Marx and the philosophy of time

Peter Osborne

What is Marx's contribution to the philosophy of time? Or, to put it another way, what has a temporal reading of Marx's writings to contribute to the understanding of the philosophical aspects of his thought? How, for example, might it reconfigure the relationship between the historical, analytical and political dimensions of his work?[1]

These are not merely, or even primarily, historical questions, but constructive and critical issues about the philosophical present: constructive, because with only a couple of notable – and notably partial – exceptions (Antonio Negri and Moishe Postone), the temporal-philosophical side of Marx's thought has yet to be systematically disinterred; critical, because of the light such a construction promises to throw on a range of issues, not least the specific contemporaneity of Marx's thought. This is a propitious time for such an investigation, for a number of reasons.

Conjuncture

First, there is an increasing awareness in the European philosophical tradition that – in its non-logicist variants – post-Kantian philosophy is first and foremost a philosophy of time. More specifically, it opposes time to being, most often via a range of quasi-'subjective' temporal forms. This is a stance most commonly associated with Heidegger (and more recently, once again, with Bergson), but it traverses the entire tradition, in different ways, from Hegel and Nietzsche, via Dilthey, Whitehead and Husserl, to Lukács and Benjamin, and on to Levinas, Ricoeur, Derrida and Deleuze – to name only the most prominent figures. Indeed, even the logicism of neo-Kantianism, the logico-linguisticism of analytical philosophy, and the mathematical neo-classicism of Badiou are marked by it, in so far as they were constituted, explicitly, as reactions against it. The place of Marx's thought within the philosophy of time is thus, to a large extent, the key to the relationship of his thought to the modern European philosophical tradition more generally.

This tradition has long been conceived as essentially that of philosophies of the subject. The establishment of the priority of time over being both consummates the triumph of the principle of subjectivity and, in the very same act, throws that principle into doubt, by dissolving the boundaries of the subject into – or fracturing it by – time. The philosophy of the subject has thus come increasingly to appear, retrospectively, in large part, as a form of *philosophical management* of the disruptive force of time, and thereby, for some, as a kind of intellectual policing of insurgent singularities. This is the terrain on which the recent Deleuzean revival of a Bergsonian philosophy of time has entered into alliance with Negri's post-Marxian philosophy of revolution.

This is a second reason for the timeliness of an investigation of the temporal dimension of Marx's thought: for all Deleuze's 'Marxism',[2] Marx's work nonetheless stands as the main polemical other to Deleuze's neo-Bergsonism in the philosophy of time. This is because the ontological monism underlying Bergson's account of temporality and multiplicity denies any ontological significance to the category of the social and hence any fundamental distinctiveness to historical time. Such a monism cannot sustain *any* philosophical concept of history.[3]

This opposition is the current form of the 170-year-long contest between *post*-Hegelian and *anti*-Hegelian philosophical problematics, inaugurated by Feuerbach's 1839 'Towards a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy', in the shadow of Schelling. This is a contest in which both the genuinely *post*-Hegelian character of post-Hegelian positions and the genuinely *non*-Hegelian character of anti-Hegelian positions are permanently in doubt. It is essentially a dispute over the relative priority of the concepts of history and time. As such, it constitutes the concept of history as a *problem* within the philosophy of time; and it constitutes the concept of time as a *problem* within the philosophy of history. There is a dual and asymmetrical problematization of time and history. Currently, within philosophy, 'time' is winning out over

'history', which increasingly appears – when it appears at all – in a narrowly empirical form. Time, on the other hand, is not so much problematized as more often simply affirmed, in a fundamental ontological sense, as the productive and creative source of 'events'.

Against this new monism, any development of Marx's philosophical legacy needs to secure three claims: (1) the existence of distinctively social being (this is Marx's concept of the human); (2) a distinctive temporality associated with this social human being (a temporality rooted in social production); (3) that this distinctively human temporality is – or at least has come to be – 'historical' in the sense associated with philosophical concepts of history. This is a sense of 'history' as the ongoing totalization of the time of the human, which nonetheless necessarily involves its mediation with (and fracturing by) what we might call 'absolute' time, or 'time itself'. It is the third of these claims that is the most difficult to sustain, not just because of internal philosophical difficulties with the concept of history (notably those associated with both the spatial, geopolitical aspect of totalization and the necessarily speculative predetermination of 'ends' of various sorts), but also because of the peculiar *de*-historicalizing temporality of capital, or capitalist sociality, which by and large constitutes – although it in no way exhausts – the temporality of the social for the vast majority of humankind today.

In this context, with regard to the theory of capitalism, it is Negri who appears as the conjuncturally privileged polemical other of Marx, since his critique of Marx's theory of value is a historico-political critique of the function of time as a measure of value, which (if it succeeds) would destroy the dialectical connection that links Marx's politics to his analysis of capitalism and thereby sustains his concept of history. Negri has raised anew the question of the network of conceptual relationships between *time*, *value* and *life*, at work in Marx's *Capital*, under radically changed philosophical and political conditions – in particular, the now-global social hegemony of capital and the marginalization of its largely reactive other, the so-called 'anti-globalization' or new anti-capitalist movements. Negri's own theorization of these conditions in terms of 'empire' and 'multitude' is notoriously problematic, and I shall not discuss it here. However, there are a series of theoretical propositions in Negri's thought that bear on the relationship between *time*, *value* and *life* that are independent of the concept of the multitude, although they provide its theoretical conditions.[4]

Furthermore, although it remains rigorously untheorized (indeed, unmentioned), the problem of history remains at stake in Negri's work, in the dual guise of the qualitatively historical novelty of the future (the temporality of which is affirmed by Negri as 'innovation' and 'the new') and the temporal whole (the philosophical thinking of which Negri explicitly and insistently rejects). The temporal whole appears in Negri's recent work only in the form of subsumption. This is because, for Negri, only capital actually (as opposed to merely speculatively) totalizes, but capital's mode of totalization de-temporalizes, or at least, in his phrase, it 'de-potentializes' time. Conversely, it is claimed, the creative temporalization of living labour de-totalizes, leading to 'the *emergence* of plural, multiversal and mobile times of subjects'.[5]

However, this scenario leaves unresolved both the unity of the concept of communism – for Negri, time is 'the real material from which communism is constructed'[6] – and the justification of that *immediate* ontologization of the historical form of labour which is Negri's procedural path to the elimination of history as a theoretical problem (having come to follow Deleuze in formally rejecting all thought of mediation). Nonetheless, at the very least, Negri's critique sharpens the problem of the relationship between the historical and ontological aspects of Marx's thought by reposing it in terms of the competing temporalities of capital and living labour. This is the point at which Negri's thought intersects in interesting ways with the legacy of the first generation of Frankfurt critical theory (Benjamin and Adorno) in someone like Postone – despite the extraordinary and fatal fact that Negri's work lacks any account of commodification. (His critique of the labour theory of value has the effect of removing the commodity from his social analysis – despite the fact that, since the early Lukács, the commodity has held pride of place in the analyses of Western Marxism not at the level of political economy, but rather as the dominant social form of subjectivation – that is, as a 'cultural' form.)

That history and historical time – rather than just time and temporality – remain on the theoretical agenda at all today in their philosophical senses (and whatever those are, precisely, they clearly have something do with a speculative thinking of the *unity of an open future*) is largely the result of its practical ineliminability from certain *extra*-philosophical discourses: specifically, those concerned with thinking the globally intersecting temporalities of capital, communicational and political forms, within the horizon of the question of the future. That is to say, theorizations of the globally intersecting temporalities of capital, communicational and political forms generate pres-

sure within philosophical space to think the concept of history as the speculative horizon of the unity of their object. This pressure is distinctively 'modern' – indeed, it is constitutive of the category of modernity itself. The importance of Marx's work here lies in its mediation of this mutual constitution of the concepts of history and modernity through an analysis of the social forms of capitalism that is itself as 'philosophical' as it is historical and socio-economic in form.[7]

Marx's thought is located within the main stream of the non-analytical philosophy of time by virtue of its deployment of a hierarchically organized system of oppositional temporal pairs, which prefigures the basic structure of twentieth-century European philosophies of time, as follows.

Oppositional pairs

Consider the following two passages from Marx's writings:

> Through the subordination of humanity to the machine the situation arises in which men [and women] are effaced by their labour; in which the pendulum of the clock has become as accurate a measure of the relative activity of two workers as it is of the speed of two locomotives. Therefore, we should not say that one man's hour is worth another man's hour, but rather that one man during one hour is worth as much as another man during an hour. Time is everything, man is nothing; he is at the most the incarnation of time. Quality no longer matters. Quantity alone decides everything: hour for hour, day for day …
>
> *The Poverty of Philosophy,* 1847[8]

> … when the limited bourgeois form is stripped away, what is wealth other than the universality of individual needs, capacities, pleasures, productive forces etc., created through universal exchange? The full development of human mastery over the forces of nature, those of so-called nature as well as humanity's own nature? The absolute working out of creative potentialities, with no supposition other than the previous historical development, which makes this totality of development, i.e. the development of all human powers as such, the end in itself, not as measured on a *pre-determined* yardstick? Where humanity does not reproduce itself in one specificity, but produces its totality? Strives not to remain something it has become, but is in the absolute movement of becoming? In bourgeois economics – and in the epoch of production to which it corresponds – this complete working out of the human content appears as a complete emptying-out, this universal objectification as total alienation, and the tearing down of all limited, one-sided aims as sacrifice of the human end-in-itself to an entirely external end. This is why the childish world of antiquity appears on one side as loftier. On the other side, it really is loftier in all matters where closed shapes, forms and given limits are sought. It is satisfaction from a limited standpoint; while the modern gives no satisfaction; or, where it appears satisfied with itself, it is *vulgar*.
>
> *Grundrisse*, Notebook V, January/February 1858[9]

These quotations articulate two homologous sets of conceptual pairings – one social, the other temporal – that run throughout Marx's works.

Socially		
capitalism	*v.*	communism
wage labour	*v.*	free activity
alienation	*v.*	appropriation
value	*v.*	wealth
Temporally		
quantitative	*v.*	qualitative
homogeneous empty	*v.*	absolute movement of becoming

Importantly, both sides of this opposition are seen by Marx as forms of the *insatiable modern*, in opposition to the limited satisfactions of antiquity. Hence, in Hegelian mode, we might say:

bad infinity	*v.*	good infinity

There are a number of interesting things about this series of dualisms – not least that they are the kind of dualisms produced by the need for historical-political judgement, and which are thus to be found quite explicitly in even as formally monistic a thinker as Deleuze, albeit mythically so: [10]

the state	*v.*	the nomad
the molar or paranoid	*v.*	the schizophrenic
time	*v.*	space

In fact, Marx's temporal binaries prefigure the dualistic conceptual structure of the mainstream of the twentieth-century European philosophy of time quite precisely.

'Bad' time		**'Good' temporality**	
time (spatially represented)	*v.*	duration	*Bergson*
ordinary time	*v.*	originary temporality/ temporalization	*Heidegger*
homogeneous empty time (historicism)	*v.*	Now-time	*Benjamin*
single, homogeneous, continuous reference time	*v.*	conjunctural differential time	*Althusser*

Indeed, when Lukács quotes the first passage by Marx above, from *The Poverty of Philosophy*, in his 'Reification' essay in *History and Class Consciousness*, he goes on to cross-reference it to a passage in *Capital* on the worker's relation to the machine, which he summarizes as follows: 'in short, it [time] becomes space'.[11] The influence of Bergson is clear.

However, the 'good' *absolute* conception of time in Marx in the passage from the *Grundrisse* is not a Bergsonian duration, but the 'absolute *movement* of becoming' of *humanity* – of humanity's becoming in the strong sense; that is, its becoming *more than it is*. The existential-ontological significance of this form of time could not be more explicit: '[humanity] … *is* [exists] in the absolute movement of becoming.' What appears in Bergson, Heidegger and even Benjamin primarily as an ontological or existential-ontological distinction between forms of time (in Convolut J of *The Arcades*, Benjamin writes of *Jetztsein*, 'now-being')[12] – and is in Althusser an epistemological distinction between methodological approaches – is in Marx a *historical-ontological* distinction, which is internal to the form of modern, as a restless striving for the new. Furthermore, it is a dialectical distinction.

Rather than being the site of a 'tiger's leap' (Benjamin's phrase), a resolute decision (Heidegger), or 'creative evolution' (Bergson), the *content* of the absolute movement of becoming appears in Marx as 'the absolute working out of creative potentialities'. One can feel the tension here in the phrase 'creative potentialities' as creativity pulls against potentiality, as the future pulls away from the past. It is important to remember, though, that 'the modern gives no satisfaction' here in *either* of its forms. And this is no criticism of the modern. Marx was not only a modern; he was a modern*ist*, as the *Communist Manifesto* makes clear.[13] This lack of satisfaction, or 'desire in general' (Hegel), is the existential register of the free creativity of the absolute movement of becoming. There is a historical ontologization of the modern here, in Marx, as the ground of freedom.

In the first quotation (from *The Poverty of Philosophy*), in which time appears solely in its bad, quantitative form, the opposition at stake is not one between two forms of time (time of alienation versus fully human time), but one between time per se (figured as quantitative) and the human (figured as qualitative). Time as measure appears here as an external, imposed measure; not an immanent qualitative 'measure' of the human itself, as the absolute movement of becoming might itself be said to be. This is the chronological time that, according to Marx's labour theory of value, is a measure of value: specifically, average socially necessary labour-time. Such time is a condition of commodification. However, contrary to certain recent interpretations, it is not time itself that is 'commodified' here.[14] In fact, Marx explicitly rejects this:

> we should not say that one man's hour is worth another man's hour, but rather that one man during one hour is worth as much as another man during an hour.

It is labour-*power* that is commodified – producing abstract labour – with its average socially necessary form measured out in chronological time. Abstract labour, as Marx calls the social form of the labour that produces exchange

values, is 'abstract' precisely by virtue of this reduction of it to quantitative units of (average socially necessary) time, which reduces its capital function (it is, after all, variable capital) to that of the exercise of a general 'power'. This power (the power of 'living labour') is thus not 'fundamentally' but rather *historically* ontological: it is the historico-ontological product of the process of production of capital as a whole. The concepts of abstract labour and labour-power are indissociable. Ontologically, both are *actual* only as *ideal* objectivities.[15]

This has led Moishe Postone to posit the concept of 'abstract time', as the time of abstract labour, in contrast to those 'concrete' times (corresponding to concrete labour) that are 'functions of events'. His concrete times are thus 'dependent variables' (dependent on events or practices); while abstract time appears as an 'independent variable' and as such supposedly 'absolute'. Postone thus offers a new temporal binary:

abstract time	*v.*	concrete time/ time of events

In its function as a general social mediation, socially necessary labour (measured in abstract time) expresses 'a general temporal norm'.[16]

There are a number of problems with this analogical extension of Marx's terminology, the identification of which throws some light on the dialectical character of Marx's temporal ontology. First, the time of abstract labour was, for Marx, itself 'historical' and hence not 'absolute', however much it might posit itself as such. Rather, 'absolute' is the term Marx reserves for the more radically temporalizing time, not of 'living labour', but of *free activity*. Second, and consequently, Postone is equivocal (at worst, simply contradictory) about historical time. On the one hand, it is on occasion treated synonymously with concrete time, as the time of events; on the other hand, it is considered the result of the dynamic relationship between abstract time (as the universalizing time of capital) and concrete time. In neither case is it situated in the context of the complex ontology of the human; or theorized in relation to the concept of time itself. This leads to a third problem: an impoverishment of the possibilities of a temporal analysis of abstract labour. For in the theory of value in *Capital*, abstract labour is not *simply* concrete labours as 'measured' in time. Abstract labour is not 'concrete labour' + 'abstract time'. For the 'time' of labour-time is not so simply separated from the 'labour' – other than ideologically – as Postpone supposes. And this is not just about competing interpretations of the concrete/abstract labour distinction. More fundamentally, labour-time is a part of the time of the labourer; that is, it is part of the *life-time* of the labourer. This is both infinite in its potentialities and finite in its actuality.

This is a second point at which Marx's account approaches, or has conceptual affinities with, elements of the early Heidegger (the first one being their use of hierarchically ordered temporal pairs): its implicit dependence on a conception of finitude grounded in mortality. Consider the 'plea of the worker', from the section 'The Limits of the Working Day', in chapter 10 of *Capital* 1:

> The capitalist … takes his stand on the law of commodity-exchange. Like all other buyers, he seeks to extract the maximum possible benefit from the use-value of his commodity. Suddenly, however, there arises the voice of the worker, which had previously been stifled in the sound and fury [*Sturm und Drang*] of the production process:
>
> 'The commodity I have sold you differs from the ordinary crowd of commodities in that its use creates value, a greater value than it costs. That is why you bought it. What appears on your side as the valorization of capital is on my side an excess expenditure of labour-power. You and I know in the marketplace only one law, that of the exchange of commodities. And the consumption of the commodity belongs not to the seller who parts with it, but to the buyer who acquires it. The use of my daily labour-power therefore belongs to you. But by means of the price you pay for it every day, I must be able to reproduce it every day, thus allowing myself to sell it again. Apart from natural deterioration through age etc, I must be able to work tomorrow with the same normal amount of strength, health and freshness as today. You are constantly preaching to me the gospel of "saving" and "abstinence". Very well! Like a sensible, thrifty owner of property I will husband my sole wealth, my labour-power, and abstain from wasting it foolishly. Every day I will spend, set in motion, transfer into labour only as much of it as is compatible with its normal duration and healthy development. By an unlimited extension of the working day, you may in one day use up a quantity of labour-power greater than I can restore in three. What you gain in labour I lose in the substance of labour. Using my labour and despoiling it are quite different things. … I demand a normal working day because, like every other seller, I demand the value of my commodity.'…
>
> There is here therefore an antinomy, of right against right, both equally bearing the seal of the law of exchange. Between equal rights, force decides. Hence, in the history of capitalist production, the establishment of a norm for the working day presents itself as a struggle over the limits of that day, a struggle between collective capital, i.e. the class of capitalists, and collective labour, i.e. the working class.[17]

From the point of view of the application of the labour theory of value to the commodification of labour-power itself, the crucial sentence here is: 'I *must* be able to reproduce it every day, thus allowing myself to sell it again.' In general economic terms, this 'must' does not obtain as any kind of necessity at the level of the individual worker, but only at the level of labour qua variable capital *as a whole*. Hence its urgency for the individual worker: capital is indifferent to his or her reproduction other than as part of a certain social aggregate of labour-power. It is, rather, an *existential* imperative – an existentially grounded 'should' or 'ought' (*Sollen*) – that is in permanent danger of being crushed beneath the weight of the dictates of social form: the *imposition* of the law of value, which, Negri rightly points out, is as much a political as an 'economic' form. There are profound and politically significant complexities in the determination of the value of labour-power that are repressed here: issues to do with the temporality and social character of reproduction, temporal relations between generations – not to mention immigration, and so on. But my concern here is with the more basic issue of the finitude of the *life* of the labourer and its significance for Marx's claim that labour-time is the measure of value.

Finitude, mortality, wealth and value

Marx generally operated with a philosophically restricted conception of finitude as determination, in either a Hegelian logico-ontological mode (conceptual determination as a model of the actual) or accordingly to a model of causality borrowed from the physical sciences ('determination' in the Anglo-American sense of the free will–determinism debate). The relationship between these two conceptions is a moot issue. Crucially, there is no philosophical thematization of an existential conception of finitude as mortality; although there are frequent moral and political uses of the idea. In particular, there is no appeal to finitude in the account of labour-time as the measure of value.[18] However, if one agrees with something like the early Heidegger's argument that the anticipation of death is the existential basis of temporalization, as I do (modified to register the social basis of this anticipation in relations with others, and hence the sociality of human individuation), then it is a short step to inferring that human finitude, in the sense of the existential register of mortality, is the *ontological basis of the 'value' of time* and, thereby, the ontological ground of labour-time's functioning as a universal measure of value. And this, despite the fact that any such 'measurement', in itself, involves the social instantiation of a degraded, 'ordinary' or merely chronological conception of time (negating the existential temporalization upon which it depends). At its limit, time is valuable because it (that is, 'your' time) *runs out*.

In this respect, the existential meaning of temporalization is dependent upon the cosmological time of nature, which involves the periodic annihilation of each individual human being. We can see this in the way in which time remains a measure of *wealth*, for Marx, in the *Grundrisse*, beyond capitalism, and beyond the value-form – not as the socially average necessary labour-time embedded in commodities, but as the disposable time that is the condition of that development of human powers which is an end in itself.

> [Capital] is … despite itself, instrumental in creating the means of social disposable time, in order to reduce labour time for the whole society to a diminishing minimum, and thus to free everyone's time for their own development. But its tendency [is] always, on the one side, *to create disposable time, on the other, to covert it into surplus labour*. … the mass of workers must appropriate their own surplus labour. Once they have done so – and *disposable* time thereby ceases to have an *antithetical* existence – then, on the one side, necessary labour time will be measured by the needs of the social individual, and, on the other, the development of the power of social production will grow so rapidly that, even though production is now calculated for the wealth of all, *disposable time* will grow for all. For real wealth is the developed productive power of all individuals. The measure of wealth is then not only longer, in any way, labour time, but rather disposable time. …
>
> The saving of labour time [is] equal to an increase in free time, i.e. time for the full development of the individual, which in turn reacts back upon the productive power of labour as itself the greatest productive power. … Free time – which is both idle time and time for higher activity – has naturally transformed its possessor into a different subject, and he/she then enters into the direct production process as this different subject. … When we consider bourgeois society in the long view and as a whole, then the final result of the process of social production always appears as the society itself, i.e. the human being itself in its social relations. Everything that has a fixed form, such as the product etc, appears as merely a moment, a vanishing moment, in this movement.[19]

This disposable time is no longer the disposable time of capitalism (one side of its contradictory dynamic), which is 'disposable time existing *in and because of*

the antithesis to surplus labour time';[20] but a disposable time freed from its antithesis to labour-time, since necessary labour-time, now 'measured by the needs of the social individual', is taken to be freely embraced as necessary. Nonetheless, it is interesting that Marx continues to write of this time as a 'measure' of wealth. For Negri, on the other hand, real subsumption 'generates a completely enveloping temporal *Umwelt* [environment] that dissolves the possibility of measure',[21] thereby generating an ontological ground, within capitalism, for a communism of radically multiple singularities. However, it is not clear what distinguishes this communism of radically multiple singularities from an immanent destruction of the social itself, since it is defined solely negatively, by the withdrawal of capitalist sociality, without reference to alternative forms of the social – some of which would need to be sustained at a global level.

The passages in the *Grundrisse* on machinery, living labour and the productive force of science and technology are, of course, the textual basis of Negri's rejection of Marx's theory of value: the claim that, under conditions of real subsumption, the productive power of science and technology abolishes the possibility of labour-time functioning as a measure of value. However, this rejection appears to be based on a misreading of the temporal grammar of the passages concerned, and an associated tendency to conflate the categories of *wealth* and *value*. (Wealth, for Marx, is a transhistorical category grounded in a relationship between needs, productive forces and time; value is a measure of wealth specific to capitalist societies.)

For example, when Marx writes,

> As soon as labour in the direct form has ceased to be the great well-spring of wealth, labour time ceases and must cease to be its measure, and hence exchange value [must cease to be the measure] of use value. The *surplus labour of the masses* has ceased to be the condition for the development of general wealth, just as the *non-labour of the few*, for the development of the general powers of the human head. With that, production based on exchange value breaks down, and the direct, material production process is stripped of the form of penury and antithesis.[22]

he is describing a hypothetical, counterfactual situation, albeit in a rhetorically motivated complicated mixture of tenses. There is a characteristic movement between an exhortatory (conjointly logical and moral) 'must' and a speculatively already achieved future present ('ceases', 'has ceased', 'breaks down' and 'is stripped'). These are rhetorical patterns familiar from the *Communist Manifesto*.

The reason this is important is that there is a tendency in the Italian School simply to will away the 'other side' of the moving contradiction of capital: namely, that capital continues to 'posit labour time as the sole measure of and source of wealth' in the form of value, despite the fact that it is no longer the main source of wealth, precisely because it *remains* the source of *value* – that is, there is a contradiction between real or material wealth and its expression in the form value. (This is hardly news: capital must periodically destroy wealth in order to reinstitute accumulation – the production of surplus value.)

But this is not where the main problem with Marx's account lies, this maintenance of value-theory as an account of the regulation of capitalist production by exchange. Rather, it lies in his assumptions about the use of disposable time within capitalism, in its antithesis to labour-time: namely, that everyone's time is freed 'for their own development'; that 'free time' is 'time for the full development of the individual', and that it thereby '*naturally* transform[s] its possessor into a different subject'. These are now utterly untenable, nineteenth-century assumptions. For there is nothing 'natural', and little that is 'free', about current processes of the transformation of the individual into a 'different subject' during disposable time. Existing society has turned free or disposable time into the site for the realization of value (consumption and the culture industry) in a manner that was unimaginable in the nineteenth century.[23] This is the terrain of Negri's and Virno's concepts of *social capital*, *the socialized worker* and the *real subsumption of the social*. Yet the ensuing 'development of the individual' is a far more profoundly contradictory process than Negri, Virno or indeed Marx himself envisaged. For example, Virno's claim that there is no longer *any* qualitative difference between labour-time and non-labour-time, in its simple reversal of Marx's position, is no more credible than its opposite – other than as a rhetorical exaggeration directed towards highlighting one among a contradictory unity of tendencies.[24] Current developments of the individual into a 'different subject' require a far more differentiated historical-ontological analysis of their own.

Notes

1. This is a revised version of a text presented in various forms to the annual conferences of the Society for European Philosophy (University of Reading, September 2005) and the journal *Historical Materialism* ('Towards a Cosmopolitan Marxism', London, November 2005), the Centre for Modern Thought, University of Aberdeen (April 2006) and the Modern East Asian Research

Centre, Leiden University (workshop on 'Marxism and Japanese Ideology', November 2007). I am grateful for the discussions at those events.

2. See, for example, Matteo Mandarini, 'Marx and Deleuze: Money, Time, and Crisis', *Polygraph* 18, 2006, pp. 73–97.
3. In his 1956 essay 'Bergson's Conception of Difference', Deleuze claims to find a 'properly historical' (as opposed to 'biological') form of differentiation within Bergson's concept of life, in Bergson's 'Final Remarks' in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* (1932) – only to annul it more or less immediately, by returning it, ontologically, to its source:

   > Bergson recognizes a specificity of the historical in relation to the vital. What does this mean? It means that with man and man alone difference becomes conscious, raises itself to self-consciousness. If difference itself is biological, consciousness of difference is historical. It is true that we must not exaggerate the function of this historical consciousness of difference. … Consciousness already existed, with and in difference itself. Duration by itself is consciousness, life by itself is consciousness. … If history is what reanimates consciousness, or rather is the place in which it reanimates itself and posits itself in fact, it is only because this consciousness identical to life was asleep … Consciousness in Bergson is not at all historical … history is only ever a matter of fact.

   Gilles Deleuze, 'Bergson's Conception of Difference', in John Mullarkey, ed., *The New Bergson*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1999, pp. 42–65; pp. 51–2.
4. These concern, principally, the concepts of *real subsumption*, *the socialized worker*, *living labour* and the *informational economy*. See Antonio Negri, *Marx Beyond Marx: Lessons on the Grundrisse* (1979), trans. Harry Cleaver, Michael Ryan and Maurizio Viano, Autonomedia/Pluto, London, 1991; 'The Constitution of Time' (1981), in *Time for Revolution*, trans. Matteo Mandarini, Continuum, London and New York, 2003; *The Politics of Subversion: A Manifesto for the Twenty-First Century* (1989), trans. James Newall, Polity, Cambridge, 2005; Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA and London, 2000, Part 3; Antonio Negri, 'Kairòs, Alma Venus, Multitudo' (2000), in *Time for Revolution*.
5. Negri, 'The Constitution of Time', pp, 48, 55; cf. also p. 51.
6. Ibid., p. 47.
7. Of those extra-philosophical discourses generating the pressure for a philosophical concept of history, it is the critique of Area Studies that currently offers the most productive standpoint from which to consider the more concrete geopolitical meanings of universalizing abstract social forms. See Harry Harootunian, *The Empire's New Clothes: Paradigm Lost, and Regained*, Prickly Paradigm Press, Chicago, 2004; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Death of a Discipline*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2003.
8. Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, Volume 6, 1845–1848, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1976, p. 127. Translation altered to avoid the use of 'man' as a masculine collective singular.
9. Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft)*, trans. Martin Nicolaus, Penguin/New Left Books, Harmondsworth, 1973, p. 488. Translation altered to avoid the use of 'man' as a masculine collective singular.
10. See Fredric Jameson, 'Marxism and Dualism in Deleuze', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, vol. 96, no. 3, Summer 1997, Special Issue: *A Deleuzian Century?*, pp. 393–416.
11. Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness* (1923), trans. Rodney Livingstone, Merlin Press, London, p. 90.
12. Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA and London, 1999, p. 391 (K, 2, 3).
13. Peter Osborne, 'Remember the Future? The *Communist Manifesto* as Cultural-Historical Form', in *Philosophy in Cultural Theory*, Routledge, London and New York, 2000, ch. 4.
14. See, for example, Wolf Heydebrand, 'The Time Dimension in Marxian Social Theory', *Time and Society*, vol. 12, nos 2/3, 2003 pp. 147–88, which sets out from the claim that in capitalism 'time itself' has become 'a commodity and an exchange value'.
15. See Peter Osborne, 'The Reproach of Abstraction', *Radical Philosophy* 127, September/October 2004, pp. 21–8; Christopher J. Arthur, 'The Spectral Ontology of Value', *Radical Philosophy* 107, May/June 2001, pp. 32–42. Negri's immediate ontologization of living labour crucially neglects this fact.
16. Moishe Postone, *Time, Labour and Social Domination*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993, chs 5 and 8.
17. Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Volume 1, *The Process of Production of Capital* (3rd edn, 1883), trans. Ben Fowkes, Penguin/New Left Review, Harmondsworth, 1976, pp. 242–3. For a more extended analysis of this passage, see Peter Osborne, *How to Read Marx*, Granta, London, 2005, ch. 8.
18. Marx's own attempt to justify labour-time as the measure of value solely in relation to exchange, in chapter 1 of the first volume of *Capital* 1, is notoriously inadequate. Furthermore, it goes against the grain of his own dialectical presentation, whereby the capitalistic character of the commodities exchanged (and hence their character as 'values') is determined only later, in the capital relation. See Christopher J. Arthur, *The New Dialectic and Marx's Capital*, Brill, Leiden/Boston/Cologne, 2002, ch. 3. Nonetheless, even on Arthur's more methodologically sophisticated re-presentation, the basis of value in commodified labour-time still requires the ontological underpinning of a more general set of relations between time, mortality and wealth. It is mortality alone that gives meaning to time; which is a condition of its function as a measure of value.
19. Marx, *Grundrisse*, Notebook VII (End of February–March 1858), pp. 708, 711–12.
20. Ibid., p. 708.
21. 'The Constitution of Time', p. 42.
22. Marx, *Grundrisse*, pp. 705–6.
23. See, for example, Adorno's 1969 radio lecture,'Free Time: Time or Freedom? Life as Contraband', in Theodor W. Adorno, *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, trans. Henry W. Pickford, Columbia University Press, New York, 1998, pp. 167–75.
24. Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude: For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life*, trans. Isabella Bertoletti et al., Semiotexte(e), Los Angeles and New York, 2004, p. 102.