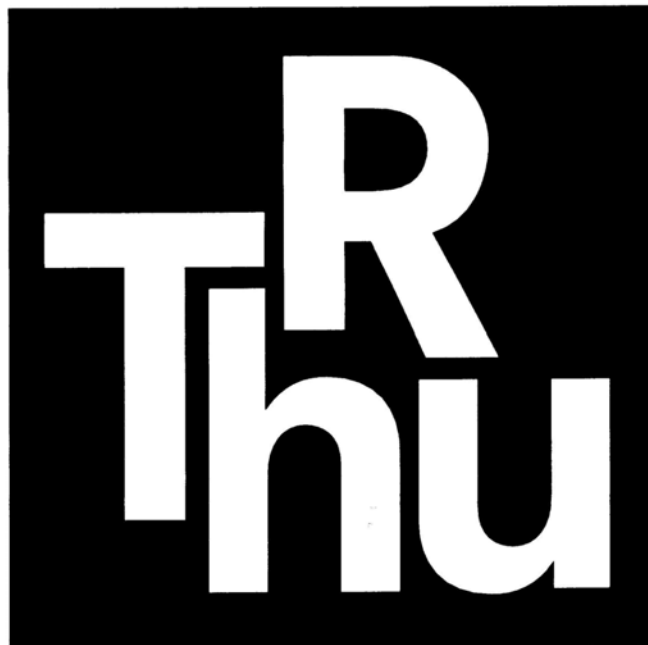


STOCK FOOTAGE AND SHOCK TACTICS.

Eisenstein, Marx and Filming *Capital*

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Between 1927 and 1929 Sergei Eisenstein (1898-1948) developed plans to film Karl Marx's *Das Kapital* (1867). Nothing came of it, but the project is still regarded as one of the most fascinating unrealised film projects in history. Eighty years later, the German filmmaker and writer Alexander Kluge returned to Eisenstein's abandoned project and made it the topic of a massive film essay, *Nachrichten aus der ideologischen Antike* (2008). Kluge does not seek to reconstruct Eisenstein's unfilmed film. Rather, he investigates the idea of filming *Das Kapital*, how Eisenstein might have done it, what it meant to Eisenstein and what both such a project and Marx's book itself can still mean to us today. In a deliberate echo of some of Eisenstein's methods Kluge doesn't present us with a linear documentary. Rather, he has created a plotless film that links together points of view and different fragments in a stream of consciousness style. Writing about both Eisenstein's and Kluge's films requires a similar approach. The present essay will therefore start with a discussion of Eisenstein's cinematic poetics and its relation to *Das Kapital*, and a discussion of Marx's central tenets in that book. From there we will create a rhizome of associations that will finally make the leap to another unrealised, or at least partially unrealised and dramatically abandoned Eisenstein film, the wonderful *Que Viva Mexico!* (1930-32), and try to look at it through the eyes of one who has read both *Das Kapital* and Eisenstein's earlier films. But the bottom line of this investigation and its occasional detours is a concern with the present: just like Kluge's film this essay wants to make *Das Kapital* work for us.

A Cinema of Attractions

Sergei Eisenstein (1898-1948) was a director of propaganda films. Eisenstein saw his art as subservient to political and ideological ideals. 'The young man who wrote in red ink "out of principle" proclaimed that cinema must be politically progressive and must steer the audience in a useful direction' (CE 112). Since Eisenstein's unrealised film of *Das Kapital* would have been the epitome of this belief it is necessary to get an idea of how Eisenstein saw cinema's ideological mission and how it was realised in the films he made in the period before he conceived of this film project. So we must start by discussing the films Eisenstein made in the 1920's. All of these were made for immediate political purposes and with the prospect of, as Eisenstein put it, 'irrevocably inculcating communist ideology into the millions' (in CE 33). His first endeavour, *Strike* (1924), was a cinematic essay on the October revolution. His second, and to many greatest, film was *The Battleship Potemkin* (1925). This film is in fact also part of an unrealised project, for Eisenstein had first set

out to create a grand epic celebrating the revolution of 1905, simply titled *The Year 1905*. The story of the Black Sea mutiny aboard the armored cruiser *Prince Potemkin* was to have been one sequence within that project, but once he started filming in Odessa Eisenstein decided to expand the episode to an independent film. The film 'aims at revolutionary pathos. "*Strike* is a treatise; *Potemkin* is a hymn"' (CE 62). In *Potemkin* Eisenstein created a style of 'heroic realism' that is meant to create a rousing effect in the spectator. In the same vein he made *October* (1927), a vast project that was hurried into production to coincide with the 7 November 1927 anniversary of the 1917 Bolshevik revolution. Eisenstein's final film of the decade, *Old and New* (1929) was a propagandistic effort to sell the agricultural collectivisations to the Russian people.

For Eisenstein the ideological mission of cinema could only succeed if it had an artistic form to match. So he sought to develop a cinematic language that might unify content (ideology) and form. This means that Eisenstein was not, as is sometimes claimed, a clear-cut formalist or Constructivist filmmaker. Form is always subordinate to content and the aim of content and form is to arouse emotion in the spectator, thus inspiring her with the ideologically correct ideas and feelings. With these beliefs Eisenstein was in line with the so-called *technè*-approach to cinema that saw film as a process of "making" guided by insight into its own practices. In a dialectical movement between practice and reflection the filmmaker sought knowledge of the principles underlying his artistic practices. These insights could then govern new practices which would in turn yield fresh insights and so on. 'As early as the mid-1920s [Eisenstein] was presenting himself as a coldly rationalistic creator for whom making a work of art was a problem in practical engineering, no more complicated in principle than designing a chicken coop' (CE 33). Eisenstein's concern with ideology lead him to subscribe to a form of 'plotless' cinema that did not rely on a linear exposition of plot and was much more dependant on purely cinematic forms of expression. It was a cinema that was heavily imbued with symbolism, metaphor and a visual lyricism that was aimed at developing ideas and ideological content. It included, amongst other things, the principle of 'typage' or using recognisable 'types' (the bureaucrat, the labourer, the proletarian) instead of complex characters. Another feature was the principle of 'overlapping editing' in which the same action was filmed from different points of view. These different points of view were later edited together so that the action is 'replayed' several times from a different vantage point, thus stretching time for maximum dramatic effect. Eisenstein's most famous use of this principle is the raising of the Nevsky bridge in *October*, where several details, such as a

woman's hair falling slowly from the raising bridge or a horse being lifted and dangling over the edge of the bridge, are prolonged in time. A third ingredient of plotless cinema is the use of motifs that cue the spectator to certain details and help generate an overall atmosphere in the film.

This cinematic language was not developed in a theoretical vacuum. Eisenstein came to cinema by way of the theatre. Before he started filming Eisenstein was involved in more than twenty theatre productions. One of the most notable was *The Wiseman* (1923), a three-act play in which the plot served as little more than a link between several episodes and actions that were designed to generate maximum effect in the audience, at one point even setting off firecrackers under the chairs on which the audience sat. The confusion created through clowning, abrupt shifts of action and acrobatic stunts was such that at the beginning of each performance a summary of the play had to be read out for the benefit of the audience. To promote the play Sergei Tretyakov published Eisenstein's manifesto 'Montage of Attractions' in his journal *Lef*. Remarkably, Eisenstein claims in this piece that the material the director works with is not the text of the play or the performance of the actors. The actual material being moulded is the audience. 'The basic materials of the theatre,' Eisenstein writes, 'arise from the spectator himself – and from our guiding of the spectator into a desired direction (or a desired mood), which is the main task of every functional theatre' (FS 230; also CE 115). Translated to cinema this means that 'every artistic decision is to be guided by how the film will affect the spectator. More drastically, Eisenstein views the spectator as putting up a material resistance that must be overcome by violence. The audience must be attacked; the work of art is a tractor plowing the spectator's psyche; the artist administers a series of "shocks"; Soviet cinema must crack skulls. Denigrating Vertov, Eisenstein asserts: "It is not a Cine-Eye that we need but a Cine-Fist". The spectator-as-material is worked, worked up, worked out, and worked over. In order to affect spectators emotionally and intellectually, Eisenstein argues, the production must manipulate their physical states' (CE 115-116). This means that art does not need to be mimetic, it does not need to faithfully represent reality, which is of course very good news for avant-garde artists. It also points the way to the concept of plotless cinema, where narration and traditional elements of romance or suspense are relegated to the background. The desired effects on the spectator are to be achieved through a series of 'attractions'. 'The attraction (in our diagnosis of the theatre) is every aggressive moment in it, i.e., every element of it that brings to light in the spectator those senses or that psychology that influence his experience – every element that can be verified and mathematically calculated to produce certain emotional

shocks in a proper order within the totality' (FS 230-231). 'Anything that jolts the spectator's sensory apparatus counts as an attraction, regardless of source or artistic status: Romeo's soliloquy, the colour of an actress's tights, a drum-roll. Traditional theatre buries its attractions within a plot structure, but the theatre of agitation can isolate and organise them for political ends. Attractions can be manifested in setting, lighting, or any other aspect of theatre (including firecrackers under the seats of the audience, as in *The Wiseman*)' (CE 117).

When Eisenstein turned to filmmaking with *Strike* he was keenly aware of the fact that the change of medium required a shift in practice. The theatre is an immediate medium in which the audience is addressed and affected directly. Film, on the other hand, is mediated. Eisenstein understood that film had to work through associations to achieve emotional power. That is to say that Eisenstein saw the need for attractions on a more complex level in cinema. Possibly influenced by Freud's theories of the subconscious Eisenstein insisted that film should develop a particular language in which the reflexes of the audience are affected through visual associations that 'allow the filmmaker to "condition" the audience's response by training pre-existing reflexes through the proper combination of stimuli. Moreover, processes of association can replace the romances and intrigues of traditional cinema. Eisenstein envisions the "plotless" agit-film as one dominated by chains of association triggering perceptual and emotional "shocks". This conception in turn hints at a rationale for his strategy of building a film through intertwining motifs' (CE 119). Editing becomes a central concern in this conception, because it is the method by which the attractions or shocks are associated in film. It is the editing that will determine whether the shocks will be effectively achieved. But Eisenstein goes one step further and wants to take the emotional shocks as a springboard to intellectual insight. 'In the late 1920s he expands his theoretical purview. Perceptual and emotional effect on the viewer remains central, but he also speculates on how cinema can provoke ideas. [...] And in his most celebrated theoretical sally of the period, he seeks to integrate his evolving notions of film form with current Soviet reflections on dialectical materialism. His thinking continues to be driven by the prescriptive concerns of agit-prop filmmaking. How can one impel the audience to entertain certain doctrines? The task of cinematography is "the deep and slow drilling in of conceptions"' (CE 123).

We must now give the briefest of sketches of how this relates to Eisenstein's theory of montage. Basically, Eisenstein develops a theory of montage that is dialectical, referring to Marxist and Hegelian dialectics. It is a conflict-based theory that sees different shots in a film as clashing together. If we were to put

this principle in its simplest form, it would look something like this: A-B, B-C, C-D, D-E, and so on. This means that there is conflict between shot A and shot B. But there is also conflict between shot B and shot C, and so on. In a dialectical movement thesis and anti-theses are lifted up ('*Aufhebung*' was Hegel's word for this process) in a synthesis. This would mean that out of the conflict of shots A and B the spectator somehow constructs a synthesis X. Out of the conflict between B and C a synthesis Y arises. And out of the conflict between C and D a synthesis Z emerges (and so on). But now a conflict presents itself between X and Y, and between Y and Z, so the process starts again. One sees the pyramidal structure that might develop out of this, culminating in one ultimate point of synthesis. As David Bordwell has pointed out, this is 'wildly implausible' as a theory of how spectators make sense of a movie (CE 130). But if we look at Eisenstein's films, the practice is somewhat less arcane without giving up the element of dialectics altogether. Eisenstein constructs his plotless films from a series of recurrent motifs and visual clues that link together, in the mind of the aroused spectator, different parts of the film, thus creating a unified (dialectical) viewing experience that gives such a terrific shock to our physiology that an outburst of emotion may trigger a new ideological insight. If we were to restate this in terms of Eisenstein's theory of montage, we have here reached the principle of 'overtonal montage', a theory that is based on a musical analogy. 'Eisenstein proposes that every cut juxtaposes two shots on the basis of some salient feature, the *dominant*. In cinematic montage, Eisenstein claims, the dominant is not absolute or stable. Shots A and B might be joined according to similarity of length, whereas shots B and C might take as the dominant factor the movement within the frame. Cutting on the dominant does not exhaust the editing possibilities. Every image bristles with "a whole complex of secondary stimulants". Joining shots A and B by similarity of length will demote all other factors, such as shot content and pictorial composition. Eisenstein names these secondary factors *overtones*. In acoustics, overtones are resonances produced by the dominant tone. Juxtaposing shots according to some dominant automatically creates elusive but rich relations among succeeding shots' overtones' (CE 131). It is clear that these overtones can become very salient if one looks at cinema from a Freudian point of view, taking into account the possible emotional effect of 'unconsciously seen' overtones in any given sequence of shots.

Armed with his theory of dominant and overtones in film shots, Eisenstein was well equipped to develop a sophisticated theory of montage. This theory distinguishes between five types of editing or montage. In *metric* montage editing will follow the

dominant of shot length, simply combining shots of identical length, thereby creating metre. 'Rhythmic montage is that which determines shot length by content' (CE 132) to create visual accents and rhythmic recurrence. In *tonal* montage editing will be steered by the tone of a shot, which is 'an expressive pictorial quality that pervades the shots' (ibid.). An example would be the fog sequence in *Potemkin* where the atmosphere of misty gloom pervades all the shots. 'All three previous types of montage concern editing on the basis of some dominant feature [...]. *Overtonal* montage, by contrast, involves "taking full account of all the stimulants in the shot"' (ibid.). It is here that a wide space opens to link shots on the basis of motifs, visual clues or other elements of form or content that might not always register directly, but will resonate unconsciously and be brought to mind again upon repetition. And obviously the skilled filmmaker will be able to combine different kinds of montage. It is for instance possible to cut on the dominant, or cut rhythmically, and at the same time introduce overtones (motifs, visual cues) that are repeated or echoed from shot to shot. This way we can conceive of 'montage as a "polyphonic" structure' (ibid.) culminating in the most elaborate form of montage, namely *intellectual* montage where the play of overtones (or motifs, visual cues, and so on) is charged with a metaphorical, symbolical or intellectual content that points towards some ideological message. Intellectual montage was exploited to the full in *October*, which brims with shots that have no narrative function but simply reflect symbolically or metaphorically on the action. A famous example is the juxtaposition of Prime Minister Kerensky of the Provisional Government (soon to be overthrown by the Bolsheviks) with the image of an elaborate mechanical peacock, indicating Kerensky's artificiality, but also his lack of character and his pedantry. In his theoretical writings Eisenstein also seeks to elaborate his theory of intellectual montage by comparing the way such metaphorical images and their meanings are constructed with the Japanese writing system, where meanings are created by combining signs. For instance, a character for 'dog' and a character for 'mouth' could be combined to create a character for 'to bark'. Although it is generally agreed that Eisenstein is stretching things at this point (CE 126), the suggestion does help to illuminate his thoughts on these matters. Also, it should come as no surprise that it was after the completion of *October*, in which he fully developed intellectual montage, that Eisenstein suddenly felt compelled to make a film from the greatest theoretical work of Marxism: *Das Kapital*. If ever it were possible to translate philosophy to the screen, it would surely be through intellectual montage. In fact, on the day after he finished shooting *October*, we find Eisenstein's first note on the project for *Das Kapital*. 'Der Entschluss steht fest,' he writes on 12

October 1927, 'das "Kapital" nach dem Szenarium von K. Marx zu verfilmen – dies ist der einzig mögliche formale Ausweg' (in Kluge 2008: 17).

As we know, Eisenstein never got around to filming *Das Kapital*. Luckily, Alexander Kluge felt that matters couldn't be left at that, not even after eight decades, and started a cinematic archaeology of Eisenstein's project. It should come as no surprise that Kluge was fascinated by Eisenstein's attempt at filming *Das Kapital*. Kluge's style of film-making contains several Eisensteinian elements and the filmmaker has had a lifelong interest in Marx. Kluge holds a PhD in law and has combined his work as a prose writer and filmmaker with an academic career. Critic Joseph Bauke once said that Kluge writes 'a prose as reasoned and as dispassionate as a lawyer's brief' (in Wakeman 1988: 522). Kluge is usually considered to be the father of the New German Cinema that emerged in the 1960s and is generally believed to have drafted most of the Oberhausen Manifesto (1962) that started the movement. He also contributed several highly acclaimed films to German cinema, all of which use Brechtian alienation and Eisensteinian attractions to create a coolly distanced and often ironic approach to his subject. In such films as *Abschied von Gestern* (1966), the famous *Die Artisten im Zirkuskuppel: ratlos* (1967) or *Gelegenheitsarbeit einer Sklavin* (1973) Kluge formulated incisive criticisms of modern capitalist society and its oppressions through distancing techniques like collage, actors who address the camera directly or combinations of fact and fiction. In fact, Kluge's comments on his own films often bear remarkable resemblance to some of Eisenstein's ideas. Asked, in 1968, how the audience should approach his new filmic language, Kluge said that 'a very easy method would be for the audience to stick to the individual shots, to whatever they happen to be seeing at any given moment. They must watch closely. Then they can happily forget, because their imagination does all the rest. Only someone who doesn't relax, who is all tensed up, who searches for a *leitmotif*, or is always finding links with the "cultural heritage", will have difficulties' (in l.c. 524). This sounds very analogous to Eisenstein's dialectical montage and its intended effect on the spectator. In fact, as we shall see, many of Eisenstein's principles are set to work in Kluge's films and especially in *Nachrichten aus der ideologischen Antike*.

Creating Capital

Karl Marx's *Das Kapital* is also an unfinished project. The book that was published in 1867, commonly known as *Das Kapital*, was in reality only the first volume of a projected larger work. During his lifetime Marx prepared manuscripts for two further volumes that were published by his collaborator Friedrich Engels, who also

edited three volumes of *Theories of Surplus Value* that were originally to constitute a fourth volume of *Das Kapital*. As it stands, the first volume is still a magnificent work of visionary insight about the question how capital arises. How does its accumulation come about and what are the economic principles that govern the creation of capital? The complexity of Marx's answer to this question is suggested by the book's opening lines: '*Der Reichtum der Gesellschaften, in welchen kapitalistische Produktionsweise herrscht, erscheint als eine "ungeheure Warensammlung"*' (K 49). In Kluge's film Rainer Stollmann points out that '*erscheint*' is the operative word in this phrase because it has a double meaning. That the wealth of society appears as an enormous collection of goods is phenomenologically true for us, who witness this appearance every day in the supermarket, on television and in our entire, goods-infested world. But this was not the way Marx himself understood the verb '*erscheinen*'. In Marx's time supermarkets were virtually non-existent. Goods were not 'everywhere apparent'. So, according to Stollmann, Marx used the verb '*erscheinen*' or 'to appear' in the sense of 'creating a misleading illusion' or 'to seem to be something other than what it is'. If the wealth of a society appears to lie in the mass of its goods, then this is indeed mere appearance or '*Schein*' and not a correct reflection of reality. The wealth of a society does not lie in the mass of goods produced, however enormous and ubiquitous that mass may be. The true wealth of a society lies in *the labour* that produces those goods. True wealth is man's ability to make things, to alter the world. *Das Kapital* is about how this wealth is taken away from its original owners, namely the workers, by capitalists. This, in essence, is the unjust process of capitalism that Marx seeks to analyse.

Two steps are crucial in Marx's argument. The first concerns the way value is created. The second step will show how money is accumulated to create capital. Everything starts with commodities or goods (*Die Ware*), which are objects or things that satisfy a human need: '*Die Ware ist zunächst ein äusserer Gegenstand, ein Ding, das durch seine Eigenschaften menschliche Bedürfnisse irgendeiner Art befriedigt*' (K 49). This practical utility bestows a use-value on objects: their value lies in the fact that we can use them to fulfil certain needs. Use-value must be distinguished from exchange value, which is the value an object has on the market-place. Use-value is subjective, whereas exchange value is a social relation. My used car has enormous use-value because, despite its old age, it still gets me where I have to be. Its exchange or trade value, however, is very limited: if I were to sell it, I would never be able to bargain a price that is expressive of the use-value the car has for me. What becomes clear here is the difference between value and worth. What something is worth to

me personally is not necessarily, and in fact rarely, in proportion to the value it has on the market. Hannah Arendt, with reference to John Locke, put this point very clearly in *The Human Condition* (1958), when she says that value is always value *in exchange*, meaning that two things deemed equal in value are exchanged. By consequence, 'value consists solely in the esteem of the public realm where the things appear as commodities, and it is neither labor, nor work, nor capital, nor profit, nor material, which bestows such value upon an object, but only and exclusively the public realm where it appears to be esteemed, demanded, or neglected. Value is the quality a thing can never possess in privacy but acquires automatically the moment it appears in public. This "marketable value," as Locke very clearly pointed out, has nothing to do with "the intrinsic natural worth of anything" which is an objective quality of the thing itself, "outside the will of the individual purchaser or seller; something attached to the thing itself, existing whether he liked it or not, and that he ought to recognize." [...] Values, in other words, in distinction from things or deeds or ideas, are never the products of a specific human activity, but come into being whenever any such products are drawn into the ever-changing relativity of exchange between the members of society' (HC 164).

How do we measure value in the public realm? In essence, value is materialised labour. A certain amount of human labour was expended in the production of the commodity and the duration of the labour required to produce it is the measure of value. So two objects in the market-place will have the same value if the same amount of time was required to produce them. If the production of a given object requires a more intensive or more sophisticated manner of production it is possible that two hours' worth of productive labour for this object equals four hours' worth of productive labour of a less sophisticated kind. In this case, Marx speaks of '*multiplizierte einfache Arbeit*' (K 59). But in all cases value is produced through the normal or average amount of labour, measured in time, required to produce an object. This amount of labour must be a conventional average amount of labour to root out lazy or under-productive labourers who might want to claim a higher value for their product because, through their laziness, it took them five hours to produce what a 'normal' or 'average' labourer would produce in four. The strange and almost magical process by which value is created is what Marx calls commodity fetishism. Objects become valuable because human beings invest their labour, and therefore a piece of themselves, in the object. This complicated process '*nenne ich den Fetischismus, der den Arbeitsprodukten anklebt, sobald sie als Waren produziert werden und der daher von der Warenproduktion unzertrennlich ist*' (K 87). '*Das Geheimnisvolle der Warenform besteht*

also einfach darin, dass sie den Menschen die gesellschaftlichen Charaktere ihrer eignen Arbeit als gegenständliche Charaktere der Arbeitsprodukte selbst, als gesellschaftliche Natureigenschaften dieser Dinge zurückspiegelt [...]. Durch dies Quidproquo werden die Arbeitsprodukte Waren, sinnlich übersinnliche oder gesellschaftliche Dinge' (K 86). Marx's phrasing, stressing the natural-supernatural character of the process, is very interesting because throughout his argument he is very much aware of the magical character of the principles he is describing. This is made especially obvious in his many references to alchemical language, describing the creation of value (and the creation of money) as a metamorphosis or transubstantiation and often remarking on its inexplicable or supernatural character. Further in his analysis Marx states the process very clearly: *'Im Arbeitsprozess bewirkt also die Tätigkeit des Menschen durch das Arbeitsmittel eine von vornherein bezweckte Veränderung des Arbeitsgegenstandes. Der Prozess erlischt im Produkt. Sein Produkt ist ein Gebrauchswert, ein durch Formveränderung menschlichen Bedürfnissen angeeigneter Naturstoff. Die Arbeit hat sich mit ihrem Gegenstand verbunden. Sie ist vergegenständlicht, und der Gegenstand ist verarbeitet'* (K 195).

We shall have to return to commodity fetishism, but we must first look at the second step in Marx's argument, namely the creation of capital. We saw that the average amount of labour required to produce goods is the basis of value. This general standard of value is expressed in money, which is a special kind of commodity with a specific social function, namely *'innerhalb der Warenwelt die Rolle des allgemeinen Äquivalents zu spielen'* (K 83). The proper medium for the general equivalent of value should be a kind of matter that is the same in all its parts: *'Adäquate Erscheinungsform von Wert [...] kann nur eine Materie sein, deren sämtliche Exemplare dieselbe gleichförmige Qualität besitzen'* so that it is possible to divide it into as many different quantities as you will and reassemble these parts again without changing its relative value (K 104). Silver and gold are ideally suited to become currency because there is something about their natural qualities that enables them to fulfil this role: whether you have an ounce of gold or a pound of gold and whether you melt this pound and change it into pieces of differing weight, the relative value of the portions of gold remains unchanged. The same obviously applies for silver, making these two metals ideally suited to express the exchange value of things in the market-place. This does not change the fact, however, that silver and gold are essentially just commodities amongst commodities. In nature, there is no difference between a piece of gold and a piece of rock. The value of gold and silver is determined by the amount of labour required to bring it into existence *'aus den Eingeweiden der Erde'* (K 107). But with the emergence of money something changes in the circuit of

commodities. As we saw earlier, the exchange of commodities is based on equivalence: one trades equal amounts of commodities. Now, with the introduction of money, one will exchange an amount of goods for an equal amount of money, which in turn can be used to purchase an equal amount of other commodities. I sell you a loaf of bread for one euro if and only if it takes me one euro's worth of time to produce the loaf of bread. With the euro I thus acquire I can go and buy one euro's labour's worth of vegetables, clothes or any other commodity I desire. Schematically, this circuit of metamorphoses runs as follows: C-M-C, Commodity is exchanged for Money is exchanged for Commodity. But with the emergence of money a new circuit comes into place which Marx calls the circuit of capital. The aim is now no longer to exchange equivalent values but to generate a profit at the end of the circuit. Schematically, the circuit of capital runs as follows: M-C-M'. Two changes have taken place. The circuit no longer starts with commodities but with money. Money is used to buy a commodity. The second change occurs when that commodity is sold again: it is sold for profit. That means that it is sold for an amount of money that is higher than the price originally paid for it (thus M' instead of M).

The profit is what Marx calls surplus value: *'Diese Inkrement oder den Überschuss über den ursprünglichen Wert nenne ich – Mehrwert (surplus value)'* (K 165). Surplus value generates capital. If equivalents are exchanged, no surplus value can emerge and by consequence no capital can be acquired. The capitalist will therefore have to seek out a commodity that allows to generate surplus value. Labour power is this kind of commodity. *'Unter Arbeitskraft oder Arbeitsvermögen verstehen wir den Inbegriff der physischen und geistigen Fähigkeiten, die in der Leiblichkeit, der lebendigen Persönlichkeit eines Menschen existieren und die er in Bewegung setzt, sooft er Gebrauchswerte irgendeiner Art produziert'* (K 181). So labour power is man's ability to produce labour. But how can this labour power be used to generate capital? The value of labour power is determined the same way all value is determined: by the average amount of labour socially necessary to produce it. In the case of labour power this amount of necessary labour is 'the time it takes to produce the commodities necessary to sustain the worker for the day. Not only food, but a contribution to the cost of housing, clothes, and so on' (Wolff 2002: 71). In essence, the value of labour is the money the worker needs to buy the goods that keep him alive. Let us now suppose that the average amount of time required to generate these necessary commodities is four hours of labour. So the worker must work for four hours to earn the wages necessary to sustain himself. However, the capitalist employs the worker for a full day's work, namely (in our relatively humane times) eight hours. So the worker is required to

work the last four hours for free. The worker exchanges a day's labour for a day's worth of sustenance. However, he need only work half a day to obtain a day's sustenance. The four supplementary hours of work create *surplus value* for the capitalist. 'The process of "extracting" surplus value is called "exploitation"' (Wolff 2002: 73).

This raises the obvious question why the labourer would be so stupid to sell his labour so cheaply; indeed to sometimes work for an amount of money that barely amounts to subsistence wages. The answer to this question lies, perversely, in what Marx calls the labourer's double freedom. The labourer is free in the sense that he is an individual in free control of his own commodity, namely his labour. He is free to trade its value in the market-place. But the labourer is also 'free' in the sense that he has no access to what is needed for him to make his labour work for him. That is to say that the labourer has no access to the means of production or the resources to practice his skills. '*Zur Verwandlung von Geld in Kapital muss der Geldbesitzer also den freien Arbeiter auf dem Warenmarkt vorfinden, frei in dem Doppelsinn, dass er als freie Person über seine Arbeitskraft als seine Ware verfügt, dass er andererseits andre Waren nicht zu verkaufen hat, los und ledig, frei ist von allen zur Verwirklichung seiner Arbeitskraft nötigen Sachen*' (K 183). So the labourers 'must both be able to work for capitalists and need to. They acquiesce in their own exploitation only because they have no alternative. They cannot work for themselves as they have nothing to work on or with, no land or other resources. Thus they must hire out their labour power to the highest bidder' (Wolff 2002: 73). Capitalists will take advantage of the enormous amount of labour force available on the market to keep the prices for labour low. This can be maintained as long as the price for labour does not fall beneath subsistence wages, which is the '*Minimalgrenze des Werts*' (K 187). If it does fall below this minimum, labour force will wear itself out and ultimately die, which is counterproductive. Whatever the capitalist does, he will keep labour alive. But if at all possible, he will do nothing more than that. It is of course not inconceivable that, for some reason or other, labour force becomes scarce, causing the price of labour force to rise. In that case one of the great spectres of Marxism appears: the replacement of the labourer with machines. This is the image of poorly paid labourers that are making the very machines that will make their labour superfluous. As a consequence of the introduction of machines, unemployment will rise and this will restock the labour force market, enabling the capitalist to cut down labour prices, so that labourers will be re-hired to work the machines at lower wages than the ones they got before. It is a vicious cycle in which only the capitalist ever wins because he holds the key to both resources and means of

production. But yet another scenario might present itself. The labourer is also a consumer. If he is no longer able to buy products because of his low wages or unemployment, the capitalist will no longer be able to sell his goods. This is the problem of over-production. Since the capitalist does not want to go bankrupt, he will have to re-hire at least some labourers at higher wages to enable them to buy his goods again. So the price of labour goes up again, causing the capitalist to start looking for cost-cutting machines again. 'So the whole filthy business starts again. The moral of the story is that capitalism needs unemployment in order to be profitable' (Wolff 2002: 78-79). As long as there is unemployment, labourers will be so eager to work that capitalists will be able to cut labour prices as low as they desire, thus generating the greatest possible amount of capital for themselves.

The overall result of this capitalist system for human beings is what Marx has famously called alienation. Alienation is not just a subjective perception but an objective state of affairs that consists of three intertwined factors. First, the worker is alienated from the product he makes. His labour or work produces a product over which he has no control: once it is made, it belongs to the capitalist. The worker cannot take it home with him. He simply invests his labour and is then separated from it. As a result, we rarely think of the world as created by humans. We fail to see the human labour expended in bringing it about because we are not even aware of the way our own labour has been invested in this world. The second element of alienation is the division of labour which results in a de-skilling of the worker, who only needs to mechanically repeat the same action over and over. This kind of work is repetitive, numbing and depressing. It reduces the worker to an element in a machine. Finally, there is alienation from our species-being. Here we reach the most fundamental presupposition of Marx's philosophy: man creates the world in which he lives. Animals also create a world, but only to the extent that their instincts incite them to build a nest or other requirements for survival and reproduction. Man goes far beyond the necessary changes required for subsistence. For example, humans also embellish the world and make art. These world-changing activities are what makes humans human. It is Marx's belief that work under capitalism destroys this world-making capacity. Capitalism limits our free ability to shape ourselves and the world because it makes our work subservient to the needs of capital. Capitalism is therefore a perversion of our very humanity, it goes against everything that makes humans human. 'Marx says many of us feel human only when we are *not* working' (Wolff 2002: 36): '*Der Arbeiter fühlt sich daher erst ausser der Arbeit bei sich und in der Arbeit ausser sich. Zu Hause ist er, wenn er nicht arbeitet und wenn er arbeitet, ist er nicht zu Hause*' (Marx 2005: 59). At one

point in *Nachrichten aus der ideologischen Antike* Kluge makes the astute observation that people under capitalism are a 'Zuschauer' or even an 'Anhängsel ihres eigenes Lebens'. This is the experience of the schizophrenic exteriority of alienation. One is not inside one's own life and does not seem to own or even inhabit it.

Making the World

If we want to see the relevance of *Das Kapital* for our present times, we need to understand the full importance of Marx's view of world-making. Marx, in Elaine Scarry's words, 'throughout his writings assumes that the made world is the human being's body and that, having projected that body into the made world, men and women are themselves disembodied, spiritualized' (BP 244). This is the basic idea behind *Das Kapital*: through labour people invest themselves in the world and make that world human. This, in essence, is the process at work in commodity fetishism, to which we now return. We create the world by extending ourselves into it, by investing our labour and through our labour a piece of ourselves in the material world. So, in a very real sense, we are part of the world. 'For Marx, material making is a recreation of the body and the body is itself recreated in that activity' (BP 256). Through our labour, we are present in the world. This means that it is no longer sufficient to say that we, being organisms, are part of the world in the sense that we are dependent on the eco-system of our planet or on the cosmos in general. We must now add the insight that we are also part of the non-natural and *made* world of manufactured objects. They too are part of us and we are part of them. Humans and their world are co-extensive. In creating objects, we become invested in them. Created objects, artefacts, are expressive of who we are. This investment is expressed in our attachment to the objects around us. Even if an object has very little worth in itself it can still mean a lot to us because of some emotional attachment (this pen is not simply a pen but my late grandfather's pen) or because it is simply part of the everyday world in which we feel at home. Our investment in the world is most clear in the comforting feeling of being at home in our own living space, the space that we assembled (we picked the furniture, the wall-paper, the paintings on the wall) to express who we are.

The world-building ability of humans was a central concern of Hannah Arendt. In *The Human Condition* she famously distinguished three types of human activity: labour, work and action. Labour is an activity that is involved in the cycle of life. What is created through labour is immediately consumed again. I bake a bread to eat it, I till the earth to grow vegetables to feed my family. Labour is the sphere of consumption: what is made is immediately reinvested in the digestive cycle of human existence.

What is consumed, disappears again from the world. Nothing remains. Work, on the other hand, is the realm of worldliness. This means that the activity of work results in the creation of a shared world. We make things that outlast us. If we build a house, the house is not demolished when we die: other people come to live there and very often this change of inhabitants will repeat itself many times over the generations. It is clear that Marx's problem with capitalism arises from the fact that the exploited labourer is not allowed to create world but is forced to remain in the realm of labour because his subsistence wages do not allow the purchase of surplus goods that are expressive of his personality. He labours to keep alive and the labour that would allow him to do more than simply stay alive is taken away from him and turned into capital for the capitalist. It is the surplus value of which he gets no part. Finally, the third and most distinctly human activity Arendt distinguishes is action. Typical of action is the fact that nothing is produced. There is no product, only an endless process that is undertaken for its own sake and because we deem it meaningful. The greatest example of action is politics, where people gather and speak up in public for the common good. To act is to take action in the world, to stand up for something, not because this gives immediate results (because every political decision can always be overturned and every action can always be undone by a counter-action) but because we take upon us the burden of responsibility for the world we share. Action is the realm of the unpredictable: we never know what the effects of our actions will be.

In our present context the activity of work is the most fascinating because of its lasting effects. It is a kind of production that does not get spent in the digestive cycle of consumption. By working we change the world, we turn resources into lasting artefacts. And we most commonly do this with the help of tools. Marx too has written about the role of tools in labour (or work): *'Das Arbeitsmittel ist ein Ding oder ein Komplex von Dingen, die der Arbeiter zwischen sich und den Arbeitsgegenstand schiebt und die ihm als Leiter seiner Tätigkeit auf diesen Gegenstand dienen. [...] So wird das Natürliche selbst zum Organ seiner Tätigkeit, ein Organ, das er seinen eignen Leibesorganen hinzufügt, seine natürliche Gestalt verlängernd'* (K 194). Tools are perceived as an extension of the self and are therefore considered to be readily at hand. We do not reflect upon the tool-character of a door handle when we use it to open a door. We do not reflect upon the tool-character of the hammer when we pick it up to drive a nail into the wall. We unconsciously treat these tools as a self-evident presence in our world and therefore as part of our own extension in our world. This point becomes more clear if we consider that we usually use our hands to handle tools. As Scarry notes, Friedrich Engels once pointed out that the human hand 'is itself an artefact, gradually altered by its own activity of

altering the external world' (BP 253). And Martha Nussbaum has written about the use we make of prostheses in our everyday existence. We distinguish healthy from disabled people, assuming that people are disabled because their body is imperfect in a way that makes it impossible for them to have unrestricted access to the (everyday human activities in) the world. A paralysed person, for example, needs a wheelchair to get about and blind people need a stick or a dog to guide them. But Nussbaum points out that we are all disabled. Many of us need glasses, but we do not call ourselves disabled because our disability is too widespread or common to be seen as a disability. Furthermore, nobody is able to get to the second floor of any building without the prosthetic use of stairs or an elevator. We are all disabled to some extent. Imperfection is our nature. And we build the world in a way that helps us overcome our physical shortcomings. That is what tools are for. But for the person labelled 'disabled' the fact that a tool is an extension of the body becomes especially salient. If one needs an artificial leg to walk, the tool is literally an extension of the body.

The body-extensive nature of tools and of the world itself is everywhere apparent. In the example of aids for the disabled this is very clear. But even the least conspicuous elements of our everyday world are to be seen from this point of view. As extensions of the body, tools and objects are an extension of the way we are aware of the world and are an attempt to deal with that awareness in a way that is beneficial to ourselves. The shape of a chair, for example, is designed to alleviate the burden of our spine. It gives rest to the body by mimicking the body. So 'the chair [can] be recognized as mimetic of sentient awareness. [...] The shape of the chair is not the shape of the skeleton, the shape of body weight, nor even the shape of pain-perceived, but the shape of perceived-pain-wished-gone' (BP 289-90). Chairs exist as an expression of the human wish to prevent pain that follows from being on our feet too long. But chairs no longer come about because of my individual desire to alleviate a back-ache, they are now being industrially manufactured. And this, to Scarry's mind, is a positive and world-building aspect of industrial labour that is easily overlooked. 'It is almost universally the case in everyday life that the most cherished object is one that has been hand-made by a friend: [...] the object's material attributes themselves record and memorialize the intensely personal [...] feelings of the maker for just this person [...]. But anonymous, mass-produced objects contain a collective and equally extraordinary message: Whoever you are, and whether or not I personally like or even know you, in at least this small way, be well' (BP 292). Even mass-production is engaged in the building of a communal human world in which we can be at home. The injustice lies not in mass-production itself, but

in exploitative labour and, especially in our present times, the burden that relentlessly capitalist mass-production puts on the environment in the name of profit.

A final point on world-making must be made. As we saw, humans build a world that is an extension and a projection of themselves. It was one of Marx's assumptions that this goes to the very nature of man. Man is only happy if he is able to express himself through meaningful activities. If we introduce Arendt's distinction between labour and work into Marx's thought, we might say that what Arendt calls labour is related to what Marx would call exploitation: bodily activity that does not break the body free from the cycle of subsistence. If the worker gets fair earnings that are expressive of the surplus value he produces, he will be able to use his earnings to buy surplus goods for the sole purpose of expressing his humanity. This means that to become human is to be able to buy luxury goods, namely goods that no longer contribute to our subsistence. Susanne K. Langer has claimed that such expressive action is not at all frivolous or some kind of surplus activity to indulge in when our more fundamental needs have been met. On the contrary, man has 'a primary need' that is called 'the *need of symbolization*. The symbol-making function is one of man's primary activities, like eating, looking, or moving about' (Langer 1957: 40-41). Langer writes that 'the organism yearns to express' ideas and feelings 'without practical purpose' (l.c. 43). This she sees as the source of religion, ritual, art and all kinds of expressive behaviour in the human. 'Opportunity to carry on our natural, impulsive, intelligent life, to realize plans, express ideas in action or in symbolic formulation, see and hear and interpret all things that we encounter, without fear of confusion, adjust our interests and expressions to each other, is the "freedom" for which humanity strives. This, and not some specific right that society may grant or deny, is the "liberty" that goes necessarily with "life" and "pursuit of happiness"' (l.c. 289).

This can help us understand why human beings are so fond of beautiful things, and especially of useless beauty. Art for art's sake or, to put it more provocatively, acquiring commodities for commodities' sake, is not an absurd concept. There is something profoundly human and healthy in our quest to gather around us objects we value. As Elaine Scarry has pointed out, we have a tendency to 'verbally disavow and discredit our immersion in materialism, sometimes even scorning the tendency of less materially privileged cultures to aspire to the possession of these same objects: that blue jeans are cherished in the Soviet Union, that a picture from a Sears Roebuck catalogue should appear on the wall of a hut in Nairobi, that Sony recorders are prized in Iran, are events sometimes greeted by western populations with bewilderment, as though the universal aspiration to such objects

[...] were a form of incomprehensible corruption or an act of senseless imitation rather than itself a confirmation and signal that something deep and transforming is intuitively felt to happen when one dwells in proximity to such objects' (BP 243). Humans like beauty for beauty's sake, they like useless things, gadgets and decorative trivialities because of their potential for expressiveness. This, incidentally, explains why the socially disadvantaged (to seek refuge in euphemism) often exasperate other people by spending their limited social benefits or other resources on luxury goods instead of on more decent housing, better food or medical care. This should not surprise us. To feed, clothe or medicate oneself does not yet make one human. People prefer televisions to food because the television is a way of expressing who they are. It is also a way of being part of the world, as it is literally a window to that world. To indulge in expressive deficit spending (or comfort shopping) when one is poor is a way of claiming one's humanity in the face of dehumanising poverty. It is to say: I am not an animal, I am a creature of expression. On this logic, to keep social benefits intentionally (too) low as an 'incentive' to work is to blackmail people with their very humanity. It denies people the means to be expressive. It is to deny them access to the world.

Opportunities (Let's Make Lots Of Money)

The most saddening part of Marx's analysis is that there is nothing by definition wrong with division of labour or mass-production. The problems arise when labour becomes alienating because it is overtaken by capitalism. Under capitalism labour or work (and what is alienated work if not subsistence-level labour?) are not aimed at maximising human well-being, they are instruments for maximising profit. In a world where much of the Third World is still being exploited while the poor in the West are increasingly looked upon as a burden instead of as humans in need, Marx's analysis is not out-dated. It is a bitter irony that Marx is one of the few philosophers about whom this is a profoundly depressing state of affairs. Usually, we would rejoice to find topical insight in philosophies past. In the case of Marx one could only hope for a world in which his writing would be nothing more than a quaint relic from times long gone. One would rejoice to find that there is nothing left in Marx that relates to our world. To be free of Marx is not only a state devoutly to be wished, it was indeed his own wish: to live in a world in which there would be no need for a book like *Das Kapital*. But such a world, it seems, will be depressingly long in coming. In fact, destructive capitalism as Marx described it seems to have been exported, along with the liberating joys of democracy, to the rest of the world. Capitalism has gone global in what Noreena Hertz has called 'the world of the Silent Takeover [...]'. Governments' hands appear tied and we

are increasingly dependent on corporations. Business is in the driving seat, corporations determine the rules of the game, and governments have become referees, enforcing rules laid down by others. Portable corporations are now movable feasts and governments go to great lengths to attract or retain them on their shores. Blind eyes are turned to tax loopholes. Business moguls use sophisticated tax dodges to keep their bounty offshore' (Hertz 2001: 9). In this world, where profit is generated off the backs of poor Third World workers being exploited in sweatshops, human beings have become an expendable resource. This is a world in which the rich countries of the West daily destroy tons upon tons of fresh foods while people on other continents, but merely a few hours' flight away, starve to death. This is the world of global capitalism that goes by the name of liberal democracy.

There are many examples to be found to illustrate that we are merely fodder for the economy and that the basic attitude towards human beings has not fundamentally changed in the century and a half that have passed since Marx developed his theories. Even seemingly small details in everyday life testify to this. For example, when road-works or an accident cause queues on our highways, we are immediately informed of the many millions this is costing employers or the economy in general. It is never calculated how many millions of hours spent with their loved-ones will be missed by the people caught in traffic (let alone that mention would be made of the grief suffered by those who lost a loved-one in the accident that caused the queue). More poignantly, and certainly more revealing about the moral structure of our society, is the use of the word absenteeism to talk about people who cannot come to work because of illness. The (eighth edition of the) *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English* defines absenteeism as 'the practice of absenting oneself from work or school etc., esp. frequently or illicitly'. Note how being absent is automatically assumed to be a *practice* and not something that befalls one. It is further suggested that this practice has a high probability of being illicit. Interestingly, the Dutch word for absenteeism, even when caused by legitimate illness, is *ziekteverzuim*, with *verzuim* meaning wilful neglect (and *ziekte* meaning illness). So people who are really ill are in fact *neglecting* to go to work, implying that they are not entirely right to stay at home. By staying at home they are costing money (their employer's, society's). The implication is clear: as humans we have a moral obligation to be operational and illness is a moral fault. By describing illness as a kind of neglect on our part it is implied that we are somehow responsible for it in the sense that we did it on purpose and with malicious intent. To be ill is to be accountable. It is to morally transgress.

This perverse logic does not stop with absenteeism. People who fall chronically ill usually stop receiving their wages after a while and fall back on social benefits. This amount is usually substantially smaller than their regular wages. Since most people's wages are just or barely enough to get by in a good month, this is disastrous when one is taken seriously ill. This disaster is even more alarming for singles or single parents who do not have a (working) partner to help cover costs, especially if they have purchased a house they have to keep paying for (or children at school or at university). And all the while these people are facing the surplus costs of medical care. Just when people are at their most vulnerable, they are dumped by society. The same thing happens to the disabled and to senior citizens having to scrape a living on small pensions that often barely cover the cost of housing. The logic behind this is quite simple: whoever is not productive is not legitimate. Our society has made it shameful to be ill, unemployed or disabled. These things are regarded as moral faults for which we are to blame and made to feel guilty. To be human is to be profitable for the economy. Unemployment benefits and other aspects of social security are labelled 'costs' that amount to a percentage of the GNP that is invariably described as 'alarmingly high'. Apparently, it is alarming to waste money on the well-being of those in need. Therefore costs for social security must be kept in check. We must be kept healthy because we need to be able to work, not because there is a genuine concern for our well-being. It may be true that Western Europe can now boast the best system of social security ever developed, but two things about it are alarming. The first is the fact that it is not taken for granted. The second is intimately tied with the first and is the fact that social security is surrounded with an ideology that makes it resoundingly clear that our social services were not developed out of charitable sentiment. Social security is there for the sake of capital. Capitalism needs our productive bodies to be alive, at least (but not necessarily more than) to the extent that they can produce labour. Those dependent on social security are just or barely kept alive as a constant reminder of the fact that theirs is an existence that can never be fully legitimate. They are parasites in the healthy fabric of the social body. To knowingly and willingly reduce people to this state of inferiority is conscious cruelty. It is to say: you are not worthy. You are not quite human. For to be human is to be productive.

In the wake of 11 September 2001 the commodification of humans seems to have shifted into higher gear with what Naomi Klein has called 'disaster capitalism', a relentless and relentlessly immoral breed of capitalism that takes the form of 'orchestrated raids on the public sphere in the wake of catastrophic events, combined with the treatment of disasters as exciting market

opportunities' (Klein 2008: 6). This is a fundamentalist form of capitalism created by the economist Milton Friedman (the most unlikely person ever to have been honoured with a Nobel Prize) who first tried to put his ideas into action under the auspices of the Pinochet dictatorship in Venezuela. Since then, his ideas have been embraced by the likes of Margaret Thatcher, Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush. In essence, disaster capitalism takes advantage of the shock of a population recovering from collective trauma to sell out the public realm to private corporations. Among the many examples Klein cites is the selling of fishermen's villages to hotel chains after a tsunami in Sri Lanka, the wholesale privatisation of public education in New Orleans after the passage of hurricane Katrina and, most infamously, the privatisation of war and 'homeland protection' under the banner of the war against terror after 9/11. Disaster capitalism results in a corporatist state. It is a system that generates extreme wealth for very few. 'Its main characteristics are huge transfers of public wealth to private hands, often accompanied by exploding debt, an ever-widening chasm between the dazzling rich and the disposable poor and an aggressive nationalism that justifies bottomless spending on security. For those inside the bubble of extreme wealth created by such an arrangement, there can be no more profitable way to organise a society. But because of the obvious drawbacks for the vast majority of the population left outside the bubble, other features of the corporatist state tend to include aggressive surveillance (once again, with government and large corporations trading favours and contracts), mass incarceration, shrinking civil liberties and often, though not always, torture' (ibid.).

It is this unrestricted capitalism that Oskar Negt refers to when he says, in the third part of Kluge's film, that only today capitalism as Marx described it can be seen in its full unbridled horror: free from all legal, moral or geographical restraints. Global capitalism, because of its enormity, is the purest form of capitalism. Marx saw *Das Kapital* as a book of science, telling the story of the evolution of capital in a way similar to the way Darwin described the origins of species. But science is always about laboratory conditions. The laws of gravity in their pure form only apply in a vacuum. In the real world, a feather and a brick do not fall at equal speed. Similarly, the workings of capital as described by Marx have something of a laboratory ideality to them. But with global capitalism the real world has finally become the metaphorical vacuum that capital would need to be 'pure' because there is no world left outside of global capitalism. So from a scientific point of view, Marx's analyses have seized to be science and have become social realism (and anyone who reads *Das Kapital* cannot help but be struck by the 'visionary' quality of

Marx's writing). But things need not stop on a global scale. Space, as we know since *Star Trek*, is the final frontier and it is only a matter of time before capitalism will go interstellar, planets will be colonised and their natural resources claimed by competing capitalist forces. In fact, Kluge foresaw such an evolution in his film *Der grosse Verhau* (1970) about a future in which space is controlled by a commercial monopoly, transporting the struggle for life to galaxies new. Incidentally, the idea of colonising space was also entertained by several communist thinkers on the extremist fringes of absurdity, as is made clear in a gloriously deadpan (and riotously funny) interview with Boris Groys in the second part of *Nachrichten aus der ideologischen Antike*.

Disaster capitalism is directly related to the unmaking of the world. In taking away the world from the citizens and handing it over to corporations disaster capitalism destroys the world by turning it from something enduring into tradable goods. But the problem goes much deeper, especially if coercion, violence, police brutality and even torture of opponents or so-called 'subversive elements' are used to enforce corporate interests over public interest. To understand this, we must look at the phenomenology of pain. Elaine Scarry has analysed the world-destroying power of pain in chilling detail. People who suffer extreme pain retreat into themselves and gradually lose interest in the world. This can be seen in many patients who suffer debilitating pain. This regression has to do with the 'unsharability' of pain, which is linked to 'its resistance to language'. This means that people in pain often find it nearly impossible to verbalise and share their pain with others. 'Physical pain does not simply resist language but actively destroys it, bringing about an immediate reversion to a state anterior to language, to the sounds and cries a human being makes before language is learned.' Pain, Scarry writes, 'has no referential content. It is not *of* or *for* anything. It is precisely because it takes no object that it, more than any other phenomenon, resists objectification in language' (BP 4). Thus to have pain is to be locked inside one's body. This is a form of alienation from the self because 'the person in great pain experiences his own body as the agent of his agony. The ceaseless, self-announcing signal of the body in pain [...] contains not only the feeling "my body hurts" but the feeling "my body hurts me"' (BP 47).

This incarceration of the person in her body is at the cold heart of torture. All torture is built on the principle of destroying a person by eliminating the world through pain. People who are held captive for torture are isolated and made to feel disorientated. They are blindfolded, denied contact with other people, transported without any idea of where they are or where they are going. Then they are locked in empty rooms that are

filthy and cold, they are given spoiled foods to eat, not allowed to wash and have to sleep on a wet mattress, on the floor or even in their own excrement. This reverses the process of world-making. The environment (rooms, furniture, bed, chair,...) that is usually the world in which we feel comfortable and at home is now made alien, unreliable and even hostile. On top of this, the person is often humiliatingly undressed in front of others. This reduces the victim's world to his own body, unable to extend his humanity to (or find comfort in) his immediate surroundings. Next, physical pain is inflicted on the body, locking the person inside her own body. The senses are overloaded with extreme changes of temperature, electrically shocked, aurally assaulted with deafening white noise or shot up with hallucinogenic drugs. This way (and we have described only the most basic tactics of torture, for man's creativity seems to be particularly infinite in this realm) a person can be totally unmade and destroyed. People regress to a state of infantile behaviour. This was also reported of prisoners in Guantánamo (Klein 2008: 45). In the end, the victim 'breaks' and will confess to anything to be rid of the pain. That way, the final remains of the victim's personality, namely a person's thoughts and voice, are captured by the torturer. 'What the process of torture does is to split the human being into two, to make emphatic the ever present but, except in the extremity of sickness and death, only latent distinction between a self and a body, between "me" and "my body." [...] The goal of the torturer is to make the one, the body, emphatically and crushingly *present* by destroying it, and to make the other, the voice, *absent* by destroying it. It is in part this combination that makes torture, like any experience of great physical pain, mimetic of death' (BP 48-49).

In view of the structure of pain and torture we must rethink the distinction between body and mind, between public and private. 'The notion that everyone is alike by having a body and that what differentiates one person from another is the soul or intellect or personality can mislead one into thinking that the body is "shared" and the other part is "private" when exactly the opposite is the case. The mute facts of sentience (deprived of cultural externalisation) are wholly self-isolating. Only in the culture of language, ideas, and objects does sharing originate' (BP 256). It is through language, through voice, that we commune with mankind, not through our body. In fact, our body can (be used to) impose limits on this voice if it is made to feel extreme pain. The unsharability of pain is the crucial element here, for 'so long as one is speaking, the self extends out beyond the boundaries of the body, occupies a space larger than the body' (BP 33). So speech is revealed to probably be an even more fundamental form of world-making than the collective efforts of work. 'Through his ability to

project words and sounds out into his environment, a human being inhabits, humanises, and makes his own a space much larger than that occupied by his body alone' (BP 49). All of which leads us back to Arendt's claim that it is *action*, which often takes an immaterial form, that distinguishes humans from other animals. The activity of speaking to other people and engaging them in debate about the shared world is what makes us human. By robbing people of this voice, torture and pain dehumanise people in a way that is very similar to, but even more destructive than, alienated labour.

Filming Capital

Now that we have discussed Marx's analysis and explored some of its implications through the work of other thinkers the question remains how Eisenstein would have 'kinofiziert' Marx's book. This is also one of the questions Alexander Kluge asks in *Nachrichten aus der ideologischen Antike*. Both from what we have seen earlier and from what is said in Kluge's film, it is now possible to reconstruct at least what Eisenstein might have envisioned. A good place to start would be 30 November 1928, in the wake of the crash of the stock exchange. On that day Eisenstein had a short visit with James Joyce in Paris. Joyce was eager to meet Eisenstein because he considered him one of the very few directors capable of filming his novel *Ulysses* (1922). Eisenstein on his part had read *Ulysses* and wanted to talk to Joyce because he had a vision of *Das Kapital* as a film structured in a way similar to Joyce's novel. The entire book tells one day in the life of Leopold Bloom, but in that one day Joyce manages to encapsulate the whole of human history, culminating in the famous final chapter with Molly Bloom's associative soliloquy. In Kluge's film Oksana Bulgakowa, who wrote the authoritative biography of Eisenstein, talks at length about Eisenstein's visit with Joyce and explains how Eisenstein conceived of his *Kapital*-project as a film showing one day in the life of a worker, one '*Arbeitstag*' which would be the point on which a mass of associations could hinge, very much in the way Joyce built his novel. Eisenstein also pondered the idea of making the film even more compact and reducing the time-frame to a ride on a streetcar or, ultimately, to tell the story from the point of view of the worker's wife. To this central story-line, which is barely a story but more a constant point of reference, many ideas and images could be attached, culminating in what would be the greatest example of plotless cinema. As Kluge notes during his interview with the writer Dietmar Dath, Eisenstein's project was conceived as '*ein Kommentarwerk*' structured like a hypertext with links galore, representing a '*Google-Form der Dramaturgie*' that stresses the modernist (and postmodern) character of Eisenstein's (and Joyce's) intentions.

Kluge's film is structured in a similar way. It consists of three thematic parts with a total running time of over nine hours, which amounts to a day's viewing labour. Snippets from Eisenstein's notes on the project, but also quotes from Marx, questions asked by Kluge or fragments from things said by interviewees are shown on title-cards that look as if they were assembled with the most basic computer software available. The titles look so cheap and unsophisticated as to almost be ironic comments on the use of the title-card. Obviously, title-cards were very important to Eisenstein, who used them to underline ideological points or to strengthen the emotional impact of his cinematic attractions. Eisenstein provocatively used title-cards to directly address the audience or express collective thoughts, as if the revolting masses in his films speak with one voice. In this, he represents the principle of the director as agitator, stirring up the audience to revolutionary sentiments (CE 56-57). Eisenstein's strategy of compiling images in which every detail matters (in view of overtone editing) is also repeated tongue in cheek when Kluge uses digital technology of the most elementary kind to split his image up in smaller units that repeat a collage of archive material, shots from Eisenstein's films and new footage shot for Kluge's film. Changing points of view are also supplied by the different interviewees, ranging from philosopher Peter Sloterdijk discussing the metamorphoses inherent in commodity fetishism over director Werner Schroeter (who took his cue for a production of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* from Eisenstein's *Potemkin*), writer Hans Magnus Enzensberger, singer Sophie Rois and many others. Kluge's film also incorporates a short film by Tom Tykwer on the way human life is embodied in the material world. Many of the extended interviews start out enigmatically, forcing the viewer to think about their relevance for the overall project. And although the interviews seem organic enough, one cannot help but feel that parts of them were scripted or rehearsed, with Kluge constantly prodding his interviewees with suggestions, analogies and points of view that seem to be one step ahead of what is being said.

In this way, Kluge's film circles around both Marx's book, Eisenstein's project and the relevance of Marx's analyses for us, living in the early twenty-first century. *Nachrichten aus der ideologischen Antike* is a sprawling film, just like Eisenstein amassed dozens of hours of material to edit his films from and created a veritable rhizome of theoretical texts that very often contradict each other or merely end up being incomprehensible in their attempt to give a unified view of the world and all knowledge available in it, and that is to say: a dialectical view of the world, where all is brought together in an all-embracing vision. One feels that this, apart from Marxist doctrine itself, is what attracted Eisenstein to Marx's book: the fact that it also

presents itself as a philosophy of history, trying to understand every aspect of our history as a phase in the history of historical materialism, but at the same time linking all this to every detail in the analysis of the worker's labour and the way his working-day is structured. In this way, the *Kapital*-project would not only have allowed Eisenstein to go farther than ever before in his experiments with plotless cinema and both overtone and intellectual montage, it would have been the realisation of a 'discursive cinema that could lay out arguments and present entire systems of thought' (CE 14) through use of such devices. If abstract thoughts can be communicated through the metaphorical imagery used in intellectual montage, there is no reason why a gifted director could not translate a philosophical treatise on political economy into a rousing cinematic experience and, in Eisenstein's words, 'teach the worker to think dialectically' (in CE 40). What Eisenstein found in Joyce's *Ulysses* was a literary model for this most modernist of cinematic endeavours.

But we must also consider that Eisenstein saw his films as propaganda, as ways of shocking the audience into belief. The attractions he created or, on a more sophisticated level, the intellectual montage deployed were aimed at making the spectator believe the central tenets of Marxism. In this, Eisenstein saw his work not as ideologically oppressive but as liberating. It was a form of resistance (to capitalism) through art. And now an interesting space opens up for us. It is the space of shock tactics. Naomi Klein has described Friedmanian disaster capitalism as a 'shock doctrine' because it capitalises on shell-shocked populations to destroy the world they knew and replace it with something corporatist, a privatised Disneyland for dollar-dizzy entrepreneurs. But if the tactics of disaster capitalism consist of 'shock and awe' (Klein 2008: 7-9) then very much the same can be said of Eisenstein's cinematic tactics, which are all about overwhelming his spectators to hammer an ideology into them. Of course, from a moral perspective, the shocks of disaster capitalism and the shocks of Eisenstein's cinema are of two very different kinds and have wildly divergent moral implications. For one thing, Eisenstein and Marxism should not be confused with (the crimes of) Stalinism. But that is not even the point to be made here. What matters is that Eisenstein believed that art and its shocks could make a difference in the real world. This is the concept of agit-prop, which became popular again on the back of the student revolts and social uprisings of the 1960s and 1970s and were recently revived by anti-globalists. The concept of delivering a shock to the system, albeit a benign and non-violent shock, is central to agit-prop. When Greenpeace blocks the passage of an oil tanker or disrupts proceedings at a nuclear plant, they are applying a shock to the system. A small shock, to be sure, with

little immediate and practical effect. But that is not the point because the shock is not meant to generate immediate effect, its primary intention is to generate public attention for what is going wrong. It is, in the sense of Arendt, action.

Anti-globalists, environmentalists and human rights activists are today the clearest examples of people who act for the common good, especially now that governments seem to have left public policy in the hands of the vultures of capital. And the actions of activists often take the shape of something semi-artistic: the performance or the happening. In fact, performance art can be traced back to Constructivist beginnings and was firmly rooted in the tradition of social revolt to begin with. So in a very real way it is simply a closing of the circle when activists take to the streets to do battle with the police, who are capital's enlisted bully-boys. Naomi Klein has described the tactics of Reclaiming the Streets, an organisation who have been 'hijacking busy streets, major intersections and even stretches of highway for spontaneous gatherings. In an instant, a crowd of seemingly impromptu partyers transforms a traffic artery into a surrealist playpen' (Klein 2000: 312). In a parallel movement, (local) governments and the police have been quick to outlaw not just such major outbursts of gleeful resistance but every kind of spontaneous action that opens up the public realm to any other usage than as a passage-way to get productive human units from their point of departure to their destination. Obviously, these are not the desirable usage of the 'free' realm. This takes us back to Kluge's notes on his film. At one point, he refers to Immanuel Kant's essay *Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?* (1784) where the freedom of thought and speech is strictly separated from public action: think freely, but obey (*'Räsonniert aber gehörrcht'*; Kluge 2008: 9). Kant formulated this in response to the Prussian king, who obviously found civil obedience extremely important. Kluge claims that not much has changed since the days of Kant. We are still free to think and say what we please as long as it is within legal confines and does not translate into public action for which no previous permit has been obtained. Art, science and critical thought are completely subsidised, making critical beggars of us all. Even more vicious is the way this translates into a culture of political correctness, with leftists presenting themselves as the new commissars of morality. This political correctness often extends to ideological correctness. The 'experts' sitting on committees to determine which artist makes 'relevant' work or which critical or philosophical text will be published use standards of ideological correctness because one needs to adhere to certain 'ideologically correct' theories to be taken seriously. Those who do not conform to the rules of leftist ideological correctness are left out, derided or simply ignored, turning the cultural realm into a cliquish set of insiders. And all

this from the fine people who will bring us pluralism. The rule of Theory in art and philosophy, though certainly a minor affair compared to the terror of disaster capitalism, is merely a cultural translation of the rule of capital. Those-who-have work hard to keep at bay those-who-have-not.

Giving Voice to Matter

The second part of Kluge's film is called *Alle Dinge sind bezauberte Menschen*. Because humans project themselves into the objects they make a magical metamorphosis takes place by which objects become invested with a piece of humanity. Hence, the line between subject and object, between nature and culture, is blurred. At several points in his film Kluge shows that objects can project their humanity back at us. In the chapter *Lamento der liegengeliebenen Ware* he describes how the composer Wolfgang Rihm was struck by the sight of a bottle of product left behind on the shelves of a supermarket. It made him notice the sadness of unsold goods that are to be sent back to the manufacturer to be destroyed. Many goods remain unsold or unclaimed, loved by none, and are therefore deemed useless and dispensable. This continual destruction of perfectly good goods is a daily holocaust, for with each object a piece of humanity is destroyed. There is a profound sadness in all waste. This melancholy of the objects is expressed and given voice in Rihm's *Lamento*. Even more clear is the chapter of Kluge's film devoted to Max Brand's industrial opera *Maschinist Hopkins* (1929), the only opera set in factory halls and among factory workers. At night, however, the abandoned machines dream of their real life and lament their servile existence as slaves to the productive process. There is a human spirit in these machines, namely the spirit of the engineers that made them and thus projected part of themselves into the machines. But by objectifying (projecting) this spirit into matter (machines) it was petrified, made lifeless. By giving voice to the machines Brand's opera brings their spirit back to life, extending it into the world. The machines address us and through speech appeal to our human compassion. The line between human and machine, between subject and object, is erased. The duality is dialectically lifted up into a higher unity, a Romantic *Bruderschaft* that embraces the entire world.

This talking-back-at-us of our creations would come as no surprise to Elaine Scarry, who followed her philosophical investigations into pain and torture with reflections on aesthetics. This is not as big a leap as it might seem. Especially in her beautiful little book *On Beauty and Being Just* (1999) Scarry explains how beauty makes us aware of the preciousness and vulnerability of the world and all things in it. Through this awareness beauty invites us to extend human sympathy to lifeless things that

suddenly appear to us as 'hurtful' as human beings. 'What,' Scarry asks, 'is the felt experience of cognition at the moment one stands in the presence of a beautiful boy or flower or bird? It seems to incite, even require, the act of replication. Wittgenstein says that when the eye sees something beautiful, the hand wants to draw it. Beauty brings copies of itself into being' (BBJ 3). This experience can give rise to 'the idea of eternity, the perpetual duplicating of a moment that never stops. But it also sponsors the idea of terrestrial plenitude and distribution, the will to make "more and more" so that there will eventually be "enough"' (BBJ 5). It is clear that this desire to produce ever more beautiful things is related to the human desire to build a collective world and to surround oneself with pleasurable things. The urge to produce beautiful things (and not just soulless commodities) is a fundamental human need, just as Marx and Langer suggested. It is also interesting to note that Scarry's suggestion can be linked to Kant's idea of purposiveness without purpose. This is the third moment in the aesthetic judgement, where Kant writes that the experience of beauty, as felt experience, has no goal or purpose other than to perpetuate itself. When we experience beauty we want to make that moment last. A good example is the difficulty we often have to tear ourselves away from a beautiful work of art in an exhibition. We compulsively return to it, unable to satiate our desire to be in its presence. Referring to Leonardo da Vinci's habit of following beautiful people through the streets of Florence, Scarry notes that 'the simplest manifestation of this phenomenon is the everyday fact of staring' (ibid.).

One of Scarry's aims in her book is to deflate the politically correct claim that it is aggressive, demeaning or otherwise hurtful or simply wrong to look at beautiful people or things because to look at them is (among other evil things) to objectify them. This is the spectre of the infamous 'male gaze' that ravages all it lays its greedy little eyes on. 'Beauty, according to its critics, causes us to gape and suspend all thought. This complaint is manifestly true' (BBJ 29). But there is nothing wrong with this because to notice beauty and to stare at it in admiration is to become aware of vulnerability and an urge to protect the object perceived as vulnerable. 'A vase crafted by Gallé [...] can, although nonsentient, be harmed by being mishandled. Noticing its beauty increases the possibility that it will be carefully handled' (BBJ 65). This increased awareness of the ease with which things can be hurt and the demand for care that this awareness entails are the effect of all experiences of beauty, which leads Scarry to conclude that 'the concern demanded by the perfect vase or god or poem introduced me to a standard of care that I then began to extend to more ordinary objects' (BBJ 66). By noticing beauty we notice vulnerability and start noticing these things everywhere and not

just in the objects traditionally categorised as works of art. 'It is as though beautiful things have been placed here and there throughout the world to serve as small wake-up calls to perception, spurring lapsed alertness back to its most acute level. Through its beauty, the world continually recommits us to a rigorous standard of perceptual care: if we do not search it out, it comes and finds us' (BBJ 81). Beauty is the world's way of reaching out to us. And by making us aware of the vulnerability of people and things, beauty 'assists us in our attention to justice' (BBJ 86) because it makes clear to us that it is important to treat all people, all creatures and all objects with care and fairness. 'Beauty seems to place requirements on us for attending to the aliveness or (in the case of objects) quasi-aliveness of our world, and for entering into its protection. Beauty is, then, a compact, or contract between the beautiful being (a person or thing) and the perceiver' (BBJ 90).

If Max Brand's opera tries to give voice to objects in their quasi-aliveness, then the Einstürzende Neubauten do one better: this German band actually extracts voice from the objects themselves. As they put it in the song 'NNNAAAMMM', '*das Lied schläft in der Maschine*' and it is up to us to wake it up and make it sing. The music of the Neubauten is like an extended urban symphony conjured from the inanimate waste of civilisation and its destructive industry. When the band first started out, their music was extremely aggressive and atonal, an aural manifesto of rejection, isolation and alienation. Many of the Neubauten's early recordings are apocalyptic soundscapes created by relentlessly banging or scraping on scrap metal, debris or pieces of concrete. It was the music of a civilisation burnt to the ground. In fact, the Neubauten often created the musical equivalent of the kind of destructive events disaster capitalists would embrace as opportunities for building new worlds from scratch. But making art out of refuse, as the Neubauten do, implies a cyclical view of the world that is made explicit in the title of the album *ENDE NEU* (1996) and in the melancholy of 'Die Befindlichkeit des Landes' on *Silence is sexy* (2000). This song evokes the spirit of Marlene Dietrich hovering over Berlin and overlooking the way the old city has been bulldozed to build new boxes of glass and steel, a modern, tidy and efficient city with no soul. But, the song warns, '*einst wächst Gras auch über diese Stadt*'. What seems final now is destined to crumble in time and become a layer of soil on which new cities will be built ('*Alles nur künftige Ruinen / Material für die nächste Schicht*'). The world is seen as in constant movement, just like in the cosmology of the ancient Stoics, where every world order, after reaching its point of perfection, is burnt away in a cosmic fire so that the process of creation can start again.

Mexican Dialectics

In 1930 Eisenstein embarked on what would become another unrealised project, the filming of *Que Viva Mexico!* Eisenstein had been under contract at Paramount, but very soon realised that none of his projects there would come to fruition. With financial backing from the writer Upton Sinclair he set out for Mexico and started work on an ambitious project. However, the production soon went over budget and became a financial drain on Sinclair. After just over a year of filming he pulled the plug on Eisenstein, gathered the film negatives and promised to send them to Russia. At that point, Eisenstein had amassed about forty hours of film, 'although subtracting duplicate footage reduces the total time of the original to approximately six hours' (IE 1). In the event, Sinclair hung on to the footage and tried to regain part of his investment by allowing others to edit films out of it. Soon, *Thunder over Mexico* (1933) and *Day of the Dead* (1964) appeared, both directed by Sol Lesser, followed by *Time in the Sun* (1939-40) by Eisenstein's biographer Mary Seton. Some of the footage also found its way into *Mexican Symphony* (W. Kruse, 1941). Sinclair also tried to make money selling the footage as stock footage. In 1954 Sinclair handed over the footage to the MoMA, where Jay Leyda, Eisenstein's former student and editor-translator of several volumes of Eisenstein's writings, assembled *Eisenstein Mexican Film: Episodes for Study*, a 225-minute edit for academic purposes. Only in 1979 did the MoMA agree to return the nitrate negatives to the USSR, where Grigorii Alexandrov, the only surviving member of the Mexican crew and also the man who had collaborated with Eisenstein on the script, edited the version of the film which is now most widely seen and is considered to be the most truthful approximation of Eisenstein's intentions, although it is inconceivable to recreate what Eisenstein might have achieved through his editing of the material. It is important to stress, however, that Eisenstein never even *saw* his own footage, let alone edit it, which was a great source of distress for him in subsequent years. By consequence, no edit of *Que Viva Mexico!* can ever be anything near authoritative (IE 1-2).

Still, there are many reasons to accept Alexandrov's edit of the film as a fair if flawed attempt to present us with something akin to Eisenstein's vision, even if some important scenes were left out. Alexandrov's edit consists of five parts: a prologue, 'Sandunga', 'Fiesta', 'Maguey' and an epilogue. Much has been written about the meaning and symbolism of these 'novellas' so we shall limit ourselves to a brief presentation of elements that are crucial for the present discussion. The Mexican Day of the Dead is of central concern to the film, and Eisenstein links it with the way ancient Mexican cosmology provides a cyclical view of life and death. This vision is in turn heavily imbued with violence and

eroticism, and especially a sadomasochistic homo-eroticism. Attractive young men are often presented as sexual objects in the film. In 'Maguey', the most famous and stunning sequence, a group of young working men set out to avenge the rape of a girl but are themselves hunted down by the capitalist's henchmen, buried up to their shoulders in the ground and trampled by horses. It is an orgiastic vision of sadomasochistic ecstasy that calls to mind the ecstatically suffering saints of Baroque art. But on another level *Que Viva Mexico!* is also about the way Mexico represents the ideal of proletarian revolution to Eisenstein. The film shows the oppression of the proletariat and its resistance against the capitalists. In this way, Marxist themes are central to its mythical imagery, not just in the 'Maguey' episode but also in 'Sandunga', where the marriage of the girl Concepción is seen as a ritual of exchange. The sequence 'sets up Tehuantepec as Eden' and uses several shots to establish the 'theme of economic exchange and assigning value to objects. Most remarkable in this respect are match-cuts and dissolves between the close-up of a necklace made of flowers, then [a] gold necklace (the dowry that Concepción has to collect), and the future groom in his hammock. All three are objects of exchange invested with libidinal as well as economic powers' (IE 66). Both the cosmological and libidinal elements in the film are of immediate concern to us and feed directly into Eisenstein's dialectical vision.

Throughout his life and work Eisenstein was looking for synthesis, which is the essence of dialectics. Synthesis, as we saw earlier, is a higher form of unity that is more than the sum of its parts. It implies a metamorphosis, a kind of surplus-meaning that is magically more than the meanings one started out with. This search for synthesis found a very strong expression in *Que Viva Mexico!*, where it is linked with eroticism. This opens a wide range of associations and meanings, especially if we consider that Eisenstein was a closeted homosexual, or at least a bisexual, who was profoundly influenced by Freud. To be sure, eroticism was not new to Eisenstein's cinema. *Potemkin* was suffused with a sultry homo-eroticism, especially in the portrayal of virile bare-chested marines in luxurious repose or taking valiant action against their oppressors. In *Old and New* (1929) Eisenstein even introduced a visual metaphor that is perfectly analogous to the lamenting machines we found in Max Brand's opera. The film tries to celebrate collectivisation by showing a mechanical cream separator squirting jets of milk as if it were sperm. This is a machine that is fertile like the earth and cattle or the human body itself. By sexualising the workings of a machine Eisenstein blurs the line between the human body and its ecstasy on the one hand and the ecstasies of the machine's body on the other hand. The machine is made to seem anthropomorphic in its sexual

exuberance. But sexual ecstasy, and ecstasy in general, are central to Eisenstein's concept of synthesis. He believed that ecstasy was a gateway to a primordial unity, a cosmic synthesis. In these beliefs Eisenstein was influenced by Lucien Levy-Bruhl's work on primitive cultures and especially by the idea of prelogical thinking, a mythologically structured form of thought that does not adhere to the rules of noncontradiction. It is a kind of sensual thinking by association that is achieved, Eisenstein believed, through ecstasy.

If ecstasy transports us to cosmic synthesis, cosmology comes into play. For Eisenstein, ancient Mexican cosmology fitted the part perfectly because 'it is marked by a mythological or circular perception of time and history [...]: death is always linked to rebirth, as in the natural life cycle' (IE 43). In this cyclical movement 'all the distinctions are blurred: between men and women, between art and nature' (IE 103). Prelogical thinking inhabits a realm before such cultural dualities took root. It is as ancient as nature and can be linked to a duality that is famously developed by Nietzsche in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* (1872), where he distinguishes between the Apollonian and the Dionysian, with the Apollonian being the order of culture and reason that is built as a human defence against the sucking morass of female Dionysian Nature. For Eisenstein, 'the dark and moist tropical area of Tehuantepec is not only a stand-in for the womb (of the civilisation, of the revolution, and so on), but actually coincides with it and is analogous to the real womb of a woman'. Departing from Nietzsche, Eisenstein sees 'the return to the womb as the prototype of all artistic creation, where the form of a circle or a sphere always designates this evolutionary regression to the originary undifferentiated state prior to birth' (IE 70). But art must extricate itself from the womb of Mother Nature and subdue it. 'Eisenstein identifies the conquest of man over nature – which most ancient myths deal with and most rituals embody – as the foundation for artistic creation. He links this attribute of prelogical thinking to his theories of the theatre of attraction, [...] where the visceral effect of the spectacle on the audience is what allows art to transcend its role as representation and become an act of willpower and the conquest over the psyche of the spectator' (IE 103).

This leads us directly into a discussion of the baroque quality of Eisenstein's cinema, which is positively bursting with colliding images. 'Eisenstein's theory of montage of attractions, which is at the core of his film theory, and in particular the notion of the *cine-fist* as a mode of directly impacting the spectator, can be seen as a perfect baroque tool, "where the body of the spectator becomes the extension of the cultural work"' (IE 95). In the baroque mode the line between subject and object is destroyed

because the visual impact of images on the visceral body (Dionysian violence) is used to enforce ideology (Apollonian thought). And this is linked with the Baroque concept of allegory, where images are used to carry higher meanings, just as they are in intellectual montage. John Rupert Martin has called this 'the transcendental view of reality' in Baroque art where 'familiar objects of visible reality may be looked on as emblems of a higher, *invisible* reality' (Martin 1991: 119). This concept of allegory would return in the philosophy of Early German Romanticism, notably in the work of Friedrich Schlegel, who felt that allegory, along with the fragment, was the only way to try and attain an approximation of knowledge of the Absolute. A specific use of Baroque allegory related to representations of time and especially of the cycle of life and death. But this cosmological attempt at synthesis also contains a sexual element that was of great personal importance to Eisenstein. 'Mexico is astonishing, especially for me,' he writes in a letter. 'Picture to yourself a country across which is stretched... my personality. You already know its diapason, from one ugly feature to another, and the contrast of all my passions and interests' (Eisenstein 2006: 53). Elsewhere Eisenstein writes that he saw Mexico as 'a sort of outward projection of all those individual lines and features which I carried and carry within me like a tangle of complexes' (in IE 106). And writing about himself in the third person in a series of notes for the writer Anita Brenner (who was to write an essay on his Mexican drawings), Eisenstein claims that 'E. appears as an erotic monk and a mystic from the Middle Ages... as a cynic and ecstatic. A singer of orgasms of all known and unknown varieties' (in IE 123). All this, of course, must be read in view of Eisenstein's homosexuality, which is linked in his mind with a sexual metamorphosis that could be found in the role of the *berdaches* in ancient Mexican culture. *Berdaches* were biological males who dressed and behaved like females and 'were seen as almost deitylike, mirroring the image of the bisexual gods' (IE 125-126). So sexuality and sexual ecstasy become for Eisenstein the synthetic point where subject and object are united and distinctions are blurred. But it is also the ultimate act of projection because Eisenstein is obviously and extravagantly projecting his own sexual feelings onto Mexican culture and into his cinema. Eisenstein swallows the world by eroticising it. This dialectic of the erotic body, where Eisenstein and the world become one, is the high-point of Marxism as a philosophy of physicality, of mind extended into the world through body.

And to be sure, some of this also did the rounds of communist ideology, especially in biopolitical circles. In *Nachrichten aus der ideologischen Antike* it is again Boris Groys who gets to address this bizarre feature of communist culture. He talks at length about the absurd experiments of Alexander Bogdanow to

create a new humanity through the exchange of blood. In Bogdanow's view, every person would have to exchange eighty percent of her blood every year, so that all people would be linked to each other, as if one were to create a global *Bruderschaft* through genetics. Ideally, one would be able to create one human body that encompasses the whole of humanity. This way, the unity of proletarians everywhere would no longer be achieved through ideology but on the physical plane, namely within the body, just like Eisenstein wanted to alter the mind of the spectator by attacking the body. It would then no longer be money that makes the world go round, but heartbeat, the rush of blood through veins. In the end, all men would be able to aspire to immortality. This would obviously raise the problem of mass cohabitation, forcing man to colonise other planets and other galaxies, moving ever further out into space (the nightmare vision of *Der grosse Verhau*). Bogdanow himself took all of this very seriously and experimented extensively on his own body. He died when he got an infection after his one hundred and twenty-third self-administered blood transfusion. As a vision of universal *Bruderschaft* his biopolitics are as impractical as they are sheer folly. They do speak, however, to the one theme that has been running through our many detours through Marx, Eisenstein and Kluge: a dialectics of universal love or, at least, care and reciprocity. The drive that bestows such terrific energy on Eisenstein's films and that infuses his theorising with grand dialectical visions is none other than the Romantic vision as it came to Marx through Hegel. It is a sure sign that much of what is modern, modernist and even postmodern in our society is really just another manifestation of the Romantic mode with its sense for the Absolute, for allegory and for spectacular cosmic visions of mankind and Nature. It is a grand vision, with more than a hint of folly in it. But it remains the most persuasive allegory about mankind and its destiny that western culture has yet been able to tell about itself.

Nailing Capital

The title of *Nachrichten aus der ideologischen Antike* suggests that Marx and Eisenstein are part of an ideological antiquity. For Kluge the time separating us from them means that we can approach their work in the same way we approach all classical writers: '*Wir können uns wie in einem Garten mit den fremden Gedanken von Marx und dem seltsamen Projekt von Eisenstein auseinandersetzen, weil sie Nachrichten aus der ideologischen Antike darstellen. So unbefangen, wie wir mit dem Altertum umgehen, das doch die besten Texte der Menschheit umfasst*' (Kluge 2008: 4). The metaphor of the garden is particularly apt because it echoes another metaphor put forward by the writer Dietmar Dath near the end of the first part of Kluge's

film. Dath describes how *Das Kapital* can be seen as a book into which a nail has been driven, attaching it to a surface. Once it is set that way, the book can spin around the nail like the needle of a compass. This spinning movement represents the many points of orientation or interpretation that the work allows. This is, in essence, the way we read all books from ideological Antiquity: through time they accumulate diverse and often conflicting readings that mutually exclude but also illuminate each other, the times in which they were formulated and ultimately also ourselves as the latest readers of this text and its history. With Leninism a second nail was driven into *Das Kapital*, bringing the book to a standstill and forcing one exclusive (and ideologically correct) reading upon it. With the demise of the communist block in 1989 this second nail was forcibly removed, allowing *Das Kapital* to spin again. Kluge's film now presents itself as a rhizome of clues to a contemporary reading of the book. But the same can be said of Scarry's analysis of pain, Arendt's distinction between kinds of human action, Eisenstein's unrealised film, activist's agit-prop and even the present essay: they are all different inroads to Marx's book. By putting all these maps on top of each other we can connect the dots of this massive rhizome of meaning and see a baroque edifice of new structures emerge, structures of criticism and resistance. As such, they are both clues and appeals to action. This way, *Das Kapital* becomes a tool-box of ideas for resistance, a set of keys to break open the status quo, *give voice* to criticism and *take action* in the world. This, in essence, was Marx's vision in writing *Das Kapital* as much as it was Eisenstein's in wanting to film it. In this sense, Marx is still our contemporary. The world is not a set of goods and should not be bought or sold. The world is who we are, what we make and where we live. The world is us. It is ours to reclaim.

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