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**Back To The Future**

**A Portable Document**

## WORK

There is too much work because everyone works, everyone contributes to the construction of social wealth, which arises from communication, circulation, and the capacity to coordinate the efforts of each person. As Christian Marazzi says, there is a biopolitical community of work, the primary characteristic of which is “disinflation”—in other words, the reduction of all costs that cooperation itself and the social conditions of cooperation demand. This passage within capitalism has been a passage from modernity to postmodernity, from Fordism to post-Fordism. It has been a political passage in which labor has been celebrated as the fundamental matrix of the production of wealth. But labor has been stripped of its political power. The political power of labor consisted in the fact of being gathered together in the factory, organized through powerful trade union and political structures. The destruction of these structures has created a mass of people that from the outside seems formless—proletarians who work on the social terrain, ants that produce wealth through collaboration and continuous cooperation. Really, if we look at things from below, from the world of ants where our lives unfold, we can recognize the incredible productive capacity that these new workers have already acquired. What an incredible paradox we are faced with. Labor is still considered as employment; that is, it is still considered as variable capital, as labor “employed” by capital, employed by capital through structures that link it immediately to fixed capital. Today this connection—which is an old Marxian connection, but before being Marxian it was a connection established by classical political economy—today this connection has been broken. Today the worker no longer needs the instruments of labor, that is, the fixed capital that capital furnishes. Fixed capital is something that is at this point in the brains of those who work; at this point it is the tool that everyone carries with him- or herself. This is the absolutely essential new element of productive life today. It is a completely essential phenomenon because capital itself, through its development and internal upheavals, through the revolution it has set in motion with neoliberalism, with the destruction of the welfare state, “devours” this labor power. But how does capital devour it? In a situation that is structurally ambiguous, contradictory, and antagonistic. Labor is not employment.

The unemployed work, and informal or under-the-table labor produces more wealth than employed labor does. The flexibility and mobility of the labor force are elements that were not imposed either by capital or by the dissolution of the welfarist or New Deal–style agreements that dominated politics for almost half a century. Today we find ourselves faced with a situation in which, precisely, labor is “free.”

Certainly, on one hand, capital has won; it has anticipated the possible political organizations and the political “power” of this labor. And yet, if we look for a moment behind this fact without being too optimistic, we also have to say that the labor power that we have recognized, the working class, has struggled to refuse factory discipline. Once again we find ourselves faced with evaluating a political passage, which is historically as important as the passage from the Ancien Régime to the French

Revolution. We can truly say that in this second half of the twentieth century we have experienced a passage in which labor has been emancipated. It has been emancipated through its capacity to become immaterial and intellectual, and it has been emancipated from factory discipline. And this presents the possibility of a global, fundamental, and radical revolution of contemporary capitalist society. The capitalist has become a parasite, but not a parasite in classical Marxist terms—a finance capitalist—rather, a parasite insofar as the capitalist is no longer able to intervene in the structure of the working process.

## BRAIN-MACHINE

Clearly when we say that the working tool is one that workers have taken away from capital and carry with themselves in their lives, embodied in their brains, and when we say that the refusal of work has won over the disciplinary regime of the factory, this is a very substantial and vital claim. In other words, if labor and the tool of labor are embodied in the brain, then the tool of labor, the brain, becomes the thing that today has the highest productive capacity to create wealth. But at the same time humans are “whole;” the brain is part of the body. The tool is embodied not only in the brain but also in all the organs of sensation, in the entire set of “animal spirits” that animate the life of a person. Labor is thus constructed by tools that have been embodied. This embodiment, then, envelops life through the appropriation of the tool. Life is what is put to work, but putting life to work means putting to work what exactly? The elements of communication of life. A single life will never be productive. A single life becomes productive, and intensely productive, only to the extent that it communicates with other bodies and other embodied tools. But then, if this is true, language, the fundamental form of cooperation and production of productive ideas, becomes central in this process.

But language is like the brain, linked to the body, and the body does not express itself only in rational or pseudo-rational forms or images. It expresses itself also through powers, powers of life, those powers that we call affects. Affective life, therefore, becomes one of the expressions of the incarnation of the tool in the body. This means that labor, as it is expressed today, is something that is not simply productive of wealth: it is above all productive of languages that produce, interpret, and enjoy wealth, and that are equally rational and affective. All this has extremely important consequences from the standpoint of the differences among subjects. Because once we have stripped from the working class the privilege of being the only representative of productive labor, and we have attributed it to any subject that has this embodied tool and expresses it through linguistic forms, at this point we have also said that all those who produce vital powers are part of this process and essential to it. Think for example of the entire circuit of the reproduction of labor power, from maternity to education and free time—all of this is part of production. Here we have the extraordinary possibility of reanimating the pathways of communism, but not with a model of the rationalization and acceleration or the modernization and supermodernization of capitalism.

We have the opportunity to explain production and thus organize human life within this wealth of powers that constitute the tool: languages and affects.

## THE BECOMING-WOMAN OF LABOR

With the concept of “the becoming-woman of labor” you can grasp one of the most central aspects of this revolution we are living through. Really, it is no longer possible to imagine the production of wealth and knowledge except through the production of subjectivity, and thus through the general reproduction of vital processes. Women have been central in this. And precisely because they have been at the center of the production of subjectivity, of vitality as such, they have been excluded from the old conceptions of production. Now, saying “the becoming-woman of labor” is saying too much and too little. It is saying too much because it means enveloping the entire significance of this transformation within the feminist tradition. It is saying too little because in effect what interests us is this general transgressive character of labor among men, women, and community. In fact, the processes of production of knowledge and wealth, of language and affects, reside in the general reproduction of society. If I reflect back self-critically on the classical distinction between production and reproduction and its consequences, that is, on the exclusion of women from the capacity to produce value, economic value, and I recognize that we ourselves were dealing with this mystification in the classical workerist tradition, then I have to say that today effectively the feminization of labor is an absolutely extraordinary affirmation; because precisely reproduction, precisely the processes of production and communication, because the affective investments, the investments of education and the material reproduction of brains, have all become more essential.

Certainly, it is not only women that are engaged with these processes; there is a masculinization of women and a feminization of men that moves forward ineluctably in this process. And this seems to me to be extremely important.

## MULTITUDE

Some historical clarification is needed here. The term multitude is a pejorative, negative term that classical political science posed as a reference point. The multitude is the set of people who live in a society and who must be dominated. Multitude is the term Hobbes used to mean precisely this. In all of classical, modern, and postmodern political science the term multitude refers to the rabble, the mob, and so on. The statesman is the one who confronts the multitude that he has to dominate. All this came in the modern era before the formation of capitalism. It is clear that capitalism modified things, because it transformed the multitude into social classes. In other words, this division of the multitude into social classes fixed a series of criteria that were criteria of the distribution of wealth to which these classes were subordinated according to a very specific and adequate division of labor. Today, in the transformation from modernity to postmodernity, the problem of the multitude reappears.

To the extent that social classes as such are falling apart, the possibility of the self-organizational concentration of a social class also disappears. Therefore we find ourselves faced again with a set of individuals, but this multitude has become something profoundly different. It has become a multitude that, as we have seen, is an intellectual grouping. It is a multitude that can no longer be called a rabble or a mob. It is a rich multitude. This makes me think of Spinoza’s use of the term multitude because Spinoza theorized from the perspective of that specific anomaly that was the great Dutch

republic, which Braudel called the center of the world, and which was a society that had mandatory education already in the seventeenth century. This was a society in which the structure of the community was extremely strong and a form of welfare existed already, an extremely widespread form of welfare. A society in which individuals were already rich individuals. And Spinoza thought that democracy is the greatest expression of the creative activity of this rich multitude. Therefore, I think of Spinoza's use of the term, which had already reversed the negative sense of the multitude, like the wild beast Hegel called it, which has to be organized and dominated. And this rich multitude that Spinoza conceived instead is the real counterthought of modernity, in that line of thought that goes from Machiavelli to Marx, of which Spinoza forms more or less the center, the central apex, the transition point; ambiguous, anomalous, but strong. Well, this concept of the multitude is the concept that we invoked before. There exists today a multitude of citizens, but saying "citizens" is not sufficient because it simply defines in formal and juridical terms the individuals that are formally free. You have to say rather that today there exists a multitude of intellectual workers, but even that is not enough. You have to say: there exists a multitude of productive instruments that have been internalized and embodied in subjects that constitute society. But even this is insufficient. You have to add precisely the affective and reproductive reality, the need for enjoyment. Well, this is the multitude today. Therefore, a multitude that strips every possible transcendence from power, is a multitude that cannot be dominated except in a parasitic and thus brutal way.

## THE BIOPOLITICAL ENTREPRENEUR

Here too, as usual, we are dealing with a sphere in which all the terms have been inverted—direct terms. We must really succeed in inventing a different language, even when we speak of democracy and administration. What is the democracy of biopolitics? Clearly it is no longer formal democracy, but an absolute democracy, as Spinoza says. How long can such a concept still be defined in terms of democracy? In any case, it cannot be defined in the terms of classical constitutional democracy. The same thing is true when we speak of the entrepreneur, when we speak of the political entrepreneur, or better the "biopolitical" entrepreneur. Or, rather, when we speak of the one who could be single or a set of collective forces, that succeeds at times in focusing productive capacities in a social context. What should we say at this point? Should this collective entrepreneur be given a prize? Frankly, I do think so, but all this has to be evaluated within the biopolitical process. I would say that here we really have the opposite of any capitalist theory of a parasitic entrepreneur. This is the ontological entrepreneur, the entrepreneur of fullness, who seeks essentially to construct a productive fabric. We have a whole series of examples that have each been at times very positive. There is no doubt that in certain community experiences, red (communist) collectivities, cooperatives basically, and in certain experiences of white (liberal) communities based on solidarity, we can see examples of collective entrepreneurship. As usual, today, we must first of all begin to speak not only of a political entrepreneur, but also of a biopolitical entrepreneur, and then begin to recognize also the inflationary or deflationary biopolitical entrepreneur. The biopolitical entrepreneur determines always greater needs while organizing the community; the entrepreneur represses and disciplines the forces at play on the biopolitical terrain. There is no doubt that an entrepreneur in the Sentier neighborhood, to take an example from the studies we did here in France, is a biopolitical entrepreneur, one who often acts in a deflationary way. Benetton is the same thing. I really believe that the concept of entrepreneur, as a concept of the militant within a biopolitical structure, and thus as a militant that brings wealth and equality, is a concept that we have to begin to develop. If there is to be a fifth, a sixth, or a seventh Internationale, this will be its militant. This will be both an entrepreneur of subjectivity and an entrepreneur of equality, biopolitically.

## GUARANTEED WAGE

There are reductive conceptions of the guaranteed wage, such as those we have seen in France—for example, the French RMI laws [Revenu Minimum d'Insertion: the “minimum income” required for integration into society], in the form they were passed, are a kind of wage structure of poverty, and thus a wage structure of exclusion, laws for the poor. In other words, there is a mass of poor people—but keep in mind that these are people who work, who cannot manage to get into the wage circuit in a constant way, who are given a little money so that they can care for their own reproduction, so that they don't create a social scandal. Therefore there exist minimum levels of the guaranteed wage, subsistence wages, that correspond to the need of a society to avoid the scandal of death and plague, because exclusion can easily lead to plague. And poor laws were born of this danger in England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. There are thus forms of the guaranteed wage that amount to this. But the real question of the guaranteed wage is a different one. It is a question of understanding that the basis of productivity is not capitalist investment but the investment of the socialized human brain. Therefore, the maximum freedom, the break with the disciplinary relationship of the factory, the maximum freedom of labor is the absolute foundation of the production of wealth. The guaranteed wage means the distribution of a large part of income and giving the productive subjects the ability to spend it for their own productive reproduction. This becomes the fundamental element. The guaranteed wage is the condition of the reproduction of a society in which people, through their freedom, become productive. Clearly, at this point, the problems of production and political organization tend to overlap. Once we have pursued this discourse all the way, we have to recognize that political economy and political science, or the science of government, tend to coincide. Because we maintain that democratic forms, forms of a radical, absolute democracy—I don't know if the term democracy can still be used—are the only forms that can define productivity. But a substantial, real democracy, in which the equality of guaranteed incomes becomes ever larger, and ever more fundamental. We can then realistically talk about incentives, but these are discourses that in today's world are not very relevant.

Today the big problem is that of inverting the standpoint on which the critique of political economy itself is based. In other words, the standpoint of the necessity of capitalist investment.

We have said before and we have been saying for years that the fundamental problem is the reinvention of the productive instrument through life, the linguistic, affective life of subjects. Today, then, the guaranteed wage, as a condition of the reproduction of these subjects and their wealth, becomes an essential element. There is no longer any lever of power, there is no longer need for any transcendental, any investment.

This is a utopia, it is one of those utopias that become machines of the transformation of reality once they are set in motion. And one of the most beautiful things today is precisely the fact that this public space of freedom and production is beginning to be defined, but it carries with itself, really, the means to destroy the current organization of productive power and thus political power.