

# Love Thy Neighbor as Thyself?!

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## *The Neighbor Inside Me*

As a result, their neighbour is for them not only a potential helper or sexual object, but also someone who tempts them to satisfy their aggressiveness on him, to exploit his capacity for work without compensation, to use him sexually without his consent, to seize his possessions, to humiliate him, to cause him pain, to torture and to kill him. (Freud 2001, p. 111)

Freud wrote these gloomy lines in 1930, but they read as if they could have been written today. In Freud, they are part of his discussion of the Biblical commandment to “Love thy neighbor as thyself.” Together with the commandment “Love thine enemies,” which he considered to be “the same thing,” Freud found it “incomprehensible,” inhuman even. Why should we *love* our neighbor—a perfect stranger? But above all: How on earth are we to achieve this? Particularly, if we take the word “love” seriously, i.e., in the strong sense of the term.

Let us now very briefly sketch out Lacan’s very powerful intervention into this debate, providing us with important tools with which to think the problem of the neighbor, or better, the *concept* of the neighbor—the concept that aims to explain what seems an almost inevitable hostility, an aggression that springs up every time we come too close to our neighbor. “The neighbor” refers neither simply to the person next door, nor to someone “close to us,” as we say. Any sort of stranger can be our neighbor. It is well known

that Lacan linked this concept to a singular structure that he called *extimité*, “extimacy,” standing for: an excluded interiority or an included exteriority; an intimate exteriority or external/foreign intimacy, transversal to the divide between Outside and Inside; a coincidence of something most intimate, intrinsic to me, with something most external and foreign; something that belongs to me, yet at the same time strikes me as utterly foreign, disgusting even. A very good and plastic example of this structure and its effects was provided by Slavoj Žižek: say that you spit into a (clean) glass; it proves very hard to then take a sip of the saliva, to drink it. In other terms: in this passage, something that, only a moment ago has been an integral part of you, something intimately yours, proper or “clean,” is transformed into a foreign object of utmost disgust.

The structure just described lies at the very heart of the relationship between the subject and the Other (and others), which is not simply a relationship of symmetrical mirroring, but involves a much more complex dialectics: asymmetry, overlapping, and an irreducible dimension of an object. But if this structure is always there, it is not always visible. The injunction to love, or simply love as such, involves my going beyond a certain imaginary limit that separates me from, and links me to, the other as my *semblable* (to use the French term), that is, the other as my “fellow man,” who fundamentally resembles me.

In the *Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, Lacan comments extensively, and across different registers, on the commandment in question. He also comments on Freud’s passionate reaction to it. He attributes Freud’s aversion to his belonging to the horizon of Aristotelian ethics and conception of the Good. Freud belongs to this tradition on account of how he formulates his famous “pleasure principle,” which automatically regulates the course taken by our mental events. The pleasure principle is, of course, not about hedonism, about actively striving for pleasure, but rather about *regulating* and diminishing the tension (i.e., any kind of excess) experienced as unpleasurable.

What defines the traditional, Aristotelian morality is precisely the link between pleasure (in the above described regulative sense) and the Good. Yet, as Lacan points out, this conception comes at the price of omitting, forgetting, repressing an entire field that escapes this kind of regulation, while following its own very different logic. Freud already saw this quite clearly: the pleasure principle often fails at playing its supposedly universal role, and people are driven by things that clearly contradict it (for example, they seem compelled to repeat distinctively traumatic experiences). This led Freud to investigate what he would call the realm “beyond the pleasure principle,” linking it to a destructive “death drive” as opposed to the pleasure principle. However, such a (simple) opposition proved untenable already for Freud, and Lacan rejected it in its entirety.

It seems that we have two possibilities here: We can postulate—as Freud did at some point—the coexistence of two competing principles (“Eros” and “Thanatos,” or life and death drives) in any human being. Or, instead of saying that the pleasure principle does not exhaust the economic side of our mental life, and hence introducing yet another, second principle, we can conclude that the pleasure principle itself is far less straight, unambiguous, and unproblematic than it seems. This was basically Lacan’s move, or conclusion: the “beyond” against which the pleasure principle is supposed to protect us actually constitutes its own “impossible” excluded kernel: the whole economy of the pleasure principle is based upon an impossible, excluded Thing (*das Ding*) at its very heart. And this economy is precisely what is also at stake in the Aristotelian notion of the “golden mean,” of “moderateness,” and its link with the Good. It is in this excluded, “extimate” place of the Thing that Lacan (in *Ethics of Psychoanalysis*) situates his concept of *jouissance*, or enjoyment, as distinctive from pleasure. Enjoyment is something like a return of the “impossible Thing” in the middle of our everyday life. “Enjoyment,” too, doesn’t refer to hedonism or debauchery, but functions in Lacan as the name

for, and the concept of, the *structural effect produced by going beyond*, “*traversing*” a certain limit.

In this sense, aggression is not rooted in another, separate principle—separate from the pleasure principle—but constitutes its other side, its inherent contradiction; it is the indicator and symptom of its own limit and cost. From this perspective, the pleasure principle is not so much a primary, original principle of the functioning of our psychical apparatus, as it is already a defense formation built around a negativity, or “impossibility,” situated at its own core.

Lacan also insists on how Freud, in his reading of the commandment to “love thy neighbor,” emphasizes the term love. In the commandment in question, it is precisely love that breaks the barrier (or breaks the defense) of the pleasure principle as the fence, or wall, separating us from the beyond, which appears to us as Evil. But what is this Evil? As we have seen, Lacan calls it enjoyment, *jouissance*, as the structural effect of this very breaking of the barrier. In other words, the “pleasure principle,” and with it the traditional Aristotelian notion of the Good, indicate, even create, a certain beyond against which they protect us, keeping us on the “safe” side of it.

It is here that the question of the neighbor comes in: in the injunction to *love* your neighbor, the neighbor gives body to this beyond, thus triggering the question of Evil which sort of inevitably dwells in, or inhabits, this neighbor. But—and this is Lacan’s *coup de force*—if this is the case, then it also dwells within me. “And what is more of a neighbour to me than this heart within which is that of my *jouissance* and which I don’t dare to go near? For as soon as I go near it [...], there rises up the unfathomable aggressivity from which I flee [...].” (Lacan 1992, p. 186).

In other terms, and simply put, it is structurally, necessarily unclear whether this excluded kernel of my being is in fact mine or my neighbor’s. For it implies, by definition, the topology of “extimacy.” And this precisely is the fundamental structure and difficulty that psychoanalysis has to confront, think, and come to grips with in a better and also more efficient way than by

reinforcing, and taking shelter behind, the pleasure principle, itself constituted precisely on the repression of this dimension.

### *Neoliberalism and Love*

Let us now jump from psychoanalysis to a very different source, namely to the way in which the commandment to love one's neighbor is commented upon in contemporary (Western) conservative politics, from moderate conservatives to the extreme right wing. The commandment at stake obviously confronts this politics with a considerable problem: on the one hand, it has to endorse it, since a crucial element of its position, its ideological legitimation and rhetoric, is the reference to Christianity as the core of "our Western identity." On the other hand, the commandment is seen as possibly ceding far too much to the neighbor as our Other, and hence as a serious threat to this same identity. This became particularly palpable and explicit with the 2015 "refugee crisis." Here's a very nice and eloquent example. When in October 2015 Tony Abbott (the prime minister of Australia at the time) delivered "The Margaret Thatcher Lecture"<sup>1</sup> in London, he also said the following:

Naturally, the safety and prosperity that exists almost uniquely in Western countries is an irresistible magnet. These blessings are not the accidents of history but the product of values painstakingly discerned and refined, and of practices carefully cultivated and reinforced over hundreds of years. // Implicitly or explicitly, the imperative to "love your neighbour as you love yourself" is at the heart of every Western polity. It expresses itself in laws protecting workers, in strong social security safety nets, and in the readiness to take in refugees. It's what makes us decent and humane countries as well as prosperous ones, but—right now—this wholesome

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<sup>1</sup> The Margaret Thatcher Center organizes these lectures on an annual basis, inviting mostly "distinguished" conservative politicians.

instinct is leading much of Europe into catastrophic error [...]. // [N]o country or continent can open its borders to all comers without fundamentally weakening itself. This is the risk that the countries of Europe now run through misguided altruism. (Abbott 2015)

Before attempting to follow the meanders of this argument, it is only fair to mention that the Australian media met Tony Abbott's speech with—as one defender of Abbott put it—“a unanimous chorus of jeers and condemnation” (Myers 2015).

Christian commentators pointed out that Jesus's command to love our neighbor lies at the heart of Christian morality, and we can't simply set it aside when it happens to prove costly or inconvenient for us. Catholic priests stated that they were “absolutely astounded” and “appalled” by Abbott's remarks. On social media, the following post on Facebook allegedly summed up the general feeling: “He [that is Abbott] is SOOOOO going to hell.”

But in Christian Europe, this sentiment did not prevail, and it was particularly the self-proclaimed *Christian* politicians that had recourse to the closing of the borders, to building walls or barbed-wire fences, and to implementing a severe—why not put it like this?—“screw thy neighbor” legislation.

What exactly did Abbott preach in London? He did not reject the Christian commandment to love your neighbor, which he recognized “at the heart of every Western polity,” instead preaching a *moderate, reasonable, modest* usage of this commandment. But of course you should love your neighbor; but do so reasonably, not too much, not too many, not beyond a certain limit. We could say that Abbott preached for properly Christian ethics to cede its place to the Aristotelian ethics of proper measure. Or, to put it in a different kind of formula, he called for “love” to be substituted by “altruism,” that is, by the correct, and not “misguided” altruism. If we jump back to Freud for just a moment, we can see all this clearly.

Freud was not religious; however, he did see clearly that to love your neighbor *beyond* reciprocity, beyond the limit of convenience and of a pleasurable exchange *was the whole point* of this

commandment. And this whole point is precisely what Abbott now designates as “misguided altruism” (which, by the way, is an interesting definition of love: love is a misguided altruism, it is altruism turning askew).

Even if perhaps not visible at first sight, this move is something that rhymes profoundly with the capitalist market economy (and ideology). In the capitalist discourse, the emphasis on philanthropy and humanitarian “projects” is itself not anecdotal, but here we’re referring more specifically to the logic that governs the field of goods as commodities, and their association with the Good in the moral sense of the term.

Jeremy Bentham formulated his famous principle of utility as promoting “the greatest good for the greatest number.” This (moral) principle has often been, and continues to be, criticized as something that inevitably comes up against the demands of my egoism: psychological egoism rules out acting in such a way as to promote overall well-being when the latter is incompatible with one’s own. Lacan, on the other hand, and much more interestingly, pointed out that this objection to Bentham was misplaced and insufficient:

My egoism is quite content with a certain altruism, altruism of the kind that is situated on the level of the useful. [...] // It is a fact of experience that what I want is the good of others in the image of my own. That doesn’t cost so much. What I want is the good of others provided that it remain in the image of my own. (Lacan, 1992, p. 187)

Altruism and egoism combine without a problem, as long as we are in the realm of goods. The limit of my good is not simply the good of the other, or of others. “It is in the nature of the good to be altruistic. But that’s not the love of thy neighbor” (ibid., p. 186). So here we come back to the difference between *altruism* as fully compatible with the field of (the) good(s), and *love* as situated beyond a certain limit of the calculus of the good, pleasure, and reciprocity.

Here's Lacan's colorful explication:

As long as it's a question of the good, there's no problem; our own and our neighbor's are of the same material. Saint Martin shares his cloak, and a great deal is made of it. Yet it is after all a simple question of training; material is by its very nature made to be disposed of—it belongs to the other as much as it belongs to me. We are no doubt touching a primitive requirement in the need to be satisfied here, for the beggar is naked. But perhaps over and above that need to be clothed, he was begging for something else, namely, that Saint Martin either kill him or fuck him. In any encounter there's a big difference in meaning between the response of philanthropy and that of love. (Lacan 1992, p. 186)

“Either kill him or fuck him”—first, we should be careful not to take these examples as designating an *objective* limit with a preestablished list of things that can be shared or exchanged, on the one side, and, on the other, a list of things that cannot. For although this difference, this dividing line certainly (and structurally) always exists, in concrete historical (cultural, economic, social) circumstances things pass from one side to the other following all sorts of conditions. So when Lacan says: “Imagine that he would ask you to kill him or fuck him,” he is doing two things at the same time: 1) He chooses a striking, received example of the difference or limit between the pleasure principle and its possible “beyond,” and 2) he points out that this *limit* (whenever and wherever it happens to appear) is precisely the point where the structure of fantasy, *our* fantasy, comes into play.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> He explicates this point in *Television*, when commenting on his prophesy of the rise of racism. When asked: “What gives you the confidence to prophesy the rise of racism? And why the devil do you have to speak of it?” he answers: “Because it doesn't strike me as funny and yet, it's true. With our jouissance going off track, only the Other is able to mark its position, but only in so far as we are separated from this Other. Whence certain fantasies—unheard of before the melting pot.” (Lacan 1990, p. 32)

For example: Although it can be factually true that Muslim culture has a different idea of manhood and womanhood than “our” Christian culture, the moment we start imagining what “these Muslim men would do to our women,” this is no longer about any factual difference; the structure of fantasy, of *our* fantasy, is already fully operative—which is to say that with these fantasies it is our own *jouissance* that we attempt to control, regulate, keep at bay.

The capitalist discourse—despite emphasizing individualism and “egoism”—does not contradict a certain kind of altruism, which Lacan also called “humaniterity” (*humanitaire*). What is a good? A good is something that can be divided, distributed, exchanged, and our society (or rather our economy) has brought this to its peak: a good is everything that subscribes, in principle, to a universal equivalent. This is the definition of the structure of (the) good(s). We are not indulging in cheap moralizing criticism of our times—this is indeed meant as a definition in the strict philosophical, logical sense of the word. It is in the nature of a good that it subscribes to a general equivalent. Otherwise, it is not a good. But love—that’s an entirely different matter. Therefore (first consequence), love is not a good. (And we can indeed see an ideological depreciation of love growing fast in our societies today.)

But let us return to Tony Abbott’s speech. We could say that he is quite right in claiming that the commandment to love your neighbor “expresses itself in laws protecting workers, in strong social security safety nets, and in the readiness to take in refugees” (Abbott 2015). What is bizarre about this claim, however, is that what Abbott describes here is usually associated with the politics of the Left, and criticized as such by the conservative Right to which he belongs.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the fact that the quote is from Abbott’s “Margaret Thatcher Lecture” cannot but strike us as doubly perverse.

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<sup>3</sup> The Liberal Party of Australia that Abbott had led at the time of his speech is a center-right conservative liberal party.

As a matter of fact, Margaret Thatcher turns out to be a very good lead when it comes to researching the destiny of the neighbor in conservative neoliberal politics. In the passage from the 1987 interview in which she launched the (in)famous thesis that “there is no such thing as society,” thus waging a very frontal attack on the “laws protecting workers,” and particularly on “strong social security safety nets,” the word neighbor appears twice. People, Thatcher says,

are casting their problems on society and who is society? There is no such thing! There are individual men and women and there are families and no government can do anything except through people and people look to themselves first. It is our duty to look after ourselves and then also to help look after our neighbour and life is a reciprocal business and people have got the entitlements too much in mind without the obligations, because there is no such thing as an entitlement unless someone has first met an obligation and it is, I think, one of the tragedies in which many of the benefits we give, which were meant to reassure people that if they were sick or ill there was a safety net and there was help [...]. That was the objective, but somehow there are some people who have been manipulating the system and so some of those help and benefits that were meant to say to people: “All right, if you cannot get a job, you shall have a basic standard of living!” but when people come and say: “But what is the point of working? I can get as much on the dole!” You say: “Look! It is not from the dole. It is your neighbour who is supplying it [...].” (Thatcher 1987, pp. 29–30)

The neighbor first appears in a strangely shameless reversal of the biblical commandment, considering that the lines come from a devoted Christian: “It is our duty to look after ourselves and then also to help look after our neighbour” (ibid., p. 30). Furthermore, the commandment is said to be about reciprocity, exchange, commerce. The fact that this biblical commandment presents her with a serious and confusing problem was openly admitted by Thatcher on another occasion, when she stated:

I confess that I always had difficulty with interpreting the Biblical precept to love our neighbours “as ourselves” until I read some of the words of C.S. Lewis. He pointed out that we don’t exactly love *ourselves* when we fall below the standards and beliefs we have accepted. Indeed we might even hate ourselves for some unworthy deed. (Thatcher 1988, p. 2)

That is a very interesting approach to interpreting the commandment at stake. According to this interpretation, the commandment doesn’t imply that we should *always* love our neighbors, or that we should love them unconditionally. Through a rather banal psychologizing maneuver, the words “as ourselves” are used to relativize the commandment, to supply a justification for not obeying it. We don’t always love ourselves, and hence we don’t always need to love our neighbor. It’s as simple as that. And so the Thatcher-Abbott axiom is born: *Of course* we shall love our neighbor, *but...* there is a limit! Here we can fully appreciate the difference between Freud’s honesty and the manipulative opportunism of the Thatcher-Abbott position. Freud doesn’t say that the commandment at stake is basically good, but sometimes too demanding and excessive, and that in these cases we can simply ignore it. No; Freud claims that it is basically horrifying, “impossible” —and hence an important source of “civilization’s discontent.” And Lacan’s criticism of Freud in this point is also an acknowledgement of Freud’s honesty: Freud saw very well that what is at stake in *loving* your neighbor aims to surpass the neighbor as our symmetrical, resembling fellow-man, and involves our confronting precisely what strikes us as most *foreign*, heterogeneous. If anything, *this* is the radical stake involved in the “Christian legacy.” The Thatcher-Abbott position, on the other hand, is essentially opportunistic: it has no trouble subordinating the “Christian legacy,” which serves as its legitimation, to its own, very profane, everyday politico-ideological agenda.

“Neighbor” reappears at the end of the Thatcher quote, this time as the “abused” neighbor: if you are on the dole, you are

effectively stealing from your neighbor. Or, to put it the other way around: people on the dole are bad neighbors, parasitic neighbors, living at your expense. Like society, the dole, too, does not really exist: it is a term (or “ideology”) that miss-presents the actual relation between real people.

Thatcher’s attack on the welfare state was also (and perhaps primarily) an attack on something else: on love and solidarity among neighbors *as a social form*, and as based on social (symbolic) mediation. The welfare state or “institutional solidarity” is, among other things, a depersonalized love for one’s neighbor. It is a “delegated” love, comprised of many social advantages that come with this delegation. Can *love* for your neighbor be “impersonal”? At the level of society, it can only be such. But the issue is not concerned simply with the opposition, or difference, between the personal, or individual, and the social. It actually follows from Lacan’s treatment of the question of the neighbor that even at its most personal the love for your neighbor always involves a depersonalized, “inhuman” dimension, stripped of ordinary feelings. Love for your neighbor actually always involves a relation with an “inhuman partner.”

We could also put it like this: The dole is there precisely so that “I” (as a person) am not required to love my neighbor (the accent in this negation is on the “I,” and not on “love”). The dole is a delegation of this love to a social infrastructure; it is the existence of this love in the form of social infrastructure. The welfare state loves your neighbor *for* you. If, in this context, we insist on the term “love,” it is because in many respects the “welfare state” stretches beyond reciprocity; it exists as something that transcends altruism as mirroring my own good in the image of my neighbor’s good. In this sense, the dole is not so much a safety net as it is an interface. Thatcher’s “nominalist” maneuver set out to re-personalize the dole, and to re-personalize it just enough for the people to see (or “recognize”) in it a neighbor, their own neighbor, shamelessly enjoying at their expense. Let’s put a face

on the dole. What does the dole with a human face look like? Well, it looks like an Evil neighbor.

But that's only a part of the (neoliberal) story. On the one side, this is what people who have jobs, and are not on the dole or any other "social benefits," should *feel*. Here, it's all very personal. On the other side, i.e., on the side of the receivers, it's a very different story. There is no question of getting personal here; on the contrary, the purely and extremely non-personal, bureaucratic net makes sure that you don't get to talk meaningfully to any person. Ken Loaches' film *I, Daniel Blake* (2016) is a brilliant, poignant rendition of this. If you require the dole, you are confronted with impenetrable bureaucratic procedures and incomprehensible gibberish deprived of all human feeling and common sense. All of this is there so as to *prevent abuse*, of course, that is, to *protect* those who work from those who have lost it and need help. In other words, there is a safety net all right, only that now it serves to protect those who don't particularly need protection. It doesn't protect those who remain on the outside, but those who are on the inside.

This particular kind of wall that is easily penetrable, transparent, as if inexistent, and at the same time utterly impenetrable and non-transparent, is indeed one of the most salient topological figures of our times, and of the functioning of late capitalism.

Therefore, the discussion of the status of the neighbor has to also be approached from within its historical and economic context, so that the specificity of the latter is taken into account. For example: within the capitalist economy (and its form of value), proximity is not the opposite of alienation, but rather the form of its appearance. In our socio-economic order, the place of maximum proximity is not, say, the neighborhood, but the (now global) *market*: it is there that our most intimate and precious possession (our labor power as *value*, our value as embodied in the products of our labor) mingles shamelessly with other people's intimate possessions and values, is compared to them, competes

with them, gets exchanged for them. This is not an immediate bodily proximity, but rather the proximity of our value, of our surplus-value.

This is also why Lacan could predict, back in 1967: “Our future as common markets will be balanced by an increasingly hard-line extension of the process of segregation” (Lacan 1995, p. 12). That is the case because the market is the place of compulsory, structural proximity. It has often been pointed out that, while globalization is all about the mobility of capital, it is much less about mobility of the people. Yet, to be more precise, we should add that the opposition here is not simply between capital and people, but rather between people and “something in people more than people” (our “value” as labor power), with the latter being situated outside ourselves, on the side of capital, its accumulation and global circulation, and hence subjected to its radical abstraction.<sup>4</sup>

The growing sense among the people that they are worth nothing, or very little, is directly dependent on the capitalist ontology in which being is value. We are reduced to nothing but value. A doubtful privilege indeed, as Marx already knew very well: to be the producer of value is not a blessing, but rather a curse.

### *The Doubtful Privilege of Being Nothing but Value*

In his recent work, David Harvey has proposed a very elaborate reading of the Marxist theory of value, that is, of Marx’s analysis

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<sup>4</sup> Many of today’s nationalist and identitarian movements are a response to this: they are attempts to situate our (surplus) value elsewhere—in our bodies (the basis of racism, which is not necessarily of the same kind as the past “hierarchical” racisms), in our nation or our national identity (which makes us unique). It is also this radical abstraction as the form of our value that accounts for the extreme sensitivity to the *bodies* of the Other, to other bodies, which strike us as too full of everything, too full of some menacing kind of *jouissance*.

of the form of value that characterizes capitalism, and of its implications.<sup>5</sup> For Marx, value is not something that gets created in the process of exchange (hence the famous “labor theory of value”), but this does not mean that it is simply intrinsic to commodities. The value in capitalism is being constituted—Harvey claims—in an ongoing dialectic of value and anti-value or non-value. Non-value is an intrinsic moment of creation of value, but also its weak point. Whenever capital takes on a particular form (be it as a production process, as a product waiting to be sold, as a commodity circulating in the hands of a merchant capitalist, or as money waiting to be transferred or reinvested) capital is “virtually devalued.” Capital lying “at rest” in any of these states is variously termed “negated,” “fallow,” “dormant,” or “fixated.” Capital is value only when it circulates, passes from these to “active” states. In this respect, anti-value signals the potential for breakdown in the continuity of capital circulation. It prefigures how capital’s crisis-tendencies can take different forms and move around from one moment (e.g. production) to another (e.g. realization). This insight is crucial. For, as Marx has also pointed out, crises in capitalism do not necessarily spell the end of capitalism, but rather set the stage for its renewal. It is here that we observe most clearly the dialectical role of anti-value in the reproduction of capital. It has to take place in order for capital to be reborn in a modified form. But the reconstitution of capital is also insecure and has its *limits*. An accumulation of debts (claims on future value production), for example, may outrun the capacity to produce and realize values and surplus-values in the future.

In other words, anti-value (or non-value) can constitute a crisis as precisely the productive, “propelling” point of capitalism, but it is also the point where the latter is most vulnerable, prone

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<sup>5</sup> For a detailed reading of this see Žižek 2017, pp. 175–223. Žižek also quotes extensively from Harvey’s as of yet unpublished manuscript (“Marx and the Labor Theory of Value”), which I am also referencing here. See also Harvey 2017.

to collapse under the dead weight of anti-value. On that basis, Harvey dismisses the political relevance of the appeals to include non-productive labor as non-value (for example, unpaid domestic labor) into value-production. Granting wages for housework, if we were able to implement it, would simply reassure us that household labors can in principle be integrated into the capitalist mode of production. A similar logic is at work in the appeals to integrate the free gifts of nature into the stream of value production by some arbitrary valuation devices (e.g., those proposed by environmental economists). This “amounts to nothing more than a sophisticated green-washing and commodification of a space from which a fierce attack upon the hegemony of the capitalist mode of production and its (and our) alienated relation to nature can be mounted” (Harvey, quoted in Žižek 2017, p. 182). In an attempt at being “just” and abolishing or at least diminishing exploitation, such attempts are in fact only reinforcing the expanding and all-consuming logic of commodification.

In other words, a counter-attack on capitalism cannot result from integrating more and more things—like domestic labor—into (the capitalist form of) value, but rather from a systematic and *organized* affirmation of non-value. It can result not from exempting some things from capital-related valorization, but by questioning this form itself, and constructing an alternative form. So Harvey.

How exactly this is to be done remains a question that is far more than merely theoretical, and the answer to which does not lie somewhere outside (and prior to) concrete and often unpredictable social circumstances and events that outline its possible occurrence.

But what, by way of conclusion, I would like to do here is point out some interesting parallels between Harvey’s (Marxian) notion of anti-value and what Lacan called *jouissance*. For we could say that *jouissance* is the psychoanalytic concept of anti-value. A crucial dimension of the capitalist form of value is that

it appears as an object of utility. These are the famous closing sentences of the first section of the first chapter of *Capital*:

Nothing can be a value without being an object of utility. If the thing is useless, so is the labour contained in it; the labour does not count as labour, and therefore creates no value. (Marx 1990, p. 131)

And now let us recall Lacan's canonical definition of *jouissance* from the seminar *Encore*: "Jouissance is what serves no purpose" (Lacan 1998, p. 3).

And yet, exactly like the Marxian non- or anti-value, enjoyment can also be integrated, pulled into the economy and dialectics of valorization, which is one of the reasons for Lacan's coming up with the term "surplus *jouissance*," coined in direct reference to the Marxian notion of "surplus-value." Similarly to the way in which this happens with anti-value, *jouissance* can also be caught in the discourse as the very *source* of value. This is a historic occurrence which Lacan relates to the rise of the "capitalist discourse."

[T]he important point is that on a certain day surplus *jouissance* became calculable, could be counted, totalized. This is where what is called the accumulation of capital begins. (Lacan 2007, p. 177)

Or:

[T]he secret of the worker himself is to be reduced to being no longer anything but a value [sic!]. [...] [S]urplus *jouissance* is no longer surplus *jouissance* but is inscribed simply as a value to be inscribed in or deducted from the totality of whatever it is that is accumulating—what is accumulating from out of an essentially transformed nature. (Lacan 2007, pp. 80–81)

This very much echoes the transformation of anti-value into value, i.e. its "capitalization," in Harvey. Surplus-value is precisely a non-value that counts. When we say "non-value," this doesn't

mean that it is something intrinsically worthless, insignificant or inexistent; it means that it doesn't *count* as value, and then it starts to count. It is this permutation that generates new surplus-value. One of the main ways in which capital progresses is by incorporating more and more things ("unproductive labor") into the realm of value and its countability.

When Lacan says that we (as workers) have been reduced to nothing but value, this may sound paradoxical. Is value, and "being of value," not something good and positive? This is precisely the "obviousness" into which both Marx and Lacan sharply intervene. When our being becomes value, we are in for some nasty surprises. If we feel worthless, the answer does not lie in the attempt (and the competing) for higher valorization, but rather in getting out of the (capitalist) form of value and its own redoubled ideological valorization. But, of course, this is in no way easy, nor is it a "personal" matter. As Lacan put it when he recommended this as a possible way out: "[it] will not constitute progress, if it happens only for some" (Lacan 1990, p. 16).

What do we gain by this co-staging of *jouissance* and (anti-)value? For an orthodox Marxist, this may sound like an attempt at inscribing the Marxist historical theory into a certain eternal "psychology" of the human. That is not what we're suggesting. Two things deserve to be pointed out in this regard. Firstly, "libidinal" and social economies are far from being unrelated, and this relation works both ways: not only from the inside out (from the libidinal onto social economy), but also from the outside in: social economy determines many key parameters of our libidinal economy. Secondly, and even more importantly, psychoanalysis can help us understand a very important structural/topological feature of the (global) market, namely that the latter has become the universal point of our "extimacy." It is neither simply inside nor outside. We work, sweat and spit into its pot, and what we get in return looks sordid and impossible to swallow. Yet it is us, it is our most intimate being, our value; which makes it all the more unbearable.

And we could say that neighbors (“foreigners,” “immigrants”) appear, and are perceived today, as agents of this *extimate* point of the global market, as the “human face” of the faceless global capitalist economy.

The intensely discussed cultural differences function more and more as a handy and colorful veil that masks a much more disturbing *sameness*. A veil that makes it possible for us not to see, and to keep our distance from, something the reality of which is nevertheless closing in on us, namely that the worthless piece of shit out there is, in fact, ourselves.

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