

THE SUBLIME PERVERSION OF



CAPITAL

MARXIST THEORY AND THE POLITICS OF HISTORY IN MODERN JAPAN

GAVIN WALKER

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ASIA-PACIFIC Culture, Politics, and Society

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NOTE ON TRANSLATIONS

Throughout this book, all translations from materials written in languages other than English are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

For the transliteration of Japanese language, I use the Modified Hepburn system, with the macron indicating a long vowel, for example, *kaikyū tōsō*. Terms in Japanese, in particular proper nouns or place names that have an established usage in English, for example, Tokyo, are not modified with diacritics.

THREE ORIENTATIONS

Our task today is nothing less than the task of creating a form or symbolization of the world. . . . This task is a struggle. In a sense, it is a struggle of the West against itself, of capital against itself. It is a struggle between two infinities, or between extortion and exposition. It is the struggle of thought, very precisely concrete and demanding, in which we are engaged by the disappearing of our representations of the abolishing or overcoming of capital. *It demands that we open or discern in capital another type or another kind of a flaw than what we understood to be insurmountable contradictions*, and that capital was able to overcome, thus overcoming also our representations. . . . The moment has come to *expose capital to the absence of reason, for which capital provides the fullest development*: and this moment comes from capital itself, but it is no longer a moment of a “crisis” that can be solved in the course of the process. It is a different kind of moment to which we must give thought.—JEAN-LUC NANCY

Although a purely capitalist society can never be concretely realized, the fact that at a certain stage of development it begins to develop in this pure direction by means of its own forces, and the fact that its underside or verso expresses a historical process in which this development is reversed, forcing capitalism to anticipate its own termination, simultaneously forces the theoretical systematization of this process toward its own completion or perfection. From the outset, a commodity economy is something in which the relation between one society and another penetrates back into the interior of each society itself and secures this moment as its ground—a commodity economy must contain a fundamental (im)possibility, an absence or “nihil” of reason [muri], inasmuch as it expresses and treats relations among human beings as relations among things, and yet it is paradoxically the precise fact that this (im)possibility [muri] itself has paradoxically developed as a form capable of ordering the totality of society that renders possible our own theoretical systematization of its motion.—UNO KŌZŌ

Empirical concepts bear on the determinations of the singularity of concrete objects—that is, on the fact that such a social formation presents such and such a configuration, traits, particular arrangements, which characterize it as existing. . . . But this term must not lead us into error. Empirical concepts are not pure *givens*, not the pure and simple tracing, not the pure and simple immediate reading, of reality. They are themselves the result of a whole process of knowledge, containing several levels or degrees of elabora-

tion. . . . By “empirical concepts” then, we do not mean the initial *material* but the result of successive elaborations; we mean the result of a process of knowledge, itself complex, wherein the initial material, and then the raw material obtained, are transformed into empirical concepts by the effect of the intervention of *theoretical concepts*, present either explicitly, or at work within this transformative process in the form of experimental settings, rules of method, of criticism and interpretation.—LOUIS ALTHUSSER

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Every individual interpretation must include an interpretation of its own existence, must show its own credentials and justify itself: every commentary must be at the same time a metacommentary as well. Thus genuine interpretation directs the attention back to history itself, and to the historical situation of the commentator as well as of the work.

—FREDRIC JAMESON, *The Ideologies of Theory*

Capital's Historicity

Throughout the twentieth century on a global scale, Marxist theoretical research confronted again and again a certain resistance—an internal or immanent resistance—to its guiding principles, and to its capacity, as a mode of knowledge and method of inquiry, to be utilized in the concrete analysis of a wide variety of historical situations. This resistance came largely from the situation of the “non-West,” understood as the diverse unity of circumstances other than those central to the historical development of western Europe. Needless to say, the division of “the West and the Rest” has long since been exposed for its direct links, at the level of knowledge, to the worldview of the nineteenth-century imperialisms as well as for its reductionist understanding of historical specificity. The very concept of “the West” has never ceased, however, to remain a remarkably resilient figure of discourse, one that continues to exert an influence on our world, its thought, and our concepts. Marxism, in this sense, has never been external to this problem.

Quite to the contrary, from the time of the First International onward, the status of Marxist theoretical and historical knowledge, when dislocated into situations far from its famous “three sources and three component parts” (as Lenin put it, “German philosophy, English political economy and French

socialism”), has been widely contested.¹ Was this mode of knowledge something delimited to its own local process of development, despite its pretension to universality, to a universal history? This broad question confronted Marxist theory long before its canonization and global development.

For example, in Marx’s late work of the 1870s, after the completion of the writing of *Capital*, he was consistently confronted with the complexity of the nature of the Russian village commune (*obshchina*), its general milieu (*mir*), and the forms of craft labor cooperatives (*artel’*) that still existed, social phenomena that had no precedent in western European settings. However, Marx, in a series of well-known documents (among others, the multiple drafts of the “Letter to Vera Zasulich,” the “Letter to Otechestvenniye zapiski,” and his “Preface to the Second Russian Edition of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*” with Engels), did not take the line of many early Russian Marxists (in particular Plekhanov), who essentially argued that these phenomena constituted blocks on the full development of capitalism and, therefore, blocks on the revolutionary process.

Prior to this moment, in the 1867 preface to *Capital*, volume 1, Marx famously remarked: “The country that is more developed industrially only shows, to the less developed, the image of its own future.”² This thesis, directed at the time against the facile dismissal of *Capital* as detailing merely “English” problems, concretizes to this day a major trend in Marxist historical analysis, one that is frequently accused of subtending a Eurocentric mode of inquiry. By confronting in the Russian case a divergent mode of development within the same world-historical situation, Marx came to argue, approximately ten years later in 1877, that this prior position did not fully encompass the aims of the project of the critique of political economy: “Events, strikingly analogous, but occurring in different historical milieux, led to quite disparate results. By studying each of these evolutions on its own, and then comparing them, one will easily discover the key to the phenomenon, but it will never be arrived at by employing the all-purpose formula of a general historico-philosophical theory whose supreme virtue consists in being supra-historical.”³ Marx’s point is not that every situation develops in the same way, but that there is a certain contemporaneity—not “sameness”—that suffuses the world of capital (what I will later describe as capital’s “world of principle” or its own dream about itself). Thus, Marx did not insist on the native “specificity” of the Russian situation but demonstrated carefully that capital always localizes its development as if it were a natural outgrowth of the situation. In other words, he drew attention to the fact that “enclosure” does not simply mean the English “Enclosures Act,” for example, but rather the general zone of abstraction in

which capitalism emerges and is maintained. In fact, this later perspective, emphasizing the coexistence and contemporaneity of divergent modalities of development within the same overall world-trajectory, was already previewed in the lines before Marx's notorious statement in the 1867 preface, when he reminds the potential German reader that the story of English capitalism is not only a story about England, stating: "I must plainly tell him, '*De te fabula narratur!*'" (It is of you that the story is told.—Horace).⁴ That is, Marx emphasized always a middle ground between two positions: on the one hand refusing the reduction of the critical analysis of capitalist production to a mere story about "the West" and on the other hand refusing to countenance the notion of a universalism wholly determined by a schematic of necessities and inevitabilities, based on a given and stable image of the world.

It is this Marx, the Marx who refuses to arrogate his theoretical system into a rigid doctrine of influence and origin on the basis of the nation, who informs this book. Today, we are essentially confronted with an ongoing set of debates—largely between a certain Marxist universalism and a certain focus on the exteriority of alternative modes of development, linked to the trends of postcolonial studies—that are neither new nor resolved. Rather, they concern the same crucial issues that Marxist theory has had to confront for the entirety of its existence as a mode of thought, and it is no accident that our contemporary moment returns these debates to the center of our attention.⁵

The return to Marxism in contemporary thought has emerged exactly during the historical period since the early 1990s broadly understood as that of "globalization," the interpenetration and intermingling of national cultures, languages, and thought as a consequence of the increasing integration of the global economy. Indeed, this moment of globalization calls for a fundamental (re)examination of the central questions of Marxist theory itself, as well as of its own historicity, because Marxism from the very outset constituted not only the backdrop to transnational political movements but also some of the first attempts in historiographical method and practice to go beyond simple "national history," by entering deeply into the metahistorical questions of the formation and maintenance of the national itself. In other words, paradoxically, Marxism's emphasis on the historical analysis of a single world constituted by global capital seems today to be not a moment of the past to simply record and sort out, but rather a living moment of the historical present.

Today, therefore, a renewed focus on and examination of the history of Marxism(s) around the world appears to have a new immediacy and urgency. Earlier attempts to open up and expose the history of Marxist thought in non-Western languages were often beset by numerous problems: the political strife

internal to world Marxism (for example, the global effects of the Sino-Soviet split), the split between “Western Marxism” and “official” or Party-oriented Marxisms, as well as the language barriers and methodological Eurocentrism of “theory” itself. In particular, the last point has largely determined the reception of non-Western Marxist theory in European languages. While the Eurocentrism of the study of history can to some extent be displaced by the empirical analysis of heretofore understudied areas and languages, it cannot be overcome simply by means of such inclusions. Because the logic of Eurocentrism is not merely a hierarchy or ranking of already-established and self-contained unities but also a cognitive schema of the world itself as a total expression of social relations, divergent areas, languages, cultures, experiences and so forth can be incorporated into it without fundamentally disturbing the function of this schema. Thus, it is critically important to understand the epistemological consequences of this schema’s operation. First and foremost, this Eurocentrism results in the location of *theory* in the “West” and the location of *data* in the “Rest.” More than the inclusion of larger and larger amounts of localized data, we must attempt to rather target and critically dissect this “division of labor” that denies the possibility of “theory” outside the West. For such examinations today, the historical role and conceptual framework of Marxist theory is perhaps the most decisive example, insofar as it has been premised, since the late nineteenth century, on the simultaneous local immediacy and global breadth of “theory” itself.

In fact, in order to understand and revisit the relevance of Marxist theory to the historical present, this binary of “the West and the Rest,” which has dominated historiographical work, must be overcome. “The West” has frequently served as something like a “model” of development for the entire world, but increasingly we are realizing that it is exactly this putative “superiority” and “unity” of the West that has prevented us from seriously understanding the historicity of capitalism itself. Despite our increasing understanding of the long historical role of certain global projects such as the Marxist theoretical paradigm, history writing often remains tied to single nation-states as units of analysis. By grasping instead the moments when theory itself was developed outside of “the West,” we become able to historicize Eurocentrism by dislocating its assumed primacy in Marxist theory, thus questioning the assumption that the “Rest” constitutes the derivative field wherein theory is “applied” or “tested” for its validity and viability. Consequently we also become able to grasp the implications for historiography in general of the long prehistory of what we now call “globalization.”

The situation through which I will attempt to develop these questions is the

extraordinary prescience and sophistication of the Marxist theoretical analyses that were undertaken in Japan beginning in the 1920s. Encompassing a wide theoretical range of questions—the clarification of the transition to capitalism in Asia, the political role of the state in its divergence from the patterns of the former feudalisms of Europe, and the examination of the history of the Japanese social formation with a view to its socioeconomic foundations—these analyses eventually became a famous and fundamental debate in the history of the social sciences in East Asia, the so-called debate on Japanese capitalism (*Nihon shihonshugi ronsō*). This debate, predominantly held from the late 1920s to the mid-1930s, deeply influenced political activism and theoretical work, not only in Japan but also in the then-colonized Korean peninsula, in China, in Southeast Asia, and elsewhere.

Precisely because the Japanese state experienced a dramatic and intense period of development from the foundation of the Meiji era in 1868, through the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905, and the spread of Japan’s empire throughout Asia from the early 1900s until defeat in World War II in 1945, the clarification of the socioeconomic causes of this intensified growth were heatedly debated. The continuity of the debate on Japanese capitalism served as a background against which the postwar themes of historiography in Japan—the clarification of the historical role of the emperor-system, the analysis of the postwar land reforms in relation to earlier reforms of property relations, the investigation of Japan’s “internal colonization” of Hokkaido (and the Ainu people) and Okinawa, as well as other “peripheries” of the nation—were developed.

By contrast, in Europe and North America, the dominant debate in twentieth-century Marxist theoretical writing on the transition from feudalism to capitalism took place largely in the late 1950s and early 1960s. This debate, spurred on initially by the opposition between Paul Sweezy and Maurice Dobb on the causes of the emergence of capitalism in the fifteenth century, has had a wide effect on Marxist writing in all European languages, and indeed in many non-European locales.⁶ Subsequently, in the 1970s, a succeeding debate around the work of Robert Brenner emerged in the pages of *New Left Review* in England and went on to encompass a great many thinkers in the orbit of so-called Western Marxism.⁷ This debate, now widely known as “the Brenner debate,” centered around an opposition between Brenner and the then-highly influential “world systems theorists” or “dependency theorists” such as Andre Gunder Frank, Immanuel Wallerstein, Arghiri Emmanuel, Samir Amin, and others. But paradoxically, these later debates in Europe and North America remained completely unaware of the earlier debates in Japan, which had long

ago sought clarification of the relationship between the so-called national question and the inner logic of the capitalist mode of production.

What concerns me in this work is to seek a divergent point of entry into this debate on Japanese capitalism, perhaps the first intensive debate at a high theoretical level of the relationship between capital and the form of the nation-state in Marxist theoretical and historical work worldwide. The work of such an analysis is necessarily one that begins not solely from the archival facts of this debate on Japanese capitalism, but more crucially for this discussion, from its *theoretical* position. Where can we locate this debate in the larger questions of the Marxian problematic as a whole? How does this debate intervene in the schematics of the transition, the logical role of the period of primitive accumulation, the reproduction of capitalist social relations in general? I approach these questions by locating the culmination of the debate on Japanese capitalism in the work of the great Marxist theorist and thinker Uno Kōzō, whose systematic attempt to think the torsion between logic and history in the analysis of capital emerged from a critical sublation—not a synthesis, but a new kind of scission—of the debate as *theory*. It is this direction that I believe can also serve as a way to emphasize the globality of the Marxist theoretical project, a way to emphasize that the debate on Japanese capitalism is not simply a debate on developmental strategies or national specificity but a debate on the most central theoretical and historical questions of Marxist analysis itself.

Throughout all of his theoretical work, Uno Kōzō essentially developed and deepened our grasp of two basic and axiomatic formulations: the “impossibility of the commodification of labor power” (*rōdōryoku shōhinka no muri*) and the theory of three levels of analysis (*sandankairon*)—a theory of principle or the inner logic of capital as a social relation (*genriron*), a theory of stages of capitalist development, encompassing the role of the state and dominant commodity-forms of specific historical epochs (*dankairon*), and finally, a theory of the analysis of the immediate conjuncture (*genjō bunseki*). In a broad theoretical sense, this book’s project aims at the central question of how these two problems can be articulated to each other. Simply put, for capitalism’s continual reproduction, labor cannot be fully commodified, and life cannot be fully captured but must instead be held in suspension. Yet we cannot encounter this raw flux at the center of the tension generated by capture, because this originary component or uncaptured facet only appears precisely *when* it is captured or employed—labor power thus had to be *historically* accumulated, controlled, and disciplined in specific and concrete circumstances.

For Uno, theory itself operates on the level of principles, the pure effects

of the self-expansion of the concept on the level of cognition, on the level of history, wherein such epistemic effects and schematics encounter objects that invariably change the effects themselves, and in the contemporary situation, where theory's task is limited to the "assisting" of practice through modalities of analysis that begin from the situation itself and not from the level of principles. In the late 1950s, in summing up his theoretical project as a whole, and in particular the theory of three levels of analysis, Uno gave in stark form the conclusion he had reached after "many years of economic research," a complex, enigmatic and forceful statement: "Marxist philosophy, which combines within it theory and practice, can only end up delivering proof positive for its basic criterion, dialectical materialism, through the principles (or pure theoretical level) of political economy itself, something that is as far removed as possible from practice."⁸ Here, and also in general in this book, the question I ask is: how does a certain cross-section of empirically singular entities, situations, significations, and so forth become "captured" as a situated, located, determined sequence? In other words, the essential problem in which these two basic formulations of Uno's thought are articulated to each other is the question of the so-called primitive accumulation. For capitalism itself, it is only through an assumed initial phase of accumulation that the origin of the circuit of the self-expansion of value can operate: as an analytic device, primitive accumulation can be read as the event of the gathering of difference as an order, the gathering and accumulation of borders, schematics, areas, and so forth that retrospectively "prove" the grounded existence of the people.

The problem of origin and, by extension, the question of the essential historicity of the schematics of difference, is investigated here in a series of moments signaled by, or commencing from, the problematic outlined and articulated by Marx: the process of primitive accumulation or the "origin" of capitalism as a systematic cycle of accumulation, not only of wealth but of difference; the structural role and position of labor power as a commodity, the seemingly impossible "origin" of the substance that grounds and enables capitalism to reproduce itself; and the general possibility of historical materialism, not as a renewal of doctrinaire sterility but as a *paleonym* that still has much to tell us, a *practice* or *ethos* that we must reintroduce in order to deal with the constant recurrence of the origin as a movement in the present, a method or means to understand the crystallization of the past in the present, the *post factum* / *post festum* nature of social-historical life and recombinant lines of engagement in it that attempt to avoid capture by both the system of the nation-state and the system of the computation and extraction of surplus value on a total scale.

The question of primitive accumulation as a general topic has in recent years come back to the forefront of certain trends of research in historical analysis, political economy, and social theory. Works like Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson's *Border as Method*, Silvia Federici's *Caliban and the Witch*, Massimo De Angelis's *The Beginning of History*, the works of the former Midnight Notes Collective on the *New Enclosures*, Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker's recent *The Many-Headed Hydra*, and other works on the enclosure of the Atlantic commons have amply demonstrated the violence of the process of accumulation itself, as well as the spectacular return of forms of capitalist accumulation and enclosure of the remnant "exterior" spaces of the world—what they have referred to as the "commons"—in the recent decades of the contemporary moment.

But it should be pointed out clearly that Marx's analysis of primitive accumulation is not particularly useful if it is merely used to articulate the historical fantasy that the latent potential of a "golden age" of the commons has been erased through the gathering and employment of a violent process of accumulation. Rather, what remains unaddressed in many of these new returns to the problem of primitive accumulation is the notion of the accumulation and construction of difference itself—not difference as raw flux, but specific difference as bordering-effect, the creation, installation, and utilization of commensurable systematic expressions of hierarchy as the fundamental building blocks of the inter-national world. It is not an accident that the formal institutional features of the nation-state emerge roughly in tandem with the most visible moments of primitive accumulation.

The contemporary discourse on the commons thus tends at times to substantialize that which is held in common, to theorize this space in terms of a set of positive attributes, a sequence of empirico-historical determinations. But this often resembles precisely the move by which capital's drive is conflated erroneously with the concrete and quotidian historical process in a given situation, the confusion of the economically given social period (the temporal marking of capital's self-expansion) with the material, site-specific circumstances given to us in sensation. The danger is precisely that the commons—an idea and project to be realized, not to be confused with some empirical spaces to which are attributed conceptual contents—tend to be continuously placed into what Alain Badiou has called "the order of being," falling under the "encyclopedic determinant" of a sociological "given" in order to legitimate itself.

The question of the commons, its nature, its dissolution, its potential, is always fundamentally a question of the beginning, of how something takes

hold and determines the development of its unfolding. The question we ask fundamentally when we examine the history of the debate on Japanese capitalism for insights into our contemporary theoretical impasses and debates is much the same: when does history begin? When does historical necessity come to be diverted, so that one historical instance comes to be seen as a “divergence” from another otherwise “normal” pathway? How does our historical consciousness produce in us political and social effects stemming from this conception of divergence (or “perversion,” as I will argue here)? Actually, I argue that we should not bother to ask this question directly but should dislocate it to ask instead: how was this question itself asked historically, and how were the answers provided employed? The Marxist theoretical apparatus has two contradictory answers to this question: on the one hand, history begins and develops through a correspondence to the development of the productive forces and the total level of development between these forces and the relations of production that are thereby implied. However, Marx also provided a well-known and utterly contradictory answer as well: “the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle.” Marxism was and remains caught between these two explanatory mechanisms, the argument for historical necessity based on the level of technical development of all factors of production in a given situation, and the argument that nothing at all has ever been necessary, but rather only contingently constituted on the plane of history by the primacy of struggle.

The basic question of politics since the advent of the Marxist sequence (and certainly prior to it as well) is the subject of history. This connotes a variety of possible and essential readings: the subject or topic of history as a discipline; the subjective nodal point around which the fabric of history itself flows; and the subjective agent in whom and through whom historical time as the logic of this invisible architecture is spurred into movement. By returning the problem of struggle itself, the cramped space of labor and its only partial determination by commodification to the central point of analysis, we can not only analyze the relevance of the Marxist theoretical archive but also effectively historicize Marxism itself without being caught in the need to prove or validate this supposedly “resistant” discourse *par excellence*. Such a project can help toward a reexamination tout court of Marxist theory, a project “not so much of the defalsification and restitution of a true Marx, but the unburdening [l’allègement] and liberation of Marx in relation to party dogma.”⁹

The national question—beyond questions of historical development and political strategy—also involves a complex epistemological register, precisely because what exactly “the nation” is, how such a thing could be constituted,

and through what mechanisms it is maintained, is itself an extensive and complex question. When we speak of nationalism generally, we speak as if we have an agreement on the concept “nation” itself. But this concept, even when working at a superficial level, cannot be easily reduced either to the concept of an “ethnic” nation or “political” nation, the two trends toward which modern nationalisms tend to develop. It is also basically necessary to situate the form of the nation in the general social field, and therefore in the analysis of social formations in the broadest sense. We know, for instance, that the form of the state has a quite ancient historical lineage. We can find forms of the state thousands of years ago in East Asia, Africa, the Americas, and so forth. But the form of the nation is a purely modern phenomenon. In my view, it is impossible to clarify the question of the nation without locating it firmly in the transition to capitalism, and in the analysis of the gradual generalization of capitalist social relations.

Through the examples of the debate on Japanese capitalism and the work of Uno Kōzō, this book in essence thus tries to undertake two basic theoretical operations: (1) to critically reexamine the national question in Marxist theoretical writing from the vantage point of the formation and maintenance of the nation-state; to thereby reinsert into this discussion the analysis of the nation-form as emblematic of capital’s inherent excess over its own supposedly smooth systematicity, and (2) to demonstrate that this aporetic figure of the nation in capital’s logic is inherently coextensive with the question of the subject, that is, both the *theory* of the subject and the *history* of the subject, typically in its modern form as the “national subject.” This attempt, therefore, is one in which the concern with the inherent instability of the nation-form, which by now seems almost obvious or taken for granted, is removed from its typically safe or comforting narrative (“of course the nation is just a construct,” “of course we are not simply limited by it”) and restored to its dangerous core: the instability of the nation-form, which is installed to overcome but not solve the instability of the subject, is not uncanny because it is a “construct” and therefore easy to escape but precisely because it is an essential constitutive element of capital’s systematic unfolding that cannot be easily escaped, insofar as capital names the logical level of social relations. This analysis will in turn lead me to a critical reflection on the status of the subject in Marxist theoretical research, and to new possible directions for the repoliticization of the critical analysis of the formation and maintenance process of the nation-state in the history of capitalist society.

Because the national question remains in essence an “open problem” in Marxist theory, I believe it is necessary to rethink, from the ground up, *how* the

nation-form functions in world capitalism. This rethinking, it seems to me, requires not only a broadening of the necessary references to include the wide array of critical perspectives on the nation and nationalism that have emerged in recent years—postcolonial studies, critical race theory, the developments in ethnic studies, the growing influence of studies of migration and citizenship, and so forth—but also a return to a specific set of thinkers in Marxism who attempted most concretely to rethink the *theoretical* place of the nation in Marxian analysis, and it is here that we must place and locate the debate on Japanese capitalism.

Perversion and Determination

When Jean-Luc Nancy exhorts us to “open or discern in capital another type or another kind of a flaw than what we understood to be insurmountable contradictions,” he reminds us that capital *was able* or *has been able* to overcome these seemingly “insurmountable contradictions” and thus has also *successfully overcome our representations*.¹⁰ In other words, the inherent incompleteness of capital, the tendency to immiserate its own social basis of reproduction, the inner conflict between the relations of production and the development of the productive forces, all moments thought to be *direct and immediate* contradictions, have been historically *surmounted* or *overcome*, but this does not mean that they have been *resolved*. Here, I will call this “other type” or “other kind” of flaw the *sublime perversion of capital*. In essence, what I intend by this phrase is to develop a formal taxonomy of capital’s tendency toward the “inversion” and “reversal” of its own misfortunes, its constant and relentless transformation of limits into thresholds, its capacity to thrive on and invert its own contradictions into developments or extensions. I will seek the clarification of this perversion by circling around certain topics related to the debate on Japanese capitalism, perhaps the most formative debate in modern Japanese intellectual history, and develop its aftermath, particularly in the theoretical work of Uno Kōzō.

In his writings on Marx, Karatani Kōjin has pointed out to us something fundamental that we must repeatedly recall when confronted with the phenomenal presentation of this thing called “capital,” a thing that is not strictly a thing as such but a congealed “spiritual concrete” that originates as a *social relation*:

What I would like to focus on is not how capital’s self-reproduction is possible but why capital’s movement has to continue *endlessly*. Indeed this is *interminable* and *without telos*. If merchant capital (or mercantilism) that runs after money (gold) is a perversion, then industrial capital,

which appears to be more productive, has been bequeathed this perversion. In fact, before the advent of industrial capital, the whole apparatus of capitalism, including the credit system, had already been complete; industrial capital began within the apparatus and altered it according to its disposition. Then what is the perversion that motivates the economic activity of capitalism? It is the fetishism of money.

At the fountainhead of capitalism, Marx discovered the miser, who lives the fetishism of money in reality. . . . Ironically, the miser is materially disinterested, just like the devotee who is indifferent to this world in order to “accumulate riches in heaven.” In a miser there is a quality akin to religious perversion. Therefore, if one sees the sublime in religious perversion, one should see the same in a miser’s perversion; or if one sees a certain vulgar sentiment in the miser, one should see the same in the religious perversion. It is the same sublime perversion.¹¹

Karatani derives this logic of the shift from Marx’s fetishism of commodities to the more fundamental fetishism of money (and ultimately the fetishism of capital itself) from Uno Kōzō, who made this important corrective to Marx.¹² But what underpins this moment in the form of the “sublime perversion” presented in the nucleus of capital is this torsion between on the one hand capital’s *endlessness*, its untraceable and repeating origin, which is erased over and over again by the expression of the exchange process, which appears as a smooth circle without beginning or end, and on the other capital’s *seeming impossibility*, its inability to control its drive toward its own suicide or transcendence of itself, expressed in the fact that capital must pursue the immiseration of the historical body of the worker, on which it nevertheless relies for the reproduction of labor power, that is, for the *consumption* of the very products it would produce. This “vicious circle” in Marx is described by the term *fehlerhaften Kreislauf*, which we might rather translate as a “defective circle,” a circuit that arrogates itself as a circular interiority but can never completely overwrite the internal elements that undermine its very operation.¹³

Karatani locates this “sublime perversion” in the parallax between its two elements: the sublime of religious experience and the perversion of the fetish. But if we unpack this phrase in more detail, we are immediately thrown back on the fact that capital as a social relation is itself from the beginning nothing more than the sublime perversion, the raising of perversion to a principle capable of ordering and maintaining social relations in its image. In this homology or conspiracy between the element of sublimity and the element of perversion, we see an entire sequence of ways of describing *how* capital oper-

ates. In other words, it is not that capitalist society is “perverted” or “sublime” in the two senses of “disabled” or “perfected”—it is that because capitalist society is so exquisitely perverse, and thereby perfectly sublime, not in spite of its “defects” but because of them, that it works at all. What we are then exposed to in this analysis is an extended meditation devoted to expanding what Marx called the “demented form” (*verrückten Form*) in which capital appears, the “dementia” of capitalist society, consisting in the fact that this thing that should be impossible manages to paradoxically work quite well.

This “sublime perversion” of capital, located at the core of the formation of the “real abstraction,” ought to be read alongside another “perversion,” a profoundly historical one, this time pointed out by Nagasaki Hiroshi in 1968:

The modern image of the world is itself a sort of perversion. In Capital, labor is separated from its correlation with useful labor [*nützlicher Arbeit*], and presupposed in the general form of the labor-power commodity, thus providing for the first time the possibility for it to be developed in principle, that is, dialectically. This is the case for all “logics of the dialectic,” not only the dialectic of the commodity, but also all instances of the dialectics of being and knowing that informed other fields of the experiential sciences. For the modern sciences, in particular all those developments of science that took mathematics as a model, the necessary presupposition has always been a formal grasp of its subject matter. The history of science provides us with numerous examples of the emptiness of resistance born from the contemporary forms of natural history based on the observation and cataloging of what is empirically given. And yet, most academic discussions continue to discard the correlation between the givenness of the material object and the labor-praxis that furnished the basis of the development of modern science and technique. This active forgetting at the foundations of modernity is nothing more than an immense perversion.¹⁴

Nagasaki’s argument, recalling Lukács among others, emphasizes the tendency, long ago identified by Marx, for the concreteness of labor to “vanish in its product,” for the historical actuality of all the microscopic elements of oppression to be telescoped simply into labor-outcomes, providing us with, for instance, a chair, rather than an aggregate material substratum of forest clearances, factory labor, conflicts over the working day, and so forth. As Nagasaki argues, this forgetting of labor lies at the basis also of capitalist development taken on the most abstract level. In other words, what appears at all times to be the natural progression of technique, of ideas corresponding to a

specific technical and social basis with a specific balance of forces, is in fact a composite of a vast array of practices, aspects of human social labor that congeal themselves into a product, an idea, a theoretical system, and so forth but can never erase their genesis as a function of labor itself, a perversion that is concentrated in the form of the labor-power commodity.¹⁵

These two perversions are subtended by “the national question”—the element that inserts a “swerve” or that interrupts the expected developmental process of capital. These perversions all are essentially moments of *the sublime perversion of capital*, capital’s capacity to realize itself precisely in such a way as to appear “indigenous,” “natural,” or a “necessary” outcome of history.¹⁶ In attempting to follow this complex and broad question toward various possible theoretical outcomes, this book, therefore, is not principally concerned with figures in the empirico-archival sense but rather with a chain of related questions that circle around this sublime perversion of capital. As a point of departure, this chain originates with the “national question” in Marxist theory. This question will thus be theorized along two lines: the historical level, at which the national question appears as the “agrarian question,” the question of the status of the “world,” and the question of “backwardness” or historical time, and the level of theory itself, in which the national question appears as the logic of beginning, origin, genesis, the impossibility that this particular order should emerge at all, the paradox of the commencement of a system that appears to erase its own contingent origins. However, it goes without saying that figures and texts are somehow involved. In other words, although this book is not principally concerned with figures as such, it can be said to have a central figure who receives top billing, and a diverse “supporting cast.” This central figure is Uno Kōzō, whose work not only plays the role of analytical object but also theoretically informs the background of other analyses in the text. The supporting actors or “*dramatis personae*” who appear here are varied—some have mere cameos, while others perhaps should have received top billing as well in a “director’s cut”—drawn from an international actors’ union that cannot be described in “civilizational” or “national” terms. But this book does not privilege or even accept the biographical mode of analysis, for a number of reasons that will be developed throughout the text.

First and foremost, the arrangement of figures, situations, and questions herein presumes a figurative capacity of theoretical and historical writing that is to some extent hostile to the concept of “context.” From another vantage point entirely, “here individuals are dealt with only insofar as they are the personifications of economic categories, embodiments of particular class-relations and class-interests. My standpoint, from which the evolution

of the economic formation of society is viewed as a process of natural history, can less than any other make the individual responsible for relations whose creature he socially remains, however much he may subjectively raise himself above them.”¹⁷ Between the refusal of context and the complete determination by context, I try above all to utilize certain historical circumstances to force into existence certain theoretical effects, effects that are not necessarily accounted for in the circumstances themselves. This attempt, therefore, is not as much a history as it is a theoretical analysis of the possibility of a history.

This book attempts to trace a theoretical genealogy of certain central the-matics of Marxist theory in the Japanese context, but it is not limited to the proper name “Japan.” Rather, this is an exercise in a simultaneous act of de-contextualization and recontextualization, focusing on a set of theoretical objects—the sense of history in historical materialism, the question of the original, or primitive accumulation, and the national question, the question of the formation process of the identificatory mechanism called “nation”—rather than a set of empirico-archival circumstances. I would like to decompose the substantiality and accepted genealogical ordering of this debate and reassemble it with an aim to using it as a launching pad from which to set out a new genealogy for Marxist theoretical writing and Marxist thought in the Japanese context. But I am simultaneously attempting to break and sunder the suture between “context” and “nation.” Without doing so, it is impossible to clarify the theoretical role and epistemological problems of “the national question.” That is, if the national question is simply understood as something whose substantiality is “proven” or legitimated by its specific “national context,” there will immediately be no point in investigating it at all, since the uncanny “national object” at its center will already be operating in a perfect circle of self-referentiality, supposedly “proving” itself by means of its own production, its “context.”

Therefore, I am also attempting in this book to intervene against “contextualization” or, perhaps more accurately, to insist on another conception of context, one that is not “naturally” linked to the “forcefield” of “area.” Rather than thus “contextualize” the following investigations extensively, I would simply point out that the basic historical moment that is in question in this book is a rereading of certain aspects of thought that emerge around the “debate on Japanese capitalism” (*Nihon shihonshugi ronsō*), which can be understood as the pivotal and cyclically recurring “origin” of modern Japanese social thought. This debate is not treated as the constant object of analysis but as a point of departure for diverse theoretical discussions. This debate has received attention in a wide variety of sources, but in my view, nothing about

it has been “determined,” “fixed,” or conclusively “analyzed.” In other words, in contrast to the dominant presentation of this moment, which is typically “sorted out” or neatly categorized into a historical field of data, I want to attempt to read this debate as theory, that is, to not simply turn this vast and complex field of questions into something that merely comforts our sense of historical completeness and systematicity or that confirms our supposedly “insightful” fantasies of the other space. In essence, the following chapters are attempts to elucidate this uncanny historical object called “the debate on Japanese capitalism” by expanding, disaggregating, and recomposing its aspects into new theoretical inquiries. While I attempt to clarify and analyze this debate as a wide-ranging moment that lies behind much of twentieth-century Japanese intellectual history and cultural production, I do not merely want to “sort back through it.”¹⁸ This “sorting” has already been done in many languages, and it is not necessary to simply restate “the facts.” Rather, I would like to try to approach the “facts” of the debate on Japanese capitalism but in such a way as to emphasize above all else their function as theoretical concepts, as tools and general problems for us as well, to remind us when we read Noro Eitarō, Yamada Moritarō, Uno Kōzō, and others, that as Marx reminds the German reader of *Capital*, the “setting” or scenario may be unfamiliar, but “it is of you that the story is told!” (*De te fabula narratur!*).

This alternate mode of approaching the debate on Japanese capitalism would serve to tear us away from the simplistic and self-congratulatory way these “facts” have been previously understood, instead restoring the political dynamics of the “facts” of the debate precisely as the “facts of the streets” (*gaitō no jijitsu*) in Tosaka Jun’s phrase. Rather than simply take the debate on Japanese capitalism as a neat package that gives us some supposed “insight” into the “special” and “Japanese” path to “development” or “modernization,” we ought to hold ourselves immanent to the theoreticality of this debate, to restore its uncanniness, its disquieting features. Although the dominant modality of understanding of this debate has been to simply trace back through it, “rationalize” it as something that has been comfortably “dealt with,” and thereby render it a static and passive “object” of inquiry, I would rather try to restore this moment to a living and active theoretical “form of life” whose questions we ourselves are still entirely enmeshed in, a “hazardous” and even “dangerous” cycle of theoretical openings that expose and disclose the abysal logic of the “rationality” of social-historical life that we often “neatly” and “bravely” imagine is obvious.

Before we enter into the various theoretical problems themselves, therefore, let me briefly expand on what I mean here by “context.”

Context and Historicity

The question of context is always an undecidable element and never something fixed. But context as a schema, by managing the theoretical surroundings of theory, its “milieu,” is always operating by means of a doubling. Context can never be sustained as a pure environment in which the individual phenomenon arises. Insofar as context is intended to name the backdrop or situation in which something may occur or in which something may be sited (also: cited), there is nevertheless always a gap or leap between this organized background and the practical linkage that is drawn to the phenomenon, the statement, the text, the historical moment, and so forth. In fact, the act of contextualization is always thereby not a means of fixing or determining the “proper” identity and unity of some phenomenon but, paradoxically, is exactly that which undermines the unity of what must appear unitary. Every semiotic effect can be cited, can be formed into the citation, thereby “site-ing” it and placing it in an economy of visibility, placing it in “sight” or “in range.” But precisely because of this openness of the structure of citation or the “graft” of writing itself, writing or the textuality of the social surface can “engender infinitely new contexts in an absolutely nonsaturable fashion,” that is, context itself can be made to operate as the conceptual lever of an entirely divergent “differential trace,” whereby the supposedly “original” set of effects and sequencing of elements is exposed or opened to another writing, another sequence.¹⁹

In this sense, contextualization is not a transparent technique, a clear and unalloyed means by which to clarify the local, situated, original elements around which a figure, concept, statement, and so on emerged. Contextualization always contains a certain politicality. In fact, the demand to contextualize along the lines of national boundaries is not inherently or necessarily problematic. It is crucial to determine the specific, concrete social boundaries that historical phenomena are exposed to in their sites of emergence, the forms of thought and forms of life according to which these phenomena are produced and in which they circulate. What is, however, problematic is the understanding of “context” to be *solely* referential to this boundary of the putative unity of national language and national community. That is, posed in this way, we might also say that the demand for “context” itself can be a block on “contextualization.”

The example of the history of modern philosophical thought in Japan, that is, the so-called Kyoto school philosophy, is a good one in this case. Recall that major thinkers of the modern Japanese philosophical tradition, such as Nishida Kitarō, Tanabe Hajime, Miki Kiyoshi, and so forth, all for-

mulate certain conceptual apparatuses that characterize their philosophical projects through intensive reading strategies of the “Western” philosophical tradition—for Nishida, the rethinking of Aristotle’s *hypokeimenon*, for Tanabe, the importance of the regulative idea in terms of Kant’s understanding of “schema,” for Miki, the force of “imagination” and “creation” in the historical world. When we attempt to sum up these projects in thought, immediately we are confronted with the problem of “context.” As soon as we attempt to “explain” or “clarify” the philosophical projects of these thinkers on the basis that the “context” of their ideas was some putative conceptual unity of the Japanese tradition, we lose sight of the fact that their context, that is, the proper and formative context of their ideas, was precisely and directly modern European philosophy itself. Now, the typical culturalist explanation reacts to such a statement by arguing that this erases and elides “what is Japanese” in these thinkers, that it merely reduces them to “imitators” of European thought. But we can see in this type of formulation—incapable of imagining that modern “European” thought could take place in Japan—that the tendency to concatenate historical acts of thought into representative inscriptions of national-cultural difference is not an attempt to return such thought to its proper context but rather a violent and destructive decontextualization, the demand for which stems from a refusal to understand the historicity of the international world itself.

This is why, despite the seemingly obvious nature of such an argument, it remains important to point out that the concept of context is almost always treated on the basis of a schema of specific difference. That is, context frequently is taken to mean the situating of a historical product—concepts, arrangements, assemblages, modes of life, rituals, practices, and so forth—within a national, civilizational, cultural, or traditional set of boundaries, according to which the situatedness of the product would be “understood.” That is, by placing the historical product into a “context,” the “texted” part of the product would be given its systematicity from an already-established schematic, through which it could be inserted into a genealogy, a hierarchy, an arrangement or organization of historical products. It is in this sense that the injunction to contextualize concepts, ideas, and thought is almost always conflated with the notion of historicization. To contextualize a given concept would be an act of placing this concept in the linguistic system in which it was first articulated, or would be a placement of the concept in a specific national or institutional history—how, for instance, a certain school of thought modified and transmitted a given conceptual register between generations or specific institutional sites and bodies. But the paradox that we must confront

is not simply that this type of contextualization tends to treat the national, civilizational, or in any case differential context as a given. More crucially, it is that this type of contextualization, rather than succeeding in historicizing the object of analysis, excludes its historicity. How does this exclusion or erasure operate?

When, for instance, we take up the analysis of a central figure of modern Japanese intellectual history, for example, Uno Kōzō, largely the subject of this book, we often first attempt to draw the historical contours of his background: where he was trained institutionally, the particular local environment of his hometown, the topics and forms of analysis undertaken by his friends, classmates, and circle of interlocutors, and so on. In this way, we establish for him a “place” in a particular historical moment, and in particular historical circumstances. Then, we examine Uno’s work, opening up an inquiry into why Marxist theory and historiography enjoyed such a deep level of development in the Japanese university system and among the most influential practitioners of the social sciences in Japan. In turn, this inquiry would allow the writer to “situate” Uno’s work on Marx, and on the development of the critical analysis of capitalism, in a particular discursive space in Japan, profoundly concerned with the prospects and historical background for the development of the Japanese economy. Thus, Uno’s work would become a part of, and commentary on, Japanese development. However, and here we see what is most troubling with the predominant mode of “contextualization,” Uno’s work has effectively disappeared. It has been subsumed under the primacy of a narrative, a story that would tell us that those intellectuals like Uno were in effect merely producing subnarratives of the general ebb and flow of “Japan.” Context here functions simply to imagine that the natural and given position of a historical product—a set of concepts, a body of texts, a mode of thinking—is contained within the form of the nation.

It is not simply a case of somehow “removing” this framework of “nation” and replacing it with another, a methodological act that might produce interesting effects but still would not trouble the treatment of context as given or natural. What context here is excluding is *creation*, the dynamics of historicity as the fluctuating and hazardous field of creative potential. Context treated as natural or given implies that the schema in which some historical product would be placed is always-already *saturated* from the outset, fully developed as a schema in which objects and concepts could simply be placed, subjecting them to a natural or inherent form of ordering. But if this is the case, history would not be a field of creation, an *evental* field—and here I want to mark something quite different from the concept of *histoire événementielle* that Fer-

nand Braudel, for instance, dismissed as a mere agglomeration of dates and places—that is, history would be, in some sense, already complete. What we would be doing by this contextualization into a “complete” history then would place us ourselves, and our historical act of situating, positing, and ordering, outside history. We would then be located in the field of a supposedly “rational” and “immediate” capacity for self-understanding, such that we could continue to produce a history, in which an ever-increasing number of products are continually being rediscovered and resituated, but whose borders and limits in extension would always-already be known.

This, then, would deny precisely the historicity of our own writing of history, the historicity in which the written line intersects explosively with the historical object, the sense of creation—*poiesis*—in which history is never a simply passive field of placement but always a force field of energy and dynamism in which historical objects are in a constant flux of relationality, entering into and exiting from relations and modes of articulation whose fluctuating dynamics are themselves profoundly historical. This entire space of torsion, of folding and unfolding onto itself is the field of historicity, in which our situatedness is always placed. If we were to pursue a concept of context that assumed easily that a thinker, an object, or a text could be located in a firm genealogy or in a determinate chain of reactions as in the physical sciences, we would be required to exclude this historicity of creation. Yet no teleological act in the historical world, which we irreversibly inhabit, can be thought outside history. Instead, contextualization that treats seriously this historicity of social relations must proceed as itself an act of creation. Why, for instance, should we assume that a temporal register of the apportioning of periodicity is enough to situate two thinkers “in context”? The register of temporality is merely one way a relation of situatedness can be drawn.

We might instead ask after the context of the concept of “face,” for instance, a concept that would draw together Spinoza, Deleuze, archaic sculpture, the history of affective significations associated with facial expressions, the history of medical and criminal analysis on the basis of physiognomy, the historical differentiation of facial features in divergent organizations of social life (the economy of noses, of beards, of eye color, of hairstyles, etc.), the sense of “face” in “surface,” the development of a concept of “side” or “plane” in mathematics and geometry, and so on. This “face-context” then, might well serve as one creative modality of explication of the forces and dynamics operating in a given sequence of thinkers. What matters above all in the formation and unfolding of such a sequence is the act of creation or of articulation that allows the heterogeneous elements to become a sequence.

What is problematic in the sequence of context called “nation” is not the fact that heterogeneous elements are concatenated into a unity, since all acts of historical analysis in language undertake this concatenation—after all, the articulation between multiple elements in order to generate effects is the originary and primal mode of creation, of *poetics* or *poiesis* in the historical sense. What remains a problem is the historical formation of ideology in which the sequence “nation” or “humanity” comes to play a role of primacy, arrogating itself as a primordial or natural arrangement. And it is here that we can address fully the problem that context, rather than establishing a clear historical situation in which to unfold a problem or development, serves fundamentally as a *denial* or repression of historicity itself, a denial of the historical character of circumstances, of concepts and statements, of the historicity of language. All of these concepts are suffused with the only partially determinate character of the historical process, which the analysis of the debate on Japanese capitalism permits us to restore for ourselves as an *unaccomplished* project.

After all, as Naoki Sakai reminds us, “as long as the duty of historiography remains the *poiesis* of ethnic, national, or cultural figures of continuity, we cannot expect any critical consciousness to emerge from it.”²⁰ In the hopes of utilizing the concepts and thought that emerged in and through the debate on Japanese capitalism, and particularly Uno Kōzō’s relationship to this debate, I would rather eschew such “contextualizations” of continuity in favor of a focus on historicizing this debate as something *affirmatively incomplete*. The task of any philosophy worthy of the name, states Etienne Balibar, is “not only to incomplete itself, but to *incomplete others*, by introducing itself or by being introduced in their writing. . . . If it is true that the regulating idea of ‘system’ is fundamentally a modern version of the old *imago mundi*, the meaning of all these aporetic undertakings is, if not to ‘transform,’ probably to *incomplete the world*, or the representation of the world as ‘a world.’”²¹ It is this task that the debate on Japanese capitalism ought to accomplish for us, when read not merely as an episode in an accomplished history.

Transition and Translation

But why revisit today these conceptions of the “transition” debates? What do they have to say to us in our current historical moment? The concept of the transition is not only concerned with the historiographical identification of the transformation of the basis of a given social order, or the “articulation of modes of production.”²² It is also a temporal question, beyond simply the possibility of *periodization*, and encompassing the question of how divergent

temporalities, divergent trajectories of development, could be located in the same sphere and in the same overall site, that is, the *world*. The transition is thus not simply a notion of how an individual social formation, or a given “nation-form,” can be understood in its emergence, maintenance, and transformation; more broadly, the transition is a concept central to the historiographical discovery of “the world” as itself an integrated unit of analysis. In turn, the transition itself has long been a crucial site of contestation around the ways the world could or could not be understood as a unity. That is, the concept of the transition has always been profoundly linked to the history of representations of the world, a history that links together the national question and the inner logic of capital.

Capital is always operating retrospectively as a relation, preparing the ground of its outside from within its logical orbit. This perverse irredeemable quality of capital’s historical time is miniaturized in the logic of “civil society”—the citizen, whose existence cannot be grounded, must be legitimated by the retrojection of a “national subject” that would give continuity to something purely discontinuous, heterogeneous, and contingent. This process of “fixing” or “ordering” is always-already present in capital’s form of presupposition. That is, by “presupposing” its own “suppositions,” capital acts in such a way as to ensure that its limits are sealed off, removed from the historical process. Yet precisely by therefore according such an essential place to history, capital acknowledges at all times its fundamental weakness or the defective moment in its logic: the contingent “continent of history” is the field of flux wherein the practical expressions of the representations essential to the image of a continuous subject are inscribed, and this field of history cannot be accounted for in capital’s logic as such. But capital attempts to do just that in the form of its own peculiar historical time. It conjures itself up from a history that it inscribes back onto the historical process, giving consistency and continuity to an accidental moment, a continuity that then serves as a legitimating device, a narrative that capital appeals to in order to prove itself.

It is precisely on this point that Sandro Mezzadra underscores the importance of the “postcolonial condition” that contemporary capitalism inhabits. In other words, because the reliance by capital on the schematic array of differences furnished and maintained in the contemporary world constitutes the concrete reality of the globality of the present, we must connect contemporary capitalism to the long and complex history of “the continual movement of inclusion and exclusion with which the individual is imagined and constructed.”²³ This production of difference by means of an oscillation or torsion between inclusion and exclusion culminates in the discourse of citi-

zenship, which underpins not only the modern state-form but also its genesis in the form of empire and colony. Through a “prehistory” of the postcolonial condition, we are alerted immediately to the chain of signification between the logic of the citizen as image of the state, and the logic of property (Locke’s “property in his own person,” or labor power) as a microphysics of capitalist development as a whole. This dual homology traces for us the inscriptions of power that irreparably condition the modern regimes of citizenship and that continue to show us what is at stake in the state’s policing of the figure of the citizen.

It is no longer a surprising or shocking historical intervention to note that the regime of control constituted by the discourse of citizenship is something that has a directly colonial legacy, but it remains an important task to theoretically demonstrate how the political and juridical theorizations that accompanied the colonial project attempted to naturalize “precise racial hierarchies” in the division of the earth itself. What we must constantly emphasize is the cyclical deployment of borders, margins, limits, interiors, and exteriors in the historical production of the “colonial difference,” the means of recoding the “incommensurabilities” of the world as hierarchical commensurabilities, whereby the underdeveloped or colonized are temporally located in a permanent “waiting-room of history.” It is no surprise, therefore, that these conditions of the historical production of difference, located in the production of the nation-form itself, not only condition the emergence of labor power but therefore condition the entire circuit of capital itself: “The historical conditions of [capital’s] existence are by no means given with the mere circulation of money and commodities. Capital only arises when the owner of the means of production and subsistence finds the free worker selling his own labor power on the market. This one historical precondition comprises a world’s history [or, a *world-history*] [diese eine historische Bedingung umschließt eine Weltgeschichte]. Capital, therefore, ushers in from the outset [von vornherein] a new epoch in the process of social production.”²⁴ We see here a complex integration of the formation of the *world* with the production of labor power as a commodity, two moments without which the concept *world* itself is unthinkable, the single and decisive precondition of world history itself. Without this precondition a concept like “world” could not be produced, precisely because labor power, while generated in relation to the nation-form, also reveals a new universality of the possibility of proletarianization. In this sense, it is only because the logical world of commodities (what Marx called the *Warenwelt*) and the historical world of bodies are volatily amalgamated together in the form of labor power that we can have a concept of “world” at all. Yet this

systematic logic of capture is only part of the story. The paradox of the historical formation of the colonial difference and its juridical recoding is that it is being continuously undermined from within by the “discovery of equality” (in Fanon’s phrase) that the increasing integration of the world has implied.²⁵ In other words, by integrating the world into a single schematic, based on the unit of the nation-state, the colonial project also produced the conditions for a global politics of equality, by placing “difference” into an overall framework of “commensurability.” It is precisely this moment that shows us the way the history of the anticolonial movements, those political irruptions that demanded that the nascent equality implied in the organization of the world be raised to a principle of society, continue to impact our world today, insofar as it is irreversibly and irrevocably “a” world. Therefore, the experience of the more or less fully achieved globalization of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, which we are living through, can be characterized by this colonial paradox. On the one hand this “discovery” of the world as a world produced an “irreversible threshold” in the historical process of planetary unification. On the other hand, insofar as this unification is a historical tendency that emerges from the colonial scenario, it also shows us that the colonial project is always tensely moving in two directions at once. It requires the form of confinement above all else—the bordering of groups, national languages, racial hierarchies, bounded spaces, and so forth—and at the same time the principle of equality or globality that is produced under the effect of the colonial enclosures is precisely the revolt against this confinement or bordering itself, the development for the first time of a world as world (rather than a world as collection of divergent parts). Today we remain within this tension or paradox, in a world in which “humanity” itself is framed, in the final analysis, through its historical character of irreversibility. This irreversibility is contained in the fact that “the violence of origin imposes a common language that erases forever any experience of difference that has not been mediated by the colonial relations of power and by the logic of global capital.”²⁶ It is here that we see the link to the transition.

The transition takes shape in a particular way, what we might call a dialectic of *limit and threshold*, through the gradual emergence of the “elements of the nation-state,” those elements that have gradually begun to “nation-alize” society. Here, we can think not only of socioeconomic apparatuses, such as the development of mercantilism or the breakdown of the feudal aristocracies. We can also conceive here of a certain dynamics of *translation*, wherein the historical forms of language, diffused in entirely different arrangements according to localities, rituals, and so forth, experience an increasing concen-

tration into the early elements through which the nation is concatenated and pulled together. Translation, in this sense, would be precisely the experience of the historical formation of the national border as an *ideational* moment, the process through which “this side” and “that side” of a gap could be posited, the moment when two sides are presupposed, in turn necessitating a *regime of translation* between them.²⁷ Thus, “the closer we come to the modern period, the greater the constraint imposed by the accumulation of these elements seems to be. Which raises the crucial question of the *threshold of irreversibility*.”²⁸

The question of the “transition,” therefore, is always linked to this concept of “threshold,” a concept for which Foucault provides us with a careful formulation: “What might be called a society’s ‘threshold of modernity’ has been reached when the life of the species is wagered on its own political strategies. For millennia, man remained what he was for Aristotle: a living animal with the additional capacity for political existence; modern man is an animal whose politics place his existence as a living being in question.”²⁹ Foucault’s vocabulary here of “wager” as the key to the transition between *apparatuses of the limit* and *apparatuses of the threshold* should be linked back into the interior of the social relations that compose “capital.” What is wagered is the capacity of “life”—that is, specifically *social life*—to both generate the building blocks and shoulder the burden of this social relation that is capital. Capital originates as a social relation capable of initiating and rejuvenating certain internally produced formations of relation. This is the sense in which Althusser long pointed out that capitalist reproduction is never the simple reproduction of the material basis of capitalist society but rather is always the reproduction of *the relations that allow for this reproduction itself*. Capital, as a social relation, can initiate and maintain itself but only as a *defective circle*, or a circuit process that never quite reaches its cyclical starting point. In order, therefore, to bridge this gap marked by the emergence of the labor-power commodity, the “whole political technology of life”—the statements, formations, apparatuses, modalities, and so forth that sustain the arrangement called “life”—must be mobilized to seal over the contingency of this “wager.” And it is exactly this constancy or inseparability of capital from its putative “outside”—the form of the nation and so forth—that Althusser identified as the “naïve anthropology” of humanism haunting the world of capital.

In the final analysis, Étienne Balibar reminds us that “it is the concrete configurations of the class struggle and not ‘pure’ economic logic which explain the constitutions of nation-states.”³⁰ Without doubt, this is correct. But is it not also the reverse? Is it not also the case that the entire schematic of

Marx's critique of political economy is devoted to showing us precisely that the "concrete configurations of the class struggle" always haunt and contaminate the supposedly "pure" interiority of the logic of capital? The labor-power commodity, the product of a historical accident in the form of a contingent encounter (the "so-called primitive accumulation"), is given a central role in the *logical drive* of capital. How could the relation of self-expanding value form itself as a circuit, as a cyclical and repeating process, without *presupposing* the presence of the labor-power commodity, which is precisely that which can *never* be strictly presupposed in capital's interior? In other words, from the very outset of the form of exchange relations, the labor-power commodity, which is a product of a volatile and purely contingent history, is made to function as if it could be assumed to be a "pure economic logic." This is exactly where the secretive role of the form of the nation comes into the most inner moment of the logic of capital, a moment that behaves as if historical considerations are axiomatically excluded, a moment intimately related to capital's most fundamental phenomenological "conjuring trick" (*escamotage*).³¹ In this sense, we ought to push Balibar's argument slightly further by emphasizing that the "concrete configurations of the class struggle" and "pure economic logic" are in fact *always contaminated with each other* in the historical experience of capitalist society, a point that Uno Kōzō's unique theoretical position in the debate on Japanese capitalism amply illustrates.

Just like the representation of translation as pure exchange, the *transition* must always be represented as if it were a natural growth, a "simple and contentless" leap of inevitability from "one side" to "the other." But when we closely examine the transition, we find something truly disquieting: we discover not that the transition is an accomplished fact of history, or a necessary step in the evolution of social life, but rather that the transition is an endless loop of "falling short," never accomplishing its task but always erasing or recoding its failure. In this sense, the paradox of civil society is not that it is "strong," "weak," "absent," "inverted," and so forth. It is rather that civil society is never fully established anywhere, precisely because the exchange process on which it is based must always "traverse" the historical outside, while pretending to be a pure interiority, a pure logical circle. What sustains this circle that is always not quite returning to itself is its repetition. But because this circular logic of civil society in the world of capital is compelled to repeat, it is also compelled to constantly re-remember its incompleteness, contingency, and relativity, a problem that remains in the everyday life of society in the form of the "indetermination" of the citizen. In other words, the figure of the citizen itself, the juridical and political figure in whom is incarnated

the historical body producing labor power, remains in a permanent state of incompleteness or chance, a figure who depends “entirely on an encounter between a statement and situations or movements that, from the point of view of the concept, are contingent. If the citizen’s becoming-a-subject takes the form of a dialectic, it is precisely because *both* the necessity of ‘founding’ institutional definitions of the citizen and the impossibility of ignoring their contestation—the infinite contradiction within which they are caught—are crystallized in it.”³² By showing us that “world” as a concept, “world” as a project, remains incomplete, an “infinite contradiction,” it also restores to us a politics of the world, a politics that would restore precisely those “concrete struggles” to their central place in its “incompleteness.” Let us now enter fully into the specific dynamics of the debate on Japanese capitalism, precisely in order to “incomplete” our own representations.

THE FEUDAL REMNANT AND THE HISTORICAL OUTSIDE

[Марксизм] засыпает песком и поливает дезинфекционной жидкостью помойные ямы истории.

Marxism covers the rubbish pits of history with sand and sprays them with disinfectant.
—N. I. BUKHARIN, *Filosofskie arabeski* (Philosophical Arabesques)

Although it is a remarkably little-known fact outside research on the history of Japanese philosophy and social thought, Marxism was one of the most dominant strands of theoretical inquiry in Japanese intellectual life throughout the bulk of the twentieth century: from its initial entry into the Japanese intellectual world in the late 1800s, Marxist analysis quickly came to constitute a vast and osmotic field that permeated all aspects of academic life, artistic practices, forms of political organization, and ways of analyzing the social situation. Numerous episodes testify to this: for example, the first language in which a *Collected Works* of Marx and Engels was published was not German, Russian, English, or any other European language but was, in fact, Japanese.¹

Contours of the Debate on Japanese Capitalism

This dominance of Marxism in Japanese academic fields, such as political economy, sociology, history, and so forth, is only part of the story. There is also a decisive political history that underpins the massive influence of Marxist theoretical inquiry in the Japanese situation. After the formation of the Japan Communist Party (*Nihon kyōsantō*; JCP) in 1922, internal debate in Marxist theory centered at first around the questions of Marxist philosophy (in the

major Marxist theorists of the 1910s and 1920s, such as Kawakami Hajime, Yamakawa Hitoshi, and Fukumoto Kazuo, among others): the theoretical grasp of subjectivity, the problem of alienation, and the historical necessity of the revolutionary mission of the proletariat. After enjoying a level of support in the early 1920s, Fukumoto's austere obsession with the correct line, what would later be understood as the theory of the "primacy of correct ideas"—the standpoint of so-called *bunri ketsugō*, or the unification of the party by removing ideologically incorrect elements (literally "unity in separation")²—became the target of denunciation during the time of publication of the 1927 Comintern Theses, largely authored under the influence of N. I. Bukharin. (Henceforth and still to this day in Marxist theoretical work in Japan, the term "Fukumotoism" has been used to dismissively critique a certain hysterical insistence on purity of line, perhaps similar to the figure of Amadeo Bordiga in the European situation.) The "Theses on Japan Adopted in the Session of the Presidium of the Executive Committee of the Comintern" on July 15, 1927 (hereafter referred to as the '27 Thesis)³ began to lay out a theoretical line that emphasized the "two-stage" theory of the revolution: Japan was not a fully realized modern state but still overwhelmed with "feudal remnants" in the form of parasitic landlordism, and so forth, and it was this analysis of the stage of development of Japanese capitalism that initiated the beginnings of the split that would come to a head with the "Theses on the Situation in Japan and the Tasks of the Communist Party," the so-called '32 Thesis. As the major "developed" country relative to its neighboring states and primary imperialist power in East Asia, the Comintern considered Japan the most important and pivotal target for the revolutionary project. But in the wake of the '27 Thesis, which emphasized that the 1868 Meiji Restoration had not yet been fully accomplished as the necessary bourgeois-democratic revolution and transition to modern world capitalism, the question thus emerged: was Japanese capitalism in the 1930s ready for socialist revolution—in the conditions on the ground, was it possible to discover the revolutionary subject of this process?

In the clarification of this question emerged the famous and influential "debate on Japanese capitalism" (*Nihon shihonshugi ronsō*),⁴ a debate whose centerpiece was the clarification of the essential questions of mode of production and the historical process of articulation of the social formation: what stage of development was Japan actually in—how, and by what means, had Japanese capitalist development proceeded, and did there exist a concomitant total development of the social formation as a whole, thus producing the political consciousness necessary for the revolutionary transition? Was the basic economic category of social life in the villages—the form of land-tenancy rent

(*kosakuryō*)—a “holdover” or “remnant” of feudalism, something partially feudal, or a product of the development of modern world capitalism? The debate on Japanese capitalism, in its encyclopedic sense, took place between the mid-1920s and the mid- to late 1930s, a concentrated period of approximately twelve to fifteen years. This debate, while unquestionably central to Marxist theory, had an exceptionally broad influence on the formation of Japanese social thought, and on the formation of the modern Japanese social sciences.

Let us briefly enter into the historical background to these questions posed in the fields of Marxist theory and economic history. Why was this clarification of the level of development in the Japanese archipelago so crucial? Why did the character of the social formation come to be such a point of contestation? After the battle of Sekigahara in 1600, the Tokugawa family came to dominance in the Japanese archipelago, installing a system of *détente* rather than full control: Japan under the military or “tent” government (*bakufu*) of the Tokugawa resembled more closely a divided and regional alliance of individual domains (*han*) than a fully centralized state. The so-called Tokugawa Period (or Edo Period, after the capital, present-day Tokyo) lasted until the events of 1868 and the Meiji Restoration (Meiji *ishin*), perhaps the most fundamental transformation in modern Japanese history, and the period through which a modern nation-state called “Japan” emerges. The character of the Meiji Restoration, and indeed the economic and social character of the late Tokugawa Period, would furnish the basic question over which historical inquiry would fight itself out over the years of the debate on Japanese capitalism. Was the Tokugawa social formation a properly “feudal” order? And was the Meiji Restoration the expected “bourgeois revolution” that would break the feudal power and place Japan on the road to capitalist development in the sequence familiar to the English enclosures and breakdown of the *ancien régime*? To many historians in the Japanese case, the Meiji Restoration could not easily be considered one in which the older forms of landownership and tenant farm rent (*kosakuryō*) had fallen away: rather, the Meiji Restoration, in this view, was seen more as “a transition from one form of feudalism to another.”⁵ For starters, from 1875 to 1879, the taxation of land accounted for nearly 80.5 percent of government revenues, and this portion only continued to grow in the early Meiji Period, approaching 85.6 percent between 1882 and 1892 (the period of the most intense round of accumulation for the new state apparatus),⁶ suggesting at a minimum a strong continuity between the two periods in terms of the economic basis of the state. Further, social studies of the transition, in terms of its effects on the peasantry, are relatively united in emphasizing that the land reforms (*Chisō kaisei*) of the early Meiji state in no way “solved” the agrarian

question (of overexploitation in the countryside and despotic methods of rent extraction). In the years following the Restoration, particularly between 1869 and 1871, the land reforms of the Meiji government placed formal legal title to the land into the hands of a landless peasantry but supplemented this with a high rate of land taxation after national assessment of land values. In practice, this often placed peasants into greater debt and inability to meet their conditions of taxation, resulting in precisely the same practices of despotic landlordism that had previously been visited on them through the rigorous Tokugawa class system. In this sense, it was quite difficult to argue that the Restoration had been a bourgeois-democratic revolution that placed agrarian life into a fully market-driven space of individual freedom, since the peasantry remained deeply subject to apparently nonmarket pressures and coercions. At the same time, the structure of the prior social relations had not been without market determinations: in the years prior to the Meiji Restoration, farmers already marketed 20–25 percent of their rice crop after taxation, meaning that somewhere around 60–70 percent of all agricultural crops were marketed in one way or another, either through taxation or sales, a quite high degree of commercialization for the time.⁷ Because the new Meiji state, forged at a time of extreme unrest in East Asia and in relation to external pressures as well as peasant revolts, needed intense levels of capital accumulation to fund its institutional development, the former domainal aristocracy and resulting large landholding patterns were not fundamentally destroyed by the Restoration but rather maintained. As Takahashi Kōhachirō, later an important figure of the Kōza-ha (Kōza faction) and disciple of Yamada Moritarō, remarked, “far from suppressing the essential relations of feudal property, the Meiji Revolution introduced these relations into the new Japanese capitalist society by giving them juridical endorsement.”⁸ This concretized one possible reading of the Restoration, emphasizing it as a paradoxical social transformation whose intent and function was to maintain continuities of power in the field of social relations.

What is important to understand about the background in historical circumstances to the debate on Japanese capitalism is the crucial point that the facts were not what was fundamentally in question.

In this sense, the struggle over the understanding of the conditions of the Restoration largely centered on how to understand the development of Japanese capitalism in terms of its “normality.” Was this only partial creation of the figure of the wage-laborer sufficient for the social formation in which it emerges to be characterized as “capitalist?” Michael Löwy, for instance, includes Japan (along with France, Germany, and Italy) in the category of “semi-revolutions from above,”⁹ or alternatively considers this set of countries to

have “skipped the ‘classical path’ and solved their bourgeois tasks without a popular revolution.”¹⁰ Löwy continues in this vein, mentioning only in passing the argument that “Japan managed rather uniquely in Asia, to remain relatively secure from imperialist penetration until it had created its own infrastructure for capitalist development. This contrasts with the situation of most of the present Third World, which is firmly and extensively integrated into structures of dependency and imperialist domination.”¹¹ Thus Japan is presented as a classical case of “passive revolution” in Gramsci’s terms, a revolution in which certain formal features remain institutionally or socially continuous while experiencing a transformation in their content.

Thus, the Japanese case of the transition from feudalism to capitalism was always complicated by a series of specific factors: (1) how to account for the pre-Meiji social formation, which differed significantly from the classical European feudal system; (2) whether to grasp the character of the Meiji state as capitalist in essence or only a partially capitalized system that retained fundamentally feudal bases; (3) how to account, regardless of one’s stance on the second question, for the very real presence of ostensibly “premodern” social features, such as the emperor-system and its ideology or the excessively high rate of exploitation in the countryside and seeming lack of liberal-bourgeois subjectivity; (4) how to think, concretely, about the possibilities and openings of socialist political practice in the midst of the aforementioned conditions. All of these problems, characteristic of the debates on the transition and the form of the nation in modern capitalist societies, appeared not only as the burning questions of the front-line of social scientific knowledge, but as general popular questions of politics and thought of the early twentieth century in Japan.

In the debate on these questions, roughly two positions emerged. One position became that of the Rōnō (Labor-Farmer) faction, who argued that the land reforms instituted in the 1868 Meiji Restoration—which they squarely considered to be a bourgeois-democratic revolution—had begun the solution to the “backwardness” of the countryside, planting the initial seeds that would lead to full capitalist development. The other position became that of the Kōza (Lectures) faction (representing the mainstream line of the JCP and the Comintern), who argued that the Restoration had not been a full bourgeois-democratic revolution but rather an incomplete transition to modernity, and that Japanese capitalism was only partially developed, on a primarily feudal basis. The Comintern’s ’27 Thesis, in splitting from earlier emphases on the immediate socialist revolutionary process, installed the conditions for the split between the JCP and the Rōnō faction (particularly Yamakawa Hitoshi

and Inomata Tsunao). But in its '32 Thesis, the Comintern position reinforced this line even further in parallel to the world situation, by calling for a mass-based bourgeois democratic revolution against absolutism and feudalism concretized in the form of the emperor-system (*tennōsei*).¹² The primary authorial and conceptual influence on this period of Comintern policy on the “national question” was Otto Kuusinen, who, in the Twelfth Plenum of the Comintern, that same year, called in general for mass-based actions that subordinated communist demands to the immediate needs of the broad mass front. By arguing that a directly communist political platform would alienate and keep the party separate from the rural poor and the “nonadvanced” strata of the working class, this call essentially began the transition in the Comintern to the line of the popular front adopted a few years later in 1935.

In Japan, the Kōza faction's position and dominance in this debate was comprehensively established with the publication of their eight-volume *Lectures on the History of the Development of Japanese Capitalism* (*Nihon shihonshugi hattatsushi kōza*) in 1932.¹³ The works in this volume were in preparation well before the publication of the '32 Thesis and therefore should be seen not as an expansion of the position of the '32 Thesis but rather as preparing the ground for the hegemony of its position in the wake of the '27 Thesis. Noro Eitarō, a leader of the JCP, who was arrested and died in prison two years later in 1934, oversaw the compilation of the *Lectures*. Noro could be seen as the one who most concretely laid the groundwork for the overall conceptions of the Kōza faction. For him, the only way to truly and effectively articulate the political consequence of theory, the proletarian strategy, was to focus on the “particularity” (*tokushusei*) of Japanese capitalist development. The reason for this, Noro claimed, was that without understanding the “dominated” (*hishi-haiteki*) mode of production (i.e., the agrarian semi-feudal structure of the countryside), one could not understand the particular way the development of the productive forces had necessitated a turn to imperialism. This basic logic could be understood as the backbone of the position staked out throughout the volumes of the *Lectures*.¹⁴

Outside Japan, on March 2, 1932, at a meeting of the executive committee of the Comintern, Kuusinen, then the leader of its Eastern Bureau, and charged with preparing analyses of revolutionary conditions in East Asia, made a presentation on Japanese imperialism and the nature of the Japanese revolution, in which he argued that the JCP had at the time made errors in its underestimation of the role of the imperial system and the struggle against feudalism.¹⁵ In this text, Kuusinen makes a number of decisive points, highly influential on but also influenced by certain existing positions in Marxist theory in Japan.

Perhaps the most important formulation is as follows: “We observe the uninterrupted and limitless oppression of the peasantry, conditioned by the exceptionally powerful remnants of feudalism [*hōkensei no zansonbutsu*]. The Japanese village is for Japanese capitalism a colony contained within its own domestic limits [*Nihon shihonshugi ni totte jikoku naichi ni okeru shokuminchi de aru*].” He continues: “Japan’s bourgeois transformation remains remarkably incomplete [*ichijirushiku mikansei de ari*], remarkably inconclusive or nondeterminate [*ichijirushiku hiketteiteki de ari*], and is in essence partial and unfinished [*chūtohanpa*].”¹⁶ Precisely because of these features, he argues, Japanese capitalism is crippled or deformed. There is, therefore, in Kuusinen’s view, no option for Japanese capitalism to sustain itself except by militarist expansion outside its own borders and therefore a direct turn toward imperialism. But this thus gives a particular character to Japanese imperialism, what he calls Japan’s “militarist-feudal imperialism” (*gunjiteki hōkenteki teikokushugi*).¹⁷ He formalized this “militarist-feudal imperialism” based on three distinctive features: (1) the emperor-system (*tennōsei*); (2) the landlord-based system of private landed property (*jinushiteki tochi shoyū*); and (3) monopoly capitalism (*dokusen shihonshugi*).¹⁸

In May 1932, the Western European Bureau of the Comintern released their decisive statement “Theses on the Situation in Japan and the Tasks of the Japanese Communist Party,” the so-called ’32 Thesis mentioned earlier, based in large part on the analysis undertaken by Kuusinen in the March documents.¹⁹ The ’32 Thesis is not a purely historical document; quite the contrary. It is a document of revolutionary strategy and tactical considerations in the immediate situation. By focusing on the nature of Japanese capitalism, the Comintern highlighted precisely Kuusinen’s three features, focusing on the emperor-system, not only as a “feudal remnant” but as the living and institutional concretization of Japanese imperialism, the thing that linked together both external plunder and internal oppression.

In the environment of the ’27 Thesis and the ’32 Thesis a number of important historians of this question emerged, chief among them Hattori Shisō and Hani Gorō. Hani, whose most influential work of this time centered around the explication of the Asiatic mode of production in relation to the development of capitalism in East Asia, produced a complementary historiography. In his famous “The Formation of Capitalism in East Asia” (*Tōyō ni okeru shihonshugi no keisei*)—his main contribution to the original eight-volume *Nihon shihonshugi hattatsushi kōza*—he investigated what was, in his view, the tendency all throughout the East Asia toward stagnation and underdevelopment, except where Western imperialism had broken the early feudal situa-

tion.²⁰ For Hani, the “Asiatic” element in the “Asiatic mode of production” could be characterized, above all else, as “essentially a slave or serf-system mode of production.”²¹

Immediately, we should note two things here: the first is the conflation of “slave” society and “serfdom,” a conflation characteristic of Hani’s analysis, insofar as it lumps together both the ancient and the recent past in a generalized concept of “precapitalism.” (Here we should recall that for Marx, and especially for the later “official” Soviet historiography, “slave society” was essentially synonymous with the Roman Empire, while “serfdom” characterized the lower peasantry in the medieval and feudal order.) The second thing to note here in this short formulation of Hani’s contribution is that the concept of the “Asiatic mode of production” is always deeply linked in his discourse to the idea of an empirical or actually existing “Asia.”

Without entering deeply into this question, which is a vast field of inquiry of its own, I must point out that what Marx referred to as the “Asiatic mode of production” had little to do with “Asia” as a transhistorical entity or as an empirical continent in the geological sense. Rather, it was an attempt to identify the specific features of the employment of surplus labor in the context of non-Roman prefeudal social formations, generally characterized by a vast state apparatus directly serving as the authoritarian director of labor-intensive agricultural activities. Perhaps more important, however, is the fact that Marx gave up this term, ceasing to use it by the time of *Capital* and generally rejecting it in his later *Ethnological Notebooks*.²² Here we should more extensively examine Hani’s understanding of the transition to capitalism in Japan.

He claims here: “Our task is to understand the historical nature of Japanese society until the point at which it became ruled by capitalist relations of production based on an analysis of the precapitalistic relations of production tied to it.”²³ It is on this point that Hani develops his own sort of schema for the transition to capitalism in “the East,” and he does so by means of a very specific analysis of dynamics of migration between the city and the countryside. According to his argument, the typical transition from feudalism in Europe consisted in a movement from the countryside to the cities—this new urban underclass would constitute the raw human material forming the proletarian class in the advent of early capitalism. But for Hani, the decisive point is that this never happened in East Asia; instead, at the time when the old feudal order of the rural community began to disintegrate and people began to make the expected mass exodus to the cities, the cities themselves had little capitalist development, and no burgeoning industry needed this excess population, so these people returned to their rural villages, which now became massively

overpopulated and filled with the underemployed. As a result, rather than becoming the seed of proletarianization, these people simply constituted an ultraexploited human surplus.

Further, for Hani, in such conditions of total devastation and absolute deprivation, there is no possibility of political development; consciousness remains hopelessly backward and feudal, because there is no modern political subjectivation through forms of work developing into the wage relation. According to this logic, Japan was definitely part of the “East” because it shared the quintessentially “Eastern” problem of overpopulation not in the cities but in the rural village. The rural agricultural community, as the bedrock of absolutism and the cornerstone of the low level of political development, was the decisive “feudal remnant” for Hani, and for the JCP as a whole. Hani, however, was in other respects a subtle and careful thinker who drew attention to the importance of always clarifying the characteristics of a given historical society. He continually points out (with a certain distance from Noro Eitarō) that overemphasizing the concept of “particularity” (*tokushusei*) results in a subjectivist orientation that will fail to grasp the specifically social character of capitalism, which is always located in the balance of forces obtaining in the relations of production. At the same time, Hani attempts to continuously return to the specifically “Asiatic” form of despotic dominance, which for him is a process of robbing the “people” (*minshū*) of their energy, their will to struggle, and it is this form of capitalist development, in which the “people” are always too late to the stage of history, which essentially characterizes the Japanese situation.²⁴ Despite Hani’s incisive emphasis on the need to always begin with the concrete relations of production that characterize a given formation, we see that here Japanese capitalism is essentially one enormous feudal remnant, one gigantic expression of “particularity” that apparently diverges or deviates from the “normal” track of development that is the logic of capital itself.

Hattori Shisō initiated a slightly divergent subdebate in the struggle over the origins of capitalism that later became known as the “manufactures debate,” staking out his position in the Kōza faction with two highly influential articles: “Revolution or Counter-Revolution in the Meiji Restoration” and “Problems of Method in the History of the Restoration.”²⁵ The basic position with which Hattori theorized the Restoration was that it constituted not a simple bourgeois revolution but a process through which the hegemonic social relations under feudalism began to crumble, a period of transition away from a purely feudal state form to the final form of feudalism, what he called “the absolutist monarchy.” In other words, the political consequences of this argument lay in the notion that while aspects of the bourgeois revolution had

been set in motion, they remained (in the 1930s) unaccomplished and unfinished. The reason for this, he argued, was the fact that the reforms undertaken in the Meiji Restoration became simply an opportunity for reproducing the old feudal relations of exploitation characteristic of the former feudal system of landholding within the newly emerging social relations, based on modern landownership, between the landlord and the tenant farmer. Thus, he sought clarification of the earlier processes of economic development latent in the Bakumatsu Period (literally, the late years of the Tokugawa military government or *bakufu*, roughly 1800–1868), and in the examination of the first signs of the emerging laws of capitalism.

Fundamentally, he argued, it was precisely the internal development of the seeds of capitalist development prior to the “opening” of the country that accounted for the social and political upheavals of the time, and therefore he located the motor force of Japanese capitalism in its internal emergence. For Hattori, the basis of the form of Japanese capitalism could be seen in the period of the 1840s–1890s (from the late Tokugawa through the Restoration until the mid-Meiji Period), and the development of a type of “manufacture”—that is, a period of early development of labor markets through an expanded division of labor in tasks (often handicrafts) but without a dramatic change in the technical basis of production. Hattori saw in this a “double ambivalence”—on the one hand, such an organization contains the specter of change (i.e., marketization, penetration of the space of work by a primitive form of capital, gradual transition toward the wage relation, and so on), while on the other hand it remains wedded to the various embodiments of feudal and absolutist social characteristics.

In between or independent of the two major positions in the debate (the Kōza, or official JCP, line that Japanese capitalism was only partially modernized on top of a feudal basis, and the Rōnō, or left-opposition, line that Japanese capitalism was in the process of revolutionizing all social relations and that superstructural elements of the conjuncture were unimportant) emerged Uno Kōzō (1897–1977), who would go on to become one of the most dominant figures in Marxist theoretical research in Japan, indeed one of the most famous thinkers of Marx’s value theory worldwide. Educated at Tokyo University, he left Japan to study abroad in Berlin from 1922 to 1924 (where he was accompanied by Sakisaka Itsurō, a leading figure in the Rōnō-ha, later the editor of the Kaizōsha edition of the *Marx-Engels Collected Works* and leader of the Japan Socialist Party after the war—incidentally, the “Weimar hyperinflation” of this period meant that with the favorable exchange rate, the Japanese Ministry of Education stipends for overseas researchers and students in Ger-

many were worth a small fortune, and in an interesting historical irony, it was this protofascist government money that allowed Sakisaka and other Marxist students to collect the materials that would compose the *Collected Works* and other original Marxian sources). Uno returned to Japan in 1924 (incidentally, on the same boat as early JCP leader Fukumoto Kazuo),²⁶ where he began to teach, first at Tohoku University until 1938, when he was arrested on suspicion of his political stance. From this moment until the end of the war, Uno was forced to remain outside academic life, working in the statistics bureau of the Japanese External Trade Organization, and then the Economic Research Institute of the Mitsubishi conglomerate (*zaibatsu*). After the war, in 1946, he was reappointed as full professor in the Department of Economics at Tokyo University, and he immediately began to release almost a decade of theoretical work that had been impossible to publish under the fascist system—*Theory of Value* (Kachiron, 1947), *Prolegomena to the Agrarian Question* (Nōgyō mondai joron, 1947), *Introduction to Capital* (Shironron nyūmon, 1948), and the first series of articles that would later form his two-volume *Principles of Political Economy* (Keizai genron, 1950).

Uno is best known for his reschematization and reformulation of Marx's economic thought, exemplified by *Capital*, into a highly formalized, purified system designed to create a “scientific” political economy on par with the other social sciences coming to the fore in the immediate postwar period.²⁷ The most basic distinguishing methodological feature of Uno's system, the theory of three levels of analysis, or *sandankairon*, is a tripartite division of the practice of theory and represents an effort to construct a general economic metaepistemology capable of dealing with not only the primary contradictions of the conjuncture of Japanese capitalism (and the constant debate in Japanese Marxism on its origins and development) but also the theoretical concerns internal to Marxian economics. Structurally, Uno proposes three levels of analysis: (1) the level of pure theory or “principles” (*genriron*), the logic of capital as a thought-experiment made rigorously theorizable by letting its self-reifying tendency “complete itself in theory”; (2) the level of the theory of stages (*dankairon*), wherein the logic of a pure capitalism encounters a historical situation and is changed, impeded, or bolstered; and (3) the level of analysis of the contemporary situation or conjuncture (*genjō bunseki*).

What this division accomplishes in its separation of a level of “pure theory” or “principles” is an attempt to draw closer to the possibility of a Marxist logic—Uno often emphasized the importance of understanding Lenin's famous argument in the *Philosophical Notebooks* that “If Marx did not leave behind him a ‘Logic’ (with a capital letter), he did leave the logic of *Capital*.”²⁸ By at-

tempting to develop to the furthest extent possible the *Logic* inherent in *Capital*, Uno also exposed or ran up against the limits of this logic, the historical contamination that is always paradoxically included in the thought-experiment of a “purely capitalist society.” Although most of the work on Uno over the last fifty years has focused on his methodology in terms of his tripartite division of theoretical practice, I argue that the essence or truly critical moment in Uno’s work lies elsewhere, in a short phrase or concept—the *muri*, or “impossibility”—that he considered the “nucleus” or theoretical center of his work, one that is constantly returning in his writing to undermine the smooth or “pure” logic of *Capital*, or rather, one that expresses the *logical* problem for the dynamics of capitalism around the *labor-power commodity* and the *historical* problem centered on the *national question*. On a worldwide level, analysis of Uno’s work has almost always agreed on its supposedly “pure” character—that is, he is widely considered the most esoteric, purely theoretical, excessively formalistic and scholastic figure in the Marxian analysis of value, but I argue that this is not at all the case.²⁹ In itself, Uno’s assertion that Marx’s work must be reconstructed as a theory of principle—a theory of a relatively *pure* capitalism or one that has developed in the direction of the principles of the capital-relation itself—is not particularly controversial. After all, Marx himself declared that the capitalism under analysis in *Capital* was not exactly synonymous with English capitalist development as such but rather constituted an “ideal average” of the capitalist mode of production:

In our description of how production relations are converted into entities and rendered independent in relation to the agents of production, we leave aside the manner in which the interrelations, due to the world market, its conjunctures, movements of market prices, periods of credit, industrial and commercial cycles, alternations of prosperity and crisis, appear to them as overwhelming natural laws that irresistibly enforce their will over them, and confront them as blind necessity. We leave this aside because the actual movement of competition belongs beyond our scope, and we need present only the inner organisation of the capitalist mode of production, in its ideal average, as it were (*nur die innere Organisation der kapitalistischen Produktionsweise, sozusagen in ihrem idealen Durchschnitt*).³⁰

In attempting to treat as much as possible the inner dynamics of this ideal “average” or “cross-section” (*Durchschnitt*) of capital’s *logical drive*, Uno makes a wager on the possibility of a certain excessive formalism as the only means available to us to “express” the abstraction of the circuit-process of capital, but he is always undercutting the purity of this circuit by drawing our attention to

this one phrase that concentrates in itself the density of politics. This is what Uno referred to as the “mantra” of *Capital* (Shihonron no “nembutsu”): “the impossibility of the commodification of labor power” (rōdōryoku shōhinka no “muri”).³¹ As we will see, Uno in no way argues that this “muri” is impossible in the sense of an absolute limit, but that it is a peculiar limit that also functions as a threshold for the development and maintenance of the capital-relation, one that is constantly present, constantly “passing through.” What he means to indicate through the use of this complex concept is simply—although it is not at all a “simple” point—that the starting-point of the systematic logic of political economy must always “suppose” (setzen) something entirely irrational as the ground of the rationality of the historical process, which will then be “retrojected” back onto the moment of origin in order to once again “presuppose” (voraussetzen) it as if it were rational. But this excessive moment that grounds the circuit of accumulation cannot exactly be accounted for itself. We must detour into it. I argue that rather than being merely symptomatic concepts of Uno’s “hyper-theoreticism,” not only Uno’s methodology of three levels of analysis but also his emphasis on this “impossibility” (muri) are concepts that are produced out of a direct sublation of the political experience of the debate on Japanese capitalism. Writing in 1950 and reflecting on the debate, Uno incisively summarizes the essential positions at stake:

To sketch it out roughly, in opposition to the Kōza position, which claimed that tenant farm rent [kosakuryō] was a feudal remnant institution, the Rōnō faction attempted to analyze the situation in strictly economic terms, arguing that even if it probably connoted a feudal holdover, it was something that could not avoid commodity-economic determinations in developing in tandem with capitalism. Let me expand in detail on this further: against the background of the landlords’ emperor-centered political power, the Kōza faction argued that the high rate of on-the-spot demands for tenant farm rent was a type of extraeconomic coercion [keizaigai kyōsei] that had continued from the feudal period. In opposition to this, the Rōnō faction claimed that the landlords were in a position that was only rendered capable of making such traditional claims for tenant farm rent precisely through the competition engendered by the excess population and land stemming from the late-developing nature of Japanese capitalism, and that it was instead the development of capitalism that had gradually altered those relations.³²

Consequently, Uno argued, “the analysis of Japanese capitalism was divided into two camps: one that placed the emphasis on general economic founda-

tions [Rōnō], and one that placed the emphasis on the particular political situation [Kōza].”³³ We can see from this schematic overview that the two essential positions in question were both basically concerned with the relation of the specific (the national form and particular factors of development) and the general (the logic of capital and its laws of motion on a world scale). In general, this opposition took the form of a series of stances related to the question of “backwardness”—was Japan a “late-developing” nation, one that had “caught up,” or was it characterized by a historical trajectory of development that had permanently crippled its features? Uno’s tendential answer is that this debate does not merely put into question the specific political lines or strategies of how to treat the situation of Japanese capitalism but rather shows us the politicality of theory itself; it shows us that “the question of how Marx’s analytical system in *Capital* could possibly be used in the analysis of such a conjunctural situation has still not been adequately clarified.”³⁴ What he means by this is simply to reject the question of “application” between theory and data as a whole. In other words, if *Capital* were to be treated as a blueprint for actually existing historical societies, nothing would be encountered in the world except for a mass of deviations. Therefore, Uno’s basic wager is twofold: (1) to separate rigorously the three different enterprises of political economy—the pure theory of capital as an enclosed logical system, the periodicity of capital’s historical appearance on a world scale, and the conjunctural analysis of specific situations—and (2) to reinsert a focus on the doubling of rationality and irrationality inherent to capital’s dynamics, as an oscillation between these levels. He locates this in exactly the “impossibility” (*muri*) that characterizes the labor-power commodity.

While the form of labor power has been extensively theorized since the time of Marx’s work on *Capital*, it remains the central issue around three questions central to the entire history of Marxist theoretical research: (1) the relation between the logical system of capital and capital’s historical appearance; (2) the relation between the critique of political economy and the possibility of a political response to capitalist society; and (3) the relation between the form of the nation or its particular expression of capitalist development and the systematic nature of capital, which knows no such boundaries. I argue that in order to understand how the debate on Japanese capitalism could be treated not merely as itself one episode in a national or civilizational history that would make it some kind of “decent” and “comforting” story but as a precious site of theoretical crystallizations that remain decisive by restoring the “danger” immanent in our time, we must approach Uno’s work as a critical sublation of the debate. That is, behind the central theoretical moments in

Uno's systematic unfolding of *Capital* lies not only a debate on the nature and characteristics of Japanese capitalism, but an entire theoretical and political continent of knowledge that we should rediscover.

Prior to the debate on Japanese capitalism, Uno and Yamada Moritarō (one of the major figures of the Kōza faction, whom I will take up shortly) at one point worked together. They shared authorship of the middle volume (*chū*), or part 2, of *The System of Capital* (*Shihonron taikai*), published as the eleventh volume of the *Complete Works of Economics* (*Keizaigaku zenshū*) in 1930 by Kaizōsha. *Shihonron taikai* is composed of three parts: part 1, "Capital's Transformation and its Cycle" (*Shihon no hentai to sono jukan*), and part 2, "The Turnover of Capital" (*Shihon no kaiten*), both authored by Uno, and part 3, "Prolegomena to the Schematic Analysis of the Reproduction Process" (*Saiseisan katei hyōshiki bunseki joron*), authored by Yamada.³⁵ What we have to notice immediately, therefore, is that the starting point of this joint research is Marx's work, but it was not the typical starting point of volume 1 of *Capital*, with which we are familiar. Rather, it is volume 2 and a divergent set of concerns: the circulation process of capital, the turnover of capital, and the process of reproduction of the aggregate social capital. Therefore, we must consider *why* it is volume 2 that allows Yamada and Uno to ground the starting point of their theoretical endeavors. I will therefore argue that only by means of a broad catachrestic reading of volume 2 can we understand the dynamics that impel the development of Marxist theoretical inquiry in the Japanese context.

Volume 2, and the analysis of both economic and social reproduction, cycles around the fundamental question: could capitalism be eternal? Could this systematic and cyclical circuit-process go on in a permanent spiral? What this question in essence asks is a central and fundamental concern with the status of the subject in Marxist theory. In other words, if capitalism could indeed go on forever, then the particular character of the subject as developed in the history of Marxist philosophical inquiry would be in jeopardy. Since the subject is already a doubling in the general Marxist text—torn between the subject on the one hand as entirely determined or oversaturated by the structure and on the other as an evental, hazardous irruption that suspends the structure of its emergence—only a clarification of the basic determinations that underpin the question of capitalism's eternality can give us a glimpse of the "scenario" in which such a subject comes into existence or is withheld from emergence. The paradox of volume 2 of *Capital* is exactly that it is in the analysis of capitalism's capacity to reproduce itself *in spite of* its own inherent

instabilities, ruptures, and gaps that we can also see an insight into how this paradox operates in the field of the national question.

Thus, at the outset of the 1930s, the Japanese communist movement and Marxist theoretical milieu was caught in the middle of an interpretive struggle in the Comintern. Like many other global sites whose directional coordinates in both theory and practice stemmed from their political connectivity to the international worker's movement, the Japanese environment was riven by debate on the central question: what is our revolutionary task? And further, in order to accomplish this revolutionary task, what is the essential nature of the situation in which we find ourselves? As a function of this question, it is my contention that if we want to draw out central crucial *theoretical* issues from the debate on Japanese capitalism, we will find them specifically in the field of history. What I mean by this is not simply that we will see the historical "specificity" or "particularity" of the Japanese situation, and merely superimpose it onto various other given national situations in order to show its "difference." Rather, what I mean is that because of the gap between the specific historical scenario outlined in Marx's work and the social-historical reality of the emergence, development, and directionality of Japanese capitalism, the Marxist theorists concerned with the clarification of Japanese capitalism were required to *create theoretical concepts* that allowed them to traverse this gap. This creativity in turn can be extracted from their works, and the concepts they created can be developed and utilized in new directions on a general level. But it should be emphasized that this point has not typically been acknowledged. On the one hand, although Marxist historiography in Japan from the 1920s through until the 1970s remained an exceptional field of work, both in the breadth and creativity of the research undertaken and the high theoretical level at which it was conducted compared to other sites, Marxist historical analysis, with few exceptions, remained largely separated from Marxist philosophy. In turn, the later analysis of Marxist historical writing in Japan has often simply taken this split for granted, emphasizing that the object of analysis of most Marxist historiography in Japan was merely *Japanese development* (treating both the concept of "development" and its putatively "Japanese" character as given).³⁶ But this has had the effect of essentially obscuring the crucial role played by the debate on Japanese capitalism in a wide and diverse field of inquiries: literary and poetic texts, the arts, philosophical inquiry, social theory, and more. My basic contention and attempt in this text is to point out that the concepts created in the debate on Japanese capitalism, and especially as they were *refracted* through the work of Uno Kōzō, can give us critical theoretical

tools today, not only for a rethinking of Japanese intellectual history, but for numerous interventions in contemporary debates on the philosophy of history, in postcolonial historiography, and for contemporary political thought.

There are four main points on which the debate on Japanese capitalism concretizes in its form certain theoretical possibilities, possibilities that I will try to expand in the chapters that follow: (1) the analysis of the temporality of world capitalism and an accompanying rethinking of the period of primitive accumulation; (2) the relation between the production of subjectivity and the historical production of labor power as a commodity; (3) possibilities for the rethinking of the national question in Marx and Marxist thought and the re-reading of nationalism in postwar Japanese thought in light of the first two points; and (4) the possibility of interventions in postcolonial studies, and particularly in relation to conceptions of “alternative modernity” in historiographical theory.

The Work of Form

In the 1950s and early 1960s, the international debate among Marxist theorists on the transition from feudalism to capitalism, principally between Maurice Dobb and Paul Sweezy, touched on numerous points critical to an understanding of the debate on Japanese capitalism. Takahashi Kōhachirō (1912–1982) was closely associated with the economic-historical work of Otsuka Hisao,³⁷ who was in turn deeply influenced by Yamada Moritarō, and particularly by Yamada’s theoretical system, in which the figure of the transition, or more specifically, the *partial* transition, played a decisive role. Takahashi’s 1952 “Contribution to the Debate” between Dobb and Sweezy, in which he strongly supported Dobb’s position, written during a stay as an invited visiting professor in France, ends on an exceptionally important note, for two reasons. First, he argues:

[The] revolutions in Western Europe, by the independence and the ascent of the petty commodity producers and their differentiation, set free from among them the forces making—as it were *economically*—for the development of capitalist production; while in Prussia and Japan this “emancipation” was carried out in the opposite sense. The organisation of feudal land property remained intact and the classes of free and independent peasants and middle-class burghers were undeveloped. The bourgeois “reforms,” like the *Bauernbefreiung* and the *Chiso-kaisei* (agrarian reforms in the Meiji Restoration), contain such contrary ele-

ments as the legal sanctioning of the position of the Junker's land property and parasite land proprietorship of a semi-feudal character. Since capitalism had to be erected on this kind of soil, on a basis of fusion rather than conflict with absolutism, the formation of capitalism took place in the opposite way to Western Europe, predominantly as a process of transformation of putting-out merchant capital into industrial capital. The socio-economic conditions for the establishment of modern democracy were not present; on the contrary, capitalism had to make its way within an oligarchic system—the “organic” social structure—designed to suppress bourgeois liberalism. Thus it was not the internal development itself of those societies that brought about the necessity of a “bourgeois” revolution; the need for reforms rather came about as the result of external circumstances. It can be said that in connection with varying world and historical conditions the phase of establishing capitalism takes different basic lines: in Western Europe, Way No. I (producer → merchant), in Eastern Europe and Asia, Way No. II (merchant → manufacturer). There is a deep inner relationship between the agrarian question and industrial capital, which determines the characteristic structures of capitalism in the various countries.³⁸

Second, to this long schematic summation of his argument, Takahashi appends this note: “This problem was raised early in Japan: see Seitōra [sic] Yamada's original *Nihon shihon shugi bunseki* (Analysis of Japanese capitalism), 1934, in particular, the preface which contains in compact form a multitude of historical insights.”³⁹ I shall now take up Yamada Moritarō's work and attempt to clarify this problem, particularly insofar as Takahashi reminds us that “for our part, what the author of *Capital* wrote about his fatherland in 1867, in the preface to the first edition, still holds true, despite the different stage of world history: Alongside the modern evils, a whole series of inherited evils oppress us, arising from the passive survival of antiquated modes of production, with their inevitable train of social and political anachronisms. Thus the question of ‘two ways,’ so far as we are concerned, is not merely of historical interest, but is connected with actual practical themes.”⁴⁰ I will show shortly how Yamada's work in particular alerts us to a whole series of “practical themes” that remain central in today's theoretical discussions.

Yamada Moritarō was born in 1897 in Aichi prefecture, the eldest son of a local landlord. After studies at the Eighth Higher School, he graduated from Tokyo Imperial University in 1923, subsequently becoming a lecturer and then assistant professor in the Department of Economics. He was fired from this

position in 1930, as a result of his sympathy for the outlawed JCP, and was eventually arrested in 1937 during the so-called Com-Academy Incident, in which numerous leftist academics were rounded up on suspicion of providing material aid to the illegal party apparatus. Thereafter in the late 1930s it became impossible to continue openly pursuing Marxist research, and after being appointed in 1939 as an economic researcher for the East Asia Research Institute (Tōa Kenkyūjo), a well-known think-tank for Japanese imperial policy, Yamada went to then-colonized China in 1940.⁴¹ After the war he returned to his professorship and continued to be a leading figure of the Kōza faction in its postwar incarnation.

The work for which he is best known and which we are here concerned with is the 1934 *Analysis of Japanese Capitalism* (originally published in 1932 as part of the original eight-volume *Lectures*), a text that has to be considered one of the most simultaneously celebrated, reviled, frustrating, controversial, and influential works in the history of Japanese Marxist theory and historiography. Known for its forbidding, mantra-like phraseology and odd, highly abstract, and individual diction, the *Analysis* is, aside from its theoretical content, an intriguing site of literary politics. Widely known for the exceptional difficulties it posed to reading, the *Analysis* generated heated debate from the moment it emerged—importantly, it is not the case that it has simply become more cryptic due to shifts in language over the subsequent seventy years: at the time of its publication, Yamada's text was considered incredibly difficult to understand, filled with “riddles” and “codes.”⁴² Yamada himself later suggested that the stylistic choices involved in the *Analysis* stemmed not from a desire to “utilize expressions in such a way so as to be easy to understand” but rather from a “strong desire to record the text in a correct form.”⁴³ In practice, however, the text is unique from a linguistic standpoint for its inversion of typical Japanese grammar, sentence structure, and diction: many of the decisive terms of the text are rendered in a highly idiosyncratic and stylized manner, something that deeply attracted young sympathetic scholars and enraged opponents with its aura of hermeticism and eclecticism.⁴⁴

In essence, Yamada's goal was a description or condensed image of Japanese capitalism as a type, form, or specific tendency, that is, the “structural features and principle forces governing its motion.”⁴⁵ Even within the orthodox Kōza faction, Yamada could perhaps be considered the figure who gave the most *theoretically* general expression of its position. It was his analysis of the origins of Japanese capitalism, its features and trends, that formed the correlate to Noro Eitarō's political explications of the “correct line” for the JCP in accordance with the Comintern's position on Japan. The Comintern

had declared in its 1922 Thesis that Japan was ready for socialist revolution; subsequently in 1927, this position was revised, although there had already been a strong split in the communist movement between the emphasis that Yamakawa Hitoshi (later the elder statesman of the Rōnō faction) placed on uniting all left and progressive forces in Japan and Fukumoto Kazuo's ultraleft emphasis on splitting over the correct line. The Comintern declared explicitly in its 1932 Thesis, likely authored under the influence of Kuusinen's line, that Japan was irredeemably backward, that too many structural features of the ancien régime remained in the conjuncture for there to be effective socialist revolution.⁴⁶ Instead, what was required was a mass-democratic front against militarism, absolutism, the emperor-system, and incipient fascism to root out the remnants of feudalism. Only once such a political process had occurred could socialist revolution become for the first time a possibility in the situation. Thus the Comintern demanded of the JCP a two-stage revolutionary process, one that subordinated socialist demands to Popular Front-style "democratic" ones. But on what basis did the Comintern demand this? The clarification of this question was the most decisive background to the Kōza position, exemplified by Yamada's *Analysis*.

A summation of Yamada's understanding in the *Analysis* of the development of Japanese capitalism and its semi-feudal nature can be described as follows: "While key industries were created under noneconomic coercion by the police-military state, the base of the economy remained feudalistic, composed of quasi-serfs tilling the soil under semi-feudal land tenure conditions and quasi-slaves forced to work in industry at appallingly low wages, lower even than those of India."⁴⁷ Yamada essentially argued that the basic form of Japanese social and economic life could be articulated through the mantra-like formula of "militarist semi-serf system petty subsistence cultivation." This type of analysis, which emphasized the specificity of Japanese social organization, had two immediate advantages: (1) it paid close attention to a major factor in the class logic of the Japanese social formation, namely the impoverishment and oppression of small farmers and the countryside as a whole, and therefore could be "confirmed" in its appearance on a vague notional basis by most activists and sympathizers, and (2) it conformed to and articulated the historical and formative basis of the Comintern's 1932 Thesis and could thus be understood as the "correct line of analysis," buttressing the position of the international communist movement's most official and respected body.⁴⁸

For Yamada, writing under the influence of the '27 Thesis, the development of Japanese capitalism and its apparently "semi-feudal" nature experienced the following historical trajectory:

The process of establishment of industrial capital in Japan (1890s-1900s) was not something characterized by the development of free labor and the free competition of capital. Rather, it was formed through the interrelation between a semi-serf system of tribute collection [han-reinōseiteki nengu chōshū] and a semi-slave system of labor [han-doreiseiteki rōeki], which simultaneously enabled the establishment of industrial capital and the turn to imperialism. This is the basic determination [kiso kitei] that led to the process of the emergence and establishment of a semi-serf system, militarist form of finance capital [han-nōdoseiteki gunjiteki kin'yū shihon]: the unified form of semi-serf system militarism and monopoly under the overwhelming role of the huge zaibatsu conglomerates, as well as the emergence of banking capital and industrial capital. The formation of finance capital in its first stage was expressed by state ownership of railways before and after the Russo-Japanese war (1905), and the establishment of finance capital in its second stage was expressed in its full-fledged form particularly by the Law for Mobilization in Munitions Manufacturing (1919) during the World War.⁴⁹

What distinguishes Yamada's work for the present analysis is the degree to which it identified (or rather produced and solidified) a naturalization and grounding of specific difference, which would "explain" the hierarchy of nation-states in global capitalist development. He articulated a fixation of "Japan" which placed it simultaneously directly in the system of international nation-states, but in a permanent subordinated position, one stemming from its "character," "style," or "form" (kata). This discourse, which was massively influential on historiography concerned with analyzing "that which is specifically Japanese" (tokushuteki Nihonteki naru mono), points not only to the broad problem of the transition as a process of formation and consolidation, but also to the general problem of origin itself. In the *Analysis*, Yamada summarizes this perspective as follows:

In the present work, in order to determine the process of the establishment of industrial capital, there is a crucial point on which emphasis must be placed. That is, the militarist, semi-serf [gunjiteki han-nōdoseiteki] form of Japanese capitalism as a system was finally determined just at the epochal moment of the 1890s-1900s (the thirties and forties of the Meiji era), precisely during the period of the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars. Specifically, the process of the establishment of industrial capital in Japanese capitalism was due to these militarist,

semi-serf characteristics, a process that at the same time enabled the turn toward imperialism, and the establishment of finance capital. It was in this capitalism, which developed from its point of origin in the new reforms of the Meiji Restoration, that the Japanese form of the process of the establishment of industrial capital, as I have described it, was conclusively [shūkyokuteki ni] fixed and determined.⁵⁰

He continues, arguing that the decisive point that must be recognized is that the “specific [tokushuteki] and inverted [tentōteki] characteristics of Japanese capitalism are grounded in its inferior world-historical position.”⁵¹ In Yamada’s understanding, this position is not a relative but a permanent one, precisely because of what he conceived of as the “stillborn” nature of Japanese capitalism, referring to a moment of origin whose effects reverberate eternally throughout the Japanese social formation with its tendencies toward militarism, overexploitation stemming from the remnants of feudalism, authoritarianism, and low political consciousness. That is, he argued that the advent of Japanese capitalism was, unlike the origin of English capitalism, “not the cause for the extinction of the semi-serf, parasitic landlord relation, but conversely the cause for its permanent continuity [eizoku].”⁵² Thus, in this systematic network in which Japanese capitalism was permanently “distorted” (*waikyoku sareta*), a “proper” civil society, based on “free exchange” concretized in the form of the *vogelfrei Proletariat*, could never develop, and political society would instead remain eternally crippled by the social forms of the semi-serf and feudal landlord, a relation in which “freedom” was absent. It is no accident that this schema of Yamada precedes and in effect grounds the later analyses of Otsuka Hisao (on the “Asiatic” ethos that prevents or holds back the development of a true “spirit” of capitalism) and Maruyama Masao (on the sequence of *genkei*—*kosō*—*shitsuyō teion* [fundamental form—ancient substratum—*basso ostinato*], which in effect is an attempt to locate what Yamada called *kata* in the form of an eternal aesthetic regime located at the substratum of social forms, providing a permanent basis of “ethnicity”).⁵³ But this type of analysis and its theory of origin is deeply problematic because it can resolve itself only in a constant logical recursion.

From the opposite factional position in the Rōnō group, Sakisaka Itsurō savagely criticized Yamada and his disciples again and again, lamenting “Yamada’s particularly pained style of writing” and viciously arguing that “it seems that Yamada ‘struggled for 10 years’ to produce this text, but on hearing this, and given its farcical reception, one simply has to call it a tragedy.”⁵⁴ He went further than sectarian insults, however, taking Yamada and his

collaborators to task for what he saw as their static, nondynamic conception of the “eternal form” of Japanese capitalism and, by extension, the Japanese social formation as a whole. Sakisaka makes the following argument vis-à-vis Yamada:

On the one hand, capital has apparently arrived at its process of establishment of finance capital, its “essential form,” and the “overwhelming role of the huge zaibatsu conglomerates, and the composition of banking capital and industrial capital” has emerged—thus, although thirty years of continual progress in the process of accumulation and concentration of capital have occurred, somehow the characteristics of landlords, peasants, and wage laborers had to remain exactly as they were in antiquity. The concentration of capital increases the number of wage laborers, and develops the proletariat both qualitatively and quantitatively. For Yamada however, capitalism’s process of monopolization is something unidirectional that does not in turn develop the other various social relations. This methodology is precisely the inverse of Marxism. Perhaps feudal remnants never fully disappear in capitalist development. Perhaps on a certain level, and in certain situations, something like this “semi-feudalism” could exist. But such a sense of “semi-” is qualitatively different from that employed by Yamada and his clique.⁵⁵

Yamada in essence understood that the Tokugawa economic system was inadequately transformed from a purely feudal basis in property relations and laboring positions. He argued that the key industries in Japan in the 1920s were military in nature, munitions manufacturing and the like, and that their militarist nature was itself a direct product of the incomplete transition from feudalism, based on the fundamental and emblematic position of the peasantry as engaged in semi-serf agricultural petty subsistence cultivation. This peasantry would be drawn from a rural population of politically “semislave” wage laborers subjected to a brutal, semi-feudal regime of property relations characterized by semi-serf-system, parasitic landlords who continued to demand rent-in-kind even during the period of the formation of finance capital in the cities.

For Yamada, the Meiji Restoration of 1868 was in no way a transition from feudalism in the concrete sense but nevertheless was absolutely essential for the development of Japanese capitalism, because it required the centralization and extensive arming of the Restoration government, which in turn led to the “key industry” of Japanese finance capital, which was precisely military manufacturing. Thus

in the first place, domestically, military equipment was required to prevent resistance actions from the various strata of laborers, who were transformed from agricultural serfs into a semi-serf peasantry engaged in petty subsistence cultivation and semislave wage laborers through the reforms of the former Tokugawa feudal system of labor organization. In the second place, in terms of foreign affairs, military equipment was required not only to defend against invasion by the advanced capitalist countries but also in order to force the market acquisition and seizure of steel in China and Korea. Thus in both of these senses, military equipping was a single supreme task. The rigid unity of the foundations of this militarist organization based on military equipment was guaranteed through the following two forms. First, the steel manufacturing plant, producing steel, the raw material for the munitions production of the weaponry forming the military and naval arsenals, the railroad as military transportation organ, the official plan for military organization and its realization, and so on. Second, the founding of the huge *zaibatsu* conglomerates that control the key industries needed for maximum possible mobilization, namely, mining, shipbuilding, and the machine industry.⁵⁶

This is the basic framework of the *Analysis of Japanese Capitalism*: this “semi-feudal system of property ownership and semi-serf system of petty subsistence cultivation,” which was the “basic determination” of the “militarist semi-serf system” of Japanese capitalism, had been—from the period of the establishment of industrial capital (1890s–1900s) up until the 1930s era of financialization, monopolization, and imperialism—the unchanging “basis” on which the Japanese form of capitalism emerged. Aikawa Haruki, a well-known Marxist thinker of the time and disciple of Yamada, summed up this perspective: “Capitalism has matured on the ground of the maintenance and preservation of landlord-based property relations, and thus had the form-characteristics of semi-serfdom engraved on it—to preserve itself, capitalism arose within relations that eternally maintain this landlord system of property ownership.”⁵⁷

While Sakisaka’s own theoretical work has a distinct set of problems in its relatively mechanistic dialectic and schema of development, he quite correctly identifies Yamada’s problematic understanding of the process of enclosures as a unidirectional movement in which this apparently eternal and inverted social form “decides everything.” Importantly, Sakisaka points out the recursivity of Yamada’s understanding of the “essential form”—it is unclear what

came first, the origin or its effects. In other words, if Japanese capitalism is inherently “backward” or “semi-feudal,” was it the form of organization of the initial concentration of capital that produced this continuing set of effects as a unified “form,” or did the “form” preexist and subsequently structure the initial process of primitive accumulation? Obviously, if the accumulation process produced the form, it cannot be the original, all-effecting substratum that Yamada takes it to be, because it could not be eternal: the next shift in the concentration and trajectory of capitalist development would necessitate a new form, thereby destroying or subsuming the old “eternal form.” But if the “form” preexisted the accumulation process and enclosures movement, how was capitalism able to alter social relations at all, as it must have done in order to develop the forms of wage, commodity, and basic industrial capital, if the blocks to revolutionizing and “freeing” the social positions were so insurmountable as to make “Japan” irreversibly “backward”?

Thus we can see that Yamada’s understanding of “form” or “tradition” as a block on capitalist development that can never be “overcome” (a position not dissimilar from many contemporary culturalist forms of “explanation”) is an (im)possible recursive circuit, one that reveals its own discursive form of capture. Yamada posits the unity of the origin as the basis of the problem but can only demonstrate the unity of the “eternal form” set up by this origin, by recourse to a series of effects that occur only retroactively.

Sakisaka viciously criticized Yamada for this type of formulation, which tended to treat Japanese capitalism as a static, nondynamic form that emerged at a particular stage through certain peculiar conditions and thereafter was essentially fixed. That is, Yamada’s understanding of capital’s “model,” “pattern,” “form,” or “style” (*kata*) could be understood as a deeper level of fixity than that provided by capital itself; it was something like an underlying semicultural substratum that perverted, twisted, and hampered the “normal” process of capitalist development, “fixing” it as a frozen, permanent distortion. In other words, for Yamada, the whole of the Japanese social formation was essentially one enormous “feudal remnant.”

Inscribed into the local motion of capital’s circuit-process was this supposed Japanese peculiarity, creating a tense stasis: while capital’s centripetal force would oscillate by gathering numerous effects toward its center, this *kata* would act as a countervailing centrifugal force, dispersing the capitalization of elements back to the feedback mechanisms of “semi-serfdom” and “semi-feudalism.” Hence, for Yamada, in the final analysis, this *kata* was “finally” or “conclusively” (*shūkyokuteki ni*) determined because, as mentioned earlier, “the specific [*tokushuteki*] and inverted [*tentōteki*] characteristics of Japa-

nese capitalism are structurally (categorically and organizationally) grounded in its inferior world-historical position as a function of its formation process of industrial capital.”⁵⁸ But as Sakisaka incisively points out, the circularity of Yamada’s logic is the inverse of Marx’s own method. The mere existence of semi-feudal relations within capitalist development is not sufficient to argue that therefore the latter is subordinated to the former. Rather, the point is precisely that these feudal relations are themselves placed within the development of capital, and do not necessarily restrain capitalism as such. Even if such practices as frequent despotic on-the-spot demands for tenant rent by the local landlord occur in the same manner as they did under feudalism, the content of this act is completely different—as Marx remarked on the commodity form itself, it might appear the same from one historical epoch to the next, but “a new social soul has popped into its body.”⁵⁹ That is, these practices have been adapted to a completely new function in the network of social relations stemming from the development of the productive forces and relations of production. Therefore, as Sakisaka points out, in Yamada’s work, capitalism itself tends to lose its historical specificity and is dispersed into a culturalist continuum of “form” or “style.” Although Sakisaka’s critique is an incisive and devastating attack on Yamada and his disciples, he nevertheless tends toward an idealism of the opposite variety: that is, for Sakisaka, even the historical production of “specificity” is meaningless, precisely because the advent of capitalism means that every “specificity” is already in the process of being dissolved, making capital for Sakisaka completely indifferent to “specificity.” Thus, he tends to place too much emphasis on the deterritorializing element of capitalist development, not seeing this movement as a constant and interrupted cycle in which capital develops itself in a complex and undulating process of relating to its own gradients of deployment, that capital’s process of creating and forming specificities is part and parcel of capital’s enclosure of the earth.

Sakisaka made precisely this critical point in his polemics against Yamada of the mid-1930s: “What one discovers in the investigation of *specificity* cannot simply be *generality*—rather we must focus precisely on the specificity of the realization process of generality itself [ippansei jitsugen katei no tokushusei].”⁶⁰ In other words, the precondition of the movement of generality (the logic of capital) is contained in its unfolding of the local transition; in order to recode the surface of the earth, it must retabulate the existing elements from a pure heterogeneous flux into specificities. Therefore, we must always analyze the *mutual complicity* between the general and the specific, which is illuminated for an instant in the moment of enclosure, in the continually renewed process

of transition as the impossible origin of order itself. It is precisely the generality of this stratum of putative specificity that is so crucial for us to analyze today, because focusing on the formation process of this stratum itself can allow us to generate new possibilities for thinking resistant histories past the dead end of contemporary universalisms, which constantly and desperately try to recuperate the fantasy of “the West,” as well as those contemporary particularisms that always end up reinstalling a bearer of the historical process in the illusory concreteness of native “specificity” as a marker of legitimation. We should always understand that Yamada’s type of explanation of “specificity” or “extraeconomic coercion” as a block on development, as something that prevents full participation in the world, can never truly demonstrate what this “specificity” consists in: Yamada in essence takes the apparently ancient substratum of Japanese cultural particularity as a “state hanging in the air,” something that, although divorced from conditions on the ground, nevertheless manages to “conclusively determine” the limits of the situation and mark the conjuncture with the sign of permanent backwardness. Yamada, and his type of explanation, must always mystify and project back into the putatively ancient past a typicality derived from a given set of conditions that “must have been there all along.” But in fact, it is exactly how capital itself operates, by retrospectively positing its own productions as its starting point. The formation of specific difference by the continual reproduction of acts of enclosure shows us, however, that every situation wherein specificity stands in an apparent contradiction to capital’s global spread is in fact an outcome of social conditions, and not an inevitable result of an ancient grounding force of particularity.⁶¹ Ōuchi Tsutomu compellingly summarizes for us the essential problem of the historicity of capital’s development in relation to this situation:

The Japanese peasantry’s existence is miserable, and the development of the productive forces is low precisely because these forces have their basis in the position of the petty farmer, which is located within the rapid development of Japanese capitalism. But what maintained the small peasant holding as a small peasant holding was not the feudalistic power of the landlord, that is, it was not a form of “extra-economic coercion,” but rather was precisely the structural character of Japanese capitalism itself. Thus, no matter how much the rural village tends to have a feudal hue [*hōkenteki na shikisai*], this does not indicate at all that the feudal system remains in the village, but simply that in order for the peasantry to be semi-self-sufficient, and to be made into the form of a semi-commodity-economic peasantry [*han shōhin keizaiteki na*

shōnō keitai], something remained in the domains of thought, affect, or practices. It was the management of this aspect through which the peasantry could be maintained as a “sacrifice that enabled Japanese capitalism to develop without resolving the problems it itself posited.” Thus, however paradoxical it may seem, in the Japanese village, what is feudal [hōkenteki na mono] is precisely capitalist.⁶²

We should thus understand capitalism as something that is always aiming at its own systematization, that is, its own self-perfection. Historically, Marxist theorists have often understood development in terms of a simple and direct physical temporality: a continuum from nothing to full development along the axis of past, present, and future. Thereby, those spaces or capitals that were comparatively less systematized in terms of the overall articulation between the level of development of the productive forces and the relations corresponding to this level were largely considered “late,” “underdeveloped,” or “immature.” But it is important to emphasize that capital’s own internal desire for systematicity means that development always occurs in a “vector” or “directionality,”⁶³ that is, development is always “toward-systematicity,” it is never the opposite. Although we can clarify on the level of empirical history the existence of certain “late developing” capitalisms (Germany, Russia, Japan, etc.) by way of comparison based on the unit of the nation-state, the fact is that their “lateness” is not itself a signifier of “backwardness” or of being “late to the stage of history.” Rather, it shows that the process of enclosure that is necessary for the establishment of capitalist relations of production always takes place through the formation of local specificities themselves. The network of signification that attributes certain situations to the “present,” certain others to “backwardness,” and still others to “premodernity,” and so forth, is a hierarchical network that is installed by the movement of enclosures, a movement that enables capital to realize its ambitions by localizing itself. Capital deploys itself in a local gradient by attempting to ground and naturalize itself in a stratum of specificity, but this stratum is something that stems from capital’s inner logic and not from the apparently “natural” local situation. In other words, “late” development itself simply means: capital’s own internal “laws of motion” territorialize themselves differentially in relation to the local vector, through which capital must act “as if” it is a natural, internal production.⁶⁴

We should not think of the time of this directionality as the “past-present-future” of phenomenal or physical life but as the time of capital’s own self-movement, that is, an overall process in which phases and gradients occa-

sionally come to the surface and then submerge throughout the endlessly spinning torus of capital that gathers and redeploys new elements throughout its spectral body. Because capital's own internal drive is always devoted to perfecting its systematic nature, capitalist development cannot be theoretically understood in a total manner by simply analyzing its emergence and historical process of maturation in a single "national" conjuncture. In other words, when capital emerges in a specific "national" gradient, it is extremely important to analyze its "specificity" in terms of its own tendency toward systematization, and not as if this "national" element is the kernel of resistance against capital's desire for full and total deployment (a desire that capital can never quite realize but that it takes as the basis of its self-unfolding). Rather, this "national" element is exactly the form of inter-national commensurability that emerges through enclosure, in tandem with capital's own emergence. This logical circuit is the one ignored by Yamada, because to open up inquiry to it would be to admit that we cannot reach the stage of unity without a prior decision—such a primordial decision would be logically unthinkable from the assumed ground of the unitary "form" of the unity "Japan," and therefore the original flux would be chaotic and not a putatively "natural" and stable presence.

Kasai Masaru has given us a summation of the debate and our grasp of its significance today:

For Yamada, Japan in the 1920s and [19]30s was a unique, failed capitalist society characterized by the "structural cohesion of the various categories" of finance capital, semi-serf petty subsistence cultivation, and general crisis. In contrast Sakisaka merely generalized this semi-serf petty subsistence cultivation as a relation subordinate to industrial or finance capital. Yamada emphasized the feudal system as the source of Japan's political specificity as a late-developing capitalist nation, while Sakisaka emphasized its economic generality. But no matter which position one examines, the debate as a whole did not understand the fact that the problems they faced in Japan at the time of the imperialist stage of capitalism were becoming problems for the entire world in that period.⁶⁵

Kasai argues that the debate was characterized by a split between a difference of focus on "specificity" or "generality"—while it can certainly be argued that this sums up the positions in question, such a reading emphasizes, naturalizes, and grounds the split between the two factions as it was presented, when in fact, in the longer intellectual-historical view, both Kōza and Rōnō faction

standpoints tended to converge in their relatively mechanistic dialectic between concrete social-historical circumstances and the logic of capitalism. Perhaps it would be better for the clarity of the debate to put it in stark political terms: the debate was directly political in nature, and beyond the question of the analysis of Japanese capitalism, constituted a struggle over the “line of march”: how could the spark of socialist revolutionary practice emerge? Makoto Itoh points out that despite the more incisive analysis of capitalism as a general system, and more informed reading of Marx, on the part of the Rōnō faction, many of its scholars, including Sakisaka, “tended to avoid the problem of clarifying the specific character of its development . . . in other words, they inclined toward a direct application of Marx’s basic theory to Japanese capitalism.”⁶⁶ He continues: “so long as Rōnō-ha scholars maintain a historical-logical approach to value theory, an excess commodity theory of crisis, and a tendency to interpret Marx rather than innovate, they remain basically quite close to the Kōza-ha. . . . The major difference between the schools centered on the methodological issue of applying basic Marxist concepts to the concrete historical development of Japanese capitalism.”⁶⁷

To an extent, however, this question of the methodological is precisely what Sakisaka emphasized with respect to Yamada’s *Analysis*: by no means did the Rōnō faction deny the “specific character” of Japanese capitalist development. What they did not do, however, was formulate from it the idealist position that such characteristics were capable of remaining so, despite the overlapping emergence of capitalism as a world system. Sakisaka drew significant attention to the fact that none of the “features” considered by Yamada and much of the Kōza faction to indicate the existence of “semi-feudalism” were necessarily feudal. Low wages, an impoverished countryside with oppressive and crushing conditions of land tenancy, and so forth cannot in themselves be considered feudal or even semi-feudal without carefully clarifying their position in the totality of social relations existing in the total social formation. Thus Yamada’s *Analysis* seemed to stem more from a sense of fitting the relations obtaining in the conjuncture to the political project articulated by the JCP.

Nevertheless, and perhaps unintentionally, the Kōza faction’s position can be charitably reread today: by constantly emphasizing the remnants of feudalism, and incessantly pointing out the problems of a supposedly “incomplete” transition to modernity, they touched on an essential political aspect of the present day—the fact that the transition to capitalism is an ongoing, constant process of capture, a constant attempt by capital to “capitalize” any exterior, and therefore a simultaneous constant creation of exteriors and difference. That is, it reminds us of the need for a more fluid understanding of the period

of primitive accumulation, not as a moment but as an ongoing process, a process that is never a *fait accompli*, never *fait* but always *à faire*, something that is always still “to be done” for capitalism.⁶⁸

Where the Kōza faction failed was in its discourse of “form”⁶⁹—it was precisely this logic that made them incapable of truly reflecting on the mutually interlocking, symbiotic, and bidirectionally imbricated relation of nationalism, imperialism, and subjugation. Because the eternal “form” of Japanese capitalism (and by extension, Japanese society as a whole) was “semi-feudal, semi-serfdom,” they tended to naturalize “specificity” as an originary, grounding force of difference, thereby placing a hierarchized and static world schema based on the unit of the “modern” nation-state at the core of their theoretical project. In doing so, they neutralized their ability to dissect the power relations of imperialism, nationalism, and uneven capitalist development, because they sought the origin of these factors in the eternality of the form of the nation itself, rather than the reverse—it is in fact the case that the liminal space of fantasy called “nation” is produced on the basis of the operations of capture propelled by capitalism. Uno Kōzō has argued that “the influence of these debates [that emerged] in the wake of the debate on Japanese capitalism on young economists, historians, and political theorists has remained deep, even today. To a certain extent, this shows us that the question of how *Capital* can be used in the analysis of such a concrete situation has still not been adequately clarified.”⁷⁰ Uno identifies the essential problem for us of “application” here, but it is a larger question than simply the organizational problem of how to (or indeed whether it is even possible to) “apply” *Capital* to a given social formation. Rather, what is at stake in rereading the debate on Japanese capitalism, a debate exemplified by these two figures, is nothing less than the contemporaneity of the question of influence and application in *general*, the question of what is at stake in history itself, how history is articulated to the grasp of the present, and how indeed that process of articulation can allow human beings to create for themselves new social forms capable of responding to the power of capture of both capitalism and the ever-retreating form of the nation-state.

Historicities of “Late Development”

In the dominant positions of the debate on Japanese capitalism, virtually no one examined Marx’s late writings on the development of capitalism in Russia, which his writing (as well as that of Engels) frequently dealt with in the decade after finishing *Capital*.⁷¹ These writings have been extensively ex-

amined for their subtle and important treatment of the “national question” and reveal Marx to be a creative, dynamic, and critical thinker who “refused to deduce social reality from his own books,”⁷² who dramatically shifted the conclusions of his own methods of inquiry in the face of new situations. But perhaps the most interesting aspect of this material, and what makes it useful for us today, is that his writings on the Russian social formation circulate around the question of the transition and on the moment of enclosure in the general development of global capital. Classically, as is now well known, certain historical tendencies in Marxism bestowed on “Europe the burden of world-historical salvation by depicting a singular capitalism with an inbuilt progressive history spreading from Europe to non-Europe, which only secures itself through the systematic erasure of non-European (mapped onto noncapitalist) historical agency.”⁷³ But the way this was historically done in Marxist theory centers around the question of development: does every situation pass through the same set of events? Does, for instance, the Japanese social formation need to experience the transition to capitalism in the manner of the English countryside as depicted in *Capital*? In the debate on Japanese capitalism, therefore, the two positions tended to paradoxically link up in presuming, from two different directions, the ironclad necessity of the English-style “becoming” of capital. For the Kōza faction, the Japanese rural village was simply a block on full development, a sign of irreparable backwardness and low political consciousness, an indication that the Japanese social formation was permanently crippled by its incapacity to realize the “correct” transition; for the Rōnō faction, the Japanese rural village is a form which is merely in the process of disintegrating on the way toward an “archetypal” process following the description of the origin of English capitalism, and its backwardness will be resolved by the inevitable transition to capitalism just as described in *Capital*.

But Marx’s late work, in particular on the Russian question, brings up numerous important points related to this question and to the conception of enclosure. Marx always emphasized, in addition to the internal logic of capital, the “historical interdependence of people and countries in the different periods of global history, that is, the synchronic unity of history”:⁷⁴ the interrelated way capital emerges as a global system, and not simply as one in which various “national” capitals follow in leaps from one situation to another. Rather, the apparently “uneven” (though it is merely one contiguous field from capital’s viewpoint) development of capitalism in relation to the nation-state should always be understood in intertwined terms. In beginning to study the Russian situation carefully, Marx came face-to-face with the need

to theorize the history, origins, and actual functioning of the Russian village commune (*obshchina*), the rural world of the peasantry (*mir*), and the forms of local cooperatives (*artel'*) that continued to exist despite their apparent "backwardness."

Marx's essential point regarding the Russian countryside is that if the village still exists in a semiarchaic form, the point is not that this village is therefore a "remnant" of feudalism. On the contrary, the point is that this "archaic form" has developed into something totally different, a form in which none of the practices, positions, words, bodies, affect, and so forth can be identified as "remnant." Rather, it is part and parcel of capitalist development itself, inseparable from the here and now. "Late" development therefore does not mean "behind" or "lower." It signifies simply that a different set of forms is developed to the highest point established by the total development of capital on a world scale, and that this development is contemporary, not something taking place in a different, backward temporality. This is precisely why, in the well-known letters to Vera Zasulich, Marx points out that "the archaic or primary formation of our globe itself contains a series of layers from various ages, the one superimposed on the other. Similarly the archaic formation of society exhibits a series of different types, which mark a progression of epochs. The Russian rural commune [*obshchina*] belongs to the most recent type in this chain. For this very reason, it is therefore capable of broader development."⁷⁵ He continues: "Its innate dualism admits of an alternative: either its property element will gain the upper hand over its collective element, or vice versa . . . it may become the direct starting point of the economic system towards which modern society is tending and may open a new chapter that does not begin with its own suicide."⁷⁶ The rural commune, therefore, far from appearing to Marx as a "natural" stratum of irreparable backwardness, or the marker of a permanently "crippled" and "inverted" capitalism, had the historical potential to itself be the "fulcrum for social regeneration."⁷⁷ As Shanin points out, what is most interesting here is that Marx, in fact, argued that the Russian situation's course was "the precise reverse of primitive accumulation."⁷⁸ But I think we can also see here that for Marx, primitive accumulation, the movement of enclosure, was not merely the unilateral dispossession of the rural village in a single manner (that of the formation of English capitalism) but was, most important, the creation of a series of bordering-effects that could spark capital's development in a given situation, and that would thereafter constitute the originary precondition for capital's movement.

Therefore, Marx gives an "economic" explanation for this historical element of the differences of enclosure depending on the situation. But his ex-

planation is not an “economism” in the style of the Second International; he does not reduce everything to an inevitability or a European-style process. He simply understands that the level of the economic is something like the “differential virtuality” that Deleuze, for instance, took it to be. At the same time, Marx always resists the “extraeconomic” explanation, precisely because it inevitably falls back into the mirror opposite of economism: the logic of the ancient cultural substratum that determines everything. Hence, Marx’s discussion can be a way to chart an understanding of world capitalism against on the one hand the remobilization of a Eurocentric economic historiography and on the other hand a culturalist or nativist logic of “alternative modernity.”

In this sense, it is interesting to note that Yamada’s theoretical inquiry into the eternal “form” of Japanese capitalism always places the motor force of history outside the economy, naming this “eternally backward” element of the Japanese social formation “extraeconomic coercion” (*keizaigai kyōsei*; *außerökonomischer Zwang*), or the exercise of an eternal feudal power. Ōuchi Tsutomu’s work on the agrarian question in Japanese capitalism extensively analyzed Yamada’s tendency to confuse this question as it relates to enclosure and the form of the Japanese village. He argues that “obviously, on the level of economic history, feudal power was exercised at a certain point in order to dispossess the serf of his land (for example, the enclosures movement in England or the *Bauernlegen* in eastern Germany), but this signifies precisely the process of disintegration [*kaitai*] of the feudal system and the primitive accumulation of capital, not some originary ‘extraeconomic coercion.’”⁷⁹ As Ōuchi points out, Yamada understands the “foundation” (*kitei*) of the social formation through the schematic formula “semi-feudal property relations = semi-serf system petty subsistence cultivation” (*han-hōkenteki tochi shoyū* = *han-reinō reisai kōsaku*) and locates Japanese capitalism as something essentially grafted on to the top of this stratum, thereby locating the motor force of social shifts in the unchanging agricultural stratum, not in the overall capitalist system.⁸⁰ This “structural character” however, is not at all the frozen and eternal “specificity” that Yamada theorized. Rather, it is exactly the specific structural features that are in motion in the becoming-general of a wide sequence of specificities, the formation process of specificity itself in capital’s enclosure of the entire earth. In other words, Ōuchi’s reading is not one that subordinates everything to economy, that says “all contradictions are resolved here.” Rather, it demarcates how in a certain set of circumstances, we encounter the “economically given social period” (*ökonomisch gegebenen Gesellschaftsperiode*)⁸¹ as if it were a type of specificity whose character is eternal. That is, capital is a social relation that always “gives itself” as if it were endless, as if it were

grounded in the putatively “natural” elements it needs to legitimate itself. But in fact, the formation of these supposedly natural and ancient elements is part and parcel of how capital emerges onto the world stage through the enclosure into specific difference of a field of pure heterogeneities. This is why if we attribute some “eternal form” to a given specific “late-developing” capitalist situation in terms of “extraeconomic coercion,” it becomes impossible to clarify its material bases and historical trajectory. This is of course not to “deny the existence of extraeconomic coercion in the sense of the existence of forms of power that operate outside the sphere of economy.” Rather, it is an attempt to “clarify the foundations of such a function of power” and its specificity. But it is never the case “that this thing that functions outside the economy can be considered feudal, or that it can be conflated with the feudal social system,”⁸² as a mark of backwardness, which is, in the final analysis, a simple denial of the “coevalness” of the world as a whole.⁸³

This logic of the “extraeconomic” in Yamada’s discussion shows us precisely why there are many problems with locating the resistance to capital in something like the stratum of “culture,” in the substantiality of specific difference. The analysis of the enclosures, however, shows us precisely that this stratum cannot be equated to the ancient practices or ancient cultural stratum that cannot be captured. Instead, even if the practices are similar, the enclosures movement (taken as a very broad category of the formation of specific difference which enabled the world to become a world of nation-states) has ensured that these practices now connote something completely different, that they are now commensurable with capitalist development. In other words, capital is always *creating* the local, forming specificities, and organizing a systematic accumulation of differences. Thereafter, capital attempts to show that it is itself “indigenous,” that its functioning stems from its locality. But this is capital’s basic trick: to take those conditions that it itself posits and retroactively claim them as the necessary preconditions for its own full deployment. The enclosure of elements into regions of specific difference establishes a regime according to which difference is itself always mobilized for capital’s smooth functioning.

Although there are numerous necessary reading strategies of these texts that I cannot adequately cover here, I want to briefly inquire into this “remnant” structure of Japanese capitalism put forward in the various forms deployed by thinkers articulating the historiographical positions of the Kōza faction. Where does this discourse stem from? Certainly, this historical logic is by no means unique to the Japanese situation. Before these thinkers developed this question of the “feudal remnant” (*hōkenteki zanshi*; *hōkensei no zansonbutsu*),

this question of the remnants or survivals of feudalism was a critical point of debate and contention in the international communist movement. It was an essential problem that Marx considered in his late work of the 1870s, and a problem that characterized the discussions of Lenin and others on the development of capitalism in Russia.

Slightly later, in the mid- to late 1920s, before Yamada and others theorized this specific structure of backwardness, the question of “feudal survivals” was the distinguishing feature of Stalin’s discussions of the prospects of the revolutionary movement in China, as well as the central point around which his line was distinguished from that of Radek, in a number of texts, such as his 1927 “Talks with Students of the Sun Yat-Sen University.” The first question posed by the students to Stalin was precisely this one: was the Chinese social formation experiencing the transition to capitalism, the imperialist entry and capitalization of the existing social relation, or was something completely different occurring? Was Radek correct to emphasize the role of global capital in identifying the primary contradictions in the social formation, or was this the wrong site of analysis? This something different, the other site that they asked after, is the question of the “feudal remnants” (*ostatkov feodalizma*), the “remains,” “traces,” or continued existence of elements of the feudal system. Stalin’s reply was precisely that Radek’s mistake lay in underestimating these “traces,” that he consistently misunderstood how these traces—Stalin here uses a slightly different phrase, “feudal vestiges” or “relics” (*perezhitkov feodalizma*)—intersected with the encroachment of world imperialism into and in concert with the development of the roots of capitalism in China. That is, Stalin drew attention to the “specificity” of this situation, the particular hegemonic “combination” (*sochetaniia*) in which the ongoing development of merchant capital in the village coexisted with the “maintenance of feudal-medieval methods of exploitation and oppression of the peasantry” (*sokhraneniia feodal’no-srednevekovykh metodov ekspluatatsii i ugneteniia krest’ianstva*). For Stalin, it was this specific “combination” that led to the particularly “militarist” nature of capitalism in China, the fact that militarism and a whole series of feudal “survivals” therefore constituted a “superstructure” built onto the top of this “singularity” in China. Therefore, world imperialism and its process of development went hand in hand with the continuance and strengthening of the whole of “the feudal-bureaucratic machine” (*feodal’no byurokraticheskuyu mashinu*).⁸⁴

Clearly, we should recognize that this conception of the problem is precisely the same as Yamada’s theoretical schematics. In other words, in a double movement, we cannot reduce the discourse of the feudal remnant to a

theoretical “particularity” of the Japanese situation. In fact, the Kōza faction form of historiography and political economy is exactly the mainstream of the global communist movement of the 1920s and 1930s, as we have seen, for example, in the remarkable terminological consistency between Yamada, Kuusinen, Stalin, and others. It is not a logic, therefore, of the “particularity” of “Japan,” it is a logic of “particularity” in general. This point is extremely important, because it demonstrates that the Kōza faction’s intellectual position cannot be dismissed in an inversion of their own logic: we cannot simply say that they were obsessed with “Japanese-ness.” On the contrary, they exemplify a general tendency in Marxist historiography and political economy that locates a global project in a network of “particularities,” a project that was developed to an extremely high theoretical level in the Japanese intellectual world, and it is this broad, global logic that is the problem.

Thus, one of the essential “translational” problematics that we can see operating centrally in this debate on the emergence of capitalism is precisely the “translatability” of the conceptual sequence of these terms: singular, particular, specific, universal, general, and so on. How does the “singular”—technically this is how we should understand the term, as it is put forward in various translations as “peculiar conditions”—come to be conceptually translated as “particularity,” which in turn comes to be understood as that which impedes, restrains, or holds back the movement of capital?

Marx’s own project does not endorse the logic of this massification of particularities in the least but emphasizes that capital grafts itself divergently onto various singularities and recomputes them. Therefore, the “specific conditions” that obtain in a given space should be understood as “peculiar” in the sense of “singular” and not as “deviant” from something supposedly “central” or “normal”: capital names a relation in which it posits its own “deviances.” That is, capitalism is always mobilizing the “particular” not in opposition to the “universal” but as part of the same movement: capitalism is always something like a “continuity in discontinuity.”⁸⁵ Therefore, the “world of particularities” envisaged in a global schema of various national “forms” of development and their temporal position can never be a “tool” for radical politics: this schematic is capital’s own blueprint for its expansion as a “continuity in discontinuity.”

In general, what is behind this series of problems? The question of the “feudal remnant” is not simply a way of talking about the rather obvious overlapping features of unevenness, asymmetricality, or contingency in the development of modernity—it goes without saying that such “feudal remnants” are always present in capitalist transition. Certain Marxist theoreticians, in par-

ticular Rosa Luxemburg, argued that primitive accumulation was not a period, as Marx described it, but rather an ongoing and endless process of violence against and expropriation of the exterior. But in the prewar Marxist discourse in the Japanese context (and in many other situations), the “feudal remnant” is understood first and foremost as a constraint, a material hindrance on “full” participation in the world as a schema. It is essentially a stand-in term for a remnant “ethnos,” “belonging,” or “kinship relations”—in short, an understanding of the traces of *gemeinschaft* overlapping the emergence of *gesellschaft*—and functions primarily to outline an image of the national community, thereby “explaining” its position in the international order.⁸⁶

But as an analytic device and heuristic lever, the entire structure of the discourse of the feudal remnant is thus reliant on the givenness and naturality of the form of the nation-state. That is, the national form is presumed to be something whose characteristics were concretized and fixed in antiquity, forms that continue to overdetermine the historicity of capital’s entry into the situation. But we must always confront the fact that, roughly speaking, the national community as a form is broadly coemergent with capital’s world deployment. In other words, the world as a systematic generality composed of a network of specificities (nation-states) is a schema that capitalist development has historically utilized in order to deploy itself. (We should always understand this role of the ongoing and repeating formation and maintenance process of the nation-state in relation to Marx’s discussion of primitive accumulation, the role of “enclosure.”) Therefore, the global Marxist theoretical culture of the time often seems incapable of understanding the historical role played by the formation of the nation-state, the process by which capital then localizes itself in a certain gradient and uses its enclosure of that gradient to legitimate its own existence. In other words, their analyses are dependent on understanding the form of national specificity as a unity that preexists the modern advent of a particular, in this case Japanese, capitalism, the state juridical form, and so forth. But this logic hampers their analyses dramatically, it prevents them entirely from developing a more theoretically coherent understanding of the phenomenon of backwardness—that is, they see backwardness as a fixed, given form and not as an ongoing production. This problem has largely overdetermined the historical development of the Marxian understanding of the national form and its relation to the form of the colony.

Capitalist development, the way capital gathers its elements and deploys itself on a global scale, is always intimately related to its political and juridical antecedents in the form of structures of commodification and classification. These structures spurred on and necessitated not only the development of the

international state system and colonial expansion but also and at the same time the development of capitalism, which always works on a global scale (while nevertheless relying on the national border and colonial difference to effect its work). Therefore, a critical site of analysis for rethinking the debate on Japanese capitalism, one that demonstrates the importance and cruciality of postcolonial studies, is precisely the analysis of the historical formation of “backwardness,” of the epistemological consequences of capital’s complex development as a “heterogeneity in homogeneity.” In fact, a great many of the prejudices, the forms of exclusion and inclusion, that have historically structured the modern world have been formed on the basis of this judgment of backwardness. Consequently, we must continually ask this question: Why did the internal emergence of the capitalist system not only require the transformation of immediate conditions to be suitable for the emergence of capital but also require an expansion elsewhere and marking of territoriality with the inscription of difference? Through the analysis of sites such as the astonishing depth and force of the theoretical legacy of Marxist theory in the Japanese case, wherein the “national question” was exposed to an unprecedented intensity of analysis, we can expand the potentiality of postcolonial studies as a critical force in the analysis of contemporary conditions of life.

The project of postcolonial studies has often put these judgments of “backwardness” into question for their universalizing assumptions, their inherent Eurocentrism, and their patronizing logic whereby the incapacity of the “natives” to effectively revolt is grounded in a putative scientificity. If we push this tendency further, we can develop this broad problematic of why and how the colonial difference comes to be inscribed in the national itself, and how this process of inscription plays an essential role in capitalism. The Marxist theoretical slippage from “singular conditions” to “particularities” can be itself addressed by this potential of postcolonial studies, to analyze not “particularities,” as if these exist in a substantial sense, but the historical production of “particularities” as part and parcel of the reproduction of the hierarchy of the world order around the “West and the Rest.”

I do not mean by this argument to diminish the political importance of the history of national liberation struggles and anticolonial national movements.⁸⁷ But it seems to me that the potential of the politicality of postcolonial studies also lies in this complementary site of analysis, one that can be creatively developed in order to account for a new situation of capitalist development and global security today, in which the nationalisms of the dominated have become compatible and useful effects for this global domination

itself. In other words, if we merely valorize “local” nationalisms as a theoretical means of resisting the hegemony of “imperial” nationalism, we will miss the important problem seen in the debates in Marxist theory on the origins of capitalist development in Japan: if we merely take the “national” as a given natural stratum of existence, as a simple presupposition, we will be unable to identify the essential operation of how this “national” element is continually reproduced in tandem with the reproduction of capital on a global scale.

Hence, Naoki Sakai, for instance, has incisively emphasized that the identity of belonging to the nation-state always-already contains the irreversible time of the history of colonialism, and that therefore the postcolonial condition that we experience today is precisely the “present existence of the history of colonialism” contained in the form of national belonging.⁸⁸ Therefore, the “post” in “postcolonial” should be understood in precisely the way Marx described the “post-festum” nature of all social reason in capitalist society. That is, capital is a social relation that is always positing its own retrospective legitimation. Similarly, it is now, in the postcolonial present, that we truly see the end products of the form of the colony, of the techniques of ordering that were developed in colonialism. Capital’s own process of becoming is constantly showing us this effect in its own internal operation; in turn, it is Marx’s work and project that attempted most rigorously to expose and conceptually isolate the most elemental form of this imbrication or complicity. It is never the case that all situations are thus characterized by some moral equivalency or that there is a lack of ethical differentiation between various types of situations. Such judgments can only be made as active-practical relations to a given situation in a given moment. But the legacy of colonialism, and the irreparable history of the colonial past, is a sedimented and irredeemable element of the form of the nation-state itself—we might even say that “colonization” can also be understood as the process of enclosure of the nation-state itself, the violent concatenation of elements into a putative national unity. That is, there can be no such thing as a nation-state that is not bound up to some degree with the colonial index of modernity—hence the reason why Foucault continuously pointed out in his work of the late 1970s and early 1980s that no state can avoid becoming involved in racism at some point. This formulation does not indicate that therefore power relations among nation-states are irrelevant. On the contrary, the relations of power among and between nation-states remain a critical problem for politics and thought. But if today there is also something like postcoloniality as a general effect that conditions global life, this tells us something important about the historical and theoretical relation

between colonialism and capitalist development taken as a whole. Indeed, it is this problem that requires us to formulate new ways of posing the “national question” to account for this situation today.

The contemporary global order of the world, whose unit is the nation-state, is of course stratified and uneven. But capital itself can always account for this—in fact, capital names that social relation that relies precisely on folding its resistant exterior back into its own internal workings. Capital in essence may take various distorted “national” forms, but even when these forms are apparent deviations, it is accomplishing its own project. The historical presupposition for the becoming of capitalism is the existence of certain organized social forces that are capable of commodifying labor power, forces that are capable of ordering, dividing, and redeploying sequences that have been made commensurable with each other and with capitalist production. In order for capital to exist, there must have been a set of presuppositions that allowed and fostered its becoming. Many of these forms are guaranteed and secured by the state, by the way the state gives itself an image of the “nation,” which folds back onto itself and attempts to legitimate it. It is exactly on this point that the debate on Japanese capitalism can be a critical force, not only for the critical reexamination of the Marxist theoretical legacy but also for the renewal of Marxist theory. That is, through this moment, we can take up the “national question” in a completely different manner from the way Marxist theory has traditionally understood it, by emphasizing a return to the “relations of production,” not merely understood in a strictly “economic” way but in terms of the relations and forces at work in the historico-epistemological “production” of “backwardness” and “national particularity” itself. Thus we can analyze the essential role played in the development of the contemporary state system, the continuing coloniality of power that characterizes the contemporary world, by the role of the historiographical “proving” of backwardness based on the concept “area.”

Elements of the National Question

When we imagine “the national question,” we generally think of a field of problems that presume or presuppose the givenness of the nation-form. That is, we often presuppose that the national question involves simply the excavation and categorization of the putatively “national” factors of development, the relative stage of a given national capital in relation to various other national capitals, the dynamics internal to a particular national formation’s reproduction, and so forth. In other words, the national question is typically

posed as if the *national* itself is not a question but an answer: the notion of specificity or particularity is frequently treated here as if it were something that explains rather than something to be explained, a split between *explanans* and *explanandum* that has a long rhetorical history. But we might also say that the national question can be understood in precisely the opposite manner, an insight to which Étienne Balibar's work has long alerted us, reminding us of the importance not just of the state but of the "nation-form," the term he gives to the aggregate of "apparatuses" and "practices" that institute the individual as "*homo nationalis* from cradle to grave."⁸⁹

It is relatively common to conceive of the nation as a form in which *belonging* is organized and to which the state responds. That is, the form of the nation-state is often understood in a commonsensical manner and by means of a simple sequence: the nation must precede the state, because it legitimates and justifies the state, it gives it a certain solidity that would otherwise be lost in attempting to link the state's boundaries to a given community. But this sequence cannot be logically sustained, for a number of reasons. First and foremost, if the nation were to precede the state, it would imply that a concept of *boundary* or *border* could be rigorously drawn between one nation and another prior to the advent of the modern *political* community. It would imply, for instance, that national language or custom could be strictly delimited or demarcated within boundaries that corresponded to concrete differences on the level of the *concept*. This in turn would imply that prior to such nations, there would exist a *natural stratum of difference*, in which difference could be understood as *already* organized. In this sense, it would imply that each national community was simply a historical concretization of a set of differences that existed not only in antiquity but eternally, in an infinite regress, but always corresponding to some natural hierarchy that would be inscribed in the earth itself.

Needless to say, we know, and have known for centuries, that such a conception of an inherent systematic ordering of difference inscribed in the earth can never be said to have existed. Nations rise and fall, they are constituted and dispersed, the borders of languages fluctuate and mutate in historically complex waves, groupings emerge, accidentally aggregated groups become "peoples," migrate, resettle, colonize, are colonized, are eradicated or flourish. None of the communities that emerge from or submerge into the historical body of the earth has ever corresponded to a prior systematic *ordering of difference*, in which its divergences and continuities could be simply "proven" by reference to a given "natural" stratum. This leads us, therefore, to assert the precise opposite of the commonly held wisdom. In other words, it is that the state—a social form always associated with an *intensive* concentration of sys-

tems and institutions that in turn are made to correspond to an *extensive* territoriality and formation of borders—must always precede the nation. This would lead us quickly to another means of understanding why the nation-form is so critical to modernity in general, but also to two fundamental characteristics of modernity as we know it: its irreversible historical fact of imperialism and colonialism, and the fundamental basis of modern social relations in the form that we call “capital.”

If we tendentially accept a divergent ordering of the common wisdom of the formation of the nation-state as a building block or unit of analysis through which the modern inter-national state system was formed and continues to be maintained, it remains to be clarified why this form of the nation should be *necessarily* produced. In thinking this problematic, there is, for instance, the famous line from Alfred Jarry’s *Ubu roi*, later utilized by Lacan: “Long live Poland, for without Poland there would be no Poles!”⁹⁰ This apparently cursory line in fact theoretically condenses the problem: at first glance, this statement has a certain uncanny functioning in its recalibration of the expected dynamic of relation between the nation-form and the national subject. It strikes us as humorous precisely because it apparently implies its inverse—“There must be Poles first, so that they can constitute a Poland”—as a matter of course. But in fact we should read it in a quite faithful manner: the national people, as an extension of the *presupposed* national subject, is a production of the nation-form, itself a technology of belonging that is subsequent to the form of the state, and not the reverse. That is, the supposedly “concrete,” “obvious,” and “real” national subject is in fact always a derivation from the most abstract schema of modern life.⁹¹

But behind this problem of the temporality or ordering of the genesis of the nation-form lies a more basic problem of the national question. Because the national question is essentially concerned with the specificity or particularity of a “given” national scenario, its peculiar developmental features, and so forth, the national question is always linked to a specific field of historical concerns. That is, it is always linked to the question of the *transition*. The various debates on the transition to capitalism on a world scale have long been at the center of the problem of the nation-form. Why and for what concrete material reasons should a certain national situation develop a particular arrangement of factors, a particular trajectory of the concentration of capital, particular expressions of social relations, particular “cultural” features or rituals, customs, linguistic specificities, and so on?

This type of question was typically answered by understanding the specific mixture of social factors that were present in the local elements that

preceded a given transition to capitalism. Was there a strong feudal social stratum, as in western Europe, with its broadly developed seigneurial system and burgeoning urban centers? Was there a type of “absolutist” social system with an inverted form of overpopulation in the rural village rather than the city, as in the Russian or Japanese countryside? Was there a strong legal character to the transition, as in the English Enclosures Act and “Poor Laws,” both throwing the peasantry off the land and simultaneously criminalizing movement through the category of “vagabondage,” or as in the eastern German *Bauernlegen*, stripping land tenancy protections from small farmers and subordinating them to a vast estate system? And what about the profoundly colonial character of the transition to a world capitalist system throughout Africa, South and East Asia, and Latin America, wherein the growing global character of markets was from the very outset tied to the experience of slavery and imperial plunder of natural resources?

What we see in all these cases is that the transition to capitalism has always been tightly linked to the history of the formation and global ordering of putatively national communities. In this sense, the historical background of the transition to world capitalism, situated just behind the formation of the global and systematic arrangement of the world on the basis of the form of the nation-state, is always linked to the *production of national subjectivity*. That is, the nature and character of the national question, when investigated historically and theoretically, always reveals itself to be first and foremost a question of *how* this peculiar and generalized arrangement, in which territory, human beings, and social systems are articulated together into national units, came into existence in the first place. This question of *why* this particular arrangement should obtain, as opposed to the infinite variety of other possibilities of social organization, is involved from its very origins with the production of individuals who would furnish, in their forms of citizenship, and above all, their supposed forms of subjectivity, the “raw materials” through which the nation-form could emerge, this *homo nationalis* that the social apparatuses of our modern world system essentially presuppose. This question is critical on the level of historiography, precisely because it can be a instructive direction from which to rethink the questions of “late development” and the relation between the general and the specific, between the logic of capital and the logic of the concrete situation.

Dipesh Chakrabarty in his influential *Provincializing Europe* has attempted to theorize this problem through an attempt to divide the question of history into two categories, what he calls History 1 and History 2. Chakrabarty theorizes History 1 as the internal logic of capital itself, what he calls “a past

posited by capital itself as its precondition.”⁹² In other words, Chakrabarty understands this History 1 as the essential motor force or dynamics of how capital finds and maintains its own narrative, the history that it tells to itself. For Chakrabarty, this is capital’s own “universal and necessary history,” the internal circuit that is never interrupted or concerned with the “local” but only with its own ceaseless, smooth circuit-process. On the other hand, he argues that there is also in Marx something Chakrabarty calls History 2, those narratives and forms of history that “do not belong to capital’s life process,” things that, although they may contribute to the reproduction of capital, do not necessarily “lend themselves” to capital.

These “History 2s” are the central question for Chakrabarty, because for him they “inhere in capital and yet interrupt and punctuate the run of capital’s own logic.”⁹³ Therefore, History 1 must constantly attempt to destroy or subjugate these History 2s, which contain alien elements that cannot be digested or integrated into capital’s own smooth circuit-process. For Chakrabarty, this distinction is an attempt to get beyond the duality of “inside” and “outside” of capital, an attempt to deal with how difference itself can be accounted for despite the global totality of capitalist development. History 2, in this schema, is not simply the other of History 1, because for Chakrabarty, this creates a subordination of History 2 under History 1, effectively erasing that very “difference” that persists despite global capitalist domination. Instead, he argues, “History 2 is better thought of as a category charged with the function of constantly interrupting the totalizing thrusts of History 1.” That is, History 2 is an assemblage of pasts that, although subject to the domination of capital, are nevertheless sources of energy for the resistance of life to capital, sites of life-practice and relation in which nothing is “automatically aligned with the logic of capital.” Chakrabarty therefore brings up the question of factory discipline, the role played by this form of control and domination, arguing that “the idea of History 2 suggests that even in the very abstract and abstracting space of the factory that capital creates, ways of being human will be acted out in manners that do not lend themselves to the reproduction of the logic of capital,” or History 1. This idea thus “allows us to make room for the politics of human belonging and diversity” amid the totalizing force of capital’s own internal logic.⁹⁴

As a result, Chakrabarty argues that no historically appearing form of capital ever constitutes a universal, but rather such forms are always assemblages composed out of a certain balance of elements of History 1 and History 2, which are in a constant and cyclical relation of interrupting each other. Thus, he exhorts us to write history in ways that acknowledge and follow the inter-

twined problematics of History 1 and History 2, ways we might be able to grasp the “more affective narratives of human belonging” that are constantly interrupting capital’s smooth logic of progressive accumulation.⁹⁵ In many ways, I agree with this project—it is one that certainly attempts to address and effectively dislocate the universal narrative of modernization that underpins much of the self-legitimizing writing that calls itself “history.” Chakrabarty seems to believe that History 1 (the logic of capital) exists at a strong distance from History 2 (the multiple life-practices that do not inhere in capital), and that therefore resistance takes place in History 2, resistances that mobilize History 2’s internal tendency to “interrupt” or “punctuate” the logic of capital as a closed circuit. Chakrabarty insinuates that History 2 therefore is essentially “difference,” while History 1 is “homogeneity,” or “sameness.” Or to rephrase the political consequences of this (at risk of simplification), he implies that History 1 is the universal spread of global capital, a logic with its origins in a Western narrative of modernity, while History 2 names the subaltern, particular sites of incomplete capitalization, those sites whose “life-processes” are not necessarily countable by Western modernization.

But the problem with this logic is that therefore the “interruptive” or resistant function of History 2 comes to be located in a bounded past (all those sites that presumably do not “fully” embody the logic of capital) and in a bounded territorialized zone. The consequence of this is that in practice, such a logic can never get past the “inside/outside” dichotomy, because “resistance” is always placed entirely outside the network of power. That is, this theory cannot account for the problem of the origin of capital as a social relation across a specific and immediate local landscape, the point that grounds the entirety of capitalist accumulation and its spread, because it does not pay adequate attention to how capital’s logic relates to its outside. Labor power is an outside, but it is an outside that is always-already being folded back into the internal workings of capital and posited as a production of its own laws, so we must understand that capital paradoxically is always mobilizing something like “heterogeneity in homogeneity,” it is always mobilizing this external element of resistance as an essential building block of its own operation. This, for instance, is why Uno’s crucial emphasis on the relation of the impossibility of the commodification of labor power to the specificity of the law of population is an essential wager that parallels Foucault’s analysis of the role of biopower in the maintenance of the state.⁹⁶ In Chakrabarty’s discussion, all power exists on the side of History 2, on the side of “specificity,” in its power of interruption, while History 1 only exists in order to be interrupted. But this cannot account for the way capital deploys the production of “specificities” themselves;

that is, for capital, this “History 2” is not the resistant exterior that prevents History 1 from effecting its complete self-deployment but something that always exists in a corollary, complementary, or complicit relation to it.

Today two broad positions are deeply entrenched in the realm of contemporary theory: the “local,” “native,” or “particular,” which legitimates the subtractive possibilities of certain situations (typically national or civilizational) to resist the hegemonizing and flattening effect of global capitalism—this can be seen in the various discourses of “alternative modernity,” of return to the “nonaligned” political movements of decolonization, of “resistant” forms of national development, and so forth. On the other hand is the continual deployment of strong universalisms from a variety of vantage points. Such “universalist” positions place the emphasis on the fact that every expression of putatively “local” difference is already being mobilized within capital’s range, that capital can effectively compute these differences in its own internal calculus and that such particularisms therefore can never resist capital’s total spread across the earth. Focusing on questions like the history of debates on the transition to capitalist modernity, particularly outside the West, can allow us to bypass the dead end produced in the encounter between these two positions. By emphasizing the moments of enclosure, when specificities are formed in order to effect the movement of the general, we can keep in sight the complicity generated between such particularisms and universalisms, the space of overlapping or bordering therefore makes these two “sides” appear. The question of the very precise way the incommensurable is rendered commensurable by capitalist production demonstrates an analytical possibility outside this double bind. This is precisely why the unresolved debate on Japanese capitalism is one of the sites par excellence in which to see what possibilities exist if we change the way we examine fields of problems like the national question from a divergent point of entry. It is in this sense that now we must try to connect these points, formed out of the specificity of the debate on Japanese capitalism, back into the core of Marx’s work itself, and one of its most complex problems: the concept of the so-called primitive accumulation.

PRIMITIVE ACCUMULATION,
OR THE LOGIC OF ORIGIN

The function of the concept of origin, as in original sin, is to summarize in one word what has to not be thought in order to be able to think what one wants to think.

—LOUIS ALTHUSSER, “From Capital to Marx’s Philosophy”

Die Erbsünde wirkt überall.

The original sin is at work everywhere.—KARL MARX, *Capital*

In 1931, the young JCP leader and theorist Noro Eitarō answered an interviewer from the mass magazine *Sararīman* in the following manner:

QUESTION: What are the reasons or motivations behind your current work?

NORO: Born as the child of one of the “openers” [*kaitakusha*] of the colonies, from a young age I grew up directly exposed on the one hand, to the essential dignity of labor, and on the other hand, to the “mechanism” or “device” [*karakuri*] of capital called “primitive accumulation” [*genshiteki chikuseki*], that is, to the inherent irrationality [*fugōri*] of the capitalist system.¹

Noro’s statement theoretically condenses and crystallizes a genealogical sequence of problems that we must address: the colonality of the birth of capitalism, the specific mechanisms or devices that capital deploys in order to realize itself, and the rethinking of the process of primitive accumulation, which supplies us with the crucial moment around which capital’s irrationality

can nevertheless function smoothly. In this sense, Noro effectively shows us the volatile contamination of logic and history that forms the basis of the capitalist system, a systematic expression of the (ir)rational birth or immaculate conception of capital, an improbable or excessive outcome of a contingent historical scenario that is recoded as the necessary order of events. Why is it necessary for us to address this question?

First and foremost, it must be said that the concept of primitive accumulation was not deeply taken up as a *concept* in the debate on Japanese capitalism. Rather, it was understood largely as a *given*. This is precisely why, as we saw in the previous chapter, Uno Kōzō argued that the debate itself was not really a debate to clarify the nature of Japanese capitalism but a kind of indirect debate over the status of Marx's *Capital*. Could this schematic of the birth of capitalism, its maintenance, and logical trajectory, be simply "applied" to another scenario in which the basic terms and relations were composed in different arrangements? Could the fundamental relations of a capitalist society be generated without the precise image of the "doubly free wage labor" of the English countryside?

Having examined these questions from the vantage point of the national question, and from the vantage point of the transition from feudalism, it is time to change our approach somewhat, and take Uno's argument at face value. In other words, it is time to return directly to Marx, taking in this specific history of the debate on Japanese capitalism, while trying to utilize the "facts" of this debate as a leverage to force Marx's work to open up to divergent theoretical possibilities. In addition, it is the concept of primitive accumulation that links together two problems that are circulating together, but not precisely in the same way, in the background of these questions. The two problems are the emergence of capital and the emergence of the nation-state in a given social formation. Historically, these two phenomena, crucial to our modern world schema, have often been theorized separately, or even treated as unconnected phenomena. It is entirely possible, and in fact has been the typical modality of analysis, as discussed in the preceding chapter, to treat the national question in Marxist theory on the basis of the *givenness* of the nation. Alternatively, numerous studies of the transition to capitalism have been undertaken, in many cases generating important and original results, while nevertheless assuming the basic category of the nation-form, as if it were something geological or natural rather than something *political*. What I want to do now, therefore, with the basic mechanics of the debate on Japanese capitalism accounted for, is to enter into a primarily theoretical discussion that aims to

produce a different reading of the concept of primitive accumulation, with the goal of linking together these two problematics.

In his lecture “La solitude de Machiavel,” Althusser makes an exceptionally insightful remark about the force of Machiavelli’s thought, one that gives us an initial starting point for this chapter:

Machiavelli is perhaps one of the few witnesses to what I shall call *primitive political accumulation*, one of the few theoreticians of the beginnings of the national state. . . . In doing so, Machiavelli casts a harsh light on the beginnings of our era: that of bourgeois societies. He casts a harsh light too, by his very utopianism, by the simultaneously necessary and unthinkable hypothesis that the new state could begin anywhere, *on the aleatory character of the formation of national states*. For us they are drawn on the map, as if forever fixed in a destiny that always preceded them. For him, on the contrary, they are largely aleatory, their frontiers are not fixed, there have to be conquests, but how far? To the boundaries of languages or beyond? To the limits of their forces? We have forgotten all of this.²

To my knowledge, Althusser never in any of his later writings expanded on what precisely he meant by this enigmatic comparison, but he gives us the most decisive clue, a thread of inquiry that inhabits Marx and Machiavelli in common here. That is, the aleatory character, the aleatory historicity, of the nation-state. In other words, Althusser does not draw a parallel between so-called primitive accumulation and its political expression in a loose sense: he identifies these two moments through their aleatory nature.

I would like to once again emphasize that the form of the nation-state itself, and the question of primitive accumulation in capitalist development, are two sites where the fundamental relation between capital’s *logical topology* and its *historical cartography* express a relationship of torsion, which is in turn the moment in which the potentiality of politics glimmers for an instant. It is this crossover between the logical interior of capital and the historical exterior of the nation-state that is critical in the process of primitive accumulation, the process by which an origin can be presumed precisely where an origin cannot be found, a process in which the historical occurrence is erased, or rather “disappears in the results.” In short, we might say that *capital itself is the continuous logical space of which primitive accumulation is the historical incident or happening*, and by excavating all the implications of this formulation, I will try to use it as a divergent point of entry into the national question.³ In order to expand the theoretical analysis of this set of problems, problems profoundly situated in

the history of the debate on Japanese capitalism, I must now detour back to a fundamental inquiry into the “so-called primitive accumulation” itself.

The “Original Sin” of Primitive Accumulation

This analysis of “primitive accumulation” begins from the eighth part of the first volume of *Capital* and takes up that volume’s final eight chapters. This placement is not an accident—it is arguable that this analysis constitutes the decisive summation of the entire set of problems concentrated in this enigmatic social relation called “capital” itself, and thus important attention has been drawn precisely to Marx’s “method of presentation.”⁴ Equally important at the very outset of this analysis is to note that the object of inquiry is not “primitive accumulation” as such, but an analysis of “the so-called primitive accumulation.” For Marx, the problem originates from the fact that the analysis of the self-expansion of capital requires an endlessly regressive series of presuppositions: the movement of accumulation presupposes the existence of surplus value, surplus value presupposes that capitalist production is already established, the existence of capitalist production presupposes the existence of labor power that can be commodified, and the existence of this most fundamental thing for capitalism presupposes its creation. Thus he argues, “the whole movement seems to turn in a vicious circle” requiring that we assume what Adam Smith called the “previous accumulation,” one not resulting from capitalism’s established functioning but one from which it itself begins to move. Thus, “primitive accumulation plays in political economy about the same part as original sin in theology.” But primitive accumulation does not indicate a break with a former “idyllic” age; rather it is “notorious that conquest, enslavement, robbery, murder, briefly, force, play the great part.”⁵

The peasantry, in being expropriated from the land, is “freed” in order to be reconstituted as the essential motor force of capitalism itself: labor power as a commodity. Thus capitalism, in growing out of the previous mode of production, could only begin its functional circuit so long as the previous blocks (the village community, communal property, self-sufficient agricultural production for use value, and so on) were removed as obstacles for the “free” development of communal owners into nonowners of anything but their labor power, and feudal semiowners into private landholding owners of means of production, in particular, land. As he explains, money, commodities, the means of production, and so forth are not themselves capital, and cannot become capital without a process of transformation, and this transformation “can only take place under certain circumstances that center in this, viz., that

two very different kinds of commodity possessors must come face to face and into contact.”⁶ We will develop this last point in a very specific direction in order to read the process of primitive accumulation as the process of the formation and capture of difference, the making-equivalent of difference in order to set in motion the circuit-process of not only capitalist development, but its corollary schema, the “international world.” This problem is one of a general movement of “capture” or “enclosure”; the origin and maintenance of a system by which “encounters” themselves can be understood. In other words, what Marx describes here is not just a process of “freeing” the peasantry to become the wage labor required for the formation and rotation of the circuit of capitalist accumulation, it is also at the same time the inverse: it is the closure of heterogeneity—the simple and pure space of difference as such—in order to produce *specific* differences, equivalences that can then “encounter” each other. This “face-to-face” encounter discussed by Marx is predicated on the possibility that the two parties in question can in fact encounter each other at all, a moment made possible only by the process of primitive accumulation understood as a process of the capturing, gathering, and recombining of difference into units capable of a relation.

Marx analyzes in detail the process in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries of the constitution of the “mass of free proletarians,” who were “hurled on the labor market by the breaking-up of the bands of feudal retainers.”⁷ Through the usurpation of formerly commonly held land, and by the forcible removal of the peasantry from its means of livelihood and community, the figure of the small farmer on a self-sufficient small feudal tenancy plot, which had been the basic social position occupied by the former peasantry, was eradicated, resulting in an enormous and unprecedented surge in the population of “free” laborers. Through laws forbidding the cultivation of plots, building of houses, or grazing of livestock unless performed on significant areas of self-owned land, the small farmer was subject to an insurmountable unified surge of force not only in the form of direct violence but also through the indirect violences of the law in the form of subordination to the state. This “parliamentary form of robbery” came through the “Acts for the enclosure of Commons,” in other words, “decrees by which the landlords grant themselves the people’s land as private property, decrees of expropriation of the people.”⁸ Through the massive wave of enclosures, direct acts of violence against the peasantry, and state intervention to ensure the smooth operation of the new formation of massive landholdings, by the “nineteenth century, the very memory of the connection between the agricultural laborer and the communal property, had of course, vanished.”⁹

As he wrote later in his letters, “the chapter on primitive accumulation does not pretend to do more than trace the road by which in Western Europe the capitalist economic order emerged from the womb of the feudal economic order. It thus describes the historical movement [of the] divorcing of the producers from their means of production, transforming them into wage-workers, and the owners of the means of production into capitalists,” and traces therefore a certain “historical tendency of capitalist production.”¹⁰ Marx reminds us in this text of his analysis of the Roman peasantry. There the peasantry were eventually expropriated from the land, divorced from their direct relationship to production, a process that resulted in the formation of large landowners and large money capital. Consequently, this former peasant strata became reduced and dispossessed of all they possessed, except their labor power. But these “Roman proletarians became not wage laborers but an idle ‘Mob,’ more abject than the former ‘Poor Whites’ of the southern states of America; and alongside them developed a mode of production that was not capitalist but based on slavery.”

To return to *Capital*: Marx argues that later, the ultimate form in the British Isles of this process was the “clearances” of Scotland—the wholesale and literal removal of people from the land. But this process was accompanied by an interesting operation: the need to maintain or recombine prior social significations into markers of differentiation, forms of difference that were nevertheless compatible, digestible, and in a relation of equivalence (hierarchy being a form of equivalence, or at least commensurability). Therefore, the “chiefs of the clans by no means gave up their time-honored trade as robbers; they only changed its form. On their own authority they transformed their nominal right into a right of private property, and as this brought them into collision with their clansmen, resolved to drive them out by open force.”¹¹ This “reckless terrorism” was the real face of the “idyllic methods of primitive accumulation.”¹²

Of course, despite the massive delinking of the former peasantry from the land and the village community, industrialization itself proceeded at a slower pace, and thus the newly “freed” laborers were largely turned into “vagabonds,” beggars, criminals, and so on. The “grim irony” pointed out by Marx is that this mass population, after being thrown off the land and forced into nomadic existence, were criminalized for precisely what was done to them. The demand that the state placed on captured and tortured vagabonds and wanderers was that they “return to their birthplace or where they have lived the last three years to put themselves to labor,” but of course such “places” were precisely the lands that had been expropriated from such populations.¹³ This

is the double bind of the creation of the labor-power commodity in the process of primitive accumulation. For Marx, the relative freedom of the former peasantry is an essential precondition of the formation of the capitalist mode of production, because the selling of labor power to the capitalist only becomes necessary with the formation of a labor market, whereby the laborer is “free” to sell to the highest bidder, without the extraeconomic coercion characteristic of feudalism and other precapitalist modes of production. But this “freedom” is complicated by the question of necessity: for Marx, the laborer must be free to sell his or her labor power. Thus, the process of primitive accumulation and its enclosure, followed by the criminalization of vagabondage and wandering, was a process not of freeing in the strict sense, but paradoxically of freeing in order to more effectively “capture” and control the movement and circulation of individuals.

Without this control, which is concretized in the form of equivalence or commensurability given in the wage (and given by the labor-power commodity), the fear is of the chaotic and exponential growth of uncaptured encounters, social confrontations unchecked and occurring without a previous established and ordering hierarchy.¹⁴ Hence, Sandro Mezzadra points out that the “fundamental theme” of Marx’s discussion of primitive accumulation at the end of volume I of *Capital* is the “critical analysis of the process of political and juridical constitution of labor power as a commodity.”¹⁵ We have to pay close attention, therefore, when Marx states that what he investigates is not so much the actual-historical event of the genesis of capitalism as the “historical presuppositions for its becoming,”¹⁶ because for Marx, primitive accumulation, the movement of enclosure, was not merely the unilateral dispossession of the rural village in a single manner (that of the formation of English capitalism) but, most important, the creation of a series of effects that could spark capital’s deployment in a given situation, that would constitute the originary precondition for capital’s movement.

Marx unfolds the historical logic of the process of primitive accumulation by examining first the genesis of the farmer, the formation of domestic industry, and the genesis of the industrial capitalist. Domestic industry is largely formed through precisely the same mechanisms of capture, in that it comes to replace the formerly self-sufficient cultivators, now transformed into wage laborers. Here Marx charts the existence of a certain material continuity between modes of production despite the enclosure and expropriation of the elements of the ancien régime: in giving the example of the flax-spinning industry, Marx points out that “the flax looks exactly as before. Not a fiber of it is changed, but a new social soul has popped into its body.”¹⁷ This “new social

soul” signifies not only the existent commodity form; it signifies the recoding of the material basis of the former order with the inscriptions of the capitalist mode of production, a social order in which the commodity economy is the sole principle.

The (Im)possible Origin of Enclosure

Marx soon examines the other side of subjectivation implied by the process of primitive accumulation: the formation of the industrial capitalist. Here he makes the decisive shift characteristic of his analytic modality by demonstrating that the process of primitive accumulation is not a historical period lived at different stages in different sites but an ideational determination of a total process of capture that cannot be directly correlated to a certain site but emerges as a generative flow in innumerable locations. In his style of grim sarcasm, he states: “The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of blackskins, signalized the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production. These idyllic proceedings are the chief moments of primitive accumulation.”¹⁸ What is decisive here in particular is his mention of Africa as a “warren,” in other words, a bounded, fenced, captured territory ideal for cultivation, breeding, and experimentation, in short, for reproduction. Here Marx points to the formation of “area” or “civilization” as a political technology of control, the effect of bordering (which can be understood as the ideational mapping of primitive accumulation on a global scale) whose primary function is to constantly reproduce the naturalizing and grounding of difference in a phenomenal-material form, thereby legitimizing and sustaining it. This reproduction is essential, because while it is ostensibly intended to signal the reproduction of Africa itself, it is simultaneously and unavoidably a figuration also of the “West,” as something differentiated from this “other” space. We can see that, in this process that forms and constructs the systematic order of “the West and the Rest,”¹⁹ the “secret” of primitive accumulation is not merely the historical process of the constitution of labor power as a commodity but also a complementary or corollary process of drawing boundaries for stable—territorialized—identification. Therefore, this element of capital’s drive to enclose, frame, and order the zones constituting blocks on the ceaseless expansion of accumulation (the Rest) also has the significance of a drive to fully inhabit, to truly become, the West, to violently remove the blocks on a direct self-identity with no remainder.²⁰ In other words, “what capital does

is that it attempts to create life worlds in its own image (like the factory) or to colonize existing ones, to put them to work for its own priorities and drives,”²¹ that is, at this moment of the process of primitive accumulation, the existing social forms are not destroyed but overwritten, recoded, and redeployed with the aforementioned “new social soul”—hence, what begins with the advent of capitalism is not an apocalyptic cleansing and rebirth but the advent of “a general semiology that overcodes the primitive semiotic systems.”²²

The first volume of *Capital*, and its analysis of primitive accumulation, ends with the curious statement: “However, we are not concerned here with the conditions of the colonies. The only thing that interests us is the secret discovered in the new world by the political economy of the old world, and proclaimed on the house-tops: that the capitalist mode of production and accumulation, and therefore capitalist private property, have for their fundamental condition the annihilation of self-earned private property; in other words, the expropriation of the laborer.”²³ Rhetorically, Marx denies that his analysis concerns the “conditions” of the colonies; rather it concerns the “secret” of the colonies. In my view, this is the critical point: that analyzing the “secret,” that is, the expropriation of the laborer as a process, is not merely a question of bringing to light the obvious violence and force exerted in order to effect it, that is, its “conditions.” It is also a question of how to understand the complex and subtle violence of *creation* in the “secret” of capitalist development. That is, this process of enclosure is not only the process of expropriation and dispossession, but also and at the same time, it is a process of the cataloging, diagramming, and fixing of singularities into a hierarchized system of classification that is made commensurable—capable of an “encounter”—but also unequal, hierarchized. Commensurability, that is, the possibility of an articulation between two things based on a shared or common measure, does not mean equivalence. It means that two things are “enclosed” in the same way, that through the emergence of “enclosure,” two things appear where there used to be simply contiguous planar space. This problem of enclosure, the space of tension that it exists in, is identified by Rosa Luxemburg in the following paradoxical formation: “Capital cannot accumulate without the aid of non-capitalist organizations, nor, on the other hand, can it tolerate their continued existence side-by-side with itself.”²⁴ But what specifically does this formulation mean for the question of primitive accumulation? Capital is always trying to flatten the earth, to eliminate all blocks on its smooth motion—for example, the form of “national difference.” Yet at the same time, Marx clearly emphasizes that capitalism is a social order in which it is “economic conditions” that “create conditions and differences among peoples independent of

the ‘State,’”²⁵ and enclosure is the form through which these “conditions” and “differences” are installed.

In other words, capital is a social relation that deploys itself through a complex parallax with the creation of “the people” itself, the violent aggregation of people into “a people,” but this “people” often does not exactly play a role that assists capital. On the one hand capital is incapable of effecting its operation of accumulation on a global scale without exploiting the form of the border, or civilizational difference. On the other hand capital is constrained by these collateral creations, it is constantly running into a double bind: the world in which capital has territorialized itself, the world whose surface capital is trying to completely recode, is not the same as “the world of capital,” in which the accumulation cycle meets no challenges. But, paradoxically—and capital’s “secret,” the “secret” of the “expropriation of the laborer” that Marx has mentioned, is contained in this problem—capital cannot bridge this gap, because this gap or irresolvable tension is in fact what allows capital to discover “labor power,” the raw material for all capitalist production, the one input that capital cannot itself directly create, and therefore the “law of population” that will allow capital to overcome this limitation without resolving it.

Therefore, this strange phenomenon called primitive accumulation, or the (im)possible origin of capital, in which we see the illogical-irrational origin of labor power as a commodity, shows us a densely interwoven knot of problems. By harnessing the flux of singularities into fields, areas, regions, in short, bounded spaces, the process of primitive accumulation can be seen as the quintessential but untraceable origin of modernity, a modernity whose constitutive feature of the transformation of empirical singularities into regions of commensurable difference is itself expressed in its ultimate form in the colonial laboratory of relations and the form of enclosure called the nation-state. Thus, the problem of primitive accumulation, understood in the sense undertaken here as a problem of the capture of empirical singularities and formation-process of hierarchized commensurability, is not merely the problem of the exterior as such but is strictly speaking the problem of *arkhē*, signifying both “commencement and commandment,”²⁶ the problem of the event of origin, but origin in the sense that while it gives foundation, it is also that which comes to control or order (“-archy”), in the form of presuming for itself a starting point that it itself founds.

Holding ourselves in the unstable conceptual space of this problem is exactly what Derrida has long referred to elsewhere as the thought of *différance*. It is precisely what Althusser theorized in his understanding of the contingent encounter or event, the aleatory moment of “becoming-necessary” in

primitive accumulation, in which “everything is accomplished in advance, the structure precedes its elements and reproduces them in order to reproduce the structure.”²⁷ Thus we see that the problem of primitive accumulation is not first and foremost a historical or stage-theoretical problem but a problem of the *logic* of origin itself. Nagahara Yutaka effectively articulates this problem in relation to the question of primitive accumulation when he states: “The specific ‘factual history’ of the formation and emergence of English capitalism, an illogical historical contingency (or precedent), a non-cyclical material event (or accident) for the logical system of the so-called principles of political economy, is always-already being completed—even transformed—on the basis of the logic of capital, and this ‘first return to origins,’ which sustains the integrating procedure of historical reduction as the ‘so-called primitive accumulation’ or the ‘origin’ of capital, can never be cut off from the cycle of logic itself.”²⁸ In other words, the entire problem of primitive accumulation and the movement of enclosures is suffused by an impossible historicity. When we historicize this double process as a historical moment, and locate it in the specific empirical situation of the “becoming” of English capitalism, we are already in the logical circuit of capital’s self-deployment, not simply on a “purely” empirical level of the economic history of a specific site. As soon as we historicize the process of enclosure, we are immediately thrown back on an impasse: is it the logic of capital as a conceptual field that presupposes enclosure as a specific moment, or does this logic already exist, and thereby give rise to this moment? That is, enclosure—or the formation of specific difference out of the flux of pure heterogeneities—is a moment in the Hegelian sense, and not in the sense of linear temporality. Enclosure is a moment of singularity, an untraceable line of capture, a third term that permits the mutual recognition and complicity between the moments of the universal and the particular. Primitive accumulation is not simply the formation of particularities. It is the formation of a network of signification according to which phenomena can be computed in the framework of universal and particular. Thus, it is an irreparable moment of the modern condition, whose effects we are still living through. Paradoxically, primitive accumulation is something that we, who are already situated in a broad spectrum of social-historical institutions such as language itself, cannot, strictly speaking, approach without already presuming it. That is, we ourselves have always-already been “enclosed,” and therefore the historicization of enclosure throws us back on the very limit of historicity itself. Marx specifically recognized that primitive accumulation and its movement of enclosures, its fixing of an order of differences, was not something that simply occurred once on the empirical level of the history of

empirical events. Rather, Marx incisively pointed out that in capitalist society, which is never at rest but is a circuit in constant motion, we must recognize that the “original sin is at work everywhere” (*die Erbsünde wirkt überall*).²⁹

Nomos and the Fixing of Order

Sandro Mezzadra has devoted a chapter of his recent and important work to this matrix of questions, demanding a rereading in a new light of this section of *Capital*. He describes the process of primitive accumulation as an *Ursprung*, an origin or moment of genesis that, “like a concave mirror, returns the image of the capitalist mode of production in its totality, by illuminating, like the ‘exception’ in Benjamin (much more than that of Schmitt), certain fundamental but hidden characteristics of the functioning of ‘normality.’”³⁰ This “normality” was extensively addressed by Marx, inasmuch as the violence and force of primitive accumulation as a historical process is hidden or covered over by its originary or initial position in relation to the viewpoint of an already-established smoothly operating circular form of capitalist accumulation. But I would argue that Carl Schmitt remains critically important here (along with Benjamin) for a theorization of the moment of primitive accumulation. It is in fact Schmitt who has theorized the most decisive corollary analysis to that performed by Marx on the question of the origin, an origin through which we see the process of capture, the transformation of the primal flux of heterogeneity into commensurability. To return to the essential question here, what is interesting in the process of primitive accumulation, understood in its broadest sense, is not merely the separation of enclosure and expropriation. Mezzadra touches on this in alluding to the relation of exception and normality that characterizes the problem of “origin.” The process of separation is not merely a divorcing of holistic, total communities from the land and from their supposedly “natural” ties; it is also a making-equivalent, the production of a hierarchical commensurability, that is the essential element of separation: it is never a separation as such but always a separation-in-recombination.

The identification of the founding moment of the *nomos* with what Marx understood as “primitive accumulation” is a productive extension of Schmitt’s analysis. The *nomos*, or origin of order itself, is an essential question for today, not only in rethinking the debate on the transition to capitalism, but in extending this rethinking to the possibility that this transitional space, and indeed all such transitions themselves, are not static processes but ongoing echoes and reverberations of the original appropriation and division. In the later corollaries to *The Nomos of the Earth*, by way of explicating in brief the rea-

sons for his deployment of the concept of *nomos*, Schmitt approvingly quotes the German constitutional jurist Hans Peter Ipsen, who argued that in the final analysis socialization itself, the founding gesture of any social order, was “making future owners of non-owners.”³¹ This is a succinct and incisive summation of the movement by which capitalism becomes necessary, making nonowners (the peasantry on communal land) into owners (of one thing, and one thing only: their labor power).

Schmitt famously said, “History is not the realization of rules or regularities or scientific, biological, or other types of norms. Its essential and specific content is the event that arrives only once and does not repeat itself.”³² Schmitt draws our attention to something critical in the event: its explosion and eruption, its status as a point and not a line, its singularity. But we must also pay attention to its residues, its remainders, its sustained traces: what Alain Badiou has extensively theorized as the excess of the event over the situation of its emergence, the event-element for which no necessity exists, in which there is no previously “countable” situation that proves or legitimates its arrival on the scene, when it explodes and punctures the “order of being.” The “essential and specific content” of history is precisely the event, the eruption into consistency of what was in flux, but the event of this making-determined does not arrive only once. It arrives continually as if for the first time, continually fixing what comes undone, continually capturing what is in flux or flight. Therefore, it is not that Schmitt is wrong to emphasize the single occasion of the event of origin: origin is itself a circuit that only repeats by returning to itself, by folding in on itself and thereby always being first, always being “one time only.”

The basic aim of Schmitt’s *Nomos of the Earth* is to examine and question the process of the “original distribution/apportionment of land” (*ursprüngliche Boden-Verteilung*),³³ the originary decisional space that made spaces, territories, and the social relations that obtained in them commensurable to each other, the process of the constitution of the “international world.” Thus Schmitt’s concern is essentially parallel to that of Marx on the role of primitive accumulation in the constitution of the wage laborer and the capitalist: he does not begin from some apparent moment and deduce the present situation, but works retrospectively. In much the same way that Marx theorizes the process of primitive accumulation from an analytical standpoint that begins with the form of the commodity, Schmitt exhumes the historicity of the process of the formation of the interstate system from the vantage point of the *present* international order, for its traces and effects on the *nomos* of the earth, and the coming of a new *nomos*. But for Schmitt, what is the *nomos* itself? “*Nomos* is the *measure* [Maß] by which the land in a particular order is divided and situated; it is also

the form of political, social, and religious order determined by this process. Here, measure, order [Ordnung], and form [Gestalt] constitute a spatially concrete unity. The *nomos* by which a tribe, a retinue, or a people becomes settled, i.e., by which it becomes historically situated [geschichtlich verortet] and turns a part of the earth's surface into the force-field [Kraftfeld] of a particular order, becomes visible in the appropriation of land and in the founding of a city or a colony."³⁴ Just as Marx discovered the "secret" of the capitalist mode of production in the process of primitive accumulation as well as in the creation of labor power, Schmitt finds the key to the process by which something diffuse and in flux ("tribe, retinue, or people") becomes something fixed, something "historically situated or located" (*geschichtlich verortet*), in the "appropriation of land and in the founding of a city or colony." By relating the founding process of a city to that of the colonies, Schmitt emphasizes the degree to which what is decisive is not the differential between them but the moment of fixation common to both, the common "measure" (*Maß*) of the process of place-ing and locating what was formerly incommensurable inasmuch as it had no "measure."

Thus, if these diffuse processes are to be understood on the basis of their common "measure," Schmitt acknowledges that there must be an originary moment that grounds them together: "All subsequent regulations of a written or unwritten kind derive their power from the inner measure of an original, constitutive act of spatial ordering. This original act [Ur-Akt] is *nomos*. All subsequent developments are either results of and expansions on this act or else redistributions—either a continuation on the same basis or a disintegration and departure from the constitutive act of the spatial order established by land-appropriation, the founding of cities, or colonization."³⁵ Thus, Schmitt poses the question of the expropriation of land (primitive accumulation) as belonging to the same genealogy as the "founding moments" of history in general: they stem from an originary moment—a poietic-practical moment—past which we can only conceptually enter into the recursive cycle of origin itself. He calls this moment the *Ur-Akt* that founds the *nomos*. *Nomos* is thus a primal force, a moment of accumulation or gathering toward stability, order, unity. In other words, *nomos* is not merely the inter-national order itself, or the form of social ordering called the nation-state, but also the uncanny force that grounds the untraceable origin of these mechanisms themselves, a flow of power that retrospectively sustains this order through its own dynamics. On this same point, Susan Buck-Morss incisively describes the *nomos* as an "aggregating force," or "ordering principle" between sovereign power and state power, that concatenates or "holds together" the individual units of the nation-state system, not merely as "autochthonous" elements, each immanent

only to itself, but as a sustaining force of combination, which furnishes and maintains a system out of these elements.³⁶

This Ur-Akt, the event of the formation of order itself, is always arriving as if for the first time, and therefore is always the same, but precisely in its sameness regenerated by its constant arrival, it is simultaneously endlessly different: it is “the absent remainder / resistance of a differential mark cut off from its putative ‘production’ or origin” (*la restance non-présente d’une marque différentielle coupée de sa prétendue “production” ou origine*).³⁷ This Ur-Akt is for Schmitt the primordial origin of the international state system, which is only one among a series of effects and results of the *nomos* process itself. But as he makes clear, this ordering or appropriation is a making-commensurable, placing elements formerly thoroughly heterogeneous to each other into contact by means of a common measure. Thus, for example, “all states interested in a given territorial change in principle recognized the same economic order, even when they were at different stages of development.”³⁸ Just as Marx emphasized, when colonization occurs, the most important initial process is that of ensuring that the existing relations either are broken or are integrated into the general order. Only through such a process of “fixing” can the colonial dimension of the accumulation of capital operate. In the final analysis, the “internationalization” of law through the experimentation in the colony could not produce an “international law” but only a national law that has been made commensurable inter-nationally. In the constitution process of international law, the role of the unit of the state exhibits the problem of the recursive problematic of the origin: “Interstate in no sense means the isolation of any subject in the international law of this type of order. On the contrary, the interstate character can be understood only within a comprehensive spatial order sustained by states.”³⁹ In other words, international law is what legitimizes, justifies, and sustains the order. But this law can only operate to the extent that the object it sustains is already in place and justified. So the self-justification of international law can only find proof for itself in precisely the object it creates, forming again the endlessly regressing sequence of the trace of the origin.

Further, the previously existing land relations, native practices, and so on in the colonized space could not constitute foundations of an actual right; rather it is the colonial difference (the fixing of hierarchy and making-commensurable of “measures” such as race, relative social class in the previous social order, language capability, sexuality, and so forth) that ensures the specific coloniality of the situation at the margins of the interstate system: the colonial collapse of the distinction between *imperium* and *dominium*—public and private property. Consequently: “The special territorial status of colonies thus was

as clear as was the division of the earth between state territory and colonial territory. This division was characteristic of the structure of international law in this epoch and was inherent in its spatial structure. Clearly, to the extent that overseas colonial territory became indistinguishable from state territory, in the sense of European soil, the structure of international law also changed, and when they became equivalent, traditional, specifically European law came to an end. Thus, the concept of colonies contained an ideological burden that affected, above all, European colonial powers.”⁴⁰ As Schmitt here shows, when the historical-actual form of the colonial system fell apart, new commensurabilities were formed. Suddenly the colonial difference itself became a major problem, not only for the formerly colonized but also as an “ideological burden” for the colonial powers. What was at stake for the colonizer in the separation, through the colonial difference, between the “mother country” and the “colony” was the self-image or the procedure of self-directed cathexis operating through it: in short, the constitution of the West. When the colonial system breaks, the problem is where the accumulated force that previously gathered in the colonial difference is dispersed to. And this retrospectively calls into question what the point of colonialism was to begin with—Schmitt has an answer—the “race for colonies also was concerned with more or less symbolic appropriations [symbolische Besitzergreifungen].”⁴¹

The Formation of Difference

In order to clarify what is at stake in this question of Marx and Schmitt on the analysis of primitive accumulation, I would like to try to develop further the consequences of this problem of the “formation of difference.” Drawing out a concept of primitive accumulation as a repeating originary movement of capture from Marx, and a concept of the primordial *Ur-Akt* of decision in the making-commensurable and spatial process of fixing from Schmitt, we must now locate in what ways the recent discourse on the return of primitive accumulation can be clarified through these readings. Many recent theoretical works, such as that of the Midnight Notes Collective on the *New Enclosures*,⁴² Silvia Federici’s *Caliban and the Witch*, and others, have focused on the role of intellectual property, the new “digital commons” of the world, and the new superstate forms of control being visited on the former colonized countries, in particular the violent transitions currently occurring in sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere to rationalized systems of private property, spurred on by the dependent relations these states have through their national debt to the International Monetary Fund and World Bank.

But Federici in particular has drawn an entirely new picture of the period of primitive accumulation and the theoretical clarification of enclosure as a broad category, by examining the “enclosure” of the female body itself, the complex violence of the creation of new categories that this enclosure signifies. She argues that “primitive accumulation . . . connects the ‘feudal reaction’ with the development of a capitalist economy, and it identifies the historical and logical conditions for the development of the capitalist system, ‘primitive’ (‘originary’) indicating a precondition for the existence of capitalist relations as much as a specific event in time.”⁴³ That is, Federici extends and develops the essential insight latent in Marx’s analysis, and implied by Schmitt’s theorization of the *nomos*, that the original accumulation, or enclosure, is not something that happens once and is then followed by a new historical cycle. Rather, primitive accumulation as a process is precisely a network of capturing the energy that is in flux and redeploying it in an order, recoding its surface so as to be directly compatible, commensurable, with the starting point of capitalist production. Therefore, much like *nomos* in Schmitt’s sense of the concept, primitive accumulation is not only a “precondition” but that which establishes the network of “preconditions” itself. Federici continues with the following critical point: “Primitive accumulation was not simply an accumulation and concentration of exploitable workers and capital. It was also an accumulation of differences and divisions within the working class, whereby hierarchies built upon gender, as well as ‘race’ and age, became constitutive of class rule and the formation of the modern proletariat.”⁴⁴ Federici’s point here is exceptionally important.

In order to understand primitive accumulation not merely as the moment of dispossession, the raw violence of expropriation, we must understand its creative, or formative aspect, the fact that primitive accumulation itself should always be conceived of as the broad deployment of apparatuses intended to form “an accumulation of differences, inequalities, hierarchies, divisions.”⁴⁵ Federici here inverts a certain traditional Marxian schematics of the pyramidal structure of history (although Marx and Engels had an entirely more subtle view of this) by arguing against the linearization of “progress,” the notion that each social shift characterizes a higher, and therefore preferable, state of affairs: “We cannot say that the separation of the worker from the land and the advent of a money-economy realized the struggle which the medieval serfs had fought to free themselves from bondage. It was not the workers—male or female—who were liberated by land privatization. What was ‘liberated’ was capital, as the land was now ‘free’ to function as a means of accumulation and exploitation, rather than as a means of subsistence.”⁴⁶ Federici’s analysis is

extremely powerful precisely because she identifies this process of primitive accumulation, the moment of the enclosures movement taken in the broadest sense possible, with the formation of *specific* difference. She carefully demonstrates that primitive accumulation did not simply mean expropriation (deterritorialization) but also meant the redeployment of the captured bodies, concepts, words, land, borders, rituals, effects, and so forth in a new hierarchical network of signification that formed and effectuated the corollary “preconditions” for the advent of capitalist relations of production (reterritorialization): the creation of “owners” out of “nonowners.”⁴⁷ What precisely is the role of this continual enclosure? Sakiyama Masaki writes, “Thus the capitalist system emerges through the combination of the process of continual primitive accumulation with the process of the accumulation of capital. Continual primitive accumulation is based on direct violence, plunder, and unlimited exploitation, and the main sources of this accumulation are nature (for example, the land worked by the peasantry), women, and the colonies.”⁴⁸ In my view, Sakiyama here correctly and importantly emphasizes the *continual* nature of the process of primitive accumulation, the fact that this process is not a “period” strictly speaking but a *logical* moment in the real movement of history. However, it seems to me that what is distinctive about this moment is that it must be considered in terms of not only its “direct violence” (although this is crucial too) but also the fundamentally “indirect” violence of enclosure as a continuous movement. In other words, developing Federici’s important emphasis on the “accumulation of differences,” we should understand this continuously reproduced enclosure as a refined and supple violence that concatenates waves of the primordial flux of bodies, practices, words, and affects into the systematic structuring pattern of commensurable specific differences that arises as a function of the nation-state system and the advent of capitalism.

We can also understand this “creative” element of enclosure in a strictly “economic” sense, in terms of the logic of capital. As Baba Hiroji has argued, “primitive accumulation is typically understood as the violent expropriation of land from the peasantry, but actually its essence lies in the *creation* of labor power that can be commodified.” In other words, he argues, it is a “process of tearing labor power away from traditional, agriculturally centered, self-sufficient production and re-cultivating it into something with labor practices and skills suitable for modern, industrially centered mass production.”⁴⁹ That is, we cannot simply say that the movement of enclosures is a moment of expropriational violence, wherein those who held communal property were dispossessed. Rather, we should point out at the same time that this movement is the set of acts whereby they are made into owners, that is, they are *constituted* as

owners of something they never knew they had before: labor power. Karatani Kōjin has explicated this point, arguing that what is essential in Marx's discussion of primitive accumulation is not merely the commodification of labor power—strictly speaking, he says, this is somewhat tautological on a logical level, because the concept of labor power itself (separate from labor) is already derived from the prior analysis of the commodity. Rather, he argues, what is decisive in this discussion is that the period of primitive accumulation describes the “historical appearance of the *owner* of the labor-power commodity.”⁵⁰ In other words, “the proletariat appears not as a human who simply possesses nothing, but rather as the *owner* of a certain commodity. The capitalist social system first emerges when the commodity economy subsumes labor power as a commodity into it. But there is no need to insert certain ‘historical conditions’ here, as Marx does. This is precisely because in the expansion of the commodity economy, the ‘free laborer’ in a double sense is born, on the one hand through the advent of bourgeois legal thought, or Protestantism, and on the other hand as the result of the ‘enclosures’ undertaken to enable capitalist production.”⁵¹ That is, the problem of enclosure, the problem of the origin and reproduction-cycle that enables capitalist social relations to continue “as if” they are endless, shows us again that this logic is always being renewed, that it is not something that occurs only once. Every time labor power as a commodity is subsumed systematically, the circuit-process that originates with the enclosures renews itself.

This process, in Schmitt's incisive formulation, is that of the continual transformation of territory into a “force-field” (*Kraftfeld*), a field onto which the “historically situated” sequence can be inscribed as a unitary people, for whom the field or area becomes that which explains them. It is a process of the naturalization and grounding of the flux of difference onto a transformed site, forming a new set of referral loops and feedback mechanisms enabling the circuit of explaining and explained to repeat such that the loop itself cannot be questioned from within it. Schmitt's earlier enigmatic statement that the “race for colonies also was concerned with more or less symbolic appropriations [symbolische Besitzergreifungen],” can be read in at least two basic directions. On the one hand it is a commonsensical point that symbolism was decisive in the interimperialist competition to enclose the largest portion of the earth's territory. On the other hand it can be read as the question of what exactly was being appropriated symbolically, that is, what forces or flows were being gathered as symbols in the colony?

Johannes Fabian has drawn attention to the epistemic ordering of the international world as a disjunct temporal unity, as an “allochronic” schema,

whereby the underdeveloped, the “Rest” in the “West and the Rest” dyad, are schematized to literally live in the past, as objects of analysis, objects to be “observed and gathered.”⁵² But let us read Schmitt’s “gathering of symbolic appropriations” in relation to Fabian’s discussion of symbolic anthropology, whose chief result is the iconization of the Other, the discovery of the Other as “form” or “style.”⁵³ That is, the Other becomes a symbolic index of the distancing effect in the specular field of observer and observed, and the observer’s logic of respect for the symbolic economy of the “native” enters directly into the slipstream of the circularity and referral loops of the origin. By “respecting” “their” “difference,” by drawing attention to “their” “own” practices—statements that, due to the enunciative positionality of the observer, are addressed fundamentally only to other potential observers—the observer makes the Other an “icon,” gathers the symbolic traces of the Other’s alterity, and ensures the Other’s unified stability for future observation. That is, this logic of the symbolic gathering reconnects the flow of symbolic practices to the establishment of the *nomos*, the process of primitive accumulation, or the flow of bordering that “historically situated” the empirical singularities in flux onto this territory in the first place. But through the anthropological observation and gathering of the symbolic, the Other’s alterity appears to be grounded and naturalized in the Other’s “own” symbolic economy as “natural” expression of the “area” (Schmitt’s *Kraffeld*) and its unique inhabitants.

Thus, through the general movement of enclosure, a new circuit of naturalization is established. Enclosed in the order of a world made of nation-states, and overseen by capital, the flux of bodies that previously existed will thereafter become a group, the flux of words will be segmented into the form of national language, the flux of rituals will be computed as evidence of the “cultural specificity” of “a people,” and so forth. It is always a retrospective process, something that can only be understood *postfestum*. The putative existence since time immemorial of “the people” as a cultural unity is always supposedly grounded in the untraceable origin of their “practices,” but these practices themselves have to be made to retrospectively connote the existence of “the people,” since as a pure sequence of practices they exist prior to “connotation” itself. In other words, we can posit the discovery of the ancient past of a certain “national people” or putatively “cultural” sequence, but only *postfestum*. That is, the *Ur-Akt* of the *nomos*, the process of primitive accumulation, does not make the old practices into new ones: it insinuates itself within the flux of practices and establishes a surrounding order in which to compute and recode them; it gives them a “new social soul.” Thereafter, this order overdetermines these practices such that they come to be retrospectively “proven” by

the existence of the “national people” whose existence they, in fact, are paradoxically supposed to prove. This circularity of identity is precisely what is installed historically by the movement of primitive accumulation; it is precisely this aspect of the enclosures that we should read in Marx when he emphasizes that it is “economic conditions” that “create conditions and differences among peoples independent of the ‘State.’”⁵⁴

The “direct” violence of dispossession through which order itself is formed must always be politically and historically analyzed for its destruction and devastation, but it is the refined, subtle, astonishing violence of this vast and aporetic formation of difference itself that is often elided. In other words, in order to grasp this problem, we must always treat the process of primitive accumulation as a dual process: on the one hand it connotes the untraceable historical emergence of labor power that can be commodified, and on the other hand it is a historical site of the *Ur-Akt* that founded and ordered the world as a *nomos*, as a system. These two aspects are intimately joined: the first sets in motion the paradoxical cycle of social relations called “capital,” while the second organizes the “formation of difference” through which the earth’s surface is recoded as a “force-field” of the order. That is, when Marx undertakes his critique of political economy, he exposes the phenomenal representation of social relations as pure exchange by returning us to “the reckless terrorism” of the formation of labor power as a commodity. But this moment of enclosure is not only the excessive moment that grounds the circuit of origin, it is at the same time the condition or starting point for the possibility of grasping the historical process as something evental, something hazardous, against the constantly rejuvenated tendency to romanticize and substantialize the “civilizational difference,” “the people,” and so forth as a preexisting space of holism. It is precisely through this doubled examination of the formation of difference as a constituent part of the process of primitive accumulation, the central moment in the *nomos*, the order of the modern world, that we can approach the uncanny “similarities between the logic of slave labor upon which wage labor secretly rests and the regime of translation upon which national language is secretly built,” processes that are erroneously “associated with the pure economy of exchange.”⁵⁵

In this sense, the process of primitive accumulation (which is not a period but a cyclically reproduced logical moment) describes the installation of “real abstraction” into history, and the fact that this moment is repeating every day shows us the paradoxical nature of the historical temporality that characterizes capitalist society. More than anything, however, we are immediately made aware of the violence of the production of the conditions of possibility for cap-

italist relations of production, for the “encounter” between buyers and sellers of labor power. Here we are reminded that “there is a primitive accumulation that, far from deriving from the agricultural mode of production, precedes it: as a general rule, there is primitive accumulation whenever an apparatus of capture is mounted, with that very particular kind of violence that creates or contributes to the creation of that which it is directed against, and thus presupposes itself.”⁵⁶

From Originary to Primitive

There has been a long debate on the translation of *die sogenannte ursprüngliche Akkumulation* as the so-called primitive accumulation. But I would like to give this debate an added dimension: what we must consider is how the originary accumulation is incorporated into capitalist development as primitive accumulation, as a repetition of the origin that is also concerned with the division or “separation” (*Trennung*) of historical time between the “primitive” or “backward” and the “on time” or “normal” course of development. The trick of primitive accumulation is to work on these two dimensions at once, as part of the same social motion, to divide the earth on the basis of “forms” in the same way that the abstraction of the exchange process is divided between “two sides.” In other words, this moment of the beginning, which is cyclically recursively repeated in the sphere of crisis (and in every capture of the worker’s body to secure the grounds for the labor-power commodity), is repeated in relation to a volatile historical exterior, repeated in terms of the form-determination of the “nation-form” (Balibar) and the “historical and moral factors” for the determination of the value and price of labor power, the “naïve anthropology” (Althusser) that lurks in the interior of capital’s logic. Capital’s schema of the world divided up into “national capitals” is itself profoundly linked to the historical formation of so-called *homo economicus*, in the form of the two figures of exchange, buyers and sellers. In other words, the figure of “Man”—as Deleuze and Guattari importantly point out, this figure of humanism is not simply “white man” (*l’homme blanc*) but “White Man” (*L’Homme blanc*)—is not an “exteriority” or “cultural supplement” to the economic field: it is rather the presupposition always-already at the very core of the circulation process.

The image of the world that capital presents to itself, by presupposing a certain accomplished history, also presupposes the production of the individuals—buyers and sellers—that would furnish the “needs” on whose basis “rational” exchange would emerge. But the very production of these in-

dividuals itself presupposes the unitary and eternal *area*, or gradient, that could legitimate those individuals as individuals by means of the form of belonging, typically to the nation-state. Thus, as mentioned at the outset of this book, the whole circuit constitutes a “vicious circle,” one that never adequately returns to its starting point, because the whole sequence of presupposition forms an abyssal and regressive chain, in which something must *always* be given: “the homogeneous given space of economic phenomena is thus doubly given by the anthropology which grips it in the vice of origins and ends.”⁵⁷ The field of “interest,” which is supposed to represent therefore the pure or immediate expression of “need,” separated from any extraeconomic coercion, direct violence, and so forth, reveals itself as the ultimate expression of this “vice of origins and ends,” insofar as it must always erase or cover over the production of this figure of “Man” itself. When Marx discusses the figures of the “guardians,” the “bearers” or “owners,” of the labor-power commodity, he refers to them specifically as “this *race* of peculiar commodity-owners” (*diese Race eigentümlicher Warenbesitzer*),⁵⁸ effectively reminding us that “the schema of the West and the Rest” is coextensive and coemergent with the dynamics of capital itself.

In other words, the “naïve anthropology” that is supposedly excluded from the circulation process, or the “total material exchange” between “rational” individuals, is in fact located at its very core. Exactly as Deleuze and Guattari point out in their identification of the nation-state as the ultimate model of the capitalist axiomatic, the form of “the nation” is already contained at the very origin of the supposedly “rational” and “universal” process of exchange, a process that acts as if it represents the smooth and perfect circle of pure rationality but that is permanently suspended between its impossible origin, which it is compelled to cyclically repeat, and its end, which is equally impossible, because it would relativize the circuit of exchange and expose it to its outside, which it must constantly erase. Thus the social body, or *socius*, itself must remain in its state of insanity or “derangement,” forever pulled in these two directions of the production of subjects. It cannot exit this “deranged form” but must try perpetually to prove its “universality” simply by oscillating between these two boundaries, two impossibilities: its underlying *schema* of the world, which “seems *absent* from the immediate reality of the phenonoma themselves” because it is permanently located in “the interval between origins and ends,” a short-circuit that incessantly reveals to us that “its universality is merely repetition.”⁵⁹ The paradox of logic and history in the apparatus of capture thus is contained in the following problem: “the mechanism of capture contributes from the outset to the constitution of the aggregate upon

which the capture is effectuated” (le mécanisme de capture fait déjà partie de la constitution de l’ensemble sur lequel la capture s’effectue).⁶⁰ This paradox, however, is “no mystery at all” (*pas du tout de mystère*), precisely because it is a mechanism or schema that exists out in the open, on the surface of society. The historical accident, the moment of capture for which there was no apparent necessity or pulsion, produces a form of torsion back on itself. Once capture has been effected, it loops back on its own contingent origins to once again *derive itself*, to anticipate and “conjure” itself up as if it were the necessary outcome of its own schema. In other words, the forms of capture, enclosure, and ordering are not simply distinguished by their appearance as always-already prior; more fundamentally, they are distinguished by this paradoxical and demented structure in which the contingent historical event cycles back to itself, once again “discovering” its own hazardous origins, but does so precisely to “recode” its emergence so as to appear as if what ought to be an accident was always in fact a necessary outcome. Thus, the historical accident of primitive accumulation is constantly “becoming what it is” neither through its contingent foundations nor its inner drive to pretend it is necessary; this schema operates precisely by cyclically repeating its origin in capture in order to harness its hazardous flux retrospectively, to conjure itself up as if its origin were a mere testament to its necessary emergence.

In this system of the violence of inclusion, the violence of the schema itself “hides in plain view,” it operates immediately before our eyes, yet “it is very difficult to pinpoint this violence because it always presents itself as pre-accomplished.”⁶¹ The seeming double bind contained in the violence of the apparatus of capture might appear to disable any conception of political intervention, to be a closed circle, but we could also say precisely the opposite. In the process of primitive accumulation, “the concept of ‘determined social formation’ has become the concept of ‘class composition’: it restores, in other words, the dynamism of the subject’s action, of the will that structures or destroys the relations of necessity.”⁶² In other words, paradoxically it is the fact that our foreclosure into the social field *has taken place* that opens the possibilities of politics. We have always-already been included into this systematic expression of capture, but this inescapability of the repetition of the beginning does not mean something disabling. This primal violence, sustained as a continuum or “status quo,” appears as a smooth state, a cyclical reproduction cycle without edges. But this appearance or semblance of smooth continuity is in fact a product of the working of violence on itself: *the violence of the historical cartography must erase and recode itself by means of violence as the smooth functioning of the logical topology.*

The National Debt: Repetition's Conduit

Every time capital requires the commodification of labor power, it must in effect repeat at the level of the logical topology the process of the transition, the “so-called primitive accumulation.” But the historical process simultaneously forces capital to undertake the transition at a microscopic level, in the form of the shrinking commodity-unit, and therefore in an even more paradoxical form than the historical “beginning.” In other words, capital must *capitalistically*—that is, not through the original “extra-economic coercion”—undertake a repeating and microscopic version of the transition to capitalism after the “historical” transition has already passed. At the “beginning” capital could rely on direct force, on a structural violence that would enable or set in motion a field of effects that would generate a general order of capture. But how can the transition be undertaken over and over again, in particular *after* the historical transition is assumed to have already occurred? Marx gave us an essential clue when he reminded us that the so-called primitive accumulation in effect reappears or takes up a second logical position in capital's interior, in the form of the *national debt*.

The original sin at the beginning of the capital-relation might as well be understood as an “original debt,” a historical appearance of something *given*, a gift. The process of primitive accumulation and its historical acts of enclosure cannot simply be understood as an excessive violence that is then superseded by a more “rational” or “decent” and “restrained” order. Rather, what the process of primitive accumulation reminds us of is the necessity for capital of the given, the form of “supposition” (*Setzung*) and “presupposition” (*Voraussetzung*). But how does this originary debt-gift operate? In what sense is this a problem of *actuality* for us? In this sense, what exactly is the national debt itself?

The national debt is a *mechanism*. A very special type of mechanism, and one that capital relies on intimately. Uno Kōzō gave us a critical clue to this type of mechanism—it is a “mechanism or apparatus that allows the (im)possibility of the commodification of labor power to pass through [*‘muri’ o tōsu kikō*].”⁶³ Uno locates this mechanism in the form of the “law of population peculiar to the capitalist mode of production” (*der kapitalistischen Produktionsweise eigentümliches Populationsgesetz*),⁶⁴ a law that is central to the questions of crisis and debt, because it concerns above all the management of *personhood*, the management of the physical-moral aspects of the material existence of the body, so as to maintain the “rational individual,” the form that would furnish adequate labor power for capitalist production. But this structure of such an apparatus is not limited to the form of population; rather the “law of population” is one mo-

ment of the overall taxonomy of these mechanisms for the traversal of the nihil of reason that capitalism necessitates from the outset. If at the beginning, there is a debt or gift, capital cannot ever truly “begin.” That is, it is impossible to “start from the first instance” if the first instance is always-already delayed or deferred by means of something that must be there already. In other words, if capital can only expand on the basis of its originary debt-gift, then capital is permanently or eternally crippled and restrained by the nature of this given element, it can never extract itself from what is given in order to fully realize its image of a circle with neither end nor beginning. In order, therefore, to overcome or at least *avoid* this problem, capital must formulate all sorts of these “apparatuses for the traversal of (im)possibility.” That is, capital must discover ways that something that should restrain or even expose its limitations can be *traversed* or *passed through*. But precisely in constantly requiring mechanisms or apparatuses outside its interior logic, capital demonstrates its relatively volatile functioning, in which precisely its excessive aspects (the reliance on the state, the enforcement of the nation-form, the violence of the exterior allowed into the interior and once more erased as violence by means of violence), its paradoxical and even “demented” aspects, appear as the central principles of its operation. When we confront this “demented” or “deranged” aspect of capital, we are also immediately alerted to the fact that this aspect of capital is also where an immense political breach exists, and it is on this point that we must clarify the current scenario of debt.

Marx recalls this problem for us at an early historical moment, reminding us that the system of national debt was generated in the “forcing-house” (*Treibhaus*) of the colonial system: thus “national debts, i.e., the alienation of the state [*Veräusserung des Staats*]*—whether despotic, constitutional or republican—marked with its stamp the capitalistic era.*”⁶⁵ In this sense, already we are acquainted with the national debt as the “mark” or “stamp” (*Stempel*) of the entry into capitalist society on a world scale, as the initial moment when the originary accumulation of capital is at one and the same time the formation of the mechanisms that will install a cartography onto the surface of the world.

The only part of the so-called national wealth that actually enters into the collective possessions [*Gesamtbesitz*] of modern peoples is their national debt. Hence, as a necessary consequence, the modern doctrine that a nation becomes the richer the more deeply it is in debt. Public credit becomes the *credo* of capital. And with the rise of national debt-making, want of faith in the national debt takes the place of the blas-

phemy against the Holy Ghost, which may not be forgiven. *The public debt becomes one of the most powerful levers [energischsten Hebel] of primitive accumulation.* As with the stroke of an enchanter's wand, it endows barren money with the power of breeding and thus turns it into capital, without the necessity of its exposing itself to the troubles and risks inseparable from its employment in industry or even in usury.⁶⁶

The logical topology of capital's origin and maintenance, and the historical cartography of the modern world order, based on the unit of the state, are volatily amalgamated together in the form of the national debt. But Marx also alerts us to something critically important: here the national debt is not so much a separate motion of violence as it is one of the most "powerful" or "energetic" "levers" for the continuation or maintenance of primitive accumulation. But why would capital need yet another exteriority? Primitive accumulation itself, its raw violence, its "extra-economic coercion," is already to an extent exterior to capital. Yet what capital always requires are ways and means of taking the raw violence on which it secretly rests and reinserting this violence into a new modality, in which its violence can appear in another form. This is exactly why the national debt, as a *mechanism*, allows capital to avoid "exposing itself to troubles and risks." Marx goes one step further, by connecting the national debt as primitive accumulation to the nation-form itself: "With the national debt arose an international credit system, which often conceals one of the sources [Quellen] of primitive accumulation in this or that people [Volk]. . . . A great deal of capital, which appears today in the United States without any certificate of birth, was yesterday, in England, the capitalised blood of children."⁶⁷ In other words, capital's enclosure of the earth appears both within and by means of national borders—by extension, Marx essentially reminds us here that the nation-form itself allows for the concealment, in an organized and bordered system of entities, of capital's originary-primitive violence, yet erases this violence precisely by allowing it to vanish into the nation as an apparatus for the traversal of this gap, "vanishing in its own result, leaving no trace behind." But this theoretical and historical problem is by no means simply an interesting episode from the past. Here we can see clearly the operation that proceeded in the German "gutter press" with respect to the Greek situation over the last five years, when the Greek national debt (and by extension the ongoing Eurozone crisis) was in essence blamed on the Greek "national character" (supposedly "lazy," excessively enjoying holidays, corrupt, incapable of "rational competition," and so forth).⁶⁸

This moment of the German-Greek opposition on the question of the na-

tional debt exposes to us the recent history of this mechanism. The era of imperialism in the strict sense consisted in the formation of “debt traps” for the peripheral and underdeveloped countries: the central imperialist nations export the domestic surplus to the colonies, the periphery, and so forth, by creating and enforcing demand, maintained by the national debt. Thus the poorer nations end up not only importing from the imperialist nations but also effectively in an endless spiral of debt, a mechanism that then forces the periphery to accept the political and economic directives of the imperialist nations for the plunder and expropriation of raw materials, cheap labor power, border controls, subordination to political regimes, and so forth. Today, this same logic persists. If the old modality of imperialism consists in the macroscopic formation of monopoly capital and superprofits in the peripheral violence, the new modality of imperialism financializes this violence into the miniature and dense concentration of capital’s interior.

It is no accident that today we see a “return of the origin,” “a moment when wage constriction is violently manifested, exactly like the sixteenth-century enclosures where access to land as a common good was repressed with the privatization of the land and the putting of wages to the proletariat.”⁶⁹ This is why we should overlap capital’s historical threshold with the moment we are living through today: “The logic of ‘governing through debt’ has its origin in the fundamental relation between capital and labor. Financial capitalism has globalized imperialism, its *modus operandi* that operates through the form of ‘debt traps,’ both national and private indebtedness, in order to realize and sell the surplus value extracted from living labor. In the imperial schema, debt is the monetary face of surplus value, the universal exploitation of labor power, and constitutes a trap precisely because it prevents living labor from freeing itself from exploitation, from autonomizing the relations of dependency and slavery that are proper to debt.”⁷⁰ The national debt allows the “reckless terrorism” of primitive accumulation to be maintained as if it were absent by redirecting it to the market. The national debt is a mechanism that “conducts” or forces the situation onto a new site of the curve of capitalist development, but it is not a mechanism that “resolves,” it is a mechanism that “defers” or “displaces” the sharpening of political struggles. The national debt, therefore, is like the *pharmakon*—it heals and hurts, it defers and differs, it is precisely the “dangerous supplement” of capitalism as a historical force: the national debt exposes the fact that capital itself can never resolve the situation that emerges when the relations of production come into conflict with the development of the productive forces. Capital, therefore, is always trying to create mechanisms that allow it to transcend its own limitations, while simul-

taneously permitting it to avoid making the political leap past its own boundaries. Yet this inevitable limit of capital's self-deployment is paradoxically the source of capital's own dynamism. Without this tense multiplication of its wounds, capital would never develop—that is, capital requires a certain risk or recklessness, but the more it defers this leap, the more spaces of political intervention are opened up in capital's austere movement. This movement keeps the elements of primitive accumulation circulating on the surface, a mechanism by which to traverse the impossibility of the commencement as such, precisely by beginning the commencement over and over again. In turn, this element of the national debt returns our focus to the role played by the nation-state in allowing this “first return to origins”—the element of the national is exactly deployed in and within the movement of capture in order to guarantee labor power's “elasticity” (*Elastizität*).⁷¹ Without the nation, the malleable elements of labor power cannot be recirculated as if they were directly graspable, by means of the reproduction of the worker's body on the outside. The nation—the original fictitious “substance”—conjures up its own little images of its pseudosubstantiality precisely in order to then “rederive” itself from their existence. In this way the elasticity of labor power is simply the microscopic or “micrological” extension of the elasticity of the nation, the form by which capital attempts incessantly to territorialize itself. Labor power's impossibility is a microscopic image of the gap or chiasmus between the logical and the historical: the historical *origin* and the logical *commencement*; and this is the point on which “the insanity of the capitalist mode of conception [*die Verrücktheit der kapitalistischen Vorstellungsweise*] reaches its climax.”⁷²

On the question of the so-called primitive accumulation, the form of the national debt alerts us to a crucial fact: “The crisis is neither an economic nor a political crisis: it is a crisis of the capital relation, a crisis made inevitable by the inherent contradictions of that relation. The crisis inevitably involves a restructuring of the capital relation, a restructuring which necessarily takes on economic and political forms. What is involved on both levels is an assault by capital to maintain the conditions of its own existence.”⁷³ In this sense, the problem of the national debt as a mechanism for the continuation of primitive accumulation *within* the capital-relation cannot be solved on the level of the nation-form—we might say polemically that the national debt is in fact the origin of the nation itself. It itself is a technology of drawing a border around the form of the nation, something that cannot be rigorously bordered. The nation itself is a form of credit: it must be traced as if it could be located. But it must be traced by capital itself. Because the nation cannot be bordered in any strict sense, it *forces a coherence* economically where there cannot be one histor-

ically. But because this technology continuously exposes it to the historical exterior, it is therefore always being undermined by its own inability to escape the historical process. At the origin there is already a debt, because something has been presupposed as given, something that utilizes this presupposition as a lever for its own functioning. The illogical logic of capital's origin or beginning is recoded as the illogical history of the state. This "intercourse" between capital and the state is concentrated or compressed into the insanity of the supposedly rational exchange process, this "Verkehr" at the beginning that appears precisely as "Austausch" in the logical interior. This is exactly what Lenin meant when he famously emphasized that "politics is the concentrated expression of economy."⁷⁴

Capital itself formulates these apparatuses—the state, the national debt—to overcome or traverse what it cannot solve. In thinking through the connection between the "so-called primitive accumulation" and the formation of the nation-state, let us pay close attention to a famous passage from Marx:

The specific economic form [Form], in which unpaid surplus labour is pumped out of direct producers, determines the relationship of rulers and ruled [Herrschafts- und Knechtschaftsverhältnis], as it grows directly out of production itself and in turn, reacts upon it as a determining element. Upon this, however, is founded the entire formation of the economic community which grows up out of the production relations themselves, thereby simultaneously its specific political form [Gestalt]. It is always the direct relationship of the owners of the conditions of production to the direct producers—a relation always naturally corresponding to a definite stage in the development of the methods of labour and thereby its social productivity—which reveals the innermost secret [innere Geheimnis], the hidden basis of the entire social structure [verborgene Grundlage der ganzen gesellschaftlichen Konstruktion], and with it the political form of the relation of sovereignty and dependence, in short, the corresponding specific form of the state. This does not prevent the same economic basis—the same from the standpoint of its main conditions—due to innumerable different empirical circumstances, natural environment, racial relations, external historical influences, etc., from showing infinite variations and gradations in appearance, which can be ascertained only by analysis of the empirically given circumstances [empirisch gegebenen Umstände].⁷⁵

These "empirically given circumstances" furnish us with capital's "factual" limits, limits linked to capital's volatile "composition" (in the sense that Negri

and others have given to “class composition”). This indicates the whole logic by which the mechanisms of capital and the state attempt to effect a specific logic of the social dimension of separation (*Trennung*), but this “separation” is something profoundly different than the theory of alienation. It shows that where capital has “forced” an amalgam, has forced a mechanism of ordering, there is a “slippage” or “*décalage*.” Where the amalgam seems most perfectly sutured is also where this *décalage* can be raised as a social antagonism and transformed into a political contradiction. The sublime perversity of the capitalist mode of production is expressed in its need to internalize, to capitalize, its violent exterior, to include in its “count” the “uncountable” and savage process of primitive accumulation, recoded as the apparatus of the national debt. The paradox is, however, that it is human beings, the debtors, who are transformed into a permanent reserve of debt yet hold a social power over capital, by occupying the position of the “guardians” (*Hüter*), the “bearers” (*Träger*) of labor power, the location of capital’s “original sin,” its primal debt, a question at which I will shortly arrive.⁷⁶

In linking together the transition to capitalism and the emergence of the nation-state, we ought to remember an important point of Marx, related to the well-known formulation that communism is the “real movement that abolishes the present state of affairs,” a familiar reference that has been recently revived in a number of discussions.⁷⁷ Although this point is an exceptionally important one, we might instead appeal to another moment in *The German Ideology* that directly links together the two points I have attempted to locate in the concept of primitive accumulation:

In history up to the present it is certainly an empirical fact [*eine empirische Tatsache*] that separate individuals have, with the broadening of their activity [*Tätigkeit*] into world-historical activity, become more and more enslaved under a power alien to them, a power which has become more and more enormous and, in the last instance, turns out to be the world market [*in letzter Instanz als Weltmarkt ausweist*]. But it is just as empirically established that, by the overthrow of the existing state of society by the communist revolution and the abolition of private property which is identical with it, this power will be dissolved. . . . Only then will the separate individuals be liberated from the various national and local barriers [*nationalen und lokalen Schranken*], be brought into practical connection with the material and intellectual production of the whole world and be put in a position to acquire the capacity to enjoy [*Genußfähigkeit*] this all-sided production of the whole earth (the creations of man).⁷⁸

This “*empirische Tatsache*” of the world of capital, linked above to the “empirically given circumstances” in which capital attempts to make its most “fatal leap” between the logical topology and the historical cartography, lays the groundwork of “facticity” or “factuality” in the historical world, the “given” that is implied in this “*empirische*.” Primitive accumulation, in the final analysis, is a formal moment that shows us the birth of the form of the labor-power commodity—and it is this form that provides capital with its *globality*, precisely the reason that Marx brings up here the “world market.” This *globality* stems from the fact that labor power cannot be considered a social form restrained by various “national” traits or borders—rather, from capital’s point of view, it is simply the basic form that the “natural resources” of the entire globe take. This is why the national question is always returning to us, why the debate on Japanese capitalism is so critical: capital discovers its *globality* precisely through the emergence of the labor-power commodity, a commodity whose violent and brutal birth was the hallmark of modernity, but this commodity cannot be “produced,” in the indirect way that capital must undertake it, without the form of the nation. The form of the nation has been, since the advent of the capitalist mode of production, the primary device or mechanism through which to generate a seemingly “natural” process of referral between the worker’s body and the body of the state. Yet, and this is the most perverse and complex problem to explain—the manifestation of capital’s *sublime perversion*—insofar as the nation-form thus allows for the birth of the labor-power commodity, which in turn furnishes the basic *global* element of the systematic order of modernity that will become *world capitalism*, the world itself as the *world of capital* is weirdly, therefore, a *product of the nation-form*, itself a kind of trace effect of the process of enclosure or capture. But what this reminds us of is an essential truth that Marx alerted us to in the analysis of the so-called primitive accumulation—this world, as the aggregate product of the various nation-states, is a world of capital, the world of the labor-power commodity, not *our* world. This is once again why we must never confuse the world of capital with the *world as a project*, as a political goal. Capital’s world, the world of “globalization” and so forth, is precisely an attempt to form a world not on the basis of the immense heterogeneity of bodies, words, affects, sounds, movements, intensities, and so on but on the basis of absolute sterility and simplicity: a world formed from the singular *global raw material* of labor power. Here, therefore, we must mark a transition and enter more deeply into what exactly the labor-power commodity is, a problem we have been only circling around up to this point. Our guide on this point will once again be Uno Kōzō, and in the following two chapters, we will see precisely

why Uno's distinctive philosophy of the labor-power commodity emerges as a transversal intervention in the debate on Japanese capitalism. That is, we will see how the labor-power commodity is always linked perversely to the national question. As an introductory or transitional statement, the problem could be summed up as follows, in a brilliant analysis by Shibagaki Kazuo, one of Uno's influential students:

The globality of capitalism, achieved through the commodification of labor power, nevertheless possesses certain limitations that are derived from this same commodification itself, a process that furnishes its own social basis, limitations that are fundamentally linked to its actual particularities. As is well known, while the commodification of labor power is, broadly speaking, the process through which social reproduction is completely transformed in commodity-economic terms, as something that cannot itself be freely produced by capital, it also provides the ground for the basic contradictions of capitalist society, a form of society always immanent to the relation between capital and wage labor. This is the point on which capitalist society must repeatedly traverse the possibility of its own self-negation in the form of regular and cyclical crises, the phenomenal appearance of its historical limits. Insofar as labor power is bought and sold and exchanged as a commodity, a market for it, that is, a *labor-power market*, must be formed, and therefore, the labor-power commodity is an entity or object that is always linked to the personal characteristics of the human being inscribed with various historical, cultural, and racial particularities and specificities. Thus, in order for labor power to be transformed into something that could be freely produced and mobilized when needed by capital, as in the case of money and all other commodities, it had to be formed within limitations established on the basis of the boundaries of area or regional boundaries [*chi'ikiteki ni kagirareta genkai no uchi de shika keisei sare'enakatta*].⁷⁹

Why does the labor-power commodity thus require something like "area," or more broadly, technologies of belonging linked to the worker's *body*? In pursuit of this question, we will now go in further depth into Uno Kōzō's work, undertaken against the backdrop of the debate on Japanese capitalism.

LABOR POWER: CAPITAL'S THRESHOLD

Socially necessary (and therefore *ipso facto* abstract) labor is also a reality, an aspect of the ontology of social being, an achieved real abstraction in real objects, quite independent of whether this is achieved in consciousness or not. In the nineteenth century, millions of independent artisans experienced the effects of this abstraction of socially necessary labor as their own ruin, i.e. they experienced in practice the concrete consequences, without having any suspicion that what they were facing was an achieved abstraction of the social process; this abstraction has the same ontological rigor of facticity as a car that runs you over.—GEORG LUKÁCS, *Towards the Ontology of Social Being*

S. Czerkinsky: What precautions should be taken when producing a concept?

G. Deleuze: You put your blinker on, and check in your rearview mirror to make sure another concept isn't coming up behind you; once you've taken these precautions, you produce the concept.—STEFAN CZERKINSKY and GILLES DELEUZE, "Faces and Surfaces"

To begin this chapter, in which I will expand on the specific question in Uno's work of labor power, we must first note, in an (un)happy coincidence, the figure of the automobile as the vehicle of thought and the production of concepts (Deleuze) but also as the concretization of the historicity of abstract labor (Lukács).¹ To productively misread this point in an attentive manner would reveal this figure to be not merely a rhetorical gesture but an indication of the degree to which the automotive industry is a concretization of thought itself in capitalist society, the degree to which the car is a personification of the entire set of problems that emerge around the uncanny and bizarre form of labor power, an immaterial or strictly absent substratum that nevertheless furnishes the alpha and omega of the materiality of capitalist society. The automotive industry, as the ideological zenith of U.S. capital, forged in the

moment of World War II (and therefore expressing the specifically militarist nature of U.S. finance capital, with Japanese “police-style” finance capital as its dominated or subcontracted junior partner), not only was the key site for the development of Fordist and later Toyotaist management techniques (the “democratic” reorganization of the firm) as means for the recalibration of the accumulation cycle in the face of crisis, contraction, and stagflation, but also has been the front curve or most advanced laboratory in capital’s drive to eliminate the problem of its reliance on labor.² The auto sector has thus been, from the very beginning, the vanguard testing ground for the development of technical innovations in automation and robotics on the shop-floor level of the production process. What is at stake in automation is not merely something expressing the contingent level of historical development of world capitalism in various sites, but something that gives us a glimpse of the internal uncertainties that ground capital’s seemingly austere indifference to the world in which it has territorialized itself. That is, what should be “taken care of” in capital’s depths (the reproduction of labor inputs that would allow its expanded reproduction) in fact takes place on the surface and shows capital’s primordial anxiety for the qualitative dimensions of labor. The automobile is a living text that discloses to us three fundamental problems: (1) the irrational and (im)possible materiality of the immaterial nonsubstance called “labor power,” an “abstraction” in the circulation process with the “ontological rigor of facticity” in the production process; (2) the contamination of logic and history that capitalist society inevitably-fundamentally produces through the violence of commodification on the savage outside of capital that must be erased or recoded as capital’s interior (the recurrent semiotic overcodings of the heterogeneous outside, which must be imagined as an interiority); and (3) the politicality implied by capital’s inability to reproduce labor power as a capitalist commodity and its concomitant reliance on the “law of population peculiar to the capitalist mode of production” (*der kapitalistischen Produktionsweise eigentümliches Populationsgesetz*)³ to “indirectly” produce it, opening up the abyssal question of the subject and the possibilities of subjective interventions in the political realm.

So when Uno Kōzō decides to produce the everyday and commonplace term “impossibility” or “impasse” (*muri*) as a concept, he first puts his blinker on by emphasizing the role played by the wage in concealing the employment of labor power as variable capital in the process of production. He reminds us that the circuit we encounter every day depends on something that is not necessarily inherent to it—so he puts his foot down on the gas, pulls into the fast lane, and checks in his rearview mirror (a device called “three levels of

analysis”; *sandankairon no hōhō*) to make sure that “history” in its full Hegelian plenitude isn’t coming up behind him. Nevertheless, further back perhaps than could be seen in this schematic rearview mirror, there was a concept that aimed at the same foundational zone of effects that Uno indicated with the term “impossibility”: what political theology called the *katechon*. By tracing a certain trajectory for Uno’s thought that is not strictly economic, and pushing it toward the politicality that is implied in its supposedly austere and purely theoretical system, I want to attempt to ask a series of questions. How is the impossibility of the commodification of labor power related to the possibilities of politics today, how does this space relate to the entire field of effects characterizing contemporary capitalism and its reproduction? And how are we to understand the ubiquity of the discourse on the commons at the present moment, a discourse that suffuses so many positions relative to contemporary theoretical work? If we are to believe that the commons represents something of a project that is both possible and desirable, then how and in what ways does this “being in common” enter into and intersect with the contemporary operations of power? In a sense, I attempt here to overlap or cross-fertilize the register of the economic with the literary or the historical, to decontextualize, recombine, and “remix” Uno’s rewriting of the Marxian program in order to examine the consequences of this “impossibility,” an interruption or “interim status report” toward a rethinking of the debate on Japanese capitalism as theory.

Threshold: Labor Power as Fold

The relation of the manufacturer to the worker has nothing human in it; it is purely economic. The manufacturer is “Capital,” the worker is “Labour.” And if the worker will not be forced into this abstraction, if he insists that he is not “Labour,” but a man, who possesses, among other things, the attribute of labour-power, if he takes it into his head that he need not allow himself to be bought and sold in the market as the commodity “Labour,” the bourgeois reason comes to a standstill.⁴—FRIEDRICH ENGELS

The determination of labour power as a commodity is nothing more than a *semblance* (*kashō*; *Schein*): a commodity-determination is given to something which originally cannot be produced as a commodity. Yet it is not *merely* a semblance. Paradoxically, it is the necessary basic form that constitutes the general foundation for the commodification of every product in a commodity-economic society.⁵—UNO KŌZŌ

In a recent discussion touching on numerous aspects of the work of Uno Kōzō, Jacques Bidet writes: “So far as I am aware, Uno is the only theoretician of significance (or at least the first, given that his followers have taken up the task)

whose project was to reformulate the exposition of the ‘theory of capitalist society’ in conformity with an adequate order of exposition, with a necessary beginning, development, and end. Such was Marx’s project in *Capital*.⁶ Bidet is careful to emphasize that his reading is inherently partial, insofar as it is based on the small amount of Uno’s work thus far translated into European languages, but he draws our attention in the above passage to one of the decisive reasons “that a dialogue with Japanese Marxism should be started,” a dialogue that is not only long overdue, but that has been for over seventy-five years of Marxist theoretical work an ongoing and quasi-permanent “missed encounter.” When Bidet thus identifies in Uno a theoretical project whose aim is to match the inner conceptual development of critique to the development of “an adequate order of exposition,” he draws our attention to something fundamental to the Marxian project. Uno frequently reminds us that we must pay close attention to the fact that *Capital*, taken across its three volumes, begins with “commodities” at the outset of volume 1 and ends with “classes” at the end of volume 3. Even within its own self-contained structure, volume 1 itself begins with commodities and ends with the “secret” of expropriation, the “so-called primitive accumulation,” “the secret discovered in the new world by the political economy of the old world.”⁷ To put it another way, the end-point of the order of exposition is directly political, an end-point that itself loops back to the beginning or commencement and politicizes the commodity-form in a recurrent and torsional theoretical cycle. This expositional structure concerns the decisive theoretical object called “class struggle,” precisely the term that Marx considered the single most important within his work. But remaining solely in the realm of *Capital*’s logical structure runs the risk of also over-identifying Uno purely with the methodological analysis of the concept of “order of exposition” or “mode of presentation” (*Darstellungsweise*) in Marx, a problem that he dealt with in a brilliant and original manner to be sure, but that constitutes only a fragment of his broader theoretical work. More precisely, Uno’s interventions into the concept of “order of exposition” are intended not to be goals of the analysis itself, but rather conceptual tools utilized in order to arrive at a new scientific determination of the nature of capital and of capitalist society. The presentation of Uno as perhaps excessively concerned with methodological issues, and particularly with the question of the order of exposition, stems largely from the relative lack of his writings in European languages that have been accessible to Marxists in Europe and North America. Needless to say, Uno’s work contains within it numerous questions and directions for development that cannot simply be encompassed in the existing presentation of his position within the global scale of the development of Marxist theory. Yet here

Bidet, in his brief but important essay, goes on to identify with remarkable insight one of the most central and important aspects of Uno's work, despite having access only to a limited number of Uno's texts in European languages:

In the first place, there is the need to distinguish between the exposition of the general structure of capital and the exposition of the general history of capitalism. Marx certainly posited the principle of such a distinction, observing that the theory of capital was a precondition for the theory of its genesis ("primitive accumulation"). But a full study of the articulation of the two general problematics has not been carried out. It can only be conducted if the requirement of conceiving the structural totality on the one hand, and the historical totality on the other, as *genuine theoretical objects* (and not as mere raw material for paedagogical or encyclopaedic exposition) is accepted. In their way, this is what the schools of pure theory and "world capitalism" do. This exigency is far from having been acknowledged in the Marxist tradition.⁸

In essence, Uno's work could be said to undertake precisely this treatment of "the structural totality" and "the historical totality" as "genuine theoretical objects," with the eventual intention of demonstrating that capital names a scenario in which, paradoxically, these two instances of totality are both held apart, preserved at a mutual distance, and simultaneously *primordially contaminated* with each other. It is this latter point, which Uno discovers around the problem of the labor power commodity, that furnishes us with our point of entry into his work, and around which another "dialogue with Japanese Marxism" seems theoretically and politically necessary in our current moment.

Although well-known by reputation in English language Marxist scholarship for his methodological interventions, the center of Uno's research consisted primarily in an attempt to reread and rethink Marx's own work, focusing on the question of the "commodification of labour power" as its nucleus. For Uno, this is the most crucial insight of Marx, something to be rigorously distinguished from political or ideological statements, such as "all hitherto existing history is the history of class struggle" and so forth. Instead, Uno was basically interested in a sequence of problems that have come to the forefront of social life today: the creation or reproduction of labor power, its linkage to the state management of life in the form of population, and the central role that this nexus plays in the phenomenon called "crisis" whereby capital recalibrates its motion. When Uno referred to "the commodification of labor power" (*rōdōryoku shōhinka*) as the "mantra" (*nembutsu*) of Marx's *Capital*,⁹ what he means is that this phrase concentrates in a dense theoretical unit the

overall question undertaken in the critical analysis of capitalist production, that is, the production of capital as a social relation. And in fact, it is this question of how labor power is produced, reproduced, entered into the accumulation cycle, and utilized, which shows us a crucial theoretical problem in the contemporary world: the relation between the logic of capitalism's inner workings and the new emerging forms of state control over life, not only in the direct biotechnical sense, but in the sense of the vast super-state apparatuses that are emerging on the world stage to govern and manage bodies, movements, languages, affects, identities, and so forth. When capital delegates its most important task, the reproduction of labor power, to a function—the law of population—that is strictly speaking outside the direct purview of capital itself, capital's innermost logic comes to intersect with the concerns of the state, the role of the state in managing its inhabitants, in deciding who is and is not included in its order, who can “pass through” the border and who cannot. Capital wagers that this network of techniques and mechanisms can ensure its stable supply of labor power, a stable supply of the force of life.

But this basic concern of Uno's, and its broad field of analytical possibilities, goes back to a fundamental theoretical difference between labor and labor power, a distinction that stems from the pioneering work of Marx and Engels on the critique of political economy, which first took form in Marx's early category of “labour capacity” (*Arbeitsvermögens*) in the *Grundrisse* manuscripts. In fact, long before the term “labor power” (*Arbeitskraft*) came to be specifically used in Marx to mark this distinction, it is clear that he identified the essential problem. Even in the early manuscript of *Wage Labour and Capital*, published in April 1849 in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, Marx pointed out the nature of this difference insofar as the laborer does not sell him or herself “once and for all (*ein für allemal*),” rather “the free labourer sells himself piecemeal (*stückweise*).”¹⁰ This identified early on the problem later formalized in *Capital*: “The continuance of this relation demands that the owner of the labor-power should sell it only for a definite period (*nur für bestimmte Zeit verkaufe*), for if he were to sell it rump and stump, once and for all (*ein für allemal*), he would be selling himself, converting himself from a free man into a slave, from a commodity-possessor (*Warenbesitzer*) into a commodity.”¹¹ In fact, we should note that, in the 1891 republished edition of *Wage Labour and Capital*, Engels reedited the manuscript, replacing numerous instances of the term “labour” (*Arbeit*) with the term “labour power” (*Arbeitskraft*) when appropriate.

Although the specific terminology evolved over the course of their work, Marx and Engels in essence always distinguished rigorously between labor—the acts of work or expenditure of energy on a teleological project of any

nature—and labor power, the unqualifiable and fluctuating kernel of human potential that becomes the sole thing owned by the worker under a capitalist commodity economy, stripped bare of possessions and deterritorialized from the land, this thing that is never sold as a totality but always as a fragment contained in the laborer's body. But labor power is something much more complex than simply the labor inputs computed by capital in its accumulation cycle. Rather, labor power also names the object against which the state utilizes and deploys its power over life, what Foucault for instance referred to in the now widely disseminated theorisations of "biopower." That is, the reproduction of labor power, the reproduction of this element that capital itself cannot in essence control, marks perhaps the single most important function of capital's power to "hide in plain view." Capital must always act as if this element is readily available to it, deploying an accumulation cycle that is impossible without the presupposition that further labor power inputs can be immediately discovered without delay when they are required for the continuance of the cycle. In this sense, labor power is an input that is always absent, but that must be presumed as a stable presence. It is no surprise that, if rigorously exposed, the dynamics of labor power in the capitalist cycle show us precisely that it is on this point that "the bourgeois rationality comes to a standstill," confronting the absence or impasse of reason that underlies capital's putatively smooth and supposedly "rational" circuit-process. But what exactly is this element of "labour power," what does this element name?

It is well known that Marx's analysis of capitalist production demonstrates that capitalism's basic circuit-process (*Kreislaufsprozeß*) relies on or presumes certain basic "presuppositions for its becoming" (*als historische Voraussetzung seines Werdens erscheinen*),¹² in particular the commodification of labor power, the formation of an input, a "necessary matter for its life-process,"¹³ through which labor can be utilized in the process of production as a use value. But this zone of exteriority to capitalism's smooth functioning relies on another exteriority to its internal logic: the so-called primitive accumulation (*ursprüngliche Akkumulation*), that is, the process of the violent expropriation of existing conditions, the process of enclosure and capture. This double exteriority on which the reproduction of capitalist relations of production rests has been widely theorized in the Marxian tradition and in contemporary theoretical work, but its implications for the current moment, for contemporary politics and for the politics of theory itself, are by no means settled—it is on this network of problems that Uno's intervention is most decisive.

In his recent works, Paolo Virno has directed our attention to the problem of labor power at the core of the question of biopolitics; some years previ-

ously and in a different contextual space, Gayatri Spivak reinstalled for us an emphasis on the need to “unavoidably grasp” the “special character” of labor power, that is, “its double nature.”¹⁴ Long before the recent theoretical returns to this question, in 1956, after more than thirty years of intensive research into Marx’s *Capital*, Uno Kōzō argued that he had discovered its theoretical essence, its microscopic expression, in the form of its fundamental “mantra” or pure axiomatic distillation: “the impossibility of the commodification of labor power” (*rōdōryoku shōhinka no muri*).¹⁵ This “mantra” theoretically concretizes the problem that lurks behind every aspect of capitalist society, the essential and foundational moment that distinguishes Marx’s advances in the critique of the political economy put forward by Ricardo, Smith, Quesnay, and others. But what basic problem does this stem from? For Marx, labor power (*Arbeitskraft*) is in general “the embodiment [Inbegriff] of those mental and physical capabilities existing in the corporeality [Leiblichkeit] and living personality of a human being, which he sets in motion [die er in Bewegung setzt] whenever he produces a use value of any sort.”¹⁶ In other words, it is the total form of the total potential of the embodied human, but a total form that only becomes visible, only itself becomes a question, when this potential is employed to produce a use value. Yet labor power is something that cannot be produced in the production process as a commodity. For the capitalist circuit of accumulation to operate, the worker must be placed in a position in which he or she is compelled to sell this labor power as a commodity for the reason that he or she is unable, has been made unable, to produce any sort of use value through it. Through a series of external conditions, through the operation of expropriation and capture, this inoperativity is installed in displacement at the heart of this cycle—the most basic and fundamental “possession” of the worker, that is, his or her pure potentiality to produce a use value, is captured as something unusable in private life and is made into a commodity: this point of origin is the repeating loop of capitalist accumulation itself, the pivot or motor force according to which capitalism founds its narrative of maturation and simultaneously creates the object that is then retrospectively attributed back toward its starting point. Virno has argued that “labor power does not indicate a circumscribed potentiality—it is the common name for various kinds [specie] of potentiality.”¹⁷ These phrases, however, do not exactly clarify the problem. “Labor power” seems merely to name this thing or space that is produced in corporeal life and outside the smoothly turning circuit of capitalism as a closed totality. This thing is not solely a name for something that has been usurped by capital but also a name for all sorts of potentials. The operation of this strange thing can therefore be summed up: “It is only labor power that

cannot be a commodity as a product of capital in a purely capitalist society—it is a unique commodity because it is what establishes this purely capitalist society and at the same time can transform into the thing that negates it.”¹⁸ But how and in what way is this “thing” formed, created, and maintained? What characterizes this strange relationship wherein we can posit the production of this “thing” only at a conceptual distance?

We have to pay close attention when Marx states that he does not so much investigate the actual-historical process of the genesis of capitalism (although, of course, he addresses this in the form of the social analysis of the period of primitive accumulation) as he focuses his attention on the *historical presuppositions for its becoming*, because it is precisely on this point that Uno reveals the fundamental proposition I attempt to expand on throughout this chapter:

From the beginning, the production process of capital is realized in a general form that no society can avoid, that is, as a labor-production process, through the specific circulation-form of capital, and thus from the very outset, there is here what we might call an excess [saishō kara iwaba muri ga aru]. In the commodification of labor power, that is, in the commodification of this thing that is originally neither a simple product nor one that can be produced as a commodity, this impossibility is constantly passing through [sono muri ga tōtte iru]. Through the development of capitalistic methods of production, however, labor power comes to be actually commodified, and for this reason can take the form of the labor wage: thus the production process appears as a natural phenomenon through the form of capital realized in the circulation process.¹⁹

That is, he argues simply that “the fact of the commodification of labor power itself constitutes the particularly ‘impossible’ phenomenon of capitalist production.” What does it mean to operate from the viewpoint of this “impossibility”? As Uno points out, exactly this thing, the labor power commodity, is essentially impossible as a function of its position, torn in two directions at once; yet as a function of its constitutive ambivalence, its elemental slippage, it is precisely that which can be transformed into the “negation” of the entire capitalist circuit of reproduction (at least, to the extent that there could exist a situation in which no supply of labor power existed for the process of production). At the same time, the very existence of the labor power commodity presupposes a kind of interior complicity with capital, precisely because labor power itself is only called into being, into its full constituted plenitude, as a result of the employment of labor, its use value. Even in his early works of the 1840s, Marx recognized that “capital can multiply itself only by exchang-

ing itself for labor power, by calling wage-labor into life. The labor power of the wage-laborer can exchange itself for capital only by increasing capital, by strengthening that very power whose slave it is.” Uno’s emphasis on the fact that there is always the generation of an excess that is “passing through” (*sono muri ga tōtte iru*) is a way of expressing the fact that the tense nonspace of labor power, torn between its deterritorialization (its creation through dispossession) and its reterritorialization (its continual but dislocational reproduction through its employment in production), itself incarnates a space of effects that cannot be grasped as a stable and stationary object. Rather it is an undercurrent that is always present in capitalism, in its ability to ground itself, its ability to testify to its own constitution and continuation.

Since labor power cannot exist in separation from the laborer’s mental and physical capabilities, it is inseparable from the reproduction of life in the most basic sense. In other words, “for the laborer, the goal of the selling of labor power is the acquisition of the necessary means of subsistence, i.e., the process of $C-M-C$.”²⁰ Even if we simply “presume” that labor power is commodified from the very beginning, it is still impossible to argue that this initial C itself is produced as a commodity; here, what the laborer attempts to obtain, means of subsistence, are repeatedly cyclically consumed in order to nourish the body, that is, in order to live. Immediately we are exposed to the vast and aporetic gap between this process of the “production” (an extremely uncanny production) of labor power and the production of any other raw materials that would furnish us with means of production (for example, steel, cotton, wood, paper, etc.). From the capitalist’s point of view, nothing fundamental on the surface of this process appears any different from the production of any other commodity, but the decisive point is that the means of subsistence, which enable the reproduction of labor power, are themselves purchased as commodities, and their use value is consumed in order to live: that is, they cannot already exist as *value*. Unlike any other commodity, the value of the means of subsistence that the laborer consumes is not at all converted into and retained as valorized in the form of labor power as a commodity as it appears in the production process. In other words, Uno argues, “the exchange process between C' and C is interrupted, not by the production process, but by the consumption process.” Labor power, as we see here, simply cannot be produced *directly* as a capitalist commodity, because it must always-already be intersected by another surface or entire phase of capital’s circuit, the consumption process.

This “indirectness,” or what we might call the “torsion” of labor power on itself, therefore, also shows us the inadequacy of the typical presentation of

the labor process in mainstream economics as a purely circulatory process, the process by which money M is transformed into the value of capital, or M' . Because this process of $M-C-M'$ is always interrupted by C , which must contain or hold in it the residue of human labor, the value expressed in the form of “labor power” cannot be transferred directly without a process of mediation from M to M' . Even if it appears this way to the capitalist, who purchases labor power as if it were a commodity like any other, who consumes or uses up this labor power as if it were a commodity input in the production process, labor power is itself “the embodiment [Inbegriff] of those mental and physical capabilities existing in the corporeality [Leiblichkeit] and living personality of a human being.”²¹ Therefore, what the form of labor power shows us is that capital’s essence consists in this “as if,” this fundamental expression of its “putative” or “presupposed” character, because capital must treat labor power as if it were any other commodity, yet this is itself “impossible” because the gaps or interruptions that labor power opens up under capital’s smooth leap from M to M' are irresolvable by capital itself. In other words, it is this first order point—capitalism is a social system in which the fundamental human relation absolutely must circulate *only as a thing* that it simultaneously cannot be, which therefore presents itself as a kind of irrationality torsionally recoded as rationality—that Uno described as the *muri* or impossibility of the commodification of labor power.

The value of labor power, like all commodities, is determined by the “socially necessary labor time” required to produce it. But this presents itself as a baffling paradox or circular logical moment when we consider the labor power commodity, because already we are projected outside the production process as such and into a concentric process: that is, the value of labor power, which cannot be directly produced, is here determined by the socially necessary labor time required for the production of the means of subsistence that are required to keep the laborer alive, not the labor time required to produce labor power itself,²² because this is strictly impossible—how could a “capacity” be produced? This is because in Marx’s terms “labor power exists only as a capacity, or power of the living individual [nur als Anlage des lebendigen Individuums]. Its production consequently presupposes his existence [Ihre Produktion setzt also seine Existenz voraus]. Given the individual’s existence, the production of labor power consists in his reproduction of himself or his maintenance [Erhaltung]. For his maintenance he requires a given quantity of the means of subsistence.”²³ This “presupposition”—the whole economy in Marx of *setzung* and *voraussetzung*, which Uno will extensively examine in one of his most important texts—therefore shows us something critical: the in-

dividual's life-existence depends fundamentally on the means of subsistence, which in capitalist society already "presupposes" that the production of this means of subsistence is undertaken by means of the commodity labor power. Thus, the whole issue of labor power shows us this torsional and recurrent loop, whereby it must be presumed in order to exist, yet the condition of its very presupposition itself presumes that what should be a *result* of the process must somehow be there at the beginning.

Thus, the laborer in a capitalist society does nothing but produce the conditions of possibility for the production of labor power as a commodity—thus, "the accumulation of capital is crucially dependent on the availability of additional labor-power that cannot be produced by capital itself. Labor power, as has been repeatedly stressed, is reproduced within the private life of workers themselves."²⁴ This stark statement that labor power is reproduced in "the life of workers" requires us to look at labor power not simply as a self-evident and available "living labor capacity" but also in its most contemporary sense: as many theorists have argued, today the primary concern of capitalist innovation is not discovering new ways of increasing the stock of fixed capital for the next cycle but is precisely the transformation of the creative capacity and private cultivation of the qualitative dimensions of labor power. So what is this thing that is produced in "life" (*seikatsu*), this thing that founds the continual motion of capitalist accumulation and on which this motion depends for its very conditions of existence? Marx will later add to this definition a crucial moment for Uno's analysis: "Labor power is the form under which variable capital exists during the process of production" (*Arbeitskraft ist die Form, worin das variable Kapital innerhalb des Produktionsprozesses existiert*).²⁵ In other words, labor power comes to exist or is called into life only when it is utilized in the process of production. Prior to its use it is nothing more than a potentiality that is materially absent. In other words, labor power's existence flashes before our eyes in the general formula of industrial capital: $M - C \dots P \dots C' - M$.²⁶ That is, given a general abstract sequence of production, an initial sum of money is exchanged for commodities, in this case for two commodity inputs necessary in order to undertake a production cycle: means of production and labor power, so the formula branches at a decisive moment, as follows.

$$M - C <_{LP}^{MP} \dots P \dots C' - M'$$

But the paradox Marx points out here is that LP does not exist as something substantial when money is exchanged for it as a commodity. Rather, it is retrospectively made to have existed only during the process of production itself.

Thus, labor power haunts the circuit $M-C-M'$, incapable of serving as a stable element and capable only of “putting in an appearance” at the central point of a given sequence of production:

$$M-C < \begin{matrix} MP_1 \\ LP_1 \end{matrix} \left[\begin{matrix} MP_2 \\ \{\emptyset\} \end{matrix} \right] \dots P \left[\begin{matrix} MP_2 \\ LP_2 \end{matrix} \right] \dots C'-M'$$

Here MP_1 and LP_1 , representing C , the initial phase of the means of production and labor power purchased with money M , are immediately temporally exposed to a gap—prior to entering the process of production, LP cannot exist as such, it lacks a stable presence, a “commodity body.” Yet it must be purchased as such. In contrast to the point of production P , wherein labor power (LP_2) is employed directly as a use-value in the production process and thereby attains a type of presence, labor power is itself merely a preemptive trace at the earlier point of exchange. Oki Kōsuke, taking his point of departure from Uno’s theoretical system, has produced a remarkable and rigorous formulation on this point, one that effectively shows us precisely the problem at stake.

The commodity-body of labour power is inserted between the two continuous processes of the body of the labourer and labour. Here the commodity-body of labour power plays a doubled role. Through the separation of the labourer’s body from labour, it conceals the obvious fact that labour—and thus the value it produces as well—is the result or effect of the labourer’s body. In order for the deterritorialised labourer and the capital he or she contingently encounters to carry out the expansion of value, the body of labour power that separates the labourer’s body from labour is necessary. This body of labour power, capable of suppressing the materiality of the labourer, is a void body. Strictly speaking, this body is absent.²⁶

There is a moment in which capital’s reproduction, which requires both means of production and sufficient labour power, cannot be assured of the existence of LP_1 , when it is a void element $[\emptyset]$, one that has not yet passed this commodity-threshold through which it is exchanged and circulated, and thus called into form. This is another critical moment of what Uno described as the “impossibility” of the commodification of labor power, because even when it is smoothly circulated, its existence is “under erasure,” so to speak. Two impossibilities that intersect or overlap between the sphere of circulation and the process of production are exposed in the volatile interval located between the edges or borders of these two spheres.

But what operation is this impossibility signifying? Why does Uno choose

this word to locate for us the site wherein something is in excess in the situation, wherein something cannot be counted, or accounted for, by means of the existing order of being? This question might be approached as follows: “The commodity labor power, however, has this peculiarity (among others): its value stands in a special relation to the quantity of use value that it represents, namely, the quantity of living labor *unfolded* in its using-up.”²⁷ Let me rephrase this economic insight by taking a rhetorical clue from and productively “misreading” what Laibman refers to here as the “unfolding” of labor power in its employment in the process of production. I would like to point out that it is precisely the “fold” itself that Uno indicates with the term “impossibility,” the limit wherein an extensive and planar surface folds into itself, creating a zone whereby its exterior can be posited as an interior. By folding its own logical space back onto itself, the smooth and freely spinning circuit-process of accumulation enables its exterior, that which cannot be accounted for in its own internal workings, to be discovered and nurtured in its interior. That is, this “impossibility” marks a space or “fold” (*pli*) that “redoubles the empty distance from where it comes to us and separates itself from itself, closing in on this distance over which it, and it alone, stands guard.”²⁸

The impossibility of the commodification of labor power is the site of a double “folding” and “unfolding” for capitalism, a zone where intensities and effects are gathered in this “fold” in order to create a labor power input for the production process outside capitalism’s “normal” functioning, and these inputs are then “unfolded” through the employment of the use value (labor) of this commodity, whose only use value is precisely to produce other use values. That is to say, this “fold” in capitalism, which Uno called an “impossibility” (*muri*), describes the function of how capitalism is capable of discovering something outside itself but ensuring that this outside comes to be “posited by it as its own presupposition” (*von ihr als ihre eignen Voraussetzungen gesetzt*).²⁹

In a broad sense, this space can be understood as a fold in power, the form through which power acts on itself and thereby continues its own chain of effects. By folding something, one takes a plane or surface (a continuous space without depth) and creates an interior out of a single exterior. But this folded interior (something like a pocket or pleat) is not thereby separated from the exterior: rather it is coextensive with it and in a mutually constitutive relation. That is, this newly created interior is not a “depth” as such, it is a depth of the surface itself. This interior therefore does not preexist the exterior from which it was formed, nor is it wholly external to the interior of the exterior itself. That is, this interior is simply formed by the folding back of the surface onto itself. Power operates in precisely this way. Consider, for instance, the reign of a

sovereign. The sovereign is in a constant process of holding court, attending rituals, meeting inferiors, bestowing judgments, overseeing projects, and so forth. The reason for doing so is that the sovereign's power stems from being seen—this is somewhat obvious. But, more accurately, the sovereign's power stems from something that is essentially useless and inoperative.

In order to guarantee the continuity of these great and terrible powers—to kill, to let live, to care for whole populations, to promote, to wage war, to make law, and so on—the sovereign must continuously mobilize his own *glory*. Strictly speaking, however, glory has no purpose; or rather, its purpose is bound up in a complex relationship with power itself.³⁰ Glory is something like the “fold” of power. It is the site wherein power must continuously give to itself an image of itself that then naturalizes or grounds the operation of power in the situation. That is, power can only be seen when it folds onto itself, when it shows forth its figurational character. Power is constantly being exposed to its own impossibility because it is continuously mobilizing something other than itself in order to naturalize its own operation. Similarly (actually it is precisely the same process, not merely a “similarity”), capital's smooth circuit of accumulation is closed; it is not something that requires anything other than what it itself posits. Yet in order to reproduce itself, capital requires labor power, something it cannot simply produce in the way it produces other commodities. That is, by folding some substratum of the ghostly interior of the worker's body into its sphere, or by encompassing the reproduction of labor power by means of the process of consumption of means of subsistence (already a product of capital) into its own internal circuit, capital creates a mechanism that allows it to posit labor power as something internal to it: this fundamental externality of the production process of labor power to the circuit of capital, which must be recoded in the sphere of circulation as internal, is “forcibly coerced” by the consumption process itself so that labor power can be given form in the commodity. Therefore, “under this premise, the circulation-form of capital for the first time becomes something in continuous movement.”³¹ This “forcible coercion” should be immediately understood as an exterior in a doubled sense, and it is precisely here that we should recall the contours of the debate on Japanese capitalism, and the problematic of “extra-economic coercion”—rather than imagining that this “extra-economic coercion” is a figure or “emblem” of the incomplete nature of the given social formation's territorialization of the mode of production, we can immediately see that this incompleteness is inherent to capital's logic.

For Uno, the essence of capital is contained in this “double result,” this operation of “folding” through which those things that are external and that

it cannot itself produce are imagined or posited within it as “ready at hand,” as available and immediate.

Nevertheless, from the fact that capital posits every such limit (*Grenze*) as a barrier (*Schranke*) which it has *ideally* (*ideell*) already overcome, it does not at all follow that capital has *really* (*real*) overcome it; and since every such limit contradicts the determination of capital, its production is subject to contradictions which are constantly overcome but just as constantly posited. Moreover, the universality towards which capital relentlessly drives itself (*Die Universalität, nach der es unaufhaltsam hintreibt*) comes up against barriers in capital’s own nature, barriers which at a certain stage of its development will allow it to be recognised as being itself the greatest barrier (*Schranke*) in the way of this tendency (*Tendenz*), and will therefore drive outwards towards its transcendence through itself (*zu seiner Aufhebung durch es selbst hintreiben*).³²

Here we see the complexity of this fold, the operation wherein capital’s self-image, its positing of its own transcendence through its own conditions, becomes the central question. Labor power, as the source of a kind of “primal energy” for capital derived from its inherent “elasticity” (*Elastizität*),³³ cannot be truly integrated into the circuit-process of capitalist accumulation but can only posited as if it *were integrated*. This “impossibility” for capitalism is therefore a general problematic of power, a means of indicating something that, while conceptually impossible, is nevertheless the very basis of the reproduction of the social-historical itself. We should remember that this “fold” wherein capital attempts to posit the supply of labor power as if it were an internal operation is nevertheless always phantasmic on a certain level, because “the ‘industry’ producing labor power is not appropriated; labor power is therefore an input of the system but not an output in the relevant sense.”³⁴ The “industry” here is the substratum of energy itself, the unbound and unthinkable field of corporeality, of life that is only partially captured in the process of the political and juridical constitution of labor power that can be commodified. This “industry” or “social factory” that is constantly producing labor power, that is, the zone of energy that reprocesses life-practices and forms them into sequences, is not itself “appropriated” by capital. The role of the state, or of sovereign power, is in attempting to “appropriate” this space to the greatest extent possible, organizing and concretizing the maintenance, the “care,” of this “industry” by means of the investment in life, or biopower. Biopower operates precisely because capital cannot “appropriate” the total circumstances of the reproduction of labor power; instead, power invests itself in a vast array

of forms designed to care for and shelter life in order to ensure the consistent and constant supply of labor power that can be commodified. For this precise reason, its unit of deployment is the form of *population*, the limit-situation that allows capital to regulate this object: “capital is capable of controlling the regulation of the supply and demand of every commodity other than labor power, the sole commodity whose supply and demand can only be regulated by capital within definite limits. It is thus the basic condition that capitalism must possess and simultaneously indicates precisely its fundamental weakness.”³⁵

The question of this “fold” of power through which capital posits its own supply of commodified labor power is obviously an “impossibility.” That is, capital is always acting “as if” this is the case, even though its own function can be guaranteed only by this mutually constitutive relationship to the outside. This “impossibility,” which names the folding and unfolding of labor power in the process of capitalist accumulation, therefore also marks a distinct topography of problems for the attempt to account for capital’s own “life-process,” its historicity.

For Uno, capitalism itself is not a linear narrative interrupted by various forms of resistance that are strictly external to it, but rather “is something that takes various distorted forms (*shuju naru waikyoku*) while nevertheless realising its own internal laws of development.”³⁶ But this can never be simply a *logical* form. Rather, *history* is inescapably present in this question: labor power could never be constituted without the historical accident/precedent that inaugurated the enclosures in the first place—the process of “so-called primitive accumulation”—and hence we should remember when analyzing capital’s internal insanity, its delirium, that even if it coquets as a pure circle with no territorial-historical outside or zone of excess, *capital’s own logical narrative of development paradoxically necessitates its historical origin*. This is why we must inquire into the actual operation, the conceptual physics operating within this impasse or impossibility of the labor power commodity, and by extension, ask a related question: why does Uno ground capitalist accumulation as a whole within this impasse, that is, what is at stake in considering this moment of the impasse as the general substratum of the process of capture? And in turn, how can the operation of this impossibility or impasse assist us in thinking the question of politics, in posing for ourselves the possibilities within it for the critical analysis of our actual moment?

In the present context, I would like to utilize this densely sedimented term “impossibility” (*muri*) to describe the subterranean current of operation at work in the dual segmentation of economy and sovereign power, an undercurrent in which the hazardous space of capture opens and exposes the “ferment

of [capital's] dissolution and the emblems of its limitations [*Wappen seiner Borniertheit*]."³⁷ For the question of the historical possibilities of addressing this problematic, Adachi Mariko has produced an apt formulation:

The introduction of "history" in Marx does not encompass its mere site of connection to capital in the form of the limitations to the supply of labor power but rather encompasses the historicity of the impossibility of the commodification of labor power itself, in other words, history as the outside that must manifest itself in the openings contained in the theory of principle, or the purified logic of capital itself—thus in Marx, in contrast to the classical school, the question is that of the dynamic transformation of the theory of principle or the inner logic of capital through the pressures exerted by history itself.³⁸

This historicity is itself a double outside; it indicates not only the history of the acts of commodification that must be simply presumed from the standpoint of capitalist society as a *fait accompli* but also the impossibility of this very act of historicization. We cannot effectively historicize or "contextualize" the moment of the impossibility of the commodification of labor power, precisely because we are always arriving on the stage of history after the fold in power has already taken place. This fold in power is constantly being renewed through its temporality, which is inherently retrospectively projected. The historicity of the impossibility, therefore, can only be accounted for in yet another dislocational movement, because "a commodity economy can become the general social form only to the extent that social relations that can commodify labor power itself are established."³⁹ The impossibility is precisely the hazardous zone that lies on the border of the unthinkable: how can history account for this space that it cannot encounter? History, however, is inescapably there: labor power could never be constituted without the historical accident/precedent that inaugurated the enclosures in the first place, hence we should remember when analyzing capital's internal insanity, its pure delirium, that even if it coquets as a pure circle with no territorial-historical outside or zone of excess, "there are no deliriums that do not involve history before they involve some ridiculous figure of Mommy and Daddy."⁴⁰ This is why we must inquire into the actual operation, the conceptual physics operating in this impossibility, and by extension, ask a related question: why does Uno ground capitalist accumulation as a whole in this impossibility, that is, what is at stake in considering this moment of the impossibility as the "underground current" or substratum of the process of capture? And in turn, how can this operation of the impossibility assist us in thinking the question of politics, the question of the commons as

a production, in posing for ourselves the possibilities within it for the critical analysis of actuality? Obviously there have been numerous attempts to clarify, develop, and extend precisely what Uno meant by this term “impossibility.”⁴¹ Here, I would like to utilize this dense, sedimented, and powerful term to describe the subterranean current of operation at work in the dual segmentation of economy and sovereign power, an undercurrent in which the hazardous space of capture opens and exposes certain “emblems of its limitations.”⁴²

The impossibility of the commodification of labor power shows us in concentrated and dense detail that this space is a zone of effects in which power tears away from itself while simultaneously fixing and sustaining a foothold in its own “tearing away.” In other words, “by incorporating into itself the two primary creators of wealth, labor power and land, capital acquires a power of expansion that permits it to augment the elements of its accumulation beyond the limits [Grenzen] apparently fixed by its own magnitude, or by the value and the mass of the means of production, already produced, in which it has its being [Dasein].”⁴³ The *Ur-Akt* by which capital exceeds its own limits, in which it secures its being, is the unthinkable historicity of the impossibility itself. It is an outside, but an outside that is always-already being folded into itself, thereby forming an interior, and simultaneously being unfolded through the production process wherein its use value component suddenly isolates and illuminates the silhouette of the absent body of labor power—what Uno marked with this term *muri* or impossibility names exactly the threshold wherein capital itself is exposed to its maximum logical volatility.

Labor Power as Sacrifice:

Production-Surface and Circulation-Surface

In *The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum*, Carl Schmitt utilizes a certain term derived from the apostle Paul’s Second Letter to the Thessalonians to describe the force that both “restrains” and “enables” the empire: what he refers to as the *katechon*, the force of “restraining,” “holding back,” “preventing,” and so forth. This term originates in the New Testament—it is “that which holds the Anti-Christ at bay,” that which prevents the inevitable process of the Apocalypse from occurring. But this “restraint” is at the same time that which allows the present period to continue, something that, by restraining the appearance and spectacular cataclysm of the end, sustains the continuance of the current moment. Schmitt’s rereading of this term focuses on the aspect of maintenance implicit in it, its double nature: that is, this force of “restraint” associated with the end of the world, the implosion

of the cosmic order under the force of its own productions, is paradoxically what enables the power of the Holy Roman Empire, what allows it to spread everywhere, to suspend all previous arrangements and ceaselessly territorialize itself without limits. Schmitt thus argues that it is only in this ultimate limit (*katechon*) that the limitless sovereign power of order can operate. That is, the empire posits its own end, the apocalypse, in the form of the Antichrist, the figure who heralds this end. Yet at the same time, precisely in deploying this figure of the end, the empire strengthens itself, ensures the stability of its power, and through its glory continuously expands and encompasses new elements. Thus, the *katechon* describes the impossible force, the impossible site of power wherein that which “restrains” and displays the empire’s end also serves as the source of its reproduction and expansion.⁴⁴ The potency contained in this space is an energy, one derived from the power generated in every act of capture and integration. Every form of capture both undermines itself (by relying on that which lies outside its body) and at the same time is enabled by this undermining (because without an exterior, development, expansion, contraction, etc., in short, dynamism, would be impossible). History itself as a continuity is the tracing of a line according to which this dynamics of power operates, the sequence of slippages and dislocations according to which assemblages are concatenated and redeployed.

In order for God to be fully manifest, fully present, this *katechon*, that which restrains and enables, must be removed. Only when this force of restraint is excised from the social can the end (or beginning, the Apocalypse) truly occur. Thus, paradoxically, this tension that arises is precisely what sustains the situation, and therefore we have to consider the *katechon* to be “the historical category par excellence” precisely because it is the most basic “descriptive concept of the true mode of being of history,”⁴⁵ caught between these poles. It is through the notion of the *katechon*, which plays a critical role in Schmitt’s thought, that he rereads the question of sovereignty as one of political theology—that is, not merely how power sustains itself, but how legitimacy is given to it from within the contours of its own deployment. Hence, “through this idea, Schmitt links theology with politics; legitimacy comes to politics from the theological. It is as a function of the *katechon* that politics is incarnated into a theology of history, and this is where it acquires its legitimation.”⁴⁶

We ought to recognize quickly that this concept (a concept in the strong sense, that is, an actual-material force) names and marks an operation similar to the one Uno referred to as the impossibility (*muri*) in his rewriting or overcoding of the basic Marxian schematics. What capital’s drive is always

pushing toward is the removal of this impossibility, the creation of a circuit of reproduction in which no outside, no space of slippage, remains. Yet at the same time, capital's modality of reproduction depends precisely on the multiplication of its encounters with this impossibility, because in order to guarantee the continuing presence of labor power, capital will have to continue capturing, sustaining, and commodifying something that is external to it. Of course, "life itself," if we can even use this term, is not something entirely external to capital—rather, we might say that life is *immanent* to capital, but capital does not have access to this life directly, "ready at hand" (*zuhanden*). Capitalism, in essence, is a systemic and total force, a closed cycle without limits, but this cycle's very existence and operation are enabled only by a fundamental outside, that is, the existence of sufficient inputs of labor power, as well as the existence of excess labor power that can be employed in future rising levels of production. What is at stake in clarifying this particular aspect of capital's existence is precisely the nature of the following seeming impossibility: the Achilles's heel of capital is the power that suffuses and permeates the "outside" and that indicates the end or limit of capitalism as such, the self-generated limits capitalism creates for itself, yet at the same time it is precisely through this energy that capitalist accumulation can appear as a smooth and expanding circuit-process. That is, it is only through the impossibility (*katechon*) or exception that the foundations of the normal operation of order are encountered and formed.

In his most recent writings, Virno has also taken up the problematic of the *katechon* in order to clarify and extend his discussion of the politics of the multitude. His discussion, however, attempts to discuss the *katechon* from the other side of the equation, that is, for Virno, the *katechon* is the most central concept that the multitude itself must learn to deploy in practice. He conceives of this function as one that "resists the pressure of chaos by adhering to chaos, just as the concave adheres to the convex."⁴⁷ That is, although it is something that posits the end, the dissolution of all social forms into a primal chaotic state of Apocalypse, simultaneously, it enables the continuation and sustenance of a given situation precisely by this positing of chaos. The *katechon* (impossibility) is in essence not specific to its use in political theology but is "a ubiquitous and pervasive property, perhaps a bioanthropological constant," something that forms the general undercurrent of various forms of power in social-historical life. In fact, he equates "the concept of *katechon* with the apotropaic function innate in any political (and nonpolitical) institution," a way of naming this space whereby power gives to itself its own justification by paradoxically positing its own powerlessness through its need for an external

emblem or ritual to legitimate itself. It is something containing an “internal antinomy,” a “double bond” of commandment, which Virno effectively sums up in the phrase “I command you to be spontaneous!” That is, the *katechon* is what keeps the situation moving, revolutionizing itself, forming adaptations and shifts; “it safeguards the state of oscillation and its persistence as such.”⁴⁸ In other words, it is precisely the impossibility of the commodification of labor power, folded back into the circuit-process of accumulation, that “safeguards” and guarantees the smoothness of the cycle itself. Only by admitting this outside, but admitting it “as if” it were something generated and posited from within, can capitalism legitimate itself and spur on its self-revolutionizing movement of transformation.

Virno’s reason for taking up this term today is his suggestion that the “*katechon* is the institution that best adapts itself to the permanent state of exception” that the world order is experiencing. He poses this conception of the *katechon* against Schmitt’s reading, which he accuses of merely being deployed as a legitimization of authoritarianism. This wager, in essence, is that the *katechon* is a political institution of the multitude, one whose essence is the action and discourse of the multitude. But I think we need to acknowledge that the *katechon* (impossibility) is something ubiquitous, the zone of energy in which that which heralds the end is also that which sustains what is ending. This *katechon* indicates the unthinkable space in which capitalism creates its own “gravediggers,” yet it is precisely through this creation of its own conditions of destruction that capitalism spurs on the progressive movement of its accumulation cycle. But how does this *katechon* (impossibility) come to actually function in social-historical life, that is, what form does it take? The impossibility names an unapproachable, unthinkable space that encompasses power’s tendency to “fold” itself inward onto itself, to deploy that which it cannot control “as if” it is controlling it.

This is where Uno locates the form of population—we must remember the second or dependent phrase of Uno’s introduction to the “muri” or impossibility of the commodification of labor power, the paradox that, although this commodification should be impossible, in capitalist society “the impossibility is constantly passing through [sono muri ga tōtte iru].”⁴⁹ I will show how this “passing” operates by means of two detours. It has been widely remarked on that Foucault’s analysis of the term “population,” although filled with rich insights, does not necessarily draw a clear theoretical relation between “population” and “biopower,”⁵⁰ nor does it adequately develop the political consequences of this relation. That is, why does the operation of biopolitics in contemporary capitalism specifically necessitate the form of population?

Biopower, the investment of life into governance, is a sequence of operations, functions, and intensities that delegates into various existing spaces the control and calibration of the smooth functioning of domination. This occurs not strictly through dispossession, oppression, and so forth but through the formation of investments, the direction of desires and affective sensibilities, the deployment and management of operations of identification and comfort. That is, biopower can be distinguished precisely by its tendency of insinuation, its effect of managing its own outside by conceiving of and deploying assemblages capable of regulating even those things that are strictly speaking not “ready at hand” for it. In other words:

Capital is something that cannot directly produce the labor power commodity, but through the formation of the relative surplus population in its accumulation process, it *can indirectly produce it*, so to speak. Thus capital gains a method of releasing the supply of labor power from the limitations of the given natural population: the development of what Marx referred to as the special character of the law of population in capitalism. This is precisely the fundamental basis through which capitalism makes itself into a specific form of society. This is why the “historical and moral factors” contained in the determination of the value of labor power must be formed in such a way as to be commensurable with capitalist production.⁵¹

That is, in order to control and maintain something it in fact cannot control, capitalism forms a means of producing the labor power commodity “as if” it were, in fact, under its direct jurisdiction. What it requires is a form of delegation that can formulate social-historical institutions capable of inciting forms of the “historical” and “moral” aspects of the field of life (from which labor power is drawn) that are “suitable” for capitalism’s own reproduction. Thus, capitalism’s specific form of population is a complex aggregate of techniques that are overlaid like a grid on the existing “natural” stratum of bodies, words, physiognomies, affects, desires, and so on, which recalibrates and reformulates them as “countable” or “computable” by capital as inputs for its circuit-process. “Capitalism turns all products into commodities—it turns labor power itself into a commodity as well, but it cannot produce this labor power *as a commodity by means of capital* [shihon ni yoru shōhin toshite seisan suru koto wa dekinai]. As a result, in order to completely commodify labor power [kanzen ni shōhinka suru tame ni], capital requires the industrial reserve army. Yet, unless this industrial reserve army is formed by capital itself, capitalism

cannot posit the social foundations of its own establishment as one historical form of society.”⁵² That is, capital is repeatedly exposed to its inability to produce the foundations of its own order. Yet, without in effect “convincing itself” of its possibility to generate its own outside, capital cannot expand, because its expansion presumes the availability of labor power, which in turn presumes the industrial reserve army effect. Capital can give form or direction to the relative surplus populations that appear in the territorial domains of capital’s manifestation, but the industrial reserve army effect paradoxically presupposes that wage labor, and therefore a working population, exists. Because of this presumption, the excess population that would guarantee capital’s ability to act as if it were capable of producing labor power directly is a result of capital’s untraceable “beginning” (*Anfang*), which should always logically precede the ordering of the population. But if capital therefore presumes this *Anfang*, it must silently or magically repeat the beginning over and over again every time the circuit C–M–C’ reaches its end. This “countable” or “digestable” aspect of the beginning that must presuppose itself is precisely what results from capital’s need to “fold” back this process into itself, to posit the external limits imposed on it as if they were imposed from within itself. What capital itself produces is not labor power but assemblages or mechanisms (*kikō*) that “transmit” or “allow through” (*tōsu*) the effect of the impossibility, this folding back into itself. I will develop this specific sense of “apparatus” in more detail in the following chapter. It is no accident that the term Foucault uses to describe how power directs, manages, and organizes the specific form of population is exactly the same as this “transmission”: it “guides” or “conducts” (*conduire*) the formation of the “historical” and “moral” elements of social life by means of this form called “population.”⁵³

In order to clarify this, let me take a short detour to 1968, when Mita Sekisuke criticized Uno’s “conception of capitalism as ‘impossible’” (*shihonshugi o ‘muri’ to miru kangaekata*).⁵⁴ Although Mita’s critique is not particularly interesting for its own theoretical merit, it is an excellent site from which to clarify Uno’s use of the term “impossibility” in order to distinguish its specificity from possible misreadings. Essentially, Mita argues that Uno commits two theoretical errors: first, for Mita, the commodification of labor power is simply the “prerequisite” (*zentei*), the “mere foundation” (*tan naru kiso*), of capitalism, but the essence of capitalism is contained not in this mere exterior condition but in the institution of the production of surplus value, and the forms of exploitation that support this production. Thus, for Mita, the commodification of labor power does not indicate any fundamental contra-

diction for capitalism but merely something that can be phenomenologically bracketed, something that is outside the systematic nature of capitalism itself and therefore neither its essence nor a meaningful point of inquiry.

In addition, Mita argues, Uno is mistaken on the question of capitalism's inability to produce the labor power commodity: for Mita, it is not the capitalist who desires to produce the labor power commodity, or the workers themselves, but the precapitalist slave-master or feudal landlord. That is, he argues that precisely through capitalism's formation of the relative surplus population, capitalism produces not too few workers but too many. Therefore, he argues, Uno is incorrect to identify an "impossibility" here, precisely because the commodification of labor power is not the site of the primary contradiction. Continuing in this line, Mita states that the essence of the creation of the labor power commodity through dispossession from the feudal system lies in its creation of "owners," those who "own" their labor power and who are therefore not mere slaves. Thus, he states, "this is not an 'impossibility' but simply a necessary point of passage in the progress of humanity."⁵⁵ He continues: "We must recognize that the fact that capitalism has continued to develop over hundreds of years demonstrates the continuity of a series of conditions that allowed it to continue. If this is the case, then you cannot prove capitalism's eventual collapse and disappearance by simply pronouncing it an 'impossibility' on the basis of some subjective criteria without clarifying how these conditions that allowed it to continue for so long have been suddenly lost."⁵⁶ Mita's basic claim is that by referring to the commodification of labor power as an "impossibility," Uno therefore considers capitalism to be an absolute "evil," something truly horrific and "unnatural," thereby not grasping the "historically progressive" elements of the rise of capitalism. But this view of Mita is radically mistaken, because it cannot understand the tension established by this impossibility, the fact that what generates the cycle of capitalist accumulation is simultaneously that which restrains it, and that capitalism itself draws its strength from this "restraining": that is, in the same way that sovereign power draws its strength from its own internal inoperativity, the limits placed on its control by its need to maintain its power through the *katechon*, so too capital paradoxically succeeds in ensuring its own continuance only by positing its own end in the form of the impossibility. Mita thoroughly misunderstands this element of the sustaining force of the impossibility. This impossibility does not merely indicate an internal failing or "unnatural" element of the capitalist circuit; rather, through this term, Uno shows us how it is that capitalism retrospectively "naturalizes" its own outside, thereby "predicting" its own end, so that this outside is always folded back into its interior.

In other words, through its most basic movement, the employment of labor in the process of production, capitalism folds this impossibility into itself, feeding on the energy of its outside, but an outside that can never be grasped, because it emerges into its phenomenal form only retrospectively.

Capital, in this sense, does not merely rob the outside of its potential in order to spur on its own development. Rather, power in general is always concerned with the act of “sustaining,” “maintenance,” and “care.” The supreme violence of capital is not contained in its actual-empirical acts of violence but rather in its acts of preservation and security. Capital is consistently concerned with the “industry” that produces labor power—life—and, because it cannot directly appropriate this “industry” or “social factory,” forms and deploys mechanisms that exert control over, and internalize, it such that it appears to be an endogenous function: “Capitalism, through the accumulation process of capital, which of necessity deploys its industrial cycle, creates a definite quantity and quality of necessary living standards for the reproduction of labor power, internally securing or guaranteeing labor power as a commodity. This is where the special law of population in capitalism lies. Capitalism, by provoking its own crises, secures or guarantees through its own laws the development of new methods of production as a well as a laboring population that corresponds to them.”⁵⁷ Of course, capital’s own dream can never quite be realized because it is always maintaining this space of tension that it desperately wants to remove in order to be “fully manifest.” This space of the impossibility is in fact where we can find the most fundamental relationship through which power enables itself: power works anywhere in which there is a relation, in which at least two operations mutually implicate and depend on each other yet cannot be separated precisely because they are mutually constitutive at the same time. In this sense, this impossibility shows to us most clearly the compositional fabric of social being, the hazardous and contingent acts on which the entire edifice of the social-historical is built. But in order to think the contemporaneity of this problematic for our own conjuncture, we need to ask what this space constitutes politically, whether or not this space can function divergently.

The impossibility itself indicates, therefore, this operation of the dual folding of the exterior into the interior and the unfolding of the labor power commodity in the process of production. Uno’s point is thus not that capitalism is itself “impossible” (as in Mita’s reading) but exactly the opposite, that capitalism’s own inverse, its own mirroring effect in which its fold retrospectively grounds itself, already exists within it, and its systematic strength constantly replenishes its own energy by means of this inner scission. That is, its “nor-

mal" operation draws on the "exception" at its core, constantly generating its own image and folding it back into itself. In other words, "the commodification of labor power on the one hand is constantly shouldering the burden of the autonomy of the capitalist social system through the dismantling of communal relations, while on the other hand it must at the same time maintain and supplement certain fixed communal relations. It is precisely this point that expresses the intensity of the impossibility."⁵⁸

But it is extremely important to not characterize this "impossibility" simply as the "other side" or verso of the smooth circuit of capitalist accumulation, as the "true" or "conclusive" outside. It is true that we must focus on the operation of this zone of effects, that we "must pass to the other side, but in order to extract oneself from these mechanisms that make two sides appear, in order to dissolve the false unity, the illusory nature of this other side with which we have taken one or the other side. This is where the true work begins, that of the historian of the present."⁵⁹ We should remark in this sense that we can cross-reference Foucault's conception of the history of the present with that elusive possibility that Uno called *genjō bunseki*, or "conjunctural analysis."

In February 1967, Uno published a short text simply entitled "On Conjunctural Analysis" (*Genjō bunseki ni tsuite*), in the monthly supplement (*geppō*) to the proceedings of the Research Group on the History of the Development of Contemporary Japanese Industry (*Gendai Nihon sangyō hattatsu-shi kenkyūkai*), a text that clarifies this relation.⁶⁰ Describing "conjunctural analysis" of the immediate situation as the "ultimate aim [*kyūkyoku no mokuteki*] of research in political economy," Uno emphasizes that his own work in capital's pure logic and stage-theoretical analysis of capitalist development consists merely in the "preparation of fundamental concepts" (*kiso gainen no junbi*) for this analysis of the conjuncture.⁶¹ In a sense, this allows him to make a very specific point that we can keep in mind in relation to Uno's link to the debate on Japanese capitalism when he first argues:

Personally, I came to the conclusion that the public finances of the Meiji government, beginning with the issuing of nonconvertible cabinet notes [*dajokansatsu*], created a system of taxation unthinkable under both the Tokugawa *bakufu* [military government] and in absolutist monarchies, and that this system was grounded in the land reforms [*Chiso kaisei*]. In the background of the theory that the Meiji Restoration had not been a bourgeois revolution were two things: an overestimation of the concept of the bourgeois revolution itself and the idea that the bourgeois revolution was something comparable to the concept of socialist

revolution. Obviously I am not arguing that the historical significance of the bourgeois revolutions should be dismissed, but placing it alongside the concept of socialist revolution greatly constrains our understanding of the latter.⁶²

In essence, the entirety of this project cycles around a basic programmatic insight of Uno: how to understand the apparent “specificity” of a particular “national” capitalist situation, and how to approach such a question without overdetermining and saturating the question from the outset with insights from other “levels of analysis.” Uno’s entire work is devoted not to merely understanding Marx’s work—rearranging, recoding, rewriting it—but to the “utilization” of this gigantic “preparation” for the endlessly deferred, simultaneously present and absent, immediate and distant, possibility that he called *genjō bunseki*, or “conjunctural analysis,” something we might place alongside Foucault’s understanding of the history of the “present,” or indeed Henri Lefebvre’s conception of “everyday life.”⁶³ Uno’s conception of the present conjuncture (*genjō*) is particularly interesting for its relation to knowledge as a whole: in presenting this tripartite structure of thought, in which the theoretical analysis of the pure laws of motion of capital (as a structure in thought) is placed alongside the stage-theoretical analysis of the role of state planning and policy as well as immediate concrete investigations, Uno forms a particularly useful theoretical structure, never subordinating immediate analysis to suprahistorical determinations but instead allowing these differing levels of analysis to interpenetrate each other and self-develop a “scientificity” (*kagaku-sei*) in which their objects of thought can be more and more clearly apprehended. In essence, Uno’s understanding of the ultimate goal of political economy as conjunctural analysis reminds us to again complicate the typical image of his thought as one in which these “levels of analysis” are meant to be held apart and not contaminate each other. Uno rather wants to, in a sense, ensure that theory is always *actualized* in terms of its function, rather than merely left at a scholastic remove from the present conditions from which it derives its impetus and exigency in the first place, emphasizing in the end that the political use of political-economic analysis is something that can only be done through the final “necessity” of the analysis: “the political judgment of the political party (*seitō ni yoru seijiteki handan*).”⁶⁴ I will return to this “torsional” structure of Uno’s work in the next chapter.

Foucault continually emphasized the political potential of the event as a strategy of investigation, what he referred to as “eventalization” (*événementialisation*), a technique devoted to the drawing out, or coaxing out, of singular-

ity, the internal and constitutive slippage of every discursive formation that forces it to reveal that “it wasn’t all that necessary after all.” It is in relation to this problem of necessity that I want to ask: what is the meaning-event (*l’événement-sens*) of the ongoing and incessant operation of the impossibility (*katechon*) that limits yet sustains the operation of power? Foucault warns us that the consideration of the event requires a “more complex logic,” “a grammar with a different form of organization” (*une grammaire autrement centrée*)—he demands that we remain alert to the fact that the “meaning-event does not localize itself in the proposition under the form of an attribute, but rather is fixed by the verb [*il est épinglé par le verbe*].”⁶⁵ Thus I want to ask: which verb is the impossibility fixed to when we eventalize its conditions of emergence and capture? The impossibility is precisely that space that is never an attribute, never a substance, but is only understandable and graspable to the extent that it is “fixed” by a verb: the impossibility comes into function, shows forth its field of effects, when it is “folded” into capitalism’s range through the mechanism of “population,” and “unfolded” as labor (labor power’s use value) in the process of production. Certainly for Uno, the commodification of labor power is “fixed” to the verb *tōru* or *tōsu*, that is, the “meaning-event” of this commodification is contained precisely in its “passing through,” being “conducted” or “transmitted,” the fact that labor power is an undercurrent of energy that suffuses the situation of production. This effect, that we can encounter this impossibility only when it is “conducted” (*tōsu*), shows us that Uno utilizes this term, and his analysis of its operation, to name something that can never be an object that is fully “ready to hand”: rather, the impossibility is exactly what Nietzsche called “the desolate stream of becoming” (*den wüsten Strom des Werdens*).⁶⁶ The way this “desolate stream” is always being “folded” into the interior as if it were under the watch and care of power is precisely how commodification can always appear as a *fait accompli*: through its “fixing” by the verb, the impossibility is always occurring as a kind of “eternal present,” that is, the meaning-event of the impossibility “is always both the displaced point of the present and the eternal repetition of the infinitive.”⁶⁷

The eventalization of the capture of labor power creates a “rupture of evidence,” a surging-forth of singularity; it “consists in rediscovering [*retrouver*] the connections, the encounters, the supporting mechanisms [*les appuis*], the blockages, the games of power [*force*], the strategies and so on that, at a given moment, form what will thereafter function as evidence, universality, necessity.”⁶⁸ This eventalization thereby allows us to see this contingent excess generated by capture, but also shows us the chain of relations and dislocations between the historicity of the impossibility and the site of

politics proper, which is always the “economically given social period” (*ökonomisch gegebenen Gesellschaftsperiode*).⁶⁹ It is the unstable and chaotic flux of labor power, the excess that is “passing through it,” its undulating dimensions, that is inherent and present in this moment. In this sense, this zone of effects also marks the site where economy and sovereign power cross over each other, where their gradients of power are articulated to each other; it marks the fundamental site wherein we see both the “economic excess / surplus which is integrated into the capitalist machine as the force which drives it into permanent self-revolutionizing” and “the political excess of power inherent to its exercise.”⁷⁰

The Endless Labor of the “Original Sin”

As we have seen in the role of the impossibility, primitive accumulation, as a substratum of capture that underlines the existence of social relations under capitalism in which the “original sin is at work everywhere” (*die Erbsünde wirkt überall*),⁷¹ is not inherently the dispossession of the outside understood unilaterally as the continuity of acts of violence but is also the process of nurturing and caring for the results of the political and juridical constitution of labor power as a commodity, and the population-form that secures and guarantees its availability:

Capital requires land, and further landownership, as a precondition outside itself, but demands it in a form appropriate to its own reproduction process. In just the same way, capital cannot create labor power as a product of capital, but it nevertheless gives birth to an apparatus that secures or guarantees it capitalistically: the deployment of its law of population. It appears not as something that secures or guarantees capital’s total control in relation to labor power, but rather as an *objective law of movement* that must subordinate capital as well. This is where we see the specificity of the labor power commodity, and in indeed it is the foundation of how capitalist society forms itself into a society precisely through its own principles.”⁷²

Labor, as the use value of labor power, that is, the labor employed in the production process (the image of the primal energy folded back onto itself), fills the space ripped open by the impossibility of its own commodification. To the extent that capital must simply assume the presence of labor power as a commodity, capital is essentially propelled into and sustained in its life-cycle by an abyssal opening, something that needs to be filled (or more precisely, needs to

be posited as having been filled; it is the grammatical future anterior). Therefore, from within the already-accomplished movement of capital, the use value of labor power, which Uno quite rightly theorizes as a “semblance” (Schein), steps into the gap and posits its own presence retroactively: “The determination of labor power as a commodity is nothing more than a semblance [kashō; Schein]: the determination of the commodity is given to something that originally cannot be produced as a commodity. Yet this is not merely a semblance. Rather, it is the necessary form which constitutes the general basis of the commodification of every product in a commodity-economic society.”⁷³ This moment has always-already happened. This is why the impossibility itself is not exactly the direct site of politics, because the impossibility is a grounding force of the order of being in general, and cannot announce itself from the outside: strictly speaking, the impossibility names the place wherein what cannot be produced from within the cycle is produced, but this impossibility is itself covered over by the employment of labor power as a use value, an operation in which this semblance retroactively attributes itself as having always-already been. This is precisely why we never actually encounter the impossibility of the commodification of labor power but can only identify the ontological gap that is filled by the semblance of labor power. This is why the commons as a political project should never be associated with that which merely exists as a plentitude within the order of being, because it is first and foremost a project, and not a *fait accompli*. All attempts to posit the commons as the holistic, precapitalist (or noncapitalist) outside, the romantic and noncomplicit supplement, and to substantially demand the empirical-territorial discovery of such spaces, inevitably result in a banal, liberal politics and an abandonment of critique.

The impossibility in essence is that which is always already completing a double movement in its very existence. It is a simultaneous site of restraining or holding back and enabling or opening up. The fact that capital cannot itself produce the additional supply of labor power demanded for progressive accumulation places a restraint on its internal development. But at the same time, it is this basic and fundamental seizure of the “primal energy” that empowers the internal forces and dynamically intensifies capital’s modality of operation. This impossibility therefore names a force that is not simply “two-sided,” because these two operations are not disconnected from each other but are mutually reinforcing, internally complicit, and inseparable in terms of their effects. This force of the impossibility encounters heterogeneous sequences and deployments of elements and attempts to capture them, dispersing their sequentiality and remodeling them in alternate commensurable clusters and assemblages. But equally this impossibility sustains elements: that is, the as-

pect of “making live” or “caring for” is part and parcel of its violence. This is never simply the “other side” or the “inverse” of the impossibility’s operation; rather, the location of the impossibility situates itself in the slash itself between violence/care.

When Foucault exhorts us to not give up on history, to instead dislocate ourselves and our practices toward the breaks, the ruptures, the splits and impasses of that which is taken as evidence of substantiality and necessity, he means something closely aligned to what Uno identified as the impossibility (*muri*). That is, he intends by this formulation to indicate the possibilities of writing histories of the constantly moving undercurrent of the operation of the “apparatus of capture,” the possibility of writing histories of the improvisationally concatenated zones of intensity generated by this capture. This is why the question of migration, of displacement, of statelessness, is so crucial to new methods of historical inquiry. Such sites do not constitute spaces “free” from capital but rather those spaces that are permanently placed in the gap created by capture, permanently located in the border. This impossibility of history is not a disabling condition but exactly the opposite: paying close attention to the historical formations or “thresholds of intensity” (*seuils d’intensité*)⁷⁴ that this hazardous space of partial determinacy is passing through is what will allow us to encounter what Althusser called “the continent of history” itself, because we ourselves are always internal to the historicity of the impossibility of the commodification of labor power. We are always internal to the fact that this fold in power is always internalizing the outside: “We are always inside—the margins are a myth. The language of the outside is a dream that one never stops renewing.”⁷⁵ Foucault’s description of the “language of the outside” as a “dream” is not, in this sense, a refusal to accept the existence of an outside *per se* but rather points to the *outsidedness* of the interior itself. We are always inside, but this inside contains the substance of the exterior, the material forces of the outside’s originary enclosure, which can never be fully erased.

This impossibility can never be approached politically as a substance but must be understood as a process in which something that is not a substance is transmuted in a retroactive process of substantialization, transforming that which is in flux into irreparable segmentarities. That is, the investigation of the historicity of the impossibility may allow us to develop a form of theoretical inquiry in which we can discover the intimate relation between the line of writing as a practice and the historical object as the fluctuating energy of the reproduction of “actual life” (*wirklichen Lebens*)—and in turn, only through such a movement can we hope to create new forms of sociality that reject the

hegemony of substantiality, spurring us away from “discoveries” and toward “productions.” The impossibility is never an object, but always a precarious form of the relations of power, and because every relation itself discloses the work of contingency at its core, this impossibility also points us toward the field of resistance, a resistance-to-come that demands an endless and repeating production of the commons. The impossibility is the unstable gathering of the hazard precisely because it is never perfectly clear that capital will succeed in its initial (always already occurring for the first time) operation of capturing labor power. But in my view this space of the impossibility is *not a project*, in the sense of a determined political sequence and its operationalization. It is the site from which we can launch investigations, around which we can attempt to rediscover the “continent of history,” but it alone can never be the project itself because here we cannot find something other than the order of being. This impossibility, in fact, is the foundational moment, the gap in the field of social being that capital itself forms in order to fold its external effects back into the internal structure of its reproduction. While we must welcome the impossibility and its hazardous zone of effects, we have to be equally careful not to imagine that this space of the impossibility itself is already a space of immanent freedom. Rather, we need to strategically push deeper into this impossibility, farther down into the depths of its energy to understand its theoretical and social functions.

Number, Absence, Subject

Ex irrationalibus oriuntur quantitates impossibiles seu imaginariae, quarum mira est natura, et tamen non contemnenda utilitas.

From the irrationals are born the *impossible* or imaginary quantities whose nature is very strange but whose usefulness is not to be despised.—GOTTFRIED WILHELM LEIBNIZ, *Mathesis Universalis*

When Uno in effect “invented” this term *muri* as a concept, it is not inconceivable that he was thinking of the concept of “irrational number” (*murisū*) in mathematics.⁷⁶ In other words, he was thinking precisely of how the rational structure of the pure world of number—the world of capital’s dream of itself, functioning as an uninterrupted interiority organized by number and the countable—constitutes a congealed level of abstraction that is nevertheless subtended by an “incalculable hazard.” Simply put, the question of irrational number historically indicates the moment at which the hitherto-existing concept of number as an expression of perfection and pure intensity was revealed

as unstable. In the sense that this *muri* of capital is an expression homologous with the *murisū* or irrational number of mathematics, what this reminds us of is that capital's basic wager—the possibility that social relations could be managed as relations among things—in which something unquantifiable must be made to behave as if it were reducible to number, countability, and stability, thus always contains within it an infinite regress: the value of labor power can only be determined by means of the value of the means of subsistence utilized to indirectly “reproduce” it. In turn, the means of subsistence—which would include not only food, clothing, and shelter but also necessary regimes of training, medical care, education, forms of subjectivation, and so forth—must contain or encompass numerous qualitative aspects that exceed or cannot be reduced purely to quantity. Here it should be emphasized that, like all commodities (save labor power and land), the means of subsistence must be produced by its own process of production. This process of production, through which the means of subsistence could be furnished for the reproduction of labor power, itself requires the labor power input. In this sense, we are already in a preliminary moment of infinite regress. Labor power, which cannot be assumed to be available when it is required, must be reproduced indirectly through the production of the means of subsistence, whose production itself must assume the existence of labor power inputs. This infinite regressive spiral of the logic inherent in the dynamics of capital is identified by Uno: “the exchange process between C’ and C [i.e., the passage from one C–M–C’ sequence to another] is interrupted, not by the production process, but by the consumption process.” We are returned, therefore, to the ultimate paradox of the subject, a paradox that is at the heart of the problem of capital as a social relation: the problem of continuity. How is it that something that merely masquerades as a substance, something that cannot be assumed to be stable, something that is punctuated at every moment by breaks, interruptions, and contingencies, nevertheless remains in a state capable of subsisting, capable of presenting itself as if it were a continuity? What the *muri* or irrational substratum shows us is not that it constitutes the moment at which things break down or cease functioning. The true paradox is that this irrationality is precisely what allows capital to appear as a continuity, as an organizing and perspectival force through which it traverses or passes through its own boundaries or borders.

In the representation of the subject that would be considered “typical” or “usual,” the subject is understood as a psychic island existing in a field in flux. This field would be outside or exterior to the boundaries of the island, and the

island in turn would constitute an inside with regard to itself. Thus the subject would be imagined in this way as something in which interiority and exteriority could be strictly separated. Lacan's intervention in the 1950s in Seminar 9 concerns an attempt to provide the theory of the subject with a different topology—a topology of the subject in the shape of the torus or Klein bottle. In other words, for Lacan, this rigid differentiation of inside and outside leads us to incorrectly assume that there is a hard kernel of interiority within the subject that would be the “evidence” or “proof” of the subject's self-identity. Rather, he argues, because the *I* as a subject emerges through the “traversing of the primal fantasy,” in which the *I* as subject of the enunciation is presumed to be identical with the subject of the enunciated, already at the most primal stage of identification, this *I* would be exposed to some “other” outside its expected boundaries. Since, therefore, this other that is absolutely internal to me is simultaneously exterior to me as a subject,⁷⁷ it follows that the subject can never be a given but must rather be a production of this splitting, a splitting, however, that never appears as a split but is smoothly traversed as if the split would never constitute a boundary or gap. This structure of putativity, this “as-if condition,” irrevocably or irredeemably structures the subject, to the extent that we might even say: “the subject” names this simultaneous gap and suture understood in the form of the “as-if.” What is paradoxical, or that gives us pause, is the fact that this form in which the subject must occur is also a description of the microscopic internal physics of capitalist society.

The singularity of the individual must always mark a point of discontinuity in the social field, but this discontinuity can only be represented in the form of the subject. The subject is thus precisely that insubstantial substance that marks the absence of any of its own legitimating traces, a mark on the map of the modern social landscape that indicates a central point of rupture, yet this point must also paradoxically be the node around which the “smooth” operation of society can function, and it is this paradox that Uno understood in the *muri* or absence of reason, the abyssal and irrational moment essential to capital's dynamics. In this sense, let me quote at length one of the few times Uno ever discussed something like the concept of “subject”:

The pure theory of capitalism must represent the capitalist commodity economy as if it were a self-perpetuating entity in order to divulge the laws of its motion. It therefore seems to me completely impossible for economic theory to demonstrate at the same time a transformation that involves the denial of those laws. I certainly do not mean that economic theory, for this reason, should assert the permanence of capitalist soci-

ety. . . . But neither the pure theory of capitalism nor empirical studies of an actual capitalist economy, nor for that matter the stage-theoretical analysis of capitalist development, offer an *economic* explanation of the process of the transition from capitalism to socialism. This is the role of the subject in the *organizational practice* of the socialist movement—the practice of this subject is not a process of mere clarification of economic necessity but rather is the utilization of the social sciences, the basis of which is political economy, to the greatest extent possible within the movement. . . . In any case, whether or not the victory of socialism is necessary depends on the practice of the socialist movement itself, and not directly on the economic laws of motion of capitalist society. But with the economic laws of motion, the class-character [kaikyūsei] of capitalist society is laid bare, and this throws light on the general economic foundation of the class-character of previous societies, and thus at the same time clarifies the historicity [rekishisei] of capitalist society. It is on the basis of this knowledge that socialist movements can scientifically assert the necessity of the transformation of capitalist society.⁷⁸

But what does this “subject” actually indicate here? The dense parallax between the production of subjectivity as a function of the first order “indirect” production of labor power as a capitalist commodity and the “role of the subject in the organizational practice of the socialist movement” is a tension that underlies the entirety of the Marxist theoretical project. On the one hand the subject must be the concentrated expression of the explosive energy of the masses, wholly contingent on the “evental” nature of politics (in the sense of “all hitherto existing history is the history of class struggle”),⁷⁹ and on the other hand the subject must somehow simultaneously be the distillation or concentrated product of the transition from the antagonism (*Gegenstand*) between labor and capital to the contradiction (*Widerspruch*) between the development of the productive forces and their corresponding relations of production and, in this latter sense, must therefore be merely the expression or result of this inevitable historical contradiction, just a sign of the metahistorical process itself. This ruptural space, in which the rare or abyssal space of the subject flickers in and out of presence, between the “iron necessity” of capital’s logic and the “random order of computation” in which capital encounters a preexisting semiotic and territorial field, always exists in a paradoxical or nonverifiable relation to the “reified” human being as political expression of the impossibility of the commodification of labor power. On this essential moment, Slavoj Žižek neatly produces one theoretical response:

For Marx, the emergence of working class subjectivity is strictly co-dependent on the fact that the worker is compelled to sell the very substance of his being (his creative power) as a commodity on the market—that is, to reduce the *agalma*, the treasure, the precious core of his being, to an object that can be bought for money: there is no subjectivity without the reduction of the subject's positive-substantial being to a disposable "piece of shit." In this case of correlation between Cartesian subjectivity and its excremental objectal counterpart, we are not dealing merely with an example of what Foucault called the empirico-transcendental couple that characterizes modern anthropology, but rather, with the split between the subject of the enunciation and the subject of the enunciated: if the Cartesian subject is to emerge at the level of the enunciation, he must be reduced to the "almost-nothing" of disposable excrement at the level of the enunciated content.⁸⁰

But the subject is precisely that which cannot be grasped as itself. The subject comes to be grasped as itself only in being retrospectively projected back onto its own emergence. That is, the subject is the original "semblance" because, paradoxically, it is only discovered and made concrete in the act of admitting its nonidentity. That is, when I try to discover myself as a subject, I can discover this, but only in as much as the subject's existence is guaranteed by the condition of being posited itself. Wherever the subject is posited, there remains the undecidability of practice, a certain impossibility that characterizes its very possibility. Uno in fact identified this operation already: labor power does not exist as such. Labor power is called into being when its use value, labor, is employed in the process of production. At that point, labor power is retrospectively made to have existed; in other words, its basic temporality is exactly the future anterior ("it will have been"). When capital needs to expand, it presumes the existence of a supply of labor power, but it conceals to itself the hazard of securing this supply. It posits for itself a semblance that fills the void and allows the circular logic of its cycle to smoothly continue. We should recognize that this entire schematics shows us something critical not only about the way capital operates, but about the *production of subjectivity* itself. I would like to therefore argue that the possibility of the commons depends not only on going deeper into the impossibility of the commodification of labor power, but on going deeper into what we might call the "impossibility of the subject," precisely because the entire question of what labor power is, how it is produced, and how it operates "signals the radical scission that marks the constitution of subjectivity in capitalism."⁸¹

In Uno's sense, labor power (along with land) are the two elements of capitalist production that can be circulated as commodities but cannot be originally produced as commodities. Rather, they must be "encountered" or "stumbled upon" historically in order to function logically. Already this introduces a rupture or gap into capital's own image of itself. Further, once capitalist production is established as a circuit-process, capital must continuously utilize the form of the "relative surplus population" to pretend or act as if labor power can be limitlessly supplied, in order to expand itself in the form of the business cycle. Therefore, labor power, the pivot or motor force of capital's expansion and reproduction, is strictly speaking *absent*, but is mobilized as a trace. Thus, capital extends itself on credit by means of a logical wager with the level of history, a wager on the traces of the body of labor power, which cannot be said to have a stable or substantial existence, but only a presence as a *semblance* of itself.

Therefore, what Uno called the "law of population" is precisely the moment that "allows" the violence of the exterior into the interior, the mechanism or assemblage by which the impossibility can be incorporated into the smooth circuit of accumulation. Numerous tendencies in the history of Marxist theory have tended to treat the question of violence or force as an "externality" for capitalist society, as something "extra-economic" (what Marx called *ausserökonomischer Zwang* or what in Marxist historical writing in Japan was called *keizaigai kyōsei*). But when we examine the field of subjectivation, the role of the "historical and moral factors" that capital requires for its own emergence, we realize quickly that on a semiotic level, capital is always maintaining this violence but recoding its social function in a divergent form. The raw violence of the outside is economically recoded as the "natural basis" of the inside, thereby smoothing over violence's violent appearance by means of yet another violence. This effect of doubling is what enables capital to deploy itself as if it were a totality, to socially organize phenomena around this totality without being able to truly legitimate itself as a completeness. "A commodity economy possesses a discrepancy or site of excess [*muri*] inasmuch as it treats relations among human beings as relations among things, but it is paradoxically the fact that this site of excess [*muri*] has developed as a form capable of ordering the totality of society that renders possible our own theoretical systematization of its motion."⁸² By capital's incapacity to capture social relations without the violence of reification, capital also opens up the space of politics within its interior. Capital computes the "random order" of events precisely "as if" they constituted a necessary, natural, and self-legitimizing sequence and then folds this set of effects retrospectively back into its own function in

order to ground itself. This “as if” (*als ob*) of capital, in which the hazardous potential of chance is smoothed over in the form of the accumulation cycle, is why Uno constantly emphasizes that capital is always something that appears “as if” (*ka no gotoku*) it is a perfect cyclical self-contained object in motion. The seeming double bind contained in the violence of the indirect “production” of the labor power commodity, whose social-historical origins lie in Marx’s discussion of the so-called primitive accumulation, might appear to disable any conception of political intervention, to be a closed circle, but we could also say that Uno shows us precisely the opposite.

Capital, as the fundamental concretization of social relations, and therefore as the apex of the social relations’ violent verso, cannot rid itself of this fundamental “condition of violence” (*Gewaltverhältnis*),⁸³ located in its logical alpha and omega, the labor power commodity, whose “indirect” production is located paradoxically outside commodity relations. An excess of violence is haunting capital’s interior by means of this constantly liminalizing/volatilizing forcible “production” of labor power. Precisely by this excessive violence, capital endangers itself and opens itself up to a whole continent of raw violence, and it is exactly on this point that Uno’s work shows us something important in terms of the question of how capital utilizes the “anthropological difference” to effect the “indirect” production of labor power.

The primal violence, sustained as a continuum or “status quo,” appears as a smooth state, a cyclical reproduction cycle without edges. But this appearance or semblance of smooth continuity is in fact a product of the working of violence on itself: violence must erase and recode itself as peace *by means of violence*. In other words, when we encounter the basic social scenario of capitalist society, the exchange of a product for money, we are already in a situation in which the raw violence of subjectivation, whereby some absent potentiality in the worker’s body is exchanged as if it is a substance called labor power that can be commodified, is covered over by the form of money, which appears as a smooth container of significations that can serve as a *measure* of this potentiality. But in order for labor power to be measured and exchanged as money, there must be a repeated doubling of violence. What must remain on the outside of capital as a social relation is paradoxically what must also be simultaneously forced into its inside, perpetually torn between the forms of subjectivation that produce labor power as an inside and the historical field of reproduction in which the worker’s body is produced on the violent outside of capital. This internal exterior is the matrix of sociality in which violence’s creative-formative aspect is brought out most prominently, and it is this rethinking that may help us to repoliticize and develop another “thought of the

outside” capable of responding to the raw field of violence that is the supposedly smooth everyday life of capitalist society.

For Uno, the commodification of labor power is the “degree zero” of the social itself, the apex or pinnacle of the social relation called capital. But this “thing” indicated by the problem of the commodification of labor power, or more specifically the excess or absurdity (*muri*) of the commodification of labor power, is also an analytical or theoretical object, something that “discloses” the “degree zero” or “ultimate point” of the social itself. In other words, for Uno, the original “accident,” the chance or hazardous historical encounter between capital and the owner of labor power, is continuously being set in motion by capital in the circulation-form of the buying and selling of labor power, where we see the basic social “antagonism” (*Gegensatz*) between capital and labor. Yet when we enter the “hidden abode of production” (Essence), we do not discover the stable yet concealed ground of this relation; rather, we discover the site of its ultimate expression of “contradiction” (*Widerspruch*): we are immediately thrown back on the fact that although labor power cannot be originally produced by capital as a commodity, it can be *circulated on the surface as a commodity*. That is, the excess or absurdity of the commodification of labor power can be *overcome* without being *resolved*. Thus this historically excessive or irrational accident of the original encounter that is being incessantly reinscribed on the circulation-surface of social life (Being) leads us from history to logic in the sphere of production (Essence). But, critically, we are not presented here with something like the “truth” or pure relation of “depth” that lies “behind” or “below” the surface. Rather, we see that a certain process of coding is always taking place. What is coded as free contractual exchange between substantial entities of purely random origin is recoded in the sphere of production as the logical impossibility or even absurdity of the stability of this relation itself: “The sphere of Essence thus turns out to be a still imperfect combination of immediacy and mediation [noch unvollkommenen Verknüpfung der Unmittelbarkeit und der Vermittlung] . . . it is the sphere in which the contradiction, still implicit in the sphere of Being, is made explicit.”⁸⁴ This “implicit contradiction” of the sphere of Being or the circulation-surface is precisely what Marx called the “antagonism” between labor and capital, an “antagonism” that becomes a “contradiction” when it is “made explicit” in the “hidden abode of production” or the sphere of Essence. I would like to simply extrapolate certain political questions from the methodological project Uno undertakes to arrive at this conclusion, a project, above all, of “force” or “forcing.” I will return to this point in the next chapter.

This excess/absurdity/irrationality of capital’s relation to the labor power

commodity, therefore, is the site around which we can understand the relation of the critique of political economy to politics itself. Because of the contingency or undecidability of the commodification of labor power, capital must recode this contingency as necessity by rerouting its referent to the sphere of circulation (and specifically to the state, which acts as the occult midwife who assists at the “indirect” birth of labor power); capital must reorder the internal sequencing of elements of the purely contingent or fortuitous encounter so that these elements connote or come to disclose a necessity, an exigency. By imagining that it can “get away with” filling the holes and ruptures in its austere motion with something derived from its absolute outside—the worker’s body—capital accidentally but recurrently stumbles or “trips up” and draws our attention to the politicality of this excess/absurdity/irrationality for the first time. Uno’s ultimate conclusion, therefore, is that in essence, dialectical materialism can only give proof positive for its necessity as a social philosophy by considering the principles or pure theory of capital, that is, something absolutely removed from the sphere of practice.⁸⁵ But this paradox, which appears as something disabling, is in fact what enables us to at last utilize the archaeology of capital’s internal logic as a lever or tool to force open the space of politics.

I would like to briefly consider the nature of this politicality by repeating an intriguing and unexpected point made by Alain Badiou about the nature of his most influential work, when he states that the entire work of *Being and Event* is in essence “a commentary on the International.”⁸⁶ What does this strange juxtaposition mean, the superimposition of the question of the International, that is to say, the question of *political organization*, onto the concerns of this text, *Being and Event*? In what way can *Being and Event* be considered a “commentary on the International?” Following Uno’s identification of the limit point of the *socius* as this absurd or excessive moment of the commodification of labor power, we can say, following Badiou’s clue as to our “reading protocols,” that politics proceeds exactly from the moment “when a situation will have appeared in which the indiscernible—which is only *represented* (or included)—is finally *presented* as a truth of the first situation.”⁸⁷ In other words, the proletarian hazard is “included” as a presumably stable or given element in capital’s austere self-movement, insofar as it appears on the surface of the circulation process, but a proletarian politics only emerges when the original situation is “forced” to disclose that the proletariat was always-already or “will have been” the truth of capital, that the capitalist situation “will have been” revealed to be structured by the proletariat from the outset in precisely the temporality of “retrojection.”

Capital reveals a situation in which its structuring truth—labor power (and land)—is tendentially absent from it and must be forced back into it in order to “carry through” the politicality of this outsidedness. So only insofar as a truth that is “heterogeneous” to the situation is jammed or forced into it can we politically respond to the situation. Capital’s outside, what is past the line traced around the theoretical object called capital, is something that can never be separated from the object. In other words, capital cannot be itself without this outside called labor power. Yet labor power is not an “absolute” outside: in truth, it does not exist as such; it is produced or emerges as a “semblance” (and Uno specifically uses this technical term from Hegel, *Schein* or *kashō*),⁸⁸ so that capital can bridge its irredeemable gap with the body of the worker or the flux of life. The “truth” of the situation called “capital” is precisely the semblance of labor power that is differentially “included” into capital’s body as a foreign element. In order for capital to be whole, to be complete, capital must paradoxically acknowledge its own incompleteness, or testify to its parasitism. Hence, in order to incorporate the “indirect” or subcontracted production of labor power, capital must disclose this weakness. But this fact alone does not furnish a politics, it does not itself indicate directions of the politicality of capitalist society. All it does is acknowledge the pseudocompleteness of capital, the “banal” or “mediocre” fact that capitalism is an oscillating space of differentiation in homogeneity that “coquets” as a pure circle. Politics is precisely what is excluded by the “always-already counted,” by the “numerical reduction” according to which “what is there” is the guarantee or legitimation of the situation’s own attempt to naturalize itself.

The position of the proletariat, its historical aim, is therefore not to insert into capitalist society a full and stable presence, to make the hazardous proletarian zero into a “plenitude,” into something “countable.” (And here we should recall Marx’s interventions in the conceptions of “surplus,” “excess,” and “plethora” of capital as the keys to his mature theory of crisis.) Rather, the political aim that emerges at capital’s degree zero is precisely the elimination, overturning, or “inversion” (*Verkehrung*) of the relation between this “infinite class” called the proletariat and its situation, called capital. Why? Precisely because the working class, as the zero-point or ultimate limit of capital, is a volatile or unstable element of capital itself: “From a social point of view, therefore, the working class, even when not directly engaged in the labour process, is just as much an appendage [*Zubehör*] of capital as the ordinary instruments of labour. Even its individual consumption is, within certain limits, merely a moment in the reproduction process of capital. That process, however, takes good care to prevent these self-conscious instruments from

leaving it in the lurch [nicht weglaufen], for it removes their product, as fast as it is made, from their pole to the opposite pole of capital.”⁸⁹ Capital itself in effect “unplugs” the proletariat from one polarity of capital and reinserts it into another polarity. But because the proletariat, which is precisely a “self-conscious instrument of production” (*selbstbewußten Produktionsinstrumente*), must always be located by capital at one polarity or another, the proletarian hazard is always “sited,” “placed,” or “posited” (*setzen*) at capital’s limit or boundary. The “limit point” of this boundary is precisely the commodification of labor power, and therefore we can see directly that the self-elimination of the labor power commodity is the essential and ultimate aim of revolutionary politics. In other words, when Marx emphasizes the self-emancipation of the proletariat and the political consistency that will carry it through, he means that this consistency is in fact a self-erasure. That is, this emancipation is the elimination of itself, or what Foucault called the “dispersion” of the subject. In the same way that forcing operates by wagering on what is absent in the situation on the level of theory in order to produce a result on the level of history, so too does politics operate by its own logic of forcing. The political organization initiates a break with (or “hits”) the situation’s fullness in order to force its own void: the proletarian zero, which is the constitutive void of capitalist society, can only break the situation of its existence as the “living dead” by abolishing itself, by paradoxically continuing on in order to cease its own reproduction. Uno, frequently derided as “apolitical” or unconcerned with the practical elements of Marxist theory, in fact reserved a crucial place for this question: at the outer limit of “conjunctural analysis,” the “ultimate goal” of political economy, lies the zone of politics proper, in which the scientific knowledge gained through theoretical work can be put into practice. Here Uno is clear: at the limit of situational analysis comes its implementation in practical political action, and “this necessitates the political judgment of the party.”⁹⁰ We can refer to this position of the double bind by Badiou and François Balmès’s phrase “communist invariants” (*invariants communistes*): “ideological invariants of a communist type, constantly regenerated by the unification process of the great popular revolts of all time.”⁹¹ These infinite invariants “synthesize the universal aspiration of the exploited to reverse every principle (and we should pay attention to the word ‘principle’ here) of exploitation and oppression. *They are born on the terrain of the contradiction between the masses and the State.*”⁹² That is, they are born outside the situation but paradoxically structure the political directionalities of the situation’s “void” elements, the elements that cannot be fully present in the situation, the proletarian outside or zero. But here who are the masses? Unlike many later interventions of

the mid-twentieth century, when the concept “masses” was often rendered an ambiguously populist, romanticized, and politically sterile concept, in my view we should always refer to Marx’s decisive and careful definition of this term in the *Critique of the Gotha Program*: the masses are “the owners of the personal condition of production, of labor power” (*Eigentümer der persönlichen Produktionsbedingung, der Arbeitskraft*).⁹³ As Uno carefully demonstrated, it is this “personal condition of production” called “labor power” that furnishes the ultimate limit of capital, and knowledge of the theoretical physics of this element remains the essential clue to the openings of politics.

What we see above all in Uno’s analysis of this bizarre and perverse *muri* or “impossibility” characterizing the form of labor power is not simply a hyper-theoretical reschematization of Marx’s thought. Rather, it is an intervention in history. In the next chapter I will take up this question by reconnecting the *muri* of the commodification of labor power to “the national question,” emphasizing that what is at stake in the question of the nation-form is something central not only to the history of capitalism, but to the very inner logic of capital itself. In other words, we will see how this *muri*, this space of slippage, torsion, and perversion, describes the demented or deranged nature of capital. But it also describes the paradox of capital’s globality and nationality. In the next chapters, we will first take up the theoretical dynamics by which this absence or void of reason operates in the volatile interval between logic and history; then we will return to the historical object of “Japanese capitalism” in order to see how the “force of abstraction” of the capital-relation is not merely mitigated by the nation-form, but reaches its sublimely perverse zenith in the form of “the national question.”

THE CONTINENT OF HISTORY AND THE THEORETICAL INSIDE

An economic science inspired by *Capital* does not necessarily lead us [ne conduit pas nécessairement] to its utilization as a revolutionary power, and history seems to require help from something other than a predicative dialectic. The fact is that science, if one looks at it closely, has no memory. Once constituted, it forgets the circuitous path by which it came into being [elle oublie les péripéties dont elle est née].—JACQUES LACAN, “La science et la vérité”

When Althusser claimed in 1960 that Marx’s work could be summed up by one singular “discovery,” he called this discovery “the continent of history,” a “new scientific continent” opened up to “scientific knowledge.”¹ As is well known, Althusser emphasizes from this point that Marxist philosophy had not adequately developed itself in tandem with its object, this “continent of History.” But he never expressly develops the concept of this “continent” itself, nor does he justify precisely why this continent must be that of “History.” Uno in turn systematized our knowledge of this continent, this “place” wherein the logical topology of capital as an interiority intersects with its site of localization, the exteriority of world history.

On the one hundredth anniversary of the publication of Marx’s *Capital*, Uno and Sakisaka were scheduled to deliver lectures at the Kyudan Kaikan on June 4, 1967. Sakisaka, having heard Uno’s lecture, declared “Uno’s gone nuts” (*Uno-kun wa kawatta*).² Why would he make such a declaration? Precisely because Uno’s lecture (of which we do not have a record) argued that *the necessity of socialism could not be derived from Marx’s Capital*, that the schematics of *Capital* furnished no proof of socialism as a *necessary* resolution of the problems

capital posed to itself. In turn, this point was the central one around which critique of Uno's work frequently turned—in giving up the link between the theoretical-historical analysis undertaken in *Capital* and the political movement for socialism, was not Uno also giving up on the Marxist revolutionary project? This is the question we must now take up.

The analysis undertaken by Uno Kōzō on the question of the (im)possibility or “nihil of reason” (*muri*) characterizing the commodification of labor power (undertaken in the previous chapter) operates as a theoretical pivot that exposes two exteriorities, two suspensions. On the one hand this moment discloses the theoretical physics of contamination between the logic of capital as a putatively closed circle and the history of capitalism as a developmental process. On the other hand the fact that this (im)possibility is always “passing through” or “traversing” the gap of logic and history reveals another exteriority in the form of the *apparatuses* that allow or permit this “traversal,” a suspension that ruptures the *apparently* smooth cycle of exchange. The leap or inversion-reversal of capital past its developmental boundaries, and the leap of the commodity into the form of money within exchange, are two moments that are coextensive on a planar surface, implied or interlocking within each other. What seals together these moments is the volatile and hazardous undercurrent of capitalist dynamics that operates under the name of “the agrarian question.” In turn, this historical pivot leads us back into the unstable logical core of capital. Uno's work constitutes a circuit, a circle whose point of departure is the debate on Japanese capitalism but whose final theoretical point of return is also linked to the debate. Here we will see how Uno's major historical point of analysis—the question of the *muri* or “impossibility” of the commodification of labor power—is linked to his primary *methodological* mode of operation: the analysis of “pure capitalism” and the schema of “three levels of analysis.”

Uno Kōzō's theoretical work utilizes the thought-experiment of a conceptually purified capitalism, in which capital's *logical* tendency to finally reify itself is allowed to cyclically oscillate in theory, generating shards of insight into capital's inner drive. In this sense, capital's logical operation constitutes a *world* unto itself: Uno calls this “the world of principle” (*genriteki sekai*). Although this schematic of three levels of analysis—principle, or pure capitalism; stage-theoretical analysis of capitalist development; and conjunctural analysis of the immediate situation—seems at first to exclude the historical from the “world of principle,” in fact Uno's work presupposes that this logical “world” is not a pure circle but a torus, a structure that constantly folds onto itself.

A torus is distinguished from a simple circle insofar as its exterior and its interior are coextensive, a planar field that folds or envelops itself, continually opening and closing itself “inside out.” That is, the surface of the outside suspends or interrupts the pure interiority of the surface of the inside, but then extends itself or folds itself into its opposite. The analysis of “pure capitalism” shows us that while we can determine the specifically logical drive of capital’s interior motion, the logical interior itself is always paradoxically dependent on and coextensive with the historical exterior for its own conditions of interiority. This paradox is expressed as the (im)possibility, the “nihil of reason,” or *muri* of the commodification of labor power, the *Ur-Akt* or *arché* of capital’s logic. In this sense, the scientific experiment called the “world of principle,” in which capital’s drive is concretized and fully expressed, depends on the historical accident in the form of the so-called primitive accumulation or transition from feudalism to capitalism. In other words, when Uno argues, for example, that logically the circuit of commodities and money is interrupted by the consumption process and not by the production process, he is pointing out the paradox that the historicity of social relations is always-already suspending the pure and smooth circulation process.

These ontological gaps in capital’s motion on a logical level therefore can only be worked out or schematized by means of the analysis of the agrarian question: thus Uno’s analysis of the historical emergence of capitalism provides the linkage between his methodological experiment called “pure capitalism” and his theoretical innovation called “the (im)possibility of the commodification of labor power.” That is, these two moments are welded together by the question of *traversal, passage, passing, the conduit, the transition*. The transition between feudalism and capitalism expresses not only a historical moment but also a logical one: although capitalist social relations should be strictly impossible, they have passed into a smooth cycle in which the ontological gap or (im)possibility does not function solely as an *obstacle* but is instead incessantly repetitively traversed without ever being resolved. We must therefore expose the mechanisms by which this contamination between the smooth cycle of theory and the “savage exterior” of history is continuously erased.

In other words, we will remind ourselves here of the critique of political economy: we will investigate the genesis of how it is that science “forgets the circuitous path by which it came into being.” Political economy forms itself as a circle, as a cycle devoted to its own systematicity. But this systematicity, once established, obliterates its own memory of its conditions of production. The key to this problem is the agrarian question. In turn, it is by opening up

this “circuitous path” that economics seeks to conceal, that we can also restore Uno’s theoretical work to the status of a critique of economics itself, rather than simply an alternative and competing “system.” His schematization of the levels of analysis of political-economic inquiry should not be read as a means to “rescue” or “save” the supposed “rationality” of the “respectable” and “decent” system of *Nationalökonomie*,³ but the opposite: the analytic of “pure capitalism” in fact exposes us to the inherent irrationality of social science itself. Uno’s work in this sense constitutes a crucial step in the critique of political economy.

The Agrarian Question: Historical Boundaries of Capital’s Logic

Through his concept of the *muri*, produced by way of the debate on Japanese capitalism, it might be polemically argued that Uno’s greatest contribution to Marxist theoretical research was to restore the specifically *theoretical* content of “the national question” to its essential role as the pivot or lever of the volatile articulation between the logic of capital and the history of capitalism. In this sense, his analysis of the “late-developing countries” is not merely devoted to the clarification of the origin and maintenance of Japanese capitalism; it also furnishes us with a general set of clues toward a rethinking of the position of the form of the nation-state itself within the analysis of capital’s dynamics. In other words, Uno himself is an artist of forcing, of *forçage*: a “partisan and artisan” in Althusser’s terms. What is at stake in Uno’s development of the schematic of “three levels of analysis” cannot simply be sorted out by arguing that he proposes a neat and clean separation of logic, history, and politics. Rather, this schema is itself a theoretical apparatus that allows us to expose precisely the opposite: the contamination and political ruptures that characterize the putatively “smooth” circuit of capital, intended to be indifferent to the machinations of the immediate historical world.

But we cannot approach this question “head on” or “frontally”; instead we have to take a “circuitous” path toward its explication: the problem of the concept of a “pure capitalism” does not begin on the level of method in a “pure” sense but in the historical investigation of the agrarian question. “In tandem with my work on Marx’s *Capital*,” Uno states, “the research I undertook on the agrarian question constitutes precisely the foundation or ground of the methodological system of three levels of analysis that I continued to develop in the postwar period.”⁴ This research that Uno undertook was a direct result of the history of the debate on Japanese capitalism, that is, a direct result of his trans-

versal or *diagonal* intervention into this debate.⁵ He reconsiders the common wisdom of the transition to capitalism by focusing on the process of disintegration of the form of the rural village in Japan. In doing so, he emphasizes a complex parallax between what he calls “feudality” and “modernity.” He does not argue that the transition to capitalism occurs in the form of a decisive rupture or comprehensive break. Rather, he emphasizes that this “feudality” constituted not an impediment that had to be overcome but precisely the enabling condition for capitalism’s emergence and development. In rereading Marx’s analysis of the transition, Uno points out that what appears to be the chaos and coercion of the exterior, mobilized to dissolve the old relations and pave the way for a new order, is in fact already a violence of the interior of capitalist social relations:

The rural village structure, which had formed the social basis of the ancien régime, was thus seemingly dismantled through violence, yet at the same time, this was also in fact an expression of the planned balancing and harmonization of capitalist production. The pastures, expanded to accommodate the goal of wool exports, offered raw materials to the domestic wool industry, and the peasantry, expelled from the land in precisely the same process, became the laboring proletariat, the force that spurred on the capitalist industrialization of the wool and other medieval industries, which were at that point still being managed and administered on the level of simple handicrafts. Thus the emerging proletariat was itself used as a powerful force of pressure in order to forcibly subordinate the existing artisans to capital.⁶

This process of the creation of relations that would furnish the logical interior of capital’s historical appearance in the form of the social system called capitalism is always-already in a temporal sequence that is “out of joint,” that has at its core a basic paradox. If the transition from feudalism to capitalism is the production of the wage-earning proletariat, stripped of everything but its labor power, from the “raw material” of the peasantry, the question remains how such a process could be effected without a schematic of relations that is itself already established. In other words, the *schema* of capital must necessarily preexist its historical appearance, yet simultaneously capital’s very narrative of its appearance relies on the “story” of its “birth,” therefore also relying on the exterior of this story, something that could begin or initiate the story that is not included in the story as such. It is in this sense that the outside had to always be the erased or recoded lever or pivot according to which the schematic division of inside and outside could be established, maintained, and cyclically

returned back to the origin, so that the raw outside or accident could appear as the necessary historical precondition for the “logical” developmental narrative to emerge. Thus “capitalist development constitutes the expanded reproduction of these relations, but the emergence of this developmental cycle itself had to newly create these relations whether by force or not.”⁷

In turn, this “new creation” of relations, which expresses the fundamental contamination between the logic and the history of capital, must be displaced (I will return to this decisive term later), recoded, and reordered by means of new mechanisms or apparatuses that could conduct this process through its encounters with its own logical irrationality, in such a way as to appear wholly rational. Therefore, “policies of commerce, finance, colonization, and so forth were able to accelerate the process of separation between the means of production and productive labor through commodity-economic methods. Of course, these policies were at the outset carried out through exceptionally blatant and directly violent means [kiwamete rokotsu naru shibashiba chokusetsuteki ni bōryokuteki naru shudan] but gradually took on indirect and disguised forms [kansetsuteki naru inpei saretaru keitai] and increasingly become densely imbued with certain national characteristics [kokuminteki seishitsu], before eventually becoming unnecessary as such.”⁸ Yet this relation of inside and outside, the paradoxical reliance or “leaning on” the stratum of history while arrogating itself as a logic, is never fully made “unnecessary.” Rather, what allows this reliance to appear unnecessary, not conjoined by any requirements, is the ceaseless formation of apparatuses through which the relations, which are always subject to the logical slippage or dislocation (in Althusser’s sense of *décalage*)⁹ of their origin, could be posited and repositioned as necessary and progressive steps in the pure inside. But “even in the liberal era, which attempted to eliminate to the greatest extent possible any form of extraeconomic coercion, the limitations to labor time must have been set by means of the law, and thus could not completely be entrusted, in the laissez-faire sense, to purely economic relations.”¹⁰

In turn this problem leads us directly back to the agrarian question. This is precisely because

When capitalist methods of production are employed in agriculture, landownership must also come under the general domination of the law of value [kachi hōsoku]. However, although land is a crucial means of production, it is not capital. . . . Land itself can be differentiated thus, precisely because from capital’s viewpoint it is something given from the outside, so to speak. In order for it to be subordinated to capital’s

demand for the law of value, land must be separated from property and management from the outset, and a form of property corresponding to capitalist methods of production must be established. In other words, while capitalist methods of production attempt to economically realize these demands even in relation to landed property, it is never something rational [gōriteki na mono] for these capitalist methods of production themselves: rather, it is a concession or compromise [jōho] made between capital and an exclusive or monopolized form of possession. Capital makes this compromise through a specific or peculiar *mechanism* [tokushu na kikō] on the level of the law of value.¹¹

I will return shortly to this concept of “mechanism” or “apparatus” (kikō), but for the time being, let us simply note its crucial place in this problem. Because the analysis of capital as a logic always leads us back to its origins as a social relation capable of ordering an entire form of society, we are always returning to the problem posed by what lies outside it. What we are then confronted by is not only capital’s drive to enclose all existing relations so as to be commensurable with its project but also, and more important, capital’s drive to overwrite, to recode, to *semiotically reorder* these relations and forms so that they can be historically rerouted back to the cyclical origin and once more *logically derived* as if they constituted merely the prehistory of the necessary unfolding of capitalist development. In this way, capital not only encloses the outside while relying on it but, more specifically, *forces* the outside to invert or reverse itself into the inside; it “folds” the historical exterior “inside out” so that it can function as the putatively logical interior.

On a historical level, Uno’s analysis, as we saw earlier, does not “deny the existence of extraeconomic coercion in the sense of the existence of forms of power that operate outside the sphere of economy.” Rather, it attempts to *theoretically* “clarify the foundations of such a function of power,” all the while refusing to make the assumption “that this thing that functions outside the economy can be considered feudal or can be conflated with the feudal social system” as a simple expression of “semifeudalism” and so forth.¹² Uno’s theoretical explication of the question of extraeconomic coercion in the analysis of the agrarian question is an intervention against the image of two sides, two “shores” of history: the “accomplished fact” of modernity and the “backward,” “stagnant” form of feudalism.

Uno’s analysis of the agrarian question in Japanese capitalist development continually reminds us that the paradox of inside and outside that obtains in the volatile amalgam of logic and history in the form of capital in general is al-

ways forming and creating *apparatuses* that will allow it to continue its motion through the erasure of these gaps. Thus,

Rather than its industrial form, so-called finance capital became the most important mechanism for the establishment of capitalism in the late-developing countries, and this new form of capital created a new political centrality in the form of the nation-state, through the concentration of the capitalist forces of each individual nation. Nationalism centered on the state [*kokkashugi*] had to be reinforced with a new content. Although there was an extremely important political significance to the dissolution of the rural village itself in a wider process of social division and dissolution, this process of dissolution could not be allowed to take place everywhere, it had to be somehow held back or impeded. The nearly impossible economic problem for the nation-state of unifying agriculture and industry under capitalism in the state-form nevertheless became an absolutely essential political task.¹³

Capital must operate so as to both push forward or *set in motion* and simultaneously to *arrest or seize up* the spasmodic form of its deterritorialization of the earth. It must, in this sense, *stop* the very process that it itself must undertake. This is precisely why Uno locates something essential for capital's dynamics in the *production of the nation-state*. That is, the nation-state must be produced, managed, and maintained, in order for the process of the dissolution of the village to be *arrested* before it spins out of control. The nation-state, in this sense, is what *holds back* capital's axiomatic deterritorialization of itself. It is a "coding" or "valuing" that allows for the management of a set of dynamics that inherently cannot be managed, that is inherently undermining itself. Yet the form of the nation-state also serves as the apparatus by which the dissolution of the village can be undertaken in the first place: substituting for kinship relations and community a new image of civil society and its figure of the national subject, along with the sphere of the market, with its impersonal "character masks" of buyer and seller. Through separation, division, and enclosure, the form of the nation-state installs the circular legitimization mechanism of landed property, whose image is derived from the state as the ultimate image of the landlord.

The debate on Japanese capitalism, and therefore on the nature and location of the agrarian question in theory, leads Uno to a seemingly paradoxical conclusion: that the so-called feudal remnants were not in fact "remnants" of feudalism in the strong sense, that is, obstacles or blocks on capital's local deployment but precisely the opposite: "The problem cannot be understood

from the perspective that these forms were fundamentally something feudal, something that remained or survived in Japanese capitalism, but rather must be posed in terms of *how* Japanese capitalist development managed or administered the functioning of these feudal relations.”¹⁴ In other words, we see here something exceptionally important in Uno’s historical understanding that will exert a certain theoretical pressure on the logical form of capital’s functioning: the role of the mechanisms or apparatuses that would allow for the development of this paradoxical relation in which what should be an obstacle instead functions to buttress, to nurture, to support or aid. This is exactly how Uno repeatedly discloses to us capital’s essential dementia, a dementia that should arrest or obstruct its function, yet through the formation and maintenance of these apparatuses, capital will be able to overcome its own demented logic without resolving the *muri* or impossibility that characterizes its inner drive. Already, then, we see the historical contamination according to which the theoretical structure is formed.

Two Limits: Purity and Exteriority

But the revolution is thoroughgoing. It is still traveling through purgatory. It does its work methodically. By December 2, 1851, it had completed half of its preparatory work; now it is completing the other half. It first completed the *parliamentary power* [*die parlamentarische Gewalt*] in order to be able to overthrow it. Now that it has achieved this, it completes the executive power, reduces it to its purest expression, isolates it, sets it up against itself as the sole target, in order to concentrate all its forces of destruction against it [*reduziert sie auf ihren reinsten Ausdruck, isoliert sie, stellt sie sich als einzigen Vorwurf gegenüber, um alle ihre Kräfte der Zerstörung gegen sie zu konzentrieren*]. And when it has accomplished this second half of its preliminary work, Europe will leap from its seat and exult: Well burrowed, old mole!

—KARL MARX, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte¹⁵

What is interesting and powerful in Marx’s work is neither his particular form of critique, nor his politics, nor his economic analyses as such. The theoretical center of Marx instead is something called “the critique of political economy.” In other words, it is a critique, a critical analysis. It is also something political: that is, its theoretical object is political, but its aims are also political. It concerns this discursive object called “the economy,” or rather, the concrete expression of the relations buttressing a capitalist commodity-economic society in the historical process of the world. But it is not simply one of these things: it is an analytical and theoretical strategy that passes through and encompasses all these moments, a diagonal line of analysis that is transversal to the discourses it moves through. In my view, we can also take a theoretical

clue from the work of Alain Badiou, and call it a strategy of force, or forcing. What does this mean?

It is not something entirely different from the subject of Engels's famous analysis "The Role of Force in History," that is, it is not something entirely separate from the question of violence. It is a violent strategy, but not in the commonsensical use of this term "violence." Rather, force (*Kraft* but also *Zwang*, coercion, "forcing open") here means the rapid and dramatic dislocation of the analytical object from its usual phenomenal conditions in order to generate a theoretical effect. In other words, it is a theoretical strategy operating within theory itself. Forcing means: the exposure of the theoretical object to its theoretical outside, not a substantial outside but an outside that is internal to the thing it is estranged from, the thing that includes it in its "count" of itself but can only be foreign from its conditions or situation of emergence. The "outside" that is implied, therefore, in the question of force or forcing is not an "absolute" outside, because such a thing can never exist. Why can such an "absolute outside" not exist? When we encounter a theoretical object, and approach it in the battlefield of theory, we nevertheless grasp its outside (that which cannot strictly speaking be entirely contained in the object) as *within* the economy (*oikonomia*) of the object itself. If it is the "outside to something," then it is not conceivable without the circulation-space of this something, the object itself. In other words, when we speak of an outside there is no way to avoid speaking of an inside. Yet, we cannot speak of something for which there is no outside at all. A theoretical object, which is the bracketed product of the total physical and spiritual deployment of an act of abstraction from the social field, always exists in an *economy*. The economy is what envelops and wraps itself around the object, giving it its object-ness. That is, the givenness of the theoretical object is only given insofar as it lies in a field, zone, or plane in which its object-ness can circulate and legitimate itself as an object. But this legitimation, or the object's capacity to draw its own borders, to enclose itself as an object, demonstrates that whenever a line is drawn, two zones are created. These two zones were previously contiguous. Yet when the border of the object is drawn, an "in" and an "out" appear. But the object's object-ness prevents us from approaching the "out" directly. We only have access to the enclosed object, whose limits are drawn in order to render it theorizable in the theoretical field. Therefore, the "outside" is neither strictly speaking "external," nor is it "unrelated" to the object. Rather, we can say that a theoretical object's "inside" connotes what is *full* in the economy, while its "outside" connotes what is *absent* or *void* in the *oikonomia*.

Marx's critique of political economy is always involved at the level of method with tracing a line around a phenomenal object, not in order to clarify its fullness or plentitude but in order to *force* this object to disclose what is absent in its presentation of itself. Spivak perfectly explicates this point by arguing that "Marx's project is to create the *force* that will make appear the massive confrontation between capital and its complicit other (its *Gegen-satz*, its counterposition, literally contradiction)—socialized labor."¹⁶ In order to explicate this methodological point, we need to pay close attention to a famous passage of *Capital*, volume 1, in which Marx argues:

The consumption of labour-power is at one and the same time the production of commodities and of surplus-value. The consumption of labour-power is completed, as in the case of every other commodity, outside the limits of the market or of the sphere of circulation. Accompanied by Mr. Moneybags and by the possessor of labour-power, we therefore take leave for a time of this noisy sphere, where everything takes place on the surface and in view of all men, and follow them both into the hidden abode of production, on whose threshold there stares us in the face "No admittance except on business." Here we shall see, not only how capital produces, but how capital is produced. We shall at last *force* the secret of profit-making.¹⁷

In the German original, this last sentence states, "Das Geheimnis der Plusmacherei muß sich endlich enthüllen,"¹⁸ "The secret of profit-making (literally: "surplus-making") must at last be revealed." This *muß* therefore contains an essential methodological point that we should pay close attention to. In the so-called Lachâtre version of the first volume of *Capital*, the only translation thoroughly corrected by Marx himself, this last sentence closely parallels the German original: "La fabrication de la plus value, ce grand secret de la société moderne, va enfin se dévoiler."¹⁹ Interestingly, however, in Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling's English version of *Capital* (overseen by Engels), this passage is somewhat "overtranslated," but precisely in this "overtranslation" something decisive emerges in the translation of this final phrase: "We shall at last *force* the secret of profit-making."²⁰ More than simply the inherent transpositions and transformations that accompany all acts of translation, we ought to read this term "force" as itself a conceptual innovation, because it discloses a very specific dynamics crucial to Marx's work, and more broadly, crucial to Uno's development of it.

In this sense of "force," which seals together the self-disclosure of capital with the active "forcing" of theory, we see Marx's method revealed clearly: to

not merely investigate the social role of capital, but to theoretically *force* capital to reveal its own secrets, to engage in a theoretical experiment through which capitalism itself discloses its own essence. Hence, here Marx takes us from capital's apparently smooth surface, where "freedom"—freely agreed contracts, equality in exchange, each selling and buying his or her own property for his or her own gain—seems to be everywhere, into capital's depths, where force or coercion (*Zwang*) forms the violent undercurrent of capture that grounds these supposed "freedoms." In other words, the use of the word "force" here shows us a doubled point. On the one hand Marx's method itself "forces open" the seemingly closed self-concealing/self-disclosing systematic circuit of capitalist accumulation, which "hides in plain view." On the other hand when we follow this method and "force open" the "secrets of profit-making," we discover an undercurrent of force as well.

To return to Uno's work, and particularly his theoretical microscope or diagnostic apparatus called the "three levels of theoretical analysis": this tool, which furnishes the logical form of analysis or experimental scenario that I am attempting to utilize, is a schematic, but more specifically a schema in the Kantian sense—a procedural rule or intervening determination that is not simply an "image." In other words, this schema is not simply "applied" to an object. This theory of three levels of analysis is not simply "applied" to an object called "capitalism" that is encountered in sensation in order to record what happens as a result. Rather, it is a weapon or device that is forcefully inserted or shoved into the situation that bears the name "capital." By ramming this weapon into capital's smooth self-definition, Uno attempts to see how capital behaves when it is forced to disclose its essence, by being purified or determined in accordance with a schema that disables capital's own techniques of insinuation. By differentiating between three levels or geological strata of political economy—principle or pure theory (*genriron*), the stadial historical development of capital (*dankairon*), and the conjunctural analysis of the immediate situation (*genjō bunseki*)—Uno is aiming at something fundamental for our discussion of "force." How does capital think about its own operation? How can politics be conceived in relation to capital's own self-movement? If capital's self-movement is a contained and endlessly spinning circuit, how can we account for its outside, the externalities on which it paradoxically relies for its own pseudowholeness? In order to deal with these basic questions, Uno utilizes this tripartite weapon in order to illuminate the gaps or ruptures between the levels at which theory operates. However, he is not concerned with merely producing a result in *theory*. Rather, he practices the art of dislocation—he utilizes the gaps of theory's own self-definition to force a result in *history*.

In other words, Uno's methodological innovations and recodings of Marx's work do not only function as a reorganization of so-called political economy: despite his own insistence on the separation of politics from the work of theory, Uno's theoretical arsenal discloses the politicality of theory, and in doing so simultaneously opens up the historical possibilities of politics.

Uno intervenes in theory to show that capitalism can be systematized as a pure circuit: he calls this internal dream or fantasy of capital "the world of principle, or pure capitalism" (*genriteki sekai* = *junsui shihonshugi*), in other words, it is an experimental world that has been purged of its world-ness, a pure spinning circuit that exists only as a schematic systematization.²¹ Strictly speaking, this "world of principle" does not exist as such. In fact, "the reality of capitalism is that it never perfectly completes this systematization [*taikeika*]. But capitalist development itself, until a more or less fixed instant, is always located within the directionality of systematic perfection [*kanseika*]." ²² What is the purpose of such a thought-experiment? First and foremost, it is an intervention. The intervention operates by introducing into a given scenario something that is strictly speaking absent. An intervention proceeds by forcing a situation to confront or admit its own void, those elements whose exclusion or absence structures the interior of the situation, but which do not exist within it as such. In other words, an intervention brings the outside, or what cannot be entirely included on the level of an element, into the interior in order to force a result. By positing this world of principle, Uno allows us to schematize not only the gaps in history that appear by comparison but also the gaps of the supposedly perfect circle of capital's self-movement.

As a technique, this positing operates as what Badiou has called the "anticipating hypothesis for the generic being of a truth, a forcing. Forcing is the powerful fiction of a completed truth. Starting with such a fiction, new pieces of knowledge can be forced, without even verifying this knowledge."²³ Foucault earlier emphasized exactly this same form of intervention in the analysis of the politics of truth, "to make a fiction work inside of truth, to induce truthful effects with this fiction, and to operate in such a manner that the discourse of truth gives rise to, 'manufactures,' something that does not yet exist, that is, 'fictions' it."²⁴ In Marx's work, this is exactly the status of "English capitalism," a pure stand-in for the theoretical capitalism under examination, and precisely why Massimiliano Tomba points out that "when Marx showed the 'image of the future' that England presents, his intention was to sketch out a performative historiography written for other segments of the international working class. . . . This historiography is interested in the possible

‘backlashes’ [Rückschläge] of the lessons from England, in the ways in which class-struggles in one country can interact with those in another country.”²⁵

Occasionally, critics of Uno’s work point out that this “pure capitalism” does not exist, that capitalism is never “pure” but always contaminated by the historical and institutional levels of development in the social formation and so on. But this criticism misses completely the theoretical technique that Uno utilizes, what Badiou has referred to above as a “forcing.” The point here is precisely that Uno does not need to “prove” the existence of something called “pure capitalism,” nor does he need to “verify” it as a piece of knowledge. Rather, by wagering on this “completed fiction,” that is, by utilizing it as a lever through which to “force” new knowledges, Uno can force capital to disclose not only its weaknesses, but also its own self-image, its dream of a perfect world wherein it meets no obstacles or boundaries. In other words, he uses this technique to demonstrate that capital can never be without its originary historical contamination. Uno wagers on this “completed fiction” in order to force the disclosure of new operations of knowledge, new segments and sequences of thought. This logic of force or presupposition is precisely why Uno pays such close attention to Marx’s use of the verb *setzen* (positing, placing, supposing, deploying, putting, etc.). What does it mean that capital “preposits” or “pre-supposes” (*voraussetzen*) the elements of its own operation, whose existence it then uses in order to legitimate itself? This is precisely the foundation of capital’s “occult quality” (*die okkulte Qualität*), through which it self-expands as value, adding value to itself (*Selbstverwertung*).²⁶

Althusser, for instance, frequently identified this paradoxical logic of capital, in which the “elements precede the forms,” and these forms then extend themselves on the basis of the elements, as if the elements were productions of the forms. But because theory also operates in terms of the characteristics of its theoretical object, this problem of *setzen* is also one that operates at the level of method, the “positing” of this absent thing called “pure capitalism,” this void that allows us to “force” knowledge of the conjuncture. As Uno points out, “we ought to compare this purely capitalist society to an experimental device or apparatus [*jikken sōchi*], in the sense employed by the natural sciences. It is not something we can simply exclude as a ‘disruptive element’ by means of a specific determinate viewpoint. It is rather the ‘spiritual concrete’ or ‘concrete in the mind’ [*geistig Konkretes*]²⁷ capable of corresponding to the developmental tendency of capitalist society.”²⁸ What is this experimental apparatus or laboratory tool? It is obvious that “in the analysis of economic forms, neither microscopes nor chemical reagents are of use. The force of

abstraction must replace both [Die Abstraktionskraft muß beide ersetzen].”²⁹ In order to understand the theoretical physics of this *Abstraktionskraft* as a diagnostic device, we should also overcode or overtranslate this term that Uno uses to describe the experimental apparatus of “pure capitalism,” what Marx called a *geistiges Konkretes*. In other words, it is not only a “spiritual” (*geistiges*) concrete, it is also a “ghostly” (*geistiges*) concrete, a haunting figure that inhabits a world it cannot truly be in. The ghost is precisely the figure of the absence that haunts all presence, the figure that in-habits a situation while constantly forcing that situation to confront its absence, or that which cannot find a place or body in the interior but can only trace the exterior from the inside. “Pure capitalism” as a “ghostly concrete” structures capitalism itself, the historical lived capitalism that we experience in life-practice. Pure capitalism has no body, it is un-in-habited/un-in-habitable, it has no incarnation, but it is paradoxically the most concrete thing that structures capital’s historical expansion: it is capital’s drive (*Trieb*). The drive is strictly absent from immediacy—it is not the same thing as biological instinct (*Instinkt*).³⁰ But the absent drive is also what demonstrates capital’s finitude, its pseudoimmortality. As a “ghostly concrete,” capital is precisely the massive agglomeration of the living dead, a specter or wraith that concatenates into one ghostly absence/presence the totality of living labor. In other words, “although a purely capitalist society can never be concretely realized, the fact that at a certain stage of development it begins to develop in this pure direction by means of its own forces [*jiryoku*], and the fact that its underside or reverse [*ura*] expresses a historical process in which this development is reversed, forcing capitalism to anticipate its own termination [*shūmatsu*], simultaneously forces the theoretical systematization of this process toward its own completion or perfection.”³¹ This absence that conditions the worldly presentation of capital, this specter called the “world of principle, or pure capitalism,” is constantly appearing as a silhouette, as a vanishing point or something like the perspectival point in a three-dimensional diagram. It is strictly absent from the scene but organizes the situation in its own image. By utilizing this perspectival point Uno forces the commodity economy to disclose where its weakness lies: “From the outset, labor power, which cannot be a product of the commodity economy itself, is passing through an ‘impossibility’ or ‘excess’ that commodifies it [*shōhinka suru muri o tōshite iru*] just like all other general products. The basis that enables this ‘passing through’ is given to a certain extent [*tōshi uru kiso o ichiō wa ataerareru*]. In other words, as something that is in essence historically limited, the commodity economy never concretely commodifies the entirety of the social but can be theoretically systematized as something

that develops toward this direction.”³² Uno theoretically systematizes a purely capitalist society as a “completed fiction.” That is, it is a fiction and therefore necessarily incomplete, but it is a self-contained fiction that *completes itself* in theory. It bears a close resemblance to the fundamental theoretical stance of the phenomenological method: “To let what shows itself be seen from itself, just as it shows itself to itself” (Das was sich zeigt, so wie es sich von ihm selbst her zeigt, von ihm selbst her sehen lassen).³³

This fiction of a purely capitalist society allows pieces of knowledge to be forced into existence, precisely because this purely capitalist society expresses the tendential movement or directionality of commodification. Commodification is never a limited phenomenon: rather, every act of commodification contains within it the overall directionality of absolute commodification. This is, for instance, precisely why Deleuze and Guattari argue that philosophy’s role is directly political: not because one can make political judgments in theory, and then simply “apply” them to the political realm, but because philosophy itself is an experimental battlefield in which the relative deterritorializations that make up the level of history can be “purified” or made absolute. In this way, the relative deterritorializations of the historical process can be generalized as a world in which absolute deterritorialization has been accomplished.³⁴ This produces a situation of the “the axiomatic deterritorialization of the world” or the “final phase of the transition from exo-colonization, capital’s annihilation of its own outside through its expansion across the earth, to endo-colonization, that is, the torsional invagination of capital’s movement of accumulation into its own interior, encompassing land and human beings themselves.”³⁵ In other words, this world of principle or pure capitalism is not a world in which there is a particularly savage capitalism; rather, this experimental world is totally divested of all obstacles to capital’s own self-movement and self-definition: “not clean war with zero deaths, but pure war with zero births.”³⁶ This experimental world can then be utilized in order to understand the tendential movements and operations of the historical world. As such, this practice of “forcing” on the basis of a completed fiction is itself directly political, precisely because it is a dislocation of the object across the levels of being: a political result in history is forced on the basis of a positing on the level of theory. The site of politicality that Uno identifies in this “positing,” and the set of questions contained in Marx’s use of the term *setzen*, revolve around the commodity: “Political economy can grasp the concrete relations that form a given society through the commodity, because these relations are ‘presupposed’ [voraussetzen] within the interior of the commodity form itself. Capital’s theoretical system thus comes to be completed [kanketsu] by

positing [setzen] within its own development itself the concrete relations that are 'pre-posit-ed' [voraussetzen] as its point of departure [shuppatsuten]."³⁷ Uno follows this decisive point by identifying the double structure of referral between the theoretical object and the policality of theory by pointing out the haunting of the inside by the outside: "A commodity economy always possesses this (im)possibility or 'nihil of reason' [muri] insofar as it manages the relations among human beings as relations among things, but it is paradoxically the fact that this (im)possibility itself [muri] has developed as a form capable of ordering the totality of society that in turn renders possible our own theoretical systematization of its motion."³⁸ This impossibility, therefore, is the site around which we can understand the relation of political economy to politics itself. Because of the contingency or undecidability of the commodification of labor power, capital must reroute or recode this contingency as necessity, it must reorder the internal sequencing of elements of the purely contingent or fortuitous encounter so that these elements connote or come to disclose a necessity, an exigency. By filling the holes and ruptures in its austere motion, capital draws our attention to this impossibility for the first time. By mobilizing labor power in its ostensibly "pure" circuit, capital tries to utilize this "phantasmic semblance that fills the irreducible ontological gap,"³⁹ but in doing so it also exposes the politicality of its own so-called economic necessity. Resistance, the proletarian capacity to revolt against the system that produced it, is only capable of discovering itself as a resistance precisely because of the way capital tries to fold this resistance back into itself. In other words, the proletariat discovers that it has "nothing to lose but its chains" only through the experience of being divorced from the land in the process of primitive accumulation and forcibly reconstituted as the owner of a single thing: labor power that can be commodified. Through the insertion of this labor-power commodity, the foundational input for capital's operation, the elementary form of resistance insinuates itself within the interior (capital's logic), and capital, in confronting the fact that it cannot itself produce this labor-power commodity, is forced to plug up its own gaps with the material of this resistance. Thus the proletarian outside discovers for itself the openings for the project of communism only, paradoxically, by being exposed to the weaknesses and limitations of capital from the inside: it is not a pure absence, but an "indiscernible" element that structures the exchange between interior and exterior. Uno constantly emphasizes that capital is always something that appears "as if" it is a perfect cyclical self-contained object in motion. But it is precisely this "as if" that gives us a clue to the correlation between the outside in political economy and the outside of politics itself, this structure of forcing

in which we encounter not only the potentiality of the “critique of political economy” but also the possibilities of the intervention.

The “revolution,” in other words, does not immediately eliminate those things that it would overcome: it rather “reduces” them to their “purest expressions” (*ihren reinsten Ausdruck*); it raises them to the level of “principle” in order to overthrow them. Thus the analysis of “pure capitalism,” rather than a depoliticized evasion of the concrete, is a theoretical practice, a practical and active measure taken to “reduce” the logic inherent in capitalism’s everyday dynamics to “its purest expression,” not simply in order to imagine the scientificity of this contaminated cycle but precisely in order to allow it to “complete” itself “in order to be able to overthrow it.” This mechanism, which Marx identifies with the revolution “traveling through purgatory,” is thus this strange amalgam whereby the immediate situation can only be apprehended by means of the “force of abstraction,” which in turn “inverts” or “reverses” itself into the most concrete elements. Already here, we are dealing with a question of “translation,” a question of the relationship of the logic of capital to the logical motion of theory itself: “Was it not the awareness of this very problematic which forced Marx to ‘translate’ economic concepts into other concepts which were to be ‘more’ than merely economic? And is it not the case that any translation of Marx’s concepts, which in truth would amount to a retranslation, would hide the very problem that led to the development of a critical theory of economic categories in the first place? The problem is that intelligible, and yet in some sense ‘incomprehensible,’ concepts prove to be only apparently-intelligible, which means precisely that they are unintelligible concepts.”⁴⁰ We will see how this “apparent intelligibility” that covers over or overcodes the fundamental unintelligibility of political economy stems from a dense overlapping or contamination between logic and history, a contamination that is mirrored or expressed in an interlocking manner with the political physics of theory itself.

The Axiomatic Traversal of the Limit

In precisely the sense that the goal of the psychoanalytic scenario is the “traversal of the fantasy,” the goal of the critique of political economy is the traversal of the fantasy of systematicity that political economy seeks to discover in capital’s axiomatic operation, a set of laws of motion that political economy attempts to mirror in its own theoretical physics. But what this “traversal” consists in must be extensively clarified. Here we will take another clue from Uno’s work and develop it in a specific theoretical direction: the question of traversal,

passing (through), conduction, the conduit, and the apparatuses that enable it. Uno writes:

Through the law of population, capitalism comes into possession of mechanisms or apparatuses which allow the (im)possibility of the commodification of labor power to pass through [*“muri” wo tōsu kikō*]. This is precisely the point on which capitalism historically forms itself into a determinate form of society, and further, is what makes it independent in pure-economic terms. Like land, this is a so-called given for capitalism, one that is given from its exterior, but unlike land it can be reproduced, and by means of this reproduction becomes capable of responding to the demands of capital put forward through the specific phenomenon of capitalism called crisis.⁴¹

Capitalism itself does not produce labor power but rather produces assemblages or mechanisms (*kikō*) that “transmit” or “allow through” (*tōsu*) the effect of the (im)possibility, this folding back into itself. We know that because of the inherent incompleteness that inevitably-recurrently emerges whenever capital’s logic attempts to display itself as a perfect circle, this logic should not work, yet it works perfectly well in capitalist society. This irrational moment or fundamental absence of reason that characterizes economic “rationality” itself presents us with a paradox, but equally poses for us a corollary theoretical problem. If capital’s logical cycle experiences some fundamental gap or rupture insofar as it can never operate without recourse to the “savage outside” that should be strictly excluded from the systematic inside, how does this logical movement pass through or traverse this gap, so that the cycle might appear whole? In fact, here we are confronted with a crucial conceptual innovation: capitalism as a historical society, a determinate form of social relations, is not distinguished simply by the form of the wage, the development of the productive forces, and so forth but by its capacity, as a “determinate form of society,” to produce, maintain, and utilize these “apparatuses” for the traversal of the (im)possibility.

The strict methodological difference between the logic of capital—its “principles”—and the history of capitalism—its stadial development—experiences a contamination or cross-fertilization precisely in the relations of force drawn by Uno around the *muri* of the commodification of labor power. This (im)possibility in effect shows us that the capture of the “extimate” energy of human labor in effect installs in capitalist society a compulsion to repeat the original-irrational moment of capture by which capitalist society locates its *arché*, but also which can never emerge in the historical world. In

this way, the impossibility of the origin must be repeated as the (im)possibility of commodification by means of what Uno called these “apparatuses for the traversing of the (im)possibility” above. It is only in the clarification of these “apparatuses” or “mechanisms” that we can clarify the political problem incarnated in this volatile amalgam of logic and history that is capitalist society. This question, therefore, moves us quickly to a theoretical formulation of the relation between the methodological level of the critique of political economy and the set of problems posed in the form of the agrarian question. Moreover, it is when we inquire into this question of *how* and *by what means* this “passing through” or traversal can be accomplished that another fundamental problem for Marxist theoretical inquiry returns to us with a sudden and dramatic force: the so-called national question. But where does this theoretical structure have its origin in Uno’s work? It shows us again the essential role of the agrarian question in “revealing,” “disclosing,” or “uncovering” these apparatuses, which work precisely to ensure that an essentially *defective* logic⁴² will nevertheless “work correctly” on the level of history.

Uno draws our attention not to the “feudal system” as such but to the “feudality” (*hōkensei*) of the rural village, in a specific and ideational form, what he calls its “thought, sentiment, and custom.”⁴³ What he means by drawing our attention to this stratum of “feeling” or “affect” is to emphasize that the form of the apparatus that allows this (im)possibility of the commodification of labor power to push its motion forward, to proceed without foundering on its own slippages, appears variously in the form of the nation-state, in the form of local customs, in the form of “thought,” forms of connection, forms of encounter, forms of emotion, and so forth. This in turn stems from Uno’s *transversal* relation to the debate on Japanese capitalism: rather than taking any of the typical positions—the arguments that Japanese capitalism was permanently crippled by emerging from a feudal basis directly into a militarist form of industrial capital, or that seemingly feudal relations in the countryside were mere remnants withering away under capital’s homogenizing influence—Uno instead, through this concept of the apparatus of traversal (although he had not yet “formally” used this phrase), makes a much different point.

Instead, he argues, the apparent existence of feudal relations in the countryside was not an indication that the actual full-blown feudal system remained on a partial basis, or that these relations were merely atrophied “remnants,” but indicated something much more complex: feudal relations or feudal “sentiments” were “*maintained precisely as a sacrifice that enabled Japanese capitalism to develop without resolving the problems it itself posited.*”⁴⁴ Note here that this paradoxical structure is exactly what he later referred to as an “apparatus

for the traversal of the (im)possibility" (*"muri" wo tōsu kikō*). In other words, this structure, which Uno first locates in the problem of clarifying the question of the "survivals of feudalism" or "feudal remnants," is not a question of "uneven development" or other rather obvious features of capitalist development on a world scale but is instead a question in which the inner logic of theory overlaps with the logic that inheres in capital as a *social relation* and exposes its basic contamination, which it nevertheless attempts to erase. That is, what we see here is the fundamental logical problem of how something that should function as an obstacle can be evaded without resolving the basis on which the obstacle emerged in the first place. To put it in different terms, the basic theoretical problem that Uno derives from the agrarian question, and that then functions later in his work as a kind of pivot or lever around which to expose capital's particular dementia, is this logic of the *traversal*, "passing," "passing through," the "conduit," and so forth. In other words, the question is not simply one of capital's (im)possibility, its fundamental "nihil of reason"; rather, the question is why the social relation called capital functions smoothly in an apparently rational and elegant circle *despite the fact that it should not function at all*, that its underlying nihil should expose this circle as a crippled and impossible circuit.

But how does this "traversal" itself function for capital? It functions as a "folding," a "pleating," a "turning inside out." In other words, it is not simply a "crossing over" or "leap." When we think of a leap, we imagine that there are two clear sides, two distinct fields, and that something simply passes from one side to the other. But capital's two leaps (the leap of the exchange process and the leap between one social basis or mode of production and another) never occur in such a neat fashion. Rather the leap is an *ideational* moment that "passes through," that is "conducted" through the situation by means of the apparatus, the device or mechanism. Or, more fundamentally, the "leap" or "inversion" is precisely what *creates* the two sides. By inverting, reversing, leaping, or "passing through," a planar surface or single topological field in extension is retroactively split into two, made to appear double, so that "this side" and "that side" come into being, so that the historical process appears to be grounded on a set of uneven substances that preexist the moment when they are revealed. But prior to the moment of *traversal*, when a boundary or limit emerges that must be "passed through," the boundary or limit would merely be located as one moment of a single planar horizon, not something that marks the gap between two sides. Thus what forms the gap, or what transforms the limit into a true break or abyss, is precisely the movement of

passage, the traversal of the limit within the planar field. This passage transforms the limit into a *gradient* or “threshold of intensity” (*seuil d’intensité*),⁴⁵ after which point it continues to function in an ideational sense as the mark or breach between two surfaces, intersected now by a different field or exterior that suspends the previous extensive arrangement.

Capital thus names the social scenario according to which this planar surface’s limits are transformed into gaps, a social system of the *axiomatic traversal of the limit*, wherein the limit itself is incessantly-recurrently being *inverted* or *dis-placed* as a gradient or “threshold.” The intensity of this threshold is contained precisely in the fact that it is the *locus* or site of the “passing” of the (im) possibility, the moment wherein the (im)possibility is traversed and thereby “retrojected” as a gap or breach. Once again, this logic is a paradoxical system intimately (or more accurately “extimately”) linked to exteriority—not the substantial outside or the fantasy of an elsewhere but the exteriority that characterizes the forms emerging under capitalism as *verrückt*, that is, both “demented” and “dis-placed” or, more centrally for my analysis, “de-ranged,” that is, both “deranged” and “displaced” from a given “range” into another. It is this “displacement” or “dislocation” (both in the sense of an unexpected localization of phenomena and a “fault line” or “crack”) in the tectonics of capitalism’s territorial expression, located not just in the form of the *state* but in the state’s specific technology called “the nation,” that furnishes one of the central moments around which Uno expands and opens up the “political physics” of capital’s so-called logic.

When Marx specifically mentions that the form of value is itself continuously-recurrently expressed and concentrated “in dieser verrückten Form,”⁴⁶ he alerts us to something essential in this word *verrückt*, or *Verrücktheit* (“insanity” but also “dis-placement”). In other words, it indicates “a mode of existence of social practice caught up in an ‘ongoing process’ of ‘inversion.’”⁴⁷ Here, in order to understand the particular “de-rangement” of capital that is concentrated in what Uno refers to as these “apparatuses for the traversal of the (im)possibility,” we ought to cross-read the emphasis on the centrality of the value-form as the ground of the specific *scientificity of critique* of Marxist theoretical research, and the program of “taking Marx from behind” undertaken by Deleuze and Guattari. Although their aesthetic and gestural modes of analysis diverge, they both locate the essence of the dynamics of capital in the “de-ranged forms” within which the form of value emerges (Backhaus), the specific “dementia” that emerges across every social surface intersected by capital (Deleuze and Guattari), and the traversal of the *seeming* (im)possibility of the

commodification of labor power, an (im)possibility that is in fact constantly being passed and passing through (Uno). In fact, we should pay strict attention again to the double sense of this term *verrückt* as both “deranged” and “de-ranged,” that is, not only insane but also transversal, diagonal, moving across fields in “displacement,” whereby the expected arrangement of phenomena is punctuated, suspended, or interrupted by a schematic of arrangement (or derangement) that “ranges” divergently, placing unforeseen combinations into another order. This *Verrücktheit* of capital is exactly why Deleuze and Guattari emphasize that the schizophrenic is one “without epistemological guarantees,” one who follows a different arrangement of reality, “which encourages or allows one to displace oneself from one field to another” (*qui l’entraîne à se déplacer d’un plan à un autre*).⁴⁸

Both of these analyses of the *verrückt* (deranged) and *ver-rückt* (de-ranged) characteristics that inform the slippages or gaps between capital’s logic and the historical development of capitalist society find their ultimate expression in Uno’s analysis of the *muri*, the (im)possibility or “nihil of reason” that is nevertheless always “passing through.” In fact, recall that in the (im)possible origin of capital in the moment of the English enclosures, the secondary effect of the formation of the owner of the labor-power commodity is to simultaneously create or formally produce the *vagabond*. In this sense, it is no accident that the formation of the modern “lumpen proletariat,” whose origin is found in the “beggars, robbers, and vagabonds” (*Bettler, Räuber, Vagabunden*) produced as a side effect of the production of the *vogelfreie Proletariat* in the process of the so-called primitive accumulation, concerns the entire question of “range,” “ranging” and “de-ranging.” The lumpen proletariat is the purest expression of “feudal remnants” not in the sense that it is something “backward” or “out of time” but in the sense that it expresses the present concretization of the process of primitive accumulation or the transition as a surface effect, that is, it does not “repeat” this moment but keeps this moment circulating on the surface. What above all characterizes the later lumpen proletariat and early “vagabond” is precisely that they “range across fields” (Deleuze and Guattari), that they “wander about” (hence the legal declaration: “Eine herumwandernde und bettelnde Person wird für einen Landstreicher und Vagabunden erklärt”) (Any one wandering about and begging is declared a rogue and a vagabond).⁴⁹ In other words, the “de-derangement” of capital’s logic, its “de-ranged forms,” are produced as a result of the contamination between the (im)possible origin of capital and the (im)possibility of the commodification of labor power, a volatile amalgam held together and yet retained as a gap by the traversal itself:

Obviously the processes of the emergence of capitalism, its maturation, and especially its decline, all appear as processes specific to each individual country. Generally speaking, it can be said that the processes experienced by countries that have seen the development of capitalism earlier will basically be repeated as an identical process in countries experiencing a late transition to capitalism. This expresses to us the fact that the principles of political economy, or the logic that inheres in capital, is only realized or achieved by passing through the historical process [*genri ga rekishiteki katei wo tōshite kantetsu shite iru koto*], revealing its various phases precisely through the temporal period of the transition to capitalism.⁵⁰

Here is where the inner *topology* of the logic and the outer *cartography* of history are linked, sealed, interlocked as surfaces on the torus of capital. But why is this theoretical direction so crucial? What is the exigency for the analysis of this contamination, this operation of the traversal?

Uno gives us another clue: “This is precisely because I think that unless we purify the theory of principle latent in *Capital* to the extent that it can be utilized in the analysis of imperialism, and in relation to questions such as that of Japanese capitalism, it will be impossible to avoid lapsing into formalism, and a realization of effective cooperation between economics and research in other areas of social science and cultural knowledge will be impossible. It is this theoretical process that will open new paths for the settling of the theory of the principles of political economy itself.”⁵¹

Topologies of the Critique of Political Economy: Torsion and Inversion

The maximum of Marxism = (Umschlag).—V. I. LENIN, “Plan for a Report on the Seventh (April) All-Russia Conference of the RSDLP(B) at a Meeting of the Petrograd Organisation, May 8 (21), 1917”

Having arrived at the problem of the traversal of the nihil of reason that paradoxically characterizes capital’s arrogated “rationality,” let us return to the following statement of Lacan, quoted in the epigraph to this chapter: “The fact is that science, if one looks at it closely, has no memory. Once constituted, it forgets the circuitous path by which it came into being [*elle oublie les péripéties dont elle est née*].”⁵² Here, we need to pay close attention to the term *péripéties*—the “circumstances,” “adventures,” the “incidents” or “events,” the “twists and turns” of the plot, so to speak. But this seemingly unimportant or cursory term in Lacan’s statement turns out to be nothing less than the pivotal

term around which the putatively “scientific” circle of capital’s logic operates. *Peripeteia* in classical Greek narrative analysis refers to a sudden or dramatic change in circumstances, a reversal, an instantaneous and unexpected “plot twist.” In other words, it connotes the tragic, comic, or absurd moment when an expected set of relations or phenomena is suddenly revealed to have transformed into its inverse, when a set of circumstances has folded inside out. The pretensions to “science” of economics, as a pure cyclical set of laws of motion mirroring the exchange process, must always violently “forget” the contingencies of the historical process in order to imagine itself as a rationality, as a pure logic. That is, once constituted, the “science” of political economy “forces” itself to ignore or elide the fact that it came into being by imitating in its theoretical structure the “deranged” nature of capital itself, which pretends to be a pure interiority while constantly having recourse to the historical process in order to retain and reproduce its dynamism. In this sense, the critique of political economy consists in the *restoration* or “re-remembering” of these *peripetias* that “science” would seek to exclude from its image of itself, to take these “secret” undercurrents and, rather than erasing them, raise them up to the level of the “world of principle” itself.

A very specific term in Marx’s work functions in the style of this *peripeteia*, a term that links together the deranged logic of capital with the pretensions to “rationality” of the “dismal science” of economics. This term is also at first glance something cursory or unremarkable, the term *Umschlag*. In Marx’s work, this term is used in two divergent senses: on the one hand it simply means the “turnover” of capital, that is, the process through which capital is advanced and subsequently returns; on the other hand this term is utilized in the *Grundrisse* manuscripts to indicate the movement of “inversion” or “reversal” whereby, through “a peculiar logic, the right of property is dialectically inverted [dialektisch umschlägt], so that on the side of capital it becomes the right to an alien product, or the right of property over alien labour, the right to appropriate alien labour without an equivalent, and, on the side of labour capacity [Arbeitsvermögens], it becomes the duty to relate to one’s own labour or to one’s own product as to *alien property*.”⁵³ He continues:

The “inversion” or “reversal” [Umschlag] therefore comes about because the ultimate stage of free exchange is the exchange of labour capacity [Arbeitsvermögens] as a commodity, as value, for a commodity, for value; because it is given in exchange as objectified labour, while its use value, by contrast, consists of living labour, i.e. of the positing of exchange value. This “inversion” or “reversal” [Umschlag] arises from

the fact that the use value of labour capacity, as value, is itself the value-creating element; the substance of value, and the value-increasing substance. In this exchange, then, the worker receives the equivalent of the labour time objectified in him, and gives his value-creating, value-increasing living labour time. He sells himself as an effect. He is absorbed and incarnated into the body of capital [wird er absorbiert vom und inkarniert in das Kapital] as a cause [Ursache], as activity [Tätigkeit]. Thus the exchange turns into its opposite, and the laws of private property—liberty, equality, property—property in one's own labour, and free disposition over it—turn into the worker's propertylessness and the dispossession of his labour [Eigentumslosigkeit des Arbeiters und Entäußerung seiner Arbeit], [i.e.] the fact that he relates to it as alien property and vice versa.⁵⁴

This *Umschlag*, in other words, is a *topological* description of the traversal of the (im)possibility, a description of *how* something that appears as a limit is recreated, recoded, and redeployed as a *gradient* of intensity for capital's functioning. This *Umschlag*, also simply the term for an "envelope," literally "envelopes" the outside by turning it "inside out," torsionally folding it in on itself, so that what should operate as a gap can be dialectically "leaped," but also burrowed into, emptied out, transformed from an apparent depth into a volatile surface. It is no accident that the exchange process, the process of the buying and selling of labor power, is not something punctuated by limits as such: these limits or gaps between seller and buyer are torsionally inverted or penetrated into only in order to recalibrate themselves as one smooth surface on which will occur "der flüssige Umschlag von Verkauf und Kauf" (the fluid reversal [or inversion] of sale and purchase).⁵⁵ In fact, although we typically describe capital's motion as a "circuit process" (*Kreislaufsprozeß*) and therefore as a circle, what is actually happening is not a circle at all. It is a topological folding and unfolding, through which the interior surface and the exterior surface can be interlocked in a planar field; it appears therefore as a torus: "Capital appears as this dynamic unity [prozessierende Einheit] of production and circulation, a unity which can be considered both as the totality [Ganze] of its production process and as the particular process through which capital goes during a single turnover [bestimmter Verlauf eines Umschlags des Kapitals], a single movement returning to itself [einer in sich selbst zurückkehrenden Bewegung]."⁵⁶ That is, capital itself is, in essence, this *Umschlag*, this inversion or torsion on itself, that names the cyclical course by which it goes through a single motion of its torsional pattern, its *Kreislaufsprozeß*, not merely in a flat

circle but in a topological opening out onto and simultaneous folding into itself. But, and this again is why capitalism is so purely demented, deranged, and de-ranged, capital is only capable of expressing itself as the logic toward which it is compelled in a single cycle. Once the cycle ends, this torsional movement of inversion finds that, in order to repeat itself, it must traverse the historical outside, it must appeal to the “apparatuses” for the traversal of this (im)possibility that lies at the boundary or edge of every circuit-process, every cycle of exchange in capitalist society, the hole at the center of the torus. Therefore, capital’s compulsion to repeat always undermines its own attempt to appear as a logic, precisely because this logic is only able to legitimate itself in the form of a single circuit. This is exactly what Marx identifies in the question of “turnover,” this moment of inversion/turnover that traces the outline of the maximal limit of capital’s ability to grasp its outside as if it were a pure moment of the inside: “The production process itself is posited as determined by exchange, so that the social relation and the dependence on this relation [die gesellschaftliche Beziehung und Abhängigkeit von dieser Beziehung] in immediate production is posited not merely as a material moment, but as an economic moment, a determination of form [Formbestimmung].” This moment that should be impossible, the presentation of the social relation as if it were a derivation from the exchange process, in which social relationality is simply determined as the exchange of things, in this sense also expresses “the maximum of circulation [Das Maximum der Zirkulation], the limit [die Grenze] of the renewal of the production process through it.”⁵⁷

It is in turn this “torsion” or inversion that reminds us to torsionally invert this de-ranged logic back on “economics,” back on the simple mirroring of capital’s quasi logic as a “rational” explanatory mechanism. It is in fact this Umschlag that economics, following capital’s own model faithfully, generally conceals or covers over. That is, when confronted with a “sudden inversion” (plötzliche Umschlagen), something that appears as the glimmer of the irrational outside within the putatively rational inside, the “agents of circulation” (die Zirkulationsagenten), or perhaps “economic fantasists,” become overawed by “the impenetrable mystery surrounding their own relations” (dem undurchdringlichen Geheimnis ihrer eignen Verhältnisse).⁵⁸ This is not only because the confrontation with the traversal of the (im)possibility exposes the insanity of the image of capitalist society as a mere enlargement of the supposedly smooth and rational exchange process; it is also because Marx’s critique, and Uno’s development and recoding of this critique, is aimed not at capital’s logic itself but at the discourse of political economy. It is not itself “an” economics.

It is a critical explosion of the way political economy “buys into” capital’s own fantasy, its dream-like attempt to arrogate itself as a logic. Thus

the economic is in this sense the object itself of Marx’s “critique”: it is a representation (at once necessary and illusory) of real social relations. Basically it is only the fact of this *representation* that the economists abstractly explicate, which is inevitably already shared *practically* by the owners-exchangers [propriétaires-échangistes] of commodities, that the “economic” relations appear as such, in an apparent natural autonomy. The representation is implicated in the very form of the *manifestation* of social relations. This is precisely what enables producers-exchangers to *recognize themselves* in the image that the economists present of them. The “representation” of the economic is thus for Marx essential to the economic itself, to its real functioning and therefore to its conceptual definition.⁵⁹

Marx himself reminds us that the scientificity of critique should never be confused with the pretension to “scientific rationality” but rather indicates an entirely different modality of analysis: “the weak points [die Mängel] of the abstract materialism of natural science, from which the historical process is excluded, are at once evident from the abstract and ideological conceptions [Vorstellungen] of its spokesmen, whenever they venture out beyond their own speciality.”⁶⁰ In other words, the scientificity implied in Uno’s analysis is not something of this type, precisely because, as we have seen, Uno fundamentally argues that the scientificity of capital is in fact *always* traversed or bisected by the historical process, that it is always contaminated with the effects of this traversal. This is why he alerts us to the fact that “the term ‘scientific’ in ‘scientific socialism’ is not something merely impressed on us by Capital: rather we ourselves must seek this ‘scientificity’ that Marx sought.”⁶¹ By drawing our attention to the fact that the scientificity specific to capital always appears in the “de-ranged form” of something that must both exclude the historical process and simultaneously come into existence only as a result of it, Uno in essence not only exposes the absence of reason that characterizes capital’s narrative of itself but also indirectly exposes us to the profound irrationality of the putatively “rational science” of political economy itself:

In fact, the commodity itself, as the point of departure for the theoretical system of political economy—even if only grasped as an abstract concept stemming from the analysis of the actual situation of a society that has not completely transitioned to capitalism—is what establishes

the general basis of the commodification of labor power in tandem with the simplification and genericization of labor through capitalism's development itself; through this process, it accelerates in the direction of the realization of a purely capitalist society, and further, displays itself in a sense as an independent commodity society established through the force of its own development. As a result, political economy can grasp the concrete relations that form a given society through the commodity, because these relations are "presupposed" [voraussetzen] within the interior of the commodity form itself. The theoretical system thus comes to be completed by positing [setzen] within its own development itself the concrete relations that are "preposited" [voraussetzen] as its point of departure.⁶²

Thus, we see precisely how, in Uno's terms, the systematic and demented structure of capital also furnishes the theoretical architecture of the system of political economy. That is, because political economy itself relies on the same "deranged forms" as capital itself but "de-ranges" them into its motion, the same "forgetting" of the "circuitous path by which it was born," the critical restoration of these *péripiétés* that are desperately erased from the inside serves to politically undermine the entire expression of political economy itself. In other words, Uno's forces on the paradox of the absolute nihil of reason that is always passing through the most apparently rational moment, the exchange process, exposes and uncovers political economy's deranged mode of operation, the way the "agents of circulation" actively forget their own "mystery."

This "enveloping" function or *Umschlag* serves as the "maximum" point of the circulation process, in which this systematicity is both disclosed and exposed as demented, and ultimately is folded "inside out" or inverted into another instance. In turn, this *Umschlag*, which furnishes the pivotal point of the theoretical and systematic process of thought-experimentation, also serves in Lenin's strange note as the "maximum" of Marxism itself.⁶³ This must remind us, therefore, of the essential homology between the "maximum of Marxism" and the "maximum of circulation," the fact that the possibility of the transformation of critique into political motion is a process in which the true "principle" of capitalist society, its "de-ranged" and "demented" nature, is politically raised to the level of principle so that its final de-ranging can occur. In this sense, when Uno reminds us that the smooth and elegant logic of capital's interior is only ever set in motion by means of its traversals of the historical outside in the volatile instance of the agrarian question, he also reminds us that what is at stake in the analysis of capital, in its theoretical mod-

eling, is never simply the description or mirroring of this quasi-logic. Political economy often attempts to discover the “rational kernel” in this logic: yet “the critique of political economy is not the mere description of this existing fact, but the analysis of its genesis.”⁶⁴ When we confront the de-ranged origin and reproduction of capital’s logical functioning, we are also confronting the political physics and boundaries of our own theoretical representations of these phenomena, representations that are implicated already in the inner laws of capital’s movement, in its demented forms of presupposition (*Voraussetzung*). In turn, it is precisely through the recurrent and endless analysis of the *genesis* of this dementia that we are constantly reminded of the volatile force, both dangerous and precious, of the historical outside, the space wherein the political capacity to implode capital’s circuit-process remains an ever-present undercurrent of all social existence.

“THE READY-MADE WORLD OF CAPITAL”

It is a double error to think that the development of commodity production is enough to bring about feudalism's collapse—on the contrary, this development reinforces feudalism in many respects, offering the latter new conditions of existence and survival—and that feudalism of itself is in opposition to the State, which on the contrary, as the feudal State, is capable of preventing commodities from introducing the decoding of flows that alone would be ruinous to the system under consideration.—GILLES DELEUZE and FÉLIX GUATTARI, *Anti-Oedipus*

Community and Supplementarity

In a well-known formulation, Max Weber famously distinguished in a specific manner between the function of theory and the function of history, warning us against a clear and easy conflation: “Nothing is more dangerous than the confusion of theory and history stemming from naturalistic prejudices. This confusion expresses itself firstly in the belief that the ‘true’ content and the essence of historical reality is portrayed in such theoretical constructs or secondly, in the use of these constructs as a procrustean bed into which history is to be forced or thirdly, in the hypostatization of such ‘ideas’ as real ‘forces’ and as ‘true’ reality which operates behind the passage of events and which works itself out in history.”¹ Thus, he argues, “the causal relationship between the historically determinable idea which governs the conduct of men and those components of historical reality from which their corresponding ideal-type may be abstracted, can naturally take on a considerable number of different forms.”² As we have seen, however, particularly in Uno's work, the relationship of theory and history is decidedly more complex when its object of anal-

ysis is capitalist society. In this case, the dynamics of the pure logical drive of capital, while tendentially separated as a question from those of historical development, always perversely rely on the realm of historical contingency to furnish the supposedly “pure” forces of the economic process. In turn, the historical realm, in which functions a supposedly “nontheoretical” basic set of social forces, is itself always subject to the “real forces” of ideology and of determinations stemming from thought: concepts of interest, of buyer and seller, of market forces, of free labor, and so forth are not merely empirical givens that can then be theorized. They themselves are determinations only accessible in their own logical development through precisely the pure theory of capital’s drive to encompass its exterior.

As we have seen, throughout the debate on Japanese capitalism and particularly in Uno’s attempt to both critically sublate as well as transcend its limitations, the national question—that is, the question of the function of the nation as a mechanism within the social relation of capital—remained always at the debate’s center. Uno’s position, maintaining a critical distance from both the Kōza-ha overemphasis on the remnants of feudalism and the Rōnō-ha conflation of capital’s generality and local specificity, has continued to exert an important influence on social theory. Among those who trace a certain lineage to Uno’s work is the contemporary critic Kōjin Karatani, whose major recent work *The Structure of World History* provides an insight into the “afterlife” of this debate, particularly around the form of the nation. In thinking this point, I want to particularly focus on the sections in Karatani’s text beginning with his formulations contained under the title “Substitutions for Community.”³ One key element of Karatani’s text, perhaps concealed by the term used here in English, “substitution,” is precisely contained in this heading itself: in Japanese, *Kyōdōtai no daiho*. Let us focus first on the nature of this term *daiho*, the neologism used in Japanese for the translation of the classic Derridean term *supplement*.⁴ As Derrida reminds us, the supplement is not merely an addition, nor is it a substitution of something that would stand in for something else, nor is it something complementary or added, but it is an *exterior addition*, something whose presence is necessary but whose presence must be retroactively erased as having been necessary.

This relationship of supplementarity is expressed in particular around the function of the nation in the triangular structure, or what Karatani calls after Lacan the “Borromean knot,” of capital-nation-state. And in turn this relationship of supplementarity discloses its essence here in the *indirectly* economic operation of “sentiment” or “affect.” As Karatani argues, one can

trace the origin of the nation in terms of any number of determinations, those already existing in a given social formation or those imposed from the exterior, but it is not sufficient to simply conceive the nation in Lenin's terms, for instance, as the political expression of the formation of a labor market: "The nation cannot be fully explained only through the processes of state unification or productive labor power, because it harbors in itself a reaction against these. In that sense, the nation is rooted in the dimension of what we might call sentiment [kanjō]."⁵ In addition to being an influential thinker of the logical drive of capital, as I have discussed in the preceding chapters, Uno Kōzō reserved a crucial but little-known place for the concept of "sentiment" in his theoretical work.

The first instance of this comes in 1935, when Uno wrote a short, experimental, or even parodic text titled "On the Origin and Nature of Economic Policy: With Reference to Spinoza's 'On the Origin and Nature of Sentiment,'" in which he recodes a series of fundamental Spinozian theses, replacing the concept of "sentiment" with the stage-theoretical analysis of economic planning in his own systematic reading of Marx's *Capital*. Why does he do this? Note first of all that 1935 marks, in a sense, the high point of the debate on Japanese capitalism, as we saw earlier. And it is precisely in this text that Uno argues for an implicit understanding of the national question in which the "national" element is comprehended in its *economic* functioning, not as an external "cultural" supplement but as itself directly functioning within the place of sentiment.

I quote the entirety of this long-unpublished text.

On the Origin and Nature of Economic Policy: With Reference to Spinoza's "On the Origin and Nature of Sentiment" (1935)

Preface:

Most writers on economic policy seem to utilize a methodology that treats things exterior to a commodity economy rather than commodity-economic things that follow from the laws of a commodity economy.

[Spinoza] Most writers on the emotions and on human conduct seem to be treating rather of matters outside nature than of natural phenomena following nature's general laws.

Definitions:

1, 2 Excised.

3 By "economic policy" I mean the modifications of a commodity economy, by which the motion of the commodity economy is

increased or diminished, aided or constrained, and also the ideas of such modifications.

N.B. If society can be the adequate cause of any of these modifications, I then call policy an activity, or state in which society is passive.

[Spinoza]: III. By "emotion" I mean the modifications of the body, whereby the active power of the said body is increased or diminished, aided or constrained, and also the ideas of such modifications.

N.B. If we can be the adequate cause of any of these modifications, I then call the emotion an activity, otherwise I call it a passion, or state wherein the mind is passive.

Postulates:

- 1 The society of a commodity economy can be affected in many ways, whereby its activity (*katsudō*) is increased or diminished, and also in other ways that do not render its power of activity either greater or less.

[Spinoza] I. The human body can be affected in many ways, whereby its power of activity is increased or diminished, and also in other ways that do not render its power of activity either greater or less.

- 2 The society of a commodity economy can undergo many changes, and, nevertheless, retain the impression or traces of objects, and consequently the same images of things.

[Spinoza] II. The human body can undergo many changes, and, nevertheless, retain the impressions or traces of objects, and, consequently, the same images of things.

Propositions:

- 1 Politics is in certain cases active, and in certain cases passive. Insofar as politics possesses adequate ideas it is necessarily active, and insofar as it has inadequate ideas, it is necessarily passive.

[Spinoza] I. Our mind is in certain cases active, and in certain cases passive. Insofar as it has adequate ideas it is necessarily active, and insofar as it has inadequate ideas, it is necessarily passive.

Corollary: Hence, it follows that politics is more or less liable to be passive or acted on, in proportion as it possesses inadequate ideas, and

contrariwise, is more or less active or acting in proportion as it possesses adequate ideas.

[Spinoza] Corollary—Hence it follows that the mind is more or less liable to be acted on, in proportion as it possesses inadequate ideas, and, contrariwise, is more or less active in proportion as it possesses adequate ideas.⁶

In principle, Uno's work gave no explanation of this peculiar and enigmatic text until fifteen years later, when he intervened in the immediate postwar rethinking of the transition from feudalism to capitalism, a debate that had dominated Marxist theoretical discussion in the Japanese context for decades. As we saw in the previous chapter, Uno here emphasizes a peculiar link to the question of sentiment: "The feudality of the Japanese village has been maintained not by the large feudal landlord, but by the small and medium sized landlord in direct connection with the tenant farmer. This is not a feudality as a system, but a feudality in thought, sentiment, and custom."⁷ Karatani, in his text, extends this basic analysis by emphasizing here the figure of the nation as the ground of precisely this sort of affective "feudality": "The feeling of obligation that arises from a reciprocal exchange is something that cannot be settled with money; in economic terms, such feeling is utterly foreign to economic rationality. To say that the nation is manifested as sentiment is to say that it is rooted in a mode of exchange different from those that serve as the base for the state or capital."⁸ Capital, in order to undertake its own supposed "rational" and directly economic production cycle, in which commodities are produced by means of commodities, requires something given, a social gift at its core, in which the basic social positions of buyer and seller are already presupposed as if they could be relied on as naturally available elements. But these elements are composed by means of the apparatuses like the nation, not something altogether internal to capital, as Karatani points out, but something that does not restrain capital either. Instead this element, located within the function of sentiment, operates just past the border or edge of the Borromean ring of capital, in the interstitial space where the three rings overlap. He continues: "We cannot understand the nation solely in terms of economic or political interest: it includes a metaphysical dimension. . . . *The nation is the imagined restoration of the community that was undermined by the commodity-exchange economy. The nation instills the sentiment that is lacking in capital-state.*"⁹ Capital-state, the space in which law and capital buttress each other, nevertheless is always subject to a hole or lack in which something must guarantee the availability of labor power through exterior mechanisms—it is precisely here that Karatani identifies something crucial in reminding us that this is not

a merely corollary function but an “imagined restoration.” Precisely because the nation must restore what capital must repress—the radical absence of the social foundations of its own order, in the form of labor power and land—the nation does not fill this lack but supplements it so that it can be ideationally overcome without ever being resolved. This is precisely why, for instance, from a divergent standpoint, Deleuze and Guattari come to the eventual conclusion that “the immense relative deterritorialization of world capitalism needs to be reterritorialized on the modern national State.”¹⁰

But what here is the continuity between the nation and the form of “community,” which must be “restored” in imagination in order to compensate for the exteriority that remains within a commodity-economy? Reflecting indirectly on the terms of the debate on Japanese capitalism, the social historian and theorist Ōtsuka Hisao addressed precisely this point:

Why must we take up the problem of “community” if we want to clarify the process of the transition from feudalism to capitalism? “Community” occupies for feudal society the same position that “commodity circulation” occupies for capitalist society. Thus, the specific class relations referred to as “feudal,” and indeed the totality of the mechanisms or apparatuses of feudal society [*hōken shakai no zenkikō*], can emerge and be maintained only on the general economic basis of “communal” relations that contain specific formal determinations. Therefore, the relations of production (and thus the class relations) of feudal society, along with their stadial development and eventual implosion, must be grasped on the basis of a clarification of this form of “community.”¹¹

On this point we should revisit for a final time the work of Yamada Moritarō (the main theoretical influence on Ōtsuka himself), whose understanding of feudalism was so crucial to the theoretical nature of the debate on Japanese capitalism. It is possible to accuse Yamada of being absolutely uncritical toward nationalism—stemming from his conception of a specifically “Japanese” style (*kata*) of development—but I would suggest rather that we might ourselves utilize his work in a completely different register. By arguing that this “Nihon-gata” or formal constraint of “Japaneseness” for a permanently perverted course of capitalist development was “conclusively fixed and determined” in the 1890s (the mid-Meiji Period), Yamada can be read to be making an argument about the formation of the nation-state as an ideological product of history yet also a real entity in its functioning, a kind of economic “supplement” that would serve to force an “imagined restoration” at the exact point where the limits of a commodity-economy confront themselves. In other words, part

and parcel of this argument is that, prior to the “fixing” of this “Nihon-gata,” “Japan” itself did not exist as a real mechanism of social relations. So what “fixed and determined” Japan itself as a mechanism for the functioning of capital in this particular space with its particular set of forces and relations? In a sense for Yamada and likewise for Uno, “Japan” was required in order to sustain feudalism *inside* capitalist society. For this weird amalgam of factors, some function like the nation must be present to undertake the “imagined restoration” of community disintegrated by the transition to capitalism. When Yamada insists on referring to the “character” of the Japanese situation in terms of his highly formalized equation “semi-feudal property ownership = semi-serf petty subsistence cultivation” (han-hōkenteki tochi shoyū = han-nōdoseiteki reisai nōkō), it is possible to simply insist that this is an excessive and archaic characterization based on an imagined “national specificity” that dominates all else. But why did Yamada insist not on the discourse of the “feudal remnants” (an explicitly culturalist mode of analysis) but on this peculiar vocabulary of “semi-” (han)?

What is this han (半)? It is literally translatable as “half,” “semi,” “quasi,” and by extension something divided, something split. Does Yamada intend by this usage the division between one thing and another? Is it half of one thing? Is it a part of a whole? Is it something semi- or partially formed? Does it mean that it has partly decayed or partly emerged? All of these questions can be rephrased: does “semi-feudal” mean that feudalism is only partially overcome? Does it mean that the economic basis is “half feudal”? Does it indicate that feudalism is only partially decayed and still the dominant side of the equation?

It could be argued that, in contrast to many of the other Kōza-ha figures, who took the substantiality of the nation for granted, Yamada’s hyperformalism led him to utilize this expression “semi-feudal” or “quasi-feudal” much in the way Deleuze and Guattari utilize their concept of a “quasi-cause”:¹² “an effect of particular social and political conditions that in turn acts on those conditions as cause—appearing to preexist its conditions.”¹³ It precisely parallels, in an important sense, the formulation Uno gave to the concept *muri*, something that should not cohere but that in fact does cohere as if it were not subject to a primordial slippage. Ōtsuka Hisao later evaluated Yamada’s *han* as “something suspended between existing and nonexisting,”¹⁴ something not substantial but rather *suspended* (and in always applying this “semi” Yamada avoids precisely the positivist substantialization of the “premodern” or “precapitalism” that tended to emerge from the Kōza-ha). By emphasizing this “semi” or “quasi” feudalism, Yamada points out the paradoxical reliance on the supposedly archaic social forms that capitalism necessarily produces:

from the so-called primitive accumulation to the repeated and cyclical “quasi-commodification” of labor power, capital is always-already relying on an excessive violence—suspended between its need to commodify labor power and its inability to do so *economically* or from within capital’s interior—to accomplish its own tasks.

Futures of Uneven Development

This returns us once again to the evaluation of the debate on Japanese capitalism, and Uno’s critique of the founding principles of the debate: it often presumed that a preexisting *substance* was the concrete and eternal ground that would “explain” or “demonstrate” why Japanese capitalism had to be, in effect, “stillborn,” why Japanese capitalism could never experience the transition in the style of the English enclosures. But this very argument, which remained the basic presupposition of postwar social thought, was based above all on a certain naïve humanism. Here the inner/outer split of social relations, in which the exchange process is doubly represented as the origin of both nation and state, must be transferred *from* the logical topology to the historical cartography, as if the cartography testified to an already-existing arrangement that would simply “prove” itself. Thus a split that characterizes the micro-physics of the form of identification itself comes to characterize the gap or breach between “areas.” This view, of course, consistently replaces Marx’s emphasis on the constitution of real social relations through the objectification of labor with an empiricism and positivism that consistently misunderstands the abstraction of *articulation* between the empirical entities observed. Because all three terms “capital,” “feudalism,” and “democracy” (perhaps “modernity” also) are consistently understood as “patterns,” “models,” “shapes,” or “contours” of thought, the volatility expressed between them is treated as a kind of gap or leap between two unitary entities. Therefore, “feudalism” is positioned as the inverse of “capital,” “capital” divested of “feudalism” is the “necessary” bridge or apparatus that would lead to “democracy,” “democracy” is the necessary link to “normal” modernity, and so forth.

As Uno argued, the essential gap of theory and history—and yet their primordial contamination—opens up exactly on the point of the reproduction of labor power. Because labor power cannot be produced as a commodity by capital, capital must somehow bridge this gap in order to expand. Therefore, capital relies on a corollary function, called the “law of population.” As soon as the role of the “relative surplus population” enters into capital’s own composition, however, we are immediately thrown back into history. The “relative

surplus population” serves primarily to “regulate” or “govern” the body of the worker, the “factory” wherein the labor-power commodity is produced. But the ways and means of governing the worker’s body therefore refer to an entire history of social contingencies: the ways words, languages, bodies, senses, emotions, biological functions, and so forth have been historically coded becomes the “substance” or material basis for this governing. Therefore, the logical circuit of capital itself is always dipping down into history in order to scoop up this “proletarian substance” called “labor power.” In this sense, however, we see paradoxically exactly why, on an analytical level, theory and history cannot be completely conflated, despite their mutual contamination. If we conflate these two things, we will not understand the “suicidal” drive of capital—it will just appear as an amalgamation of people making decisions. But as we know today, the distinguishing characteristic of capital, and in particular its final phase of its own deterritorialization (or the capitalization of capital itself), is precisely that it functions in such a way that its totality or spectral body is always in excess of the parts that compose it.

The immediate conjunctural situation is the point at which inner surface and outer surface meet, where labor power folds into itself, from the historical surface of violence into the logical surface of circulation (where, in Hegel’s terms, Being and Essence experience this torsion). The fact that labor power cannot be commodified within the sphere of circulation or Being means that labor power itself must split or be scissored between its site of “placement” and itself. It is placed firmly in the sphere of circulation insofar as it is “called into life” only by the process of exchange, that is, it is “born” into its commodity-body only in circulation, but it cannot be what it is—the capacity to labor for a determinate time frame—without being violently/accidentally/volatily produced on the outside of the sphere of Being, in the realm of Essence. Thus labor power experiences a primordial scission from its peculiar form of *commencement*, and this we see in its originary connection to the national question. Iwata Hiroshi, one of the most influential and important of Uno’s students, writes as follows:

What characterizes modern history from the outset, in contrast to ancient or medieval history, is on the one hand its globality [*sekaisei*] expressed as the globalization of Europe, and on the other its nationality [*kokuminsei*], which only ever appears as an internal constitutive part of the aforementioned globality. What grounds this duality is the globality of the capitalist economic process. The capitalist economic process exists solely by rendering the various productions of nations and peoples that

emerge in the world market into an organic part of the unified process of this world market, and precisely in this way constitutes itself as world capitalism.¹⁵

Iwata, in other words, argues that the form of *nationality* is derived from the form of *globality*, and not the other way around. Typically, the form of the nation is assumed to be the organic substance from which the globality of the world as a specifically *inter-national* world is formed. But this logic is unsustainable in a rigorous thinking of the concept *world*.

Marx reminds us that the historical formation of the social relation called “capital,” what Iwata here refers to as “modern history,” is not merely an object of analysis. That is, it is not something that can be strictly speaking isolated in the style of a chemical experiment. Rather, this bizarre and perverse “thing” called capital itself “comprises a world’s history.”¹⁶ Here we are exposed to something both absolutely essential in Marx and, simultaneously, something that is typically erased or covered over. That is, capital does not enter into a world that is already formed out of a system of building blocks, such as the form of the nation. It is rather precisely the opposite. When the social relation called capital emerges, it emerges in its own “world.” Already, capital encounters the world, but encounters it as its *world*. The history of this world, which can only emerge with the emergence of the capital-relation, is already implied in the microscopic dimensions or relations of power that characterize the relationality of capital itself, the self-expansion of value. It is no accident that Marx refers to this “world” as the “ready-made world of capital” (*diese fertige Welt des Kapitals*),¹⁷ a world that is “ready” but also “already” for capital. In other words, this initial moment of capital’s globality, *al-ready* contained in the dense concentration of relations that surge forth in its commencement, shows us the perverse temporality characterizing the world of capital. Capital emerges already formed, and its world too therefore emerges “ready for business.” But what does it mean that “the world” emerges? How could this be the case, when we know that of course there was a planet that preexisted capital, an entire natural historical process that developed over millennia, and so forth? This question or complication can only be understood by distinguishing here between *planet* or *earth* and *world*. World indicates not some substance or given natural-historical substratum but a *schema*.

Iwata specifies that “the capitalist economic process exists solely by rendering the various productions of nations and peoples that *emerge in the world market*.” I want to return to this last phrase—the “nations and peoples that emerge in the world market” (*sekai shijō ni tōjō suru sho-kokumin ya sho-minzoku*):

this is precisely how we can link the national question, the production and reproduction of the nation-form, to the sphere of circulation, which in turn occupies, as we have seen, precisely the impossible position that capitalism cannot avoid. What capital describes is the overcoding of the surface of the earth in accordance with a schema, or what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as an “axiomatics.” The components that emerge within the world of world capitalism may not themselves be products of this schema; they may well be “ancient” or primeval cultural, linguistic, territorial, or habitual structures. But world capitalism indicates that these features remain nevertheless *within* the schema of the capital-relation, which has rewritten or recoded the entire earth as an arrangement. What matters above all in the historical and theoretical analysis of capital is that it is not, and can never be, a “thing” that would be placed alongside other “things” produced by modernity. It is always-already a relation and, in turn, a relation that reproduces relations themselves. This paradox also reminds us that while capital is a schema, it is not *one* schema: it is a schema that reproduces itself *schematically*, a schema of schemas, by which relations can unfold. Unlike the idealism and mechanical thinking that dominates the last vestiges of the Eurocentric Marxism(s), capital does not exist in some hierarchy of systems of domination, such that we can place various technologies of subjectivation—race, gender, class, sexuality, religion, and so forth—into a simple equation as “beneath” or “below” the overall generality of capital. Capital is a relation that is organized from the outset to function as a modality of differentiation subjected to a schema of *specific* difference, but it is also a relation devoted to the reproduction of the possibility of differentiation itself. Nor is capital the general name under which “discrimination” operates. Capital instead is a name for ourselves, the most perfectly perverse structure in which we ourselves compose the cogwheels of the machinery to which we are in turn subjected.

Here, the way capital’s globality necessitates, creates, and maintains capital’s nationality is linked above all else to the commodification of labor power. But, more specifically, it is linked to this perverse structure of the *muri*, the (im)possibility, the “*nihil of reason*,” of this commodification. The figure of the national subject is conflated with the historical individual in order to “image” the “forced coherence” that cannot be but must. It cannot be whole or without a slippage, but it must act as if it is. In the end, what we see in the analysis of Japanese capitalism has nothing whatsoever to do with the “exceptional” Japanese path to “development,” or with the supposed “fact” of unevenness, or with supposedly decisive “cultural” attributes of this process. What we see instead is our history—the history of capital.

Just as we are a fragment of the total natural historical content of the universe's self-expression, and we ourselves are therefore the universe's attempt to understand itself, so the worker's body, which is in essence the compositional material element from which capital (as its alpha and omega, labor power) composes its physical torus, is the self-abolition of capital as a process, frozen and solidified in phenomenal form. What is accomplished in capital's territorialization of the space retroactively imagined as the nation-state "Japan" is a cross-section of the density and concentration of the world-historical process. It is not that capital has been changed, transformed, or "perverted" from its "normal" course through the intervening force of the supposedly stable nation.

The wager that Uno makes on the national question is exactly to insist that the nation is not the obvious and immediately available "concrete" while the logic of capital is the distant and abstract. Rather, he emphasizes that our paradox is exactly the opposite. What is most concrete and accessible to thought is the pure abstraction that lurks at the heart of capital, linked to the distant possibility of the national question by means of the (im)possibility of the commodification of labor power, which is "passing through" and in turn through which the entire historical process "passes." If Uno shows us the *muri* of labor power, Yamada shows us the *muri* of the nation. In other words, it is a coherence where there should not be one. Even though it is impossible, it is passing through. What we universally experience, then, is not in any way the logic of capital as such but always the logic of capital as it is sublimely perverted by its need to justify and proclaim itself from the standpoint of our actually existing earth. What is truly universal, then, is precisely a certain experience of universal particularity, a sort of universal falling-short of universality as such. The impossibilities or *muri* of labor power and the social relation of national belonging exist in a pairing of mutual support, buttressing each other with new "imagined restorations" to supplement the holes produced by the absence of social foundations that are continually undermined by capital. What the debate on Japanese capitalism and the theoretical work of Uno, which emerged from it, teach us is that we have only barely begun to think through the implications of this sublimely perverse abstraction called capital, which attempts to anticipate our visions and defeat our endeavors precisely because capital itself is already the point of departure for our cognitive architecture. As Uno argued, the eventual goal of the critique of political economy and the critical analysis of capitalist production is a truly scientific and conjunctural analysis of the immediate situation. But it is Uno's basic insight that in fact, paradoxical as it may at first seem, it is conceptually impossible to know what is going on in

Japan on the basis of “Japan” as a given entity. If we posit “Japan,” we posit already the full explanatory plenitude of the national formation, by making it perfectly circular: “Japan” can always be mobilized to “explain” itself, to testify to its own given nature. That is, the insight is precisely that the logic of capital (what Uno called “the world of principle”; *genriteki sekai*), which is always-already in a hybrid/void space of partial territorialization, can never be investigated in terms of the national border, which is a purely conjunctural/contingent moment that is never subject to necessity. The logic of capital, which in commonsensical terms is the most distant or inaccessible formal paradigm, is paradoxically in fact the most immediate, much more immediate in a sense than the analysis of the conjuncture, which is the most difficult to grasp, despite its immediate “presence.”

The analysis of Japanese capitalism can never be done “as” itself, but only insofar as we ourselves are able to investigate the means through which the production of “Japan” (the nation in general as a mechanism of “imagined restorations” of community) is organized in tandem with the logic of capital. But because the sublime perversion of the world of capital is compelled to repeat at a microlevel every time labor power is commodified, it is also compelled to constantly re-remember its incompleteness, contingency, and relativity. Every repetition of *transition and translation* contains the potential for a new arrangement of politics. This means to work on two directions at once: to resist the theoretical move that reduces the critical analysis of capitalist society to a purely logical dynamics or to an economistic universalism, while simultaneously refusing the positivist tendency to reduce the character of “proof” to a delimited subset of empirical circumstances or predetermined identitary categories, isolated from their world-historical determinations. It is only in working on both directions—the essence of the task of developing a truly *dialectical historiography*—that we can continue to expand our knowledge of capital’s enclosure of our world and, most important, become ever more capable of utilizing this knowledge in the development of a politics capable of moving beyond both capitalist society and the form of the nation.

Chapter One: The Sublime Perversion of Capital

1. V. I. Lenin, “The Three Sources and Three Component Parts of Marxism,” in *Collected Works*, vol. 19 (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1962), 23–24. The epigraph to this chapter is from Jameson, *The Ideologies of Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 5.

2. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 in Karl Marx, Frederick Engels: *Collected Works*, 50 vols. (MECW), vol. 35 (New York: International Publishers, 1996), 9.

3. Marx, “Letter to Otechestvenniye zapiski,” in vol. 24 of MECW (Moscow: Progress, 1989), 200–201.

4. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 in MECW, vol. 35 (New York: International Publishers, 1996), 8.

5. In this sense, the debates occasioned by the publication of Vivek Chibber’s *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital* (London: Verso, 2013) are the latest expression of this phenomenon. My intention in this book, by taking up the debate on Japanese capitalism and the work of Uno Kōzō, is precisely to give a broader global background to these contemporary debates, to furnish for them an expanded “prehistory.” For reasons of topicality, I cannot enter deeply into the evaluation of this debate around Chibber’s book in this book, but I would point to two particularly important evaluations: Sandro Mezzadra, “Review Essay on Vivek Chibber, *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital*,” *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 16:6 (2014), 916–925; Timothy Brennan, “Subaltern Stakes,” *New Left Review* 89 (September–October 2014), 67–87.

6. See Hilton et al., eds., *The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1979).

7. See Aston and Philpin, eds., *The Brenner Debate: Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-industrial Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

8. Uno Kōzō, *Shihonron to shakaishugi* [Capital and socialism], vol. 10 of Uno Kōzō *chōsakushū* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1973), 11.

9. Foucault, “Structuralisme et poststructuralisme,” in *Dits et écrits II*, 1976–1988 (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), 1276; “Structuralism and Poststructuralism,” vol. 2 of *Essential Works of Foucault* (New York: New Press, 1998), 458.

10. J.-L. Nancy, *La création du monde, ou mondialisation* (Paris: Galilée, 2002).

11. Karatani Kōjin, “Chikuseki to shin’yō: Tasha kara no tōsō” [Accumulation and credit: Escape from the Other], originally published in *Gunzō* (1985), reprinted in *Tankyū I* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1992), excerpts from 127, 134–135, 137–140. This set of remarks is partly translated into English in *Kōjin, Architecture as Metaphor: Language, Number, Money*, trans. Sabu Kohso (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), 173, and later rewritten in a slightly different and condensed form in *Toransukuritiiku: Kanto to Marukusu* (Tokyo: Hihyō Kūkan, 2001), 310–311; *Transcritique: On Kant and Marx*, trans. Sabu Kohso (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 209. Translations modified and edited.

12. On this point see Uno Kōzō, *Keizai genron* [Principles of political economy] (first version), in vol. 1 of *Uno Kōzō chosakushū* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1974). Uno’s argument here, based on Marx’s incomplete analysis in volume 3 of *Capital* around the crucial concept of “automatically interest-bearing capital” (*sore jishin rishi o umu mono toshite no shihon*), was deeply influential in Marxist theory in Japan in the 1960s and 1970s. Uno’s discussion remains an underdeveloped field of questions, particularly because it provided a certain formal intervention into the distinction between commodification, reification, and alienation, three quite distinct concepts that are often erroneously conflated in Marxist theoretical work.

13. On this analysis of this term, see the important analysis of Yutaka Nagahara in his *Warera kashi aru mono tachi: Han-shihonron no tame ni* [We, the defective commodities: For an analytics of anti-capital/ism] (Tokyo: Seidosha, 2008).

14. Nagasaki Hiroshi, “Hanranron” [On revolt], *Jōkyō* (November 1968); reprinted in *Hanranron* (Tokyo: Sairyūsha, 1991), 29–30. It is important to point out that this text of Nagasaki, which is one of the most influential texts, if not the most influential text, of the Japanese ’68, explicitly and regularly utilizes one of Uno Kōzō’s important conceptual innovations, the term *muri* (“im/possibility,” or what I will later call the “nihil of reason”) but does not cite Uno directly. See chapter 4 for a long development of this concept.

15. On this point, there would be a possibility of dialogue between Nagasaki’s work and the tendencies around Negri. Negri and his particular strain of *operaismo* have always emphasized the subjective dimension of technical innovation, to the extent of developing the theory of “exodus” (this term is most specifically associated with Paolo Virno) from the base of capital’s developmental curve, leaving it to collapse under the withdrawal of labor. Needless to say, behind this possible dialogue would be a larger reexamination of Lukács as a “secret” voice or silent presence behind Negri’s work, and in general behind the global ’68.

16. Here, this “swerve” of course refers to the work of the later Althusser on the concept of “aleatory materialism.” This term serves in Althusser’s late work as a formalization of the theory of the *clinamen* in Epicurus, a concept that then appears in varying forms: the question of contingency, the primacy of relations over the terms of the relation, the analysis of *virtù* and *fortuna* in Machiavelli, and so forth. Recently, however, it has been argued that this “aleatory materialism” in Althusser should not simply be conceived as finding in “contingency” a new telos, as if things could be easily settled by simply replacing the older Hegelian necessity with a newer “alea-

tory” orientation. See here a number of the essays in Katja Diefenbach et al., eds., *Encountering Althusser: Politics and Materialism in Contemporary Radical Thought* (London: Continuum, 2012). I fully share this view. What I hope to develop in this book concerns contingency, of course. In fact, it is a central concern. But if we want to provide a theoretical development of Althusser’s late work, particularly in relation to Marxist historical analysis, I believe it is necessary to rethink this discussion of contingency and necessity in terms of the *torsion* between them, between history and logic, the most fundamental and difficult problem in the analysis of Marx’s work. What I refer to here as the “sublime perversion” of capital is precisely the work of the torsion of this doublet. We will see in the next chapter how this “double” structure operates concretely.

17. Marx, preface to the first German edition in *Capital*, vol. 1, vol. 35 of MECW, 10.

18. This point is made in an important essay by Nagahara Yutaka, “A Sketch on the Hauntology of Capital,” in *Keizai shirin* (Tokyo: Hōsei University) 66, no. 2 (October 1998), 143–162.

19. See here Jacques Derrida, “Signature Event Context,” in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 320.

20. Naoki Sakai, *Nihon/eizō/Beikoku: Kyōkan no kyōdōtai to teikokuteki kokuminshugi* [Japan/image/America: The community of sympathy and imperial nationalism] (Tokyo: Seidosha, 2007), 306.

21. Etienne Balibar, *The Infinite Contradiction*, Yale French Studies no. 88 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 146.

22. The debate on the “articulation of modes of production” should be understood as another recasting of the basic questions of the debate on Japanese capitalism. See for an overview, Aiden Foster-Carter, “The Modes of Production Controversy,” *New Left Review* 1, no. 107 (1978), 47–77, and Joel S. Kahn and Josep R. Llobera, “French Marxist Anthropology: Twenty Years After,” *Journal of Peasant Studies* 8, no. 1 (1980), 81–100. For the basic theoretical problem behind the articulation debate see for example three representative studies: Claude Meillassoux, “From Reproduction to Production: A Marxist Approach to Economic Anthropology,” *Economy and Society* 1, no. 1 (1974), 93–105; Emmanuel Terray, *Le Marxisme devant les sociétés primitives: Deux études* (Paris: Maspero, 1969); Pierre-Philippe Rey, “Class Alliances,” *International Journal of Sociology* 12, no. 2 (summer 1982), 1–120.

23. Sandro Mezzadra, *La condizione postcoloniale: Storia e politica nel presente globale* (Verona: Ombre Corte, 2008), 43.

24. Marx, *Das Kapital*, vol. 1 in *Marx-Engels Werke*, 40 vols., vol. 23 (Berlin: Dietz, 1962), 184; *Capital*, vol. 1 in MECW, 180. Translation modified. The term “comprises” in the second-to-last sentence (“umschließt eine Weltgeschichte,” my emphasis) also indicates an “enveloping,” “en-closing,” or “en-compassing.” This “topological” sense should be kept in mind.

25. Mezzadra, *La condizione postcoloniale*, 52–55.

26. Mezzadra, *La condizione postcoloniale*, 65.

27. On this crucial concept of the “regime of translation,” see the many works of Naoki Sakai.

28. Étienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, trans. Chris Turner (London: Verso, 1991), 88.
29. Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, trans. R. Hurley (London: Allen Lane, 1979), 143.
30. Balibar and Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class*, 90.
31. See Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (London: Routledge, 1991).
32. Balibar, “Citizen Subject,” in *Who Comes after the Subject?*, ed. E. Cadava, P. Connor, and J-L. Nancy (New York: Routledge, 1991), 53.

Chapter Two: The Feudal Remnant

1. The first version in the world of Marx and Engels’s collected works was produced by the publishing house Kaizōsha (Tokyo) between 1928 and 1935 in thirty-two volumes, edited by Sakisaka Itsurō and others. On the history of this first edition, see Murata Yōichi, “Hōyaku ME zenshū, senshū to MEGA” [The Japanese translation of the Marx-Engels Collected Works and selected works in relation to the new Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe], in *Atarashii MEGA: Shin Marukusu-Engerusu zenshū, Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe 1974*, Kyokutō Shoten News Bulletin (Tokyo: Kyokutō Shoten, 1973), 24–28. On the beginnings of Marxist theoretical work in Japan, see Suzuki Kōichirō, *Shihonron to Nihon [Capital and Japan]* (Tokyo: Kobundō, 1950). On the history of the exchanges in the Comintern and the Moscow-based Instituta K. Marksa F. Engel’s (later the Institut Marksizma-Leninizma, and now the Institut teorii i istorii sotsializma) on the compilation of the first Japanese-language collected works of Marx and Engels, see Ōmura Izumi’s recent “Futatsu no Nihongo-ban ‘Marukusu-Engerusu zenshū’ no kikaku: Takano Iwasaburō to D. Ryazanofu no kutō—Kominterun to shōgyōshugi shuppan no hazama de” [Two plans for the Japanese version of “Marx-Engels Collected Works”: The struggle of Takano Iwasaburō and David Ryazanov—Between the Comintern and commercial publishing], *Ōhara shakai mondai kenkyūjō zasshi* [Bulletin of the Ōhara Institute for Social Research] (Hōsei Daigaku Ōhara shakai mondai kenkyūjō) 617, nos. 1–24 (March 2010). The existence of these early editions of the *Collected Works* shows that in the 1920s in Japan a massive intellectual and political community was already in place that undertook this labor of translation, editing, collection, printing, and so forth, a labor that in Germany, Russia, France, England, the US, and elsewhere took many further decades to accomplish, despite the relative proximity of materials and capable collaborators. Today there exist numerous independent Japanese translations of all three volumes of *Capital* (including the various drafts, the so-called Lachatre version of vol. 1 in French, etc.), and multiple different edited translations of the entire *Marx-Engels Werke* in Japanese, encompassing translations of numerous archival texts still unavailable in published form in any other language—a process that continues in the extensive Japanese collaboration on the ongoing *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe* project, based at the Institute for Social History in Amsterdam. The epigraph to this chapter is from N. I. Bukharin, *Filosofskie arabeski (Dialekticheski ocherki)*, in vol. 2 of *Tyuremnye rukopisi* (Moscow: Airo-KhKh, 1996), 31, *Philosophical Arabesques*, trans. Renfrey Clarke (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2005), 35–36.

2. See Fukumoto Kazuo, “Hōkō tenkan wa ikanaru sho-katei o toru ka, wareware wa ima sono ikanaru katei o katei shitsutsu aru ka: Musansha ketsugō ni kan suru Marukusuteki genri” [What processes constitute the “turning point” and which of these processes are we currently experiencing? On the Marxian principles of proletarian unity], in vol. 21 of *Gendai Nihon shisō taikai* [Collection of contemporary Japanese thought], ed. Takeuchi Yoshitomo (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1965), 74–75.

3. For the Theses, see Gary Beckmann and Okubo Genji, *The Japanese Communist Party, 1922–1945* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969), and their original versions in “Thesen über Japan: Angenommen in der Sitzung des Präsidiums des EKKI vom 15. Juli 1927,” in *Internationale Press-Korrespondenz*, 8. Jg. Nr. 1 (3 Januar 1928) do., Nr. 2 (6 Januar 1928); and “Thesen über die Lage in Japan und über die Aufgaben der Kommunistischen Partei Japans,” in *Internationale Press-Korrespondenz*, 12 Jg. Nr. 42 (20 Mai 1932).

4. For a general historical overview of the debate in European languages, see Germaine A. Houston, *Marxism and the Crisis of Development in Prewar Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), and Hiroomi Fukuzawa, *Aspekte der Marx-Rezeption in Japan: Spätkapitalisierung und ihre sozioökonomischen Folgen, dargestellt am Beispiel der japanischen Gesellschaft* (Bochum: Studienverlag Dr. N. Brockmeyer, 1981). Andrew E. Barshay, *The Social Sciences in Modern Japan: The Marxian and Modernist Traditions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), addresses certain aspects of this debate, and Uno’s work, from a perspective clearly inspired and influenced by Maruyama Masao’s thought. See E. H. Norman, “The Feudal Background of Japanese Politics,” Secretariat Paper No. 9 for the Ninth Conference of the Institute of Pacific Relations. New York, 1945. On Norman’s contributions, and particularly on his relation to the debate on Japanese capitalism, see Harry D. Harootunian, “E. H. Norman and the Task for Japanese History,” *Pacific Affairs* 41, no. 4 (winter 1968–69), 545–552. For a theoretical attempt to read this moment in tandem with certain concerns of postcolonial studies, see Gavin Walker, “Postcoloniality and the National Question in Marxist Historiography: Elements of the Debate on Japanese Capitalism,” *Interventions* 13, no. 1 (2011), 120–137. Curtis Anderson Gayle, *Marxist History and Postwar Japanese Nationalism* (London: Routledge, 2003), analyzes the turn toward the “ethnic nation” in the postwar JCP orbit, touching on its relation to the debate in the 1930s. See also René Zapata, “Le marxisme au Japon: 1898–1937,” and Kaoru Sugihara, “Le débat sur le capitalisme japonais (1927–1937),” in *Actuel Marx*, no. 2, *Le marxisme au Japon* (Paris: PUF, 1985), as well as Nagahara Yutaka, “A Sketch on the Hauntology of Capital,” *Keizai shirin* (Tokyo: Hōsei University) 66, no. 2 (October 1998), 143–162. N. F. Leshchenko, “Revoliutsiia Meidzi” v rabotakh Iaponskikh istorikov-marksistov (Moscow: Nauka, 1984), analyzes numerous aspects of the debate’s main theorists (focusing on the Kōza faction figures, such as Noro Eitarō, Hani Gorō, Hattori Shisō, etc.) in terms of their understanding of the 1868 Meiji Restoration, variously characterized as a bourgeois-democratic revolution or not. See also Leshchenko, “Sovetskaia istoriografiia Meidzi Isin i genezisa kapitalizma v Iaponii,” in *Rossiia i Iaponiia v issledovaniakh Sovetskikh i Iaponskikh uchenykh*, ed. I. A. Latyshev (Moscow: Nauka, 1986), 36–49, for a discussion of Soviet theoretical relations to the debate. In Japa-

nese, the literature on the debate is obviously immense. The best general overview is Nagaoka Shinkichi, *Nihon shihonshugi ronso no gunzō* [A portrait of the debate on Japanese capitalism] (Tokyo: Aoki Shoten, 1985), and the selections of primary texts collected and presented in Aoki Kōhei, ed., *Tennōsei kokka no tōshi: Nihon shihonshugi ronsō I* [Investigations of the emperor-system state: The debate on Japanese capitalism I] (Tokyo: Shakai Hyōronsha, 1990), and Kasai Masaru, ed., *Sekai nōgyō mondai no kōzōka: Nihon shihonshugi ronsō II* [Structure of the world agrarian question: The debate on Japanese Capitalism II] (Tokyo: Shakai Hyōronsha, 1990). The work of the theorist Ōuchi Tsutomu represents one of the best analyses of the history of the debate on Japanese capitalism, and its position within history of Marxist theoretical inquiry as a whole. See in particular Ōuchi Tsutomu, *Nihon shihonshugi no nōgyō mondai*, rev. ed. (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1952), reprinted in vol. 7 of Ōuchi Tsutomu *keizaigaku taikai* (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 2000); Ōuchi, *Nihon keizairon*, 2 vols. (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1963), reprinted in vol. 8 of Ōuchi Tsutomu *keizaigaku taikai* (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 2009). From a historical standpoint, the publication of the extensive declassified Comintern documents now contained in G. Adibekov et al., eds., *ВКР(б), Коминтерн в Японии, 1917–1941* (Moscow: Rossiiskaia politicheskaiia entsiklopediia [Rosspen], 2001), should be extremely significant as a resource for reexamining the position of Marxist theory in Japan in relation to the world communist movement of the prewar period.

5. See here Nagai Michio and Miguel Urrutia, eds., *Meiji Ishin: Restoration and Revolution* (Tokyo: United Nations University, 1985), for an overview of this and other perspectives on the social basis of the Restoration, in particular those of Tōyama Shigeki and I. A. Latyshev.

6. Mikiso Hane, *Peasants, Rebels, and Outcasts: The Underside of Modern Japan* (New York: Pantheon, 1982), 17.

7. John Halliday, *A Political History of Japanese Capitalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1975), 42.

8. Takahashi, “La place de la révolution de Meiji dans l’histoire agraire du Japon,” *Revue historique* 210, no. 2 (1953), 248. See discussion in Halliday, *Political History of Japanese Capitalism*, 43.

9. Michael Löwy, *The Politics of Combined and Uneven Development: The Theory of Permanent Revolution* (London: Verso, 1981), 28.

10. Löwy, *Politics of Combined and Uneven Development*, 161–162.

11. Löwy, *Politics of Combined and Uneven Development*, 162.

12. See *Komintern: Nihon ni kan suru teze-shū* [The Comintern: Collected theses on Japan] (Tokyo: Aoki Shoten, 1961).

13. Noro Eitarō, ed., *Nihon shihonshugi hattatsu-shi kōza* [Lectures on the history of the development of Japanese capitalism], 8 vols. (Iwanami Shoten, 1932–33).

14. On this point, see Noro Eitarō’s earlier *Nihon shihonshugi hattatsu-shi* [History of the development of Japanese capitalism], 2 vols. (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1930).

15. Otto Kuusinen, “Nihon teikokushugi to Nihon kakumei no seishitsu: 1932 nen sangatsu futsuka no Komintern shikkō i’inkai, jōnin i’inkai kaigi ni okeru dōshi Kūshinen no hōkoku” [Japanese imperialism and the characteristics of the Japanese

revolution: Comrade Kuusinen's presentation to the Executive Committee of the Comintern, Meeting of the Standing Committee on March 2, 1932], in *Kominternun: Nihon ni kan suru teze-shū* (Tokyo: Aoki Shoten, 1962), 102–119. For a general overview of this period of the Comintern's international policy, see *The Communist International, 1919–1943: Documents*, vol. 3, 1929–1943, ed. Jane Degras (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960).

16. Kuusinen, “Nihon teikokushugi to Nihon kakumei no seishitsu,” 104.

17. Kuusinen, “Nihon teikokushugi to Nihon kakumei no seishitsu,” 107.

18. Kuusinen, “Nihon teikokushugi to Nihon kakumei no seishitsu,” 114.

19. Otto Kuusinen, “Nihon ni okeru jōsei to Nihon kyōsantō no ninmu ni kan suru teze,” in *Kominternun*, 76–101.

20. Hani Gorō, “Tōyō ni okeru shihonshugi no keisei” [The development of capitalism in East Asia] (1932), in *Meiji ishinshi kenkyū* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1956), 1–114.

21. Hani, “Tōyō ni okeru shihonshugi no keisei,” 43–44.

22. On the ethnological notebooks, see Kevin B. Anderson, *Marx at the Margins: On Nationalism, Ethnicity, and Non-Western Societies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010). I have commented elsewhere on this work of Anderson, which is, particularly in its archival research, an important and original contribution. See Gavin Walker, “Gendai shihonshugi ni okeru ‘minzoku mondai’ no kaiki: Posutokoroniari kenkyū no aratana seijiteki dōkō,” *Shisō* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten) 1059 (July 2012), 122–147. On the “Asiatic mode of production,” see in particular *Akademiia nauk SSSR, Institut vostokovedeniia, Ajiateki seisan yoshiki ni tsuite*, trans. Hayakawa Jirō (Tokyo: Hakuyōsha, 1933), and Anne M. Bailey and Josep R. Llobera, *The Asiatic Mode of Production: Science and Politics* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981).

23. Hani, “Tōyō ni okeru shihonshugi no keisei,” 128.

24. Hani, “Tōyō ni okeru shihonshugi no keisei,” 114. This point will later deeply influence the perspectives of the practitioners of what has been called *minshūshi* from the 1960s onward: “history from below” or “people’s history.” In particular on this point I can mention the work of Yasumaru Yoshio. See for example, his *Nihon no kindaiika to minshū ishiki* (Tokyo: Heibonsha).

25. Hattori Shisō, “Meiji ishin no kakumei oyobi han-kakumei,” in vol. 3 of *Hattori Shisō zenshū* (Tokyo: Fukumura Shuppan, 1973), 179–256; Hattori, “Ishinshi hōhōjō no shomondai,” in vol. 4 of *Hattori Shisō zenshū* (Tokyo: Fukumura Shuppan, 1973), 13–116.

26. On this episode and on his time in Berlin, see Uno Kōzō, *Shihonron gojūnen* [Fifty years with Capital], vol. 1 (Tokyo: Hosei University Press, 1970), 184–252.

27. Here the decisive reference must be to the five-volume *Shihonron kenkyū* [Research on Capital], ed. Uno Kōzō (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1967). These volumes record a collective task, a massive intellectual endeavor of the complete schematization of all three volumes of *Capital*, recomposed and rearranged in a more coherent ordering. They are also living documents of the astonishing theoretical level of Uno’s doctoral seminar, at this time attended by Ōuchi Hideaki, Kamakura Takao, Sakurai Tsuyoshi, Furihata Setsuo, and Yamaguchi Shigekatsu, all of whom became leading

Marxist theoreticians in their own right. When this work was originally published in 1967, the centennial of the publication of the first volume of *Capital*, this moment was marked by a massive surge of publications on Marx. See on this point Ōuchi Hideaki, “Nihon ni okeru ‘Shihonron’ hyakunen kinen” [The centennial of Marx’s *Capital* in Japan], in the monthly supplement (*geppō*) to *Uno, Shihonron kenkyū*, vol. 3 (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1967).

28. V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, 4th ed., vol. 38 (Moscow: Progress, 1976), 317.

29. For a relatively recent reading, which although affirmative, tends to reproduce this image, see Jacques Bidet, “Kōzō Uno and His School: A Pure Theory of Capitalism,” in *Critical Companion to Contemporary Marxism*, ed. Jacques Bidet and Stathis Kouvelakis (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 729–740. Ōta Kazuhiro’s recent chapter “Uno Kōzō: Rōdōryoku shōhinka to sandankairon” [Uno Kōzō: The commodification of labor power and theory of three levels of analysis], in vol. 2 of *Nihon no keizai shisō*, ed. Suzuki Nobuo [*Keizai shisō*, vol. 10] (Tokyo: Nihon keizai hyōronsha, 2009), unfortunately reproduces this point as well.

30. Marx 1962b, 839; Marx 1998, 818. Translation modified.

31. This term, *muri* (無理), is in no way a technical term but a commonplace and everyday expression in conversational Japanese. It can be used to indicate that something is impossible, improbable, unlikely, etc, as well as an injunction to not “overdo it” or “do something to excess,” to “strain oneself,” or to “go over the top.”

32. Uno Kōzō, “Nihon shihonshugi ronsō to wa nani ka” [What is the debate on Japanese capitalism?], in supp. vol. [*bekkan*] of *Uno Kōzō chosakushū* [Collected works of Uno Kōzō], 11 vols. (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1974), 13.

33. Uno, “Nihon shihonshugi ronsō to wa nani ka,” 12.

34. Uno, “Nihon shihonshugi ronsō to wa nani ka,” 14.

35. Uno Kōzō and Yamada Moritarō, *Shihonron taikai* (*chū*), [The system of capital (middle vol.)], vol. 11 of *Keizaigaku zenshū* [Complete works of economics] (Tokyo: Kaizōsha, 1930). Uno’s segments are reprinted in *Shihon no hentai to sono junkan* and *Shihon no kaiten*, in vol. 5 of *Uno Kōzō chosakushū* [Collected works of Uno Kōzō] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1973–74), 271–448. Yamada’s segment is reprinted in vol. 1 of *Yamada Moritarō chosakushū* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1983).

36. Here I must briefly address three essential works of intellectual history: Germaine A. Houston, *Marxism and the Crisis of Development in Prewar Japan*, Nagaoka Shinkichi, *Nihon shihonshugi ronsō no gunzō*, and Andrew Barshay, *The Social Sciences in Modern Japan*. I must state unequivocally that my investigation here is not in any way a critique of these texts: rather I attempt to work in a certain “division of labor” with them. That is, the questions undertaken here on the surface seem to concern certain of the same “objects of analysis” as those in these three texts: the debate on Japanese capitalism, the history of Marxist theory in Japan, and the work of Uno Kōzō, Yamada Moritarō, and others. But the mode of operation through which I approach these texts is quite different. What concerns me here is not to establish the genealogical or biographical background of the debate on Japanese capitalism, or its archival history in the sense of who did what when. All three of the aforementioned works give us an exceptional and detailed array of information on the question of the debate (through the 1920s) in

relation to theories of development (Hoston), the intellectual exchanges and lives that intersected in the debate (Nagaoka), and the formation of the Marxist and modernist directions of the mainstream social sciences in Japan (Barshay). Rather, what I am interested in is to enter into the theoretical work in Marxist theory, historiography, and philosophy of this moment as *theory*, to reread and rewrite certain problems that emerge from the historical moment of the debate on Japanese capitalism not only in Japanese studies but from in the contemporary rethinking of historiography, the formation of the international world, postcolonial studies of capitalist dynamics, and new analyses of the epistemology of the social and human sciences. In this sense, I aim to think of “world Marxism” without reliance on the conception of the givenness of the nation-state, both methodologically (as a compositional or figurational element of contemporary analysis) and historically (as a field in flux in the debates on the national question itself). Hoston, Nagaoka, and Barshay, among others, have done an immense work, in all three cases, absolutely original and pathbreaking: a vast and crucial work of archaeology, unearthing and placing in the field of history a series of moments and sequences that reorient our conceptions of the world scale of Marxist thought and its impact on the formation of the social and human sciences. But equally it must be said that this in no way constitutes a closure or end to the questions involved. Rather, thanks to their work, we must now *begin* an entire theoretical and historical project of rethinking the debate on Japanese capitalism in *theory*, that is, utilizing this vast field of knowledge not only as a field of raw data about the “other space” but also as a repository of contestation, a repository of the congealed historicity of struggle through which knowledge on a world scale has been constituted and reproduced. That is, the debate on Japanese capitalism, the formation of Marxist theory outside the putative unity of “the West,” and the theoretical content of these sequences of analysis, is not something that can be conclusively or finally determined simply by ordering it into a received history or by situating it in a “context.” Instead, we must start from the outset an endless labor of rethinking *theoretically* the content of *theory* itself by means of a new arrangement of intellectual history. In this sense, then, what follows is not a reading that attempts to fill in gaps in the analyses of Hoston, Nagaoka, or Barshay (or indeed the many others who have touched on numerous aspects of this debate—and I should mention many people here, writing not only in English but in French, German, Russian, Chinese, various languages of contemporary India, and of course, Japanese, where this debate has been powerfully developed in contemporary Marxist thought). Rather, it is an attempt to think of *what* is at stake in the debate on Japanese capitalism for *theoretical inquiry today*.

37. For reasons of space, I cannot develop here the relationship between Otsuka and Yamada, although I would like to take another opportunity to do so. Otsuka was profoundly influenced in his view of world history and comparative economic history by Yamada and specifically by Yamada’s *Nihon shihonshugi bunseki* [The analysis of Japanese capitalism] (in *Yamada Moritarō chosakushū*, vol. 2). On this point, see Otsuka’s essay “Yamada riron to hikaku keizaishigaku” [Yamada’s theoretical work and comparative economic historiography], *Tochi seidoshigaku* [Journal of agrarian studies], 93 (October 1981), 20–28. Many of Otsuka’s other works, in particular his discussions

of world history in texts like his “Yoken no tame no sekaishi” [World history for foreknowledge], 199–209, and “Kindaiteki ningen ruikei no sōshutsu: Seijiteki shutai no minshūteki kiban no mondai” [Emergence of the typology of the modern human: On the problem of the national foundations of the political subject], 169–175, in vol. 8 of Otsuka Hisao *chosakushū* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1969), could also be revisited from this perspective. See chapter 6 for further discussion of Ōtsuka.

38. Kōhachirō Takahashi, “A Contribution to the Debate,” in Georges Lefebvre et al., *The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1978), 96.

39. Takahashi, “Contribution to the Debate,” 96, n. 78. Yamada Moritarō’s given name is here erroneously rendered “Seitaro.”

40. Takahashi, “Contribution to the Debate,” 96–97. The internal quote from Marx is from the 1867 preface to *Capital*, 1st German ed., in vol. 1 of *Marx-Engels Collected Works* (MECW), vol. 35 (New York: International Publishers, 1996).

41. Nagaoka Shinkichi, *Nihon shihonshugi ronsō no gunzō* [A portrait of the debate on Japanese Capitalism] (Tokyo: Minerva Shobō, 1984), 271–275.

42. Terade Michio, *Yamada Moritarō: Marukusushugisha no shirarezaru sekai* [Yamada Moritarō: The unknown world of a Marxist] (Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Hyōronsha, 2008), 75–76.

43. See Yamada’s 1979 “Preface to the Bunko edition,” reprinted in vol. 2 of *Yamada Moritarō chosakushū*, 6–7.

44. Terade, *Yamada Moritarō*, 75–76, compares Yamada’s eclectic literary style to Russian formalism and futurism in the arts, which, although somewhat forced as a direct historical link, is productive and suggestive for another reason. Contrary to the basic argument of Sakisaka, Yamada’s discursive style is exceptionally modern. In other words, in contrast to the sarcastic argument that Sakisaka loved to polemically deploy against the Kōza-ha figures (“This text should be read by candlelight, in the winter snows, with fireflies, Japanese harp music, etc.”) for their supposed “love of feudalism,” Yamada’s stylistic choices do not at all recall the pseudo-ancient orthography and mythic fantasy of integralism stylistically put forward in State-Shinto and other far right texts of the time. In fact, there is a kind of excessive modern violence to the Japanese language that he is constantly undertaking—a kind of desire to *break* or *force* the Japanese language to disclose something outside its linguistic system. Of course, this itself is a complex and not entirely adequate point, but it seems to me that we must be quite careful to avoid the conflation of Yamada and his later disciples like Otsuka and Maruyama.

45. See Sumiya Mikio and Taira Kōji, *An Outline of Japanese Economic History 1603–1940* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1979), 274–275.

46. Here we should also mention that Kuusinen was the main author of the important Comintern paper *The Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies: Thesis on the Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies and Semi-colonies*, adopted by the Sixth World Congress of the Communist International, 1928 (London: Dorrit Press, 1929), later reprinted in English in Italy (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1967). Here, the argument was particularly centered on this point: “Everywhere, imperialism attempts to preserve and perpetuate all those pre-capitalist forms of exploiting (especially in the villages) which serve as the basis

for the existence of its reactionary allies” (11). This text uses the terms “semi-feudal” and “semi-slave” regularly, and we should note, therefore, that Yamada’s peculiar vocabulary was not something particularly Japanese but a reflection of a certain international discursive space.

47. Sumiya and Taira, *Outline of Japanese Economic History*, 275.

48. See Makoto Itoh, *Value and Crisis: Essays on Marxian Economics in Japan* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1980), 22–26.

49. Yamada, *Nihon shihonshugi bunseki*, in *Yamada Moritarō chosakushū*, vol. 2, 141.

50. Yamada, *Nihon shihonshugi bunseki*, 3.

51. Yamada, *Nihon shihonshugi bunseki*, 5. Also see on this point Terade Michio’s recent biographical essay *Yamada Moritarō*, 77–79. Terade’s text unpacks Yamada in an interesting though idiosyncratic way, reading his literary politics in relation to futurism.

52. Yamada, *Nihon shihonshugi bunseki*, 152.

53. For reasons of topicality, I cannot extensively develop this point here, but I will take a future opportunity to reread Otsuka and Maruyama in relation to Yamada’s work.

54. Sakisaka Itsurō, “*Nihon shihonshugi bunseki ni okeru hōhōron*” [Methodology in *The Analysis of Japanese Capitalism*], in *Nihon shihonshugi no shomondai* [Problems of Japanese capitalism] (Tokyo: Ōdoshā, 1947), 15.

55. Sakisaka, “*Nihon shihonshugi bunseki ni okeru hōhōron*,” 20.

56. Sakisaka, “*Nihon shihonshugi bunseki ni okeru hōhōron*,” 28.

57. Quoted in Sakisaka, “*Nihon shihonshugi bunseki ni okeru hōhōron*,” 32.

58. Yamada, *Nihon shihonshugi bunseki*, 4.

59. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 in *MECW*, vol. 35, 734.

60. Sakisaka, “*Nihon shihonshugi bunseki ni okeru hōhōron*,” 20. This perspective of Sakisaka could be productively read alongside Jairus Banaji’s major recent text, *Theory as History: Essays on Modes of Production and Exploitation* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), in particular around Banaji’s discussion of free labor, and the clear distinction he draws between the evaluation of a given mode of production and the forms of exploitation existing under it.

61. In general on this point, see Engels, “On Social Relations in Russia,” his response to P. Tkatschov’s “Offener Brief an Herrn Friedrich Engels,” in vol. 24 of *MECW* (Moscow: Progress, 1989), 39–50.

62. Ōuchi Tsutomu, *Nihon shihonshugi no nōgyō mondai* [The agrarian question in Japanese capitalism], rev. ed. (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1952), 284. The brief quote in Ōuchi’s discussion is from Uno’s essay “*Waga kuni nōson no hōken-sei*” [The feudality of the Japanese rural village], in vol. 8 of *Uno Kōzō chosakushū*, 53–61. Emphasis mine.

63. See Uno, “*Keizaigaku ni okeru ronshō to jissshō*” [Theoretical and practical proof in political economy], in vol. 8 of *Uno Kōzō chosakushū*, 11–12.

64. Uno, “*Shihonshugi no seiritsu to nōson bunkai no katei*” [The establishment of capitalism and the process of disintegration of the rural village], in vol. 8 of *Uno Kōzō chosakushū*, 41.

65. Kasai Masaru, “Nihon shihonshugi ronsō to wa nan de atta ka” [What was the debate on Japanese capitalism?], in *Sekai nōgyō mondai no kōzōka* [Structure of the global agrarian question] (Tokyo: Shakai Hyōronsha, 1990), 309.

66. Itoh, *Value and Crisis*, 36.

67. Itoh, *Value and Crisis*, 37.

68. See Massimo De Angelis, “Marx and Primitive Accumulation: The Continuous Character of Capital’s Enclosures,” *Commoner* (www.commoner.org.uk), September 2001; Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body, and Primitive Accumulation* (New York: Autonomedia, 2004), esp. 61–64; Yann Moulier Boutang, *De l’esclavage au salariat: Économie historique du salariat bridé* (Paris: PUF, 1998), esp. 101–108.

69. See on this point Uno’s important interventions on the question of agriculture, collected in *Nōgyō mondai jōron*, in vol. 8 of *Uno Kōzō chosakushū* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1974), 6–213, especially the articles “Shihonshugi no seiritsu to nōson bunkai no katei” (originally published in *Chūō Kōron*, November 1935), and “Hōken ronsō no sainen ni tsuite” (originally published in *Waseda daigaku shimbun*, February 21, 1947). I take up these texts in chapter 4.

70. Uno Kōzō, “Nihon shihonshugi ronsō to wa nani ka,” 15.

71. Actually, paradoxically it was Yamada who was interested in these writings from the very outset, but the broader points were not taken up at the center of any of these debates.

72. Teodor Shanin, “Marxism and the Vernacular Revolutionary Traditions,” in *Late Marx and the Russian Road: Marx and “The Peripheries of Capitalism,”* ed. Teodor Shanin (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983), 275.

73. John T. Chalcraft, “Pluralizing Capital, Challenging Eurocentrism: Towards Post-Marxist Historiography,” *Radical History Review* 91 (winter 2005), 32. Chalcraft’s article is an incisive analysis of the tendency in the history of Marxist historiography to erase the non-European trajectories of development. Nevertheless, I think that we can discover numerous Marxist orientations, many of them non-European, that do not fall into this tendency. Marx’s own late work, as I briefly touch on here, contains the potential for alternative readings in divergent directions as well. Moreover, this fundamental question turns also on the way capital itself is understood in relation to its vectors of deployment, the relation between the general movement of the logic of capital and the specific sites in which it territorializes itself, a question centered on the problem of enclosure and primitive accumulation.

74. See E. A. Zhelubovskaia, ed., *Marks-Istoriik* (Moscow: Nauka, 1968), 431. Quoted in Shanin, *Late Marx and the Russian Road*, 18.

75. Marx, “Second Draft of the Letter to Zasulich,” in vol. 24 of *MECW*, 363.

76. Marx, “Third Draft of the Letter to Zasulich,” in vol. 24 of *MECW*, 367–368.

77. Marx, “Letter to Vera Zasulich,” in vol. 24 of *MECW*, 371. On this point in general, also see Marx and Engels’s 1882 “Preface to the Second Russian Edition of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*” in vol. 24 of *MECW*, 425–426. See Bruno Bosteels’s discussion of Alvaro Garcia Linera’s important reading of these texts of Marx on the Russian village commune in his *The Actuality of Communism* (London: Verso, 2011).

78. Shanin, *Late Marx and the Russian Road*, 17.

79. Ōuchi Tsutomu, *Nihon shihonshugi no nōgyō mondai*, 102–103.

80. See Ōuchi, *Nihon shihonshugi no nōgyō mondai*, 137–138, n. 133. On this point, it bears mentioning that Yamada's logic of a capitalism unnaturally grafted "on top" of a stratum of unchanging backwardness is not an argument limited to the context of Marxist theory in Japan. Precisely the same argument was made by many figures in the world Marxist theoretical milieu, perhaps most famously by Stalin against Radek in the polemics of the 1920s surrounding the analysis of the Chinese social formation. See in particular Stalin, "Talks with Students of the Sun Yat-Sen University" (1927), in vol. 9 of *Works* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1953), 243–245, wherein he essentially describes, contra Radek, Chinese merchant capital as something built on top of a permanent basis of "feudal-medieval methods of exploitation and oppression."

81. Karl Marx, "Marginal Notes on Adolph Wagner's *Lehrbuch der politischen Ökonomie*," in vol. 24 of *MECW*, 547, translation modified; "Randglossen zu Adolph Wagners *Lehrbuch der politischen Ökonomie*," in vol. 19 of *Marx-Engels Werke* (Berlin: Dietz, 1962), 371.

82. Uno, "Waga kuni nōson no hōkensei," 64–65.

83. See on this point Johannes Fabian's *Time and the Other* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

84. Stalin, "Talks with Students of the Sun Yat-Sen University," 243–245; I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, vol. 9 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1948), 66–67.

85. Ouchi Tsutomu, extending the work of Uno Kōzō, incisively points out that the most apparently feudal processes in rural exploitation were not paradoxically "hold-overs" of feudal power or "restraints" on capital's development, but rather structural elements of Japanese capitalism itself. That is, he shows clearly that "backwardness" is not something local or eternal; rather it is precisely that capital demands the formation of an overall schema of particularity in order to effect its own development. See Ouchi, *Nihon shihonshugi no nōgyō mondai*, 284.

86. In this sense both of the main trends of the debate on Japanese capitalism fall into the trap of imagining "community" as an accomplished fact in its full plenitude, in precisely the manner so comprehensively criticized by Jean-Luc Nancy (see *The Inoperative Community*, 11).

87. In fact, it is my view that a more complex understanding of the national question, and its link to the theoretical problem of the production of national belonging, can lead us to a new appreciation of the importance for history and theory of the struggle for national liberation. I cannot extensively develop this point for reasons of topicality, but I would like to take another opportunity to do so elsewhere. Although I have many problems with James Blaut's reworking of the national question in Marxist theory, and strongly disagree with aspects of his analysis, he makes an important point in emphasizing that the national liberation struggles should be directly considered to be class struggles: "Marxism does not reduce the national struggle to something which excludes the manifold dimensions of human culture; it conceives these latter to be forms and arenas of class struggle. Most critically, Marxism does not

reach behind or under class struggle to find some other more basic force or phenomenon, something like an eternal ‘nation,’ and ‘idea of the nation-state,’ a ‘principle of nationalities,’ a pseudo-biological principle of ‘territoriality’ or ‘aggression,’ or the like, something supposedly autonomous from class struggle and more deeply rooted in ‘human nature.’” James Blaut, *The National Question: Decolonising the Theory of Nationalism* (London: Zed Books, 1987), 24–25.

88. See Naoki Sakai, *Nihon/eizō/Beikoku: Kyōkan no kyōdōtai to teikokuteki kokumins-hugi* [Japan/image/America: The community of sympathy and imperial nationalism] (Tokyo: Seidosha, 2007), 294–295.

89. Étienne Balibar, “The Nation Form,” in Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, trans. Chris Turner (London: Verso, 1991), 93.

90. This line is recalled at the outset of Joan Copjec, *Imagine There’s No Woman: Ethics and Sublimation* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002).

91. Although I cannot take it up here for reasons of space, it would be necessary to take another occasion to develop this question in relation to the work of Nicos Poulantzas, in particular his final work, *State, Power, Socialism* (1978), trans. Patrick Camiller (1980). In relation to this work, Étienne Balibar has given us an exceptionally important set of reflections in his “Communisme et citoyenneté: Sur Nicos Poulantzas,” in *La proposition de l’égaliberte: Essais politiques 1989–2009* (Paris: PUF, 2010), 179–200, in particular his discussion of the specific form of the nation-state (185–188).

92. Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 62–63.

93. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 64.

94. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 66–67.

95. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 69–71.

96. This point is extensively taken up in chapters 4 and 5.

Chapter Three: Primitive Accumulation

1. Noro Eitarō, “Susumu beki michi” [The path to be followed] (interview), *Sarariman* (January 1931), reprinted in vol. 2 of *Noro Eitarō zenshū* (Tokyo: Shin Nihon Shuppansha, 1994), 10. My italics. The editors add here that when Noro mentions “the colonies” (*shokuminchi*), he is specifically referring to Hokkaidō. The epigraphs to this chapter are from Louis Althusser, “From Capital to Marx’s Philosophy,” in Althusser et al., *Reading Capital*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: Verso, 1971), 63, and Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 in Karl Marx, *Frederick Engels: Collected Works*, 50 vols. (MECW), vol. 35 (New York: International Publishers, 1996), 589; Marx, *Das Kapital*, vol. 1 in *Marx-Engels Werke* 40 vols. (MEW), vol. 23 (Berlin: Dietz, 1962), 619.

2. Althusser, “Machiavelli’s Solitude,” in *Machiavelli and Us*, trans. Gregory Elliot (London: Verso, 1999), 125–126.

3. In general on the question of so-called primitive accumulation, I have benefited from numerous discussions and interventions, but I point out the following three in particular: Yutaka Nagahara, *Warera kashi aru mono tachi* [We, the defective

commodities: For an analytics of anti-capital/ism] (Tokyo: Seidosha, 2008); Jason Read, "Primitive Accumulation: The Aleatory Foundation of Capitalism," *Rethinking Marxism* 14, no. 2 (2002), 24–49; Werner Bonefeld, "Primitive Accumulation and Capitalist Accumulation: Notes on Social Constitution and Expropriation," *Science & Society* 75, no. 3 (July 2011), 379–399.

4. Read, "Primitive Accumulation," 40.
5. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 in MECW, vol. 35, 704–705.
6. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 in MECW, vol. 35, 705.
7. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 in MECW, vol. 35, 707.
8. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 in MECW, vol. 35, 714.
9. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 in MECW, vol. 35, 718.
10. Marx, "Letter to Otechestvenniye zapiski," in vol. 24 of MECW (Moscow: Progress, 1989), 199–200.
11. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 in MECW, vol. 35, 718–719.
12. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 in MECW, vol. 35, 723.
13. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 in MECW, vol. 35, 723–725.
14. The most comprehensive demonstration of this form of capture in the transition to the wage can be found in Yann Moulier Boutang, *De l'esclavage au salariat: Économie historique du salariat bridé* (Paris: PUF, 1998).
15. Sandro Mezzadra, *La condizione postcoloniale: Storia e politica nel presente globale* (Verona: Ombre Corte, 2008), 139.
16. Marx, *Economic Manuscripts of 1861–1863*, in vol. 34 of MECW (New York: International Publishers, 1994), 247.
17. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 in MECW, vol. 35, 734.
18. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 in MECW, vol. 35, 739.
19. On the discursive function of the West and the Rest or the ideology of so-called civilizational difference, Naoki Sakai's crucial discussion of the operation of the "regime of translation" or "bordering"—the assemblage of effects that forces an act of translation, which is simply an act of articulation in the space of pure heterogeneity, to appear as an "encounter" between two already substantialized positions, rather than a primal zone wherein this split is itself created—deeply informs my analysis of the "formation of difference," and is closely tied to Marx's analysis of the process of primitive accumulation as the Ur-Akt of the creation of labor power that can be commodified. See Naoki Sakai, *Translation and Subjectivity: On "Japan" and Cultural Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).
20. This use of the term "drive" should be clarified. "Drive" or *Trieb* can be understood here in Freud's sense, as a force of pulsion that pushes something toward an object of satisfaction; it should not be confused with simple instinct (*Instinkt*). When I apply this term to capital, I mean that capital is a social relation in which the commodity economy is the only social principle. Therefore, the reproduction of capitalist society itself, the total reproduction of the society as a whole, must always pass through or be mediated by the form of the commodity. Capitalism therefore is always "driving" toward a pure commodity economy, one in which all social relations are purely commodified, although it never completely accomplishes this goal—in fact, it

cannot accomplish this goal because it requires something outside of its own circuit: labor power. Nevertheless, even if capitalism is never perfectly systematized according to its own ideal schematics, even if it can never reach its object of satisfaction (pure capitalism), capital possesses at all times a drive or directionality toward this systematicity. Uno Kōzō incisively formulates this point in Uno Kōzō, “Keizaigaku ni okeru ronshō to jissshō” [Theoretical and practical proof in political economy], in vol. 4 of *Uno Kōzō chosakushū* [Collected works of Uno Kōzō] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1974), 5–25. We should note that Marx himself explicitly used this term drive (*Trieb*) in *Capital*: “The drive to hoard [Der Trieb der Schatzbildung] is in its very nature unsatiable. In its qualitative aspect, or formally considered, money has no bounds [schrankenlos] to its efficacy, i.e., it is the universal representative of material wealth, because it is directly convertible into any other commodity. But at the same time, every actual sum of money is limited in amount, and therefore, as a means of purchasing, has only a limited efficacy. This antagonism between the quantitative limits [Schranke] of money and its qualitative boundlessness, continually acts as a spur to the hoarder in his Sisyphus-like labour of accumulating. It is with him as it is with a conqueror who sees in every new country annexed, only a new boundary [Grenze].” Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 in MECW, vol. 35, 143–144; *Das Kapital*, vol. 1 in MEW, vol. 23, 147. I will later return to this decisive passage, which also alerts us to two concepts of the limit, *edge*, or *border*: *Schranke* and *Grenze*. These two terms will also fulfill a specific function in terms of the limits of the labor-power commodity and the borders of the national question.

21. Massimo De Angelis, *The Beginning of History: Value Struggles and Global Capital* (London: Pluto Press, 2007), 139.

22. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Mille plateaux* (Paris: Minuit, 1980), 555; *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. B. Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 444–445.

23. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 in MECW, vol. 35, 760–761.

24. Rosa Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital* (London: Routledge, 2003), 345.

25. Marx, “Preparatory Materials—Notes on Bakunin’s Book *Statehood and Anarchy*,” in vol. 24 of MECW, 507.

26. Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever*, trans. E. Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

27. Louis Althusser, “Le courant souterrain du matérialisme de la rencontre,” in vol. 1 of *Écrits philosophiques et politiques* (Paris: Stock/IMEC, 1994), 574; “The Underground Current of the Materialism of the Encounter,” in *Philosophy of the Encounter: Later Writings, 1978–1987*, trans. G. M. Goshgarian (London: Verso, 2006), 200.

28. Nagahara Yutaka, “Ronri no ronriteki rinkai: Jissen e no ‘ronri’teki tsugite” [The logical limits of logic: “Logic”-al splittings toward practice], in *Shijō keizai no shinwa to sono henkaku: “Shakaiteki na koto” no fukken* [Overturning the myth of the market economy: The restoration of the social] (Tokyo: Hōsei University Press, 2003), 67.

29. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 in MECW, vol. 35, 589; Marx, *Das Kapital*, vol. 1 in MEW, vol. 23, 619.

30. Mezzadra, *La condizione postcoloniale*, 134.

31. Carl Schmitt, *The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum*, trans. G. L. Ulmen (New York: Telos Press, 2003), 332.
32. Schmitt, *Du politique: Légitimité et légalité et autres essais* (Puisseux: Pardès, 1990), 244–249.
33. Schmitt, *Der Nomos der Erde im Völkerrecht des Jus Publicum Europaeum* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1974), 38; *Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum*, 68.
34. Schmitt, *Der Nomos der Erde im Völkerrecht des Jus Publicum Europaeum*, 40; *Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum*, 70.
35. Schmitt, *Der Nomos der Erde im Völkerrecht des Jus Publicum Europaeum*, 47; *Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum*, 78.
36. Buck-Morss's analysis in her "Sovereign Right and the Global Left," *Rethinking Marxism* 19, no. 4 (October 2007), brilliantly unpacks the question of the *nomos* in terms of the contemporary question of state legitimation, the mechanisms by which the international order "governs" itself, or cares for itself and thereby perpetuates itself precisely through its own paradoxical suspension. My attempt in this chapter presupposes a certain analytical division of labor with her discussion, by developing this paradoxical element that is concentrated in the question of the *nomos* in a slightly different direction. I try to cross-read the question of primitive accumulation with this Schmittian moment in order to "force the secret" (Marx 1996, 185–186) of the constitution and maintenance of that most retrograde idea and supreme political cretinism today: the supposed "clash" between "civilizations."
37. Derrida, "Signature Event Context," in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 318. Translation modified.
38. Schmitt, *Der Nomos der Erde im Völkerrecht des Jus Publicum Europaeum*, 169; *Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum*, 197.
39. Schmitt, *Der Nomos der Erde im Völkerrecht des Jus Publicum Europaeum*, 183; *Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum*, 210.
40. Schmitt, *Der Nomos der Erde im Völkerrecht des Jus Publicum Europaeum*, 172; *The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of the Jus Europaeum*, 199.
41. Schmitt, *Der Nomos der Erde im Völkerrecht des Jus Publicum Europaeum*, 189; *Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum*, 215.
42. The essential reference here is "The New Enclosures," the widely influential issue of *Midnight Notes* 10 (fall 1990). See on this collection of documents Mezzadra, *La condizione postcoloniale*, 128–130.
43. Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, The Body, and Primitive Accumulation* (New York: Autonomedia, 2004), 63.
44. Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*, 63–64.
45. Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*, 115.
46. Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*, 75.
47. Let me note that in relation to this discussion of Federici, Sandro Mezzadra has pointed out: "In the contemporary debate on the theme of the commons, too often a nostalgic tone tends to prevail, exactly as if these 'common goods' were merely something given—and that need to be conserved. In this sense, although I otherwise

value the book, Silvia Federici's *Caliban and the Witch* is symptomatic: by beginning from an emphasis on the sacrosanct, autonomous behavior and resistance of women in the countryside to the attempts to put their sexuality under control between the medieval period and the early modern state, Federici in fact ends up proposing a somewhat 'idyllic,' and decidedly unsustainable representation of European feudalism" (Mezzadra, *La condizione postcoloniale*, 153). Mezzadra here identifies something important in relation to the political consequences of Federici's discussion, and his emphasis on the need to always consider the commons to be a production and not a discovery is a crucial point. Nevertheless, Federici's historical analysis is of the utmost importance in clarifying the question of primitive accumulation as a formation-process, and not simply a process of dispossession.

48. Sakiyama Masaki, "Shūhen no keizokuteki saiseisan" [The continual reproduction of the periphery], in *Shihon* (*Shikō no furontia*) [Capital—frontiers of thought] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2004), 113.

49. Baba Hiroji, *Fuyūka to kinyū shihon* [Affluentization and finance capital] (Minerva Shobō, 1986), 41.

50. Karatani Kōjin, *Marukusu sono kanōsei no chūshin* [Marx—the center of his possibilities] (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1990), 72.

51. Karatani, *Marukusu sono kanōsei no chūshin*, 74.

52. Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 122.

53. Fabian, *Time and the Other*, 123–141.

54. Marx, "Preparatory Materials—Notes on Bakunin's Book *Statehood and Anarchy*," vol. 24 of MECW, 507.

55. Naoki Sakai and Jon Solomon, "Addressing the Multitude of Foreigners, Echoing Foucault," in *Traces 4: Translation, Biopolitics, Colonial Difference* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2006), 28.

56. Deleuze and Guattari, *Mille plateaux*, 558–559; *A Thousand Plateaus*, 447.

57. L. Althusser and Étienne Balibar, "The Object of Political Economy," in *Reading Capital*, trans. B. Brewster (London: Verso), 163.

58. Marx, *Das Kapital*, vol. 1 in MEW, vol. 23, 186; *Capital*, vol. 1 in MECW, vol. 35, 182.

59. Althusser, "Object of Political Economy," 163.

60. Deleuze and Guattari, *Mille plateaux*, 557; *A Thousand Plateaus*, 446.

61. Deleuze and Guattari, *Mille plateaux*, 557; *A Thousand Plateaus*, 446.

62. A. Negri, *Marx beyond Marx: Lessons on the Grundrisse* (London: Pluto, 1991), 111. It is precisely this point that allows us to an extent to cross-read the history of the analysis of the value-form with Deleuze and Guattari's work on capitalism's "dementia," a cross-reading that should also be linked to a complete rethinking of the aesthetic and ethical arrangements that inhere in the historiographical discussions of so-called uneven development. In relation to this important passage, let me note also that Negri's conception of the subject is always linked to the production of subjectivity, to the gathering or arrangement of possible expressions, and should never be misunderstood as something like "the national subject."

63. Uno Kōzō, “Benshōhōteki mujun ni tsuite” [On dialectical contradiction], in vol. 10 of *Uno Kōzō chosakushū* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1974), 426–427. I will analyze this entire field of points, particularly around this concept of *muri*, in the next chapter.

64. K. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 in MECW, vol. 35, 626; *Das Kapital*, vol. 1 in MEW, vol. 23, 660. In the fourth German edition, Marx also adds a decisive and more systematic phrasing here, when he mentions “the law of progressive diminution of the relative magnitude of variable capital” (*das Gesetz der progressiven Abnahme der relativer Größe des variablen Kapitals*), in MECW, vol. 35, 625; MEW, vol. 23, 660.

65. K. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 in MECW, vol. 35, 742; *Das Kapital*, vol. 1 in MEW, vol. 23, 782.

66. K. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 in MECW, vol. 35, 742; *Das Kapital*, vol. 1 in MEW, vol. 23, 782.

67. K. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 in MECW, vol. 35, 743–744; *Das Kapital*, vol. 1 in MEW, vol. 23, 783–784.

68. Note on this point that the “nationality” of crisis is not simply a question of history, in the sense of a question that has been overcome. Throughout the ongoing debt crisis in the Eurozone, and particularly in the Greek case, “explanations” of the situation have been relentlessly rerouted to racial-national stereotypes and old-style “national character” studies. Of course, all of these so-called explanations of the crisis are absurd. The German tabloid “newspaper” (one hesitates to truly call it a newspaper) *Bild* placed the following headline on the front of the daily news: “Verkauft doch eure Inseln, ihr Pleite-Griechen!” (literally, “Sell your islands, you bankrupt Greeks!”). In response to this, the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung released an excellent pamphlet, comprehensively debunking all the ideological presuppositions that characterized the attempt to place the national debt into the realm of “national character.” See <http://www.rosalux.de/publication/37617/verkauft-doch-eure-inseln-ihr-pleite-griechen.html>.

69. C. Marazzi, *The Violence of Financial Capitalism*, new ed. (New York: Semiotext(e), 2011), 118.

70. Christian Marazzi, “Un orizzonte sovranazionale per rompere la trappola del debito,” *Il manifesto* 16 (December 2011), 11. See also Andrea Fumagalli, “Lotte di classe nel default,” *Il manifesto* 16 (December 2011), 10.

71. Marx, *Das Kapital*, vol. 1 in MEW, vol. 23, 630; *Capital*, vol. 1 in MECW, vol. 35, 599.

72. K. Marx, *Kapital*, vol. 3 in MEW, vol. 25, 463; *Capital*, vol. 3 in MECW, vol. 37, 483. Here we should recall that for Uno Kōzō, the “automatically interest-bearing capital” plays the same structural role for capital as does the “absolute Idea” in the Hegelian logic.

73. J. Holloway and S. Picciotto, “Capital, Crisis and the State,” *Capital and Class* 1, no. 2 (summer 1977), 92.

74. V. I. Lenin, “Once Again on the Trade Unions,” in vol. 32 of *Collected Works of V. I. Lenin* (Moscow: Progress, 1976).

75. K. Marx, *Das Kapital*, vol. 3 in MEW, vol. 25, 799–800; *Capital*, vol. 3 in MECW, vol. 37, 777–778.

76. See in particular chapters 4 and 5 on the analysis of the labor-power commodity.

77. See in particular A. Badiou, *The Communist Hypothesis* (London: Verso, 2010), and B. Bosteels, *The Actuality of Communism* (London: Verso, 2011). See also the discussion in Gavin Walker, "The Dignity of Communism: Badiou's Communist Hypothesis," *Socialism & Democracy* 25, no. 3 (2011), 130–139.

78. K. Marx, *Die deutsche Ideologie*, vol. 3 of MEW, 37; *The German Ideology*, vol. 5 i MECW, 51.

79. Shibagaki Kazuo, "Shihonshugi no sekaisei to kokuminsei," [Capitalism's globality and nationality], *Shisō*, no. 499 (January 1966), reprinted in Shibagaki, *Shakai kagaku no ronri* [The logic of the social sciences] (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1979), 83–85. Shibagaki's text is a critical development of Iwata Hiroshi's important work on world capitalism, published principally in his *Sekai shihonshugi* [World capitalism] (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1964). For reasons of topicality, I cannot extensively expand on certain specific points here that are ripe for theoretical development, so I simply note that I will take another opportunity to revisit this exceptionally important and relatively ignored text. One point that should be mentioned is the political context of this discussion: for Iwata, one of the most important Marxist theoreticians among the new left of the 1960s, the fact that capitalism must necessarily become *world* capitalism implied the necessity of a theory of *world* revolution, that is, a simultaneously occurring chain-reaction of revolutionary uprisings aimed at the overthrow of world capitalism on a *world* scale. This, of course, was posed against the concept of a revolutionary movement in "one country," as in the historical concept of "socialism in one country." What is significant to note here is simply that the wide diffusion of this concept of world capitalism among the revolutionary left of the time in Japan shows us the exceptional power of Uno's thought, which furnished the backdrop to these political questions. In turn, the question of capital's *world* scale and *national* scale was precisely the centerpiece of the debate on Japanese capitalism, which returns time and time again to the fore in Japanese postwar intellectual life. I will return to Iwata in the final chapter.

Chapter Four: Labor Power

1. The epigraphs to this chapter are from Georg Lukács, *Towards the Ontology of Social Being*, vol. 2, trans. David Fernbach (London: Merlin Press, 1978), 40, and Stefan Czerkinsky and Gilles Deleuze, "Faces and Surfaces," in Deleuze, *Desert Islands and Other Texts* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1996), 282.

2. See on this point Michel Aglietta, *A Theory of Capitalist Regulation: The US Experience* (London: Verso, 2000), especially 111–150.

3. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 in Karl Marx, *Frederick Engels: Collected Works*, 50 vols. (MECW), vol. 35 (New York: International Publishers, 1996), 626; *Das Kapital*, vol. 1 in Marx-Engels Werke, 40 vols. (MEW), vol. 23 (Berlin: Dietz, 1962), 660. In the fourth German edition, Marx also adds a decisive and more systematic phrasing here, when he mentions "the law of progressive diminution of the relative magnitude of variable capital"

(das Gesetz der progressiven Abnahme der relativer Größe des variablen Kapitals), in *MECW*, vol. 35, 625; *MEW*, vol. 23, 660. In the following pages I will extensively examine the latter question of variable capital, which overlaps but should not be conflated with labor power.

4. Engels, *Die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England*, in *Marx-Engels-Werke*, vol. 2 (Berlin: Dietz, 1962), 487; *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, in *MECW*, vol. 4 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975), 563. Translation modified.

5. Uno, “Rōdōryoku naru shōhin no tokushusei ni tsuite” [On the specificity of labor power as a commodity], in *Uno Kōzō chosakushū*, vol. 3 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1973), 495.

6. Jacques Bidet, “Kōzō Uno and His School: A Pure Theory of Capitalism,” in *Critical Companion to Contemporary Marxism*, ed. Jacques Bidet and Stathis Kouvélakis (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 730.

7. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 in *MECW*, vol. 35 (New York: International Publishers, 1996), 760–761.

8. Bidet, “Kōzō Uno and His School: A Pure Theory of Capitalism,” 740. My emphasis.

9. Uno, “Shihonron no kakushin [Capital’s Nucleus],” in *Uno Kōzō chosakushū*, vol. 11 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1973), 32–34.

10. Marx, *Wage Labour and Capital*, in *MECW*, vol. 9 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), 203; *Lohnarbeit und Kapital*, in *Marx-Engels-Werke*, vol. 6 (Berlin: Dietz, 1962), 401.

11. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 in *MECW*, vol. 35 (New York: International Publishers, 1996), 178; *Das Kapital*, vol. 1 in *Marx-Engels Werke*, vol. 23 (Berlin: Dietz, 1962), 182.

12. Marx, *Economic Manuscripts of 1861–1863*, vol. 34 of *MECW* (New York: International Publishers, 1994), 247.

13. Marx, *Economic Manuscripts of 1861–1863*, vol. 34 of *MECW*, 243.

14. Paolo Virno, *Il ricordo del presente: Saggio sul tempo storico* (Turin: Bollati Borin-ghieri, 1999), 120–141; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Limits and Openings of Marx in Derrida,” in *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (London: Routledge, 1993), 108.

15. Uno Kōzō, “Shihonron no kakushin” [Capital’s nucleus], originally published as the monthly supplement (*geppō*) to the *Marx-Engels senshū* [Selected works] (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1956), reprinted in vol. 11 of *Uno Kōzō chosakushū* [Collected works of Uno Kōzō (UKC)] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1973), 32–34.

16. Marx, *Das Kapital*, vol. 1 in *MEW*, vol. 23, 181; Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 in *MECW*, vol. 35, 177. Translation modified.

17. Virno, *Il ricordo del presente*, 127.

18. Uno, *Shihonron to shakaishugi* [Das Kapital and socialism], in vol. 10 of UKC (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1973), 9.

19. Uno, *Keizai genron* [Principles of political economy], in vol. 1 of UKC (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1973), 134–135. On this passage, see Yutaka Nagahara’s many writings on the term *muri*, now collected in his *Warera kashi aru mono tachi: Han-shihonron no tame ni* [We, the defective commodities: For an analytics of anti-“capital”/ism] (Tokyo: Seidosha, 2008), especially 169–181. I would like to note the importance of the phrase “actually commodified” (*genjitsuteki ni shōhinka shinagara*) and point out

that Uno here refers implicitly to the Hegelian concept of “the actual” (*das Wirkliche*) in the adverbial form *genjitsuteki ni*, which connotes a wide-ranging conceptual field: the real, working, operative, etc. In this sense, “actuality” (*wirklich; Wirklichkeit*) indicates something “for-itself,” something that gathers contingencies around it, and makes them operate in accordance with an interior force of pulsion or drive. This is one of the reasons that “actuality” in this sense is a decisive concept in relation to capital, and holds an important place in Uno’s thought.

20. Uno, “Rōdōryoku naru shōhin no tokushusei ni tsuite” [On the specificity of labor power as a commodity], in vol. 3 of UKC (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1973), 487. In Japanese-language Marxist theory, the original German abbreviations W = Ware; G = Geld, Pm = Produktionsmittel, A = Arbeitskraft, etc., are usually retained, but I have restored these to the standards in English: C = commodity, M = money, Mp = means of production, Lp = labor power, c = constant capital, v = variable capital, s = surplus value.

21. Marx, *Das Kapital*, vol. 1 in MEW, vol. 23, 181; Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 in MECW, vol. 35, 177. Translation modified.

22. See here Uno, “Rōdōryoku naru shōhin no tokushusei ni tsuite,” 488–490.

23. Marx, *Das Kapital*, vol. 1 in MEW, vol. 23; Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 in MECW, vol. 35, 181.

24. Uno, *Keizai genron* (Iwanami zensho) [Principles of political economy, second version (“Iwanami zensho version”)], in vol. 2 of UKC (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1973), 76–77.

25. Marx, *Das Kapital*, vol. 1 in MEW, vol. 23, 616; *Capital*, vol. 1 in MECW, vol. 35, 585.

26. Oki 2004, 130–131. This essay has now been included in Oki’s new and important book, *Yojō no seiji keizaigaku* [The Political Economy of Excess] (See Oki 2012), which develops numerous important and original theses related to the work of Uno.

27. David Laibman, *Value, Technical Change, and Crisis: Explorations in Marxist Economic Theory* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1991), 50–51.

28. Foucault, “Le langage de l’espace,” in vol. 1 of *Dits et écrits*, 2nd ed., (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), 436.

29. Marx, *Economic Manuscripts of 1857–58*, vol. 28 of MECW ((Moscow: Progress, 1986), 383.

30. Giorgio Agamben’s recent installment in his *Homo Sacer* series of works is devoted to an analysis of precisely this important question of the necessity of glory for power’s operation. See *Il regno e la gloria: Per una genealogia teologica dell’economia e del governo* (Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 2007). In the Japanese context of the emperor-system, one of the quintessential historical forms that expresses this relation, see T. Fujitani, *Splendid Monarchy: Power and Pageantry in Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

31. Uno, “Rōdōryoku naru shōhin no tokushusei ni tsuite,” 497.

32. Marx, “Randglossen,” 337; Marx, *Grundrisse der Kritik*, 323–24.

33. Marx, *Das Kapital*, vol. 1 of MEW, vol. 23, 630; *Capital*, vol. 1 of MECW, vol. 35, 599.

34. Laibman, *Value, Technical Change, and Crisis*, 51.
35. Uno, "Shihonron no kakushin," 34.
36. Uno 1973f, 42.
37. Marx, "Randglossen," 425; Marx, *Grundrisse der Kritik*, 408.
38. Adachi Mariko, "Arata na keikenteki sho-ryōiki toshite no 'jinkō' no mondai" [New experiential fields in the question of population], in *Marukusu riron kenkyū* [Investigations in Marxist theory] (Tokyo: Ochanomizu Shobō, 2007), 274, my emphasis.
39. Uno, "Rōdōryoku naru shōhin no tokushusei ni tsuite," 502.
40. Deleuze and Guattari, "Capitalism and Schizophrenia," in Guattari, *Chaosology: Texts and Interviews, 1972–1977*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer (New York: Semiotext(e), 2009), 58. The natural point to expand here would be not to take their bait and engage in this pointless psychoanalytic provocation but instead to remix and reroute this important aphorism to the analysis of what Tosaka Jun called "family-ism," or capital's cyclically recurring fetish for "home and hearth" as the key technique in the reproduction of labor power. Of course, "Mommy" and "Daddy" also indicate the t(r)opology of land ("Mommy") and capital ("Daddy"), who cannot pretend that history didn't precede their particular demented conspiracy of on the one hand patriarchy and the nation-state (the reproduction of labor power) and on the other hand the forcible coercion or violence of money and commodities (the smooth circulation-world superimposed on our world).
41. In addition to Nagahara's aforementioned *Warera kashi aru mono tachi*, I should also mention Aoki Kōhei, *Komyunitarianizumu e: Kazoku, shiteki shoyū, kokka no shakai tetsugaku* [Toward communitarianism: Social philosophy of family, private property, and the state] (Tokyo: Shakai Hyōronsha, 2002), 146–151; Aoki Kōhei, *Komyunitarian Marukusu: Shihonshugi hihan no hōkō tenkan* [Communitarian Marx: The turning point of the critique of capitalism] (Tokyo: Shakai Hyōronsha, 2008), 187–196.
42. Marx, *Economic Manuscripts of 1857–1858* [Grundrisse], vol. 28 of MECW (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1987), 425; Marx, *Ökonomische Manuskripte 1857/1858*, in MEW, vol. 42 (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1983), 408.
43. Marx, *Das Kapital*, vol. 1 in MEW, vol. 23, 630–631; *Capital*, vol. 1 in MECW, vol. 35, 599. Note here the essential but implicit reading of Hegel's Logic.
44. See Carl Schmitt, *Der Nomos der Erde im Völkerrecht des Jus Publicum Europaeum* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1974), 29–30; *The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum*, trans. G. L. Ulmen (New York: Telos Press, 2003), 59–60.
45. Montserrat Herrero López, *El nomos y lo político: La filosofía política de Carl Schmitt* (Navarra: Ediciones universidad de Navarra, 1997), 420. I was alerted to this text by Bruno Bosteels, "The Obscure Subject: Sovereignty and Geopolitics in Carl Schmitt's *The Nomos of the Earth*," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 104, no. 2 (spring 2005), 295–305.
46. Herrero López, *El nomos y lo político*, 422.
47. Virno, *Multitude between Innovation and Negation*, trans. Isabella Bertolotti et al. (New York: Semiotext(e), 2008), 56.
48. Virno, *Multitude between Innovation and Negation*, 59–61.
49. Uno, *Keizai genron*, 134–135.

50. Despite the important investigations of Foucault on this point, I am not convinced of the political importance or even necessity of the widespread discussion of “biopolitics” today as something new or recent. As we can see in the absent torsion of labor power on itself in the process of production, the investment of capital into life was the original wager or “throw of dice” at the outset of the modern era. But “life” itself is not the site of politics, because the form of “reification” of the human as a political derivation from the “commodification” necessary for the circulation of capital requires the abstraction of something from the pure ground of life and in this sense is always simply the outside/reserve of the “economically given social period,” which is the only site of politics.

51. Uno, “Rōdōryoku no kachi to kakaku” [The value and price of labor power], in vol. 4 of *UKC* (1974), 132.

52. Uno, “Rōdōryoku naru shōhin no tokushusei ni tsuite,” 497.

53. See the lecture of March 1, 1978, in Foucault, *Sécurité, territoire, population: Cours au Collège de France, 1977–1978* (Paris: Seuil/Gallimard, 2004), 195–232; *Security, Territory, Population*, trans. Graham Burchell (London: Palgrave, 2007), 191–226.

54. See Mita Sekisuke, *Uno riron to Marukusushugi keizaigaku* [Unoist theory and Marxist economics] (Tokyo: Aoki Shoten, 1968), 250–255.

55. Mita, *Uno riron to Marukusushugi keizaigaku*, 252.

56. Mita, *Uno riron to Marukusushugi keizaigaku*, 252–253.

57. Ōuchi Hideaki et al., eds., *Uno Kōzō: Chosaku to shisō* [Uno Kōzō: Work and thought] (Tokyo: Yūhikaku, 1979), 60.

58. Aoki Kōhei, “Komyunizumu kara komyunitarianizumu e: Gendai shakai tetsugaku ni okeru Marukusu, Uno riron no kōzō” [From communism to communitarianism: The structure of Marxist and Unoist theory in contemporary social philosophy], in *Marukusu riron no saikōchiku: Uno keizaigaku o dō ikasu ka* [The reconstruction of Marxist theory: How can Unoist economics be revived?], ed. Itō Makoto and Furihata Setsuo (Tokyo: Shakai Hyōronsha, 2000), 183.

59. Foucault, “Non au sexe roi,” in vol. 2 of *Dits et écrits*, 265.

60. Uno, “Genjō bunseki ni tsuite,” [On conjunctural analysis], in *Gendai Nihon sangyō hattatsu-shi kenkyūkai* [Proceedings of the Research Group on the History of the Development of Contemporary Japanese Industry], February 1967, reprinted in supp. vol. [bekkan] of *UKC*, 48–51.

61. Uno, “Genjō bunseki ni tsuite,” 48.

62. Uno, “Genjō bunseki ni tsuite,” 48.

63. As Henri Lefebvre notes, “the idea of uneven development makes the general critique of the continuist (evolutionist) pattern of the process of becoming more precise, specific, and particularized. In our opinion, the implications of the idea of uneven development and the law derived from it have not yet been exhausted, particularly as regards everyday life. We have already suggested the hypothesis of a period not only where the hoe or the swing plough would coexist alongside interplanetary rockets, and where small farmers would continue to work the land by hand and go hungry while an ‘elite’ of technicians and managers would be exploring outer space, but also where a backward everyday life would coexist with a highly developed tech-

nology, in a way that would be difficult to bear. The situation of everyday life strikes us (unfortunately) as being a prime example of the law of uneven development. But the proposition can be reversed: the law of uneven development points to the possibility of an almost limitless range of human (social) situations at the very heart of economic and technological development, from the rearward to the front line of action, to use a military metaphor." Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, vol. 2, *Foundations for a Sociology of the Everyday*, trans. John Moore (London: Verso, 2002), 315–316. Some of the most incisive theoretical developments of this thesis have been made in particular by Harry Harootunian in thinking through the experience of modernity, everyday life, and uneven development in the Japanese social formation. See in particular *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000) and *History's Disquiet: Modernity, Cultural Practice, and the Question of Everyday Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

64. Uno, "Genjō bunseki ni tsuite," 51.

65. Foucault, "Theatrum philosophicum," in vol. 1 of *Dits et écrits*, 950.

66. Friedrich Nietzsche, "Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil der Historie für das Leben," in *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen II*, in vol. 1 of *Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980), 317.

67. Foucault, "Theatrum philosophicum," in vol. 1 of *Dits et écrits*, 950.

68. Foucault, "Table ronde du 20 mai 1978," in vol. 2 of *Dits et écrits*, 842.

69. Karl Marx, "Marginal Notes on Adolph Wagner's *Lehrbuch der politischen Ökonomie*," in vol. 24 of *MECW* (Moscow: Progress, 1989), 547, translation modified; "Randglossen zu Adolph Wagners *Lehrbuch der politischen Ökonomie*," in vol. 19 of *MEW*, 371.

70. Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 298.

71. Marx, *Das Kapital*, vol. 1 in *MEW*, vol. 23, 619; *Capital*, vol. 1 in *MECW*, vol. 35, 589.

72. Shimizu Masanori and Furihata Setsuo, eds., *Uno Kōzō no sekai: Marukusu riron no gendaiteki saisei* [The world of Uno Kōzō: Contemporary reanimations of Marxist theory] (Tokyo: Yūhikaku, 1983), 239. Emphasis mine.

73. Uno, "Rōdōryoku naru shōhin no tokushusei ni tsuite," 495.

74. Deleuze and Guattari, *Mille plateaux* (Paris: Mille, 1980), 71.

75. Foucault, "L'extension sociale de la norme," in vol. 2 of *Dits et écrits*, 77.

76. I owe the initial clue for this formulation to conversations with Naoki Sakai. I would like to take another opportunity to further develop this relation of the *muri* of the commodification of labor power and the concept of "irrational number."

77. Here we could recall the extremely important analysis of Tanabe Hajime on the concept of the "self-I" and "other-I" (*jiga* and *taga*). See Tanabe, "Zushiki 'jikan' kara zushiki 'sekai' e" [From the schema "time" to the schema "world"], in vol. 6 of *Tanabe Hajime zenshū* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1963), esp. 25–27.

78. Uno, *Keizai genron* (Iwanami zensho), 163–164.

79. Marx and Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*.

80. Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology* (London: Verso, 1999), 157.

81. See here Sandro Mezzadra, “Forces and Forms: Governmentality and Bios in the Time of Global Capital,” in Gavin Walker and Naoki Sakai, eds., “The End of Area: Biopolitics, Geopolitics, History,” special issue of *positions: asia cultures critique*, forthcoming.

82. Uno, “Keizaigaku ni okeru ronshō to jissshō” in vol. 4 of UKC (1973), 19.

83. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 in MECW, vol. 35, 609.

84. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse*, pt. 1, *Die Wissenschaft der Logik*, in vol. 8 of *Werke in zwanzig Bänden: Theorie-Werkausgabe*, 235 (sec. 114).

85. See Uno, chapter 1 of *Shihonron to shakaishugi* [Das Kapital and socialism], in UKC, vol. 9.

86. Badiou and Critchley, “Ours Is Not a Terrible Situation,” 363.

87. Badiou, *L'être et l'événement* (Paris: Seuil, 1988), 397–398.

88. See Uno, “Rōdōryoku naru shōhin no tokushusei ni tsuite.”

89. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 in MECW, vol. 35, 573; *Das Kapital*, vol. 1 in MEW, vol. 23, 598–599.

90. Uno, “Genjō bunseki ni tsuite,” 51.

91. Badiou and Balmès, *De l'idéologie* (Paris: Maspero, 1976), 67.

92. Badiou and Balmès, *De l'idéologie*, 67.

93. Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Program*, in vol. 24 of MECW, 88. *Kritik des Gothaer Programms*, in MEW, vol. 19).

Chapter Five: The Continent of History

1. On this phrase, see L. Althusser, “Lenin and Philosophy,” in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1971), 39; see also Althusser, “Philosophy as a Revolutionary Weapon” and “Preface to *Capital*, Volume 1,” in the same volume.

2. See Ishiko Yasukuni, *Rōnōha Marukusushugi*: Riron, hito, rekishi, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Shakai Hyōronsha, 2008), especially 233–236.

3. See here Hans-Georg Backhaus, “Zur logischen Misere der Nationalökonomie,” in *Dialektik der Wertform: Untersuchungen zur Marxschen Ökonomiekritik* (Freiburg: Ça ira Verlag, 1997).

4. Uno Kōzō, “Nōgyō mondai joron” [Prolegomena to the agrarian question], in vol. 8 of *Uno Kōzō chosakushū* [Collected works of Uno Kōzō (UKC)] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1974), 4.

5. On this point see in particular Ouchi Hideaki, “Uno keizaigaku no keisei: Nihon shihonshugi ronsō no shiyō” [The formation of Unoist economics: The sublation of the Debate on Japanese capitalism], in *Uno keizaigaku no kihon mondai* (Tokyo: Gendai hyōronsha, 1971), 8–54.

6. Uno, “Shihonshugi no seiritsu to nōson bunkai no katei” [The establishment of capitalism and the process of disintegration of the agrarian village], in vol. 8 of UKC, 24–25, my italics.

7. Uno, “Shihonshugi no seiritsu to nōson bunkai no katei,” 25.

8. Uno, "Shihonshugi no seiritsu to nōson bunkai no katei," 26.
9. Althusser, "Lenin and Philosophy," in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1971), 45.
10. Uno, "Iwayuru keizaigai kyōsei ni tsuite" [On so-called extra-economic coercion], in vol. 8 of UKC, 66–67.
11. Uno, "Iwayuru keizaigai kyōsei ni tsuite," in vol. 8 of UKC, 68, my italics.
12. Uno, "Waga kuni nōson no hōkensei" [The feudality of the Japanese rural village], in vol. 8 of UKC, 64–65.
13. Uno, "Shihonshugi no seiritsu to nōson bunkai no katei," 39.
14. Uno and Tohata Seiichi, *Nihon nōgyō no zenbō*, vol. 4, *Nihon shihonshugi to nōgyō* [Japanese capitalism and agriculture] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1960), 32, n. 1.
15. Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, in vol. 11 of Karl Marx, Frederick Engels: *Collected Works*, 50 vols. (MECW) (Moscow: Progress, 1979), 185; Marx, *Der achtzehnte Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte*, vol. 8 of Marx-Engels Werke, 40 vols. (MEW) (Berlin: Dietz, 1962) 196.
16. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Limits and Openings of Marx in Derrida," in *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (London: Routledge, 1993), 108, my emphasis.
17. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 in MECW, vol. 35 (New York: International Publishers, 1996), 185–186.
18. Marx, *Das Kapital*, vol. 1 in MEW, vol. 23, 189. Here we should note the strange sexual economy of Marx's use of the verb *enthüllen* (to reveal, to uncover), literally to "unsheath" (*Hülle*, "sheath"). Freud extensively utilizes this term in the sense of "uncovering" the repressed sexual psychic life of the hysteric, a term that resonates with the sense of revealing the sordid sexual practices hidden behind a façade. In this sense we should recall that this passage occurs precisely to alert us to the generative-renewing role of the "use" of labor power in capital's dynamics, itself a "scandalous," paradoxical, and yet constitutive moment that Marx's work is intended to "disclose." I owe thanks to Yutaka Nagahara for discussions on this point. We should also note that this term is central to Marx's own description of his project of critique: "to lay bare the economic law of motion of modern society" (*das ökonomische Bewegungsgesetz der modernen Gesellschaft zu enthüllen*). See Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 in MECW, vol. 35, 10; *Das Kapital*, vol. 1 in MEW, vol. 23, 15.
19. Marx, *Le Capital*, trans. M. J. Roy, entièrement révisée par l'auteur (Paris: Maurice Lachâtre et cie, 1872), 75.
20. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 in MECW, vol. 35, 186.
21. I do not take up here the many critical reappraisals of Uno's understanding of this "pure capitalism." Among a vast number of sources, see for example Iwata Hiroshi, *Marukusu keizaigaku* [Marxian economics], 2 vols. (Tokyo: Morita Shoten, 1967–1969); Mita Sekisuke, *Uno riron to Marukusushugi keizaigaku* [Unoist theory and Marxist economics] (Tokyo: Aoki Shoten, 1968); Satō Kinzaburō, *Shihonron to Uno keizaigaku* [Capital and Unoist economics] (Tokyo: Shinhyōron, 1968); Kaneko Haruo, *Kōza Marukusushugi kenkyū nyūmon* [Introduction to research in Marxism: Lectures], vol. 3 (Tokyo: Aoki Shoten, 1974); and Furihata Setsuo, ed., *Uno riron no gendankai* [The current stage of Unoist theory] (1979), vol. 1 of *Keizaigaku genriron: Ronsōshitteki kaimei*

[The principles of political economy: Explication in the history of debates] (Tokyo: Shakai Hyōronsha, 1979). The question of “pure capitalism” is here utilized simply as a lexical clue to the elucidation of the politicality of theory itself. I would like to take another opportunity elsewhere to revisit the world-history of the reception of Uno’s concept of “pure capitalism” from the viewpoint of the theory of crisis.

22. Uno, “Keizaigaku ni okeru ronshō to jissshō,” in vol. 4 of UKC (1974), 11.

23. Badiou, “The Ethic of Truths: Construction and Potency,” *Pli* 12 (2001), 252.

24. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon, 1972), 193.

25. Massimiliano Tomba, *Marx’s Temporalities* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 162.

26. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 in MECW, vol. 35, 165; Marx, *Das Kapital*, vol. 1 in MEW, vol. 23, 169.

27. Although it is not specifically cited in the original Japanese text, by the phrase *seishinteki ni gutaiteki na mono*, Uno is clearly referring to this highly particular term utilized by Marx (via Hegel) in the *Grundrisse* manuscripts. See Marx, *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*, vol. 42 of MEW (Berlin: Dietz, 1983), 35; Marx, *Economic Manuscripts of 1857–1858 (Grundrisse)*, in vol. 28 of MECW (Moscow: Progress, 1986), 38.

28. Uno, “Keizaigaku ni okeru ronshō to jissshō,” 18.

29. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 in MECW, vol. 35, 8; Marx, *Das Kapital*, vol. 1 in MEW, vol. 23, 12.

30. On the concept of drive, see chapter 3, note 20.

31. Uno, “Keizaigaku ni okeru ronshō to jissshō,” 19.

32. Uno, “Keizaigaku ni okeru ronshō to jissshō,” 12.

33. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1967), 34.

34. Deleuze and Guattari, “Geophilosophy,” in *What Is Philosophy?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 88.

35. Nagahara Yutaka, “Teikoku aruiwa gunji Baberu: Gurobarizeshon to sekai naisen,” *Gendai shisō* (Tokyo: Seidosha) 30, no. 1 (2002), 187. On the terms *exo-colonialization* and *endo-colonialization*, see Paul Virilio, *L’insécurité du territoire* (Paris: Stock, 1975).

36. Virilio, *The Information Bomb* (London: Verso, 2000), 145.

37. Uno, “Keizaigaku ni okeru ronshō to jissshō,” 17. Note that Uno extensively utilizes the original German terms *setzen* and *voraussetzen* in his text, so much so that he does not bother to translate them into Japanese but merely inserts them into his sentences.

38. Uno, “Keizaigaku ni okeru ronshō to jissshō,” 19.

39. Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology* (London: Verso, 1999), 238.

40. Hans-Georg Backhaus, “Between Philosophy and Science: Marxian Social Economy as Critical Theory,” in *Open Marxism I: History and Dialectics*, ed. W. Bonefeld, R. Gunn, and K. Psychopedis (London: Pluto Press, 1992), 56.

41. Uno, “Benshōhōteki mujun ni tsuite” [On dialectical contradiction], in vol. 10 of UKC (1974), 426–427.

42. On this point, see Yutaka Nagahara, *Warera kashi aru mono tachi: Han-shihonron*

no tame ni [We, the defective commodities: For an analytics of anti-“capital”/ism] (Tokyo: Seidosha, 2008), and particularly his analysis of the “defective circle” that must be repeatedly traced by means of the form of the commencement. Nagahara’s thesis—an absolutely original one that opens numerous theoretical possibilities for us—is that there is a formal order of three divergent forms of commencement or beginning in Marx. These three forms in turn can be related back to the three forms of the relative surplus population (floating, latent, and stagnant) outlined by Marx, another line of entry into the question of “origin.”

43. See here Uno, “Waga kuni nōson no hōkensei” [The feudality of the Japanese rural village], in vol. 8 of UKC, 53–61.

44. Uno, “Waga kuni nōson no hōkensei,” 55.

45. Deleuze and Guattari, *Mille plateaux* (Paris: Seuil, 1980), 71.

46. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 in MECW, vol. 35, 87; Marx, *Das Kapital*, vol. 1 in MEW, vol. 23, 90.

47. Backhaus, “Between Philosophy and Science,” 60.

48. Deleuze, *L’île déserte: Textes et entretiens 1953–1974* (Paris: Minuit, 2002), 328.

49. Marx, *Das Kapital*, vol. 1 in MEW, vol. 23, 764.

50. Uno, *Kyōkōron* [Theory of crisis], in vol. 5 of UKC (1974), 141.

51. Uno, “Kyōkō no hitsuzensei wa ika ni shite ronshō sareru beki ka” [How can the necessity of crisis be proven?], in vol. 4 of UKC, 144.

52. Lacan, “La science et la vérité,” in vol. 2 of *Écrits* (Paris: Seuil, 1966), 349–350.

53. Marx, *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*, in MEW, vol. 42, 370–371; Marx, *Economic Manuscripts of 1857–1858* (Grundrisse), vol. 28 of MECW (Moscow: Progress, 1986), 386–387.

54. Marx, *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*, in MEW, vol. 42, 575; Marx, *Economic Manuscripts of 1857–1858* (Grundrisse), in vol. 29 of MECW (Moscow: Progress, 1987), 64.

55. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 in MECW, vol. 35, 140; Marx, *Das Kapital*, vol. 1 in MEW, vol. 23, 144.

56. Marx, *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*, in vol. 42 of MEW, 520; Marx, *Economic Manuscripts of 1857–1858* (Grundrisse), in vol. 29 of MECW, 8.

57. Marx, *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*, in vol. 42 of MEW, 528; Marx, *Economic Manuscripts of 1857–1858* (Grundrisse), in vol. 29 of MECW, 16.

58. Marx, *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*, in vol. 42 of MEW, 365; Marx, *Economic Manuscripts of 1857–1858* (Grundrisse), in vol. 29 of MECW, 378–379.

59. Étienne Balibar, “Sur la dialectique historique: Quelques remarques critiques à propos de Lire le capital,” in *Cinq études du matérialisme historique* (Paris: Maspero, 1974), 213.

60. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 in MECW, vol. 35, 375–376, n. 2; Marx, *Das Kapital*, vol. 1 in MEW, vol. 23, 393, n. 89.

61. Uno, *Shihonron ni manabu* (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1975), 41.

62. Uno, “Keizaigaku ni okeru ronshō to jishō,” 17.

63. The epigraph to this section is from V. I. Lenin, “Plan for a Report on the Seventh (April) All-Russia Conference of the RSDLP(B) at a Meeting of the Petro-

grad Organisation, May 8 (21), 1917,” in vol. 36 of *Collected Works of V. I. Lenin* (Moscow: Progress, 1971), 451.

64. Backhaus, “On the Dialectics of the Value-Form,” Thesis Eleven 99 (1980), 104.

Chapter Six

1. Max Weber, *The Methodology of the Social Sciences* (New York: Free Press, 1949), 94. The epigraph to this chapter is from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press: 1977), 229.

2. Weber, *Methodology of the Social Sciences*, 95.

3. Karatani, *Sekaishi no kōzō* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2010); *The Structure of World History: From Modes of Production to Modes of Exchange*, trans. Michael Bourdagh (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014).

4. See *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974),

5. Karatani, *Sekaishi no kōzō*, 316–317; *Structure of World History*, 212.

6. This text was unpublished in Uno’s lifetime and only republished in Uno, *Shihonron to watashi* [Capital and myself] (Tokyo: Ochanomizu Shobō, 2008), 271–272.

7. Uno, “Waga kuni nōson no hōkensei,” in vol. 8 of *Uno Kōzō chosakushū* [Collected works of Uno Kōzō] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1974), 60–61.

8. Karatani, *Sekaishi no kōzō*, 316–317; *Structure of World History*, 213.

9. Karatani, *Sekaishi no kōzō*, 322; *Structure of World History*, 216. My emphasis.

10. G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 98.

11. Ōtsuka Hisao, “1954 nen tochi seidoshigakkai shūki gakujuutsu taikai, kyōtsū rondai: Hōkensei kara shihonshugi e no ikō—toku ni ‘nōgyō kyōdōtai’ to no kanren ni oite” [Keynote speech at the 1954 conference of the Association of Agrarian Studies: The transition from feudalism to capitalism, specifically in relation to the concept of “the agrarian community”], in vol. 7 of *Ōtsuka Hisao chosakushū* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1969), 261.

12. For discussions on Yamada’s theory of “semifeudalism” and the concept of “quasi cause,” I owe thanks to Yutaka Nagahara.

13. Jason Read, “A Universal History of Contingency: Deleuze and Guattari on the History of Capitalism,” *Borderlands e-journal* 2, no. 3 (2003).

14. Ōtsuka, “Yamada riron to hikaku keizai-shigaku” [Yamada’s theoretical work and comparative economic historiography], *Tochi seidoshigaku* [Journal of agrarian studies] 93 (October 1981), 24.

15. Iwata Hiroshi, *Sekai shihonshugi* [World capitalism] (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1964), 12.

16. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 in Karl Marx, *Frederick Engels: Collected Works*, 50 vols. (MECW), vol. 35 (New York: International Publishers, 1996), 180.

17. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 in MECW, vol. 35, 752.

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