive that lurks in the phrase, 'subject of forgiveness'). If the unity and identity of God guarantee the identity and selfhood of the self, then one *regains one's identity* in an analogical relation to God.

Deleuze has shown how Kant's discovery of time as the inner sense effectively fractures the I. By contrast to Descartes' method, which expels time and establishes space as an absolute background upon which selves as accidents play out their dramas, "and entrusting time to the operation of continuous creation carried out by God," the Kantian fracture in the I signifies the death of God. There is a reciprocal relation between the identity of the I and the unity or identity of God (paralleling the reciprocal relation of the debtor and the creditor). As such, "the supposed identity of the I has no other guarantee than the unity of God himself."¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁹ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 86.

God survives as long as the I enjoys a subsistence, a simplicity and an identity which express the entirety of its resemblance to the divine. Conversely, the death of God does not leave the identity of the I intact, but installs and interiorizes within it an essential dissimilarity, a ‘demarcation’ in place of the mark or seal of God.²⁰⁰

Yet already in Kant, “God and the I both underwent a practical resurrection ... the fracture is quickly filled by a new form of identity,” an active and synthetic identity that disavows the conditions of its own constitution—the modern, autonomous individual quite rightly attributed to Kant.²⁰¹

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 86-87.

²⁰¹ In practice, this resurrection appears perfectly efficacious. We see its realization in liberal democracy and live the formal freedom it grants us. Yet, as Deleuze points out, the resurrection of God and the self depends on a more profound, transcendental flux of being and subjectivity. Deleuze speaks of an ‘aborted Cogito’ and a ‘dissolved self,’ which underly and render possible the transcendental illusion of a transcendent God and a unified, autonomous self. It is again a question of temporality—and, decisively, of ‘larval subjects,’ as Agamben has pointed out. Deleuze demonstrates in *Difference and Repetition* that subject as typically understood by Western thought is in fact a global integration of an infinite multiplicity of local egos or larval subjects. By contrast, the Western philosophical, theological and political orthodoxy of modernity has tended to view the subject in terms of a unity or identity that precedes the accidents which befall it—whether it be the monadic, self-interested individual of neoclassical economics, or the transcendental ego of phenomenology. In short, a soul which is ‘trapped’ by a body and undergoes the passions and affections of life in the world. Nothing could be further from Deleuze’s theory of the subject, which insists on the *production* of subjects by virtue of a passive synthesis, a ‘contemplation’ in which substance modifies itself, and which constitutes the living present of the self. Crucially, this living present is *not* said of human beings as such, but of the “thousands of little witnesses which contemplate within us,” which are so many modifications, perceptions, contractions, and satisfactions of substance—the little partial or larval egos that knit together to form the ‘subjects’ we take ourselves for. (Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 75). “The self does not undergo modifications, it is itself a modification,” and the human being is the always incomplete, aborted, global synthesis of these modification—a dissolved self, an aborted Cogito. A laceration or a burn are modifications just as much as a novel thought is a modification, and the same must be said of a scar, a muscle fiber, a spoken word: “Underneath the self which acts are little selves which contemplate and which render possible both the action

The preceding analyses have been an attempt to show that the *analogia entis* is grounded in the asymmetry of the creditor-debtor relation, but that, decisively, the true conditions for the emergence of an analogical relation to God are in fact grounded in immanence, in the perversity of the formula *Deus sive Moneta*. Analogy *parasitizes immanence*, and if everything appears analogical it is precisely because analogy requires a disavowal of immanence and a consequent *narration* or *memory-making* of the constitution of the self. To put it another way, the manner in which—and the grammar by which—we name God has the character of a self-affection: to the speculative death of God corresponds the (material) incarnation of money in the human being. It is therefore our task to investigate the manner in which—and the grammar by which—the (material) resurrection of God corresponds to the speculative absolution of the human being become

and the active subject. We speak of our ‘self’ only in virtue of these thousands of little witnesses which contemplate within us: it is always a third party who says ‘me.’ These contemplative souls must be assigned even to the rat in the labyrinth and to each muscle of the rat” (Ibid., 75). Yet the question remains: how is the integration of these larval subjects achieved—how is an identity produced from these disparate and heterogenous selves? In a word: *memory*. The theory of memory deployed in *Difference and Repetition* is complex and cannot be fully recounted here, but let it suffice to note that upon the passive synthesis of the living present, in which the larval subjects that contemplate within us froth and form, is founded a passive synthesis of memory (what Deleuze, following Bergson, terms the ‘pure past’—of which the lived present is an extreme contraction) and an *active synthesis* of memory in which one plunges into this past in reminiscence (Proust’s theory of involuntary memory), in search of one’s identity, or a resemblance to oneself which can count as an identity. That the *global* process of subjectification should be characterized by an *activity* of memory should not surprise us: human beings as globally integrated subjects live in the past inasmuch as we dedicate ourselves to the maintenance of the memory of a promise, and we do not properly live in the future, since we are always departing from one present (which we do not properly experience) for a past present, and it is always the future (the spectral power of credit) that haunts us.

money. The Christian drama of salvation, taken at face value, is a story of redemption. Yet the question to be raised suggests a different story or memory: *who*, precisely, is the subject of this story of redemption? In a sense, everything above has been leading toward this question, which henceforth assumes the character of a theodicy, an apology for God or money. It will become clear below that the answer to this question is necessarily equivocal, as it has precisely to do with a seemingly innocuous grammatical feature. The double genitive harbored in the phrase 'subject of forgiveness' signals precisely the ambiguity of money, and bears in itself an integral relation to the Christian "stroke of genius" identified by Nietzsche.

It is as though the indebted subject and the subject of forgiveness occupied two seemingly separate planes of immanence. On the face of it, one does not pass from being indebted to innocence, or to the 'state' of being forgiven, without leaving a plane behind in favor of a new plane (one passes from the 'prehistoric' plane to the Christian plane, and is transformed in the process). Yet we have seen how *the* plane of immanence (upon which is erected the whole hierarchy of analogical being) is interleaved, and that various regimes or *dispositifs* can obtain in a single 'subject.' No doubt, the passage from a disciplinary society to a biopolitical society marks a fundamental transformation of the subject and the social relations which constitute the subject. Nonetheless, it remains the case that one is always in the middle, caught in this apparatus or that apparatus, as if in this fold or that fold of Borges' infinite book. And it is the very nature of the fold to be

always between two folds,²⁰² and for there to be folds between the fold between two folds.²⁰³

There is indeed a fundamental distinction between the system of cruelty which birthed the human subject as a rational, promising animal, and the apparatus of the infinite debt into which human beings have been plunged since the advent of Christianity—and one should insist on this distinction. I only wish to point out that there is an apparatus which has the precise function of weaving these two heterogeneous apparatuses together, guaranteeing the passage from one to another, ensuring the oscillation and amplification of guilt and innocence: *the apparatus of forgiveness*. This latter apparatus is more or less coterminous with the apparatus of the infinite debt, but in fact it grounds the credit-debt relation. The creditor was characterized by the pleasure derived from the suffering of the debtor, but with the Christian intervention (where the creditor forgives the debtor) this pleasure takes on the form of a power of judgment and a scene of forgiveness. Nietzsche notes that the spectacle of suffering required spectators—in the form of gods or deities who look on as the human drama of credit and debt,

²⁰² Deleuze, *The Fold*, 13. “It is because the Fold is always between two folds, and because the between-two-folds seems to move about everywhere: Is it between inorganic bodies and organisms, between organisms and animal souls, between animal souls and reasonable souls, between bodies and souls in general?”

²⁰³ Spinoza’s brilliance was to have demonstrated that one can speak of an *actual infinity*, by virtue of the infinite divisibility of infinite substance, opposed to the bad infinity identified by Hegel. The pure immanence of Spinozan substance gives rise, no doubt, to illusions of transcendence, and is always in danger of being parasitized by logics of analogy. As will become clear below, the whole aim of a philosophy and politics of immanence must be a sort of extirpation of transcendence.

exchange and circulation, takes place. The debt owed to one's human creditor was gradually displaced onto these gods, such that the earthly creditor assumed the form of a deity. A doctrine of judgment (coterminous with the doctrine of the infinite debt, hence linked inextricably to the still nascent apparatus of forgiveness) begins, historically, to displace and inspire the system of cruelty, and the affective mnemotechnics gives way to a system or complex of *lots*, distributed by the gods.

“At bottom,” writes Deleuze, “a doctrine of judgment presumes that the gods give *lots* to men, and that men, depending on their lots, are fit for some particular *form*, for some particular organic *end*.”²⁰⁴ A hierarchy is established according to the moral judgment of the value of human beings. The debt is a lot, a cruel fate or a destiny, and the human subject which had so carefully constructed its identity through its memory-making becomes distributed as a variable or a fragment of chance in a cosmic game of value and pleasure—a profound desubjectification. The turning point, as I have pointed out, arrives with Christianity:

There are no longer any lots, for it is our judgments that make up our only lot; and there is no longer any form, for it is the judgment of God that constitutes the infinite form. At the limit, dividing oneself into lots and punishing oneself become the characteristics of the new judgment or modern tragedy. Nothing is left but judgment, and every judgment bear on another judgment. [...] We are no longer debtors of the gods through forms or ends, but have become in our entire being the infinite debtors of a single God. The doctrine of judgment has reversed and replaced the system of affects.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁴ Gilles Deleuze, “To Have Done With Judgment,” *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 128.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 129.

Yet this reversal and replacement is more properly described as an inversion and subsumption. In fact, one could replace every instance of the word ‘judgment’ in the citation above with the word ‘forgiveness.’ Not every judgment is a forgiveness, but every forgiveness is a judgment that exceeds the juridical apparatus of cruelty. The very personal relation of the creditor-debtor relation that burned a memory into the human gives way to the impersonal, sovereign, and unconditional forgiveness of the Christian logic of salvation. Henceforth, the Christian subject is innocent, which is to say, inasmuch as the debt can no longer be paid—not even in principle—indefinitely indebted. Moreover, the subject regains the identity it had lost in its alienation and self-estrangement as a mere bundle of debts and securities; the money-form is no longer expressed in flesh and blood (*a la* Marx), but in the autonomy, identity, and innocence of the modern capitalist subject, specifically in the commodity-form which retroactively determines the human social relations which have given rise to it. The affective system of cruelty has not disappeared; it has rather been tamed and domesticated in keeping with the domestication of the human being. One no longer lops off the hand of a debtor or takes a ‘pound of flesh.’ One rather interiorizes what was once exterior, or as Deleuze and Guattari put it: “The debt must not only become an infinite debt, it will have to be internalized and spiritualized as an infinite debt (Christianity and what follows).”²⁰⁶ The entire neoliberal grammar of human capital, entrepreneurship of the self, and so on, has its ground in this new constitution of the subject. Good people spending good money in a

²⁰⁶ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 217.

good society. Before all else the market requires, or is, a morality—a psycho-social cartography whose paramount aim is its own justification or theodicy.

It will be objected that, if the system of cruelty, the whole prehistoric mnemotechnics, was such a disastrous beginning for humanity, then why not affirm the Christian-capitalist regime as an advance? One wonders why this turn of events—or rather, this *tremendous event*—should be coded negatively. Why should one consider the constitution of a robust and well-grounded subject deleterious? In other words, *why a critique of forgiveness?*

5.2 Forgiveness is by no means a simple concept. It is not even, strictly speaking, a concept, but rather an *act* and a *scene*. Forgiveness is a drama, in which the human being qua debtor is assigned a central role. The human being is the content or the material of this drama; God or money is its infinite form.²⁰⁷ Recall Derrida’s provocation: “forgiveness is a history *of* God.” This history is the history of a “covenant between God and God” which passes through body of human debtor as mediator. In another text on the question of forgiveness, Derrida suggest that the tradition or history of forgiveness is fundamentally Abrahamic (indeed, the text in which Derrida speaks of a covenant between God and God concerns the Noahic deluge; and *nota bene* the term ‘Abrahamic’

²⁰⁷ It is the logic and the grammar of forgiveness that is under scrutiny here. No doubt, a wholly different investigation could be undertaken with regards to the vicissitudes of various scenes (in the plural) of interpersonal forgiveness, and each case would have to be decided in a singular fashion. In any case, this essay is concerned with the *singular scene* of a general forgiveness, in which the human being qua debtor is the material of forgiveness, the privileged means to the ends of a theodicy of money.

refers, for Derrida, to the three historical monotheisms: Judaism, Islam, and Christianity).

“It is important,” writes Derrida,

to analyze at its base [that is, at the base of this Abrahamic inheritance] the tension at the heart of the heritage between, *on the one side*, the idea which is also a demand for the unconditional, gracious, infinite, aneconomic forgiveness granted to *the guilty as guilty*, without counterpart, even to those who do not repent or ask forgiveness, and *on the other side*, as a great number of texts testify through many semantic refinements and difficulties, a conditional forgiveness proportionate to the recognition of the fault, to repentance, to the transformation of the sinner who then explicitly asks forgiveness.²⁰⁸

Derrida is concerned with the apparently problematic reading of forgiveness put forward by Vladimir Jankelevitch, according to which, on the one hand, forgiveness must be unconditional, mad, pure grace, and, on the other hand, the demand that Jankelevitch makes in the follow-up to his philosophical treatise on forgiveness which had emphasized the necessarily unconditional character of forgiveness, for a *repentance* on the part of the guilty.²⁰⁹ The scenario in which these two seemingly contradictory theories of

²⁰⁸ Jacques Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, trans. Mark Dooley and Michael Hughes (New York: Routledge, 2001), 34-35.

²⁰⁹ The paradox of the Jewish philosopher Jankélévitch’s theories of forgiveness lies principally in the apparent shift from his first philosophical volume on the subject, simply titled *Forgiveness* (published in 1967 as *Le pardon*) and the volume that followed it only a few years later (*L’Imprescriptible*, a section of which was translated into English as “Should We Pardon Them?”). In the former book, Jankélévitch mounts a staggeringly erudite and labyrinthine critique of forgiveness, resulting in a theory of a mad, unconditional forgiveness that holds the past injury in memory while nevertheless abolishing it in a quasi-involuntary act of pure grace. The final account of forgiveness, interestingly, resembles a Christian concept of forgiveness more than a Jewish one, as though Jankélévitch had ceded too much to Christianity in *Le Pardon*. In the latter volume, specifically in the section published in English, there is a remarkable shift—I would argue it is a shift *towards a Jewish conception*—towards a refusal of forgiveness altogether. The context surrounding the writing of “Should We Pardon Them?” is crucial: Jankélévitch is responding directly to the idea that the French state could, or should, be

forgiveness emerge is different than the one that concerns us, though we can perhaps glean from Derrida's interrogation an important structural truth, at the risk of challenging Derrida's conclusions. Derrida insists that the unconditional and conditional characters of forgiveness must always be opposed, that forgiveness is never a matter of judgment but is always located in a zone of exception that exceeds and therefore grounds the juridical. One can see the same logic at work in Derrida's commentary on Mauss: the gift as that which is radically aneconomic, and that upon which the economic as such depends for its principle of circulation. The gift is understood as the "first mover of the circle" of exchange, yet is immediately annulled *qua* gift as soon as it enters into this circle.²¹⁰

There is a whole ontology at work here, and it accords with the overall trajectory of Derrida's corpus as a critique of the metaphysics of presence. The conditions of the

able to pardon the war criminals of National Socialism—their crimes are properly *imprescriptible*, hence inexpiable. Moreover, as Jankélévitch insists, the criminals had not *asked* for forgiveness, and in the absence of repentance forgiveness proper was properly impossible, despite the mad grace that he had espoused only a few years before. My own inquiry into forgiveness differs in kind from Jankélévitch's—and, for that matter, from Derrida's—but one can still glean a number of important structures and logics from their analyses. For the purposes of the present inquiry, I wish to call attention to the existence of real limits to forgiveness—even, and especially, unconditional forgiveness. And without being able to wade into the debate in the present essay, I essay that if there is a contradiction in Jankélévitch's shift from one idea of forgiveness to another, the contradiction is less to do with his logic and more to do with the world to which his logic is addressed. See Vladimir Jankélévitch, *Forgiveness*, trans. Andrew Kelley (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013). And see Vladimir Jankélévitch, "Should We Pardon Them?," trans. Ann Hobart, *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (Spring, 1996), pp. 552-572.

²¹⁰ Derrida, *Given Time*, 30-31.

possibility of the gift are also the conditions of its impossibility.²¹¹ The gift must not be recognized as gift, rather it must be forgotten in advance, or rather exist only as an absolute secret, as not-existing, yet as that which gives existence to existing. “Forgetting and gift would therefore be each in the condition of the other,” according to the Heideggerian theme of the oblivion or forgetting of Being which would be the condition of Being and the truth of Being.²¹² The familiar Derridean logic of the trace here shines forth: the gift would only be thinkable in terms of its absence or non-occurrence, since the appearance or presence of the gift immediately annuls the gift and precipitates the cycle of exchange, of gift-counter-gift described by Mauss. Derrida’s critique of Mauss amounts to the assertion that, in spite of the title of his work and its general theme, Mauss “speaks of everything but the gift,” dealing rather with “economy, exchange, contract,” missing entirely the zone of exception which for Derrida characterizes the time of the gift, and installs the gift beyond Being, as that which gives Being to beings.²¹³ We witness the same opposition between unconditionality and conditionality that was put forward in the text on forgiveness in the Derridean logic of the gift.

There is nonetheless an apparent difference: whereas the condition of the gift is a certain forgetting or forgetfulness, the condition of forgiveness is a *memory*. The misdeed, the debt, or the broken promise must be remembered *in order to be forgotten*

²¹¹ Ibid., 12.

²¹² Ibid., 18.

²¹³ Ibid., 24.

and forgiven. And it is here where we can see clearly where the logics of the gift and forgiveness, in fact, coincide: if forgiveness qua forgiveness must necessarily be unconditional, mad, hyperbolic and without need of repentance on the part of the guilty subject, then forgiveness is given, precisely, *as gift*. Derrida never tires of pointing out that our juridical and economic life is conditioned by the globalization of Christianity, and without this *globalatinization* the very idea of “pure and unconditional forgiveness” would, as Derrida admits, “not have the least meaning.”²¹⁴ The fact is that the two poles of forgiveness are absolutely heterogeneous, but nevertheless remain indissociable. The transcendental logic of forgiveness, like that of the gift, requires that forgiveness lose itself in coming to itself, or in coming upon the subject—*yet one must always refer oneself to this unconditional nature of forgiveness.*

What becomes clear is that the Christian logic of unconditional forgiveness *has its conditions*. It remains unconditional ideally, but is everywhere conditioned by the necessity of a guilty or indebted subject. The indebted subject is the material of forgiveness. The transcendental condition of forgiveness is neither an ideal form nor a law of nature, but the maimed body of the debtor, the memory of the future. Here again one perceives the brilliance of Nietzsche’s thesis: the forgiveness that is effected in Christianity is *not asked for*; repentance only occurs retroactively (I am forgiven unconditionally, but I must admit my guilt, assume my status as infinitely indebted, in

²¹⁴ Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, 45. See also Derrida’s earlier comment: “...the ‘globalization’ of forgiveness resembles an immense scene of a confession in progress, thus a virtually Christian convulsion-conversion-confession, a process of Christianization which has no more need for the Christian church” (31).

order to obtain this forgiveness and the innocence it promises). As in the case of the gift, one must respond to forgiveness by becoming worthy of forgiveness, but only after the fact. Forgiveness is not a trap, nor a mere bait-and-switch: it is the power inherent in sovereignty itself, and as we will see, functions always in the service of *maintaining sovereignty*. What we witness in Christianity is the weaponization of forgiveness.

What is the nature of this weaponization? Derrida refers to the power to forgive as the “right of grace.” This right of grace is always the prerogative of the sovereign, who, as absolute monarch, can “by divine right, pardon a criminal; that is to say, exercise in the name of the State a forgiveness that transcends and neutralizes the law. Right [*droit*] beyond the law [*droit*].”²¹⁵ This transcendence of the law takes the form of an exception, according to the well-known formulation of Carl Schmitt: “Sovereign is he who decides the exception.”²¹⁶ Derrida gives the following description of the structure of the exception:

What counts in this absolute exception of the right of grace is that the exception *from* the law, the exception *to* the law, is situated at the summit or at the foundation of the jurido-political. [...] As is always the case, the transcendental principle of a system doesn’t belong to the system. It is foreign to it as an exception.²¹⁷

Yet there is reason to suspect that this formulation remains inadequate. One can, in fact, already see in the logics of the gift and forgiveness a slippage in Derrida’s analysis

²¹⁵ Ibid., 45-46.

²¹⁶ Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 1.

²¹⁷ Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, 46.

toward a certain analogical conception of Being. This description of the transcendental is another red flag.²¹⁸ As Agamben has tirelessly endeavored to demonstrate, the zone of exception is always a zone of indiscernibility.²¹⁹ And while the structure of the exception does indeed testify to a certain foreignness or not-belonging to the system, this ex-static character of the exception becomes increasingly indiscernible from the interior of the system: the inside and the outside merge into a zone of absolute indiscernibility, and the exception becomes the rule. Benjamin had already pointed this out in his *Theses on the Philosophy of History*: “The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the ‘state of emergency’ in which we live is not the exception but the rule.”²²⁰ If the power to forgive is the most exceptional of exceptions, the power most befitting an absolute sovereignty, and if this exception has everywhere become the rule, then forgiveness is the most

²¹⁸ The transcendental is not the transcendent. On the contrary, the latter is produced as an illusion by the former. Derrida’s description of the transcendental is problematic *not* because the description does not resemble the structure or topology of the exception that in turn structures the world in which we live, but precisely because the world in which we live is always a *product of immanence*. The exception is a transcendental structure inasmuch as it is the structure of the world and the subjects that populate the world, but it is not transcendental in itself, since it must always refer itself back to its ground: immanence, the literal equality of being.

²¹⁹ See, for instance, Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), esp. 15-70. The first ‘part’ of *Homo Sacer* addresses the structure and the logic of the exception in some detail. Note also that, according to Agamben, the law presupposed the non-judicial in the same way that language presupposes the non-linguistic. In the case of the law: what is presupposed is the infinite debt; in the case of language, the cruelty of mnemotechnics (20). And see Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

²²⁰ Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 257.

general, most universal structure of political and social life. The law itself is subject to, and constituted by, this rule of forgiveness: the rule (of law) is forgiveness, or as Deleuze and Guattari put it:

Even the law, which we assume functions to protect us against tyranny and despotism, has its origin in the form of the creditor-debtor contract: before it becomes a feigned guarantee against despotism, the law is the invention of the despot himself: *it is the juridical form assumed by the infinite debt.*²²¹

That is to say, paraphrasing Deleuze and Guattari: Christianity has its metaphysics—its name is forgiveness.²²²

Hence, one can say that the Derridean slippage toward analogy identified above can perhaps be boiled down to this: the logics of the gift and forgiveness cede too much to an emanative ontology and transitive causality, where the transcendental is itself conditioned by criteria of transcendence—the Good beyond Being, the hierarchy of analogy that results from its giving Being to beings, and the logic of transcendence that characterizes the structure of sovereignty. Daniel W. Smith observes that for Derrida, there is a formal structure of transcendence immanent within metaphysics, though this structure can never be made present as such. The structure of transcendence rather “functions as the

²²¹ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 213.

²²² Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 75. “In the name of *transcendental* philosophy (immanence of criteria), [Kant] denounced the transcendent use of syntheses such as appeared in metaphysics. In like fashion we are compelled to say that psychoanalysis has its metaphysics—its name is Oedipus.”

condition (the ‘quasi-transcendental condition) of metaphysics itself.”²²³ The concepts of *différance*, the trace, and the supplement all refer to this transcendence, and therefore to a beyond of Being, the quintessential analogical term. Hence, the gift can only be given as not given (that is, the gift cannot be or become a *datum*, a perception or an experience), and must remain a pure transcendence vis-a-vis that which receives. Likewise, forgiveness can only forgive the unforgivable. Derrida in fact draws this insight from Hegel (perhaps the thinker of the State par excellence), who, according to Derrida, insists that

nothing is impardonable but the crime against *that which gives the power to forgive*—the spirit according to Hegel, and what he calls ‘the Spirit of Christianity’—but it is precisely this unforgivable, and this unforgivable alone which the sovereign would still have the right to forgive.²²⁴

In other words, it is not enough to refuse the transcendence of the sovereign, or to commit the ‘crime’ against the power to forgive, because the sovereign is precisely that which *forgives this unforgivable crime* in order to maintain the coherence and control of the State. Worse than an enclosure or a prison, one is always already forgiven for the unforgivable, with no hope of escape from the infinite debt.

Perhaps this is the sense of Derrida’s invocation of the covenant between God and God: not that there is God on the one hand and the human being on the other hand, according to a relation of resemblance and analogy; rather that God and the human being

²²³ Daniel W. Smith, “Immanence and Transcendence: Two Directions in Recent French Continental Thought,” *Between Deleuze and Derrida*, ed. Paul Patton and John Protevi (New York: Continuum, 2003), 49.

²²⁴ Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, 47. My emphasis.

mutually condition one another according to the immanent criteria of the thesis of the univocity of being. It is not enough to espouse a vulgar Feuerbachianism, according to which God is merely the self-consciousness of humanity writ large, since this is merely the inverse of the story peddled by the partisans of the *analogia entis* (“How strange that God so *resembles* a human being,” the smug secularists intone). Even Marx—who is if nothing else a Feuerbachian—attenuates Feuerbach’s theses, insisting on the fact that human beings have an inverted consciousness of the world *because the world itself is inverted*.²²⁵ The human being as such is a crystallization of God or money, a congealed scar tissue, a fold of the power of forgiveness. A critique of forgiveness is therefore an immanent critique. Once again, the Spinozist question rises to the surface: how is it possible that we can come to the point at which we desire our own repression?

5.3 “Capitalism,” writes Benjamin in his famous fragment, “has developed as a parasite of Christianity in the West ... until it reached the point where Christianity’s history is essentially that of its parasite—that is to say, of capitalism.”²²⁶ This claim is decisive for several reasons. First, Benjamin identifies a crucial feature of the religion of capital: it is “the first instance of a cult that creates guilt, not atonement.”²²⁷ The logic of this guilt without atonement seems—on the face of it—to contradict my own theses about

²²⁵ Karl Marx, “Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right,” *Marx on Religion*, ed. John Raines (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002), 171.

²²⁶ Benjamin, “Capitalism as Religion,” 289.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 288.

the apparatus of forgiveness. However, Benjamin himself complicates his claim and discovers in capitalism-Christianity a mechanism of guilt and atonement that, as we will see below, rather seem to confirm the foregoing analysis. Second, it allows us to displace—however minutely—the theses of Weber which are limited to conceiving capitalism as a social formation conditioned by Christianity.²²⁸ On the contrary, at the theoretical or conceptual register, Christianity *is* capitalism; at the material or social register, capitalism *is* the praxis of Christianity. The third decisive feature of Benjamin's fragment in a sense unites the two preceding it: rather than accepting or confirming the usual story about the process of secularization, Benjamin's fragment makes secularization a problem for thought. What we discover when we peel back the veneer of secularization (with its ideals of formal equality and formal freedom, the panoply of Enlightenment illusions of progress and historical development) is nothing other than a theodicy of money.

²²⁸ Michael Löwy suggests that one should read this admittedly difficult and enigmatic fragment as belonging to a constellation of thinkers (Bloch, Fromm, among other Frankfurt School figures) who put forward “anticapitalist readings of Max Weber,” those “dissident ‘disciples’” of Weber who used the arguments of the *Protestant Ethic* “in order to develop a virulent anticapitalism, of socialist-romantic inspiration.” My own suggestion is that we read Benjamin's fragment as a cardinal moment of a critique that remains to be carried through: a critique of Christianity qua capitalism. My own approach has been to insist that the capitalist mode of production, inasmuch as it is characterized by exchange, arises from a prior Christian logic of the infinite debt, which itself was brought to bear upon the system of cruelty which constitutes the social milieu of the credit-debt relation. Christianity makes exchange possible; it is the social condition of possibility of the emergence of capitalist mode of production. See Michael Löwy, “Capitalism as Religion: Walter Benjamin and Max Weber,” *Historical Materialism* 17 (2009), 71.

Let us begin with the first of these decisive moments in Benjamin, as it will illuminate the others. Apropos of the religion of capital's excess of guilt (or debt, according to the "demonic ambiguity" of the word *Schuld*) and its lack of atonement, expiation or forgiveness, Benjamin describes a critical threshold reached by capitalism, in which God—rather than remaining aloof as in the quasi-mythology of Deism, is absorbed into the system as such, *incorporated into human existence*. I quote Benjamin at length:

Capitalism is probably the first instance of a cult that creates guilt, not atonement. In this respect, this religious system is caught up in the headlong rush of a larger movement.²²⁹ A vast sense of guilt that is unable to find relief seizes on the cult, not to atone for this guilt but to make it universal, to hammer it into the conscious mind, so as once for all to include God in the system of guilt and thereby awaken in Him an interest in the process of atonement. . . . The nature of the religious movement which is capitalism entails endurance right to the end, to the point where God, too, finally takes on the entire burden of guilt, to the point where the universe has been taken over by that despair which is actually its secret *hope*.²³⁰

That this is a description of the internal logic of Christianity is evident in at least two instances, both pertaining to guilt: on the one hand there is the universal sense of guilt without relief, on the other hand the God who takes on the burden of this guilt. With respect to the argument at hand, the passage that follows immediately after the one quoted just now is all the more decisive:

Capitalism is entirely without precedent, in that it is a religion which offers not the reform of existence but its complete destruction. It is the expansion of despair, until despair becomes a religious state of the world in the hope that this

²²⁹ E.g. the movement of the general economy—the single substantial economy which endlessly divides into itself.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 289.

will lead to salvation. God's transcendence is at an end. But he is not dead; he has been incorporated into human existence.²³¹

The final two sentences of this remarkable passage require clarification: God's transcendence is indeed at an end, inasmuch as God has become (or has always been) the immanent field of money understood as the complex of flows of matter-energy which are transmuted into the social relations of credit and debt. But a new transcendence arises in the wake of this transformation: God is not dead, but has been transformed into money—money which incarnates itself in the body of the debtor, and the subject of forgiveness who bears her innocence like a terrible weight. This transcendence—the analogical production of credit and debt—is not the classical transcendence of an eternal supreme being, but that of an immanent Good, defined only as increase and development. It is transcendence as immanent limit: “The *real barrier* of capitalist production is *capital itself*.”²³² The Good beyond being finds itself in the world, passes from hand to hand, circulates in markets, incarnated in the human being who promises. Not a Good become Goodness, but a Good become goods.

It is important to note the divergence of this genealogy of money from the usual narrative of secularization. If it was once possible to see secularization as an inevitable crawl out of the so-called primitive age of religion toward an enlightened and democratic

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Karl Marx, *Capital, Vol. 3*, Ch. 15, available at marxists.org, URL: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1894-c3/ch15.htm>.

age of knowledge and emancipation (typified by Kant's 'Sapere aude!')²³³, the experience of the 20th century, characterized by imperialist war, neocolonialism and capitalist expansion—not to mention the resurgence in the late 20th and early 21st centuries of religious extremism and the explosion of 'religiosity' in the global south, the 'return of religion' that has so fascinated thinkers in almost every discipline—has called into question the very framework of the European Enlightenment. Gil Anidjar, along with Talal Asad and Tomoko Masuzawa, among others—have decisively and rigorously demonstrated that secularization (indeed, the very notion of the secular itself) is in fact a Christian project of globalization. The very distinction between the secular and the religious (the former which is supposed to have come to, or will come to, replace the latter) is a Christian invention. "Like that unmarked race," writes Anidjar,

which, in the related discourse of racism, became invisible or 'white,' Christianity invented the distinction between religious and secular, and thus it *made* religion. It made religion the problem—rather than itself. And it made it into an object of criticism that needed to be no less than *transcended*.²³⁴

In a recent essay, Alberto Toscano points out that Marx himself was on the track of this counter-genealogy of Christianity. It is possible, in fact, "to summarize Marx's stance [in the 1840s] as a *critique of the critique of religion*."²³⁵ Marx's frequent assaults

²³³ Immanuel Kant, "What is Enlightenment?" URL: <http://www.columbia.edu/acis/ets/CCREAD/etscc/kant.html> (Accessed April 20th, 2016).

²³⁴ Gil Anidjar, *Semites: Race, Religion, Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 47.

²³⁵ Alberto Toscano, "Rethinking Marx and Religion." URL: http://www.marxau21.fr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5:rethinking-

and potent invectives against religion notwithstanding, Toscano clearly demonstrates that Marx, far from being the progenitor of what passes for critique of religion today (the phenomenon of the so-called New Atheists and their ilk), was in fact engaged in an altogether different enterprise. “When Marx writes of religion as a *theory* of the world, he is making a properly dialectical point: religion provides an inverted picture of the world *because the world itself is inverted.*”²³⁶ No doubt, human beings make or create religion, but everything hinges on the nature of this ‘make’ or ‘create.’ In fact, the whole problem is badly framed if one insists on speaking of religion *in general*. One must rather focus on the one religion that *made* religion by dividing itself into itself, producing on the one hand the lengthy list of ‘world religions’ (in which Christianity is ‘included’), and on the other hand the liberal democratic order of secularism. Hence, if one wishes to affirm the speculative identity of Christianity and secularism (though Anidjar would no doubt resist the word ‘speculative’), there still remains the question of whether or not secularism has a religious content, or whether it lives off of its ‘opposition’ to religion alone.

Toscano’s (which is to say Marx’s) answer appears unequivocal: capitalism is the religious form of secularism. And, moreover, Christianity is itself, in Marx’s own rendering, the special religion of capital:

The development of capitalist production creates an average level of bourgeois society and therefore an average level of temperament and disposition amongst

marx-and-religion&catid=65:sur-la-religion-et-la-laicite&Itemid=88 (Accessed April 15th, 2016).

²³⁶ Ibid. See also Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 10. “Society constructs its own delirium ... a true consciousness of a false movement.”

the most varied peoples. It is as truly cosmopolitan as Christianity. This is why Christianity is likewise the special religion of capital. In both it is only men who count. One man in the abstract is worth just as much or as little as the next man. In the one case, all depends on whether or not he has faith, in the other, on whether or not has had credit.²³⁷

The phrase ‘critique of the critique of religion’ should be read at this register: the predominant form of the critique of religion (in Marx’s time and in our own) is an essentially *Christian* critique, a Christian discourse, doomed to failure. In Toscano’s paraphrase of Marx, “in as much as religion is both a hypostasis of, and manner of coping with, not just natural forces but social ones ... Christianity is in this sense *a theory (or logic) of capitalism*.”²³⁸ Conversely, capitalism is the praxis of post-Enlightenment Christianity.

Hence, the infamous passage concerning religion as the ‘opiate of the masses’ has to be read strictly in terms of the Marxist method of addressing the material conditions of social and ideal forms. It is not simply a matter of criticizing the false-consciousness of religious persons, but of determining and abolishing the conditions which constitute false-consciousness. Marx’s famous passage, so often misinterpreted by the partisans of

²³⁷ Karl Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*, Ch. 24, available at marxists.org. URL: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1863/theories-surplus-value/> (Accessed April 20th, 2016). For a parallel in the mature Marx, see *Capital, Vol. I*, 172. “For a society of commodity producers, whose general social relation of production consists in theft that they treat their products as commodities, hence as values, and in this material 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, i.e. in Protestantism, Deism, etc., is the most fitting form of religion.”

²³⁸ Toscano, “Rethinking Marx and Religion.”

militant secularism, makes clear that the germ of Marx's shift to a critique of Christianity was already underway in 1844:

The abolition of religion as the *illusory* happiness of the people is the demand for their *real* happiness. To call them on them to give up their illusions about their condition is to *call on them to give up a condition that requires illusions*. The criticism of religion is therefore in *embryo* the *criticism of that vale of tears* of which religion is the *halo*.²³⁹

As Toscano observes,

We might say that the early conviction whereby the struggle against religion is the 'embryo' of true revolutionary transformation, gives way, through Marx's deepening study of the system of exploitation and his own political engagement, to a belief that such an anti-religious struggle might even serve as a detour or a cloak for real political struggle, that is to the idea that the aims of atheism and Enlightenment cannot be accomplished through a bald affirmation of Godlessness and Reason as matters of consciousness or mere pedagogy.²⁴⁰

It is not enough to simply critique religion as if religion *in general* could become an object of political critique. On the contrary, one must critique that which *makes* religion, that which makes religion "the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world and the soul of soulless conditions."²⁴¹ One must critique Christianity.

The true secularization (quite apart from what passes for secularization in our own day and age), according to Toscano's reading of Marx, can only be achieved by abolishing the liberal secular state—which, though it has sloughed off its religious 'content,' maintains a religious form "by embodying the alienated freedom of man in

²³⁹ Karl Marx, "Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right," *Marx on Religion*, ed. John Raines (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002), 171.

²⁴⁰ Toscano, "Rethinking Marx and Religion."

²⁴¹ Marx, "Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right," 171.

something external to him.”²⁴² According to Marx, the state maintains the formal structure of a religion: “Religion is precisely that: the devious acknowledgement of man, through an intermediary. The state is the intermediary between man and man’s freedom.”²⁴³ And not just any religion:

Indeed, the perfected Christian state is not the so-called *Christian* state, which recognizes Christianity as its foundation, as the state religion, and which therefore excludes other religions. The perfected Christian state is rather the *atheist* state, the *democratic* state, the state which relegates religion to the level of the other elements of civil society. The state which is still theological, which still officially professes the Christian faith, which still does not dare to declare itself a *state*, has not yet succeeded in expressing in *secular, human* form, in its *reality* as a state, the *human* basis of which Christianity is the exaggerated expression.²⁴⁴

The modern state is a Christian state.²⁴⁵ Christianity is the form of the liberal democratic state, just as it is the theory of capitalism. The two central targets of revolutionary theory and praxis, the capitalist mode of production and the state-form, have in common this Christian genealogy. One can neither overcome capitalism nor abolish the state without a rigorous critique of Christianity.

The logic of salvation in Christianity only achieved its realization or materialization with the advent of industrial capitalism. Though the parasitization of Christianity by capitalism forces any analysis of their symbiotic development into a zone of

²⁴² Toscano, “Rethinking Marx and Religion.”

²⁴³ Karl Marx, “On the Jewish Question,” 50.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 54.

²⁴⁵ See also Anidjar’s lecture on this same argument, URL: <http://backdoorbroadcasting.net/2013/10/gil-anidjar-on-the-christian-question-marx-nietzsche-freud/>. (Accessed April 20th, 2016).

indiscernibility, one can untangle the strange topology of their relations with reference to a decisive statement made by Marx in *Capital*, according to which the form of value as exchange-value could not have emerged in an epoch prior to the development of the capitalist mode of production. The reason he gives for this constraint is instructive, and bears directly upon the critique of Christianity: the general and equivalent character of human labor (from which exchange-value emerges as the expression of the value produced by abstract labor) “could not be deciphered until the concept of human equality had already acquired the permanence of a fixed popular opinion.”²⁴⁶ That is to say, there must be a system or set of social and material conditions in which human beings can be rendered formally equal to one another. We have already encountered this system or set of conditions: *the apparatus of forgiveness*.

No doubt, in accordance with Marx, money emerges as the general equivalent from the process of exchange of commodities. Yet money is first and foremost the general credit, the faith or *credo* which human beings circulate and distribute amongst themselves, and it is only with the Christian innovation—wherein God, the ultimate creditor forgives the debt and renders it qualitatively and absolutely infinite—that all human beings stand *equally* before God. If in the prehistoric system of cruelty and mnemotechnics human beings stood in various analogical relations to their creditors, with varying degrees or quantities of debts, in Christianity there is but a single analogon—God or money—toward which each human being corresponds as an analogate. Human beings

²⁴⁶ Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1, 152.

are equal among themselves inasmuch as they are forgiven, inasmuch as each personal existence is reduced to a generalized and infinite debt. In the *Grundrisse*, Marx gives the conditions for the emergence of the capitalist mode of production: formal equality and formal freedom, each of which masks, respectively, the substantial inequality and substantial unfreedom which are the true condition of human being in modernity.²⁴⁷

Christianity is the theory or logic of capitalism precisely because it establishes the *formal equality* and the *formal freedom* of the human being. Thus, we can essay a rough schema of the logical progression of forgiveness. Forgiveness is latent or virtual in the creditor-debtor relation (the creditor is distinguished by the power to forgive); forgiveness is made explicit and generalized in Christianity (the creditor forgives the debtor, precipitating the latter into the infinite debt); forgiveness is actualized in capitalism (the debtor is always already forgiven, and must labor to become worthy of their innocence).

We can therefore make sense of Benjamin's claim that capitalism creates debt but not forgiveness. In perhaps the most decisive reversal of all, *forgiveness creates debt*. The subject of forgiveness is the capitalist subject par excellence, and is in fact the expression of the subjective ground of the neoliberal indebted subject, as analyzed by Lazzarato. Christianity 'overcomes' the creditor-debtor relation by way of the doctrine of salvation and the apparatus of forgiveness—which together constitute the basis of the resubjectification of the debtor, in terms of formal equality and formal freedom. Christianity's transformation into capitalism, God's transformation into money: these

²⁴⁷ Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, 241-242.

mutations of the social-material field of human being and becoming have the effect, precisely, of displacing and obscuring the conditions of human bondage. It is religion—irrationality, error, illusion, terrorism, or barbarism—that is the problem, rather than Christianity-capitalism, *rather than God or money*. The supposedly ongoing process of secularization, and the liberal democratic state to which it gives birth, is in fact the manner in which, and the method by which, God or money forgets and forgives itself—it is a theodicy of money.

5.4 Certain questions remain. I have laid out both a formal argument and historical argument for the genealogy of the apparatus of forgiveness, and in truth the most difficult task is to synthesize these two dimensions. They intertwine and merge with one another at one moment, then diverge and differentiate themselves at another. No doubt, more research is required to establish the specific historiographical conditions under which Christianity and capitalism came to assume their parasitic relation and their eventual identity. The problem of dating is one such difficulty. For example, Philip Goodchild has identified the founding of the Bank of England—the first properly central bank which subjected the crown to a war-debt and which increasingly became indistinguishable from the State—as a possible ‘date’ of the death of God (or God’s transformation into money).²⁴⁸ There are other aporias, each of them, in their recalcitrance, testifying to an irreducible paradox, to a genuine problem for thought. My own approach, despite its

²⁴⁸ Philip Goodchild, *Capitalism and Religion: The Price of Piety* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 30. “It was this deed which caused the murder of God.”

obvious insufficiencies, has attempted to isolate the specific character of the genesis of money, which, as will have become clear by now, is rooted in the originary social relation between creditor and debtor, and the doctrine of the analogy of being which is both the ground of this relation and what is expressed in it.

There is, however, a final problem, to which I now turn: what is the general structure of this apparatus of forgiveness, prior to its deployment as the principle of equality and freedom in bourgeois, capitalist society? What is the sense of the claim made at the outset of this paper, that it is, in fact, not we who desire or undergo forgiveness, but God who forgives God in us? Let us return once more to the uncanny scene of forgiveness described by Derrida in “Literature in Secret.”

In any case, before one can detect in it any particular status and value, before one has to believe in it or not, this inherited text offers this reading: forgiveness is a history *of* God. It is written and addressed to the name of God. Forgiveness comes to pass as a covenant between God and God through the human. It comes to pass through the body of man, through the flaw that crosses through man [*à travers le travers de l’homme*], through man’s evil or fault, which is nothing but his desire, and the place of the forgiveness *of* God, according to the genealogy, inheritance, and filiation of this double genitive. Saying that forgiveness is a history *of* God, an affair between God and God—and we humans are found from one end to the other of it—provides neither a reason for nor a means of dispensing with it. At least we have to realize that as soon as one says or hears ‘pardon’ ... well, God is mixed up in it.²⁴⁹

For now I note simply that Derrida takes pains to point out that, in terms of the drama of forgiveness *of* God, what is *at stake* is desire. On the subsequent page he states explicitly: “As always, desire is what engenders fault. It is (the) failing itself. It therefore

²⁴⁹ Derrida, *The Gift of Death and Literature in Secret*, 148.

governs the logic of repentance and forgiveness.”²⁵⁰ Derrida is here concerned with a reading of the Noahic story in the Hebrew Scriptures, and the possibilities generated by the seemingly impossible scene of God forgiving God for, on the one hand, creating humans with evil in their hearts, and, on the other hand, the decision to destroy the earth by deluge. At the risk of introducing Christian elements into the logic that Derrida is attempting to draw out of this decidedly non-Christian story (note that, in contrast to the Christian approach, the very elements of the drama *in themselves* foreground the question of theodicy!), I simply want to attempt to articulate the decisive importance of this image of a covenant between God and God, and the body of the human being which serves as its stakes, site, and surplus. The subject of forgiveness—identified above as the capitalist subject—is also this God who needs or arranges for forgiveness.

Recall the ‘evaluating eye’ of Nietzsche’s second essay. We noted a certain sadistic dimension in the extraction of pleasure that characterizes the system of cruelty. Nietzsche claims that, by virtue of the punishment inflicted on the debtor, the creditor “participates in a *right of the masters*” and that the *jouissance* that accrues to the creditor as a surplus “will be the greater the lower the creditor stands in the social order.”²⁵¹ The social hierarchy is simultaneously assumed and expressed in this scene of cruelty: the creditor is to the debtor as a god is to the sinner, yet the creditor himself is a debtor to another creditor, hence a sinner to yet another god. This is why Deleuze describes the system of

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 149.

²⁵¹ Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 65.

cruelty as a social network of personal and interpersonal relation of punishment. It is true that in sadism proper there is no such ‘network,’ and the sadist-libertine must presuppose her mastery in order to exercise it. Yet it remains the case that in Nietzsche’s vision of the system of cruelty, an incipient analogy of being reigns over the actions and passions of the creditors and the debtors. The human being was not *simply* made calculable and rational: such an operation could not be carried through without crucial reference to a *proportion*, a *mean*, in short, *an analogical conception* of the Good. The system of cruelty was not a rudderless festival of pain and punishment, but a strategy of instituting and effectuating a political economy of the promise, with a free will and a conscience as its immediate elements.

The creditor himself was the ‘first’ spectator of the spectacle of suffering. Yet once human beings had achieved, so to speak, their soul and their conscience, and having turned inward against themselves (the bad conscience), other spectators were required. Here Nietzsche invokes the gods: “Indeed, divine spectators were needed to do justice to the spectacle that thus began and the end of which is not yet in sight.” From now on, Nietzsche intones, “man is *included* among the most unexpected and exciting lucky throws in the dice game of Heraclitus’ ‘great child,’ be he called Zeus or chance.”²⁵² Now it is the gods who are the sadists, tossing humanity like dice through the cosmos, reveling in each outcome of chance. Indeed, Nietzsche observes that this is what the rational, promise-making being truly can neither fathom nor tolerate: the *senselessness* of

²⁵² Ibid., 85.

suffering.²⁵³ In the case of the “naive man of more ancient times,” there must at minimum be spectators who derive pleasure from suffering—or else suffering would collapse into meaninglessness. In this regard, one should insist that sadism is not merely the fact of taking *pleasure* in the pain of another, but is a structure of subjectivity that above all functions to bestow meaning on suffering and the world in which suffering occurs. Despite that fact that the meaning *is meaning* only for the sadist, it is enough that, for those undergoing the suffering, this meaning exists *for someone*.²⁵⁴

In the other case mentioned by Nietzsche, that of the Christian (“who has interpreted a whole mysterious machinery of salvation into suffering”),²⁵⁵ everything changes dramatically. Where the spectators were the transcendent gods, whose spectating was characterized by an indifference (the apathy of the sadist), now God becomes the sole spectator. And not only a spectator, but a *participant*: Christ is both spectator and spectacle. Christology is a theory of a fundamental masochism, and Christian ritual is its praxis.²⁵⁶ Deleuze has shown that sadism and masochism, far from being complementary,

²⁵³ Ibid., 68.

²⁵⁴ Gilles Deleuze and Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, *Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty and Venus in Furs* (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 118. “The sadist derives pleasure from other people’s pain, and the masochist from suffering pain himself as a necessary precondition of pleasure. Nietzsche stated the essentially religious problem of the meaning of pain and gave it the only fitting answer: if pain and suffering have any meaning, it must be that they are enjoyable to someone.”

²⁵⁵ Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 68.

²⁵⁶ In *Blood*, Anidjar has traced the genealogy (or hematology) of the element of blood in Christianity, which testifies to a certain logic of inclusion and exclusion. Where the Hebrew scriptures appear to know nothing of blood (it is always ‘flesh and bone’ which

or two sides of one ‘syndrome,’ are perfectly distinct from one another, each being subject to different logics and employing different means to obtain pleasure.²⁵⁷ Where sadism is characterized by a need for institutions (the contractual relation between creditor and debtor is oriented toward the codification and *institution* of the contract, the form of reason itself—law as the ‘juridical form of the infinite debt’), masochism

is at stake), there is a significant development with the Christian scriptures and tradition. Blood comes to signify the substance shared by the community—the very being and identity of the community as such: Christianity constitutes itself as the community of blood. Decisively, at least for the political and social history of the West, the *particular* character of Christian blood comes to supersede and redistribute blood to all other ‘faiths,’ all other ‘peoples,’ according to an order of resemblance. The manner in which one *accesses* Christian blood (e.g. The sanctifying blood of Christ) becomes indistinguishable from the Eucharist ritual. Exclusion from the Eucharist means exclusion from the community: “it was, on the one hand, a matter of relation of the body and blood of Christ to each other and to his person, and on the other hand, a question of how Christians gain access to the *sanguis Christi* that saves” (54). Christianity inaugurates a universal community of blood—in which everyone is formally equal and free—but the element quickly becomes differentiated and heterogeneous to itself: *a difference between bloods*. Hence, Anidjar credits, so to speak, Christianity with the invention of race, the state, and the nation—each of which constitutes itself in a relation to the blood of the people. With regards to the invention of race, the advent of the Spanish Statutes on the Purity of Blood in 1449 marks the moment when the blood of Christians comes to be identified as the ‘pure’ blood, and all other bloods considered polluted by degrees of dissimulation from Christian blood. Apropos of the Spanish statutes, Anidjar writes: “Among the historians themselves, the statutes constitute a divided point of origin, the historical and contentious beginning around which comes to be articulated what we have come to call ‘modern racism’” (61). One would have to think these semiotic and elemental hematologies through and through—but for now we should simply note that the Eucharist (perhaps the Christian ritual par excellence) has less to do with piety as it normally conceived, and more to do with *access* to God or money—to credit. That capitalist credit and the social relations of exchange have replaced the Eucharist as the central social and religious ritual in our time remains a speculation, but one would not be wrong to—at the very least—raise the question. The Christian question, that is.

²⁵⁷ Deleuze, *Masochism*, esp. 15-23.

requires contracts and causes them to proliferate endlessly.²⁵⁸ It is true that sadism and masochism can and do overlap, but they do so just as apparatuses do—distinct yet indiscernible, as though implicated in one another without dissolving into one another.

The Christian innovation is to displace the sadism of the system of cruelty with an apparatus of forgiveness, wherein God undergoes the suffering of humanity and *makes the human being an element of the contract rather than a party to it*. For all of the apathy and indifference associated with sadism, it remains an intensely personal relationship, and could not be otherwise, since the cruelty inflicted by the sadist must be inflicted on a human being *as human* (an unwilling victim—a person *with a will*). By contrast, masochism, in spite of the requirement that another person participate in the contract or the alliance, is almost entirely impersonal, and in the end reduces the torturer to an instrument or mere element of the contract: the woman who inflicts pain on the masochist is not qualitatively differentiated from the whip in her hand, the furs that cover her body, or the mirror in which the tortured beholds his trials. In masochism, all of the bodies and objects are *materials*, props or furniture, *of the scene of torture*. Christianity is a masochism all the more extreme because it makes everything, the whole of existence, into the material of a torture according to the terms a single infinite contract and an infinite debt.

The fact that the Christian scene of forgiveness is a scene of torture is too quickly—and too often—passed over. Here again the distinctions between sadism and masochism

²⁵⁸ Ibid., esp. 76-80.

are decisive. God is not a sadist who places an unwilling victim on the cross. On the contrary, God places God on the cross—willingly—in an act of auto-crucifixion or self-sacrifice. Per usual, Nietzsche has already noted the central contradiction of such a move, since the act of self-sacrifice is always implicated in an attempt at a *reconstitution of the self*. There is, writes Nietzsche, “one thing we know henceforth—I have no doubt of it—and that is the nature of the *delight* that the selfless man, the self-denier, the self-sacrificer feels from the first: this delight is tied to cruelty.”²⁵⁹ In other words, apropos of Christianity’s ‘stroke of genius,’ where God sacrifices God out of love for the debtor, Nietzsche’s question peals like a bell: can one *credit* that? Inasmuch as we are autonomous subjects of capitalism, endowed with a free will, a conscience, a soul, the answer is clear: verily, forever and ever, amen.

5.5 It is clear that the apparatus of forgiveness produces subjects as free and autonomous beings, equal amongst themselves in an analogical relation to God. What is more, we now have a sense of the process of desubjectification that, as in every apparatus, subtends the process of subjectification characteristic of the apparatus of

²⁵⁹ Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 88. Note also that the German word used by Nietzsche is *Lust* (“*diese Lust gehört zur Grausamkeit.*”) The translation I have consulted for this essay renders *Lust* as ‘delight’ in this passage, but the word is often translated as ‘pleasure’ as well, testifying not only to the crucial link between the system of cruelty—in which the pleasure derived from the suffering of another is the surplus-value afforded to the creditor who punishes—and the doctrine of judgment, infinite debt and forgiveness—where the pleasure remains, with pain as its precondition—but *also* to the decisive connection to Freud, for whom the term *Lust* forms the basis of the theory of the pleasure principle (*Lustprinzips*).

forgiveness. In short, the modern liberal subject is produced as the condition which allows the capitalist mode of production to emerge (formal freedom and formal equality), but in the same moment the subject of forgiveness is desubjectified, reduced to a purchasing-machine, or a conduit through which the fluxes and flows of capital circulate as securitized debts, bundled and sold, tossed back and forth between high-stakes traders and hedge-fund managers—like so many dice throws. The desubjectification effected by the apparatus of forgiveness renders its subjects as *material* for forgiveness, the elements of a scene of forgiveness which has a single subject; the status of the human being as an autonomous subject is retained as a purely formal condition for the expansion and accumulation of surplus—the self-valorization of God or money.

There is, in fact, only one subject of forgiveness: God or money. Derrida's diction, in his description of the covenant *between God and God*, is exemplary. Not only does it alert us to the presence of a covenant or contract constitutive of the being of God, it makes the *between* of God and God a problem for thought. It is as though God were fractured from one end to the other, as if a broken promise—and everything, so to speak, takes place in this between. That this between should take the form of a scene, a veritable theater of the social, is due less to any 'dramatic' elements in it, and more to its masochistic character, the latter which is obsessed by a sort of directorial vision: in a masochistic fantasy (such as Christianity, or, for that matter, capitalism), what matters most is the *mise en scene*.

Masochism is primarily characterized not simply by taking pleasure in one's own pain, but rather by the suspension of pleasure, by the empty time of anticipation and

excitation.²⁶⁰ We gravely misunderstand pleasure by conferring on it the status of an unbound or unlimited excitation. Freud clearly defines pleasure as a *diminution* in excitation, a sort of binding or limiting of a given sensation.²⁶¹ If desire is understood as the complex of heterogeneous flows of matter-energy, which (according to the Spinozan theory) invest living beings according to their capacity for affection, then masochism is a meticulous and complete *staging of desire* such that pleasure can be deferred and the excitation-desire can accumulate. It is as though God or money were a great body or plane upon which our sociality, our exchanges and our promises, play out autonomously. Here and there a subject crystallizes to bear a value or to break a promise, but it is always the tranquility and silence of the infinite surface of money which sees and speaks.

Deleuze notes that Masoch's novels always "bear the stamp of decency," according to a sort of bourgeois sensibility—"We never see the naked body of the woman torturer; it is always wrapped in furs." Yet underneath the descriptions provided by Masoch of the scenes of torture, rosy or somber by turn, there rages the intensities of desire, always seeking out a determination by means of something determinable—a human being, a temporality. "The body of the victim remains in a strange state of indeterminacy except where it receives the blows."²⁶² In this regard, one can surmise that human beings are

²⁶⁰ Deleuze, *Masochism*, 30-35.

²⁶¹ Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, trans. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1961), 4.

²⁶² Deleuze, *Masochism*, 26.

erogenous zones²⁶³ of the body of God or money, yet also the whip and the chain that strike the body, and the sofa and mirror upon which the scene plays out, all of this at once—and for all. The masochist fantasy is the form of everyday experience in bourgeois society—titillating, yet adhering to certain standards or platitudes of conduct and contract. Moreover, and decisively, in the case of masochism, the subject is always the victim: subject = victim. In the masochistic fantasy,

the masochistic hero appears to be educated and fashioned by the authoritarian woman whereas basically it is he who forms her, dresses her for the part and prompts the harsh words she addresses to him. It is the victim who speaks through the mouth of his torturer, without sparing himself.²⁶⁴

It is as though the torturer, the ‘despotic woman’ of the masochist fantasy, were ventriloquized by the subject-victim of her affections—as though, at the limit, she were produced *qua* subject for the sole function of indemnifying herself, indicting herself.

One can grasp the direct link between masochism and Christian doctrine by examining the manner in which guilt is experienced by the masochist. It is not that the masochist is innocent. On the contrary the masochist “lives in the very depths of guilt; but far from feeling that he has sinned against the father, it is the father’s likeness in him that he experiences as a sin which must be atoned for.” The usual psychoanalytic explanation insists that the masochist experiences guilt *in relation* to the father; Deleuze’s innovation is to point out that it is rather “the father who is guilty in the son, not the son

²⁶³ Or, what amounts to the same thing, trading floors of an infinite market.

²⁶⁴ Deleuze, *Masochism*, 22.

in relation to the father.”²⁶⁵ In the latter case there is a relation of analogy: the son experiences the father as the Law, to which his crimes are addressed and from which he receives a punishment. Here atonement is a means of regaining the likeness of the Father, or what amounts to the same thing, of keeping the Law at a distance so as to maintain a relation of similitude to it. However, everything changes in the former case, in which it is the father who is guilty in the son. Here there is still analogy, but the analogical relation is now internal to the subject, and “guilt is turned completely upside down: it is both at its deepest and its most absurd. It is an integral part of the masochist’s triumph, and ensures his liberation.”²⁶⁶

Once again it is Kant who has effected the major displacement. Prior to Kant, the classical conception of the law was essentially analogical and Platonic, and took root in Christianity: one needs the law (or laws) only inasmuch as one does not know the Good. “If men knew what the Good was, or knew how to conform to it, they would not need laws: the law is only a representative of the Good in a world that the Good has more or less forsaken.”²⁶⁷ With the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant effects a general reversal or overthrow of this classical conception. Henceforth, the Good depends on the law and not the other way around: the moral law is purely formal, and it is no coincidence that Kant considered Christianity to be the only truly ‘moral’ religion, the only religion

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 101.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 81.

capable of teaching us or providing us with a framework for morality.²⁶⁸ “Clearly,” writes Deleuze,

THE LAW, as defined by its pure form, without substance or object or any determination whatsoever is such that no one knows nor can know what it is. It operates without making itself known. It defines a realm of transgression where one is already guilty, and where one oversteps the bounds without knowing what they are, as in the case of Oedipus. Even guilt and punishment do not tell us what the law is, but leave it in a state of indeterminacy equaled only by the extreme specificity of the punishment.²⁶⁹

One can immediately discern the structure of the infinite debt in the Kantian reversal: the law must be internalized as purely formal, such that one is always already guilty, and one’s awareness of one’s guilt is due only to the punctuations of punishment, the durations of which progressively stretch and fold until they envelope all of existence. The analogical relation to the law becomes immanent in the subject. As always, the law is the juridical form assumed by the infinite debt. Even the law is dissolved into the generality of money. God and the self undergo a practical resurrection—the good, innocent and autonomous subjects of secular liberal democracy and the capitalist mode of production.

Deleuze suggests that Sade and Masoch represent the two main attempts at subverting the law as pure form, the one by transgression and irony, the other by submission and humor. In the case of the latter, the masochist, “stands guilt on its head

²⁶⁸ Derrida has considered this dimension of Kantianism and its implications for the structure and genesis of the globalization of Christianity. See Derrida, “Faith and Knowledge,” 50, and *passim*.

²⁶⁹ Deleuze, *Masochism*, 83-84.

by making punishment into a condition that makes possible the forbidden pleasure.”²⁷⁰

That this should represent an overthrow of the law, a way in which to ‘have done’ with the judgement of God, seems more or less clear to Deleuze, but let us consider the matter more closely. Deleuze writes that

The essence of masochistic humor lies in this, that the very law which forbids the satisfaction of a desire under the threat of subsequent punishment is converted into one which demands the punishment first and then orders that the satisfaction of the desire should necessarily follow upon the punishment.²⁷¹

It is not that the masochist derives pleasure *from* pain, but that pleasure is only achievable due to a prior submission to punishment; “the masochist must undergo punishment before experiencing pleasure.”²⁷² In terms of our own critique, masochism does not appear to be as purely liberating as Deleuze would have us believe.

We saw above that God appears to be fractured from end to end, and that the *between* which is or effects this fracture is the space or place of the human (“we humans are found from end to end of it”). It is absolutely imperative to understand, first, that this fracture *is the being of the human as such*, and that, second, *the fracture is constitutive of God*. God is God because God *and* God. Yet again Christ is the ‘solution’ to the problem of the broken promise that is God. To the perennial theological question, “why did God become human?,” we reply that God has always, or is, become human. The specifically Christian innovation, the turn from the sadism of the system of cruelty to the masochism

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 89.

²⁷¹ Ibid., 88-89.

²⁷² Ibid., 89.

of the doctrine of judgment and the infinite debt, is to have made the punishment and suffering of the human the *prerequisite* for the pleasure of God. That is to say, God or money wants to be a subject (it is always the subject that is missing in desire), and hence must convert the condition of its brokenness into the material for its absolution and reconstitution: the human being becomes the material of forgiveness *of* God.

In the Christian theodicy of money—to which this essay has addressed itself—and according to the masochist logic of the Christian reversal, the Father is guilty *in* the Son, the Father desires *in* the Son—yet the ‘place’ of the Son qua God-man is precisely *the fracture in the Father*, as both laceration and suture. A strange topology results, where inside and outside collapse into one another, as if stranded in a zone of total indiscernibility. One might object that this confuses everything, that the human being is now both a subject of forgiveness *and* the material of forgiveness. Yet this is precisely the function of the apparatus of forgiveness: to produce subjects as expressions of the forgiveness of God or money. According to the Spinozan ontology with which we began this inquiry, that which is expressed is not separate from its expression.²⁷³ The theodicy of money proceeds by making the human being—the free will and desire of the human being—the problem, rather than God or money. It is never God who is guilty. Money is never at fault. It is never capitalism that enslaves us; it is we who desire our own

²⁷³ This is a constant theme of Deleuze’s reading of Spinoza: “God expresses himself in himself ‘before’ expressing himself in his effect: expresses himself by in himself constituting *naturata naturans* [naturing nature], before expressing himself through producing within himself *natura naturata* [natured nature].” See Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, 14.

enslavement. It is never Christianity as such which should be problematized; only its simulacra are worthy of critique.

Finally—at last—it is always a question of belief and desire. Nietzsche’s solution in the second essay of the *Genealogy* is revealed to be, in the last instance, insufficient. “[T]he prospect,” he writes, “cannot be dismissed that the complete and definite victory of atheism might free mankind of this whole feeling of guilty indebtedness toward its origin, its *causa prima*. Atheism and a kind of *second innocence* belong together.²⁷⁴” Yet this atheism is itself never complete, never total, because *everyone believes in money*.²⁷⁵ Money is that which desires in us; and everyone believes in money: belief *in money* as that which makes belief in general possible (general credit), and belief *in money* as that *in which* we believe, *on which* we believe (*our* plane of immanence, the plane of analogy). Human beings are the stigmata of an invisible hand, from which forgiveness flows eternal.

²⁷⁴ Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 91.

²⁷⁵ Toscano recounts an amusing satire penned by Marx’s son-in-law, Paul Lafargue, which dramatizes a fictional London Congress “where the ruling classes of Europe meet to debate which forms of belief can best pacify labour unrest. The emblematic declaration is voiced by the ‘great English statistician, Giffen,’” who solemnly intones: “‘Now, then, the only religion that answers the needs of the moment is the religion of Capital. . . . Capital is the true, only and omnipotent God. He manifests Himself in all forms and guises. He is found in glittering gold and in stinking guano; in a herd of cattle and in a cargo of coffee; in brilliant stores that offer sacred literature for sale and bundles of pornographic etchings; in gigantic machines, made of hardest steel, and in elegant rubber goods. Capital is the God whom the whole world knows, sees, smells, tastes. He exists for all of our senses. He is the only God who has yet to run into an atheist.’”

See Toscano, “Rethinking Marx and Religion.”

To have done with the judgment of God, to have done with the infinite debt—to *have done with forgiveness*—will require a wholesale refusal of the conditions under which we are produced as subjects and material of forgiveness. Which is to say, one must address the material conditions of our contemporary bondage, indebtedness, and innocence—and the theory or theodicy which we undergo, consummate and perform. In short, one must return to a thought and a practice of *pure immanence*, freed of the despotic monotheism, moralism, and analogy which parasitize it.

It is not enough to simply be anti-capitalist. It is not enough to be innocent. One must be anti-Christian. One must be unforgivable.

Chapter 6 – Conclusion: The Politics of Immanence

6.1 Let us summarize the argument in two simultaneous movements; one logical or conceptual, the other historical.

(1) Forgiveness is essentially latent in the creditor-debtor relation in the system of cruelty. It oscillates between potentiality and actuality inasmuch as the creditor may or may not forgive the debtor, but the creditor is always fundamentally distinguished from the debtor inasmuch as the creditor has, or is, the power to forgive. (2) With the Christian innovation, forgiveness is made explicit and is generalized. It is no longer potential, but is ‘incarnated’ or effectuated in the body and life of the human being. There is only one lot for all, the debt becomes infinite *de jure* rather than the *de facto* infinite debt of the circulation of the system of cruelty (where blocks of finite debts circulated as bonds of alliance or filiation). The formal equality and formal freedom of human beings is established by the Pauline doctrine of equality before God (forgiveness renders all humans equal before God). (3) The advent of industrial capitalism marks a materialization, a true incarnation, and a genuine praxis of Christianity: formal equality and formal freedom are actualized in the process of exchange, rendering possible the

capitalist mode of production, and the existential labor of the debtor becomes the abstract labor of the capitalist subject. Whereas money *qua* general credit or collective faith provided the ground for the emergence of the capitalist mode of production, money now functions as general equivalent. Money *qua* credit promises value and gives a future to exchange, and money *qua* medium of exchange carries out this mediation and produces value, extending the process of circulation indefinitely. The debtor is always already forgiven, and labors to become worthy of her innocence. (4) The twinned neoliberal projects of governmentality and financialization are in fact internal to the capitalist mode of production, but nevertheless express a decisive transformation: the credit-debt relation regains an ascendancy which had been more or less subsumed by the relation of capital and labor. The neoliberal turn, for all of its violences, expropriations and accumulations, has the virtue of making Christianity a problem for thought, of returning thought to the ‘prehistory’ of the system of cruelty (which, as Nietzsche insists, accompanies every historical epoch like a specter). The neoliberal subject once again labors existentially, in the abstraction of late capitalist financial circulation.

Hence, the apparatus of forgiveness effects a theodicy of money; at first latent (cruelty), then explicit and general (Christianity), then actual and concrete (capitalism), and finally existential once again—or for the first time again, according to a structure of repetition in which prehistory haunts the present as a spectral power—a *memory of the future* (neoliberalism). The transformation of God into money *is this theodicy*, in its various guises of secularization, the liberal democratic form of the State, and the financialization and globalization of capital—the complicated and complex warp and

woof of globalatinization. However, a central problem remains to be addressed. I have throughout this inquiry insisted that the transformation of God into money occurs, so to speak, in stages—in the logical structure of credit and debt, and in history. This remains true—as I hope the summary above demonstrates—but I have also insisted that God is *essentially* money, and that this expresses a more or less originary or immemorial truth. How is one to reconcile these seemingly contradictory claims?

We must conceive of God's transformation into money as the process by which God or money becomes adequate to its idea. Yet the idea to which God or money becomes adequate is not, in the last instance, ideal. One of Deleuze's central contributions in *Difference and Repetition* is to have demonstrated that an idea must be understood as a *problem*.²⁷⁶ Ideas are essentially problematic, not in the sense that one normally speaks of problematic speech or actions, rather ideas are *objectively problematic* in that they are the expression of a virtual field of singularities (a plane of immanence) upon which are effected various strategies, solutions and integrations (such as the promise or the subject). God or money is the problem to which the human being is a solution, the question to which a promise is offered as an answer. Yet, conversely, the human being is the problem to which God or money is the solution, the question to which analogy answers. The reciprocal relationship of the human being and God or money is what characterizes our plane of immanence: one does not exist or insist without the other. God or money will be extinguished with the human, as the human extinguishes itself with

²⁷⁶ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 168-176.

God or money.²⁷⁷ What is absolutely crucial to understand is that the human being is not something different than God or money, yet neither is the human being the same as God or money. *The human being is the expression of God or money*, the actualization or realization of the latter. This is why one must attenuate Feuerbach's thesis: it is not that God is simply humanity writ large, rather that God is the inscription of value in the human being. God is that which desires in us. God is not dead; it is rather much worse than that. God is unconscious.

Thus, we can hazard a formula: God or money is the plane of immanence *that we are*. Not only are we what is at stake in the apparatus of forgiveness, we are also that which desires those stakes, and that which constructs the apparatus in which we are captured. To say that God is unconscious is not to say that God is *the* unconscious. It is simply to recognize that God or money is what makes us human: to be human is to be unconscious. One cannot simply abolish money any more than one can simply kill God. Achieving a real liberation from our own desired enslavement will, in fact, require a radical rethinking of the material conditions of the actualization of God or money—and this essay represents an initial foray into such a project—hence the necessity of articulating a political theology of money that grasps money in all of its demonic ambiguity. A theodicy of money is equally a theodicy of humanity: a trans-millennial apology for hierarchy, violence, greed, and every other evil on the face of the earth. We

²⁷⁷ With regards to the uncertain future of the human race and the implication of capitalism in the destruction of the planetary conditions of human existence, see Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015).

are all guilty. *Ergo*, we are all innocent. Such is the operation—the stroke of genius—of the apparatus of forgiveness.

6.2 The question of debt forgiveness is not merely theoretical. In fact, this question is increasingly germane to our political sphere—for instance, the neoliberal amnesty packages offered to indebted states such as Greece, which are essentially ‘austerity with a human face.’ The International Monetary Fund (IMF), the global institution of creditors, or more precisely, debt-enforcers, will forgive the debt—on condition that... In this case, forgiveness comes with conditions (typically the balancing of budgets, the gutting of social services and welfare programs, amongst other essential state functions) that dangle the threat of default and economic catastrophe if the creditor’s ‘reasonable’ demands go unsatisfied. David Graeber recounts a story of attending a party at Westminster Abbey, where he was caught in a conversation with a stranger who, upon hearing that Graeber and his comrades supported abolishing the Third World debt that the IMF was enforcing, objected that “they’d borrowed the money! Surely one has to pay one’s debts.”²⁷⁸ The anecdote illustrates perfectly the common-sense that subtends and nourishes the moralism of the creditor-debtor relation—even at the level of international finance and sovereign debts. *Everyone knows* that one must pay one’s debts! Austerity policies are not limited to so-called debtor nations. Even though one rarely hears of the danger of a U.S. default on the national debt (with the exception of those moments when a recalcitrant GOP-led

²⁷⁸ Graeber, *Debt*, 2.

Congress refuses to raise the debt ceiling), the U.S. has in fact subjected its citizens to structural austerity for decades, and the consequences are becoming increasingly clear.²⁷⁹

The moralism of the creditor-debtor relation in our contemporary situation is perhaps best expressed in the student debt crisis. According to the *Debt Resisters' Operations Manual*, a pamphlet published by an anonymous collective in association with Strike Debt and Occupy Wall Street, “total student debt in the United States surpassed the \$1 trillion mark” in 2012.²⁸⁰ This is a staggering figure (the average level of debt for student leaving college is around \$27,000). The consequences of such an enormous concentration of debt in the younger generation of consumers have yet to be fully realized, but there are already rumblings of the cataclysmic economic crisis to come. The Wall Street Journal recently published an article fretting that too many students are falling into default on their loans—to the tune of \$200 billion.²⁸¹ It often goes unnoticed that lending money to students for tuition functions as a shadow stimulus to the economy. Money is created *ex nihilo* and lent to students as credit, who take on the debt in order to finance their education, but also to provide for basic means of subsistence

²⁷⁹ See, for instance, the article in *truthout Magazine*, “Studies Show Austerity Policies Exacerbate US Suicide Epidemic.” URL: <http://www.truth-out.org/opinion/item/35785-studies-show-austerity-policies-exacerbate-us-suicide-epidemic> (Accessed April 25th, 2016).

²⁸⁰ Strike Debt, *The Debt Resisters' Operations Manual* (2012), 30. URL: <http://strikedebt.org/The-Debt-Resisters-Operations-Manual.pdf> (Accessed April 25th, 2016).

²⁸¹ Josh Mitchel, “More Than 40% of Student Borrowers Aren’t Making Payments,” *The Wall Street Journal*. URL: <http://www.wsj.com/articles/more-than-40-of-student-borrowers-arent-making-payments-1459971348> (Accessed April 25th, 2016).

(paying rent, buying groceries), as well as luxuries such as alcohol and video games—the practice is usually referred to as receiving ‘excess aid.’ The mechanism is as simple as signing a promissory note, typically online. Should this shadow stimulus disappear, as it may in the near future in the event of a freeze on lending due to the student debt bubble bursting, millions, perhaps billions of dollars a year would disappear from circulation.

The emergent focus on debt forgiveness is laudable, but it is nothing new, and one should approach it equivocally. On the one hand, it would be naive to refuse, as a matter of ‘principle,’ the forgiveness of one’s loans, were such forgiveness offered. The situation of many debtors is dire enough that a forgiven mortgage, or a forgiven tuition balance, could prove absolutely life-changing, with a net-positive effect on the individual or the family concerned. On the other hand, we have seen throughout this essay that forgiveness is not as straightforward as it seems. Devin Singh’s argument, cited in the Interlude, points to precisely such a hidden motive of debt forgiveness: forgiveness is a sort of reset-button for the sovereign, “ultimately reinforc[ing] sovereign authority and emphasiz[ing] the system’s dependence on sovereign will and decision ... *Debt cancellation is a form of sovereign crisis management.*”²⁸² It is not that we should refuse forgiveness for the sake of a theoretical argument, or in order to safeguard some imagined pure subjectivity of resistance. Advocating the cancellation or forgiveness of debts can, and is proving to be, a crucial avenue of solidarity with one’s fellow debtors

²⁸² Singh, “Debt Cancellation as Sovereign Crisis Management.” URL: <http://cosmologicsmagazine.com/devin-singh-debt-cancellation-as-sovereign-crisis-management/>

and a method of resistance to privatization of education, and the austerity measures that always threaten to leave the debtor drowning.²⁸³ The danger is that we accept forgiveness without calling into question the very structure of power that made us ‘guilty’ in the first place.

Forgiveness indeed erases the ledgers of debt, but it is also the condition for the accumulation of further debt. *Forgiveness creates debt*, at both the transcendental register of the infinite debt it inculcates in the subject of forgiveness *and* the register of the continued functioning of the empirical system of debts. As Deleuze and Guattari observe, “desiring-machines work only when they break down, and by continually breaking down.”²⁸⁴ The system functions only by malfunctioning, requiring periodic infusions of mercy and grace to grease its gears. The task of any anti-capitalist undertaking of the future is to make this malfunctioning a condition of emancipation, rather than the maintenance of the State and the economic machine of the capitalist mode of production.

As Singh points out:

The case of debt cancellation reveals the persistence and necessity of sovereignty in our current economic arrangements. It calls into question whether debt cancellation policies are a truly radical act. Instead, they may function as pressure

²⁸³ Vis-a-vis solidarity, note the important move made by the ‘Corinthian 15,’ a group of former students who are contesting the very legitimacy of their educational debt (federal loans) to Corinthian Colleges, Inc., a for-profit private educational system that has been accused of fraud and predatory lending by several state and federal government agencies. See <https://debtcollective.org/studentstrike> for profiles of these courageous debtors. With regard to the austerity measures already in place, note that students are almost universally prohibited from discharging their educational debts through a declaration of bankruptcy. See the *Debt Resisters’ Operations Manual*, 34-35.

²⁸⁴ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 8.

valves designed to recalibrate the economic system and allow it to persist. Perhaps the most disruptive and transformative ways forward, then, involve allowing debt to balloon out of control, to default, and to jam the gears of a system that thrives on debt as its lifeblood. Perhaps what we need is not debt cancellation, but *debt negation*, a refusal and rejection of the category of debt altogether, and a striving to think human social, spiritual, political and economic relations in a vastly different register.²⁸⁵

A massive debt cancellation may indeed be on the horizon. Negotiating its treacherous conditions and stratagems will require thinking the operations of the apparatus of forgiveness through to the end. That this will require an interrogation of the being of the human as such, and the manner in which this being is implicated in a plane of immanence dominated by an analogical hierarchy, is evident from the preceding argument. My suggestion, albeit a meager one, is that we must allow ourselves access to a certain negativity, a certain power of refusal, that is proper to immanence.

6.3 Recall the formula of the analogical production of money: credit in itself is debt for itself. The debtor is always *for* forgiveness, since forgiveness requires a guilty party. Forgiveness is always *for* the creditor, even if forgiveness is said of, or dispensed to, the debtor. In spite of the fact that I have spoken endlessly of the creditor-debtor *relation*, the emphasis has been on the two terms of the relation—the creditor and the debtor as respective *relata*. In these few words that remain, I would like to address the relation itself—relation as such.

²⁸⁵ Singh, “Debt Cancellation as Sovereign Crisis Management.” URL: <http://cosmologicsmagazine.com/devin-singh-debt-cancellation-as-sovereign-crisis-management/>

One could attempt a formulation of immanence as follows: immanence in itself is for nothing. Immanence should be formally opposed to analogy on every point. As Deleuze remarks, “[Immanence] signifies that being itself is univocal, while that of which it is said is equivocal: precisely the opposite of analogy.”²⁸⁶ Immanence and analogy are *formally* opposed, because in fact analogy is a product of immanence misunderstood as a closed, claustrophobic system, from which no escape is possible. In fact, it is true that there is no escape in the sense that there is no beyond, in the sense that transcendence is always the triple illusion of consciousness: the illusion of final causes, the illusion of free will, and the theological illusion.²⁸⁷ Immanence in itself is indeed total and perfect—it is the real as such—but immanence in itself is the infinite modulation of itself. The danger

²⁸⁶ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 304. I have replaced the term ‘univocity’ with ‘immanence’ in this passage in order to reflect the increasing emphasis that Deleuze put on the theory of immanence in his later writing. While the doctrine of univocity plays a major role in *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze essentially ceases to refer to the term in his later work, since the theoretical labor that univocity had provided was essentially completed. For an account of the historical significance of Deleuze’s brief encounter with the scholastic debate between univocity and analogy and the implications for a philosophy of immanence, see Daniel W. Smith, “The Doctrine of Univocity: Deleuze’s Ontology of Immanence,” *Essays on Deleuze* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 27-42.

²⁸⁷ Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, trans. Robert Hurley (San Francisco: City Light Books, 1988), 20. “Since it only takes in effects, consciousness will satisfy its ignorance by reversing the order of things, by taking effects for causes (*the illusion of final causes*): it will construe the effect of a body on our body as the final cause of its own actions. In this way it will take itself for the first cause, and will invoke its power over the body (*the illusion of free decrees*). And where consciousness can no longer imagine itself to be the first cause, nor the organizer of ends, it invokes a God endowed with understanding and volition, operating by means of final causes or free decrees in order to prepare for man a world commensurate with His glory and His punishments (*the theological illusion*).”

that one risks in speaking of immanence is that the latter will be misunderstood as the sum total of possibilities, when in fact immanence is nothing but necessity, pure necessity.

Deleuze has described the relation between possibility and necessity in terms of the tired person and the exhausted person. Inasmuch as one can never realize the whole of the possible—since one must necessarily fragment the possible, according to the logic of an either/or—the tired person and the exhausted person are like two subjective figures of an objective disjunction.

The tired person has merely exhausted the realization, whereas the exhausted person exhausts the whole of the possible. The tired person can no longer realize, but the exhausted person can no longer possibilize ... There is no longer any possible: a relentless Spinozism. Does [the exhausted person] exhaust the possible because he is himself exhausted, or is he exhausted because he has exhausted the possible? He exhausts himself in exhausting the possible, and vice-versa. He exhausts that which, in the possible, *is not realized*. He has had done with the possible, beyond all tiredness, 'for to end yet again.'²⁸⁸

The possible is that which can only be realized through exclusion: one chooses *this* path by excluding *that* path ("one even creates the possible to the extent that one realizes it").²⁸⁹ The indebted subject and the subject of forgiveness are such tired persons. Money is that which gives possibility inasmuch as it is that which realizes a possibility: one makes plans according to money, one saves money according to money, one marries according to money, one wakes and sleeps according to money, etc. We are ruled by possibility and not the other way around.

²⁸⁸ Deleuze, "The Exhausted," 152.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

Exhaustion is different. “The goal is no longer to go out or stay in, and one no longer makes use of the days and the nights. One no longer realizes, even though one accomplishes something.”²⁹⁰ It is as though possibility, in itself exhausted, has collapsed into necessity—the paradoxical freedom of the All of chance. For freedom lies not in the will, but in the necessity and swerve of the being of becoming, the thresholds of desire which lead not to a beyond but to transformation (the Dionysian bacchanal, the will to power—which is not a desire *for* power, but the infinite differentiability of desire itself, the dynamic identity of *clinamen* and *conatus*). Will is that which adjudicates, judges and decides between possibilities, but desire is that which is for nothing. “One does not,” writes Deleuze, “fall into the undifferentiated, or into the famous unity of contradictories, nor is one passive: one remains active, but for nothing. One was tired *of* something, but one is exhausted *by* nothing.”²⁹¹ The exhausted person plays with the possible without realizing it. The exhausted person relates to the possible in a non-relation. To be for nothing; to be unable to possibilize by refusing the possible as such; to cease to be tired by the possible and to exhaust the possible—perhaps this is what it could mean to have done with forgiveness. Contra Derrida, forgiveness is not the impossible, nor, *qua* the impossible, the condition of possibility. It is possibility itself. The refusal of possibility, of the future that God or money gives, is the task of the theory and praxis to come. If

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 153.

²⁹¹ Ibid. My emphasis.

money is that which desires in us, such that we become something or someone that desires, then one must be, on the contrary, for nothing.

I close with a quote from Agamben's *State of Exception*. I have made a minor modification which I trust will not constitute too grave a transgression: where Agamben has written 'law,' I have substituted 'money.'

One day humanity will play with [money] just as children play with disused objects, not in order to restore them to their canonical use but to free them from it for good. What is found after [money] is not a more proper and original use value that precedes [money], but a new use that is born only after it. And use, which has been contaminated by [money], must also be freed from its own value. This liberation is the task of study, or of play.²⁹²

One can only hope that—just as I have erased 'law' in this passage—one day 'money' will in its turn be erased, refused, replaced with nothing.

²⁹² Agamben, *State of Exception*, 64. See also Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 116. "It is claimed that man does not know how to *play*: this is because, even when he is given a situation of chance or multiplicity, he understands his affirmation as destined to impose limits upon it, his decisions as destined to ward off its effects, his reproductions as destined to bring about the return of the same, given a winning hypothesis. This is precisely a losing game, one in which we risk losing as much as winning because we do not affirm the *all* of chance: the pre-established character of the rule which fragments has as its correlate the condition by default in the player, who never knows which fragment will emerge. The system of the future, by contrast, must be called a divine game, since there is no pre-existing rule, since the game already bears upon its own rules and since the child-player can only win, all of chance being affirmed each time and for all times."

Postscript

In the conclusion to *Blood*, Anidjar raises a final question: what is the future of murder?²⁹³ The concluding essay departs from the theme of blood with which the volume as a whole is occupied, and addresses a certain, albeit effaced, Christian dimension of the thought of Sigmund Freud. Anidjar's argument proceeds through a reading of *Moses and Monotheism*, demonstrating that, in the last analysis, Freud's final monograph is in fact a meditation on the figure of Christ, and that the logic of atonement appears to displace the logic of *Totem and Taboo*, which famously claimed that civilization was founded on the repressed guilt of the band of brothers who murdered their father. In other words, Freud discovers in the sacrificial logic of Christianity a new theory of the unconscious—"our Christian unconscious."²⁹⁴ I will not recount the entirety of the argument here, save to observe that the feature which Anidjar is so intent to isolate, so as to answer the question,

²⁹³ Anidjar, *Blood*, 235.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 248.

what is the future of murder?, has precisely to do with the play of guilt and innocence peculiar to Christianity.

In a progression that should be familiar by now, one begins with murder (the murder of God the father), then proceeds to universalize that murder (we are *all* guilty of this murder), and finally to confession (we are all guilty of this murder, but because of the nature of this murder, and by virtue of having confessed to it, we are all innocent). “We have all killed him. Except for the innocent, who forgave and forgot—themselves.”²⁹⁵ In what is perhaps the most stringent indictment of Christianity conceivable, Anidjar gives his answer:

The future of murder is innocence. In Benjaminian terms, this means that the distinction between law-instituting violence and law-preserving violence is transformed into law-abolishing violence, and then into violence-denying love. Instead of collective guilt, collective innocence. Such is the Christian dispensation...²⁹⁶

In the same manner, and by means of the same mechanism, one should pose the question: what is the future of money? The answer is, *mutatis mutandis*, quite clear: the future of money is forgiveness. Hence the imperative to refuse the future, to have done with forgiveness, and to, at every moment, seek to shake the foundations of the possible—that still, small voice of possibility which we have called, from the very outset, *God or money*.

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 255.

²⁹⁶ Ibid. My emphasis.

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