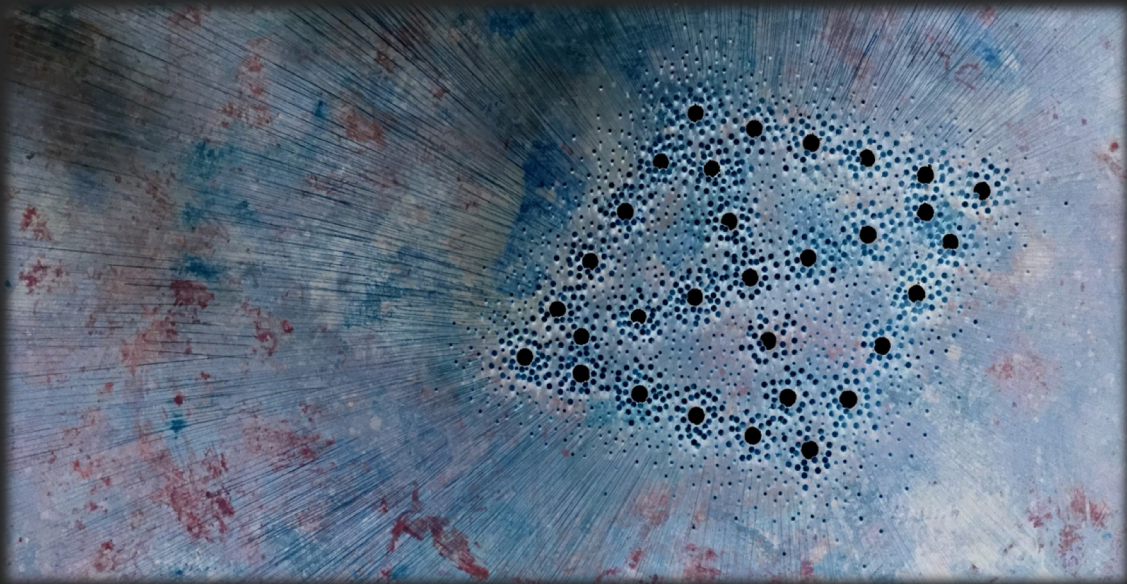


ALIENOCENE – DIS-JUNCTION

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# THE INTERNATION AND INTERNATIONALISM

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BERNARD STIEGLER

It was in London in 1864, in the presence of Karl Marx, that the first International Workingmen's Association was created, which in 1889 was transformed and renamed the Second International in the presence of Friedrich Engels. These two international associations seemed to embody the slogan with which *The Communist Manifesto* ended:

Working men of all countries, unite!<sup>1</sup>

This slogan was then adopted by the Third International, which became the Communist International. This was followed by the 1920 Tours Congress of the French Section of the Workers' International, where a split led to the creation of the French Communist Party.

'The Internationale', adopted as a hymn during the Second International, is a song that calls for the unity of the proletarians across all borders in the name of the human race:

Let us group together, and tomorrow  
The Internationale  
Will be the human race.

In 1932, Henri Bergson, an ardent defender of the League of Nations (and one of the founders of what would become UNESCO), observed that

a single society, embracing all mankind [...] does not yet, and perhaps never will, exist.<sup>2</sup>

In April 1904, Jean Jaurés wrote in the first issue of the daily newspaper *L'Humanité* (which he thus founded) that

humanity does not exist yet, or barely exists.<sup>3</sup>

Thirty-seven years later, Martin Heidegger will write that the only worthwhile thought with respect to what is called thinking is that

we are still not thinking.<sup>4</sup>

‘Still not’, ‘perhaps never’: these questions arise with respect to what, as thought and as fate, goes beyond particularisms and singularities, that is, differences and localities. But with Marcel Mauss, and also with Bergson, it will be less a matter of going beyond than of opening up.

As promise and risk, the open – in the language of Bergson but also of Rainer Maria Rilke, and of Heidegger reading Rilke, and of Gilles Deleuze revisiting Bergson – is more than just the abstract universality of what the latter calls ‘intelligence’. The question of universality comes from German idealism; for Hegel, this

question will be constituted in terms of the dialectical thought of universal history.

For Marx and Engels, the international union of proletarians is the effective (*wirklich*) realization of the universal, not the abstract and ideal universal of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* but the concrete realization of revolutionary critique, carried out by the power of the negative that the proletariat becomes through the relations of production in political economy, and by doing justice to labour.

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The internationalism of the Marxist members of the socialist Second International, who will join the Third International that becomes communist, will be opposed to what will be created following the Treaty of Versailles signed in 1919: the League of Nations, an institution founded on 10 January 1920 after a proposal by Woodrow Wilson taking up the Seventh Proposition of Immanuel Kant's 'Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose'.<sup>5</sup>

Marcel Mauss was a socialist, like Lucien Lévy-Bruhl. Close to Jaurès and co-founder of *L'Humanité*, he is an opponent of Jules Guesde. The Socialist International – the Second, dissolved in 1916 – then saw coming with the Bolshevik revolution what would become the Communist International. Around 1920, according to Lévy-Bruhl, which is to say the year in which the League of Nations

was created, Mauss wrote a text on the nation that seemed to warn his Marxist comrades against the idea of rejecting the concept of nationality and the reality of national society in the name of proletarian internationalism.

It is tempting to see in this cautious consideration of national reality an anticipation of the *reactions* that will give rise to Italian fascism, then to German National Socialism and eventually to the Second World War. I do not believe, however, that this is the most fruitful angle from which to interpret Mauss's analysis. More fundamental, it seems to me, is to pay attention to historical singularity in the infinite variety and complexity of its layers inasmuch as they must not be dissolved into what Deleuze will describe as the universality of the market.<sup>6</sup>

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Mauss proposes understanding internationalism not as a-national but rather in terms of an inter-nation, which is to say without dissolving the idea either of the nation or of national society. He agrees that we must develop internationalism but argues that it must be done in such a way that it constitutes what could be called an internation, composed of nations that are themselves bearers of what, as the life of the spirit in the sense of Paul Valéry and Hannah Arendt, presupposes what we should call noodiversity – connected to life qua biodiversity.

Appearing in order to organize exchanges between nations, both in terms of international trade and in terms of cooperation in the ideal and universal community of humanity, the challenge of establishing a cosmopolitical union of nations grew along with the assertion and unification of the latter in the sense of nation-states, while at the same time spiritual and/or imperial unities were being undermined under pressure from dynamics arising from the industrial revolution and the emergence of capitalism.

The interpretation of these historical transformations, which form the horizons of the ‘dynamic of capitalism’ studied by Marx and then Braudel, is also at issue in Jason Moore’s argument that, rather than asking about the Anthropocene era, we should instead address the question of what he calls the Capitalocene age.<sup>7</sup> His thesis, however, lacks one essential ingredient: analysis of what we will call ‘anthropy’ and the consequent need to fight it with what we call ‘neganthropy’. For this, this Capitalocene age must be inscribed back into a renewed concept of the Anthropocene era.<sup>8</sup>

In the increased tensions caused during the nineteenth century by the shift from growth by pure predation and conquest (in Kojin Karatani’s sense<sup>9</sup>) to the capitalist industrial economy that requires the intensification of exchange in the prosperity of peace, the question of *unification* lies at the heart of all diplomacy, while on

the other hand national capitalisms, confronted with their contradictions, tend to regress to the stage of the economy of conquest (that is, to wage war), in particular between Germany and France, which is to say between German capitalism and French capitalism, which exacerbates nationalism so as to transform producers into cannon fodder.

We cannot understand this state of affairs, or the rapprochement between the former foes and competitors France and England, if we ignore the fact that Germany did not ‘benefit’ from colonial conquest (Bismarck did not establish the so-called ‘German colonial empire’ until very late, and it remained limited, as was the case for Italy), or if we ignore how English and French capitalism were based on a predatory colonial economy – which amounts to what Marx called primitive accumulation, or more precisely, according to the translation of *Capital* by Jean-Pierre Lefèbvre, initial accumulation.

Faced with the character of national capitalism as always potentially warlike and predatory, the class struggle, opposing capital and labour, presents itself according to the representatives of the ‘world of labour’ as the opposition between proletarian internationalism and capitalist nationalisms.

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A fundamental problem arises, however, when capital is structurally and systemically deterritorialized by financialization, while technology increasingly limits the influence of the proletariat associated with the world of manual labour. At the same time, conversely, proletarianization affects ‘all layers of the population’<sup>10</sup>, as *The Communist Manifesto* and then the *Grundrisse* anticipated.

The problem becomes all the more acute when we acknowledge that the ecological question, and more generally the ‘eschatological’ limits of the Anthropocene, demand that the economy and exchange be rethought by privileging territorial coherence and by limiting forms of international trade that enrich the producers of carbon dioxide while subjecting local economies to increasingly extractivist and predatory logics. It then soon becomes clear that, as Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen (in the wake of Alfred Lotka) was the first to point out, the capitalist economy is based on a Newtonian conception of physics, whereas thermodynamics, but also Schrödinger’s conception of life, imply that it should be thought above all as a *problem of entropy* – which in the Anthropocene becomes *anthropy* (in the sense of the IPCC’s reference to ‘anthropogenic forcings’).

Marxists, however, have trouble assimilating such a point of view: to do so would mean calling into question nothing less than dialectics and materialism conceived as the historical realization of the universal through



the power of the proletarian negative. This power of the proletariat manifests itself more than ever as an *experience of powerlessness*, and consequently as an ever-increasing adherence to nationalisms, and thus the exhaustion of thought endorsing proletarian internationalism is evident, but this is so above all because it structurally ignores the question of entropy, as is very clear in Engels' *Dialectic of Nature* – not to mention the fact that Marxism ultimately fails to draw the consequences of the 'fragment on machines' in the *Grundrisse* (and on this point the interpretation of Italian workerists is hardly more convincing than that of Marxists generally).

This is why, despite the efforts of Althusser and the Althusserians, there is no Marxist epistemology worthy of the name. And this is so because for Althusser, who never questions entropy, and who thus never questions the physics of Engels, *The German Ideology* – which formulates the question of *exosomatic evolution* a century before it is raised by Lotka in 'The Law of Evolution as a Maximal Principle'<sup>11</sup> – is a 'non-scientific' text. This question, however, forms the horizon of Book I of *Capital*, and it should be the starting point from which to *revise* Marxian epistemology.

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What we can and must do first, then, is try to reread Mauss beyond Mauss – and by passing through many others

who try in this ‘interwar’ period to consider singularities, including Bergson, as Nietzsche did before him, and Robert Musil did contemporaneously with him.

What in Mauss barely amounts to a thesis, outlined in a paragraph entitled ‘L’internationalisme’ in which he makes the case for an internation where nations would co-individuate and transindividuate (if we can express it in Simondonian terms), must be reconsidered starting from the question of what we should apprehend as constituting this neganthropy such that humanity, which barely exists, *is* only as its *différance* and in order to *struggle against its anthropy*.

It then becomes possible to imagine the program of a new critique of political economy that would be based above all on a reconsideration of work as insoluble into labour or employment, inasmuch as work projects itself *beyond the fact of proletarianization* leading to the automation described in the *Grundrisse* as the constitution of vast automatons. The latter are, however, condemned to become *closed systems*, as Bertalanffy shows, that is, to contribute further to the increase in the rate of entropy (by anthropization), an increase that lies at the root of the problem of the Anthropocene era.

Such a reconsideration of economics, passing through Alfred Lotka, obviously poses a major problem for Marxist-style proletarian internationalism, given that

negative entropy, as well as negative anthropy, or neganthropy, can occur only within localities: as deferrals of entropy that generate local differentiations – and, in this way, as *idiomatic différance*, as we could say by passing through Jacques Derrida.

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In France, National Rally, formerly the National Front, presented its political program for the 2019 European elections and the electoral campaign that preceded them through a speech given by Marine Le Pen in Metz on 1 May 2019. It did so under the banner of what has been called localism, by taking up proposals of Hervé Juvin, an economist who headed the National Rally list of candidates at these European elections – and who is now a Member of the European Parliament.

In making this choice, National Rally, quite remarkably, explicitly projected itself into the perspective of an *ecological civilization founded on a politically nationalistic and xenophobic ecological economy* (in this respect, Le Pen adhered to Juvin's discourse in *France, le moment politique*<sup>12</sup>). Is anything new here? It has often been noted, for example, that Nazism evinced a kind of ecologism by referring in a highly confused way to both Haeckel and Nietzsche – not to mention the role of Konrad Lorenz. Antoine Waechter, founder of the French environmental movement, has also

often been accused of advocating a suspicious conservatism.

In this evolution of the National Front – which through Le Pen the father had hitherto aligned itself to Ronald Reagan, one reason for becoming National Rally being to erase this ultraliberal origin – what is indeed very new is that:

- firstly, Le Pen's speech in Metz *seemingly departs* from Donald Trump's 'climato-scepticism';
- secondly, and conversely, this speech does not express *anything* about the either the Anthropocene era or climate change, denied by Trump and by many other friends of National Rally, and in the first place Jair Bolsonaro;
- thirdly, it does not ask questions related to entropy, nor therefore does it raise the question of locality *from this point of view*.

Unsurprisingly on this point, LePenist discourse, with deep fidelity from daughter to father, contrary to all illusion, articulates and supports all this in the last resort through its logic of designating immigrants and nomads as scapegoats – just like Trump, but also like Manuel Valls in France and so many others cut from the same cloth after him in France and elsewhere, Valls himself having, besides, again become Catalan.

It would, however, be a serious mistake to use this as a pretext to refuse to *critique* the statements of National Rally – critique is never content just to denounce, but nor should it in any way constitute a dialogue with National Rally: it is primarily a matter of a sanitary exercise of teratological analysis and the lessons to be drawn from it.

This is what we endeavour to do in *Qu'appelle-t-on panser? 2. La leçon de Greta Thunberg*, as a way of responding to the call of this young Swedish girl who has become so celebrated and so hated, as well as to the calls of Youth for Climate, in dialogue with them, through which we must transform the true problems (and therefore the false problems that always conceal them) into true questions – that is, into (a) concepts and (b) proposals.<sup>13</sup>

In the Anthropocene era, internationalism must become that of an internation, where only an economy of neganthropy can effect this 'transition' without sinking into 'greenwashing'. It is an epistemological affair as well as an economic, juridical and social one – in the sense that it must be conducted with societies and their inhabitants. This is precisely the meaning of what, along with the Institut de recherche et d'innovation and Ars industrialis, we call contributory research and contributory economics – which is not too far from what Jaurés and Mauss considered under the name of

cooperativism, and which, like the commons, puts shared and co-developed knowledge at the centre of the economy.

*Translated by Daniel Ross.*

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<sup>1</sup> Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, trans. Samuel Moore (London: Penguin, 1985), p. 121.

<sup>2</sup> Henri Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, trans. R. Ashley Audra and Cloudesley Brereton (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), p. 95.

<sup>3</sup> Jean Jaurès, 'Notre but' (18 April 1904), available at: <[https://www.marxists.org/francais/general/jaures/works/1904/04/jaures\\_19040418.htm](https://www.marxists.org/francais/general/jaures/works/1904/04/jaures_19040418.htm)>.

<sup>4</sup> Martin Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, trans. J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Immanuel Kant, 'Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose', *Political Writings*, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

<sup>6</sup> *Translator's note*: See for example Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations, 1972-1990*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 172.

<sup>7</sup> *Translator's note*: See Jason W. Moore, *Capitalism in the Web of Life: Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital* (London and New York: Verso, 2015) and Moore (ed.), *Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism* (Oakland: PM Press, 2016).

<sup>8</sup> This is explained in Bernard Stiegler, *Qu'appelle-t-on panser? 2. La leçon de Greta Thunberg*, forthcoming.

<sup>9</sup> Kojin Karatani, *The Structure of World History: From Modes of Production to Modes of Existence*, trans. Michael K. Bourdaghs (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014).

<sup>10</sup> Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, p. 88, translation modified.

<sup>11</sup> Alfred J. Lotka, 'The Law of Evolution as a Maximal Principle', *Human Biology* 17 (1945), pp. 167-94.

<sup>12</sup> Hervé Juvin, *France, le moment politique: Manifeste écologique et social* (Monaco: Rocher, 2018).

<sup>13</sup> Transforming problems into questions is what we are trying to do both in Seine-Saint-Denis through social experiments in contributory economics (see [recherchecontributive.org](http://recherchecontributive.org)) based on a reconsideration and revaluation of work outside of employment, as de-proletarianization and as struggle against the anthropic economy that characterizes capitalism today more than ever, and through an initiative addressed to António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations – the UN being the heir to the unfortunate League of Nations. In order to stimulate reflection and propose an initiative on the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of the League on 10 January 2020, a group was formed whose work will be placed on the [international.world](http://international.world) website, which tries in particular to respond to the speeches that the Secretary-General gave at the UN on 10 September 2018 and in Davos on 24 January 2019.