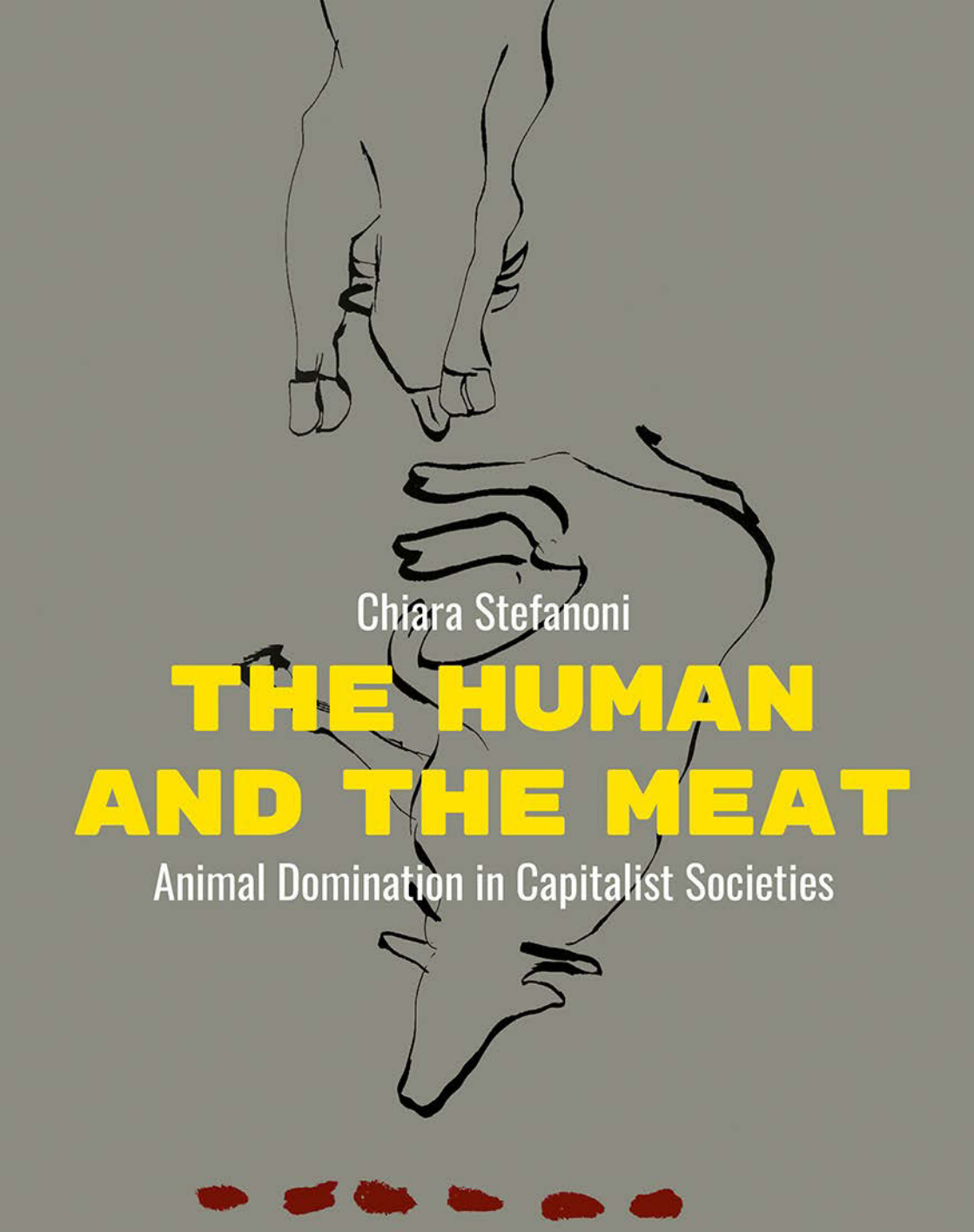

Chiara Stefanoni

THE HUMAN AND THE MEAT

Animal Domination in Capitalist Societies

[transcript] Human-Animal Studies

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Chiara Stefanoni
The Human and the Meat

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To all the animals whose encounter we missed,
to the black-*furred ones I have met*

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Introduction

If I broke down the wall of flesh
and hanging from the hook I smiled
what would he say who is paid to dismember
the stamper of tongues
what label would they put on me
how many organs would they discard
and would the vet think panta rei?[1]

The past few years have been frustrating for advocates of animal liberation. Alongside growing neglect and indifference toward the horrors of animal domination and exploitation across nearly all levels of society, a further insult has emerged, verging on "mockery". As socio-ecological crises related to climate change, environmental devastation and mass extinctions intensify, public and political debate on these issues grow, with animals and human-animal relationships at the center. These debates unfold both through institutional channels, such as the international agenda calling for a shift toward sustainable agriculture and consumption, and through grassroots movements like "Fridays for Future" and "Extinction Rebellion", but to little effect. Rhetoric regarding multispecies justice,[2] care and sustainability for all creatures, does not seem to stop animals' conditions from worsening.

The outbreak of COVID-19, a zoonotic disease resulting from interspecies infection, and its global spread in early 2020 seemed to have brought many critical flaws of our animal-based food production systems into the public spotlight, and with them the inherent dilemmas within contemporary human-animal relations

1 Ivano Ferrari, *Slaughterhouse* (Macello), trans. Matteo Gilebbi, Legas, New York-Ottawa, 2019, p. 82.

2 This notion, developed originally in academic circles, has recently entered the UN Signals Spotlight, "Signals Spotlight identifies some of the areas where our legacy to future generations is in doubt – and asks what that means for development". One of these areas is multispecies justice, "Sustainable development will need to consider environmental justice and the rights of non-human animals". https://www.undp.org/future-development/signals-spotlight-2024/multi-species-justice accessed 9th June 2025.

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and capitalist industrial agriculture. This was evident in the impact of animal farming on the growing proximity between wild and domesticated animals,[3] to numerous outbreaks in slaughterhouses, the mass culling of millions of infected animals on mink farms and the widespread media narratives, like "animals are reclaiming cities", which dominated headlines during the early months of the pandemic.

Many called for a "challenge to change", but those appeals went unanswered. Everything returned to normal, and the aftermath of the pandemic, particularly regarding the domination of animals, is desperately lacking critical interpretation. Since 1975, animal advocates and theorists have traditionally explained the exploitation of non-human animals in terms of an irrational moral prejudice that indiscriminately privileges human interests at the expense of those of other species, what is commonly referred to as "speciesism".[4] According to this explanation, it is an entrenched moral error as old as (Western) humanity itself[5] that leads to the incessant production and killing of billions of animals and fish for human consumption, they say, with total indifference to the conditions experienced by animals. Therefore, it is the task of animal ethicists to expose these cultural and moral inconsistencies in order to underwrite an antispeciesist stance. By extension, it is up to each person of good will and reason to recognize these inconsistencies and change their lifestyles and consumption choices. There are significant flaws in this response, which render it both theoretically unconvincing and practically ineffective for activism and genuine social change.[6] Moreover, it may be said that precisely because of its misguided theoretical orientation, this response has dominated the mainstream of an-

3 See, for example, Wolfgang Brozek and Christof Falkenberg, "Industrial Animal Farming and Zoonotic Risk: COVID-19 as a Gateway to Sustainable Change? A Scoping Study", *Sustainability*, vol. 13, no. 16 (2021), p. 9251; United Nations Environment Programme and International Livestock Research Institute. *Preventing the Next Pandemic: Zoonotic Diseases and How to Break the Chain of Transmission*, Nairobi, Kenya, 2020. A useful resource with more than 200 works on the connections between zoonoses (not only COVID-19), capitalist animal agriculture and practices involving wild animals is compiled by the Centre for Animal Ethics at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona: https://www.upf.edu/web/cae-center-for-animal-ethics/zoonotic-pandemics accessed 9th June 2025.

4 Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation*, Ecco Press, New York, 2001; Oscar Horta, "What is Speciesism?", *Journal of Agriculture and Environmental Ethics*, vol. 23 (2010), pp. 243–266.

5 Chapter five, *Animal Liberation*, "Man's Dominion…a Short History of Speciesism" (pp. 185–212). Singer traces speciesism from its roots in the *Book of Genesis* to the twentieth-century works of Aldous Huxley.

6 See, for example, Carol J. Adams and Lori Gruen, "Ecofeminist Footings", Adams and Gruen (eds.), *Ecofeminism: Feminist Intersections with Other animals and the Earth*, Bloomsbury Publishing, New York, 2014, pp. 1–43; Matthew Calarco, *Thinking Through Animals. Identity, Difference, Indistinction*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2015, pp. 6–27; Cary Wolfe, "Humanist and Posthumanist Anti-speciesism", Paola Cavaliere (ed.), *The Death of the Animal: A Dialogue*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2009, pp. 45–58.

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tispeciesist thought – whether in academia or in practice (NGOs, associations, welfare committees) – precluding a response better suited to correcting the true ills of speciesism.

An attempt to develop a more credible and complex response can be found in certain marginalized approaches to the animal question, known as Critical Animal Studies (CAS) and related activism. Here, the animal question shifts from a moral footnote to a crucial social and political matter. The current problem of animal domination is not seen as rooted in a mistaken idea or bias – i.e. speciesism – but is instead rooted in the material processes of production and reproduction of capitalist society. Therefore, understanding current human-animal relations and act for real change requires examining the role of animals within capitalism and incorporating it within a critical theory of society. This is the meaning behind the "critical" in CAS, and it explains its appeal to the political left, even if this appeal goes largely unacknowledged.

The critique of capitalism is central to CAS, as it forms a key element in diagnosing and potentially solving the ongoing domination of animals, despite its increasingly evident unsustainability. As a left-wing movement, however, CAS also suffers from broader "divisions within the Left". Specifically, a certain tension has escalated since the late 1990s[7] between the two most prominent critical frameworks within contemporary leftist thought: Marxism and intersectionality. To put it simply, orthodox Marxism develops a critique of capitalism by focusing on economic class relations and labor, prioritizing class struggle. On the other hand, intersectionality concentrates upon the complex interconnections between various cultural axes of oppression and identity formation, such as race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, ability, religion, education, etc. Intersectionality emerges from the tradition of the cultural left and social movements that arose in the second half of the 1970s, particularly feminism and Black rights movements. It identifies multiple, intersecting forms of oppression, challenging and complicating the identity politics often associated with these movements. Intersectionality rejects the notion of a single, primary source of domination, whether it be gender, class, race, or any other axis of oppression. The crossfire between these two perspectives revolves around accusations of reductionism. Marxists accuse intersectionality of *cultural reductionism* (culturalism) – focusing merely on cultural dynamics at the expense of economic structure – while intersectional theorists criticize Marxism for *economic reductionism* (economism), narrowly concentrating on economic relations and class struggle to the neglect of other axes of oppression, treating them as secondary and transient. This divide is particularly problematic and damaging for CAS, which aims to be *both* intersectional and

7 Representative of this debate is the repartee between Nancy Fraser and Judith Butler. See Nancy Fraser, *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the "Post-Socialist" Condition*, Routledge, New York, 1997; and Judith Butler, "Merely Cultural", *Social Text*, no. 52/53 (1997), pp. 265–77.

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Marxist, viewing animal domination as enmeshed with other axes of oppression while also being fundamentally woven into the material fabric of capitalist society.

This tension is extremely persistent on social media. For example, a prominent theorist within the intersectional animal advocacy movement accused a well-known Marxist antispeciesist of "economic reductionism" (and neoconservatism, especially sexual). The Marxist theorist responded with accusations of "cultural reductionism" (and liberalism). The dispute ended with a terse but revealing post in which both figures, despite their disagreements, converged, "You cannot call yourself antispeciesist if you are not, at the same time, anti-capitalist. That's how it is. End of the story".[8]

This brief yet illustrative online quarrel captures in a direct, and perhaps simplistic, way the core focus of this book and the relationships between the key elements of this debate: antispeciesism, intersectionality, and the critique of capitalism. Key assumptions of the quarrel are:

1. There is an inextricable link between capitalism and the domination and exploitation of animals.
2. Intersectionality frames species oppression as part of the broader Western system of dualistic thinking, which leads to the charge of culturalism.
3. Marxism understands this oppression primarily in terms of economic exploitation, leading to accusations of economism.

This book positions itself within the framework of CAS and its aspiration for a critique of animal domination that is both intersectional and Marxist. Thus, in the light of this debate, its central question is: How can modern animal domination be explained in relation to other forms of domination *and* in the overarching context of capitalist society, in order to identify its distinctive characteristics from a materialist and non-reductionist perspective, neither cultural nor economic? The intersectional perspective, which emphasizes the multiplicity, simultaneity, and connectedness of various forms of oppression and privilege, orients CAS research toward analyzing the interconnections between speciesism and other axes of oppression, fostering alliances and political solidarity across oppressed groups. This perspective avoids single-issue conceptions of struggle, in which animal domination alone is prioritized. Intersectionality often fails, however, to investigate or to explain *how* and *why* these different forms of domination intersect, leaving their foundations somewhat unclear. As a result, appeals to intersectionality in the context of anti-oppression struggles can risk being perceived as superficial or overly general. When such explanatory efforts are made, as in ecofeminism, a field that anticipated intersectional

8 Facebook conversation. The content was observed in November 2020 but is no longer accessible.

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thinking, they often locate the common root of various forms of domination in epistemic frameworks or cultural logics. Thus, what intersectionality lacks in this regard is a consistent theory of society and power. This lack leads to those accusations of being "merely cultural" or, worse, of "cultural reductionism". While cultural analysis is not problematic in itself, it is not seen as sufficient for effective social criticism.

This evokes the first guiding question: How can socio-material depth be added to an intersectional perspective, capable of explaining the effective dynamics of the structural interlocking of dominations beyond a laundry list of oppressions?[9] Attention to the social dimension leads CAS to develop a critique of capitalism, because it is capitalism that enables animal domination and exploitation to take place on such a massive scale. David Nibert's framing of speciesism as an ideology legitimizing the economic exploitation of animals set a significant precedent.[10] This somewhat reductionist approach, however, clashes with CAS's intersectional commitments. To navigate the impasse, some scholars have turned to the notion that different systems of power and domination – such as speciesism, capitalism, patriarchy, and racism – intersect (albeit vaguely) with each other. Yet, this line of analysis tends to prioritize speciesism over other systems and views the relationship between speciesism and capitalism as merely quantitative. Capitalism is seen simply as amplifying speciesism and the scale and intensity of animal exploitation.

This approach risks falling into economic reductionism, providing an inadequate understanding of the social dynamics and failing to specifically define capitalist society, leading to the second and third guiding questions: How can we frame capitalism in a non-reductionist, non-economistic way (In other words, what is the most appropriate interpretation of Marxism for understanding capitalist society)? And, What is the precise nature of the link between capitalist societies and animal domination? These both suggest further structural questions such as, Is it possible to achieve animal liberation without moving beyond capitalism? Are there structural constraints inherent to capitalist societies that imply the reproduction of certain power relations, hierarchies, modes of subjectivation when it comes to human-animal relations? The challenge is to explain if, why, and how one can call themselves antispeciesist without also being anti-capitalist (as well as anti-heterosexist and anti-racist).[11] Thus, the goal – one that remains yet unachieved

9 "The theories of feminist identity that elaborate predicates of color, sexuality, ethnicity, class, and able-bodiedness invariably close with an embarrassed 'etc.' at the end of the list. Through this horizontal trajectory of adjectives, these positions strive to encompass a situated subject, but invariably fail to be complete". Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble; Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Routledge, New York and London, 1999, p. 182.

10 David Nibert, *Animal Rights/Human Rights: Entanglements of Oppression and Liberation*, Rowman and Littlefield, Lanham, 2002.

11 In the book, I touch upon gender and capitalist societies (ch. 3) and only mention issues related to nation-form and "race". However, once the concept of "forms of the production of in-

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in CAS – is to develop a logic for the socio-political analysis of animal domination and exploitation in capitalist societies that moves beyond the dichotomy between cultural and economic analysis and fulfills the dual requirement of being both materialist and intersectional.

To develop this, chapter one of this book analyzes the history and theory of Critical Animal Studies, examining its intersectional foundations and the role of ecofeminism. It assesses the existing literature on the connections between speciesism and capitalism that draws on various Marxist traditions, ranging from traditional Marxism and Western Marxism to operaismo and post-operaismo. Additionally, attempts outside the tradition of CAS and from within the animal rights theory to engage with Marxist thought and leftist politics are considered in order to demonstrate that these efforts often fall short, primarily due to the theoretical foundations of animal rights theory being deeply entrenched in liberal, moralistic and analytic philosophical frameworks.

Chapter two lays the groundwork for developing a logic that can both analyze capitalist societies and resist reductionism. This analysis begins with an interpretation of Marx's critique of political economy, drawing on the "Neue Marx-Lektüre" (New Marx Reading). A historical and conceptual overview of this approach shows how, contrary to more traditional views, Marx's critique is not an effort to propose an "alternative" economic system that redistributes wealth more fairly. Rather, it aims to provide an abstract-conceptual reconstruction of the structural conditions that make these social relations possible in the first place. The New Marx Reading convincingly reframes his critique of political economy as a critical analysis of how social complexity is formed under the specific conditions of capitalist production. Thus, it emphasizes the importance of *social forms*, which are particular ways of organizing social cohesion, such as economic forms like value, money, and capital, but also legal-political forms like law and the state. The concept of *dispositifs* (apparatuses) is crucial to this chapter, insofar as it accounts for the variable, contingent, and historical-empirical reality of social relations, including institutional configurations, fields of knowledge, power relations, and forms of subjectivation. The Foucauldian notion of *dispositif* is hybridized with Jacques Rancière's concepts of police and politics and the framework of Historical-Materialist Policy Analysis (HMPA). This combined framework allows for an examination of empirical trajectories of conflict and concrete social disputes, power relations, and actor constellations. Through this prism, politics acquire the crucial meaning of *practice*

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dividuals" is introduced, a thorough materialist analysis of these forms of domination and of their dynamics of relation with capitalist forms of goods production becomes available. See Francesco Aloe and Chiara Stefanoni, "Anatomia della nazione. Dalla formula trinitaria alle forme della popolazione", *Consecutio Rerum. Rivista critica della postmodernità*, no. 10 (2021), pp. 362–5.

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of conflictual relationality aimed at shaping social living conditions, both from the perspective of emancipation and domination.

The third chapter marks the beginning of the second part of the book, operationalizing, putting to use this multi-layered theoretical framework in a novel analysis of animal domination and exploitation in capitalist societies, aiming at understanding its qualitative change and specific organization. The chapter begins by identifying the existence of "forms of production of individuals" alongside capitalist forms of production of goods and services, building on the foundational insights of Marxist feminism from the 1970s. The organization of human-animal relations, characterized by a structural separation and coupling between the gendered production of human labor-power and the commodification of animals, is reconstructed as part of the "ideal average" of capitalist societies, leading to an understanding of "anthropological form". The chapter argues that this form is the reified and naturalized, thus invisible, matrix underlying the process of producing humans.

The fourth chapter shifts the focus to the *dispositifs*, engaging with historical reconstruction. The first historical power-knowledge "dietary *dispositif*" that materialized this anthropological form performed a fundamental change in meat production and consumption processes, encapsulated in the term "*hygienizing meat*". This *dispositif*, whose central element is the industrial slaughterhouse, brought about the so-called nutrition transition toward animal-source food, marking the rise of an animal-based food system within mid-nineteenth-century capitalist society. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the political conflictual relationality (its context, actors, processes) surrounding these changes, with particular emphasis on slaughterhouse reform and surrounding debates.

Given the historical scope of this chapter, some sections contain descriptions of institutional violence, such as slaughterhouse mechanisms and phases of animal slaughter drawn from primary sources. These accounts aim to provide a historically accurate perspective on the evolution of meat production. Additionally, due to the reliance on historical sources and non-critical animal studies sources, certain terminology used throughout this chapter may include objectifying terms such as "livestock", "cattle", which were – and still are – intrinsic to the discourse of industrialized meat production. While these descriptions and terms are essential to the historical analysis, readers may find some passages challenging. Proceeding with awareness of the material presented is advised.

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Part I: Theoretical Foundations

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1. Framing Critical Animal Studies

1.1 The Emergence of CAS: A Historical Overview

If any historical narrative begins with a conventional date to distinguish *before* from *after*, then the history of "the animal question" begins in 1975 with the publication of philosopher Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation*.[1] This chronological touchstone coincides with "a master-narrative in the field of animal studies, a narrative that traces significant philosophical concern with the moral status of nonhuman animals back only to the 1970s and to 'Oxbridge-style' analytic moral philosophy".[2] Singer was solicited to publish *Animal Liberation* when he was a postgraduate in philosophy at Oxford University, after he sent an unsolicited review of the 1971 book, *Animals, Men and Morals*.[3] Its authors, Roslind and Stanley Godlovitch and John Harris, were members of the so-called Oxford Group or Oxford Vegetarians, an intellectual circle developing a moral philosophy that included non-humans.[4]

Over the past 50 years, reflection and research on the topics of human-animal relations and animality, broadly construed, have undergone a remarkable expansion. The "animal turn" can be observed in a growing number of disciplines, including philosophy, anthropology, ethology, psychology, sociology, history, geography, biology, literary studies, and film studies, giving rise to the vast interdisciplinary field of animal studies (AS), or human-animal studies (HAS), and to novel paradigms for research. A quantitative change in the number of publications, conferences, books, academic programs, societies, etc., has been accompanied by a qualitative change: "As it has expanded the range of possible research topics in a number of

1 Singer, *Animal Liberation*.

2 Dawne McCance, *Critical Animal Studies: An Introduction*, SUNY Press, Albany, 2012, pp. 7–8.

3 Stanley Godlovitch *et al.*, *Animals, Men and Morals*, Victor Gollancz, London, 1971.

4 See Robert Garner and Yewande Okuleye; *The Oxford Group and the Emergence of Animal Rights: An Intellectual History*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2020 and Peter Singer, "The Oxford Vegetarians – A Personal Account", *International Journal for the Study of Animal Problems*, vol. 1, no. 3 (1982), pp. 6–9. This is the mainstream genealogy of the animal question. As we shall see below fundamental contributions came, in the same 1980s, from feminism, especially ecofeminism, and often in direct opposition to Singer and Regan's approach.

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disciplines, the animal turn has also suggested new relationships between scholars and their subjects, and new understandings of the role of the animal in the past and at present".[5] Criticisms of the animal turn accuse academia with either neutralizing or co-opting the political and social imperative intrinsic to the question of animal *liberation* explicit in the title of the movement's inaugural book – a normative commitment to the liberation of non-human animals from exploitation.

In 2001 a "theory-to-action, activist-led, scholarly think-tank"[6] established the "Centre for Animal Liberation Affairs". In 2007, it was renamed the "Institute for Critical Animal Studies", thereby formalizing Critical Animal Studies (CAS) as a field of study. It is important to note that CAS has little, if any, connection to the Oxbridge-style, analytical, Singerian framework. CAS vigorously rejects and critiques the liberal position on animal rights espoused by these perspectives, which seek to extend the legal discourse on fundamental human rights to non-human animals on the basis of moral theory (e.g., giusnaturalism,[7] contractualism[8]). The "founding act" of CAS, a manifesto written for the occasion of ICAS's inauguration, affirms the rejection of "apolitical, conservative, and liberal positions [...], reformist, single-issue, nation-based, legislative, strictly animal interest politics".[9]

It is important to consider precisely what is meant by the adjective "critical" in CAS. First and foremost, the presence of the term "critical" in this context refers to the critique of AS, which has been rebranded as "Mainstream Animal Studies" (MAS). CAS's founding act explicitly outlines this opposition:

> Animal studies has already entrenched itself as an abstract, esoteric, jargon-laden, insular, non-normative, and apolitical discipline, one where scholars can achieve recognition while nevertheless remaining wedded to speciesist values, carnivorist lifestyles, and at least tacit – sometime overt – support of numerous forms of animal exploitation such as vivisection. In recent years Critical Animal Studies has emerged as a necessary and vital alternative to the insularity, detachment, hypocrisy, and profound limitations of mainstream animal studies that vaporizes their flesh and blood realities to reduce them to reified signs, symbols, images, words on a page, or protagonists in a historical drama, and thereby utterly fail to confront them not as text but rather as sentient beings who live and die in the most sadistic, barbaric, and wretched cages of technohell that humanity has been able to devise, the better to exploit them for all they are worth.[10]

5 Harriet Ritvo, "On the Animal Turn", *Daedalus*, vol. 136, no. 4 (2007), p. 119.

6 ICAS website: https://criticalanimalstudies.org/about/ accessed on 9th June 2025.

7 Tom Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1983.

8 Robert Garner, *A Theory of Justice for Animals: Animal Rights in a Nonideal World*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2013.

9 Steven Best, et al., "Introducing Critical Animal Studies", *Journal for Critical Animal Studies*, vol. 5, no. 1 (2007), pp. 4–5.

10 *Ibid.*, 4.

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The criticism levelled here is that MAS separates theory from activist practice, pursuing theory for its own sake without significant action towards social change regarding the real conditions of animals. In contrast, CAS scholars are committed to "engaged theory"[11] – theory that is either directly or indirectly employed to effect radical or minor social transformation. They are committed to *praxis*, or the interconnectedness between theory and practice, rooted in the Western Marxist tradition. CAS is particularly indebted to the Frankfurt School's elaboration of praxis in the context of its critical theory of society. Steven Best devotes an entire section of his 2009 essay to highlight the affinities between CAS and the Frankfurt School. He states:

> There are interesting historical and theoretical parallels between the emergence of the Frankfurt School and their "critical theory" approach against positivist academia and conformist cultures in Europe and the US, and the CAS polemic directed against MAS and the positivism and apolitical culture that continues to dominate academia in the present day.[12]

This leads to a second, more substantial, meaning of "critical" in CAS. Two 1937 programmatic essays on the distinction between traditional and critical theory, Max Horkheimer's *Traditional and Critical Theory*[13] and Herbert Marcuse's *Philosophy and Critical Theory*,[14] trace the differences between traditional and critical theory, defining critical theory by its explicit political commitments, normative perspectives, and its goal to radically transform the existing social order toward emancipation.[15] In 2014, two prominent critical animal studies scholars in their conclusive essay for the

11 Taylor and Twine, "Locating the 'Critical' in Critical Animal Studies", p. 6.

12 Steven Best, "The Rise (and Fall) of Critical Animal Studies", *Liberazioni. Rivista di critica antispecista* (2013), http://www.liberazioni.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Best-TheRiseand-FallofCriticalAnimalStudies.pdf. accessed on 28th June 2025.

13 Max Horkheimer, "Traditional and Critical Theory", *Critical Sociology: Selected Readings*, trans. M. J. O'Connell, Penguin, London, 1976, pp. 207–8.

14 Herbert Marcuse, "Philosophy and Critical Theory", *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory*, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro, Beacon Press, Boston, 1969, pp. 147–54.

15 In more recent years, CAS anthologies, in delimiting their own field of study, make less direct reference to these authors. Nevertheless, they speak in terms of praxis and critical theory. For example, "a core difference between the animal studies scholar and the critical animal studies scholar is an intended commitment to praxis. Praxis is the application of theory to action and vice versa." Carol Glasser, "The Radical Debate: A Straw Man in the Movement", Taylor et al. (eds.), *The Rise of Critical Animal Studies*, p. 242. Or, in the introduction to a 2018 anthology, *Critical Animal Studies. Toward Trans-Species Social Justice*, the editors write, "Praxis means to bring theory into action". Atsuko Matsuoka and John Sorenson (eds.), *Critical Animal Studies: Towards Trans-species Social Justice*, Rowman and Littlefield, Lanham, 2018, p. 18.

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seminal collection, *The Rise of Critical Animal Studies: From the Margin to the Centre*, assert:

> CAS [is] a strand of critical theory (broadly defined) […]. By "critical", we mean the application of critical theory towards actual liberation. Max Horkheimer's famous definition of critical theory as that which tries "to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them" is correct as far as it goes, but wrong in that it places the limits of liberation at only "the human". We would say that critical theory and, therefore, *critical* animal studies, is that which seeks to liberate the animal from the circumstances that seek to enslave her.[16]

1.1.1 Before CAS: Animal Rights and the Left

CAS has an overt commitment to leftist, Marxist, and anti-capitalist politics. It emerged in opposition to the liberal, moralistic, and abstract discourse often associated with traditional animal rights, which had historically fostered mutual distrust between the Left and advocates of animal issues. The juridical framework of animal rights and welfare as extensions of human rights is the only discursive and political outcome provided for the animal question from Oxbridge-style discussions. For Marxists, this centralization of rights within the theoretical and political framework is inherently problematic.[17] In other words, before CAS integrated antispeciesism and Marxism, there was indeed significant tension between the two perspectives. The Left often viewed the traditional animal rights discourse as insufficiently critical of broader structural issues, which is central to Marxist thought and as incompatible with its focus.

Although there was not yet a clear animal question as we define it today, there was intense debate over vivisection and animal treatment in the mid-nineteenth century, especially in England. Marx and Engels expressed open disdain for pro-animal advocates, and in the course of delineating "Conservative, or Bourgeois, Socialism" in the *Communist Manifesto*, they make a passing reference to the treatment of animals:

16 Helena Pedersen and Vasile Stanescu, "Future Directions of Critical Animal Studies", Taylor et al. (eds.), *The Rise of Critical Animal Studies*, p. 262.

17 This is a controversial issue. See for example, Steven Lukes, "Can a Marxist Believe in Human Rights?" *Praxis International*, vol. 1, no. 4 (1981), pp. 334–45. More generally, the discourse of human rights and subjectivity-centered humanism have been subjected to fundamental criticism by authors, such as Giorgio Agamben, Costas Douzinas, Jean-Luc Nancy, Slavoj Žižek. On the other hand, these critiques led to thinking, according to Claude Lefort, Étienne Balibar and Jacques Rancière, that Marx failed to see the political dimension of human rights (e.g. the right to resist oppression, the right of association, the right to have rights).

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> A part of the bourgeoisie is desirous of redressing social grievances in order to secure the continued existence of bourgeois society. To this section belong economists, philanthropists, humanitarians, improvers of the condition of the working class, organisers of charity, *members of societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals*, temperance fanatics, hole-and-corner reformers of every imaginable kind.[18]

Engels is just as sardonic in listing the sects of "weirdos" that could have been attracted from the workers' revolution:

> And just as all those who can expect no favours from the official world or are finished with it – opponents of inoculation, supporters of abstemiousness, *vegetarians*, *anti-vivisectionists*, nature-healers, free-community preachers whose communities have fallen to pieces, authors of new theories on the origin of the universe, unsuccessful or unfortunate inventors, […] honest fools and dishonest swindlers.[19]

Although such judgments may appear pitiless or ironic, they reflect the diverse composition and affiliations of animal welfare and animal rights advocates at the time. This diversity will be explored further in the fourth chapter, which analyzes slaughterhouse reform and the social composition and strategies of animal activist groups. Engles' charge that they are primarily white, middle-class, moralistic, classist, and patronizing will largely be substantiated via two examples. Firstly, Engels' list, which combines vegetarians and antivivisectionists with nature-healers, preachers, and opponents of vaccination, suggests this group was motivated by a spiritual or religious fear of scientific materialism. Secondly, the socialist reformer Henry Salt, creator of the *Humanitarian League* and author of *Animals' Rights: Considered in Relation to Social Progress*, the most radical, pro-animal text of the nineteenth-century, writes that the butchery process was so repugnant that it could be only delegated to a "pariah class".[20] In light of this, refutations made by various contemporary animal

18 Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Marx & Engels Collected Works*, 50 vols., vol. 6, Lawrence & Wishart, ebook, London, 2010, p. 513. [emphasis added]

19 Frederick Engels, *On the History of Early Christianity*, Marx and Engels, *MECW*, vol. 25, p. 451. [emphasis added]

20 Henry Salt, *Animal Rights: Considered in Relation to Social Progress*, Society for Animal Rights, Clarcks Summit, 1980, p. 61.

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rights theorists[21] against the claim that the animal rights movement is not inherently leftist, but drawn instead from bourgeois morality, begin to lack significance.

On the other hand, animal rights movements have traditionally shown little interest in Marx. This is not surprising, given their roots in moral discourse and liberalism. Thus, those few who have worked to connect explicitly animal rights and Marxism represent a contradiction in terms, manifested in the oddity of approaching Marx's work with the classical method of "Oxbridge-style" analytic moral philosophy. The first essay in this direction, "Humanism = Speciesism: Marx on Humans and Animals" published in 1988 by British professor emeritus of sociology Ted Benton, was described as "pioneering ecosocialist".[22] Despite this article's relatively small impact within the field, it established a trend in the literature of accusing Marx of being speciesist and anthropocentric on the basis of his ontological humanism. In the wake of Benton's 1988 essay came his 1993 book *Natural Relations: Ecology, Animal Rights and Social Justice*,[23] Barbara Noske's *Natural Relations: Ecology, Animal Rights, and Social Justice*,[24] essays by David Sztybel,[25] Katherine Perlo,[26] Lawrence Wilde,[27] a manifesto for an animal rights by Charlton, Coe and Francione,[28] and, more recently, articles by Ryan Gunderson[29], Corinne Painter[30] and others.[31] These

21 See Alasdair Cochrane, *An Introduction to Animals and Political Theory*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2010, p. 102; John Sorenson, "Constructing Extremists, Rejecting Compassion: Ideological Attacks on Animal Advocacy from Right and Left", John Sanbonmatsu (ed.), *Critical theory and Animal Liberation*, Rowman and Littlefield, Lanham, 2011, p. 234; Gary Francione et al., "The American Left Should Support Animal Rights: A Manifesto", *The Animals Agenda* (1993), pp. 28–34. John Sanbonmatsu, "Introduction", Sanbonmatsu (ed.), *Critical theory and Animal Liberation*, p. 15; Renzo Llorente, "Reflections on the Prospects for a Non-Speciesist Marxism", Sanbonmatsu (ed.), *Critical theory and Animal Liberation*, p. 129.

22 Ted Benton, "Humanism=Speciesism: Marx on Humans and Animals", *Radical Philosophy*, vol. 50 (1988), pp. 4–18.

23 Ted Benton, *Natural Relations: Ecology, Animal Rights, and Social Justice*, Verso, London-New York, 1993.

24 Barbara Noske, *Beyond Boundaries: Humans and Animals*, Black Rose Books, Montreal, 1997.

25 David Sztybel, "Marxism and Animal Rights", *Ethics and the Environment*, vol. 2, no. 2 (1997), pp. 169–85.

26 Katherine Perlo, "Marxism and the Underdog", *Society & Animals*, vol. 10, no. 3 (2002), pp. 303–18.

27 Lawrence Wilde, "'The Creatures, Too, Must Become Free': Marx and the Animal/Human Distinction", *Capital & Class*, vol. 24, no. 3 (2000), pp. 37–53.

28 Francione et al., "The American Left Should Support Animal Rights: A Manifesto".

29 Ryan Gunderson, "Marx's Comments on Animal Welfare", *Rethinking Marxism*, vol. 23, no. 4 (2011), pp. 543–8.

30 Corinne Painter, "Non-human Animals within Contemporary Capitalism: A Marxist Account of Non-Human Animal Liberation", in *Capital & Class*, vol. 40, no. 2 (2016), pp. 327–45.

31 Diana Stuart et al., "Extending Social Theory to Farm Animals: Addressing Alienation in the Dairy Sector", *Sociologia Ruralis*, vol. 53, no. 2 (2013), pp. 201–22.

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texts share a common "Oxbridge-style" animal rightist approach, both in methodology and in content. They all tend to assert, explicitly or implicitly, a definition of speciesism: a prejudice according to which the species of an individual is relevant to establish whether they are part of a moral community. From this definition, two clear characteristics emerge. On the one hand, speciesism is defined as a *cognitive* prejudice that, accordingly, can be analyzed or refuted logically or rationally. On the other hand, speciesism is anchored to the concept of a moral community, which structures the entire discourse within the boundaries of normative ethics. Normative ethics is commonly defined as "the attempt to formulate a *morally* useful principle about the normative status of action".[32] The fundamental principle, which is embraced by Singer's utilitarianism and Regan, Garner and Francione's animal rights theory, is one of equal moral consideration on the basis of common qualities possessed by individuals. Normative ethics' strategy is to demonstrate with scientific evidence that animals have intrinsic interests and characteristics that render them part of our common moral community, in the least as "moral patients". A moral patient is an individual who is unable to perform moral actions, but can suffer because of the actions of others. Consequently, they must be recognized as bearers of interests that must be protected by guaranteeing the fundamental rights to life, physical integrity, and freedom. Normative ethical theories ultimately aim to integrate ontological questions with moral ones. In essence, if individuals are to participate as agents or patients in a moral community, they must exhibit certain characteristics reckoned *essential* for the principle of equal consideration. Ontological investigation thus serves the function of identifying agents and patients that share rights and moral obligations. In the field of normative ethics, to support an essential difference is, *ipso facto*, to assert an essential difference in moral value, drawing a line between the human and the other, the animal.

This perspective explains why normative animal ethicists focus almost exclusively on the young Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*[33] (or *Paris Manuscripts*) – his most Feuerbachian and thus ontological work – and other explicitly ontological moments in his thought. They fail, however, to acknowledge the broader *opus* of Marx's thought and historical conditions, seemingly cherry-picking favorable quotations on human-animal dualism, extrapolated from their original contexts.[34] In what appears to be a rather tenuous juxtaposition of disparate theories (animal rights and Marxism), these authors misread Marx as an exponent of

32 Fred Feldman, *Introductory Ethics*, Prentice-Hall, Upper Saddle River, 1978, p. 40.

33 Karl Marx, "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844," Marx and Engels, *MECW*, vol. 3, pp. 229–346.

34 This criticism has been raised also by Marco Maurizi in *Beyond Nature. Animal Liberation, Marxism, and Critical Theory*, Haymarket Books, 2022; and by Foster and Clark, "Marx and Alienated Speciesism", p. 2.

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normative ethical theory. Certain accusations (or defense from these accusations)[35] of Marx's inconsistency regarding animal rights and his anthropocentrism are noteworthy. According to this literature, Marx's primary contradiction is the adoption of two opposing perspectives. On the one hand, there is the continuist perspective, which is grounded in naturalism and asserts that the human is a natural being. On the other hand, there is the humanist vision, which posits that the human is a privileged entity, essentially and qualitatively different from other animals (human exceptionalism). As Benton claims:

> The ontological basis of the ethical critique of capitalism (embedded in the notion of estrangement) appears to be inconsistent with the coherent formulation of its transcendence (in particular, the notion of 'humanisation' in relation to animals as part of nature). As I shall suggest later, this dilemma can be resolved by a revision of the ontology of the *Manuscripts* which nevertheless leaves intact a good deal of the ethical critique of capitalist society.[36]

Leaving aside the misconception that Marx's analysis of capitalism is conducted a) from an ethical standpoint and b) from the standpoint of estrangement/alienation [*Entfremdung/Entäußerung*],[37] the ambitious aim of normative animal ethics is a revision and extension of Marxism to include animal rights. This integration is based on the belief that only through such synthesis can Marxism's inconsistencies be resolved, thereby enabling it to effectively address the problem of the animal condition under capitalism. Sztybel gives a good insight into this attitude:

> It may be argued that there are contradictory tensions in Marxism, which can only be resolved by changing the received view of Marxism into a vision that admits of

35 Wilde, "'The Creatures, Too, Must Become Free'".

36 Benton, "Humanism=Speciesism", p. 5.

37 The terms "*Entfremdung*" (estrangement) and "*Entäußerung*" (alienation) have been firstly used in a systematic way by Hegel beginning with *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. The two terms are not equivalent. *Entfremdung* and *sich entfremden* always have the negative meaning of "splitting" and "extraneousness". *Entäußerung*, *sich entäußern* and *Veräußerung*, instead mean "renunciation", which can take a positive or a negative sense. In *1844 Manuscripts*, however, the two terms "*Entfremdung*" (estrangement) and "*Entäußerung*" (alienation) are indistinguishable. Moreover, there is a prevalence of *Entfremdung*, which appears 83 times (29 times in the *Die entfremdete Arbeit* (*Estranged labour*) chapter, while *Entäußerung* appears 55 times (13 times in that chapter). In terms of the prefix *ent-*, *entfremd-* e *entäußer-* (i.e. of verb forms) there is a strong prevalence of the former (152 times throughout the text and 62 in the chapter *Estranged labour*) over the latter (99 times throughout the text and 34 in the chapter *Estranged labour*).

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> animal rights, or else a suitable equivalent […] As I will argue, revision of Marxism in the direction of animal rightism is both necessary and desirable.[38]

The core point of this revision, as established by Benton, is the extension of the concept of alienation to animals and, consequently, the extension of the concept of class. In order to apply the concept of alienation to animals, it is necessary to demonstrate that animals are alienated specifically by the conditions of capitalist production. This entails questioning human exceptionalism and expanding the working class to include "working animals". Thus, before examining these arguments in detail, it is necessary to consider Marxist anthropology-ontology as it is understood by normative animal ethics.[39] According to Feuerbach, one of the key aspects of alienation is the alienation of humans from their *Gattungwesen*, which is variously translated as "species-being", "generic essence," "generic being," or "human essence". Marx generally adopts his understanding of human essence from Western philosophy. His use of the term *genus* to indicate the scope of similarity amongst humans and animals refers back to Aristotle.[40] Marx proceeds, then, to identify the specific difference (*differentia specifica*) that distinguishes them qualitatively from other living beings. In 1844 he writes:

> [L]abour, life activity, productive life itself, appears to man in the first place merely as a means of satisfying a need – the need to maintain physical existence. Yet the productive life is the life of the species. It is life-engendering life. The whole character of a species – its species-character – is contained in the character of its life activity; and free, conscious activity is man's species-character. Life itself appears only as a means to life. The animal is immediately one with its life activity. It does not distinguish itself from it. It is its life activity. Man makes his life activity itself the object of his will and of his consciousness. He has conscious life activity. It is not a determination with which he directly merges. Conscious life activity distinguishes man immediately from animal life activity. It is just because of this that he is a species-being. Or it is only because he is a species-being that he is a conscious being, i.e., that his own life is an object for him. Only because of that is his activity free activity.[41]

It is unsurprising that normative animal ethics finds such passages foundational. Here, in fact, Marx explicitly adheres to anthropologism (i.e., an essentialist per-

38 Sztybel, "Marxism and Animal Rights", p. 170.

39 Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, pp. 270–83.

40 See Marx W. Wartofsky, *Feuerbach*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1977, pp. 224, 374, 423; and Jonathan E. Pike, *From Aristotle to Marx: Aristotelianism in Marxist Social Ontology*, Routledge, London, 2019.

41 Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, p. 276.

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spective of human essence) in the wake of Feuerbach and Bruno Bauer against Hegel.[42] In summary, normative animal ethics views their conceptual tasks thusly: First, they isolate the essential characteristics of humans based upon Marx's analysis. Second, assuming an elision between ontology and ethics, they impute to Marx a speciesist ethical theory. Third, by anachronistically drawing on the most recent achievements in ethology and biology, they argue that these characteristics are also possessed by animals and that animals therefore occupy the same moral category as humans. The most paradigmatic example of this approach can be attributed to Sztybel, who, by assembling quotations from various Marxian and Engelsian texts, proposes a list of nine traits on the basis of which Marxism would support human exceptionalism:

> "man" alone is (1) a being for himself, (2) individuated only in the midst of society, (3) defined by labor and productivity, (4) productive of "his" own subsistence, (5) productive beyond immediate physical needs and for others beyond self and kin, (6) a tool-making animal, (7) a transformer of nature, (8) possessed of consciousness and knowledge of nature, and (9) capable of consciously making "his" own history.[43]

According to Sztybel, once human exceptionalism is removed from Marx's ontology, it becomes possible to extend the notion of alienation to animals. The first and most influential attempt in this direction was developed by Dutch anthropologist Barbara Noske in 1989. Noske applied the forms of human alienation proposed by Marx in the *Paris Manuscripts* to farm and laboratory animals. Her analysis identifies four specific modes of alienation, and a fifth and final overarching one. First, alienation from the product of labor: "animals are alienated from what they produce which consists of either their own offspring or (parts of) their body".[44] Second, alienation from the productive activity: animals are forced to perform a single productive activity (such as fattening) at the expense of all other natural activities that are their own. Third, alienation from their fellow animals: animals are estranged from their fellow animals because they are removed from their natural social configurations and forced

42 Louis Althusser, *For Marx*, trans. Ben Brewster, Verso, London-New York, 2005; Jacques Rancière, "The Concept of Critique and the Critique of Political Economy. From the *1844 Manuscripts* to *Capital*", *Reading Capital: The Complete Edition*, trans. Ben Brewster and David Fernbach, Verso, London-New York, 2016, pp. 62–134; Michael Heinrich, *An Introduction to the Three Volumes of Karl Marx's Capital*, trans. Alexander Locascio, Monthly Review Press, New York, 2012; and Roberto Fineschi, *Marx e Hegel. Contributi a una rilettura*, Carocci, Roma, 2006, pp. 28–30, 47.

43 Sztybel, "Marxism and Animal Rights", p. 178

44 Noske, *Beyond Boundaries: Humans and Animals*, p. 18.

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into conditions that prevent normal social bonds. Fourth, alienation from the environment: animals removed from their ecosystems are alienated from their natural stimuli and their natural behavioral patterns. Fifth, and in summary, alienation from nature: the union of these four forms of alienation results in the alienation of animals from their species life. Thus, concludes Noske, animals are "deanimalized" under capitalism.[45]

The assertion that working animals constitute an alienated and exploited group suggests a parallelism with the working class and its revolutionary potential. Traditional Marxist perspective holds that the working class, in perceiving its own alienation, recognizes that its plight stems from capitalism and that capitalism must be overthrown. This parallelism, foreshadowed in Noske and Benton,[46] is made explicit by Perlo, Hribal and, more recently, Painter. According to them, animals have agency, such as the "ability to intentionally engage in an activity, such as caring for one's young"[47] and "the capacity and intention to satisfy interests that are intimately connected to their flourishing – recall that they cry, they mourn, they flee and they bite back when they are mistreated".[48] Animals are "part of the working class"[49] and their labor produces surplus value.[50] In response to the common objection that animals do not experience themselves as alienated because they are unable to conceptualize their nature and, consequently, unable to conceive of themselves in terms of a class conflict, Painter recalls the words of Catharine MacKinnon:

> Who asked the animals? […] Do animals dissent from human hegemony [and dominance]? I think they often do. They vote with their feet by running away. They bite back, scream in pain, withhold affection, approach warily, fly and swim away.[51]

Painter is arguing that animals are able to perceive their own alienation (in the form of severe suffering and frustration) and, in this sense, potentially constitute a revolutionary class. Stated otherwise, if animals had the ability, they would "unite and break the chains that compel them to labour"[52].

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45 *Ibid.*, 12.

46 Benton, *Natural Relations*, p. 59.

47 Painter, "Non-human Animals within Contemporary Capitalism", p. 334.

48 *Ibid.*, 336.

49 Jason Hribal, "Animals Are Part of the Working Class: A Challenge to Labor History", *Labor History*, vol. 44, no. 4 (2003), pp. 435–53.

50 Jason Hribal, "Animals Are Part of the Working Class Reviewed", *Borderlands*, vol. 11, no. 2 (2012), p. 12 and Perlo, "Marxism and the Underdog", p. 307.

51 Quoted in Painter, "Non-human Animals within Contemporary Capitalism", p. 332.

52 Bob Torres, *Making a Killing: The Political Economy of Animal Rights*, AK press, Oakland, 2007, p. 39.

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There are intrinsic problems in these attempts to juxtapose animal rights theory and Marx, and within the thesis that Marx's criticism of capitalism rests upon the condemnation of the reduction of humans to the condition of animals.[53] Moreover, when viewed from a posthuman perspective, both sides of the debate are tinged with essentialism (what would be this "nature" from which animals would be alienated in Noske's fifth point?). There remains, nonetheless, a significant problem that demands attention. From the perspective of the leftist animal rights camp, there is no intrinsic connection between animal domination/exploitation and capitalism. Therefore, Cochrane, having considered the proposals of Benton, Noske, and Perlo, is justified in questioning "whether capitalism is a necessary impediment to achieving justice for [animals]" and in envisioning a capitalist society which raises animals for profit, and yet does not harm them.[54] Much of the literature I have reviewed here fails to conceptualize capitalism and capitalist society as a critical starting point. Benton and the others do not, for example, refer to *Capital*, but rather reduce Marx to a few citations from the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* and to the concept of alienation.[55] They ignore, willingly or not, the Althusserian framing of the conceptual break marked by *The German Ideology*.[56] This work elaborates Marx and Engels' critiques of the concepts of *Gattungwesen* and *Entfremdung/Entäusserung*. The former is supplanted by the concept of *bestimmte Individuen* (real individuals) and the latter appears only rarely and vaguely in Marx's writings after 1845.

From this point of view, what Sztybel says about himself: "I am no Marxist",[57] can be extended to leftist animal rights thinkers more broadly. Indeed, Benton himself defines his framework as "loosely Marxist".[58] In focusing on the *Paris*

53 As, for example, stated in Benton, *Natural Relations*, p. 23

54 Cochrane, *An Introduction to Animals and Political Theory*, p. 108.

55 Regarding Benton's position about the two phases of Marx, "Benton's earlier interpretation of the *Paris Manuscripts* and their political-economic topics as Feuerbachian and Hegelian, his repeated hints to the contrast between the young and the old Marx, and Benton's adoption of Althusser's periodization of the theoretical development within Marx's works suggest that Benton shares Althusser's paradigm of Marx's epistemological break […] Nevertheless, Benton's appreciative judgment of the *Paris Manuscripts* as the 'deepest […] of Marx's writings' seems to speak against the interpretation that Benton is a hardened Althusserian with respect to Marx's early writings." Christian Stache, "On the Origins of Animalist Marxism: Rereading Ted Benton and the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*", *Monthly Review*, vol. 70, no. 7 (2018), pp. 22–41. Benton does not comment on the issue in the article *Speciesism = Humanism*.

56 Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels, *MECW*, vol. 5, pp. 19–539.

57 http://davidsztybel.info/99.html accessed 9th June 2025.

58 Benton, *Natural Relations*, p. 5.

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Manuscripts, which is not considered to be part of the traditional Marxist canon,[59] and not referring to Western Marxism, which hinges upon the *1844 Manuscripts*, the pre-CAS leftist animal rights camp lacks a coherent and comprehensive interpretation of Marxism upon which an analysis of animal conditions under capitalism could be based. Nevertheless, many leftist animal rights authors assert, explicitly or implicitly, that traditional Marxism orients their field and serves as its foundation. Traditional Marxism has been described as the "closed, coherent proletarian worldview and doctrine of the evolution of nature and history",[60] which is based on three pillars: an ontological-determinism regarding the revolutionary providence of the proletariat; a historicist interpretation of the form-genetic method, in which the sequence commodity-value-money-capital is an abstract description of actual history; and a critique of the content of the state, by which the state is understood as an instrument of the ruling class.[61] In summary, a critical understanding of "animals in capitalism" cannot rely upon traditional Marxism due to the inadequacy of latter's account of capitalist social formation.

1.2 CAS and Intersectionality

Having explored pre-CAS efforts in normative animal ethics to link antispeciesism with Marxism, let us now go back to CAS and examine the fundamental concepts that underpin this field. Since its initial formulation, CAS has both interdisciplinary and intersectional,[62] concerned with understanding and framing animal domina-

59 For the definition of traditional Marxism, see Ingo Elbe's overview: "The term "Marxism" was probably first used in the year 1879 by the German Social Democrat Franz Mehring to characterize Marx's theory, and established itself at the end of the 1880s as a discursive weapon used by both critics and defenders of 'Marx's teachings'. The birth of a 'Marxist school', however, is unanimously dated back to the publication of *Anti-Dühring* by Friedrich Engels in the year 1878, and the subsequent reception of this work by Karl Kautsky, Eduard Berstein et al. [Thus] In many respects, Marxism is Engels' work and for that reason actually an Engelsism". Central Marxist texts, in addition to Frederick Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, Marx and Engels, *MECW*, vol. 25, pp. 5–309, are: Frederick Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*, Marx and Engels, *MECW*, vol. 26, pp. 353–98; Marx, *Capital Vol. 1* – Chapter 32, "*Preface*" to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, vol. 29, pp. 261–5; and Marx and Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. See Ingo Elbe, "Between Marx, Marxism, and Marxisms – Ways of Reading Marx's Theory", trans. Alexander Locascio, *Viewpoint Magazine*, October 21, 2013, https://viewpointmag.com/2013/10/21/between-marx-marxism-and-marxisms-ways-of-reading-marxs-theory/ accessed 9th June 2025.

60 Elbe, "Between Marx, Marxism, and Marxisms".

61 *Ibid*.

62 As Richard Twine puts it, "the key concept of CAS: intersectionality". Richard Twine, "Review: Defining Critical Animal Studies-An Intersectional Social Justice Approach for Liberation, Anthony J. Nocella, John Sorenson, Kim Socha and Atsuko Matsuoka (eds)", *Animal Studies Jour-*

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tion within the complex network of various kinds of social domination. CAS has never understood animal domination as a single-issue. Instead, it has sought to break with anthropocentrism and to integrate the animal perspective within other critical frameworks. Notably, the intersection that has received the most attention in critical animal studies to date is that between animals and gender.[63] This is due to the ecofeminist roots of CAS:

> A significant catalyst for debate on animal ethics came from ecofeminist writings during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s alongside, and often in tension with, the influential work of well-known animal philosophers such as Tom Regan and Peter Singer. Any contextualization of CAS must confront the fact that, in an intellectual sense, it existed before the term was coined, and that it has since become an umbrella term for bringing together scholars who do critical research on human–animal relations.[64]

Stemming from ecofeminism's focus on nature, several alignments within animal studies and gender studies have emerged,[65] more recently with direct reference to climate change and ecological crisis.[66] The intentional coinage of the term "CAS" implies a commitment to intersectionality and extended disciplinary domain, includ-

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nal, vol. 3, no. 2 (2014), p. 32. See Taylor and Twine, *The Rise of Critical Animal Studies*; Richard Twine, *Animals as Biotechnology: Ethics, Sustainability and Critical Animal Studies*, Earthscan, London, 2010; Kim Socha, *Women, Destruction, and the Avant-Garde: A Paradigm for Animal Liberation*, Brill Rodopi, Amsterdam, 2012; and John Sorenson et al. (eds.), *Defining Critical Animal Studies: An Intersectional Social Justice Approach for Liberation*, Peter Lang, Bern, 2014.

63 There were close connections between women's suffrage and anti-vivisection movements prior to ecofeminist discourse. Coral Lansbury, *The Old Brown Dog: Women, Workers, and Vivisection in Edwardian England*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1985; Nicolaas A. Rupke (ed.), *Vivisection in Historical Perspective*, Croom Helm, London, 1987; Mary Ann Elston, "Women and Antivivisection in Victorian England, 1870–1900", Rupke (ed.), *Vivisection in Historical Perspective*, pp. 259–94; Hilda Kean, "The 'Smooth Cool Men of Science': The Feminist and Socialist Response to Vivisection", *History Workshop Journal*, vol. 40, no. 1 (1995), pp. 16–38; and Craig Buettinger, "Women and Antivivisection in Late Nineteenth-century America", *Journal of Social History*, vol. XXX (1997), pp. 857–72.

64 Taylor and Twine, "Locating the 'Critical' in Critical Animal Studies", p. 4.

65 See Greta Gaard (ed.), *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1993; Carol J. Adams and Lori Gruen (eds.), *Ecofeminism: Feminist Intersections with Other animals and the Earth*, Bloomsbury Publishing, New York, 2014.

66 Greta Gaard, "Ecofeminism and Climate change", *Women's Studies International Forum*, vol. 49 (2015), pp. 20–33.

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ing feminism, critical race studies,[67] queer studies,[68] and disability studies.[69] In this way, CAS clarifies and challenges how the material and symbolic exploitation of animals intersects with the dominant categories of gender, race, class, sexuality, and various forms of embodied difference, and their maintenance.

Today, the term "intersectionality" has entered the mainstream, and thus become vague or misused. The term was first coined in 1989 by the legal scholar, critical race theorist, and black feminist, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw,[70] to account for the intertwining of racial and gender discrimination, given the inadequacy of U.S. anti-discrimination laws to protect black women. Consequently, it is widely believed that intersectional theory originated in academia and is divorced from contexts of militant activism. In reality, the gaps amongst feminism, anti-racist discourse, and class struggle, had already been pointed out as early as the 1970s, and even before.[71] Black women activists and collectives, such as Angela Davis, The Combahee River Collective, bell hooks, and Debora King, among others, have noted that the oppression of black women is not adequately addressed from any one of these fields alone.[72]

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67 See A. Breeze Harper, *Sistah Vegan: Black Female Vegans Speak on Food, Identity, Health, and Society*, Lantern Books, New York, 2010; Maneesha Deckha, "Toward a Postcolonial, Posthumanist Feminist Theory: Centralizing Race and Culture in Feminist Work on Nonhuman Animals", *Hypatia*, vol. 27, no. 3 (2012), pp. 527–45; Claire Jean Kim, *Dangerous Crossings: Race, Species, and Nature in a Multicultural Age*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2015; and Aph Ko and Syl Ko, *Aphro-ism: Essays on Pop Culture, Feminism, and Black Veganism from Two Sisters*, Lantern Books, New York, 2017.

68 See Simonsen Rasmus Rahbek, "A Queer Vegan Manifesto", *Journal for Critical Animal Studies*, vol. 10, no. 3 (2012), pp. 51–81; Jovian Parry, "From Beastly Perversions to the Zoological Closet: Animals, Nature, and Homosex", *Journal for Critical Animal Studies*, vol. 10, no. 3 (2012), pp. 7–25; and Massimo Filippi and Marco Reggio (eds.), *Corpi che non contano. Judith Butler e gli animali*, Mimesis, Milano-Udine, 2015.

69 See Stephanie Jenkins et al. (eds.), *Disability and Animality: Crip Perspectives in Critical Animal Studies*, Routledge, London, 2020; and Sunaura Taylor, *Beasts of Burden: Animal and Disability Liberation*, The New Press, New York, 2017.

70 Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics", *University of Chicago Legal Forum* (1989), pp. 139–67.

71 In 1949, Claudia Jones, an activist of the Communist Party USA and a black feminist, published "An End to the Neglect of the Problems of the Negro Woman!", *Political Affair*, vol. 28 (1949), pp. 51–67. It can be considered a forerunner of intersectional analysis, as it highlights how the simultaneity of class exploitation, gender, and racial oppression results in black women being situated at the lower rung of the social hierarchy.

72 See Angela Davis, "Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves", *The Massachusetts Review*, vol. 13, no. 1/2 (1972), pp. 81–100; Angela Davis, *Women, Race and Class*, Random House, New York, 1981; Combahee River Collective, "The Combahee River Collective Statement", Akasha Gloria Hull et al. (eds.), *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, but Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies*, Feminist Press Books, Westbury, 1982, pp. 13–22.

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Intersectionality currently circulates as a key term amongst many contemporary social movements and critical social theories. It functions as a tool of investigation beyond the original "oppression pair" – ethnicity and gender – to encompass other categories and axes of power, such as class, sexuality, disability, speciesism, religion, castes, and so forth. Intersectionality emerged as a critique of radical and white essentialist feminism, and the perspective that such feminism relied upon an abstract, "universal" woman, understood as essentially "other" or "absent". The aim was to focus instead upon hierarchical and experiential differences determined by the multiple, simultaneous, and sometimes contradictory interconnections of different kinds of oppression. The metaphor of a crossroads, introduced by Crenshaw in an attempt to capture this aspect, is famous:

> Consider an analogy to traffic in an intersection, coming and going in all four directions. Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happens in an intersection, it can be caused by cars traveling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them. Similarly, if a Black woman is harmed because she is in the intersection, her injury could result from sex discrimination or race discrimination. […] But it is not always easy to reconstruct an accident: Sometimes the skid marks and the injuries simply indicate that they occurred simultaneously, frustrating efforts to determine which driver caused the harm.[73]

Another simple method for recognizing the interconnectedness of oppression is to "ask the other question", as proposed by Mari J. Matsuda in 1991:

> When I see something that looks racist, I ask, 'Where is the patriarchy in this?' When I see something that looks sexist, I ask, 'Where is the heterosexism in this?' and when I see something that looks homophobic, I ask, 'Where are the class interests in this?[74]

This approach analyzes the complexity and emphasizes the simultaneity of multiple power differentials at both the individual and the systemic level of analysis. At the individual level, it focuses on identity narratives and lived experiences of oppressed subjects and groups, aiming to show the social multidimensionality inherent to processes of subjectivation. On the systemic level, i.e. in relation to broader socio-cultural discourses, intersectionality focuses upon the mechanisms, the conditions, and the structural construction and maintenance of power and oppression. Patricia Hill Collins has introduced alongside the notion of intersectionality, which is useful

73 Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex", p. 149.

74 Mari J. Matsuda, "Beside My Sister, Facing the Enemy: Legal Theory Out of Coalition", *Stanford Law Review*, vol. 43, no. 6 (1990), p. 1189.

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for describing and investigating micro-level processes, the concept of "interlocking systems of oppression", which addresses the macro-level development of oppressive structures.[75] Another way of formulating this difference is to distinguish between two camps:[76] one that adopts an "additive" or "cumulative" model (corresponding to the micro-level) and the other that adopts a "constitutive" model (corresponding to the macro-level). Such models can then be matched with different epistemological stances such as *anticategorical* (the deconstructivist rejection of social categories), *intracategorical* (aiming to complicate categories rather than eliminate them, focusing on social groups at previously ignored intersections) and *intercategorical* (a strategic and provisional acceptance of existing social categories in order to map multiple configurations of inequality).[77] The micro-level, combined with the additive camp and with inter and intracategorical approaches, considers the various social axes of oppression as pre-existing and trans-historical, and focuses on the ways in which they intersect under certain conditions to produce multi-marginalized individuals and groups.[78] Micro-level analyses are typically carried out through case studies, characterized, therefore, by empirical investigations that aim to identify, describe, and document the relations of oppression at stake in a given historical-social context. Macro-level analyses, on the other hand, aim, at least in principle, to explain why forms of subordination emerge and how they are reproduced, questioning the dynamics of existing social categories. The constitutive camp maintains that categories do not pre-exist and *then* intersect, but rather are constantly produced and (re)invented through each other in a relational process.[79] This model is oriented towards broadening theories of power relations. Some authors within this camp stress the idea of integral connections amongst oppressions, which they describe as "part of one overarching structure of domination",[80] or as "connected" within a "larger pic-

75 Patricia H. Collins et al., "Symposium on West and Fenstermaker's 'Doing Difference'", Sarah Fenstermaker and Candace West (eds.), *Doing Gender, Doing Difference. Inequality, Power, and Institutional Change*, Routledge, London, 2002, p. 82.

76 Nira Yuval-Davis, "Intersectionality and Feminist Politics", *European Journal of Women's Studies*, vol. 13, no. 3 (2006), pp. 193–209.

77 Leslie McCall, "The complexity of Intersectionality", *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol. 30 (2005), pp. 65–92.

78 See Gabriele Winker and Nina Degele, "Intersectionality as Multi-Level Analysis: Dealing with Social Inequality", *European Journal of Women's Studies*, vol. 18, no. 1 (2011), pp. 51–66; and Wendy Hulko, "The time-and Context-Contingent Nature of Intersectionality and Interlocking Oppressions", *Affilia*, vol. 24, no. 1 (2009), pp. 44–55.

79 See Yuval-Davis, "Intersectionality and Feminist Politics", p. 195.

80 Patricia H. Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, Routledge, London, 2002, p. 222.

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ture",[81] or related to a wider "landscape of power".[82] The constitutive model contradicts the categorical stability and reification of differences that they see within the additives camp. As Yuval-Davis asserts in relation to the triple oppression of Black and working-class women:

> Any attempt to essentialize 'Blackness' or 'womanhood' or 'working classness' as specific forms of concrete oppression in additive ways inevitably conflates narratives of identity politics with descriptions of positionality as well as constructing identities within the terms of specific political projects. [...] in such identity politics constructions what takes place is actually fragmentation and multiplication of the wider categorical identities rather than more dynamic, shifting and multiplex constructions of intersectionality.[83]

The additive model falls into the discourse of identity politics, thereby embracing the correspondence between positioning and social grouping. As a result, it fragments and multiplies identities, concentrating solely on the symbolic/discursive modes of construction and representation of difference as identity.[84] Along these lines, a crucial question remains unaddressed: "are there, in any particular historical condition, specific and limited numbers of social divisions that construct the grid of power relations within which the different members of the society are located?"[85]

In essence, the intersectional approach appears as an inclusive framework with dynamic and multi-layered perspectives on society, domination, and subjectivity. A framework that can challenge essentialist, binary, and reductionist fallacies, from both theoretical and activist standpoints. The insistence on the multiple simultaneity of oppressions means bringing to light and problematizing the privileges that complement them and that are often taken for granted. This, alongside the effort to understand why and how social dominations are connected, is essential for the establishment of political solidarity amongst different oppressed groups that is authentic, sound, and fruitful. Furthermore, if we consider that intersectionality is neither overly complex nor simplistic, and that it permits the examination of diverse theoretical problems through an array of methodological approaches, we can appreciate the reasons for its success and popularity amongst a wide audience, from the entire feminist spectrum and critical social theory in general.

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81 Rita Kaur Dhamoon, "Considerations on Mainstreaming Intersectionality", *Political Research Quarterly*, vol. 64, no. 1 (2011), pp. 238–9.

82 Floya Anthias, "Hierarchies of Social Location, Class and Intersectionality: Towards a Translocational frame", *International Sociology*, vol. 28, no. 1 (2013), p. 130.

83 Yuval-Davis, "Intersectionality and Feminist Politics", p. 195.

84 Nancy Fraser, *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the "Post-Socialist" Condition*, Routledge, New York, 1997.

85 Yuval-Davis, "Intersectionality and Feminist Politics", pp. 202–3.

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Nonetheless, intersectionality has been subjected to critique from both the academic and the political sphere. In addition to a lack of methodological clarity and the difficulty of applying such broad and open frameworks,[86] the most problematic aspect to be questioned is its theoretical consistency. While the additive camp explicitly overlooks the explanatory depth required for a coherent social theory, even the constitutive camp fails to address the underlying "why" in its examination of social categories. The constitutive camp, despite being less fragmentary and static than the additive approach, still under-theorizes the social dimension. In short, intersectionality *tout court* appears to lack a consistent theory of social power.

As pointed out by the Marxist feminist current of social reproduction theory,[87] such approaches consider the broader power relations that inform the social context as something indeterminate, discreet, and chaotic, composed of "ever-variable configurations (or 'matrixes') of partial relations, reproduced in the absence of any essential or systemic logic".[88] Intersectional scholar Dhamoon, for instance, refers to the "larger picture in which differences are connected" as "represent[ing] the shifting, messy, indeterminate, dynamic, and multilayered movement of difference making".[89] Evidently, such a conception merely alludes to a unitary logic, but does not identify or clarify it.

1.2.1 Ecofeminism: A Cultural Logic for Intersectionality

Long before the concept of intersectionality was explicitly defined, another feminist perspective functioned in a way that could be called intersectional: ecofeminism. The term ecofeminism was coined by the French feminist Françoise d'Eaubonne in 1974[90] with reference to the idea that women play a fundamental role in ecological revolution. The term also refers to the social, political, and theoretical movement that arose

86 This has been partly solved in Winker and Degele, "Intersectionality as Multi-Level Analysis".

87 See Barbara Laslett and Johanna Brenner, "Gender and Social Reproduction: Historical Perspectives", *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 15, no. 1 (1989), pp. 381–404; Sue Ferguson, "Building on the Strengths of the Socialist Feminist Tradition", *Critical Sociology*, vol. 25, no. 1 (1999), pp. 1–15; Isabella Bakker, "Social Reproduction and the Constitution of a Gendered Political Economy", *New Political Economy*, vol. 12, no. 4 (2007), pp. 541–56; Cinzia Arruzza, "Functionalist, Determinist, Reductionist: Social Reproduction Feminism and Its Critics", *Science & Society*, vol. 80, no. 1 (2016), pp. 9–30; and Tithi Bhattacharya (ed.), *Social Reproduction Theory. Remapping Class, Recentering Oppression*, Pluto Press, London, 2017.

88 Susan Ferguson, "Intersectionality and Social-Reproduction Feminisms", *Historical Materialism*, vol. 24, no. 2 (2016), p. 45.

89 Dhamoon, "Considerations on Mainstreaming Intersectionality", pp. 238–9.

90 Françoise d'Eaubonne, *Feminism or Death: How the Women's Movement Can Save the Planet*, trans. Ruth Hottell, Verso, London-New York, 2022.

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from this idea and from the intersection of radical feminism, social justice movements, environmentalism, and pacifism.[91] In the 1970s, "ecofeminism" did not label a coherent body of theories, but was generally related to the theoretical and practical connections between sexism and the domination of nature in Western culture, investigated from various disciplinary perspectives, such as history, sociology, political science, literary criticism, and theology. Only since the late 1980s has ecofeminism entered academic discourse as a set of heterogenous orientations that is more accurately described by the plural term, "ecofeminisms". Broadly speaking, "ecofeminist philosophy"[92] may be described as the investigation and analysis of the integrated and structural domination of women and nature, the critique of representations of these subjects by patriarchal Western philosophical traditions, and the pursuit of alternative models, including ethical,[93] materialist/socialist,[94] cultural/spiritual,[95] queer,[96] phenomenological ecofeminism,[97] etc. Moreover, reference to animal issues has been implicitly present since the beginning of ecofeminist research.[98]

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91 Ecofeminism underwent an academization which has led it to be "colonized" by philosophy. At the same time, this process has led to a separation between theory and practice due to the weakening of activism and ecofeminism slipping into the background as a social, political, and theoretical movement in favor of white academic feminism. See Julie Cook, "The Philosophical Colonization of Ecofeminism", *Environmental Ethics*, vol. 20, no. 3 (1998), pp. 227–46.

92 Karen J. Warren, "Feminist Environmental Philosophy", Edward N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Summer 2015, https://plato.stanford.edu/ archives/sum2015/entries/feminism-environmental/ accessed on 9th June 2025.

93 See Josephine Donovan and Carol J. Adams (eds.), *The Feminist Care Tradition in Animal Ethics: A Reader*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2008; Lori Gruen, *Ethics and Animals: An Introduction*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2011; Marti Kheel, *Nature Ethics: An Ecofeminist Perspective*, Rowman and Littlefield, Lanham, 2007; and Christine Cuomo, *Feminism and Ecological Communities: An Ethic of Fluorishing*, Routledge, London, 1998.

94 See Val Plumwood, "Feminism and Ecofeminism: Beyond the Dualistic Assumptions of Women, Men and Nature", *The Ecologist*, vol. 22, no. 1 (1992), pp. 8–13; Mary Mellor, *Feminism and Ecology*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1997; Mary Mellor, "Feminism and Environmental Ethics: A Materialist Perspective", *Ethics and the Environment*, vol. 5, no. 1 (2000), pp. 107–23; and Ariel Salleh, *Ecofeminism as Politics: Nature, Marx and the Postmodern*, Zed Books Ltd., London, 1997.

95 See Starhawk, *Power, Authority, and Mystery: Ecofeminism and Earth-Based Spirituality*, Irene Diamond and Gloria F. Orenstein (eds), *Reweaving the World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism*, Sierra Club, San Francisco, 1990, pp. 73–86; Riane Eisler, "The Gaia Tradition and the Partnership Future: An Ecofeminist Manifesto", Diamond and Orenstein (eds.), *Reweaving the World*, pp. 23–34.

96 Greta Gaard, "Toward a Queer Ecofeminism", *Hypatia*, vol. 12, no. 1 (1997), pp. 114–37; Catriona Sandilands, "Mother Earth, the Cyborg, and the Queer: Ecofeminism and (More) Questions of Identity", *National Women's Studies Association (Nwsa) Journal*, vol. 9, no. 3 (1997), pp. 18–40.

97 Trish Glazebrook, *Eco-Logic: Erotics of Nature. An Ecofeminist Phenomenology*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 2008.

98 For a detailed review of vegetarian ecofeminism, see Greta Gaard, "Vegetarian Ecofeminism: A Review Essay", *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, vol. 23, no. 3 (2002), pp. 117–46.

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During the mid 1970s, the intersections of species domination, with gender and race domination was explored within the context of second-wave radical feminism and lesbian feminism. Carol Adams' *The Oedible Complex*,[99] published in 1975, was the first lesbian feminist study on women's vegetarianism, and suggested a conceptual link between sexism and speciesism in Western culture. Adams reiterated and refined this claim in her 1990 essay, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*.[100]

Initially, ecofeminism thematized the domination of animals from an antispeciesist point of view only marginally. The topic first appeared in, "All and One Flesh: The Rights of Animals",[101] an essay from a 1983 anthology, *Reclaim the Earth: Women Speak Out for Life on Earth*. Almost a decade later, another anthology, *Reweaving the World*, featured essays critiquing the practices of animal sacrifice and hunting.[102] Some voices of vegetarian feminism chose to embrace a methodological convergence between ecofeminism and antisepciesism, as their "analyses shifted from the objects of oppression to the structure of oppression".[103] This is the case of Adams herself and, among others, Susan Griffin whose *Women and Nature* (1978) had been very influential for the vegetarian branch of ecofeminism text.[104] Both Adams and Griffin embrace ecofeminism as a term in 1991.[105] Two years later, Greta Gaard's anthology *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature* establishes vegetarian ecofeminism as a field. As Gaard herself retrospectively explains:

> The convergence of feminist vegetarianism and ecofeminism, as if following a simple algebraic operation, combined the equation "ecofeminism = women +

99 Carol J. Adams, "The Oedible Complex: Feminism and Vegetarianism", *The Lesbian Reader*, Gina Covina and Laurel Galana (eds.), Amazon Press, Oakland, 1975, pp. 145–52.

100 Carol J. Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory*, Continuum Books, New York, 1990.

101 Norma Benney, "All of One Flesh: The Rights of Animals", Leonie Caldecott and Stephanie Leland (eds), *Reclaim the Earth: Women Speak Out for Life on Earth*, Women's Press, London, 1983, pp. 141–51.

102 Respectively: Sally Abbott, "The Origins of God in the Blood of the Lamb" and Marti Kheel, "Ecofeminism and Deep Ecology: Reflections on Identity and Difference", Diamond et al. (eds.), *Reweaving the World*, pp. 35–40, 128–137.

103 Gaard, "Vegetarian Ecofeminism", p. 128.

104 Griffin's book is not typically regarded as ecofeminist. Gaard mentions two other ecofeminist texts in content, but not yet in name: Elizabeth Dodson Gray, *Green Paradise Lost*, Roundtable Press, Wellesley, 1981; and Andrée Collard and Joyce Contrucci, *Rape of the Wild: Man's Violence against Animals and the Earth*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1989. *Ibid.*, 126–7.

105 See Carol J. Adams, "Ecofeminism and the Eating of Animals", *Hypatia*, vol. 6, no. 1 (1991), pp. 125–45; and David Macauley, "On Women, Animals and Nature: An Interview with Ecofeminist Susan Griffin", *American Philosophical Association Newsletter on Feminism and Philosophy*, vol. 90, no. 3 (1991), pp. 116–27.

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> nature" with "women + animals", and appeared in the first text of vegetarian ecofeminism in my *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature*.[106]

Animal ecofeminism has provided indispensable contributions to antispeciesist reflection and CAS. Important examples include Carol Adams' concept of the "absent referent" – which highlights the disconnection between meat eaters and animals, as well as the separation of animals from their end products – and the idea of meat as "mass term," which reduces entire species of animals and unique beings into something without individuality and specificity.[107] Additionally, notable contributions are: the criticism of universalism as an approach to vegetarianism/veganism;[108] the intersectional approach to power relations and structures of oppressions; the central role of the body as a foundation for a feminist ethics of care that encompasses other animals, drawing moral obligations from human and animal interdependent situatedness in a broader ecological support systems.

After a period of both popularity and activism between the 1980s and 1990s, ecofeminism as a social and theoretical movement suffered a major backlash at the turn of the millennium, and an almost total exit from the scene from 2010 onwards.[109] This trajectory is consistent, on the one hand, with the weakening of the ecological, pacifist, antinuclear movements and, on the other hand, with the post-structuralist critique of identity essentialism within feminism. More recently, ecofeminism's highly problematic trans-exclusivity, sex workers exclusivity, and transantagonism have also been pointed out and rightly criticized.[110]

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106 Gaard, "Vegetarian Ecofeminism", p. 128.

107 See Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, pp. 20–29; Id., "The War on Compassion", in *Antennae: The Journal of Nature in Visual Culture*, vol. 14 (2010), pp. 5–9.

108 See Richard Twine, "Ecofeminism and Veganism: Revisiting the Question of Universalism", Adams et al. (eds.), *Ecofeminism*, pp. 191–207; and Deane Curtin, "Toward an Ecological Ethic of Care", *Hypatia*, vol. 6, no. 1 (1991), pp. 60–74.

109 Greta Gaard, "Ecofeminism Revisited: Rejecting Essentialism and Re-placing Species in a Material Feminist Environmentalism", *Feminist Formations*, vol. 23, no. 2 (2011), pp. 26–53. See also, Laura Hobgood-Oster, "Ecofeminism: Historic and International Evolution", Bron R. Taylor (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature. Vol* 1, Continuum Books, London, 2005, pp. 33–538; and Noel Sturgeon, *Ecofeminist Natures: Race, Gender, Feminist Theory and Political Action*, Routledge, London, 2016.

110 See Kuura Irni, "Revisiting Ecofeminist Genealogies: towards Intersectional and Trans-Inclusive Ecofeminism", Kadri Aavik, Kuura Irni, and Milla-Maria Joki (eds.) *Feminist Animal and Multispecies Studies: Critical Perspectives on Food and Eating*, Brill, Leiden, 2024, pp. 207–47; Carrie Hamilton, "Sex, Work, Meat: The Feminist Politics of Veganism", *Feminist Review*, vol. 114, no. 1 (2016), pp. 112–29; and Valerie Tollhopf, *Ecofeminism Will Be Trans-Ecofeminist or Not at All: A Transfeminist Critique*, paper presented at 12th European Feminist Research Conference, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Barcelona, Catalonia, Spain, July 9–12, 2025.

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Indeed, in order to avoid an association with the essentialism evoked by the term "ecofeminism", alternative names such as "ecological feminism",[111] "feminist environmentalism",[112] "critical feminist eco-socialism",[113] or simply "gender and the environment" have been sought to emphasize the intersectionality between feminism and the environment.

Alongside many field studies aimed at articulating the interactions amongst two or more forms of oppression in specific socio-cultural contexts, ecofeminism, and in particular the Australian philosopher Val Plumwood, have worked towards a unitary, systemic logic to explain why forms of domination intersect, remain stable, and reproduce. It is this logic that the strictly intersectional approach seems to be missing. In her most important book, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*,[114] published in 1993, Plumwood identifies this logic with Western dualism, e.g. reason/nature, culture/nature, mind/body, masculine/feminine, reason/emotion, human/animal, etc. She traces the history of this system of thought from the Greek philosophies of Plato and Aristotle through Descartes, leading up to contemporary mechanism and behaviorism. Dualism, according to Plumwood, is more than dichotomous opposition, and more than a relation of difference or non-identity. It is a conceptual scheme that constructs interrelated and mutually reinforcing binary oppositions based upon a hierarchical logic. Dualism converts a logical correlation of differences given according to a gradual continuum of similarity, to a subordinating opposition between already given and static objects, utilizing a hypostatization process.

As Plumwood puts it:

> Dualism is a relation of separation and domination inscribed and naturalised in culture and characterised by radical exclusion, distancing and opposition between orders constructed as systematically higher and lower, as inferior and superior, as ruler and ruled, which treats the division as part of the natures of beings construed not merely as different but as belonging to radically different orders or kinds, and hence as not open to change.[115]

Plumwood presents the main intersecting Western dualisms as a list, allowing two modes of interpretation.[116] A horizontal reading of the pair involves a hierarchy in which terms on the left side are culturally valued in opposition to those on the right

111 Karen J. Warren, *Ecological Feminism*, Routledge, London, 1994.

112 Bina Agarwal, "The Gender and Environment Debate: Lessons from India", *Feminist studies*, vol. 18, no. 1 (1992), pp. 119–58.

113 Val Plumwood, "Integrating Ethical Frameworks for Animals, Humans, and Nature: A Critical Feminist Eco-Socialist Analysis", *Ethics & the Environment*, vol. 5, no. 2 (2000), pp. 285–322.

114 Val Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, Routledge, London, 2002.

115 *Ibid.*, 47–8.

116 *Ibid.*, 43.

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(e.g. culture/nature, mind/body: culture > nature; mind > body). A vertical reading maps, on the left side, interconnected and mutually reinforcing cultural hegemonies and, on the right side, interconnected and mutually devaluating categories (e.g. culture-mind/nature-body). Plumwood specifies the inter-relation between dualistic pairs with the notion of "linking postulates", which are "assumptions normally made implicit in the cultural background which create equivalences or mapping between the pairs".[117] Such postulates include the notion of men as more "rational", of humans being uniquely cultural, or of the body as inherently passive. The repetition of a reason/nature dualism throughout the majority of these pairs solidifies the culturally constructed relational values embedded in these horizontal hierarchies and vertical mappings.

It is important to note that discursive transformations take place here. Nature, for example, can be harvested by dominant groups for conceptual resources (e.g. aggressiveness, competitiveness) with which to construct their identities. Therefore, the whole structure needs to be thought of as fluid and open to being modified by the introduction of new dualisms.[118]

Plumwood characterizes five features of "logical structure of dualism":[119]

1. *Backgrounding (denial)*: culturally dominant concepts are considered to form a singular, centered reality while denying their actual dependence on relational opposites;
2. *Radical exclusion (hyperseparation)*: some characteristics (e.g. language in the human/animal distinction) are mobilized to signify polarized differences between two realms, in order "to maximize distance or separation between the dualized spheres and to prevent their being seen as continuous or contiguous";[120]
3. *Incorporation (relational definition)*: the devalued concept is defined only in relation to its opposite, thus in terms of lack and absence. It is therefore incorporated into a fundamentally relational system;
4. *Instrumentalism (objectification)*: the devalued concept is made passive and conceived as having no end in itself. Given the process of incorporation, its objectives are also defined in terms of the opposite pole;
5. *Homogenization or stereotyping*: differences within the devalued pole are denied. "They are all alike" becomes the motto.

117 *Ibid.*, 45.

118 See Richard Twine, "Ecofeminisms in Process", *Ecofeminism e-journal* (2001).

119 Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, pp. 47–55.

120 *Ibid.*, 49.

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Moreover, according to Plumwood,[121] dualism's logical reliance on the concept of "the other" corresponds to the representation of otherness in classical propositional logic, or classical negation. Through a logical analysis of classical negation, she gives formal expression to the five features of dualism she has previously specified.

On the one hand, ecofeminism has provided theoretical consistency in identifying an integrated and unitary logic.[122] On the other hand, however, because ecofeminism moves into the field of culture, *epistèmes*, and the logical construction of concepts, it continues to under-theorize the social,[123] which gets in the way of its mission of cross-movement political solidarity. Indeed, "how we conceptualize the social matters in developing effective political strategies".[124] A cultural logic, therefore, is not enough to make intersectionality an effective element of critical theories. We need a "socio-material logic",[125] or, a materialist logic of social complexity, in order to understand the interlocking of multiple forms of domination and to investigate whether and how this logic conditions and limits particular configurations of multiply-oppressive experiences.

1.3 CAS and Anti-Capitalism: Marxist Approaches

It can be said that a general, materialist orientation toward the social is another key feature of CAS. CAS is fundamentally concerned with the *condition* of the animal – its treatment in and by society – with the explicit goal of engendering liberating so-

121 *Ibid.*, 55–9.

122 Twine highlights some contradictions in the list of dualisms, especially in Gaard's version, which includes pairs referring to sexualities (e.g. heterosexual/queer, production/reproduction). "Queer sexualities" vertically maps with "reproduction", but it is not the case that queer people are devalued via this association. Rather, queer people are being devalued by being portrayed as non-reproductive. In this case, queer sexualities are associated with nature, but via an association with nature's non-rational and "beastly" meaning. Twine, "Ecofeminisms in Process".

123 The same criticism is made by Cudworth, who defines Plumwood's position idealist, i.e. focused on cultural discourses. "[Her] understanding is ideational – we do not see how these ideas of separation, of human uniqueness and the animal as 'Other', are articulated in located contexts and inform what sociologists would understand as social institutions and related practices." Erika Cudworth, "Beyond Speciesism: Intersectionality, Critical Sociology and the Human Domination of Other Animals", Taylor et al. (eds.), *The Rise of Critical Animal Studies*, p. 27.

124 Ferguson, "Intersectionality and Social-Reproduction Feminisms", p. 42.

125 *Ibid.*, 43.

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cial change via *engaged* theory.[126] As Taylor and Twine write, "In the CAS context, theory must be relevant to understanding and changing the material conditions of animals, and to historicising the still normative concepts that have been largely successful in shielding human–animal relations from critical scrutiny".[127] This is reflected in CAS's embrace of sociology and attentiveness to economic structures and power issues in society.[128] In the aforementioned "founding act" of CAS, reference to economy appears as the first point on the list of tenets: "We seek to develop a Critical Animal Studies that: 1. Pursues interdisciplinary collaborative writing and research in a rich and comprehensive manner that includes perspectives typically ignored by animal studies such as *political economy*".[129] The inclusion of an economical perspective is immediately characterized by a commitment to anti-capitalism (vaguely intended): "[CAS] rejects apolitical, conservative, and liberal positions in order to advance an anti-capitalist, and, more generally, a radical anti-hierarchical politics".[130] Since such anti-capitalist commitment, "sociology has made a most useful contribution in the theorising of human relations with non-human animals in terms of Marxist influenced analyses".[131] The important idea for CAS is that the "critique of capitalism [is] inseparable from a critique of both animal commodification and environmental destruction".[132]

Marxist analyses of contemporary capitalism conducted from the perspective of CAS deal with such questions as:

> What would global capitalism look like minus the exploitation of animal reproductive labour? How does that abuse intersect, in specific contexts, with that of human labour? And how can the disavowal of violence against animals illuminate, generally, theories of commodity fetishism?[133]

126 Helena Pedersen and Vasile Stanescu, "What is "Critical" about Animal Studies? From the Animal "Question" to the Animal "Condition"", Socha, *Women, Destruction, and the Avant-Garde*, pp. ix-xi.

127 Taylor and Twine, "Locating the 'Critical' in Critical Animal Studies", p. 6.

128 For a detailed account of the relation between (critical) sociology and CAS see Twine, *Animals as Biotechnology*, pp. 3–9; Cudworth, "Beyond Speciesism"; and Kay Peggs, "From Centre to Margins and Back Again: Critical Animal Studies and the Reflexive Human Self", Taylor et al. (eds.), *The Rise of Critical Animal Studies*, pp. 56–71. Cudworth writes, "It is time for sociology to step up to the task of outlining the social institutions in which the discourse of species is embedded and to provide an analysis in terms of social relations." Cudworth, "Beyond Speciesism", pp. 26–7.

129 Best et al., "Introducing Critical Animal Studies". [emphasis added]

130 *Ibid.*

131 Cudworth, "Beyond Speciesism", p. 27.

132 Twine, *Animals as Biotechnology*, p. 9

133 Taylor and Twine, "Locating the 'Critical' in Critical Animal Studies", p. 10.

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Whether exploited animals are understood to be commodities,[134] wage laborers,[135] slaves,[136] superexploited commodities,[137] super-exploited means of production,[138] or as producing value in the form of biocapital,[139] the charge of economical reductionism holds true. All these analyses adopt, implicitly or not, a tripartite model of animal oppression. Nibert explains thusly: first there is the economic exploitation of animals for human interests. Then, power inequality is coded in law to allow exploitation. Finally, speciesism emerges as in ideology from these economic institutions and practices, legitimizing and inspiring domination.[140] Though this model fails to account for social intersectionality,[141] the general framework is adequately articulated to account for the intersectionality of species domination, specifically.[142]

134 Nibert, *Animal Rights/Human Rights*; and David Nibert, *Animal Oppression and Human Violence: Domesecration, Capitalism, and Global Conflict*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2013.

135 Hribal, "Animals Are Part of the Working Class Reviewed".

136 Painter, "Non-human Animals within Contemporary Capitalism".

137 Torres, *Making a Killing: The Political Economy of Animal Rights*.

138 Christian Stache, "Conceptualising Animal Exploitation in Capitalism: Getting Terminology Straight", *Capital & Class*, vol. 44, no. 3 (2020), pp. 401–21.

139 Nicole Shukin, *Animal Capital: Rendering Life in Biopolitical Times*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2009; Agnieszka Kowalczyk, "Mapping Non-Human Resistance in the Age of Biocapital", Taylor et al. (eds.), *The Rise of Critical Animal Studies*, pp. 183–200; and Twine, *Animals as Biotechnology*; Arianna Ferrari, "Nonhuman Animals as Food in Biocapitalism", David Nibert (ed.), *Animal Oppression and Capitalism*, Praeger, Santa Barbara and Denver, 2017, vol. 1, pp. 184–208. For critical perspective, see Francesco Aloe, "Antropodecentrare *Il Capitale* di Marx. Dal lavoro astratto al processo di valorizzazione", *Liberazioni. Rivista di critica antispecista*, no. 37 (2019), pp. 30–43.

140 See Nibert, *Animal Rights/Human Rights*, p. 17 ff.

141 See Cudworth, "Beyond Speciesism", pp. 27–8.

142 Consider the concept of Animal-Industrial Complex (A-IC). See Gwen Hunnicutt, Richard Twine, and Kenneth Mentor (eds.), *Violence and Harm in the Animal Industrial Complex: Human-Animal Entanglements*, Routledge, New York, 2024; Amy J. Fitzgerald and Nik Taylor, "The Cultural Hegemony of Meat and the Animal Industrial Complex", Taylor et al. (eds.), *The Rise of Critical Animal Studies*, pp. 165–82; Kimberley Ducey, "The Chicken-Industrial Complex and Elite White Men: Connecting the Oppression of Humans and Other Animals", Tracey Harris, "'The Problem Is Not the People, It's the System': The Canadian Animal-Industrial Complex", Livia Boscardin, "Capitalizing on Nature, Naturalizing Capitalism: An Analysis of the 'Livestock Revolution', Planetary Boundaries, and Green Tendencies in the Animal-Industrial Complex", Nibert (ed.), *Animal Oppression and Capitalism*, vol. 1, pp. 1–19, 57–75, 259–76. The concept of Animal Industrial Complex was first proposed by anthropologist Barbara Noske in *Beyond Boundaries: Humans and Animals*, and then refined by sociologist Richard Twine in "Revealing the 'Animal-Industrial Complex' – A Concept and Method for Critical Animal Studies", *Journal for Critical Animal Studies*, vol. 10, no. 1 (2012), pp. 12–39. It is understood as an organizing concept seeking to represent the overall framework of species domination in capitalist societies and intersections with other complexes of the global economy such as "military-industrial complex", "prison-industrial complex", "entertainment-industrial complex" and "pharmaceutical-industrial complex" (*Ibid.*, 16–20). A succinct definition of the A-IC is, "*a partly opaque and*

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Research carried out within this framework is fundamentally sociological, empirically focused on institutions (governments, corporations, and scientific related institutions, both public and private), technologies, and media representation. In this respect, their focus is too narrow to account for the social from a more structural perspective. Other authors within the field of CAS adopt a less empirical perspective in addressing capitalism, conceiving of it not only as an economic system but as an integrated social formation. They pose structural questions such as: is it possible to achieve animal liberation without moving beyond capitalism? Is animal liberation compatible with capitalism? The answer, which is assumed without actually being explained, is summarized in the following quote by CAS scholar Sanbonmatsu: "Animal liberation and capitalism are in sum not merely in tension with one another, they are mutually incompatible modes of civilizational development".[143]

1.3.1 CAS and the Frankfurt School

Sanbonmastu's and other CAS scholars' analyses[144] make explicit reference to Western Marxism (György Lukács, Karl Korsch, Ernst Bloch, the Frankfurt School, Antonio Gramsci, Henri Lefebvre, etc.).[145] In so doing, just like leftist animal rights theorists, they focus mostly on the *Paris Manuscripts* and the concept of alienation, interpreted through the lens of Western Marxism. This shift in thinking, which arose from a crisis within the socialist labor movement in the aftermath of the First World

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multiple set of networks and relationships between the corporate […] sector, governments, and public and private science. With economic, cultural, social, and affective dimensions it encompasses an extensive range of practices, technologies, images, identities and markets" (*Ibid.*, 23). A-IC is internally structured into three overlapping sectors: agribusiness, animal experimentation, entertaining-pet. A-IC concept and methodology are similar concerning their definition, function, and scope to the dimension of *dispositifs*. See below.

143 Sanbonmatsu, "Introduction", p. 26.

144 See Sanbonmatsu (ed.), *Critical theory and Animal Liberation*, especially: Zipporah Weisberg, "Animal Repression: Speciesism as Pathology", pp. 177–93; Aaron Bell, "The Dialectic of Anthropocentrism", pp. 163–75; Eduardo Mendieta, "Animal is to Kantianism as Jew is to Fascism: Adorno's Bestiary", pp. 147–62; and Christina Gerhardt, "Thinking With: Animals in Schopenhauer, Horkheimer, and Adorno", pp. 137–146; John Sanbonmatsu, "Capitalism and Speciesism", Nibert (ed.), *Animal Oppression and Capitalism* cit., vol. 2, pp. 1–30; Maurizi, *Beyond Nature* ; Amy Buzby, "From Factory Floor to Killing Floor: Marx, Critical Theory and the Status of the Animal", *Theory in Action*, vol. 8, no. 3 (2015), pp. 27–50; Melanie Bujok, "Zur Verteidigung des tierlichen und menschlichen Individuums. Das Widerstandsrecht als legitimer und vernünftiger Vorbehalt des Individuums gegenüber dem Sozialen", *Das steinerne Herz der Unendlichkeit erweichen: Beiträge zu einer kritischen Theorie für die Befreiung der Tiere*, Susann Witt-Stahl (ed.), Alibri Verlag, Aschaffenburg, 2007, pp. 310–43.

145 Elbe, "Between Marx, Marxism, and Marxisms". On "Western Marxism", see Perry Anderson, *Considerations on Western Marxism*, Verso, London-New York, 2016.

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War and has its "founding" text in Lukács' 1923 *History and Class Consciousness*,[146] turns away from a traditional reading of Marx and rather understands Marx's approach as a revolutionary theory of social praxis. Frankfurt scholars are primary references for CAS, in particular Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse, and their socio-anthropological-psychological investigation of the structural foundations of what they termed an "irrational society." The expression originally refers to the global landscape from the 1930s onward, marked by the rise of authoritarianisms, the transformation of the Russian revolution in the Stalinist Soviet Union, the rise of National Socialism in Central Europe, and the growth of American capitalism.

At the heart of CAS's engagement with Western Marxist theories lies Horkheimer and Adorno's theory of domination as developed in *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*. According to Horkheimer and Adorno, contemporary society is the apex of a process of unitary and increasingly total domination erroneously viewed as continuous progress. The cumulative growth of productive forces is cited as evidence of social progress, when it actually represents a regression of the human into barbarism. "The title Adorno gives to this process is 'retrogressive anthropogenesis'",[147] and it relies upon the concept of instrumental rationality, i.e. the objective subsuming the particular under the universal.[148] It is "the original model of domination, of which every other form of domination is merely derivative".[149] Thus, the key to understanding the contemporaneity of multiple totalitarian power systems, the current "irrational society", begins and ends in the genealogical criticism of instrumental reason.[150]

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146 György Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, trans. Rodney Livingstone, MIT Press, Cambridge, 1972.

147 Axel Honneth, *The Critique of Power: Reflective Stages in a Critical Social Theory*, trans. Kenneth Baynes, MIT Press, Cambridge, 1991, p. 38.

148 Horkheimer and Adorno devote the first of two excursuses in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* to the figure of Ulysses as the ultimate bourgeois consciousness and instrumental rationality, and the identification of Enlightenment reason in the mythological poem. In the episode of the Sirens in book XII of the *Odyssey*, they identify the secret of the "intertwinement of myth, power, and labor." Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Edmund Jephcott, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2002, p. 25.

149 Honneth, *The Critique of Power*, p. 42.

150 "We have no doubt – and herein lies our *petitio principii* – that freedom in society is inseparable from enlightenment thinking. We believe we have perceived with equal clarity, however, that the very concept of that thinking, no less than the concrete historical forms, the institutions of society with which it is intertwined, already contains the germ of the regression which is taking place everywhere today. If enlightenment does not assimilate reflection on this regressive moment, it seals its own fate." Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. xvi.

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The Frankfurt scholars, investigating the development of rationality, trace its evolution back to the prehistoric process of human self-affirmation on nature, or *anthropogenesis*. Horkheimer and Adorno write that human beings, when released from instinctual security, from animal immediacy with the environment, and from "bodily adaptation to nature",[151] and moved by the drive of self-preservation, "have always had to choose between their subjugation to nature and its subjugation to the self".[152] The implication is that the emergence of the human and the progress/regression of civilization as whole coincides with the process of *domination over nature*, which is one and the same with the process of *alienation from nature*.[153] Human estrangement from nature is twofold: from external nature (which includes animals); from internal nature (the animality of the human – instincts, inner impulses)[154]. And domination is, in turn, instrumental manipulation that goes hand in hand with reason which detects, fixes and objectifies those aspects of nature. The ways in which this manipulation has materialized has changed over time in the form of progressive/regressive phases, according to the logic of alienation and domination of nature. This process of thought, or reason, reaches its apex with modern science and technology embodied within material innovations and certain social organizations (hunting, nomadism, sedentary societies with agriculture and animal husbandry, capitalism, etc.). As summarized by Adorno and Horkheimer: "Civilization replaced the organic adaptation to otherness, mimetic behavior proper, firstly, in the magical phase, with the organized manipulation of mimesis, and finally, in the historical phase, with rational praxis, work".[155] With rational praxis begins also the social domination of the privileged class over the working class as an extension of the human domination of external nature.[156]

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151 *Ibid.*, 148.

152 *Ibid.*, 25.

153 "Human beings purchase the increase in their power with estrangement from that over which it is exerted" *Ibid.*, 6.

154 Both at a phylogenetic and ontogenetic levels, "Throughout European history the idea of the human being has been expressed in contradistinction to the animal. The latter's lack of reason is the proof of human dignity. So insistently and unanimously has this antithesis been recited by all the earliest precursors of bourgeois thought, the ancient Jews, the Stoics, and the Early Fathers, and then through the Middle Ages to modern times, that few other ideas are so fundamental to Western anthropology" *Ibid.*, 203–4.

155 *Ibid.*, 148.

156 "But if the nomadic savage, despite his subjection, could still participate in the magic which defined the limits of that world, and could disguise himself as his quarry in order to stalk it, in later periods the intercourse with spirits and the subjection were assigned to different classes of humanity: power to one side, obedience to the other. The recurring, never-changing natural processes were drummed into the subjects, either by other tribes or by their own cliques, as the rhythm of work, to the beat of the club and the rod, which reechoed in every barbaric drum, in each monotonous ritual". *Ibid.*, 15–6.

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The peak of this process – which is, in a circular way, a "going back to the start" – is the mid-twentieth-century world situation of totalitarianism and capitalism. In the automatism of modern industrial society, is a submission to the hostile and alien forces of nature from which magic and myth, and then enlightenment, should have freed humanity. Here is the barbaric regression to which the violent anthropogenesis leads: "Any attempt to break the compulsion of nature by breaking nature only succumbs more deeply to that compulsion".[157]

The only way out is realizing the non-necessity of domination through the remembrance of nature, i.e. when nature is "apprehended as knowledge":[158]

> But a true praxis capable of overturning the status quo depends on theory's refusal to yield to the oblivion in which society allows thought to ossify […] Enlightenment consummates and abolishes itself when the closest practical objectives reveal themselves to be the most distant goal already attained, and the lands of which "their spials and intelligencers can give no news"– that is, nature misunderstood by masterful science – are remembered as those of origin.[159]

What CAS scholars fundamentally retain is the estrangement of nature, especially internal nature, or "the self-estrangement of our own animality".[160] For example, in the introduction to the volume *Critical Theory and Animal Liberation* the editor states:

> All the contributors to our volume show that the compulsory forgetting, or repression, of our own animal essence – that is, of the knowledge that we human beings are always already caught up with the drama of being animal (desiring, feeling, experiencing, suffering, laboring, loving, and so on) – prepares the way for the unending catastrophes of modernity […]. Negation of the animal other is not a side concern to the "real issues" facing human social life but the pivot around which our civilization itself has formed.[161]

The idea of the history of civilization as history of domination – a (circular) progress/regress starting with the domination of nature and culminating with capitalism – is interpreted seamlessly:

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157 *Ibid.*, 9.

158 "Nature in itself is neither good […] nor noble […]; only when apprehended as knowledge does it become the urge of the living toward peace, the consciousness which, from the beginning, has inspired the unerring resistance to *Fuhrer* and collective. What threatens the prevailing praxis and its inescapable alternatives is not nature, with which that praxis coincides, but the remembrance of nature". *Ibid.*, 211–2.

159 *Ibid.*, 33.

160 Sanbonmatsu, "Introduction", p. 7.

161 *Ibid.*, 8.

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> Of the two modes of life [speciesism and capitalism], speciesism is undoubtedly the more fundamental one. This is so not only because domination and control of other species is the precondition for all capital accumulation but because our species life, our identity as a species, is organized around this dominion. Speciesism, we might say, is the "*Ur*"-modality or most primordial of all modes of human life, of human productive activity […] Simply put, capitalism is the highest form of speciesism, the "ideal," or most fully realized – and therefore most destructive – of the myriad forms that speciesism could conceivably take.[162]

In adopting such a reading, CAS scholars inherit the problems[163] of Western Marxism as a social theory and its understanding of capitalism. First of all, they adopt a philosophy of history intrinsic to *Entfremdung* in Marx. Or better said, they attempt to think of history in terms of an *origin*, assuming a starting point, or historical basis, that, gradually, became concealed or expelled with the unfolding or progression of history itself. Therefore, human activity becomes – because of its own movement – an activity of concealment that hides its own origin and foundations. At this point, the only recourse is to look back from a state of oblivion and to remember – digging through religious, scientific, philosophical forms of sedimentation.[164]

Dialectic of Enlightenment's thesis of retrogressive anthropogenesis, with its "self-fulfilling prophecy" flavor, reflects this model as a theoretical armature.[165] Moreover, Adorno and Horkheimer's philosophy of history is "exempted from scientific confirmation"[166] and social criticism is assigned solely to philosophy. Adorno and

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162 Sanbonmatsu, "Capitalism and Speciesism" p. 3. Or again, "Though capitalism did not create speciesism, it removed the last of the cultural and technical barriers to nonhuman animal exploitation which in previous epochs had set at least some limits to the scale and intensity of speciesist exploitation […] However, notwithstanding patriarchy, racism, and other structures of power that intersect with and help constitute speciesism, the chief propulsive mechanism of speciesism today remains the capitalist world system" *Ibid*., p.25.

163 We can set aside the intrinsic essentialism and humanist/anthropocentric social ontology – indeed at the basis of Frankfurt's social theory – to sustain the animal liberation. See Craig McFarlane, *Critical Animal Studies Beyond Anthropocentrism and Humanism*, presented at "Thinking About Animals" conference, Brock University, 2011.

164 See Warren Montag, "'Foucault and the Problematic of Origins': Althusser's Reading of *Folie et deraison*", *Borderlands*, vol. 4, no. 2 (2005).

165 "With the denial of nature in human beings, not only the *telos* of the external mastery of nature but also the *telos* of one's own life becomes confused and opaque. At the moment when human beings cut themselves off from the consciousness of themselves as nature, all the purposes for which they keep themselves alive – social progress, the heightening of material and intellectual forces, indeed, consciousness itself – become void, and the enthronement of the means as the end, which in late capitalism is taking on the character of overt madness, is already detectable in the earliest history of subjectivity". Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, pp. 42–3.

166 Honneth, *The Critique of Power*, p. 59 ff.

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Horkheimer describe European civilization on the basis of indirect testimonies and the history of ideas: literary and philosophical works (especially Kant's and Nietzsche's texts), Homer's *Odissey*, de Sade's tales, etc.[167]

As this brief analysis demonstrates, Western Marxism is characterized by two features. First, "the neglect of problems of politics and state theory",[168] and a repressive and instrumental theory of the state. This reading is reflected in the following quote by Sanbonmatsu: "The role of the state […] in promoting and consolidating the capitalist-speciesist system could itself be the subject of an entire book. Under capitalism, the state effectively *serves* to protect the interests of corporations and the wealthy".[169] Second, "a selective reception of Marx's theory of value, and the predominance of a 'silent orthodoxy' concerning the critique of political economy".[170] The sum of these two features can be identified in the concept of "state capitalism," the central element of *Dialectics of Enlightenment*'s analysis of the socio-economic structure of contemporary society and the liberal phase of capitalism. As highlighted by Honneth, the designation "state capitalism", originally introduced by Frankfurt scholar Friedrich Pollock to account for the National Socialist political-economic order,

> asserts a mode of organization of capitalism in which the steering of the entire economic process by the mediating sphere of the competition of individual capitalists is transferred over to the centralized administrative activity of an apparatus of domination. The calculated interests of the major corporations and the planning capacity of the state organs come together in a technical rationality to which all domains of social action are uniformly subordinated. […] The cycle of civilization comes to a close with the end of liberal capitalism since, with the formation […] of an administrative elite who exercise control, a piece of human prehistory returns – the arbitrary and violent appropriation of power by social groups.[171]

Therefore, an analysis of capitalist society and its forms of domination and socialization, cannot be undertaken, since, in the totalizing view of the history of domination, "the commodity exchange is merely the historically developed form of in-

167 For a historical reconstruction of Adorno and Horkheimer's historical-philosophical theory of domination, that trace the link between domestication – neolithic revolution – and the birth of property relations and the state, as "tracing back the history of class-societies to the enslavement of nonhuman nature", see Maurizi, *Beyond Nature*.

168 Elbe, "Between Marx, Marxism, and Marxisms".

169 Sanbonmatsu, "Capitalism and Speciesism", p. 14 ff. [emphasis added]

170 Elbe, "Between Marx, Marxism, and Marxisms".

171 Honneth, *The Critique of Power*, pp. 72–3.

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strumental rationality",[172] which has developed from human self-affirmation and alienation from nature.

1.3.2 CAS and (Post-)Operaismo

Other analyses in the field of CAS, such as those of Wadiwel[173] and Kowalczyk,[174] work with Italian Marxist operaismo and postoperaismo conceptual tools. Operaismo emerged in the 1960s in Italy and then spread to other countries in the 1970s as part of the so-called New Left. It criticizes classical workers' movement and left political parties for viewing workers as a passive, social factor, challenges traditional Marxism and its orthodox determinism and economism, and operates a "Copernican Inversion,"[175] which poses class struggle as the motor of capitalist development, rather than objective, economic laws. In this view, capitalism adapts itself to the thrusts and shocks produced by the workers' movement and its capability for resistance, modifying its own productive forms (new working practices, new technologies). Only in this way can capital continue its process of valorization.

> Workers' struggles determine the course of capitalist development; but capitalist development will use those struggles for its own ends if no organized revolutionary process opens up, capable of changing that balance of forces. It is easy to see this in the case of social struggles in which the entire systemic apparatus of domination repositions itself, reforms, democratizes and stabilizes itself anew.[176]

Working from this inversion, and later post-operaist Antonio Negri's and Micheal Hardt's reinterpretation of the working class as a boundlessness "multitude", critical animal studies scholars privilege the potency of resistance and struggle of the oppressed, their possibility and ability to oppose exploitation, extending the concept of multitude to include animals. Both operaismo and post-operaismo, however,

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172 *Ibid.*, 38.

173 Dinesh J. Wadiwel, "Do fish Resist?", *Cultural Studies Review*, vol. 22, no. 1 (2016), pp. 196–242; Dinesh J. Wadiwel, "Chicken harvesting machine: Animal labor, resistance, and the time of production", *South Atlantic Quarterly*, vol. 117, no. 3 (2018), pp. 527–49.

174 Kowalczyk, "Mapping Non-Human Resistance in the Age of Biocapital".

175 Operaismo rereads Marx's *opus* from the point of view of *Grundrisse*, especially *Fragment on machines*, and *Results of the Immediate Process of Production*. Harry Cleaver, "The Inversion of Class Perspective in Marxist Theory: From Valorisation to Self-Valorisation", *Open Marxism-vol. 2: Theory and Practice*, Bonefeld Werner et al. (eds.), Pluto Press, London, 1992, pp. 106–44.

176 Mario Tronti, "Our Operaismo", *New Left Review*, no. 73 (2012), pp. 119–39. According to post-operaists Negri and Hardt, the transition to post-Fordist organizations of production based on flexibility, precariousness, and availability results from adapting capitalism to the resistance of workers through absenteeism, sabotage, cultural experimentation. See Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 2000, pp. 272–6.

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have been criticized in their account of capitalist society. The main shortcomings of these perspectives concern crisis theory, Marx's value theory, and the consequent introduction of the notion of "immaterial labor".

To put it briefly, by emphasizing class conflict as the decisive factor for capitalist crises, (post)operaismo tends not only to overestimate and to idealize contemporary struggles against capital (but not necessarily against capitalism as such), but also misses the crucial aspect of Marx's theory of crisis, i.e. that the capitalist mode of production has *intrinsic tendencies* toward crisis which are entirely independent of the state of class struggle.[177]

Hardt and Negri reject Marx's theory of value, drawing on the alleged novelty of "immaterial labor"[178] around which they center their economic theory of contemporary capitalist society. They argue that immaterial (intellectual, communicative, affective, and relational) forms of production have become hegemonic, and, since immaterial aspects of labor products can no longer be measured, the labor theory of value is outdated. This claim is clearly based on the orthodox "labor" theory of value – equating "abstract labor" with temporal, measurable factory labor. This reading, however, shows "an ignorance regarding concepts like value-form or fetishism".[179] As Michael Heinrich writes,

> Marx's concept of "abstract labor" is not at all identical with a particular type of labor expenditure, but rather a category of social mediation: it aims at the specifically social character of privately expended, commodity producing labor – regardless of whether this commodity is a steel tube or care giving labor in a nursing home, which is run in a capitalist way.[180]

Retaining CAS's key features discussed so far, namely intersectionality and orientation to the social analysis of contemporary capitalism, while aiming at avoiding their respective criticisms (intersectionality's lack of a consistent social and power theory; economic reductionism and/or mistaken account of the social and capitalism), the following chapter elaborates a theoretical framework (or a material-social

177 See Heinrich, *Karl Marx's Capital*, pp. 169–178; Frederick H. Pitts, "Creative Industries, Value Theory and Michael Heinrich's New Reading of Marx", *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique*, vol. 13, no. 1 (2015), pp. 197–9.

178 Maurizio Lazzarato, "Immaterial Labor", Paolo Virno and Michael Hardt (eds.), *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1996, pp. 142–57.

179 Michael Heinrich, "Invaders from Marx: On the Uses of Marxist Theory, and the Difficulties of a Contemporary Reading", 2005, http://www.oekonomiekritik.de/205Invaders.htm accessed on 9th June 2025.

180 *Ibid*. See also Heinrich, *Karl Marx's Capital*, p. 44; Frederick H. Pitts, *Critiquing Capitalism Today: New Ways to Read Marx*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2017, pp. 191–218.

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logic) of capitalist societies for a materialistic approach to socio-political analysis in which species domination can be addressed in proper and comprehensive ways. This is important if we wish to orient ourselves to a socio-political reconsideration of our relations with nonhuman animals. A proposed materialist logic is articulated into three main concepts: social form, in a Marxist sense, *dispositif*, and politics.[181]

181 This perspective draws and greatly expands upon Francesco Aloe and Chiara Stefanoni, "Verso una logica dei complessi sociali capitalistici: forme, dispositivi, politica", *Liberazioni. Rivista di critica antispecista*, no. 34 (2018), pp. 38–50.

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2. A Materialist Logic for Capitalist Societies

2.1 Reading Marx Anew

Although Marx speaks in terms of "commodity-form", and not of commodity alone, of "money-form", and not of money, of "value-form", and not of value, of "capital-form" and not of capital, the conceptual implications have received little regard in early Marxist scholarship, which took for granted Engel's historicist and empiricist interpretation. It took a hundred years from the publication of the first volume of *Capital* to properly rediscover Marx's notion of social form.

This account has been developed by the so-called "new reading of Marx" or "New Marx Reading" ("Neue Marx-Lektüre"),[1] an interdisciplinary theoretical current, originally developed in (mainly West) Germany from the mid-1960s onward by lesser-known Frankfurt scholars, such as Hans-Georg Backhaus, Alfred Schmidt and Helmut Reichelt – all of whom were pupils of Adorno. Backhaus' pioneering article, *On the Dialectics of the Value-Form*,[2] written in 1969, could be considered the foundational text for this new reading of Marx, along with Reichelt's *Zur logischen Struktur des Kapitalbegriffs bei Karl Marx*, published in 1970,[3] and various texts that resulted from what has come to be known as the German State-Derivation debate (*Staatsableitungsdebatte*).[4] The debate, which involved authors such as Bernard Blanke, Ulrich Jürgens, Hans Kastendiek, Joachim Hirsch, Wolfgang Müller, Christel Neusüss, Heide Gerstenberger, emerged in response to practical, political problems in West Germany in the late 1960s. A set of key events during these years revealed certain inadequacies within earlier forms of Marxism. Firstly, following a recession

1 Ingo Elbe, *Marx im Westen. Die neue Marx-Lektüre in der Bundesrepublik seit 1965*, Akademie, Berlin, 2010. For an introductory overview in English, Elbe, "Between Marx, Marxism, and Marxisms".

2 Hans-Georg Backhaus, "On the Dialectics of the Value-Form", trans. Micheal Eldred and Mike Roth, *Thesis Eleven*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1980), pp. 99–120.

3 Helmut Reichelt, *Zur logischen Struktur des Kapitalbegriffs bei Karl Marx*, Europäische Verlagsansts, Hamburg, 1970.

4 The main contributions to the debate are collected in John Holloway and Sol Picciotto (eds.), *State and Capital. A Marxist Debate*, Edward Arnold, London, 1978.

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that lasted from 1965–67, Marxist analysis failed to articulate an effective response regarding the role of the state in the economic recovery in 1967–68. Secondly, the Social Democrats (SPD) had become a major partner in a socio-liberal government with the elections of 1969, thus becoming a majority force. Thirdly, the German student movement fail to establish meaningful contact with the working-class movement. Together, these three developments opened new, problematic questions about the limits and possibility of state intervention.[5] In addition to those involved in the State-Derivation debate, other authors and collective projects representatives of the New Marx Reading include Helmut Brentel, Dieter Wolf, Heinz D. Kittsteiner, Projekt Klassenanalyse, PolyluxMarx, Sonja Buckel, and Moishe Postone.[6] More recently, Micheal Heinrich, a prolific scholar of Marx, whose *Introduction to the Three Volumes of Marx's Capital*[7] is considered one of the most authoritative accounts on Marx, has become a leading voice.

While the movement has its roots in the 1960's, Backhaus did not coin the term, "Neue Marx-Lektüre" until 1997.[8] The years in which the New Marx Reading was taking shape were marked by social upheaval, exemplified by the student protests of May 1968 and by the Vietnam war, which revealed the first cracks in U.S. post-war hegemony. During this time, the dogmas and ideological shortcomings of traditional Marxism, as embodied in authoritarian Soviet "Socialism", were being reevaluated. People wondered if traditional Marxism adequately captured Marx's thought, leading to the so-called "New Left" or "critical turn" in Marxism, as well as the emergence of the structuralist and post-structuralist currents in France, and operaismo and postoperaismo in Italy. Despite the differences amongst the various voices animating the New Marx Reading, the apparent common goal was to overcome the so-called dialectical and historical materialism of Marxism-Leninism. It is also noteworthy that, in contrast to operaismo and despite its radical emancipatory claims, the New Marx Reading was largely unable to break the confines of academia.

A crucial moment was the 1967 colloquium, *100 Jahre 'Kapital'*. Under the auspices of this conference, the new questions, research objectives, and methodologies for a reinterpretation of Marx's thought from the perspective of social theory were first defined. A refusal of Engelsian and humanistic flavor was the basis of inquiry into the original objects and methods of critique of political economy (with an emphasis

5 *Ibid.*, 15.

6 Postone is counted by Heinrich as a full-fledged participant in the New Marx Reading, *Ibid.*, 229.

7 Heinrich, *Karl Marx's Capital*.

8 Elbe contends this origin of the term, backdating it to 1973 in *Marx im Westen*, p. 31,

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on Marx-Hegel relation), and the link between the three volumes of *Capital*, recentering attention upon the *Grundrisse*.[9]

Marx's rough draft of the *Grundrisse* had virtually no circulation outside of the Soviet Union. Moreover, the 1953 Dietz edition, which includes all seven manuscripts plus miscellaneous related material, also failed to reach a wider audience. Only in the 1960s, thanks to 1962 Alfred Schmidt's *The Concept of Nature in Marx*,[10] followed by the publication of a substantial commentary on *Grundrisse* by Roman Rosdolsky in 1968, does the *Grundrisse* reach a broad West German public.[11] Rosdolsky claimed that better understanding *Grundrisse* would shed crucial light on the Marxist critical-dialectic method. Other manuscripts central to the development of this new reading of Marx include the first edition of *Capital*'s first volume and its appendix, or *Anhang*,[12] the *Urtext*[13] and the *Results of the Immediate Process of Production*.[14]

By challenging the conventional equation of Engel's commentaries with Marx's thought – the basic assumption of the Marxist paradigm of the Second and Third Internationals – and the Engelsian, historicist misinterpretation of the first three chapters of *Capital*, including value theory, Backhaus and his followers set the framework for a new methodological program. This program entails the critical-reconstructive reading of Marx's system of thought to reconstruct and re-establish his method of presentation [*darstellungsmethode*] as logical, form-genetic method. This approach contests Engels's historical and empiricist interpretation, which sees the sequence of categories (commodity, the elementary, expanded, and general forms of value, money, capital) as merely an abstract reflection of historical progression, rather than as a necessary sequence revealing their inner, inseparable connection. Through this method, Marx's critique of political economy can be understood with greater precision.

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9 Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Martin Nicolaus, Penguin Classics, London, 2005.

10 Alfred Schmidt, *The Concept of Nature in Marx*, trans. Ben Fawkes, New Left Books, London, 1971.

11 Roman Rosdolsky, *Zur Entstehungsgeschichte des Marxschen 'Kapital'*, Europäische Verlagsanstalt, Hamburg, 1968.

12 Karl Marx, *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy. Vol I*, trans. Ben Fowkes, Penguin Classics, London, 1990, pp. 943–1084.

13 Karl Marx, *The Original Text of the Second and the Beginning of the Third Chapter of "A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy" (the Urtext)*, Marx and Engels, *MECW*, vol. 29, pp. 430–507.

14 Karl Marx, *Results of the Direct Production Process*, Marx and Engels, *MECW*, vol. 34, pp. 355–471. For this account see Elbe, "Between Marx, Marxism, and Marxisms".

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Following Elbe,[15] three reconstructive levels emerge within Marx-Engels studies, according to an "exoteric/esoteric" distinction.[16] Firstly, we identify and set aside the Engelsian component as merely "exoteric", as, for instance, Backhaus does in his *Materialien zur Rekonstruktion der Marxschen Werttheorie*, parts one and two.[17] Secondly, we identify and remove Marx's meta-theoretical self-understanding, the *intentio auctoris*, labeling it as an "exoteric", inadequate self-reflection getting in the way of a proper analysis of capitalism, the true "esoteric" content.[18] Thirdly, we apply the "exoteric/esoteric" distinction to the terms Marx himself employs in his analysis of classical economics. Here, the "exoteric" inquiry is that which adheres to the everyday consciousnesses of social agents (including the authors themselves) and their immediate perceptions and representations. In contrast, the "esoteric" focuses on the formation of thought within the context of capitalist social intercourse. This deeper stage of the critical-reconstructive reading, as pursued by Backhaus in the third and fourth parts of *Materialien*, and by Heinrich in *Die Wissenschaft vom Wert*,[19] duplicates the "esoteric/exoteric" distinction, identifying both exoteric and esoteric elements both in Marx's meta-discourse and his real analyses. Indeed, we should not entirely reject Marx's self-understanding meta-discourse as "exoteric", since it contains many "esoteric" insights. Moreover, "exoteric" contents and conceptual ambiguities can likewise be found in the critique of political economy – a treatment which had previously been described as "esoteric". According to Elbe:

> In place of the legend of a linear progression of knowledge on Marx's part, there appeared the recognition of a complex coexistence and interpenetration of progress and regression in the method of presentation and the state of research of Marx's critique of economy.[20]

It is important here to distinguish two different conceptions of reconstruction. To maintain the idea of esoteric content, even at this last, deeper stage of interpreta-

15 *Ibid.*

16 The distinction between the exoteric and esoteric aspects of Marx's theory goes back to Stefan Breuer, *Die Krise der Revolutionstheorie: negative Vergesellschaftung u. Arbeitsmetaphysik bei Herbert Marcuse*, Syndikat, Frankfurt am Main, 1977.

17 Collected in Hans-Georg Backhaus, *Dialektik der Wertform. Untersuchungen zur Marxschen Ökonomiekritik*, Ça ira, Freiburg, 1997.

18 These first two levels were expressed from a different perspective by Louis Althusser, who advocated for a reconstruction of *Capital* on the basis of a "symptomatic" reading, and by Alfred Schmidt and Backhaus. See Louis Althusser, "From Capital to Marx's Philosophy", Althusser et al., *Reading Capital*, pp. 11–70.

19 Michael Heinrich, *Die Wissenschaft vom Wert. Die Marxsche Kritik der politischen Ökonomie zwischen wissenschaftlicher Revolution und klassischer Tradition*, Westfälisches Dampfboot, Münster, 1999.

20 Elbe, "Between Marx, Marxism, and Marxisms".

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tion, means to maintain the belief in the existence of a coherent, hidden kernel, an underlying, inner logic within Marx's theory. Backhaus and Reichelt believed that this inner kernel had been preserved in relative purity in the *Grundrisse* as well as in other drafts of *Capital*. Thus, reconstruction involves identifying and retaining what has been lost and using the earlier texts to shed light on the later ones, revealing a concealed, esoteric core. This project was only possible after the completion of MEGA (*Marx Engels Gesamtausgabe*),[21] in the 1970s.[22] In addition to standardizing Marx's works, the MEGA classifies the *Grundrisse 1857–58*, the *Economic Manuscript of 1861–63*, and the *Economic Manuscript of 1863–65* as preparatory drafts of *Capital*. It proposes a linear development from 1857 onward, progressing with each draft to *Capital* in its final form: Volume I, followed by Volumes II and III, edited by Engels. This mode of classification assumes a clear distinction between drafts and final works. Thus, "this labelling is not a pure description, it implies a certain judgement, and a judgment which can be questioned".[23]

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21 The first project of MEGA was outlined in 1921 by philologist and leftist intellectual, David B. Rjazanov, at that time director of Marx-Engels Institute in Moscow, supported by the German Social Democrats Party, SPD. The plan comprised three sections: the first devoted to the *œuvres*, with the exception of *Capital*; the second to *Capital*; and the third to correspondence. In 1927, the first of the forty-two volumes expected for MEGA appeared in Frankfurt. Between 1929 and 1932, eight more volumes were published by Berlin Marx-Engels-Verlag. The project, however, was left incomplete due to Hitler's rise to power and escalating Stalinian terror. After the Second World War, a new edition was taken into consideration, with the explicit refusal to continue the Rjazanov's on the grounds of outdated philological criteria. Only after Stalin's death was it possible to undertake a second attempt, assigned to the Institutes of Marxism-Leninism of the Social Unity Party (SED) in Berlin and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in Moscow. The first edition appeared in 1972, following new editorial guidelines and innovative concepts (total reproduction of the correspondence; complete reproduction of every layer of work: sketches, drafts, manuscripts; original language with original punctuation and orthography; and appendixes with historical-philosophical-political clarifications). This was followed by a second new edition in 1975. After the fall of "real socialism" in the 1990s, MEGA published with the Internationale Marx-Engels-Stiftung (IMES) in Amsterdam. For a contribution to the history of MEGA and the publication in German of Marx's and Engels's works, see the preface to Riccardo Bellofiore and Nicola Taylor (eds.), *The Constitution of Capital: Essays on Volume 1 of Marx's Capital*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2004.

22 See Michael Heinrich, "Reconstruction or Deconstruction? Methodological Controversies about Value and Capital, and New Insights from the Critical Edition", Riccardo Bellofiore and Roberto Fineschi (eds.), *Re-Reading Marx. New Perspectives after the Critical Edition*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2009, pp. 71–98.

23 Heinrich, "Reconstruction or Deconstruction?" p. 78. Heinrich challenges this standardized view. Drawing on a close philological reading of Marx's economic manuscripts of 1880–1, he argues for the existence of two different projects: a *Critique of Political Economy* in six books – capital, landed property, wage-labor, the State, foreign trade, the world market – and *Capital* in four books – three theoretical ones and a fourth on the history of economic theory. Ac-

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The current version of MEGA, much richer than that of the 1970s, poses serious challenges to the project of reconstruction as such. On the one hand, the idea of a clear distinction between drafts and final work fails, "we have only differently developed drafts of a shifting, unfinished and incomplete projects. And on the other hand, we find several ambivalences even in basic notions which make different lines of interpretation and reasoning possible".[24] These ambivalences are not there by accident, rather they are caused by a fundamental problem: the complex coexistence of two separate discourses in Marx's *Capital*. The first is the "scientific attempt" to "revolutionize a science",[25] namely, the science of political economy, eschewing its humanism, individualism, ahistoricism and empiricism, as a tool for shaping social revolution. The second is that science itself. As Heinrich puts it:

> This scientific revolution, this break with the theoretical field of political economy, was not complete. At some points of his presentation, Marx stuck to the field he broke with at the same moment. In the same text we can observe a break with this field and the continuing presence of some elements of this field. These two sides are not clearly separated.[26]

Consequently, the idea is not to unlock an ultimate understanding of Marx's critique by reconstructing its inner, coherent core, which does not exist. Rather it is more of a "constructive task […] an always unfinished, open and at every level questionable process".[27] The aim is to continue working on Marx's revolution of political economy, moving past the legacy tied to traditional categories of economy, which are obstacles

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cording to Heinrich, the attempts to realize the first involved texts from *Einleitung*, written in summer 1857, to *Economic Manuscript of 1861–63*. The second group of texts composed for the second project comprises the works from *Economic Manuscript of 1863–65* to the 1881 *Notes on Wagner* (see the tables in *Ibid.*, pp. 86–87). Besides important changes regarding value theory, accumulation, circulation, and crisis, the two projects can be distinguished structurally, namely the distinction between "capital in general" and "competition of many capitals" in the *Critique of Political Economy* and the relation of "individual capital" and "total social capital" in *Capital*.

24 Michael Heinrich, *Ambivalences of Marx's Critique of Political Economy as Obstacles for the Analysis of Contemporary Capitalism*, http://www.oekonomiekritik.de/310Ambivalences.htm. 2nd Historical Materialism Conference, London, 10 October 2004, revised paper.

25 Karl Marx, *Marx to Kugelmann, December 28 1862*, Marx and Engels, *MECW*, p. 436.

26 Heinrich, *Ambivalences of Marx's Critique of Political Economy as Obstacles for the Analysis of Contemporary Capitalism*. Heinrich elucidates this thesis with the analysis of three issues in which the ambivalence is patent: value, money-commodity, crises. Regarding value two approaches stand side by side: a "substantialist-naturalist theory of value" and a "monetary theory of value". Marx presupposes the necessity of a money-commodity as the bearer of the money *form*.

27 Heinrich, "Reconstruction or Deconstruction?" p. 96

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to links between Marxist categories and contemporary capitalism. Moreover, also the categories used for analysis are themselves open and questionable.

The first (re)constructive effort, started by Backhaus and Reichelt, was focused upon value theory, moving away from a substantialist-naturalist theory and towards a pure, monetary one. The reflection upon value has, indeed, been prominent in the New Marx Reading tradition. Some critics have pointed out[28] that this emphasis on value happened at the expense of the analysis of capitalist totality and that the reconstruction of *Capital* did not reach the categories of capitalist production, nor the general law of accumulation. The charge is that the New Marx Reading is an "apolitical and […] neoscholastic reading of Marx".[29] If this critique might hold in the case of Backhaus and Reichelt's first works, it does not do so with regard to more recent scholarship from the New Marx Reading. A historical recounting of the emergence of the New Marx Reading out of a conglomeration of multifarious theoretical influences further belies the claim that the group lacks politics. The State-Derivation debate, which centered on the politics of social domination in capitalist society, was an early catalyst for the group's formation. The separation of economy and politics in capitalist societies was the central polemic of this debate, which approached the problem via logical and historical analyses of capitalist production. The aim, in other words, was to derive a functional understanding of the state (or the separation between the economic and the political) from the category of capital, working against theorists such as Habermas, who separate the study of politics from the analysis of capitalist production.

It was in this context that the masterly 1923 essay, *The General Theory of Law and Marxism*[30] by the Soviet legal scholar Evgenij B. Pašukanis, an intellectual predecessor of the New Marx Reading who was executed during the Great Purge in 1937, was fully appreciated. Additionally, the economist Isaak I. Rubin's major work *Essays on Marx's Theory of Value*,[31] which also appeared in 1923 in the USSR, became foundational for the group when it was translated and disseminated in the 1970s. Rubin, like Pašukanis, was executed during the purges of 1937. Rubin and Pašukanis address core questions respectively of Marxist value and state theory understanding

28 See Riccardo Bellofiore and Tommaso Redolfi Riva, "The Neue Marx-Lektüre. Putting the Critique of Political Economy Back into the Critique of Society", Radical Philosophy, no. 189 (2015), pp. 24–36 and Werner Bonefeld, *Critical Theory and the Critique of Political Economy: On Subversion and Negative Reason*, Bloomsbury, London, 2014.

29 Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen and Dominique Routhier, "Critical Theory as Radical Crisis Theory: Kurz, Krisis, and Exit! on Value Theory, the Crisis, and the Breakdown of Capitalism", *Rethinking Marxism*, vol. 31, no. 2 (2019), p. 179.

30 Evgeny B. Pašukanis, *The General Theory of Law and Marxism*, trans. Barbara Einhorn, Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick, 2002

31 Isaak I. Rubin, *Essays on Marx's Theory of Value*, trans. Miloš Samardžija and Fredy Perlman, Black and Red Books, Detroit, 1972.

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the importance of reading Marx's *darstellungmethode* as "analysis of form", "form-genetic method". The New Marx Reading thus interprets their work as a reconstruction of Marx's original theories on value and the state.

In addition, complex and close interconnections between French Marxist scholars, such as Althusser, Jacques Rancière, and the West German groups, influenced the emergence of the New Marx Reading.[32] As highlighted by Elbe,[33] one of the first attempts to combine the West German debates and Althusser's tradition was made in 1976 by Joachim Hirsch in the field of state theory.[34] Hirsch integrates the formal-analytical method of the State-Derivation debate with Althusser's Ideological State Apparatus theory and, above all, with the Gramscian-inspired relational state theory developed by Nicos Poulantzas, Althusser's pupil. Hirsch's justification for this experimental method is derived from the assumption that form analysis is only useful for determining the basic class character of the bourgeois state, and that concrete political analysis is required to address most problems surrounding theory of the state. Hence, Hirsch aims to bridge conceptual-logical analysis and historical

32 Althusser considered value theory and fetishism versions of Feuerbach's theory of alienation, and, in the 1970s, dismissed them as residual idealism. In 1969, in an introduction to Volume One of *Capital*, he wrote that readers should "put THE WHOLE OF PART ONE ASIDE FOR THE TIME BEING and BEGIN YOUR READING WITH PART TWO: 'The Transformation of Money into Capital'". Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1971, p. 81. In 1965, the collective volume *Reading Capital* flirted with the conceptual pair of visibility/concealment, crucial for a theory of fetishism. Jacques Rancière developed a theory of fetishism and value-form based upon criticizing such readings in terms of idealist anthropological critique of alienation. See Rancière, "The Concept of Critique and the Critique of Political Economy". Rancière's text, focused on the notions of social forms, subjectification, and objectification, constitutes an important contribution to the debate on value-form, showing conceptual affinities with the New Marx Reading. See Elbe, *Marx im Westen*, pp. 58–62 and Panagiotis Sotiris, "Althusserianism and Value-form Theory: Rancière, Althusser and the Question of Fetishism", *Crisis and Critique*, vol. 2, no. 2 (2015), pp. 167–193. Due to Rancière's and Althusser's later rejection of the notion of fetishism and post-1968 disappointment, this affinity has gone unnoticed. On the question of the relation between value-form theory and Althusserianism, see Panagiotis Sotiris and Dimitris Papafotiou, *Althusser and Value-Form Theory: A Missed Encounter?*, 2016, paper presented at the 13th Historical Materialism Conference, London, 10–13 November, 2016 https://www.academia.edu/29894551/Althusser_and_value_form_theory_a_missed_encounter accessed 9th June 2025; and John Milios, "Rethinking Marx's Value-Form Analysis from an Althusserian Perspective", *Rethinking Marxism*, vol. 21, no. 2 (2009), pp. 260–74.

33 Elbe, *Marx im Westen*, pp. 401–4.

34 See Joachim Hirsch, "Bemerkungen zum theoretischen Ansatz einer Analyse des bürgerlichen Staates", *Gesellschaft. Beiträge zur Marxschen Theorie*, vol. 8, no. 9 (1976), pp. 99–149; Joachim Hirsch, *Materialistische Staatstheorie. Transformationsprozesse des kapitalistischen Staatensystems*, vsa, Hamburg, 2005; and Joachim Hirsch and John Kannankulam, "The Spaces of Capital: The Political Form of Capitalism and the Internationalization of the State", Antipode, vol. 43, no. 1 (2011), pp. 12–37.

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investigation. He shows that the two major efforts for a renewal of Marxism as a political theory – that of the 1960s and that of the 1970s – are not inherently opposed. More recently, the "historical materialist policy analysis" (HMPA) and the so-called "strategic-relational approach" adopt this perspective as well.[35]

Two key sources for such readings are *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*,[36] written by Marx in 1852 and devoted to a historiography of Louis Bonaparte *coup d'état* of 1851, and is its "prequel", *The Class Struggles in France, 1848 to 1850*[37] of 1850. These texts present a periodization of political developments, which Jessop analyzes in terms of the following:[38]

1. the political stage and its actors, i.e. the superficial but effective level of discourses and symbolism through which different political forces express their aspirations and try to persuade their audiences;
2. "the social content of politics", i.e. the class struggle content behind the scenes of this stage. Marx's analysis of class compositions and class interests is related to economic interests in specific conjunctions and/or periods, and the consequent strategic and tactical possibilities, rather than to abstract positions within the processes of production;
3. the changes in the institutional architecture of the state and their consequent structural influence on the political balance of forces;
4. the interconnected movements of the local, national and international economy over different time scales insofar as they shape political positions.

These debates lead to the second and third threads – after the criticism of pre-monetary theories of value – that shape the (re)constructive efforts of the New Marx Reading. First, the rejection of any manipulative-instrumental conception of the state and, second, the abandonment of interpretations of Marx's theory "based on labor-ontological revolutionary theory (or even upon revolutionary theory as such)".[39] In the background of all of this lies a precise understanding of what Marx is genuinely portraying in *Capital*: it is not English capitalism of his time, nor nineteenth-century competitive capitalism, nor any specific empirically existing capitalism. Rather,

35 A more detailed account of HMPA approach is developed below, in the section "*Dispositisf* and Politics". See also Alexander Gallas et al. (eds.), *Reading Poulantzas*, Merlin Press, Talgarth, 2011.

36 Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Marx and Engels, *MECW*, vol. 11, pp. 99–197.

37 Karl Marx, *The Class Struggles in France, 1848 to 1850*, Marx and Engels, *MECW*, vol. 10, pp. 45–145.

38 Bob Jessop, *State Power: A Strategic-Relational Approach*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2008, pp. 85–98.

39 Elbe, "Between Marx, Marxism, and Marxisms".

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Marx's object of study is, in his words, "the internal organization of the capitalist mode of production, its ideal average, as it were",[40] i.e. the fundamental categories and social forms that characterize capitalism, differentiating it from non-capitalist modes of production, so that we may speak of "capitalism" as such. At times, to be sure, Marx mistook certain contingent elements characteristic of the nineteenth-century capitalist configuration in which he lived for essential mechanisms of capitalist dynamics in their ideal average. One example of this is Marx's thesis on the necessary existence of a money-commodity, which the collapse of Bretton-Woods currency system has irrefutably proved wrong.[41]

And yet, some of the intrinsic features of capitalism first described by Marx have come to full fruition only in the twentieth century. Take, for example, the production of relative surplus value which is tightly connected to Fordism, which only after the Second World War was established across the board.[42] Heinrich goes so far as to claim that, "in some respects, one could say that *Capital* has more applicability to the 20th and 21st centuries than to the 19th".[43] This claim derives from the fact that describing capitalism in its "ideal average" requires an exceptionally high level of abstraction. Capitalism in its ideal average, however, does not manifest in real time or space. It exists only in specific, historical manifestations, embedded in concrete social and political processes, in which capitalist and non-capitalist elements coexist. Nonetheless, to analyze this coexistence – or to investigate a particular manifestation of capitalism or its history – an understanding of capitalist categories and social forms at such an abstract level is essential. And the method to grasp them is the "analysis of forms", the *social form-analysis*, or the form-genetic method, which is, according to the New Marx Reading, the crux of Marx's breakthrough.[44] The fundamental Marxist question concerns the logical process of *form-determination*, which he applied to the categories of political economy in order to bring to light the social relations concealed within in those forms. Marx writes,

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40 Karl Marx, *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy. Vol III*, trans. David Fernbach, Penguin Classics, London, 1991, p. 970.

41 Heinrich, *Karl Marx's Capital*, pp. 69–70, 161–162.

42 See Chapter 3.

43 Heinrich, "Invaders from Marx", p. 83, p. 5.

44 Marxist orthodoxy, beginning with Engels' commentary on Marx's *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859) or the supplement to Volume III of Capital (1894), followed by Karl Kautsky, Rudolf Hilferding and Lenin, gives a historicist interpretation of the form-genetic method. Marx's analysis is understood as empiricism and historicism, and *Capital* as a historiographical work. Thus, according to Engels, the first three chapters of *Capital* describe a historical economic epoch which he calls, "simple production of commodities" and dates from 6000 BC to the fifteenth century.

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> Political economy has indeed analysed value and its magnitude, however incompletely, and has uncovered the content concealed within these forms. But it has never once asked the question why this content has assumed that particular form, that is to say, why labour is expressed in value.[45]

The same question is raised by Pašukanis in relation to the state and the law:

> [Stuchka's] definition uncovers the class content concealed within legal forms, but does not explain why this content assumes that particular form. For bourgeois philosophy, which regards the legal relation as the eternal, natural form of every human relation, this question never even arises.[46]

Following these questions, then, the new reading reinterprets Marx's critique of political economy in terms of social form-analysis, i.e. as critical analysis of specific social forms within capitalism, considering not only economic forms like capital, value and money, but also legal-political forms, namely the law and the state.[47] From this perspective, the critique of political economy is indeed critical theory, concerned with complex social forms and dynamics under the conditions of capitalist commodity production. This means considering these forms as rising from, "the connection between the material process of production and reproduction of the life of socialized people and the relations between these people who constitute themselves in this process of material reproduction".[48]

In foregrounding this method of social form-analysis, the new reading focuses more upon qualitative and sociological aspects of political economy than would conventional Marxism, which sees it as an alternative economic doctrine or as a theory of the distribution and redistribution of social wealth. In this respect, the New Marx Reading reflects the Frankfurt School's critical theory of society. On the one hand, the New Marx Reading, starting with Backhaus and Reichelt, explicitly distances itself[49] from the culture-critical orientation of Frankfurt's reading, which leads to a

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45 Marx, *Capital I*, pp. 173–4. When Marx undertook his project to critique political economy at the end of the 1850s, he meant to write also a volume wholly dedicated to the state. In the preface to *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* of 1859, he writes, "I examine the system of bourgeois economy in the following order: capital, landed property, wage-labour; the State, foreign trade, world market" (p. 261). The book, however, was never written.

46 Pašukanis, *The General Theory of Law and Marxism*, p. 84.

47 On legal-political form see Aloe and Stefanoni, "Verso una logica dei complessi sociali capitalistici", pp. 39–43.

48 Bernhard Blanke et al., "On the Current Marxist Discussion on the Analysis of Form and Function of the Bourgeois State", Holloway et al. (eds.), *State and Capital*, p. 118.

49 "The fact that the concept of society and the concept of ideology of the Frankfurt School become comprehensible only adopting as a starting point the Marxian theory of value, and yet that this dimension of value theory has been completely obscured both in the German

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critique of instrumental reason as a philosophy of history, and to anthropological pessimism. New Marx Reading also rejects the Frankfurt scholars' vague attempts to critique political economy on the grounds that the latter assume from the very beginning the categories of political economy which instead have to be explained.[50] They assert, for example, that Adorno assumes the fetish character of commodities as a result of monetary exchange without considering processes of socialization, thus falling into a premonetary theory of value, which Marx irrefutably proved wrong. At the same time, however, some key reflections of Frankfurt scholars are central to the development of the New Marx Reading, beginning with the influence on Backhaus's critical reconstruction of Marx's theory and Reichelt's theory of validity.[51]

Adorno's focus on socialization [*Vergesellschaftung*] as the basis of society leads to the interpretation of Marx's critique of political economy as an analysis of the specific form of socialization in capitalist society,[52] or the program of an "anamnesis of the genesis"[53] of autonomized social forms, i.e., as we will explore, the task of understanding their *social* origin and taking back the social form to a specific practice.

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controversy on positivism and in the commented exposition of this controversy, shows how Adorno and Horkheimer themselves did not carry out sufficient methodological reflection on the foundation of critical theory in terms of value theory". Hans Georg Backhaus, *Ricerche sulla critica marxiana dell'economia: materiali per la ricostruzione della teoria del valore*, Riccardo Bellofiore and Tommaso Redolfi Riva, (eds.) Mimesis, Milano-Udine, 2016, p. 127 [my English translation].

50 "Critical political economy adopts the conceptual horizon of political economy; the critique of political economy opens onto a very different discursive horizon. Attention – or lack of attention – to specific social forms and purposes distinguishes the two." Patrick Murray, "Critical Theory and the Critique of Political Economy: From Critical Political Economy to the Critique of Political Economy", Beverley Best et al. (eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Frankfurt School Critical Theory*, Sage, London, 2018, p. 766. See the full article for an account of the relations between the Frankfurt School and the new reading of Marx.

51 Backhaus and Reichelt suggest an *a posteriori* reading of the genesis of the new reading of Marx with the School of Frankfurt as its only source. Backhaus, in the collection of his main works (*Dialektik der Wertform*), published in 1997, reconsiders his transcript of Adorno's seminar in the summer of 1962 on "Marx and the basic concepts of sociological theory", *Seminar Transcript in the Summer Semester of 1962*, trans. Verena Erlenbusch-Anderson and Chris O'Kane, *Historical Materialism*, vol. 26, no. 1 (2018), pp. 154–164. Reichelt identifies the germinal moment of the new reading of Marx in Backhaus' casual discovery of the first edition of *Capital* in a Frankfurt student center in 1963. Helmut Reichelt, *Neue Marx-Lektüre. Zur Kritik sozialwissenschaftlicher Logik*, VSA-Verlag, Hamburg, 2008, p. 11. See Elbe, *Marx im Westen* cit. for a critique of this position.

52 Riccardo Bellofiore and Tommaso Redolfi Riva, "Hans-Georg Backhaus: The Critique of Premonetary Theories of Value and the Perverted Forms of Economic Reality", Best et al. (eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Frankfurt School Critical Theory*, p. 386–388.

53 Quoted in *Ibid*., p. 388.

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Related to this, Adorno's critique of the fetish as "the theoretical tool to understanding the social nature of capitalist social relations",[54] together with the theory of real abstraction by Alfred Sohn-Rethel is reflected in the New Marx Reading.[55] Additionally, the critique of positivism, understood in a broad sense, as naïve epistemology which considers its categories immutable and trans-historical, generates reflection upon the social conditions of the genesis of thought forms (both at the level of science and the level of everyday consciousness of social actors) under capitalism. The question here is, "why can thought – in everyday life or philosophical thinking – not adequately grasp its own capitalistic social conditions?".[56] Ultimately, the New Marx Reading draws from these insights, while at the same time, moves past the Frankfurt school by centering the connections amongst the critique of political economy and a reconstructed understanding of Marx's analysis of capitalism.

2.2 The Method of Form-Analysis and Social Forms

Following Blanke, Jürgens and Kastendiek,[57] it is possible to distinguish two explanations for the determination of form: a historical-typologizing explanation, and a functional one. The first retraces form-determination in historical processes that can be typologically generalized (e.g. the state as the outcome of modern history). The second reconstructs one or more functions that a given "sphere" fulfills within social systems, explaining its existence through these functions, which are assumed to be valid across all types of human societies (e.g., the function of making binding decisions as the basis for the state's existence). Contrary to these approaches, a Marxian method avoids the error of taking "the standpoint of phenomena in their finished forms"[58] as its starting point. Rather, it searches for their conditions of existence in the specific requirements of capitalist social structures. Thus, social form-analysis aims at "theoretically reconstructing the entire historical-social formation".[59] The analysis must determine, firstly, *whether* a given social form is inherent to the "ideal average" of capitalist society. To answer this, the inquiry must decipher from structural constraints imposed by capital relations, such as impersonality, reification/naturalization and specific separations, "those conditions which

54 *Ibid.*

55 Alfred Sohn-Rethel, *Intellectual and Manual Labour: A Critique of Epistemology*, trans. Martin Sohn-Rethel, Humanities Press, Atlantic Highlands, 1978.

56 Frank Engster, "Critical Theory and Epistemological and Social-Economical Critique", Best et al. (eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Frankfurt School Critical Theory*, p. 751. On forms of thought see below.

57 Blanke et al., "Form and Function of the Bourgeois State", p. 113 ff.

58 Marx, *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy. Vol II*, p. 294.

59 Blanke et al., "Form and Function of the Bourgeois State", p. 118.

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make the genesis of a certain form necessary". Secondly, the form-analysis must establish how different forms relate to each other as necessary forms in the reproduction of the society itself. As written in "Form and Function of the Bourgeois State", "The aim of the analysis is not, however, to realize in retrospect the 'course of history' but to present the forms in the context in which they stand 'logically', that is, in which they reproduce themselves under the conditions of a particular historically concrete form of society".[60]

It is easy to see here that this method deals with the demarcation of and relations amongst "logical" analysis and "historical" analysis.[61] A significant objection, however, to the form-analysis approach is the charge of ahistoricity. As Holloway and Picciotto write, "If form analysis is to be understood as purely logical and historical analysis as empirical, this will not help us to develop a historical materialist theory of the development of the [social forms]".[62] To contest this objection, it is crucial to comprehend how "logical" and "historical" interrelate in the form-genetic method. According to Kittsteiner,[63] this method has four "historical implications":

1. its object is not a historical becoming, nevertheless is historical-social, non-natural and non-eternal;
2. inner historicity of capital, its "logical temporality": the immanent direction of development given by the system of forms (structural historical dynamics of "the development of productive forces, the rate of profit", etc.,);
3. external historicity of capital: the historically specific preconditions from which capitalist social complexes proceed which could not be originally produced by capital itself but only reproduced later by the complex (e.g. the separation of the immediate producers from their means of production);
4. historical as empirical-factual: the sphere of the historical contingency of singular events, for example, the "real movement of competition".

Kittsteiner's implications take into account that social forms are always the product of historical processes, struggles, and social actions. It is thus misleading to consider their genesis in terms of intrinsic logic, or seeing the social actors in these processes as inherently capitalistic. Along these lines, "form analysis is the analysis

60 *Ibid.*, 118–9.

61 This issue brings into question the very possibility of drawing such demarcation. See the introduction of Holloway and Picciotto, *State and Capital*.

62 *Ibid.*, 22.

63 See Heinz-Dieter Kittsteiner, "'Logisch" und "Historisch": Über Differenzen des Marxschen und Engelsschen Systems der Wissenschaft. (Engels' Rezension "Zur Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie" von 1859), *Internationale Wissenschaftliche Korrespondenz zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung*, vol. 13 (1977), pp. 1–47.

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of an historically determined and historically developing form of social relations".[64] For example, the political form of the bourgeois state is related to the crises of the *Ancien Régime* society. In this sense, the bourgeois state was the result of historical processes, struggles and actions of a particular society.[65]

Therefore, form-analysis *per se* does not have pretensions of explaining institutions, concrete political processes and different class compositions and their organization, etc., of capitalist societies – neither how and why the historical constitution of money, state, etc., occurred, nor their functions. Nevertheless, it frames the overall structural conditions that orient institutional configurations, functions, power relations, rationalization models, and individual actions. Thus, this approach is not a ready-made "theory of society", but rather its categorial basis. In other words, on the level of form-analysis, it is possible to derive the "system-limit" (of the economical or the political, for example, and of capitalist society as a whole) because it is fixed "by the form determinations developing out of the relation of capitalist production".[66] Again, from "Form and Function of the Bourgeois State",

> On this level of abstraction, however, we can give only the *general points of departure* […]. The question of how this formation takes place in detail, how it is transposed into structure, institution and process […], can no longer be answered by form analysis. It would have to be made the subject of historical analysis.[67]

The task of the remainder of this chapter is to enlighten the relations between form-analysis and historical analysis, enriching the materialist logic of capitalist social complexes in order to clarify how it relates to concrete and historical institutional constellations, processes, social actions. This enrichment is necessary to operationalize this logical, theoretical view of the social complexity and translate it into empirical research, answering the methodological problem of "how the 'logic' of capitalist society theoretically reconstructed […] is to be 'applied' to the analysis of historical and concrete forms of appearance".[68] Until this point, this chapter has aimed to describe the form-genetic method and its aims. Now, questions of *why* will be illuminated. Why is it necessary to reconstruct theoretically, to make a logical "anamnesis of the genesis" of value, money, the state, etc.? Why has introducing the question of the form, as Marx did, been revolutionary not only for the science of political economy, but also for the critique of capitalist society?

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64 Holloway and Picciotto, *State and Capital*, p. 27.

65 Heide Gerstenberger, "The Historical Constitution of the Political Forms of Capitalism", *Antipode*, vol. 43, no. 1 (2011), pp. 60–86.

66 Holloway and Picciotto, *State and Capital*, p. 139.

67 Blanke et al., "Form and Function of the Bourgeois State", p. 119.

68 *Ibid.*, 114.

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The answers lie, in part, in the phenomenon of fetishism characterizing capitalist societies. Simply put, in capitalist societies, social forms such as commodity, money, capital, etc., manifest as mere things, objects which have always existed (e.g. commodity as the product of labor, money as mean of payment, capital as an amount of money), while they are actually "social hieroglyphics"[69] that need to be deciphered. Thus, form-analysis can be seen "as a critique of fetishism"[70] capable of undermining the fetishized objectivity of social forms.[71] But, what are social forms, and how are they related to fetishism?

The notion of social form as it is conceptualized within the framework of the New Marx Reading contends that value, money, capital, the state and all other capitalistic social forms are "congealed",[72] condensed,[73] or objectified[74] social relations between individuals which vanish in their appearance. The uniqueness of the Marxian conception expressed in *Capital*, which all these elements capture, is in its affirmation not only that social forms are relations between individuals, but also that they are "concealed beneath a material [*dinglicher*] shell",[75] i.e. mediated by things. As Heinrich underlines,[76] Marx's and Engels' points of departure in the *Communist Manifesto* are classes and class struggle, which they assume can explain all the rest. On the contrary, however, Marx has reached the conclusion in *Capital* that, since relations between individuals are "concealed beneath a material [*dinglicher*[77]] shell", they cannot constitute the starting point, but rather are a result which has to be developed. For this reason, in *Capital* the chapter titled "Classes" is the last, incomplete, of the third book. In *Capital*, Marx's analysis abandons the misconception expressed in the *Manifesto* that, in capitalism, social relations are readily transparent and that only manipulation by the ruling classes disguises them. Again, the conditions of social relations specific to capitalism, according to *Capital*, are their concealment "beneath

69 Marx, *Capital I*, p. 167.

70 Alexander Neupert-Doppler, "Society and Political Form", Best et al. (eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Frankfurt School Critical Theory*, p. 819.

71 As will become clear, form-analysis works on the epistemic side of fetishism, i.e. on naturalization only. In order to dissolve the concrete reification a change in daily practices of (re)production of life is needed.

72 Sonja Buckel, *Subjectivation and Cohesion: Towards the Reconstruction of a Materialist Theory of Law*, trans. Monika Vykoukal, Brill, Leiden, 2020, p. 236.

73 Sonja Buckel, "The Juridical Condensation of Relations of Forces: Nicos Poulantzas and Law", Gallas et al. (eds.), *Reading Poulantzas*, pp. 154–69.

74 Hirsch and Kannankulam, "The Spaces of Capital".

75 Marx, *Capital I*, p. 167.

76 Michael Heinrich, *¿Cómo leer "El Capital" de Marx?: indicaciones de lectura y comentario del comienzo de "El Capital"*, trans. César Ruiz Sanjùan, Escolar y Mayo, Madrid, 2011, pp. 185–6.

77 This is the adjectival form of the German word "Ding" which means "thing". Sometimes Marx uses also the synonym adjectival form "sachlich/e" derived from "Sache".

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a material [*dinglicher*] shell" and reification. They are not regarded as transparent at all.

Social forms are fundamentally historically specific modes of organizing social relations (i.e. modes of socialization [*Vergesellschaftung*], in which social cohesion is expressed) that constitute themselves in daily practices. The processes of material production and reproduction of life are the key practices through which reification and naturalization occur in capitalist societies. They solidify and fix this particular layout of relations, with its burden of domination, and perpetuate it. This working definition of social forms, derived from Buckel, Hirsch, Heinrich, and others, illuminates the concepts of objectification and "thingification" along Marxist lines.

Social forms emerge from determined daily practices, which are the historically specified processes of material reproduction of goods and services as well as individuals. Focusing here only on the material reproduction of goods and services, in capitalist societies this function is assigned to capitalist commodities production which is based on two specific practices: individual labor spent privately and on trade, and the exploitation of surplus labor. The functioning of production and circulation in capitalism is, actually, anarchic because it is based upon private and isolated labor. There is no coordination in advance based upon need. There are, instead, private independent producers who expend their labor as private labor, treating the product of this labor as private property that holds not only use-value but also value, expressed in money, and which they exchange on the market. Independent producers make individual decisions without consulting each other. Each guesses as precisely as possible what and how much they need to produce, what and how much other producers produce and how much demand there is on the market. Then, they bring their products to the market and exchange them, because, due to the social division of labor, they are dependent on one another; everyone needs everyone else's products. It is only in the market, only *ex post*, if their products are exchanged as commodities, they find out if their individual labor is part of the total labor of society, that is, if it is recognized as socially useful.

With regard to the practices related to labor activity, we must note three essential elements: workers operate under the control of the capitalist, who has purchased their labor-power; the products of their labor – the goods and services created – are the property of the capitalist, not the workers, who are the immediate producers; these goods and services are produced only in view of surplus value and workers work longer than is necessary for their own reproduction.[78]

The social agents involved in these practices may be completely unaware of their role in this structure. Moreover, regardless of what people think and want, they act *de facto* as commodity owners. For example, Marx writes of value form,

78 For a full account of capitalist processes of production, see Heinrich, Karl Marx's *Capital*, pp. 81–131; and Chapter 3 below.

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> People do not therefore bring the products of their labour into relation with each other as values because they see these objects merely as the material [*sachliche*] integuments of homogeneous human labour. The reverse is true: by equating their different products to each other in exchange as values, they equate their different kinds of labour as human labour. *They do this without being aware of it*.[79]

Reification and naturalization are both essential concepts to analyze the ideas of objectification, or "thingification", of social relations and fetishism.[80] Reification occurs because of the general organization of material reproduction and distribution in capitalist societies, that is, private labor based on the social division of labor and trade. It is the process of objectification of social relations in things and institutions, and hence the vanishing of the same relations in the process. As Marx says about the money form,

> It is […] precisely this finished form of the world of commodities – the money form – which conceals the social character of private labour and the social relations between the individual workers, by making those relations appear as relations between material [*sachlich*] objects, instead of revealing them plainly.[81]

This process means, at the same time, a "subjectification of the things in which these social determinations are represented and concealed",[82] or, "the acquisition by the thing of the function of motor of the process".[83]

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79 Marx, *Capital I*, pp. 166–7. [emphasis added, translation amended]

80 Marx, and interpreters such as Heinrich, Fischer, and Lindner, collapse the two distinct phenomena of reification and naturalization into the notion of fetishism. This entails a confusion about the reception of the Marxist concept, especially in light of Marx's alleged irrational social ontology. See Marco Iorio, "Fetisch und Geheimnis. Zur Kritik der Kapitalismuskritik von Karl Marx", *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie Zweimonatsschrift der internationalen philosophischen Forschung*, vol. 58, no. 2 (2010), pp. 241–56; Stephan Grigat, *Fetisch und Freiheit*, Ça ira, Freiburg, 2007; and Ingo Elbe, "Il concetto di reificazione nella critica dell'economia politica di Marx", *Lo spettro è tornato. Attualità della filosofia di Marx*, trans. Pietro Garofalo, Mimesis, Milano–Udine, 2017, pp. 95–109. Marx does not use the word "naturalization", while the term "reification" first appears in *Capital*'s third chapter.

81 Marx, *Capital I*, pp. 168–9.

82 Jacques Rancière, "The Concept of 'Critique' and the 'Critique of Political Economy' (from the 1844 Manuscript to Capital)", trans. Ben Brewster, *Economy and Society*, vol. 5, no. 3 (1976), p. 360.

83 *Ibid*., 362. "The circuit of money-capital is the one which best expresses the capitalist process. In fact it is a peculiarity of this process that it has as its principle the self-expansion of value, as the circuit from M to M' clearly expresses. But this determinate form of the process of reproduction of capital, the process of self expansion of value made possible by the relations of production of capital and wage-labour, tends to disappear in its result" *Ibid*., 356. [emphasis added]

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Naturalization is the epistemic repercussion in which reified forms appear as natural and trans-historical. On the level of epistemic functions, social forms are no longer congealed social relations *per se*, but rather "categories". In this sense, value, money, capital, credit, etc., are "the categories of bourgeois economics"[84] and the state is the category of political science. Since, however, "reflection on the forms of human life [and] scientific analysis of those forms [...] [begin] *post festum*, and therefore with the results of the process of development ready to hand", these categories embed those reified forms into the "natural forms of social life [...] immutable [in] content and meaning".[85] Scientific analysis perceives them as the obvious objects of a particular field of knowledge, only focusing on their concrete content and never discussing the form-determinations of their subject matter. Of course, these categories are also the categories of everyday life of social agents. Everyone talks about money, credit, law, state, prices, etc., and acts on the basis of these things. From the purview of science, however, the common sense is not concerned with the meaning or the content of these expressions. Both knowledges and common sense are correct in this way, because social forms as categories are "forms of thought which are socially valid, and therefore *objective*".[86]

In sum, social forms orient social agents' rationalization models (thoughts and representations) and individual actions. The conditions of their genesis vanish with the appearance of the forms and naturalize within social practice, losing any representational ambiguity or valence. Thus, the forms themselves have social validity, but only "for the relations of production belonging to this historically determined mode of production, i.e. commodity production",[87] even if, as an effect of the capitalist organization of the production process, they appear to be valid in every society.

Sic stantibus rebus, fetishism, understood conceptually as the combination of reification and naturalization, is real for Marx. He states, "To the producers, therefore, the social relations between their private labours *appear as what they are*, i.e. they do not appear as direct social relations between persons in their work, but rather as material [*dinglich*] relations between persons and social relations between things".[88] It is not a state of false consciousness, understood as a curtain or a bundle of illusions which simply reflect an *a posteriori*, inverted and mystified version of the process of the reproduction of society.[89] Fetishized forms, constituted through the daily practices and behaviors of unwitting individuals, are the *necessary* forms

84 Marx, *Capital I*, p. 169. In Marx's definition an economic theory is "bourgeois" "in so far as it views the capitalist order as the absolute and ultimate form of social production". *Ibid.*, p. 96.

85 *Ibid*, 168.

86 *Ibid.*, 169.

87 *Ibid.*

88 *Ibid.*, 165–6. [emphasis added]

89 Jan Rehmann, *Theories of Ideology: The Powers of Alienation and Subjection*, Brill, Leiden, 2013.

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in which capitalistic social relations manifest under capitalist conditions. This is because fetishized social forms specify practical and rational conditions of possibility for individuals, orienting their behavioral and leading to basic subjectivation.[90] In other words, these forms turn individuals into subjects, or intentional beings equipped for this or that type of behavior and reasoning. For example, economic forms constitute individuals as commodity owners, or wage-laborers and capitalists who think and act in terms of price, wage, profit and so on. Legal-political forms constitute individuals as free citizens and owners of their person and their rights.[91] The social form analysis is thus also a theory of the constitution of subjectivity in the capitalist process of social production. It is a "theory of capitalist subjectivity",[92] though extremely abstract. Bearing in mind that Marx does not discuss subjects in *Capital* – he speaks of individuals in terms of "personification", "character mask", "*dramatis personae*", "bearer" [*Träger*] of social relations[93] – it is clear that there is a "system-limit" that restrains the concept of capitalist subjectivity within this context. These constrains derive from Marx's analysis of the specific mode of socialization in capitalist societies. He opposes anthropologism and individualism in classic political economy, developing form-determinations conceptually, without recourse to the behavior and goals of the individuals involved. The question is whether the social forms are produced because the actors have set themselves the goal, so that the form-determinations may be explained via these goals exclusively, or whether these forms reproduce in the actions of actors without their complete awareness of what they are doing.

This conception implies what could be called a minimal psychological theory, suitable for the conditions of capitalist social complexes. In *Capital*, subjects enter

90 Subjectivity is more conventionally associated with self-knowledge, personal experience, interiority, or, in philosophy, the epistemic condition of certain objects appearing to an individual, for example in the terrain of phenomenology. For this reason, it is important to underline that the problem of subjectivity is approached here from a Marxist lineage. See William Callison, "Subjectivity and Power: Marxist Lineages", *A Companion to Critical and Cultural Theory*, Imre Szemann et al. (eds.), John Wiley and Sons, Hoboken, 2017, pp. 173–89.

91 This double constitution of the subject in capitalist societies is not by chance. Rather, the economic constitution of the individual as commodity owners (both in the sphere of circulation and in the sphere of production) and the legal one as rights' owners are necessary. This is guaranteed by the state which stands above society as an extra-economic force. See Pašukanis, *The General Theory of Law and Marxism*.

92 Rancière, "The Concept of 'Critique' and the 'Critique of Political Economy'", p. 32.

93 Marx's identification between person and mask derived from the Latin word *persona* and the Greek one *prosopon* is largely drawn on Hobbes' account. See Luca Basso, *Marx and the Common: From Capital to the Late Writings*, trans. David Broder, Brill, Leiden, 2015, pp. 40–9; and Mark Neocleous, "Staging Power: Marx, Hobbes and the Personification of Capital", *Law and Critique*, vol. 14, no. 2 (2003), pp. 147–65.

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the discussion only in the second chapter, which is devoted to the process of exchange and the introduction of commodities on the market. "Our commodity-owners think like Faust: 'In the beginning was the deed'. They have therefore already acted before thinking".[94] As Basso notes, "the irruption of subjects is thus devoid of any 'humanist' emphasis, since they are examined on the basis of the immanence of the deed".[95] The basic element of this theory is the *action* performed by the subject, not their consciousness or mental state. Through the immanence of inter-actions between subjects – historically determined practices activated by individuals – the process of fetishization (reification + naturalization) of social relations occurs. Basic social objects and the categories and knowledge and everyday life emerge and are structured, thus bearing cognitive effects, shaping representations and consciousness and ensuring the functioning and reproduction of the social complex.[96] Basso writes,

> The fetish character [of social forms] is not an effect of the alienation of consciousness, but rather an effect in and on consciousness produced by the dissimulation of social relations within and through the way in which they appear. The basis of fetishism is found outside the sphere of consciousness, in the objective reality of historically determinate social relations.[97]

If we isolate this frame of emergence, we see a movement from the outside to the inside. Subjectivity is constituted by the social process, and not the other way around. The deeds from which Marx starts already conform to the rationalization and behavioral orientations set by the forms themselves. Form-determination must therefore be analyzed before the conscious behaviors and motivations of subjects are addressed. To quote Balibar:

> If the constitution of objectivity in fetishism does not depend on the prior givenness of a subject, a consciousness or a reason, it does, by contrast, constitute subjects which are a part of objectivity itself or which are, in other words, given in experience *alongside 'things'*, alongside commodities, and *in a relation to them*. These

94 Marx, *Capital I*, p. 181.

95 Basso, *Marx and the Common*, pp. 23–4.

96 Marx's psychological perspective has been described as objective, social, externalist, practical and materialist. It is mostly played outside the consciousnesses and the mind, negating, in a sense, its own subject matter. It is a theory of the genesis of subjectivity where the subject is practical, anonymous and not conscious of itself, a non-subject. See David Rubinstein, *Marx and Wittgenstein: Social Praxis and Social Explanation*, Routledge, London, 2013; and Étienne Balibar, *The Philosophy of Marx*, trans. Chris Turner, Verso, London-New York, 2007, pp. 66–7.

97 Basso, *Marx and the Common*, pp. 17–8.

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> subjects are not constituent, but constituted; they are quite simply 'economic subjects' or, more exactly, they are all individuals who, in bourgeois society, are first of all economic subjects (sellers and buyers and therefore owners, […]). The reversal effected by Marx is, then, complete: the constitution of the world is not, for him, the work of a subject, but a genesis of subjectivity (a form of determinate historical subjectivity) as part (and counterpart) of the social world of objectivity.[98]

It is important to make explicit the object and range of application of this conception to avoid accusations of reductionism and economic determinism.[99] The conception deals exclusively with the constitution of subjectivity and its rationalization models relative to the field of action of the social and does not include the totality of the sphere of the "mind". There is an "incompressible minimum of individuality".[100]

Fetishism is only real under the conditions of the capitalist social process. Since fetishized social forms emerge from capitalist daily practices that are the consequence of determined social practices,[101] if these practices fade away, that is to say, if capitalism comes to an end, fetishism will also end. At the same time, as we have said, fetishism, in terms of naturalization, is not, in principle, impenetrable. Here, we find the work of form-analysis.

> Fetishism is also not a completely closed universal context of deception from which there is no escape. Rather, it constitutes a structural background that is always present, but affects different individuals with varying strength and can be penetrated on the basis of experience and reflection.[102]

Intersubjective actions also possess independent dynamics that "lead to processes of learning and radicalization in which the capitalist system as a whole is called into question".[103]

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98 Balibar, *The Philosophy of Marx*, p. 67.

99 See Chapter 3 below, which enriches this discussion by introducing the concept of forms of production of individuals, thereby avoiding any possible accusations of economic reductionism.

100 *Ibid*., 122.

101 "I call this the fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labour as soon as they are produced as commodities, and is therefore *inseparable from the production of commodities*." Marx, *Capital I*, p. 165. [emphasis added] Marx's analysis of fetishism is not reduced to commodities, i.e. the sphere of circulation, but it is extended to money (in the second chapter) and to capital (in chapter 48 of the third volume, entitled "The Trinity Formula"). Value is the simplest abstraction, which, "contains in an embryonic way all the inner qualities and contradictions" of those other categories. *Ibid*., 16.

102 Heinrich, *Karl Marx's Capital*, p. 185.

103 *Ibid*., 195.

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As capitalist commodity production establishes itself, the social context that results from relations between individuals that comprise society through reified and naturalized social forms undergoes a process of objectified autonomization independent of the individuals. It is not under their control, rather it controls people. As written in *Capital*,

> Their [the exchangers] own social movement has for them the form of a movement made by things, and these things, far from being under their control, in fact control them […] Their own relations of production […] assume a material shape [*sachliche Gestalt*] which is independent of their control and their conscious individual action.[104]

As said, social forms are rooted in daily practices that express certain relations between individuals. At a first glance, these practices are plain, neutral and fair.[105] An individual goes to the market to buy commodities someone else is selling. In this transaction, members appear equal and free. On the market, one can choose from a vast amount of commodities, produced by different companies in competition with each other. Money earned as wage for freely contracted labor is used for these transactions. The broader contract is the common legal expression of this equal exchange of one property for another.[106]

Individuals living in capitalist societies are free. They are subjects with rights. There is no personal domination or relationship of force. We are not obliged to provide services or payments to another person due to birth or some other fixed status. Service obligations or payments only arise through voluntarily signed contracts

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104 Marx, *Capital I*, pp. 167–168, 187. [translation amended]

105 The fact that the whole economy seems to consist only of acts of buying and selling, i.e. the sphere of circulation, disregarding the spheres of production and consumption, is a specific result of capitalist production. The sphere of circulation, only concerned with transactions, appears "as that which is immediately present on the surface of bourgeois society" Karl Marx, *Outlines of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft of 1857–58)*, Marx and Engels, *MECW*, vol. 29, p. 186.

106 "The sphere of circulation or commodity exchange, within whose boundaries the sale and purchase of labour-power goes on, is in fact a very Eden of the innate rights of man. It is the exclusive realm of Freedom, Equality, Property and Bentham. Freedom, because both buyer and seller of a commodity, let us say of labour-power, are determined only by their own free will. They contract as free persons, who are equal before the law. Their contract is the final result in which their joint will finds a common legal expression. Equality, because each enters into relation with the other, as with a simple owner of commodities, and they exchange equivalent for equivalent. Property, because each disposes only of what is his own. And Bentham, because each looks only to his own advantage. The only force bringing them together, and putting them into relation with each other, is the selfishness, the gain and the private interest of each". Marx, *Capital I*, p. 280.

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which can be dissolved at any time. The singular wage-laborer enters into contact with a capitalist in a free and equal way, without any relation of personal dependency with that specific capitalist.

Following Marx and over-simplying to highlight the qualitative difference and peculiarity of the relation of domination in capitalist societies, it is possible to make a comparison with the pre-capitalist societies where domination was direct, personal and unmediated. For example, in a slave-owning society, the slave is personally non-free, they are property of another person, and the slave owner has an absolute personal rule over the slave. The situation is similar in feudalistic contexts. There is a direct, personal dependency between landlord and servant. Thanks to a military, an administrative or a juridical office, the landlord has direct authority, obliging servants to serve and pay their landlord, or they are not allowed to leave their plots. They need permission to marry and their children are born into the same relation of dependency. In both cases, there is no sphere of rule independent of concrete personal relationships, nor is there a separation between "politics" and "economy". Political domination merges with economic exploitation.

In capitalist societies, the majority of people are not only legally free but also materially free, meaning they lack any substantive properties necessary for survival. They do not have vast amounts of money nor ownership of the means of production, whether for sale, or subsistence. Marx uses the expression "worker free in a double sense"[107] to describe this situation. It is for this reason subjects voluntarily stipulate contracts to receive wages to buy the necessities to live. We are driven to sell our only property, i.e. labor-power, *the ability to labor*, treating it as a commodity. The capitalist, on the other hand, the owner of substantive property (the means of production and money) can extract surplus value and realize the "unceasing movement of the profitmaking",[108] that is the movement of the capital. This specific social relation between classes (a class of property owners and a class of propertyless, but legally free individuals) is what Marx refers to as *capital relation*.[109] Even when one feels a personal dependency on a particular capitalist, due to particularly unfavorable working circumstances, this situation should not be confused with pre-capitalist personal dependency. Here, the power of the money owner over the laborer is given by dependency on the supply of money, it is not a direct and personal constraint. As Marx puts it in the *Grundrisse*, "The power which each individual exercises over the activity of others or over social wealth exists in him as the owner of exchange values, of

107 *Ibid.*, 272.

108 *Ibid.*, 254.

109 In *Capital*, Marx's use of the term "class" is structural. It refers to positions within social processes of production based upon ownership or non-ownership of substantive property. In its "ideal average" at the form level, capitalism does not allow for a fully developed "class-theory". See Heinrich, *Karl Marx's Capital*, pp. 191–8.

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money. The individual carries his social power, as well as his bond with society, in his pocket".[110]

Thus, if the money owner loses his money, they no longer have any power over the seller of labor-power. Moreover, if the capitalist themselves want to survive, they too are forced into restless movement and profiteering.[111] This way, the decisive relations of domination and exploitation are not personal, but mediated by things. People submit to "inherent necessities", to the "silent compulsion"[112] of personified things and institutions, which, at the same time, embody social connection and social wealth. Again, "the individual carries […] his bond with society in his pocket", but can equally lose it.

The conditions that have made this "silent compulsion" historically possible are comprised by social relations of direct antagonism, violence, coercion, dispossession, and domination. "If money […] 'comes into the world with a congenital blood-stain on one cheek', capital comes dripping from head to toe, from every pore, with blood and dirt".[113] Here, Marx describes the historical formation of capitalist conditions in England. This violent process, which Marx sketches at the end of the first volume of *Capital* under the title "The So-Called Primitive Accumulation", was not a peaceful result of the market, but was actively constructed by the state. The English case involved the expropriation of small producers (peasants and artisans) from their plots; enclosure, monopolization and concentration of vast amounts of land; appropriation of common land and the transformation of the field into the pasture; expropriation of the Church as feudal property owner an consequent pauperization of its clientele; transformation of feudal clan property into capitalist private property; and imprisonment and imposition of forced labor on the poor.[114] From this process – and from similar accumulation processes that occurred during the global spread of capitalism[115] – the capital relation is formed. This relationship between social classes underlies capitalist production process and capitalist societies as

110 Marx, *Grundrisse*, p. 157.

111 Heinrich, *Karl Marx's Capital*, p. 104, ff.

112 "The silent compulsion of economic relations sets the seal on the domination of the capitalist over the worker. Direct extra-economic force is still of course used, but only in exceptional cases. In the ordinary run of things, the worker can be left to the 'natural laws of production', i.e. it is possible to rely on his dependence on capital, which springs from the conditions of production themselves, and is guaranteed in perpetuity by them". Marx, *Capital I*, p. 899. See also Søren Mau, *Mute Compulsion: A Marxist Theory of the Economic Power of Capital*, Verso, London-New York, 2023.

113 *Ibid.*, 925–6.

114 Valeria Bruschi et al., *PolyluxMarx. A Capital Workbook in Slides. Volume One*, trans. Alexander Locascio, Karl Dietz Verlag, Berlin, 2013, p. 134.

115 "'Primitive accumulation' is not a historically singular process". Heinrich, *Karl Marx's Capital*, p. 93.

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a whole, and is constantly reproduced by it by means of reified and naturalized social forms. As Marx asserts, "These presuppositions which originally appeared as prerequisites of [capitalist production process'] becoming […] now appear as results of its own realisation, reality, as posited by it".[116] To the extent that fetishized social forms orient the action and rationalization of individuals and classes in a non-transparent way, they make basic social antagonisms amenable to prosecution. That is, they ensure that society, despite and because of its contradictions, reproduces these social forms without overcoming them.

Returning to the first part of the definition, *modes of organizing fundamental social relations*, the term concerns the *constitution* of social complexity in the proper conditions of capitalist production, or the specific type of social cohesion and socialization in capitalist social complexes. It follows that this socialization is mediated by and expressed in the social forms themselves. Individuals cannot choose freely and consciously their mutual relationships, nor they can control their social existence through immediate actions. Social cohesion is instead expressed predominantly through intertwined, fetishized social forms. In other words, socialization is certainly realized through conscious actions of individuals (such as bringing their products on the market to exchange them), yet nevertheless, they are not aware of the structures and forms of development of socialization itself. Therefore, in the end, socialization is not produced consciously and directly by individuals, but it is obtained "behind their backs", in a mediated-impersonal way, through the fetishized forms of value, money, capital, state, law, and, it will be argued, others.

2.3 *Dispositifs* and Politics

As we have seen, conceptual form-analysis and the discourse on social forms reveal the "system-limit" of capitalist societies and its fixed, structural conditions and objectifying domination. The social forms express, and account for, the stability and regularity of capitalist society. This is not, however, a sufficient "(critical) theory of society". No statements about concrete historical formations, institutions, processes, or struggles can be made at this level of abstraction, but rather, it is its categorial basis.

116 Marx, *Outlines of the Critique of Political Economy*, p. 388. Also, "Capitalist production therefore reproduces in the course of its own process the separation between labour-power and the conditions of labour […] As soon as capitalist production stands on its own feet, it not only maintains this separation, but reproduces it on a constantly extending scale". Marx, *Capital I*, pp. 723, 874. For an analysis of the relation between primitive accumulation and capitalist accumulation, see Werner Bonefeld, "Primitive Accumulation and Capitalist Accumulation: Economic Categories and Social Constitution", *Science & Society*, vol. 75, no. 3 (2011), pp. 379–99.

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Thus, the logic of capitalist societies needs to be enriched and diversified, adding another dimension of analysis to clarify how social forms relate to institutional constellations, and how reification, naturalization and social agency occur in capitalist complexes. What are the conditions of reproduction in capitalist societies? How are these conditions historically met? Why does reproduction work, if capitalist relations are inherently antagonistic? How is it possible to break the cycle of reproduction of social forms within capitalist societies? All these questions deal with the so-called "structure and agency" problem,[117] a central topic of Marxist social theory[118] and of mainstream sociology. What is the relation between the "structure" and the "agency"? "Agency" may be defined as, "the capacity of individual or group actors to actively contribute to the shaping of the social,"[119] and "structure," as,

> the repetition over time of the related actions of many agents [which provides] the framework, within which the action of a single agent at a particular spatio-temporal point is performed. Structure qua *framework* constrains any given agent's action at a particular spatio-temporal point. (In addition, structure qua framework *enables* various actions not otherwise possible).[120]

With these definition in mind, the New Marx Reading draws upon Poulantzas – and Gramsci, via Poulantzas – to address the problem of structure and agency. These attempts, such as Hirsch's, which are based upon the West German State-Derivation debate turn to Poulantzas and to the concept of *institutionalization*. For example, the state is regarded as "a spatio-temporal institutionalisation of the political form",[121] or the "concrete [...] structure of the state and its apparatuses" is considered to be the result of a "process of institutionalization" of the political form.[122]

Additionally, the Foucauldian concept of *dispositif*,[123] is useful for defining this level of the logic of capitalist societies because it brings together three fundamental

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117 Nicholas Abercrombie *et al.*, "'Agency and Structure'", *The Penguin Dictionary of Sociology*, Penguin, London, 1984.

118 For an account of the different conceptualizations of the structure-agency relation within Marxist social theory, see Alexander Gallas, *Dichotomy, Dualism, Duality: An Investigation into Marxist Conceptualisations of Structure and Agency*, VDM Verlag Dr. Müller, Riga, 2010.

119 *Ibid.*, 9.

120 Seumas Miller, "Social Institutions", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. by Edward N. Zalta, Summer 2019, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2019/entries/social-institutions/ accessed on 9th June 2025.

121 Sonja Buckel et al., *The European Border Regime in Crisis: Theory, Methods and Analyses in Critical European Studies*, vol. 8, Studien, Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung, Berlin, 2017, p. 10.

122 See Hirsch and Kannankulam, "The Spaces of Capital", p. 13.

123 I keep the French word and not the common English translation "apparatus" because of its crucial conceptual and etymological ties, which, instead, are occluded by "apparatus". A preferable English translation is "dispositive". For a detailed analysis of the conceptual dif-

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aspects of a "(critical) theory of society" – knowledges, powers and subjects/subjectivations – which are the same dimensions involved in social forms, only on another stage in the analysis. This integration and the transition to the concept of the *dispositif*, which encompasses more than just the condensation of social forms within institutions, builds upon both Sonja Buckel's interpretation of Hirsch's Poulantzasian perspective, which is clearly influenced by Foucauldian tools,[124] and on the historical and textual engagement between Poulantzas and Foucault. Although Poulantzas rejects Foucault's general epistemological and theoretical project, in his 1978 masterpiece *State, Power, Socialism*[125], he explicitly engages, both positively and negatively, with Foucault's works on discipline and power-knowledge, particularly with *Discipline and Punish*[126] and *The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge*.[127] The reverse is not the case: Foucault never refers to Poulantzas' work, even if he does refer to some other contemporary Marxists.[128] It has also been pointed out[129] that in the posthumously published seminars *Security, Territory, Population*[130] of 1978 and *The Birth of Biopolitics*[131] of 1979, Foucault implicitly, perhaps covertly, answers some criticisms put forward by Poulantzas. In any case, during Poulantzas' life-time (Poulantzas died in 1979), there was a unilateral dialogue of borrowing and adapting Foucauldian concepts, as well as harsh criticisms directed against Foucault's underestimation of capitalist relations of production and class struggle and his reductive view of the law as merely repressive.[132] It is furthermore necessary to

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ferences between *appareil/apparato*/apparatus and *dispositif/dispositivo*/dispositive see Jeffrey Bussolini, "What is a Dispositive?", *Foucault Studies*, no. 10 (2010), pp. 85–107.

124 See Buckel, *Subjectivation and Cohesion*, 2020.

125 Nicos Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*, trans. Patrick Camiller, Verso, London-New York, 2000.

126 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan, Vintage Books, New York, 2012.

127 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction. Vol.* 1, trans. Robert Hurley, Pantheon Books, New York, 1978.

128 Balibar mentions Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, the Frankfurt School and Althusser. Étienne Balibar, "Foucault and Marx: The Question of Nominalism", Timothy J. Armstrong (ed. and trans.), *Michel Foucault, Philosopher*, Harvester Wheatsheaf, Hemel Hempstead, 1992, p. 39.

129 "In his lectures on governmentality, held shortly after the publication of SPS [*State, Power, Socialism*], Foucault used a particular phrase to characterize the state that was reminiscent of Poulantzas: 'The state is nothing else but the mobile effect of a regime of multiple governmentalities'". Urs L. Lindner, "State, Domination and Politics: On the Relationship between Poulantzas and Foucault", Gallas et al. (eds.), *Reading Poulantzas*, p. 149.

130 Michel Foucault, "Security, Territory, Population", Michel Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth: Essential Works of Michel Foucault 1954–1984. Vol* 1, trans. Robert Hurley et al., The New Press, New York, 1997, pp. 67–71.

131 Michel Foucault, "The Birth of Biopolitics", Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, pp. 73–9.

132 For a detailed account of the relation between Poulantzas and Foucault, see Chapter 8 of Bob Jessop, *State Theory: Putting the Capitalist State in its Place*, Penn State Press, University Park,

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consider Poulantzas' connection to Althusser[133] triangulated with Foucault, through his critical discussion with Marx and Marxism, a "genuine struggle" that "can be viewed as one of the driving forces of [Foucault's] productiveness".[134]

Poulantzas, Foucault and Althusser, despite their overt resistance to comparison with each other,[135] share the interest in the problematic of the reproduction of social complexes which is, at the same time, the problematic of subject(ion) under the conditions of modernity. Their respective thought has also been impacted by common life experiences, such as the failure of May of '68 and the consequent reorientation in their respective theoretical and political analyses.

Moreover, Foucault's work is, in various ways, directly integrated into the Historical Materialist Policy Analysis (HMPA) and its foundational strategic-relational approach framework.[136] In this light, Foucauldian arguments about power and knowledge, governmentality, statecraft, strategy and technology of power are fundamen-

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1990; Chapter 5 of Thomas Lemke, *Foucault's Analysis of Modern Governmentality*, trans. Erik Butler, Verso, London-New York, 2019; and Lindner, "State, Domination and Politics".

133 Alexander Gallas, "Revisiting Conjunctural Marxism: Althusser and Poulantzas on the State", *Rethinking Marxism*, vol. 29, no. 2 (2017), pp. 256–80.

134 Balibar, "Foucault and Marx", p. 39.

135 This is particularly true in the case of Althusser and Foucault. Foucault criticized Althusser's concept of ideology to an extent that would enable a theory of the epistemological break between knowledge and science and the pretense to make Marxism a political metadiscourse. See Michel Foucault, "Truth and Power", Michel Foucault, Colin Gordon (ed.), *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*, trans. Colin Gordon et al., Pantheon Books, New York, 1980, pp. 109–33. Moreover, Foucault rejected the comparison between the concept of material ideology and his notion of *dispositif*. There are, however, continuities between the two concepts. For a juxtaposition of ideology and *dispositif*, see Orazio Irrera, "L'idéologie et la préhistoire du dispositif", *La pensée politique de Foucault*, Orazio Irrera and Salvo Vaccaro, Kimé (eds.), Paris 2017, pp. 137–55; Orazio Irrera, "Foucault and the Refusal of Ideology", *Foucault and the Making of Subjects*, Laura Cremonesi et al.(eds.), Rowman and Littlefield, Lanham, 2016, pp. 111–28; Diego Melegari, "Due fratelli silenziosi. Althusser, Foucault al bivio dell'ideologia", *Scienza & Politica. Per una storia delle dottrine*, vol. 26, no. 50 (2014), pp. 137–159. The link between Althusser and Foucault has only recently been considered. See Jean-Baptiste Vuillerod, *La naissance de l'anti-hégélianisme. Louis Althusser et Michel Foucault, lecteurs de Hege*l, Lyon, 2022; Balibar, "Foucault and Marx"; Pierre Macherey, *Le sujet des normes*, Éditions Amsterdam, Paris, 2014; Warren Montag, "'The Soul is the Prison of the Body': Althusser and Foucault, 1970–1975", *Yale French Studies*, no. 88 (1995), pp. 53–77.

136 Jessop, *State Theory*; Jessop, *State Power: A Strategic-Relational Approach*; Ulrich Brand, "State, Context and Correspondence. Contours of a Historical Materialist Policy Analysis", *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft*, vol. 42, no. 4 (2013), pp. 425–42; Buckel, *Subjectivation and cohesion*; Buckel et al., *The European Border Regime in Crisis*; Alex Demirović, "Materialist State Theory and the Transnationalization of the Capitalist State", *Antipode*, vol. 43, no. 1 (2011), pp. 38–59; John Kannankulam and Fabian Georgi, "Varieties of Capitalism or Varieties of Relationships of Forces? Outlines of a Historical Materialist Policy Analysis", *Capital & Class*, vol. 38, no. 1 (2014), pp. 59–71; and Buckel, "The Juridical Condensation of Relations of Forces".

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tal for avoiding the class reductionism characterizing Poulantzas' reflections. Although in *State, Power, Socialism* Poulantzas, took notice of other relations of domination in capitalist societies (especially gender),[137] which were ignored in his previous work, he has never managed to shed a traditional Marxist emphasis on class domination. Consequently, he does not do justice to the multiplicity of relations of domination in capitalist contexts such as sexuality and ethnicity and their intersections.

The notion of *dispositif* was introduced into the philosophical lexicon by Foucault who, since the 1970s, foregrounds this concept in his analyses of disciplinary systems in *Discipline and Punish*, and of the genealogy of sexuality in *The History of Sexuality*. It is not until an interview in 1977, however, that Foucault explicitly defines the term. He develops it more systematically in his lectures at the Collège de France in 1978 and 1979.[138] Although the concept of *dispositif* is acknowledged by Paul Rabinow in the introduction to *The Essential Foucault* as "one of the most powerful conceptual tools introduced by Foucualt",[139] Rabinow also wrote, with Hubert Dreyfus in 1982, that *dispositif* was an extremely vague concept in terms of methodological rigor.[140] Deleuze's interpretation, mitigating the vagueness and exposing the basic features of the *dispositif* and its central status in Foucault's thinking, has been very influential in the reception of this concept.[141] A major event along these lines was Deleuze's conference held in 1988 entitled, *What is a* dispositif?.[142]

In his 1977 interview, Foucault accounts for the "meaning" and the "methodological function" of the term. He says,

> What I'm trying to pick out with this term is, firstly, a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions – in short, the said as much as the unsaid.

137 Jörg Nowak, "Poulantzas, Gender Relations and Feminist State Theory", Gallas et al. (eds.), *Reading Poulantzas*, pp. 123–37.

138 Sverre Raffnsøe et al., *What is a Dispositive? Foucault's Historical Mappings of the Networks of Social Reality*, Copenhagen Business School [wp], 2014.

139 Paul Rabinow and Nikolas S. Rose, "Foucault Today", *The Essential Foucault: Selections from the Essential Works of Foucault: 1954–1984*, Paul Rabinow and Nikolas S. Rose (eds.), New Press, New York, 2003, p. xv.

140 Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1982, pp. 119–21.

141 Monique David-Ménard, "Agencements deleuziens, dispositifs foucaldiens", *Rue Descartes*, no. 1 (2008), pp. 43–55.

142 Gilles Deleuze, "What is a *dispositif* ?", Armstrong (ed.), *Michel Foucault, Philosopher*, pp. 159–68.

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> Such are the elements of the *dispositif*. The *dispositif* itself is the *network* that can be established between these elements.[143]

The conception of the *dispositif* as a net, thought of as a knotted fishing net, or to a "tangle", to use Deleuze's words,[144] allows us to grasp two of its important features. First, its being "a name of variables", to use again a Deleuzian expression. This means *dispositif* does not indicate something general and constant, always and everywhere given in the same way, but rather something unique, contingent and historically determined, formed in a unique way from the intertwining of particular factors and thus fundamentally plural. It is more useful to speak, then, of *dispositifs*. Foucault's anti-essentialist and nominalist vision emerges clearly here, as well as the eminently historical, archaeological-genealogical character of his analysis of *dispositifs*. The *dispositif* is a deeply relational concept. It is simultaneously a set of heterogeneous elements, situated within an arrangement, as well as the set of all their connections. Deleuze elucidates the three dimensions of the *dispositifs*: knowledge,[145] power, subject(ivation). This is in accordance with what Foucault himself wrote in the second volume of *The History of Sexuality* in 1984, where he defines the notion of "form of experience". This is a concept linked to *dispositif* as "a correlation between fields of knowledge, types of normativity, and forms of subjectivity".[146] In what follows, these three dimensions guide the reading of the notion of *dispositif*. In reference to some conceptual archaeologies of the term, a feature evoked by the image of the net is that of capture, a feature on which Giorgio Agamben's interpretation insists. He writes, "I shall call a *dispositif* literally anything that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviors, opinions or discourses of living beings".[147] If, therefore, living beings are constantly caught in the meshes of the *dispositifs* – which are "meshes of power"[148] – then an im-

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143 Michel Foucault, "The Confession of the Flesh", Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, p. 194. English translation amended. In the original, the expression "system of relation" instead of "network" is used. "Network" better translates the French word "*réseau*", used in Foucault, "Le jeu de Michel Foucault", *Ornicar. Bulletin périodique du champ freudien*, vol. 10 (1977), pp. 62–93.

144 Deleuze, "What is a *dispositif* ?", p. 159.

145 *Ibid.*, 160.

146 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 2: The Use of Pleasure*, trans. Robert Hurley, Random House, New York, 1985, p. 4.

147 Giorgio Agamben, "What Is an Apparatus?", "*What Is an Apparatus?" and Other Essays*, trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2009, p. 14. [amended translation]

148 The reference is to the title of Foucault's lecture on his conception of the notion of power given at the University of Bahia, Brazil, on November 1, 1976. It first appeared in English as Michel Foucault, "The Meshes of Power", Stuart Elden and Jeremy W. Crampton (eds.), *Space, Knowledge and Power: Foucault and Geography*, trans. Gerald Moore, Ashgate Publishing Company, Burlington, 2007, pp. 165–74.

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portant consequence is that *dispositifs* can be conceived neither as tools *at the disposal* of someone nor as tools *made by* someone.

Considering the first part of the negative disjunction, *dispositifs* are not at the disposal of any one entity. There are no absolute sovereigns or central authorities to govern them because they themselves arrange (the Latin word for the verb "arrange" is *disponere*, from which comes the French word *dipositif*) the relations of power. They allow knowledges, powers and subjectivations, to performatively come into being. Agamben claims that this term replaced the term *positivité*, "positivity", used at the end of the 1960s, borrowed, via Jean Hyppolite, from the young Hegel. In the essay *Introduction to Hegel's Philosophy of History*,[149] Hyppolite analyzes *The Positivity of the Christian Religion* of 1795–96, in which Hegel writes of the opposition between "positive religion", which is institutionalized and historical, and "natural religion", which is focused on the direct relationship between human reason and God. While the latter is immediate, the former, according to Hegel, deals with "feelings that are more or less impressed through constraint on soul".[150] This constraint on the subject – which is an important link between positivity and *dispositif* – is not only an external relation of command and obedience through rites and rules but, through acts from within on the individual, positing, or "positivizing", feelings, behaviors, forms of perception and self-awareness. Therefore, according to Agamben, historical relations between living beings and processes of subjectivation and the typical Foucauldian "productive" account of power, held in tension by institutions and rules, are condensed in the concept of positivity.

According to Agamben, we see that *dispositifs* orient rational and behavioral models, constituting individuals into subjects, thus shaping specific social interplays. Accordingly,

> at this stage, the social actions must be analyzed as events that occur with regards to and with an effect on the dispositive. […] The dispositive is an inclusive depiction of whatever seems to have been prescribed or determined as applicable to the social interplay at any given time. […] This normative level is regarded as an inevitable 'reality', in so far as the dispositive influences the (in their own right already prescriptive) activities of the sociality. The effects of the dispositive are embedded in the institutions it reshapes.[151]

The Agambenian etymological and archeological reconstruction, however, does not touch directly upon knowledge, the one of the three dimensions of *dispositifs*. This

149 Jean Hyppolite, *Introduction to Hegel's Philosophy of History*, trans. Bond Harris and Jacqueline Bouchard Spurlock, University Press of Florida, Gainesville, 1996.

150 *Ibid.*, 21.

151 Raffnsøe et al., *What is a Dispositive?*, pp. 19–20.

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point can be integrated by using Judith Revel's analysis.[152] Revel identifies the conceptual antecedent of the notion of *dispositif* in the term "*épistémè*", or "epistemological field",[153] both key concepts in Foucault's *The Order of Things*[154] of 1966. Foucault reiterates this point as well, in 1977,

> What I should like to do now is to try and show that what I call an apparatus is a much more general case of the *episteme*; or rather, that the *episteme* is a specifically discursive apparatus, whereas the apparatus in its general form is both discursive and non-discursive, its elements being much more heterogeneous.[155]

For Foucault, an epistemological field is the "historical *a priori*" and the element of "positivity", by virtue of which "ideas could appear, sciences be established, experience be reflected in philosophies, rationalities be formed, only, perhaps, to dissolve and vanish soon afterward".[156] An epistemological field is an *a priori* in that it is a system of the conditions of possibility of the different types of discourse *and* it is historically determined. The epistemological field allows, on the one hand, the spatialization of history and the identification of the constitutive and performative characters of *a priori*. The notion of the epistemological field – of historical *a priori* – depends upon the concept of network, thus implementing the transition to the concept of *dispositif*.[157] The replacement of the term "*épistémè*" with *dispositif*, therefore, leads the analysis towards the investigation of the "institution", which Foucault defines as, "everything which functions in a society as a system of constraint and which isn't an utterance".[158] This is to say, the analysis of materiality, of balances of forces and of power games is enabled, thus impressing on the "philosophy of *dispositifs*", as Deleuze calls it, a political torsion, more than an epistemological one.

Regarding the second part of the negative disjunction, *dispositifs*, we have said, are not made by any one subject. "And what", one could argue, "laws are not enacted by the state? What administrative measures are not decided by competent bodies? What architectural structures are not designed and built by professionals?" These questions are all permutations of the broader one, "What are the origins of *dispositifs*?" Foucault, again in 1977, states, "I understand by the term '*dispositif* ' a sort of – shall we say – formation which has as its major function at a given historical moment

152 Judith Revel, *Dictionnaire Foucault*, Ellipses, Paris, 2008, pp. 41–2.

153 Another interpretation in accordance with Revel's reading is Óscar Moro Abadía, "¿Qué es un dispositivo?", *Empiria: revista de metodología de Ciencias Sociales*, no. 6 (2003), pp. 29–46.

154 Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things. An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, trans. Alan Sheridan Smith, Routledge, London, 2005.

155 Foucault, "The Confession of the Flesh", p. 197.

156 Foucault, *The Order of Things. An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, p. XXIII.

157 Judith Revel, *Le vocabulaire de Foucault*, Ellipses, Paris, 2009, pp. 24–7.

158 Foucault, "The Confession of the Flesh", pp. 197–8.

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that of responding to an urgent need. The apparatus thus has a dominant strategic function".[159] Response to an urgency, a criterion of genesis which, together with the structure of heterogeneous constituent elements, best defines *dispositif*, fixing its "*strategic* nature".[160] In the wide heterogeneity and flexibility of the *dispositif*, the French philosopher introduces, therefore, as a unitary principle, the rule of their appearance. It is precisely the search for the catalysts or the dynamics that originated the *dispositifs* of modernity that absorbed Foucault in the 1970s, beginning with his study of the prison in *Discipline and Punish*. The reduction in penal severity, with the passage from torture to prison, is not so much a decrease in intensity (a quantitative phenomenon) as, Foucault says, "a change of objective".[161] It is not so much a transformation in attitude as "an effort to adjust the mechanisms of power that frame the everyday lives of individuals; an adaptation and a refinement of the machinery"[162] according to changing social, economic and cultural situations. Or again, we can mention the example that the French philosopher cites concerning the practical problem that a floating, wandering population causes at the dawn of mercantilist society. The strategic objective is, in this situation, to avoid the mobility of labor, so that "one finds the local and perfectly explicit appearance of definite strategies for fixing the workers in the first heavy industries at their work-places"[163] including the building of working-class cities, housing, the establishment of savings-banks system and philanthropy.

For Foucault, strategies without strategists is possible at the macro-level, at the network level, not at the level of individual agents. He writes of "grand strategies", or "global strategy". This is not to say that Foucault believes that a building is not the work of an architect, or that a mandate of education is not a decision taken by Parliament, but that at the network level, there is no need to "attribute to it a subject which makes the law, pronouncing it in the form of 'Thou shalt' and 'Thou shalt not'".[164] To return to the example of the mobility of employment, the moralization of the working class through philanthropic discourse has not been imposed by anyone – not by Guizot's legislation nor by Dupin's books, nor by the masters' unions. "And yet", Foucault states, "it was accomplished, because it met the urgent need to master a vagabond, floating labour force".[165] It is through contextualized interactions, re-adjustments, re-workings and the over-determination of practices, objec-

159 *Ibid.*, 195. [translation emended]
160 *Ibid.*, 196.
161 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 16.
162 *Ibid.*, 77.
163 Foucault, "The Confession of the Flesh", p. 202.
164 *Ibid.*, 204.
165 *Ibid.*

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tives and tactics, that "you get a coherent, rational strategy, but one for which it is no longer possible to identify a person who conceived it".[166]

Insistence on the concept of globality, or coherence, attributes a sense of cohesion, balance, and calculation to historical processes, concealing from view the "shambles" or component parts that bring *dispositifs* into being. This impression is partially legitimate from the point of view of the functionality of a *dispositif*. Foucault is not interested in the mere description of a phenomenon, but wonders "Why did that work? How did that hold up?"[167] He starts with the assumption that such a thing has succeeded, as if following a "battle", and attempts to explain retrospectively. To start from something that worked and held up, and to explain it, implies an ordered vision, while to describe the battle does not. Even if one argues, however, that Foucault's analyses are "too neat", it remains true that *dispositifs* induce nonetheless a certain amount of unpredictability. Describing a *dispositif* does not necessarily predict the system of its effects. Thus, for example, the prison does achieve the strategic objective of monitoring, concentrating and constraining the mobility of a multitude of vagrants and irregulars, but, at the same time, produces the unforeseen, involuntary effect of forming professional delinquent affiliations. In the end, Foucault defines the *dispositif* as:

> a matter of a certain manipulation of relations of forces, either developing them in a particular direction, blocking them, stabilising them, utilising them, etc. The apparatus is thus always inscribed in a play of power, but it is also always linked to certain coordinates of knowledge which issue from it but, to an equal degree, condition it. This is what the apparatus consists in: strategies of relations of forces supporting, and supported by, types of knowledge.[168]

In other words, the idea of grand strategies designates "the specific character of the social by viewing its regularisation as a result of the unification and homogenisation of individual patterns of action, which is induced by their concurrence".[169] Foucault's conception may be problematized by functionalism, especially in the idea of the genesis of the *dispositifs* as a response to an urgency, and by the issue of scale, not only the level of practical social analysis, but also concerning the types and numbers of

166 *Ibid.*, 203. See also what Foucault writes about "general apparatuses" ("*dispositifs d'ensemble*") in *The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge*: "Here the logic is perfectly clear, the aims decipherable, yet it turns out that no one can have conceived and very few formulated them: such is the implicit character of the great, anonymous, almost mute strategies which coordinate the voluble tactics whose 'inventors' or directors are often devoid of all hypocrisy". Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction. Vol.* 1, p. 95.

167 *Ibid.*, 209.

168 Foucault, "The Confession of the Flesh", p. 196.

169 Gallas, *Dichotomy, Dualism, Duality*, p. 78.

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dispositif applied to social analysis. What does it mean, for example, to talk about the "*dispositif* of the Athenian city", or the "Christian *dispositif*", or "the *dispositif* of the French Revolution or the Bolshevik Revolution", as Deleuze does?[170] Finally, the concept of the *dispositif* does not inherently explain how the regularization of patterns of action is achieved, why they tend to converge or where is their point of convergence.

In sum, an empathetic reading of Foucault suggests the existence of an overall unity of a system of domination through strategic codification of power relations. Nevertheless, since such an approach cannot explain theoretically why and how a certain strategic codification takes place (for example, Poulantzas' concept of "structural selectivities" and Bob Jessop's adaptation as "strategic selectivities"), it ultimately collapses into a discourse of micro-power – the ever-changing and mutual composition and re-composition of the relations of power, their "sociological amorphy".[171] Otherwise stated, if the *dispositif* is a network of power, subjectivation and knowledge connected by heterogeneous, relational nodes, this network, far from offering itself as evidence to sensory experience, emerges only through a theoretical analysis of the abstractions that constitutively and specifically structure the social field, such as social form-analysis. Therefore, it is possible to overcome the problems related to the Foucauldian use of the concept of *dispositif* through a process of insertion-modification in the materialist logic which is being outlined. For this purpose, we can define *dispositif* as *a network of institutions and mixed practices, authorized by correlated scientific knowledges, with subjectivation effects.*

Following the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy's entry for "social institutions",[172] institutions are to be distinguished from less complex social elements such as conventions, rules, roles and rituals, which are among their constitutive components. At the same time, institutions are also to be distinguished from more complex social entities such as societies and cultures, of which institutions are constitutive elements. Social institutions are often organizations, and they can also be systems of organization, grounded in different spheres of activity (political, economic, etc.). Moreover, some institutions are meta-institutions, i.e. institutions organizing other institutions or systems. For example, governments are meta-institutions. In a *dispositif* we can find institutions of all these three kinds. A *dispositif*, in this way, can be compared to a molecule – it has constitutive elements ("atoms"), but also its own particular structure and unity. This analogy illustrates both the relative independence of a *dispositif* vis-à-vis other *dispositifs*, and their integration into the unitary system of the social complex. Social forms may be regarded as matrices of *dispositifs* and, in

170 See Deleuze, "What is a *dispositif* ?"

171 Jessop, *State Theory*, p. 238.

172 See Miller, "Social Institutions" cit.

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turn, *dispositifs* as concretizations or materializations of social forms.[173] Social forms determine the conditions of possibility for the constitution of *dispositifs* and orient their practices, institutions and knowledges. Moreover, at the most abstract level, social forms determine the particular arrangement of *dispositifs* in their given context.

Examining the functionality of the *dispositif* across the three dimensions of knowledge, subjects and power reveals how multiple social forms develop with respect to each. Considering knowledge, social forms constitute the immediate epistemic objects of knowledge, correlated to institutions and practices, and the conceptual categories or fields of knowledge. For example, economic forms like value or capital constitute what individual economists perceive to be the natural objects of political economy. Rather than understanding the *form-determinations* of their subject matter, they focus solely on the concrete content, namely the practices

173 Buckel, *Subjectivation and cohesion*. This analytical integration between the complementary dynamics of "logical"-abstract and "historical"-concrete, or Marxian social forms and Foucauldian dispositifs, is repeatedly suggested by Foucault himself. Foucault hints at the fact that Marx's conceptual reconstruction of the capitalist mode of production is the background against which the point of view of his *dispositifs* analysis can be understood. "If the economic take-off of the West began with the techniques that made possible the accumulation of capital, it might perhaps be said that the methods for administering the accumulation of men made possible a political take-off in relation to the traditional, ritual, costly, violent forms of power, which soon fell into disuse and were superseded by a subtle, calculated technology of subjection. In fact, the two processes – the accumulation of men and the accumulation of capital – cannot be separated" (Discipline and Punish, pp. 220–1). Foucault asserts this view in another crucial passage: "This bio-power was without question an indispensable element in the development of capitalism; the latter would not have been possible without the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production and the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes. But this was not all it required; it also needed the growth of both these factors, their reinforcement as well as their availability and docility; it had to have methods of power capable of optimizing forces, aptitudes, and life in general without at the same time making them more difficult to govern. If the development of the great instruments of the state, as institutions of power, ensured the maintenance of production relations, the rudiments of anatomo- and bio-politics, created in the eighteenth century as techniques of power present at every level of the social body and utilized by very diverse institutions (the family and the army, schools and the police, individual medicine and the administration of collective bodies), operated in the sphere of economic processes, their development, and the forces working to sustain them. They also acted as factors of segregation and social hierarchization, exerting their influence on the respective forces of both these movements, guaranteeing relations of domination and effects of hegemony. The adjustment of the accumulation of men to that of capital, the joining of the growth of human groups to the expansion of productive forces and the differential allocation of profit, were made possible in part by the exercise of bio-power in its many forms and modes of application. The investment of the body, its valorization, and the distributive management of its forces were at the time indispensable". Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*. Vol. 1, pp. 140–1.

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and institutions being constituted. In this way, pre-formed knowledge socially validates the corresponding forms by organizing and authorizing certain *dispositifs*. This link between social forms and knowledge shows that the social form-analysis is not an abstract exercise, but rather enables the challenging of certain bodies of knowledge and the social relations underlying them.

Social forms outline the "system-limits" of capitalist subjectivity. They determine the specific conditions of possibility for the actions and the rationalizations of individuals. Recall the example of wage laborers. At the level of *dispositifs*, concrete and historical institutional constellations, knowledges and processes underlie the delineation of subjectivity. For example, consider the neoliberal *dispositif*, whose elements are – among others – legal-political practices that reduce workers' rights and political-economic practices that liberalize exchange. Here, with regard to the field of action of this *dispositif*, the wage laborer is further constituted by such meshes of power as a precarious worker.

At the level of the *dispositif*, power relations are often conflicting and polemical. The tactics, objectives, strategies, projects, and interests of different social agents confront each other in a field of struggles between social forces. Different class compositions, class identities, political parties, dynamics of political representation, social movements, public assemblies, mass gatherings, informal groups and so on are all factors within this field of social struggle. Conflicting relationality takes place in the context of *dispositifs*, traversing them; in this way, its trajectories are shaped both by the *dispositifs* themselves and, more structurally, by the social forms. Social forms bear the marks of indirect and impersonal power relations characteristic of capitalist societies. Within the materialist logic that integrates the discourse of the *dispositifs* with that of social forms, two types of power relations can be distinguished – that of collective conflict across *dispositifs*, and the relationality of "domination", which refers to the relatively permanent social bond determined by the social forms. Thus, the notion of power alone is not sufficient to grasp these two different types of relationality. To remedy this, the concept of 'politics' is essential for defining the realm of conflict – one that includes both dominant and opposing strategies, as well as the "grey zones" between them. This interpretation of 'politics' draws significantly on Rancière's conception.

According to Rancière, the mainstream conception of politics – elections, bureaucracies, shifts of power within states, the governments, etc. – is not politics at all. It is instead what he calls *the police*. Rancière writes,

> Politics is generally seen as the set of procedures whereby the aggregation and consent of collectivities is achieved, the organization of powers, the distribution of places and roles, and the systems for legitimizing this distribution. I propose to

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> give this system of distribution and legitimization another name. I propose to call it *the police*.[174]

This characterization resonates not only with the coercion and repression often associated with "the petty police, the truncheon blows of the forces of law and order and the inquisitions of the secret police",[175] but also with the concept of police identified by Foucault in eighteenth-century writings: practices of government that are oriented to cover everything relating to population and its happiness. The process of police, as Rancière defines it, "is that of governing, and it entails creating community consent, which relies on the distribution of shares and the hierarchy of places and functions".[176] This distribution " leaves no space for a supplement"[177] because it allocates "ways of doing, ways of being, and ways of saying",[178] i.e. determines the limits of the visible and the sayable within which "bodies are assigned by name to a particular place and task".[179] The fact "that human communities gather together under the rule of those qualified to rule – whose qualifications are legitimized by the very fact that they are ruling", is the "normal order of things".[180] For Rancière, politics stands in logical opposition to the police. He writes,

> I now propose to reserve the term *politics* for an extremely determined activity antagonistic to policing: whatever breaks with the tangible configuration whereby parties and parts or lack of them are defined by a presupposition that, by definition, has no place in that configuration – that of the part that has no part. This break is manifest in a series of actions that reconfigure the space where parties, parts, or lack of parts have been defined. Political activity is whatever shifts a body from the place assigned to it or changes a place's destination.[181]

Politics is a "rupture, […] a deviation, […] a supplement to all social (ac)counts and an exception to all logics of domination".[182] Its process "is that of equality. It consists of a set of practices guided by the supposition that everyone is equal and by the attempt to verify this supposition. The proper name for this set of practices remains

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174 Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, trans. Julie Rose, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1999, p. 28.

175 *Ibid.*, 28.

176 Jacques Rancière, "Politics, Identification, and Subjectivization", *October*, vol. 61 (1992), p. 58.

177 Jacques Rancière, "Introducing Disagreement", *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, vol. 9, no. 3 (2004), p. 6.

178 Rancière, *Disagreement*, p. 29.

179 *Ibid*.

180 Jacques Rancière, "Ten Theses on Politics", trans. Rachel Bowlby and Davide Panagia, *Theory & event*, vol. 5, no. 3 (2001).

181 Rancière, *Disagreement*, pp. 29–30.

182 Rancière, "Ten Theses on Politics".

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emancipation".[183] The form of this process is that of dissensus – a quarrel over a social order's given assumptions, over the naturalness of police order, over the order of the visible and sayable which allocates the places where one does one thing and those where one does something else, "enacted in the name of a category denied either the principle or the consequences of that equality: workers, women, people of color, or others".[184] Names, however, "pin people down to their place and work", which is a function of police logic. "Politics," writes Rancière, "is about 'wrong' names. It is never the simple assertion of an identity; it is always, at the same time, the denial of an identity given by a other, given by the ruling order of policy".[185] These truly political subjects are "always on the verge of disappearing, either through simply fading away or, more often than not, through their re-incorporation, their identification with social groups or imaginary bodies".[186] Rancière writes of consensus:

> Consensus knows only: real parts of the community, problems around the redistribution of powers and wealth among these parts, expert calculations over the possible forms of such redistribution, and negotiations between the representatives of these various parts. Consensus, then, is actually the modern form of reducing politics to the police.[187]

According to this, politics is not a permanent given of human societies, rather it is a precarious, contingent activity. Rancière's notion of the political as "the encounter between two heterogeneous processes, […] the field for the encounter between emancipation and policy in the handling of a wrong", is helpful in that it goes beyond what he writes of "politics".[188] Chambers points out that the distinction between the political and politics is introduced by Rancière in a lecture originally written in English in 1991, *Politics, Identification, Subjectivization* presented at a conference in the United States.[189] Chamber states, "the very idea of thinking about 'the political' comes to Rancière from outside, from what was at the time a very American-centric debate over multiculturalism, and it is voiced in a foreign language, English".[190] After 1991, Rancière does not seem to elaborate on this terminology or distinction.

183 Rancière, "Politics, Identification, and Subjectivization", p. 58.
184 *Ibid.*, 59.
185 *Ibid.*, 62.
186 Rancière, "Introducing Disagreement", p. 7.
187 *Ibid.*
188 Rancière, "Politics, Identification, and Subjectivization", p. 58–9.
189 Samuel A. Chambers, "Jacques Rancière and the Problem of Pure Politics", *European Journal of Political Theory*, vol. 10, no. 3 (2011), pp. 303–26.
190 *Ibid.*, 314.

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A "three terms" model – a realm of domination (police), a realm of dissensus (politics), and a ground upon which they meet (the political) – is dependent upon abandoning the ontological interpretation of the political as a mediating third space that would allow the meeting of politics and police (which would still be an Arendtian-style introduction of a space "proper" to politics), and instead understanding it as a relational concept in reference to the dynamic relationship between politics and police.[191] For Rancière, in fact, there is no relationship of externality between politics and police. He writes,

> We should not forget that if politics implements a logic entirely heterogenous to that of the police, it is always bound up with the latter.
> Politics acts on the police. It acts in the places and with the words that are common to both, even if it means reshaping those places and changing the status of those words. What is usually posited as the space of politics, meaning the set of state institutions, is precisely not a homogenous place. Its configuration is determined by the state of relations between political logic and police logic.[192]

And again,

> Politics does not stem from a place outside of the police […] There is no place outside of the police. But there are conflicting ways of doing with the "places" that it allocates: of relocating, reshaping, or redoubling them.[193]

There is another essential aspect of Rancière's conceptualization of politics that it is particularly meaningful in the framework of the materialist logic of capitalist societies. Namely, the refusal of the assumption that "'everything is political' since power relationships are everywhere".[194] Otherwise stated, it is not the case that every social practice is in itself political. Rather, a logic of politicization in which the singular individuals are put together as collective actors is more useful for understanding the larger functioning of a social system. Rancière repeatedly gives the example of feminist movements. He writes, "The domestic household has been turned into a political space not through the simple fact that power relationships are at work in it but because it was the subject of argument in a dispute over the capacity of women in the

191 Jean-Philippe Deranty, "Rancière and Contemporary Political Ontology", *Theory & Event*, vol. 6, no. 4 (2003); and Joseph J. Tanke, *Jacques Rancière: an Introduction*, Continuum Books, New York, 2011.

192 Rancière, *Disagreement*, pp. 31, 33.

193 Jacques Rancière, "The Thinking of Dissensus: Politics and Aesthetics", Paul Bowman and Richard Stamp (eds.), *Reading Rancière: Critical Dissensus*, Continuum Books, London, 2011, p. 6.

194 Rancière, *Disagreement*, p. 32.

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community".[195] This is to say that, "the home and housework are no more political in themselves than the street, the factory, or government". They are political inasmuch that the feminist movement "asks if […] maternity, for example, is a private or a social matter, if this social function is a public function or not, if this public function implies a political capacity".[196] Feminist movements interrupt the police order of the sayable and visible by calling into question its social/political, private/public divide and create space for previously uncounted objects and subjects. They do this via a process of political subjectification, as Rancière calls it, enabled by an assumption of "wrong" naming, which is a process of collective politicization.[197] The difference here with the larger concept of politics is that, for Rancière, when a political subject is re-incorporated into the police order as a real part of the society (or as a party inside the logic of consensus) it immediately disappears as political subject as such.[198]

Another source of inspiration for the *dispositif-politics* dimension of the logic for capitalist societies is Historical Materialist Policy Analysis (HMPA) approach, especially as elaborated in the article "The European Border Regime in Crisis".[199] Here, the conflicting relationality that traverses *dispositifs* is theorized using mainly the concept of hegemony (similar to the Rancierian concept of police), based upon the insights of Gramsci's hegemony theory. Hegemony projects are defined as "bundles of strategies that pursue similar goals", implemented by a constellation (neither static nor homogeneous) of social actors in response to a problematic social, economic or political situation, which aim at becoming dominant and deterministic in "*society as a whole*".[200] As Buckel and her authors underline, however, "not all social forces, not all actions, practices and strategies can conceptually be subsumed

195 *Ibid.*, 32–3.

196 *Ibid.*, 41, 40.

197 "A mode of subjectification does not create subjects ex nihilo; it creates them by transforming identities defined in the natural order of the allocation of functions and places into instances of experience of a dispute. "Workers" or "women" are identities that apparently hold no mystery. Anyone can tell *who* is meant. But political subjectification forces them out of such obviousness by questioning the relationship between a *who* and a *what* in the apparent redundancy of the positing of an existence. In politics 'woman' is the subject of experience – the denatured, defeminized subject – that measures the gap between an acknowledged part (that of sexual complementarity) and a having no part […] All political subjectification is the manifestation of a gap of this kind. The familiar police logic that decides that […] militant feminists are strangers to their sex, is, all in all, justified. Any subjectification is a disidentification, removal from the naturalness of a place". *Ibid.*, 36.

198 For a critique of Rancière's thesis on reserving the term politics for emancipatory action, see Oliver Marchart, "The Second Return of the Political: Democracy and the Syllogism of Equality", Bowman et al. (eds.), *Reading Rancière: Critical Dissensus*, pp. 129–47.

199 Buckel et al., *The European Border Regime in Crisis*.

200 *Ibid.*, 17.

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within hegemony projects".[201] They classify non-hegemonically-oriented practices in reaction to and in refusal of a given hegemonic order as follows:

1. Counter-Hegemonic Strategies: strategies devoted to achieving an alternative hegemony in society. For example, radical reformist projects, including conservative and progressive ones;
2. Anti-Hegemonic Strategies: strategies that reject hegemony and hierarchical relationships. For example, radical critical, anarchist strategies which try to establish alternative spaces and ways of life (communes, occupied social centers, exchange rings, etc.);
3. Escape Strategies: non-political, targeted, everyday practices of subversion, resistance, refusal, avoidance of a hegemonic order. For example, migrant practices of mobility;
4. Resignation: non-strategic, passive behaviors without any active participation in supporting a given hegemonic order.

With the exception of the fourth category, the concept of politics here introduced also covers the counter-hegemonic strategies, the anti-hegemonic strategies and the escape strategies, insofar as they require a collective politicization, similar to the Rancierian concept of politics as antagonistic to the police. These strategies, indeed, powerfully act on social forces and their hegemony projects, forcing them to react and to reorganize.

To analyze conflicts empirically, HMPA sets out a three-step methodology:

1. Context Analysis: aimed at articulating the historical dynamics (conjunctural contextualization) and the structural condition (form-determined and *dispositif* path dependency) of a conflict, and of the different strategic responses to it;
2. Actor Analysis: aimed at identifying how and why social forces react differently or in opposing ways to problematic situations. It involves the analysis of: strategies and their protagonists, hegemony projects, the relative positions of hegemony projects within the social relations of forces;
3. Process Analysis: the reconstruction of the dynamics of the conflict, the complex processes of the struggle of a conflict, via the combination of the first two steps.[202]

The distinction between politics, with reference to *dispositifs*, and impersonal domination, with reference to social forms, avoids the short circuiting of these two types of power relationality, a conflation often present in Foucault's somewhat elusive and

201 Buckel et al., *The European Border Regime in Crisis*, p. 19.

202 Kannankulam and Georgi, "Varieties of Capitalism or Varieties of Relationships of Forces?"

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indefinite definition of power. From this perspective, even the distinction Foucault later made – and frequently cited in the literature – between power relations and states of domination proves insufficient.[203] Foucault defines power relations as reversible at any time and as exercising "only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are 'free'",[204] and describes domination as a situation in which power relations "remain blocked, frozen".[205] In capitalist societies, however, juridical subjectivity is based upon freedom and equality, precluding the Foucauldian distinction as a productive analytical premise.

This indicates another problematic point regarding Foucault's equivocal conception of power. In his critique of Freudo-Marxism, Lacanian psychoanalysis and the philosophies of sovereignty of Hobbes, Rousseau, and Schmitt, Foucault constructs the *legal-discursive model of power* as an ideal-type of *negative* understanding of domination, centered on bans, prohibitions and repression, while uncritically adopting a reductive vision of command-based law. This does not allow him to grasp the distinctive features, freedom and equality, of legal subjectivity in capitalist societies, nor, therefore, the *productive*, positive character of modern law in the constitution of individuals as subjects.[206]

Again, social forms are matrices of *dispositifs* and, in turn, *dispositifs* are concretizations and materializations of social forms. Between social forms and *dispositifs*, there is no direct or causal relation between essence and appearance, nor a functionalist or a teleological one, related to the reproduction of social forms or specific *dispositifs*. It is true that the *dispositifs* are generally form-determined, but there are multifarious ways – historical, concrete context-sensitive ways – in which this form determination occurs. Thus, forms are not fixed once and for all, neither they will always be materialized in a specific configuration.

For instance, value form materializes in very different *dispositifs* involving money and credit. Considering money as the mesh of a network as the analytical starting point, it is possible to suppose that, in specific situations, money is a mesh of two different nets, two different *dispositifs*. Money exists in an ensemble with, among other things, laws that link it to a particular commodity, say gold,[207] and in this way

203 "The analyses I am trying to make bear essentially on relations of power. By this I mean something different from states of domination". Michel Foucault, "The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom", Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, p. 283.

204 Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power", James D. Faubion (ed.), *Power: The Essential Works of Michel Foucault 1954–1984. Vol* 3, trans. Robert Hurley et al., New Press, New York, 2001, p. 342.

205 Foucault, "The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom", p. 283.

206 This criticism was first put forward by Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*, pp. 77–8. See also Lindner, "State, Domination and Politics", pp. 146–8.

207 Already in the nineteenth century the use of banknotes was more common in everyday commerce than the use of gold. Banknotes were released, firstly by individual banks, and then

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money is defined as a money commodity. Considering a distinct *dispositif* in which money is enmeshed with, among other things, a bank system in which only central banks are credit institutes, money is defined as an outcome of credit, or so-called fiat money. Although these *dispositifs* are somewhat different, nonetheless both commodity money and fiat money are concretizations of value form which is, so to say, their upstream category. This is possible because *dispositifs* are traversed by politics, which is not fixed. It is possible to distinguish three types of relations between social forms, the *dispositifs* that actualize them and trajectories of conflicts traversing them:

1. Conflicts that confirm or realize a specific *dispositif* as the concrete expression of a social form, staying within it (such as conflicts around contracted working hours, organized by trade unions);
2. Conflicts that undermine a specific *dispositif* that materializes a social form, but without questioning that form in itself. In this case, conflicts could lead to the constitution of another *dispositif* compatible with the form (such as in the emergence of the neo-liberal *dispositif* in the 1980s and the 1990s after the crises of Fordism);
3. Finally, under certain circumstances, conflicts that undermine a social form in itself (such as May 1968 in France).[208]

Thus, even social forms can become a battlefield, "despite their fetishized immunization against change".[209] In the end, depending on the type of relation, the immanent tendency of capitalist societies towards their own reproduction could be either guaranteed or, it could be impeded. This means that a capitalist society is only a reproducing entity if the concurrence of both forms (structure) and politics (agency) are considered.

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by central banks, which promised to honor the notes in gold. The gold standard had been maintained even after the Second World War as established at the Bretton Woods conference. The difference with the previous system was that only the U.S. dollar was covered by gold, all the other currencies had a fixed exchange rate to the dollar. Due to the vast amount of dollars in circulation by the end of the 1960s it became impossible to couple gold with the dollar. In 1971, during the conference of Camp David, the gold standard and the fixed currency exchange rates was abolished.

208 Alexander Gallas, "Reading 'Capital' with Poulantzas: 'Form' and 'Struggle' in the Critique of Political Economy", Gallas et al. (eds.), *Reading Poulantzas*, pp. 93–4.

209 Buckel et al., *The European Border Regime in Crisis*, p. 12.

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Part II: Operationalization

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3. The Anthropological Form of Producing Individuals

3.1 Filling the Lacuna: Forms of Production of Individuals

According to form-analysis, social relations in capitalist societies, expressed in various forms such as money, capital, law, state, etc., have a fetishistic character. These interconnected, fetishized forms constitute the abstract structural connections, or the anatomy, or the ideal average of capitalist societies. As is well known, Marx's analysis of social forms is constrained to the examination of the economic structures that organize the social and technological labor processes involved in the production of goods and services. Consequently, his analysis elucidates uniquely the manner in which class separation, and thus class domination and exploitation, are reproduced and naturalized within capitalist societies. Nevertheless, this economic analysis is not exhaustive. A materialist study of social forms encompasses also the processes of reproduction of material life in its most basic sense, as well as the social forms through which this reproduction is organized. As materialist, socialist and Marxist feminist currents[1] have demonstrated since the 1970s, such processes of reproduction of material life include the generative reproduction of human life and the gender relations associated with it. In other words, the reproduction of capitalist societies as a whole encompasses the reproduction of labor-power and population, or "social reproduction", *stricto sensu*.[2]

1 The terms "socialist feminists", "materialist feminists", and "Marxist feminists" will be used interchangeably to refer to a shared commitment to understanding women's oppression as rooted in the socio-material relations inherent to capitalism, rather than as a mere consequence of biases, attitudes and ideologies.

2 The term labor-power refers to the ability of individuals to perform labor. "Labour-power exists only as the ability to work of a particular person, the labourer. But labourers grow old and die, and society's stock of labour-power cannot then be replenished without the birth of potential new labourers. Thus […] it is necessary for labour-power to be reproduced that the labourer himself is reproduced". Susan Himmelweit and Simon Mohun, "Domestic Labour and Capital", *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, vol 1, no. 1 (1977), p. 16. According to Marx, under the conditions of commodity production, the expenditure of labor-power can be a source of value. Labor-power is the special commodity that realizes the self-valorization of value, which is the movement of capital, expressed in the formula M-C-M' and, thus, the production

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Interest in this particular aspect of social materiality was, indeed, initiated by Marx and Engels. In *The German Ideology*, they notoriously wrote, "men, who daily re-create their own life, begin to make other men, to propagate their kind: the relation between man and woman, parents and children, the *family*".[3] Even more famous is Engel's expansion of this idea in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* where he wrote a passage that "became for a time, perhaps the most widely cited quotation in socialist-feminist scholarship",[4]

> According to the materialistic conception, the determining factor in history is, in the last resort, the production and reproduction of immediate life. But this itself is again of a twofold character. On the one hand, the production of the means of subsistence, of food, clothing and shelter and the implements required for this; on the other, *the production of human beings* themselves, the propagation of the species. The social institutions under which men of a definite historical epoch and of a definite country live are determined by both kinds of production: by the stage of development of labour, on the one hand, and of the family, on the other.[5]

It is important to highlight and to anticipate that the distinction between two "types of production" and, consequently, between people and things (or between humans and non-humans) as postulated by Engels represents a fundamental, anthropocentric assumption that remains unexamined. Furthermore, this is an analytical distinction that Engels draws from capitalist organization, which materially separates

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of *surplus value*. The latter is the increase in value obtained with the movement of capital, the difference between M and M'. Labor-power is a special commodity and makes this possible because its use value is such that its consumption creates more value than its cost. The term "social reproduction" is a technical expression in recent Marxist feminist debate, defined as, "the activities and attitudes, behaviors and emotions, and responsibilities and relationships directly involved in maintaining life, on a daily basis and inter-generationally. It involves various kinds of socially necessary work – mental, physical, and emotional – aimed at providing the historically and socially, as well as biologically, defined means for maintaining and reproducing population. Among other things, social reproduction includes how food, clothing, and shelter are made available for immediate consumption, how the maintenance and socialization of children is accomplished, how care of the elderly and infirm is provided, and how sexuality is socially constructed". Johanna Brenner and Barbara Laslett, "Gender, Social Reproduction, and Women's Self-Organization: Considering the US Welfare State", *Gender & Society*, vol. 5, no. 3 (1991), p. 314. It is useful to retain and add the term "*stricto sensu*" to avoid conflating this feminist notion of "social reproduction" with Althusser's concept of the social reproduction of society as a whole. See Louis Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism. Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, trans. G.M. Goshgarian, Verso, London-New York, 2014.

3 Marx and Engels, *The Germani Ideology*, pp. 42–3.

4 Judith Butler, "Merely Cultural", *Social Text*, no. 52/53 (1997), p. 271.

5 Frederick Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Engels, *MECW*, vol. 26 (1882–1889), pp. 131–2. [emphasis added]

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wage labor (production of goods and services in the commodity form) from the family sphere (production of individuals and consumption). Engels, however, projects this distinction trans-historically onto all types of social formations, as is evident, as he continues, "by the stage of development of labor on the one hand and of the family on the other".[6]

The passages quoted above, in conjunction with Marx's incidental remarks on the destruction of the family with the advent of capitalism in the first volume of *Capital*,[7] represent the classic sites of Marx and Engels' manifest engagement with the issue of generative production and gender relations. Indeed, this topic is at the heart of the Marxist project of analyzing fetishized social forms as early as 1845. In the fourth thesis on Feuerbach, in which the method of form-analysis and the new materialist program is set forth,[8] Marx's case study is the family. He writes,

> Feuerbach starts off from the fact of religious self-estrangement [*Selbstentfremdung*], of the duplication of the world into a religious, imaginary world, and a secular [*weltliche*] one. His work consists in resolving the religious world into its secular basis. He overlooks the fact that after completing this work, the chief thing still remains to be done. For the fact that the secular basis lifts off from itself and establishes itself in the clouds as an independent realm can only be explained by the inner strife and intrinsic contradictoriness of this secular basis. The latter must itself be understood in its contradiction and then, by the removal of the contradiction, revolutionised. *Thus, for instance, once the earthly family is discovered to be the*

6 *Ibid.*

7 "Compulsory work for the capitalist usurped the place, not only of the children's play, but also of independent labour at home, within customary limits, for the family itself. The value of labour-power was determined, not only by the labour-time necessary to maintain the individual adult worker, but also by that necessary to maintain his family. Machinery, by throwing every member of that family onto the labour-market, spreads the value of the man's labour-power over his whole family. It thus depreciates it". Marx, *Capital I*, pp. 517–8.

8 The link between the fourth thesis and the analysis of social forms, understood in the sense of the Marxist project of the critique of political economy, was initially identified by Bakchaus. Backhaus traces an insightful parallel between Feuerbach's theoretical move in the field of religion and Smith and Ricardo's theoretical move in the field of economic theory. In the former, the apparent independence and substantiality of God is reduced to the unified essence of the human. Similarly, in the latter, the apparent independence and substantiality of value is reduced to the unified principle of human labor. At this point, however, "the chief thing still remains to be done." The objective is to make the opposite movement of a reconstruction of the necessity of these independent forms and their objective semblance from the historically specific conditions of socialization of labor, from the social form of labor. See Backhaus, *Dialektik der Wertform*, p. 52. Reichelt states that Marx's analysis of value-form in *Capital* is to be understood as fulfilling the program of the fourth thesis on Feuerbach on the level of political economy. See Reichelt, *Zur logischen Struktur des Kapitalbegriffs bei Karl Marx*, p. 24, 151; Elbe, *Marx im Westen*, pp. 79–80; and Francesco Aloe, personal communication.

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> *secret of the holy family, the former must itself be annihilated [vernichtet] theoretically and practically.*[9]

Despite these insights, Marx never fully developed the fourth thesis with reference to the family, and he frequently biologized the processes of generative reproduction, framing procreation as a natural relationship. Engels, for his part, also abandoned the dyad model of social materiality, giving primacy to the "production of means of existence", to which the production of human beings was deemed subordinate. This oversight represents a lacuna of Marx's theory, highlighted first by socialist materialist feminism in the 1970s and 1980s. A lively debate around the concept of domestic labor emerged following the publication of Margaret Benston's seminal article, *The Political Economy of Women's Liberation*, in 1969.[10] Although the idea of the household as a site of women's oppression and the term, "domestic labor", were already circulating in previous feminisms,[11] this text was the first to originally thematize the category of domestic labor as work that was necessary to the reproduction of labor-power, and thus to capitalist society as a whole. As Susan Ferguson and David McNally observed in 2013, "Quite simply: without domestic labour, workers cannot reproduce themselves; and without workers, capital cannot be reproduced. It is difficult to overstate the significance of this single move".[12]

Since that time, standard Marxism has been accused of failing to adequately address the issue of domestic labor. This is due to the fact that Marxism posits the primacy of the relations under which wage labor is performed, overlooking, or "invisibilizing", domestic labor.[13] While materialist feminists converged on this charge of

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9 Marx, *Theses on Feuerbach*, Marx and Engels, *MECW*, vol. 5 (1845–1847), p. 4. [emphasis added]

10 Margaret Benston, "The Political Economy of Women's Liberation", *Monthly Review*, vol. 21, no. 4 (1969), pp. 13–27.

11 Juliet Mitchell, "Women: The Longest Revolution", *New Left Review*, no. 1 (1966), pp. 11–37.

12 Susan Ferguson and David McNally, "Capital, Labour-Power, and Gender-Relations: Introduction to the *Historical Materialism* Edition of *Marxism and the Oppression of Women*", Lise Vogel, *Marxism and the Oppression of Women: toward a Unitary Theory*, Brill, Leiden, 2013, p. xix.

13 According to Marx, the value of labor-power is determined, as is the case with all other commodities, by the labor-time necessary for its production and reproduction. Every individual necessitates means of subsistence, encompassing not only food and clothing, housing and fuel, but also education, training, etc. Marx concludes that the labor-time necessary for the production of labor-power is identical to that required for the production of the means of subsistence. In other words, the value of labor-power is equivalent to the value of the means of subsistence necessary for the maintenance of its owner. See Marx, *Capital I*, p. 274 ff. Marx does not see, however, an element that distinguishes the commodity of labor-power from any other commodity. In the case of a normal commodity, the value of the means of production used to produce it forms part of the value of the same commodity, as well as the new value added by the labor that creates the finished product from these means of production. "This is not the case with the commodity labor-power: its value is determined solely by the

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invisibilization, their debate generated two interrelated questions: "Does domestic labour produce (surplus-)value?" and, "Does domestic labour constitute a mode of production unto itself, distinct from the capitalist mode?"[14]. A crucial theoretical result of the debate was the assertion that labor-power *is not produced capitalistically* and, thus, domestic labor is not a form of value-creating labor. Two prominent figures in the debate, Hartmann[15] and Vogel,[16] tend to agree on this point, despite holding general positions that are typically regarded as antithetical.[17] The theoretical fallacy of equating domestic labor with value-producing labor on the grounds that it generates the labor power that generates surplus value for capital was pervasive. It was championed by operaist feminists who, despite adopting this mistaken notion, recognized and efficiently deployed its potential for political mobilization.[18]

In sum, it is irrefutable that in capitalist societies there is at least one kind of production which is not *directly* organized by the forms of capitalist production, namely the production of labor-power, which coincides with the (re)production of its owner.[19] Three questions, however, arise from this conclusion. They are: 1) What

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value of the means of subsistence that have to be purchased on the market. Reproductive labor carried out in the household (housework, childrearing), primarily by women, does not form a part of the value of labor-power". Therefore, Marx is wrong in asserting that the determination of the value of labor-power is just like that of the other commodities. He fails to recognize this distinctiveness and, consequently, the centrality of domestic labor and the production of individuals which, in the end, is not produced capitalistically. To conclude, "the restriction of the value of labor power to the costs of reproduction [means of subsistence] is a functional necessity of capitalism. […] The fact that the daily value of labor-power (the value *required* for its own reproduction) is lower than the value that can be *created* in a day by the use of labor-power (through expenditure of labor-power) is the foundation of the 'occult quality' of value to create new value". Heinrich, *Karl Marx's Capital*, pp. 94–5.

14 Ferguson and McNally, "Capital, Labour-Power, and Gender-Relation", p. xx.

15 Heidi Hartmann, "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union", *Capital & Class*, vol. 8 (1979), pp. 1–33.

16 Lise Vogel, *Marxism and the Oppression of Women: toward a Unitary Theory*, Brill, Leiden, 2013.

17 In the literature, a classification of Marxist-feminist theories has emerged that distinguishes between Dual (or Triple) System Theory and Unitary Theory. Hartmann would be considered an exemplar of the former school, whereas Vogel is regarded as the pioneering figure of the latter, which is currently exemplified by Social Reproduction Theory. See Cinzia Arruzza, "Remarks on Gender", "Remarks on Gender", *Viewpoint Magazine*, September 2, 2014, https://viewpointmag.com/2014/09/02/remarks-on-gender/ accessed on 9th June 2025. It can be argued, however, that Hartmann's Dual Systems Theory is, in fact, a unitary theory of the mode of production in an extended sense. In addition to capitalist forms, the forms of production of individuals should also be taken into account and cannot be reduced to class relations.

18 Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James, *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community*, Falling Wall Press, Bristol, 1972. The political mobilization is the famous campaign "Wages for Housework", which developed from 1971 onwards and extended to Italy, Germany, Switzerland, Great Britain, Canada and the United States.

19 This is confirmed also by Heinrich, *Die Wissenschaft vom Wert*, pp. 260–1.

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is, then, the *form* of this production? 2) What types of domination are intrinsic to this form? And, 3) How is this form connected to those of capitalist production?

The domestic labor debate of the 1970s and 1980s, and more recent queer revisions, yielded similar answers.[20] Regarding the form of production (1), a number of concepts have been proposed, including: "mode of reproduction" (Bridenthal), "domestic mode of production" (Delphy), "mode of production of domestic labor" (Harrison), "the individuals' mode of production" (Wittig), "sex/gender system" (Rubin), "production of people in the sex/gender sphere" (Hartmann), "domestic labour as production" (Himmelweit and Mohun), "sexuo-affective production" (Ferguson and Folbre), "technology of gender" (De Lauretis) and "the sexual mode of production" (Butler).[21] Despite their differences, these concepts all point to the recognition of a *specific form* of the generative reproduction process.

Regarding types of domination (2), these concepts are unanimously related to gender domination, defined variously in terms of patriarchy, a binary sex/gender system, or a heterosexual matrix. Although the connection between reproduction and gender relations appears self-evident, it is crucial to acknowledge that, in theory, there are no inherent limitations to the speculation that in "more imaginative societies",[22] the (re)production of individuals, including "biological" reproduction, could be entirely detached not only from a heterosexual matrix or a binary sex/gender system and its correlated domination, but also from a sex/gender system *tout court*.

The dynamics of connection with the forms of capitalist production (3) is the question that has undoubtedly sparked the most impassioned, theoretical debates.

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20 A detailed and thorough examination of these positions is beyond the scope of this book. Instead, I will simply mention the key concepts that have been proposed as answers to the three questions.

21 Renate Bridenthal, "The Dialectics of Production and Reproduction in History", *Radical America*, vol. x, no. 2 (1976), pp. 3–11; Christine Delphy, *The Main Enemy: a Materialist Analysis of Women's Oppression*, trans. Lucy ap Roberts and Diana Leonard Barker, Women's Research and Resources Centre Publications, London, 1977; John Harrison, "Political Economy of Housework", *Bulletin of the Conference of Socialist Economists*, vol. III, no. 1 (1973), pp. 35–52; Monique Wittig, "The Category of Sex", Louise Turcotte (ed.) *The Straight Mind and Other Essays*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1992, pp. 1–8; Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex", Rayna R. Reiter (ed.), *Toward an Anthropology of Woman*, Monthly Review Press, New York and London, 1975, pp. 157–210; Hartmann, "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism"; Himmelweit and Mohun, "Domestic Labour and Capital"; Ann Ferguson and Nancy Folbre, "The Unhappy Marriage of Patriarchy and Capitalism", Lydia Sargent (ed.), *Women & Revolution: A Discussion of the Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism*, Black Rose Books, Montréal, 1981, pp. 313–39; Teresa de Lauretis, "The Technology of Gender", *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction*, Indiana University Press, Indianapolis, 1987, pp. 1–30; Butler, "Merely Cultural".

22 Hartmann, "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism", p. 16.

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A classic formulation of this question is, "Does domestic labor constitute a mode of production unto itself, distinct from the capitalist mode?" Strategies to answer this question derive from two basic positions: first, the conceptualization of domestic labor as a distinct mode of production, co-existent with, but distinct from the capitalist mode; and second, the extension of the concept of the "mode of production" itself to include sexual and gender regulation and generative functions.

Those who advocate the first strategy, such as Benston, Harrison, and Delphy, despite their differences,[23] emphasize the material autonomy and self-sufficiency of the reproduction of the domestic mode, which they conceptualize as a class system in its own right, remaining, somehow, at a pre-capitalist stage.[24] As for the second strategy, the shared thesis is that the material reproduction of societies encompasses both the production of goods and services and the production of people. Neither aspect alone is materially self-sufficient, or capable of self-reproduction. The production of things requires people, and the production of people requires things. Nevertheless, at a formal level, the relations that organize these two aspects differ, necessitating an investigation into the *modes* in which these two aspects are organized. Bridenthal speaks of "dialectics" between what she labels production and reproduction.[25] Hartmann speaks of "partnership", defined as a coexistence that is not necessarily functional or univocal between what she calls patriarchy and capitalism.[26] Himmelweit and Mohun speak of interdependency and mutual influence.[27] Broadening the concept of the mode of production, serves to illuminate more precisely the dynamics of the connections amongst the social forms of these relations (question 3), the production of goods and services (i.e. means of subsistence and of production) and production of labor-power.

Given that social forms are historically specific modes of organizing certain relations, one must start from historical fact. Historically, the differentiation of a purely economic sphere is a constitutive feature of capitalism. It is absent in pre-capitalist societies, which do not distinguish between economic production and regenerative life processes. In pre-capitalist societies, there was a unity of production and generative reproduction within peasant families. In contrast, in capitalist societies, there

23 Benston views it as a residual pre-capitalist mode, Harrison as a client mode, and Delphy as a mode that underlies and sustains the capitalist one.

24 For a critical examination of these positions, see Himmelweit and Mohun, "Domestic Labour and Capital", pp. 21–2. On Delphy, see Arruzza, "Remarks on Gender". These conceptualizations do not fully account for the separation between economic production and regenerative processes that are characteristic of capitalism. For this reason, they tend to view the domestic mode of production as a dual entity, encompassing both the production of goods and services within the family and the production of individuals.

25 Bridenthal, "The Dialectics of Production and Reproduction in History", p. 5.

26 Hartmann, "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism", p. 17.

27 Himmelweit and Mohun, "Domestic Labour and Capital", p. 21.

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is a separation between the production of goods and services, which occurs within private capitalist enterprises, and generative (re)production, which occurs within private families.[28] As evidenced by socialist feminist discourse, in standard Marxism, the field of material (re)production is reduced to the production of goods and services, the social relations of production and the relations intrinsic to the sites of goods production. Thus, within this context, "labor-power is treated as a vital input to production, but nowhere is labor-power taken seriously as an output of production".[29] In light of the expanded concept of mode of production, however, it is possible to take into account and address the daily and generational production of individuals and labor-power. Then, "for the purpose of illuminating family forms and domestic relations, we need to *invert our perspective*, analysing goods production as a process of labour-power's consumption, while seeing the domestic consumption of food and shelter as a process of labour-power's production".[30] Starting from this description, the following diagram may refine these insights and better conceptualize the dynamics of connection between the production of individuals and the production of goods and services.[31]

It is important to note that the focus is not on defining the specific content of the social form organizing the production of individuals, be it the "sex/gender system", or "heteronormativity", or "patriarchy", etc. (question 2). This is because the separation, represented by the dashed line, has no meaning in terms of gender relations. Therefore, the content of the specific form can only be identified through a dedicated analysis of the production of individuals. Those analyses focus on "what happens", so to say, within the lower oval and "discover" that this form has to do with the production of gendered individuals and cishetero-sexist domination. Unlike the political and legal forms examined by the State derivation debate (see section 2.1), the relationships concerning the production of individuals are not logically deducible from capitalist commodity production.[32]

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28 Ursula Beer, *Geschlecht Struktur Geschichte. Soziale Konstituierung des Geschlechterverhältnisses*, Campus, Frankfurt a.M.-New York, 1991.

29 Wally Seccombe, *A Millennium of Family Change: Feudalism to Capitalism in Northwestern Europe*, Verso, London-New York, 1992, p. 11.

30 *Ibid*. [emphasis added]

31 The material developed in this section further elaborate on the ideas presented in Francesco Aloe, Chiara Stefanoni, "Animals in Capitalist Societies. Conceptualizing the Anthropological Form", paper presented at 20th Annual Historical Materialism Conference, SOAS University, London, UK, November 10, 2023. For a fully developed theory of gender as a social form of the production of individuals, see: Chiara Stefanoni, Francesco Aloe, "From Marxist Feminism to Queer Materialist Theory: Conceptualizing Gender as Social Form", *Bollettino filosofico*, vol. XXXX (2025), forthcoming.

32 This raises the question of whether there is a pre-eminence among modes of production, that is, whether the capital relation directs the generative relation in some way. In Aloe and Stefanoni, "Anatomia della nazione", p. 369, we argued in favor of this pre-eminence: "In this

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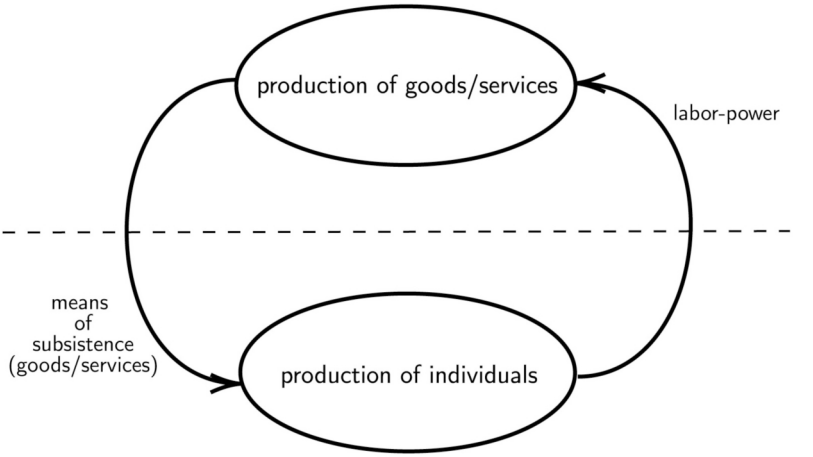
Diagram 1: The diagram offers a qualitative reinterpretation of Marx's well-known schemas of reproduction. The two elliptical shapes represent the social forms that organize these two productions, the dashed line represents their separation.



The arrow on the left represents the flow of means of subsistence, produced by capital as commodities, which stream to private families, providing them with the objective conditions for generative (re)production. The arrow on the right represents the flow of labor-power thus generated, which is sold as a commodity and moves to capitalist enterprises, providing them with the subjective conditions for valorization. The dynamics of the relationship between the form of the production of goods and services, i.e. capital, and the social form organizing the production of individuals are functionally interdependent, in constant mutual interaction and perturbation, exerting indirect influence on each other. They therefore constitute two interconnected social forms in a structural coupling, entangled in an interlocking structure of domination.

framework, if it is true that the peculiar dynamics of the capitalist mode of production – from which it is possible to identify structural goals and efficiency criteria for the orientation of power relations – have their direct field of action in the economic and political/state spheres, however, with their specific goals, they permeate all social spheres at various levels and thus provide 'a general illumination which bathes all the other colours and modifies their particularity' (Marx, *Grundrisse*, p. 107)". This question, however, is only meaningful at the level of concrete, not formal, processes. At this concrete level, the production of wealth tends to dominate, for example, by correlating national population decline with situations of economic crisis, unemployment, war, or disease. Certainly, there are situations in which the needs of reproduction of individuals have been prioritized over commodity production, for example during the lockdowns in the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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3.2 Anthropological Form: Producing Individuals as *Human*

Engels, in the aforementioned passage that is among the most frequently cited quotations in socialist-feminist scholarship, describes the production of individuals as, borrowing terms from the natural sciences, "the production of human beings themselves, the propagation of the species".[33] Consequently, the debate on the form of production of individuals and capital within the context of Marxist feminism, as well as the original diagrammatic elaboration proposed in the previous section, has been centered on the production of human individuals and intra-human relations of domination. Nonetheless, this definition as well as the differentiation between the production of "things" and "people" are anthropocentrically biased. Why is the production of individuals (and thus the analysis of gender and capital relations) immediately qualified as the production of individuals *of the human species*? This question represents a lacuna in Marxian theory and a fundamental blind spot that persists even in feminist-queer theories. The relations of domination between humans and non-human animals, or "species troubles", are grossly overlooked. This oversight is a consequence of a particular social form that both reifies and naturalizes the anthropological matrix of the production of individuals. To bring into view this theoretical result, it is necessary to remove the anthropocentric clause and consider the production of animal individuals, *both humans and non-humans*, leading to a series of fundamental inquiries: 1) What can be said about this form of production within the framework of Marxist analysis of capitalism in its ideal average? 2) How is it interconnected with the social forms of gender relations and capital?

From the perspective of relations of domination between humans and non-human animals, certain historical differences between pre-capitalist and capitalist societies are apparent. In pre-capitalism, there was a substantial unity between animal production and the generative reproduction of humans within the peasant family. This is the scenario depicted by Marx as, "patriarchal rural industry of a peasant *family* which produces corn, *cattle*, yarn, linen and clothing for its own use",[34] exemplified using two related concepts: "domesticity" and "*societas*". The concept of "domesticity", as defined by historian Richard Bulliet, provides a framework to understand a period in human-animal relations when social, intellectual, and economic structures normalized daily contact with animals.[35] Daily contact implied the domestic, generative production and exploitation of various animals for different purposes and according to their usefulness in order to potentially enable the self-sufficiency of patriarchal, rural industry. This was achieved through an interlocking of all the

33 Engels, *The Origin of the Family*, p. 132.

34 Marx, *Capital I*, p. 171. [emphasis added]

35 Richard W. Bulliet, *Hunters, Herders and Hamburgers. The Past and Future of Human-Animal Relationships*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2005, p. 3.

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functions disclosed by the specific qualities of animals.[36] Daily contact also entailed that "most people slaughtered their own chickens and hogs, or watched their butcher carve steaks and chops from a fat-sheathed carcass".[37]

The concept of *societas*, which can be translated as "relation, community", was first introduced by the ancient Roman author and naturalist, Pliny the Elder, in his writings, to delineate the relationships between humans and other animals. This concept has been subsequently revived by the contemporary philosopher, Tristan Garcia, who writes, "*Societas* gives concrete expression to a common bond between the specific capacities of different animals and what one species in particular, the human species, can make use of. *Societas* denotes both the human species' inclusion in the same community, and the possibility of exchanges between humanity and other animals".[38] This concept, despite its naturalistic flavor, elucidates the notion of a utilitarian and anthropocentric communality between humans and animals within a self-sufficient and closed productive nucleus. Thus, the peasant family represents the spatial and functional unity of the organization of the production of individuals, both human and animal.

In contrast to pre-capitalist societies, capitalist societies are distinguished by the separation of animal production and the generative reproduction of humans occurring within the private family unit. The household becomes an exclusively human space for the production of human individuals, severed from the production of animal individuals, which occurs in the economic sphere and is organized by capital forms. The concept of "postdomesticity", introduced by Bulliet as opposed to "domesticity", embraces this separation. Postdomesticity refers to a stage in human-animal relations in which people are physically and psychologically distant from the animals that produce the products they use,[39] and "treat animal products as industrial commodities and live animals as raw materials to be processed in the most efficient way possible".[40] Garcia characterizes this separation as, "Becoming predominantly urban. […] Humanity restricted its everyday acquaintance with other animals to companion species, nature reserves, zoos, and symbolic functions".[41]

Adapting the previous diagram, this specific historical separation becomes:[42]

36 Benedetta Piazzesi, *Così perfetti e utili. Genealogia dello sfruttamento animale*, Mimesis, Milano-Udine, 2015, pp. 26–39.

37 Bulliet, *Hunters, Herders and Hamburgers*, p. 4.

38 Tristan Garcia, *Form and Object*, trans. Mark Allan Ohm and Mark Allan Cogburn, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2014, p. 210.

39 Bulliet, *Hunters, Herders and Hamburgers*, p. 3.

40 *Ibid.*, 177.

41 Garcia, *Form and Object*, p. 212.

42 Aloe and Stefanoni, "Animals in Capitalist Societies".

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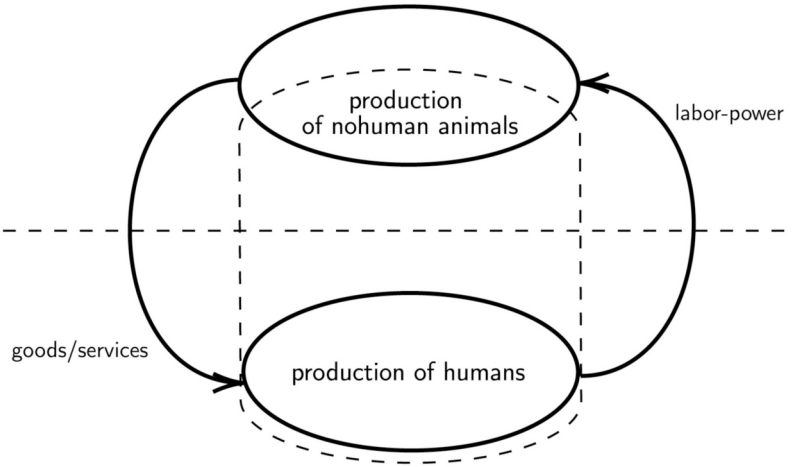
Diagram 2



The two ovals, representing the production forms of goods and services (capital) and of individuals (gender relations), respectively, remain. The dotted line continues to represent their separation, and the arrows continue to represent the output and input commodity flows. The addition to this diagram, the dashed elliptical shape, represents the totality of the production of individuals, both human and non-human. This dashed shape comprises the entire lower oval, the generative reproduction of humans, and intersects with the upper oval, the production of non-human animals, which is directly organized by capital and distinctly separated from human production. Therefore, the structure of the separation between humans and non-human animals *coincides precisely* with the separation between capitalist production of goods and services and the production of human individuals, represented by the dashed, horizontal line.

Regarding question 2), this diagram implies that the social form of human domination over non-human animals is identical to the structural coupling between capital and the form of generative reproduction, because this coupling is precisely what continually reproduces and naturalizes the separation between humans and non-human animals. This is expressed in the following formula: $A \cong K \rightleftarrows G$ (A represents the form of human domination over animals; K represents capital; G represents gender form).

The term "anthropological form" derives both from this Marxist theoretical foundation, and from ideas put forth by Agamben in relation to the "anthropological machine" and the ongoing reproduction of the separation between humans and non-

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human animals that it denotes.[43] The concept of anthropological form signifies, in a non-anthropocentric and materialist sense, the Agambenian insight that, "*Homo sapiens* is neither a clearly defined species nor a substance; it is, rather, a machine or device for producing the recognition of the human"[44], operating through a dual process of inclusion and exclusion.

In capitalist societies, the individual is produced as a gendered subject – represented in the lower oval – to be pumped – represented by the right arrow – as commodity labor-power into the capitalist production of goods and services. This *ipso facto* produces him or her[45] as distinct from animals. Simultaneously, the latter are produced as commodities and are thus excluded from the human category. Together with other commodities, animals and animal products, such as meat, other animal-sourced foods, medicines, entertainment involving animals, clothes, and more, stream to private families – represented by the left arrow – thereby providing them with the objective conditions for generative reproduction. In this way, they are fundamentally included in the production of human individuals.

Diagram 2 permits an abstract-conceptual reconstruction of the anthropological form, therefore a reconstruction *ex-post*. Integrating a diachronic dimension will elucidate certain structural requirements that constitute the conditions of possibility pertaining to the social form of human-animal relations and animal domination in capitalist societies.

Both the separation between the production of goods and services, on the one hand, and the production of individuals, on the other, are fundamental aspects of capitalist societies, represented in the diagram by two ovals. The upper is organized by capital form. With regard to the lower, complex internal processes organize the production and reproduction of individuals. It seems reasonable to posit that, even in the early phases of capitalism, the daily and generational production of human and non-human animals was still organized according to some pre-capitalist forms. Not only was the intact, extended patriarchal family a major armature along these lines. Just as importantly, a large portion of the means of subsistence, (crucially food) was produced by households themselves or obtained by independent farmers and artisans. This can be represented by a loop (see Diagram 3).

43 Giorgio Agamben, *The Open. Man and Animal*, trans. Kevin Attell, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2004, pp. 33–8.

44 *Ibid.*, 26.

45 The binarism (him *or* her) is appropriate in this context, given that the form produces as recognizable only male or female subjects.

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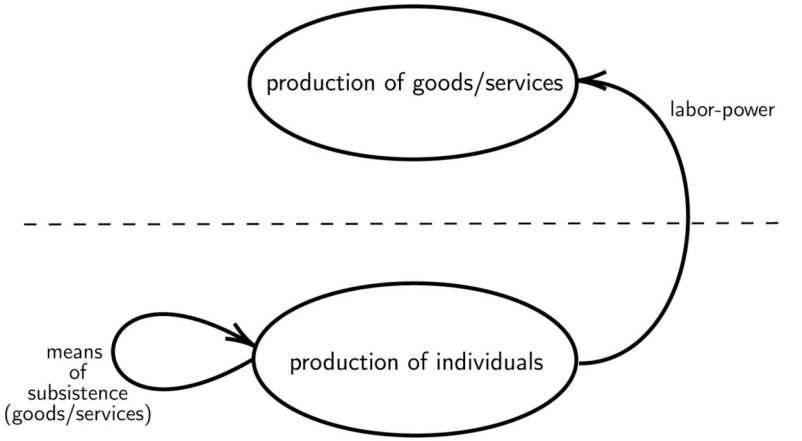
Diagram 3



Surely, a correlation exists between the two spheres. This is represented by the right arrow in Diagram 3 pointing from the bottom to the top, signifying a process of "picking up" of labor-power. This coincides with the moment labelled by Marx as the '*formal subsumption* of labor', which is an already existing labor process that initially does not occur under the command of capital, but is subordinated to capital. The distinction from similar pre-capitalist organizations consists in the fact that laborers work for a capitalist, and are thus selling their labor-power.[46]

The two elliptical shapes in Diagram 3 adhere to different logics, thereby engendering a state of conflict.[47] Namely, at the abstract level, in the capitalist mode of production, there is an intrinsic imperative of endless valorization, which imposes itself through the coercive laws of competition, driving towards the destruction of the material conditions of reproduction and naturalization. In a situation of formal subsumption, these destructive tendencies are connected to the production of absolute surplus value, attainable by a potentially limitless extension of the work day, longer than is necessary for the self-preservation of the laborer, so that the capitalist may appropriate the surplus value thereby generated.[48] Consequently, capital inher-

46 "Handicraftsmen who previously worked on their own account, or as apprentices of a master, should become wage-labourers under the direct control of a capitalist", Marx, *Capital*, p. 645.

47 The Marxist feminist Nancy Fraser similarly speaks of "'social contradiction' inherent in the deep structure of capitalist society. […] Neither intra-economic nor intra-domestic, it is a contradiction *between* those two constitutive elements of capitalist society". She refers to this as "social-crisis tendency of 'capitalism as such'". Nancy Fraser, "Contradictions of Capital and Care", *New Left Review*, vol. 100 (2016), p. 103.

48 For a detailed account of the capitalist process of production, see Heinrich, *Karl Marx's Capital*, pp. 99–108.

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ently poses a mortal threat to the (re)production of the very labor-power it needs to exploit. This is a direct threat to the Engelsian "propagation of the species", or Marxist feminist "social reproduction".

The solution to this crisis involves a dual transformation.[49] On the one hand, the transformation of the form of production of individuals, with a new specific arrangement – be it a "sex/gender system", or "heteronormativity" – and the separation of the production of animals from this arrangement, which is transformed now into capitalist organization.[50] On the other hand, the transformation of the relations between capitalist forms and forms of production of individuals – from "picking up" to structural coupling (disruption of the loop and appearance of the left arrow and establishment of the cycle), i.e. the constitution of the anthropological form. It is crucial that the transformation of the relations and the "content" of the form of generative reproduction are one and the same process. This is of the upmost importance. The constitution of structural coupling and the concomitant transformation of that form is, in fact, precisely what allows a fully capitalist structure to unfold and take root, marked, not so much by absolute surplus value, but by the production of relative surplus value.[51]

On a detailed level, the production of relative surplus value is achieved through the reduction of necessary labor time, i.e. the part of the working day during which the value of all the products that the workers require for their own (re)production is created, through the *intensification* of labor time (cooperation, division of labor), and the continuous improvement of productive assemblages, such as machinery. Unlike the absolute extension of working hours, this compression process does not necessarily possess a fatal tendency to destroy labor power. Of course, when productivity is increased by the introduction of machines, this also leads to an extension of working hours, as well as to shift work and night work, to achieve the longest possible running time of the machine. As a consequence of the increase in productivity, however, technical development may accelerate, raising the standard of living of the

49 Other processes that are part of this "solution" to be considered are the establishment of a legal workday, a minimum wage, and regulations concerning occupational health and safety or state welfare measures with legal provisions (such as, insurance policies) first imposed through workers' struggles, therefore happening at the *dispositif* level of the capital form and nation form. *Ibid.*, 207 ff.

50 In other words, the capitalist organization of the production of animals and their zootechnical transformation can be described as part of the process of subsumption of agricultural labor.

51 "The lengthening of labor-time is, however, only possible within limits, thus the *typically capitalist method* for increasing exploitation is the production of 'relative surplus value,' and through the implementation of increasingly expensive machines at that". *Ibid.*, 150. [emphasis added]

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working class simultaneously with rising profit, and, eventually, a shortening of labor-time.[52]

The production of relative surplus value is only possible through the *real subsumption* of labor under capital, as defined by Marx. Real subsumption signifies that the labor process is revolutionized in its entire organization. That is, "the capitalist mode of production creates the material guise of production corresponding to its social form".[53] Nevertheless, this dynamic, the production of relative surplus value, or real subsumption, is subject to an indispensable precondition: the majority of means of subsistence consumed in the working-class household must be *capitalistically* produced. This is the only means to achieve the significant decrease in the value of labor-power that would result in the increase of profits.[54]

In terms of the diagrammatical representation, only under these conditions will the left arrow appear, representing the effective establishment of the coupling. Nuclear families become totally dependent on commodities for subsistence, thereby reducing the time required for reproductive labor, such as cooking. Conversely, labor power is expended for the majority of the working day in the process of valorization. From a Marxist-feminist point of view, commodity consumption is part of the process of labor-power's production, organized by a new form of generative reproduction. This means that the coupling of capital and the generative form, thus the anthropological form, and the separation of humans and animals it perpetuates, is essential to the anatomy of the ideal average of capitalist societies. The anthropological form produces individuals as humans and declares or inscribes the population *as human*, thus ensuring reproducibility, against the destructive tendencies specific to capitalism and in favor of its own conditions of existence. The process of production of individuals is given by an anthropological matrix whose "invisibility" is a consequence of the fetishized anthropological social form.

The "golden structure" (Diagram 2) of capitalist societies is realized in this case, where structural coupling is perfectly balanced, enabling the anthropological form

52 *Ibid.*, 104–5.

53 *Ibid.*, 118.

54 The capitalistic production of most means of subsistence reduces the necessary labor time and increases the surplus labor time that can be appropriated. Individual capitalists, oriented toward profit maximization, introduce a technological upgrading of machinery that, by lowering production costs below the social average, enables them to acquire extra surplus value. This extra value persists as long as the upgrading and, with it, the decrease in the value of the produced commodity are not generalized by competition. To the extent that the produced commodity enters, directly or indirectly, into the means of subsistence of labor-power, given that the value of labor power is equal to the value of the means of subsistence, the value of labor-power also decreases. Moreover, the concept "profit" is not accurate in this context. The correct analytical category is the rate of surplus value. For a comprehensive discussion of these concepts, see *Ibid.*, 99–103, 121.

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to function ideally and without obstacle. This represents the state of greatest "splendor" of capitalist societies and their effective unfolding, which coincides with the greatest levels of reification and naturalization of their forms of domination and exploitation.[55] Nonetheless, the destructive tendencies inscribed within the production of absolute and relative surplus value, such as the systematic blindness of capital to its own conditions of existence, persist.[56] These tendencies can be conceptualized as causing a perturbation or a disruption to the anthropological form in the sense that they perturb or disrupt the equilibrium of the structural coupling between capital and the specific arrangement of the generative form, as well as the human/animal separation, by affecting the smooth functioning of the reproduction cycle to the point of open conflict.

To conclude, by incorporating the analysis of the anthropological social form of production of individuals and its respective *dispositifs* into the study of capitalist societies, it is possible to direct attention toward certain qualitative changes as well as structural constants in human-animal relations that are often obscured by the accentuated continuity and uniformity of the cultural models underlying concepts such as speciesism, anthroparchy[57] and "war against animals".[58] An illustrative example is the centralization of slaughterhouses and farms far from cities, cou-

55 A historical realization of such a structure involves the establishment of three elements that began in the late nineteenth century and took hold in the twentieth. First, Fordism, in which standardized products were produced on the assembly line for mass consumption and wages were raised (at least for a certain segment of the workforce: white, full-time production workers), leading to the mystification of the wage form and the naturalization of class exploitation. Second, the establishment of the *dispositif* of heterosexuality, which includes the nuclear family as the site of consumption of commodities and reproduction of individuals, a strong gender hierarchy in which the woman is the "angel of the home", and the pathologization of "perverts". Aloe and Stefanoni, "Anatomia della nazione", pp. 370–4. Third, the establishment of the dietary *dispositif* (meatification of the diet) and the zootechnical transformation (breeding and slaughterhouses). Here is the naturalization of species domination. Interestingly, Ford's moving assembly line was inspired by the disassembly line he saw when he visited Chicago's famous Union Stock Yard slaughterhouse.

56 Fraser's social-crisis tendency.

57 "Anthroparchy literally means 'human domination', and I see anthroparchy as a social system, a complex and relatively stable set of relationships in which the 'environment' is dominated through formations of social organization which privilege the human. […] the 'environment' […] be defined as the non-human animate world and its contexts – including the whole range of multifarious animal and plant species". Erika Cudworth, "Most Farmers Prefer Blondes: The Dynamics of Anthroparchy in Animals' Becoming Meat", *Journal of Critical Animal Studies* (2008), pp. 33–4.

58 According to Dinesh J. Wadiwel, humans' relationship to animals, for the most part, precisely does constitute an actual state of war, literally and materially. The concept of "war" describes more accurately a relationship that is "primarily hostile", that is more often than not "combative or at least focused upon producing harm and death", and that entails such "a monstrous

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pled with the "meatificaiton" of standard or average diets. This is the outcome of a specific historical *dispositif* – which will be analyzed in detail in the next chapter – that emerged from the conflictual relationship of different social forms (Diagram 3). Such centralization is not conceivable as a historically specific arrangement of biological-naturalistic survival, such as meat-eating. Rather, it can be viewed as a concrete social solution that allows for the production of human individuals as necessary for the reproduction of capitalist societies.

deployment of violence and extermination". Dinesh J. Wadiwel, *The War Against Animals*, Brill, Leiden, 2015, pp. 5, 6.

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4. The Dietary *Dispositif*

4.1 *Dispositifs* of the Anthropological Form

An abstract-conceptual reconstruction of the anthropological form provides a framework for understanding the structural conditions for human domination over non-human animals in capitalist societies, and opens to historical-social analysis certain configurations of animal domination. The anthropological form materializes as three specific *dispositifs* to be explored historically:

1. The dietary *dispositif*: the network which enables the exploitation of nonhuman animals for human feeding. Textile and clothing production with animal-derived components are interconnected to the food supply chain as well, as in the case of leather;
2. The pharmaceutical-experimentation *dispositif*: the network regarding the exploitation of non-human animals as experimental subjects both in the development of new drugs (for use in humans and other animals, such as farm animals, to augment productivity) and in various other fields of scientific research (bioengineering, cognitive science, ethology, etc.);
3. The entertainment-pet *dispositif*: the network regarding the exploitation of non-human animals for human "leisure" (zoos, theme parks, movies, safaris, dog and cat breeding, wild animals trafficking, etc.).

To grasp the qualitative transformation, the birth of the dietary *dispositif* will be explored historically, with respect to meat production. Since the latter half of the nineteenth century, the dietary *dispositif* in capitalist society has been centered upon meat. As Baics and Thelle put it, "meat, in particular, occupies a critical juncture for nineteenth-century food systems because no other food item was so intricately connected to urban modernity".[1] Urbanization was a fundamental process of the nineteenth century, with the urbanized population growing rapidly between 1820 and

1 Gergely Baics and Mikkel Thelle, "Introduction: Meat and the Nineteenth-Century City", *Urban History*, vol. 45, no. 2 (2018), p. 184.

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1914 (the level of urbanization of Western countries increased from approximately 12 percent to 36 percent).[2] More and bigger cities, with an expanding populations coming from the countryside and a rise in the standard of living for the middle class generated an urbanized set of issues surrounding meat supply, namely the scale of production and demand, leading to the rise of meat as a staple commodity. The relationship between urbanization and the commodification of meat, however, is not a direct causality, and the previous system based upon household production and private slaughterhouses was still present, if waning. As a *dispositif* perspective makes clear, this was the outcome of a specific, historical trajectory, involving different elements within specific sets of power relations.

Moreover, meat's privileged role in the capitalist transition, especially red meat, along with other foodstuffs of animal origin, also known as animal source food – milk and dairy products, fish, and eggs – developed differently across different regions and over time.[3] The commodification of liquid milk was particularly dependent upon the railway expansion, for example, thus becoming a phenomenon of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[4] The fishery sector also transformed in the late-nineteenth century (around 1880), thanks again to the railroad, steam-powered fishing vessels, "power lifters", beam trawl and the first attempts in developing marine hatchery.[5] Finally, in the 1910s and the 1920s, chicken meat and egg production shifted from subsistence, household production – in which backyard hens recycled organic house waste converting them to eggs, manure and eventually meat – to commercial production, the emergence of the poultry industry and the subsequent specialization between broiler and egg production.[6]

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2 Paul Bairoch and Gary Goertz, "Factors of Urbanisation in the Nineteenth Century Developed Countries: A Descriptive and Econometric Analysis", *Urban Studies*, vol. 23, no. 4 (1986), pp. 285–305.

3 Analogous changes in meat consumption affected Mediterranean Europe only after 1900 and East Asia only after 1950. Vaclav Smil, "Eating Meat: Evolution, Patterns, and Consequences", *Population and Development Review*, vol. 28, no. 4 (2002), pp. 599–639.

4 For an account of milk as a commodity, from its origin in the 1860s and 1870s to 1940, conducted in terms of "the heterogeneous relations that it embodies and mediates", see Richie Nimmo, *Milk, Modernity and the Making of the Human: Purifying the Social*, Routledge, London, 2010.

5 John M. Knauss, "The Growth of British Fisheries During the Industrial Revolution", *Ocean Development & International Law*, vol. 36, no. 1 (2005), pp. 1–11; and Colin E. Nash, "Aquatic Animals", Kenneth F. Kiple and Kriemhild Ornelas (eds.) *The Cambridge World History of Food*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2000, pp. 459–61.

6 For case studies in Australia, see Andrea Gaynor, "Fowls and the Contested Productive Spaces of Australian Suburbia, 1890–1990", Peter Atkins (ed.), *Animal Cities: Beastly Urban Histories*, Ashgate, Farnham, 2012, pp. 205–19. For case studies in the U.S., William Boyd, "Making Meat: Science, Technology, and American Poultry Production", *Technology and Culture*, vol. 42, no. 4

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During the nineteenth century, the emergence of centralized slaughterhouses and intensive farming led to government regulation and public health reforms, and other transitions within the market, family, zootechnical practices, culinary practices, the fields of nutrition science and dietetics (based upon chemistry and biology), media and communication representations and related, individual practices of self-regulation through consumer choices. Through this *dispositif*, in Western modernity, meat has experienced a change of purpose and function describable as "hygienizing meat", a process imposing the sanitation and more efficient organization of both human and non-human exploitation.

4.2 The Dietary *Dispositif*: Beginning with the Slaughterhouse

A network, even if it has a finite extension, does not have a beginning or an end, unlike, for instance, a chain where its first and its last link are easily identifiable. The same is true for a molecule. Thus, given the analogy between molecule and *dispositif* established in Section 2.3, where to start untying this dietary *dispositif*? Which knot-atom to start with? Meat is a complex and multiple object during modernity, varying greatly across contexts and times, it always involves the act of killing animals. Excluding cannibalism, necrophagy, and in-vitro meat research projects,[7] because of their exceptionalism, meat can be essentially defined as flesh of *killed* animals. Thus, the institution of the public slaughterhouse is the main subject of this inquiry.

Two books, *Meat, Modernity and the Rise of Slaughterhouse*[8] and *Animal Cities: Beastly Urban Histories*[9] are primarily used here to outline the dietary *dispositif* and its relational, heterogeneous elements (starting from the slaughterhouse) and trace the patterns and trends in its development, based upon on first-hand historical accounts and specific case-studies. Rapid political, social and economic integration of Europe, first, and the rest of the world in the second half of the century under capitalism, in other words, "globalization", determine the general *dispositif* and

(2001), pp. 631–64; and Donald D. Stull and Michael J. Broadway, *Slaughterhouse Blues: The Meat and Poultry Industry in North America*, Thomson/Wadsworth, Belmont, 2013.

7 The unsuccessful promise of in vitro meat is to create animal protein without the death of an individual creature. Erik Jönsson, "Benevolent Technotopias and Hitherto Unimaginable Meats: Tracing the Promises of in Vitro Meat", *Social Studies of Science*, vol. 46, no. 5 (2016), pp. 725–48; Carlo Salzani and Zipporah Weisberg, "The Ethics and Politics of Cultured Meat: Food Transition, Big Business, 'Humanewashing'", Donald Bruce and Ann Bruce (eds.), *Transforming Food Systems: Ethics, Innovation and Responsibility*, Brill-Wageningen Academic, Wageningen, 2022, pp. 428–33.

8 Paula Y. Lee (ed.), *Meat, Modernity, and the Rise of the Slaughterhouse*, University of New Hampshire Press, Lebanon, 2008.

9 Peter Atkins (ed.), *Animal Cities: Beastly Urban Histories*, Ashgate, Farnham, 2012.

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shape its recurrent relational patterns.[10] For example, slaughterhouse reforms were widespread in Europe, following the Napoleonic public abattoirs in Paris of 1818. Rouen inaugurated its central slaughterhouse in 1830, followed by Marseille in 1848, Lyon in 1858, Brussels in 1840, Vienna in 1851, Edinburgh in 1852, Manchester in 1872, Milan in 1863, Zurich in 1868, Frankfurt in 1861, Munich in 1865, Hamburg in 1872, Berlin in 1881, Rome in 1888, Barcelona in 1891 and Valencia in 1902. Paris opened a new slaughterhouse structure, La Villette, in 1867. Moreover, there was frequent and comprehensive exchange of knowledge between scientific communities in different countries regarding slaughterhouses. For instance, Scottish veterinarian John Gamgee, the leading critic of farm conditions such as diseased animals and threats to public health in Britain, spent several years in continental Europe, touring the principal veterinary schools in France, Germany and Italy.[11]

Since the 1870s, an international food system or food regime emerged[12]. Lasting until 1914 this "first food regime" was centered on European, especially British, imports of basic grains and meat from settler colonies (Argentina, Canada, the Americas, Australia and New Zealand) and of sugar, tea, coffee, palm oil, etc. from tropical colonies. At the same time, European was experiencing a crisis of grain production and expanded farming and soil mining in settler states. British hegemony in the world market thanks to its industrial and finance capital was legitimized by the rhetoric of free trade.[13] Along these lines, the food regime analysis involves international relations of the dietary *dispositif*.

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10 Kevin H. O'Rourke and Jeffrey G. Williamson, *Globalization and History: The Evolution of a Nineteenth-Century Atlantic Economy*, MIT press, Cambridge, 1999.

11 John Francis, "John Gamgee (1831–1894): Our Greatest Veterinarian", *British Veterinary Journal*, vol. 118, no. 10 (1962), pp. 430–8.

12 The perspective of food regime analysis "links international relations of food production and consumption to forms of accumulation broadly distinguishing periods of capitalist accumulation". Harriet Friedmann and Philip McMichael, "Agriculture and the State System: The Rise and Decline of National Agricultures, 1870 to the Present", *Sociologia Ruralis*, vol. 29, no. 2 (1989), pp. 93–117. Food regime analysis focuses on the following question: "Where and how is (what) food produced in the international economy of capitalism?; Where and how is food consumed, and by whom? What types of food?; What are the social and ecological effects of international relations of food production and consumption in different food regimes?" Henry Bernstein, *Food Regimes and Food Regime Analysis: A Selective Survey*, paper presented at "Land Grabbing, Conflict and Agrarian-environmental Transformations: Perspectives from East and Southeast Asia" conference, 5–6 June 2015, Chiang Mai University, 2015, p. 1 https://www.iss.nl/sites/corporate/files/CMCP_1-_Bernstein.pdf accessed 9th June 2025. In recent years this perspective has been revisited in Philip McMichael, "A Food Regime Genealogy", *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, vol. 36, no. 1 (2009), pp. 139–69; Philip McMichael, *Food Regimes and Agrarian Questions*, Fernwood Publishing, Halifax, 2013; and Bernstein, *Food Regimes and Food Regime Analysis*.

13 Bernstein, *Food Regimes and Food Regime Analysis*, table 1, p. 5.

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At the same time, certain case studies reveal local characteristics and politics of this *dispositif*, at the country or city level. In line with Victorian Britain's role as the "workshop of the world",[14] its cities provide some of the best-documented cases of urban meat production in historical literature.[15] In the U.S., literature endowed cities such as Chicago the reputation, of "slaughterhouse to the world."[16] Western

14 Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire: from 1750 to the Present Day*, The New Press, New York, 1999, p. 112 ff.

15 Chris Otter, "Civilizing Slaughter: The Development of the British Public Abattoir, 1850–1910", Ian MacLachlan, "Humanitarian Reform, Slaughter Technology, and Butcher Resistance in Nineteenth-Century Britain", and Richard Perren, "Filth and Profit, Disease and Health: Public and Private Impediments to Slaughterhouse Reform in Victorian Britain" Lee (ed.), *Meat, Modernity, and the Rise of the Slaughterhouse*, pp. 89–152; Ian MacLachlan, "A Bloody OKal Nuisance: The Persistence of Private Slaughter-Houses in Nineteenth-Century London", *Urban History*, vol. 34, no. 2 (2007), pp. 227–54; Atkins, "Animal Wastes and Nuisances in Nineteenth-Century London"; Ian MacLachlan, "'The Greatest and Most Offensive Nuisance that Ever Disgraced the Capital of a Kingdom': The Slaughterhouses and Shambles of Modern Edinburgh", *Review of Scottish Culture*, no. 17 (2004–5), pp. 57–71; Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*; Harriet Ritvo, "Animals in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Complicated Attitudes and Competing Categories", Aubrey Manning and James Serpell (eds.), *Animals and Human Society: Changing Perspectives*, Routledge, London, 2002, pp. 106–26; Brian Harrison, "Animals and the State in Nineteenth-Century England", *The English Historical Review*, vol. 88, no. 349 (1973), pp. 786–820; and Anne Hardy, "Food, Hygiene, and the Laboratory: A Short History of Food Poisoning in Britain, Circa 1850–1950", *Social History of Medicine*, vol. 12, no. 2 (1999), pp. 293–311.

16 Dominic A. Pacyga, "Chicago: Slaughterhouse to the World", in Lee (ed.), *Meat, Modernity, and the Rise of the Slaughterhouse*, pp. 153–67; William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*, WW Norton & Company, New York, 1991, pp. 207–59; and Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle*, Pennsylvania University Press Electronic Classic Series, Philadelphia, 2008. On Cincinnati, see Steve C. Gordon, "From Slaughterhouse to Soap-Boiler: Cincinnati's Meat Packing Industry, Changing Technologies, and the Rise of Mass Production, 1825–1870", *IA. The Journal of the Society for Industrial Archeology* (1990), pp. 55–67. On New York, see Roger Horowitz, "The Politics of Meat Shopping in Antebellum New York City", and Jared N. Day, "Butchers, Tanners, and Tallow Chandlers: The Geography of Slaughtering in Early Nineteenth-Century New York City", Lee (ed.), *Meat, Modernity, and the Rise of the Slaughterhouse*, pp. 178–97. For a comparative study of planning regulation in New York, Baltimore, Boston and Philadelphia, see Catherine Brinkley and Domenic Vitiello, "From Farm to Nuisance: Animal Agriculture and the Rise of Planning Regulation", *Journal of Planning History*, vol. 13, no. 2 (2014), pp. 113–35. For a comparative study on market culture in New York, Paris and Mexico City, see Roger Horowitz et al., "Meat for the Multitudes: Market Culture in Paris, New York City, and Mexico City over the Long Nineteenth Century", *The American Historical Review*, vol. 109, no. 4 (2004), pp. 1055–83; and Lindgren Johnson, "To "Admit All Cattle without Distinction": Reconstructing Slaughter in the Slaughterhouse Cases and the New Orleans Crescent City Slaughterhouse", Lee (ed.), *Meat, Modernity, and the Rise of the Slaughterhouse*, pp. 198–215.

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Europe's urban centers,[17] Paris, foremost, also boast literature about the meat industry.[18] Detailed research has been conducted also on Mexico City[19] and more recently on Buenos Aires,[20] Rio de Janeiro,[21] Barcelona,[22] Copenhagen,[23] and Moscow,[24] providing an image-set of this phenomenon as it emerged. While such literary sources are merely descriptive, they provide data to be historically, analytically, and institutionally examined.

Despite the contextual differences which make each abattoir unique across these cases, some recurrent, essential features include location, exterior and interior architecture, and inhabitants. A four-point analysis structured by these features is as follows:

1. Location. The abattoir is on the outskirts, distant from city centers, often near a river or canal, and connected to rural areas and urban centers through railways and shipping lines. An abundant fresh water source is fundamental for the well-functioning of the slaughterhouse complex. Waterways supply running water, fed by a system of pumps, and waste disposal (blood and unprocessed bodies or body parts), through a drainage system. The direction and intensity of the current of the water source are essential factors.

An example is New Orleans' Crescent City Slaughterhouse, located on the Mississippi River. The strong current of the river flows down and away from the city, thus

17 Dorothee Brantz, "Animal Bodies, Human Health, and the Reform of Slaughterhouses in Nineteenth-Century Berlin", Lee (ed.), *Meat, Modernity, and the Rise of the Slaughterhouse*, pp. 71–88.

18 Kyri Claflin, "La Villette: City of Blood (1867–1914)", Lee (ed.), *Meat, Modernity, and the Rise of the Slaughterhouse*, pp. 27–45; Sydney Watts, "The Grande Boucherie, the 'Right' to Meat, and the Growth of Paris", and Paula Y. Lee, "Siting the Slaughterhouse: From Shed to Factory", Lee (ed.), *Meat, Modernity, and the Rise of the Slaughterhouse*, pp. 13–26, 46–70.

19 Jeffrey M. Pilcher, "Abattoir or Packinghouse: A Bloody Industrial Dilemma in Mexico City, c. 1890", Lee (ed.), *Meat, Modernity, and the Rise of the Slaughterhouse*, pp. 216–36.

20 Fabiola Lopez-Duran and Nikki Moore, "Meat-Milieu: Medicalization, Aestheticization and Productivity in Buenos Aires and its Pampas, 1868–1950", *Urban History*, vol. 45, no. 2 (2018), pp. 253–74.

21 Maria-Aparecida Lopes, "Struggles over an 'Old, Nasty, and Inconvenient Monopoly': Municipal Slaughterhouses and the Meat Industry in Rio de Janeiro, 1880–1920s", *Journal of Latin American Studies*, vol. 47, no. 2 (2015), pp. 349–76.

22 Manel Guardia et al., "Meat Consumption and Nutrition Transition in Barcelona, 1709–1935", *Urban History*, vol. 45, no. 2 (2018), pp. 193–213.

23 Mikkel Thelle, "The Meat City: Urban Space and Provision in Industrial Copenhagen, 1880–1914", *Urban History*, vol. 45, no. 2 (2018), pp. 233–52.

24 Anna Mazanik, "'Shiny Shoes' for the City: The Public Abattoir and the Reform of Meat Supply in Imperial Moscow", *Urban History*, vol. 45, no. 2 (2018), pp. 214–32.

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"the remarkable absence of all odor".[25] In Chicago's Union Stock Yard complex, by contrast, where the environmental conditions were not as favorable, the waterway could become a real "river of blood". The leader of the global meat industry, owned by the Union Stock Yard & Transit Company (USY & T Co.), opened on Christmas Day, 1865, and was located on the South Branch of the Chicago River. This swampy land posed drainage issues, and the huge amount of waste dumped in the shallow body of water contaminated it so much that it bubbled from the decomposition, giving it the name "Bubbly Creek", as it is still called. Moscow's abattoir, constructed between 1886 and 1888, demonstrates some solutions to the problem of low water levels. The shallow and slow Moskva River, flowing through a densely populated area downstream of the city, could not efficiently clean and remove the offal of meat production. A water filtration engineering project was implemented, in which each building of the complex was connected to a sewerage system that brought the waste to filtration fields at a large wetland south-east of Moscow.[26]

2. Exterior Architecture. The slaughterhouse is not a single building, but a complex of several different edifices, some of them connected by internal railways. A huge, enclosed area may comprise animals pens and stables, gates, a killing floor, a special abattoir for diseased animals, refrigeration rooms, a dressing room, a suspension room, carcass destruction facilities, farmed animals trading market, canning divisions, administrative offices, storerooms, apartments for employees, hotels for drovers and farmed animals producers, guardhouses, laboratories, biology museums (housing, for instance, waxworks, preserved examples of animal pathologies and parasites, as well as statistical materials on morbidities), libraries and auditoriums.

An interesting example is Mexico City's Peralvillo slaughterhouse, officially inaugurated in 1897 as part of the progressive reform program of urban improvement undertaken by the government of Porfirio Díaz (1876–1911) and the technocratic elite which surrounded him, known as the *científicos*, the scientific ones. They were intent upon making Mexico a modern nation according to the model of what they viewed as the technologically advanced societies of Europe and North America. In accordance with this mentality, a biology museum was located on the main floor of the slaughterhouse's administrative building, as a monument to scientific progress. The library, where health inspectors could keep up to date with the latest medical essays, was located upstairs, next to a laboratory equipped with microscopes for meat inspection.[27] A similar case is Moscow's abattoir where, in addition to the laboratory

25 Quoted in Johnson, "To 'Admit All Cattle without Distinction'", p. 210.

26 Mazanik, "'Shiny Shoes' for the City", p. 220.

27 Pilcher, "Abattoir or Packinghouse", p. 226.

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and the museum, there was a 300-seat auditorium for scholarly lectures. Like the Peralvillo slaughterhouse, Moscow's slaughterhouse symbolized the commitment of municipal authorities to public health, in the image of European cities. For this reason, in both cases, the slaughterhouse is considered and presented to the public as a "technological and scientific masterpiece", and a center for scientific promotion and education.[28]

Sometimes, the abattoir complex also comprises meat and viscera markets. Generally, however, slaughter and butchery are disaggregated, especially after the introduction of refrigeration and canning technologies. In an organization in which production is separated from consumption, the slaughterhouse is entirely devoted to rendering "animal to edible" – to borrow the incisive title of the book by ethnographer Noëlie Vialles[29] – while dead-meat markets, private butchers stores dispersed along the streets, and meat stalls at municipal urban markets are places for the sale of a commodity which was starting to look more and more like every other commodity. The separation between slaughterhouse and market is a regulated and coordinated system, subject to policy.[30]

Facilities for the manufacture of animal by-products also constitute part of the slaughterhouse, located either inside its the fence or just close to it. They produced things such as blood fertilizer, or served as tallow factories, tanneries, soap makers, bone boilers, fat renders, plants for cleaning intestines, albumin factories, etc., in a word, the so-called "nuisance trades". The whole complex is separated and hidden from the outside by a fence, "cloaked in banality, [...] purposely camouflaged by an inexpressive exterior that deflect visual attention".[31] Usually, the buildings are arranged with logical rigor to streamline the process of "decorporealization"[32] of the living animal body. This process takes place with a movement of living animals from pens, near railway platforms and docks to their fading into thin air through the smokestacks of the by-products factories, passing through the "inner sanctum"[33] of the slaughterhouse – out of sight both from people outside and inside the facilities. A similar process of decorporealization is accomplished, in some cases,[34] with a top-

28 Mazanik, "'Shiny Shoes' for the City", p. 230.

29 Noëlie Vialles, *Animal to Edible*, trans. J. A. Underwood, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994.

30 See the study on Barcelona in Guardia et al., "Meat Consumption and Nutrition Transition in Barcelona"; and the comparative study on Paris, New York, and Mexico City in Horowitz et al., "Meat for the Multitudes".

31 Lee, "Siting the Slaughterhouse", p. 51.

32 Johnson, "To 'Admit All Cattle without Distinction'", p. 211.

33 This is the most common case. The idea of this kind of movement is elaborated by Johnson from an 1875 lithograph of the Crescent City Slaughterhouse but can be easily applied to other slaughterhouse complexes. *Ibid.*

34 Pacyga, "Chicago", p. 156.

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down, vertical movement. The edifice of the abattoir is three to seven stories, and animals are taken up ramps to the slaughter hall on the top floor. Through openings in the floor, various parts are removed from the animal – paws, skin, viscera, fat, etc. – that fall into the tables below where other workers further divide meat, tendons and bones. They are then moved to a lower floor, where respective manufactures are located. The meat goes to the butcher's shop, the bones, to degreasing or gelatine manufacture, the tendons and waste, to make industrial saws, fatteners, glues. Due to the size and complexity of abattoirs, they were often called "cities" or "towns", like the famous "City of Blood", i.e. La Villette abattoir,[35] or "Meat City", i.e. the first major slaughterhouse in Copenhagen, or "Pakingtown", i.e. Chicago's Union Stock Yard.[36]

3. Interior Architecture. The interiors of slaughterhouses are mechanized and "truly modern". Washing and transportation are two of the most highly mechanized functions. There is plenty of running water, well-functioning drainage systems, broad paved streets lit by gas or, later, electricity, separate, large, open, well-lit and well-ventilated, climate controlled halls for different species of animal and meat. Mechanical apparatuses such as waterproof floors, lifts, transporters, weighing machines, aerial rails, pulleys, rails, hooks, sausage-mincers, hog-scraping devices, bullets, pistols, bolts, carbon monoxide, coal gas, telegraphs, electric currents (used for the "civilized" slaughter, stunning of the animal before killing it) replace human labor more and more.

This increasing mechanization reached its peak with the introduction of the conveyor belt and, above all, the pulley, or wheel,[37] which completed the two-story disassembly line. The pulley could lift and transport live animals through the workstations for the various slaughtering phases, making it very significant for slaughterhouse

35 La Villette, opened in 1867 beside Paris' fortifications in the Nineteenth Arrondissement, was part of Baron Georges-Eugène Haussman's renovation project of Paris, aimed at concentrating those noxious activities related to meat, while, at the same time, distancing them from the great boulevards of bourgeois Paris. La Villette was the greatest market and slaughterhouse establishment in the continent with 40 pavilions on a 54 hectares area. Claflin, "La Villette", p. 28.

36 In 1864, the stockyard covered 129 hectares. By 1900, it grew to 192 hectares. Pacyga, "Chicago", p. 154.

37 "At the head there was a great iron wheel, about twenty feet in circumference, with rings here and there along its edge. Upon both sides of this wheel there was a narrow space, into which came the hogs at the end of their journey […] It began slowly to revolve, and then the men upon each side of it sprang to work. They had chains which they fastened about the leg of the nearest hog, and the other end of the chain they hooked into one of the rings upon the wheel. So, as the wheel turned, a hog was suddenly jerked off his feet and borne aloft". Sinclair, *The Jungle*, p. 38.

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development. In the 1840s, Cincinnati's slaughterhouses suspended hooks from an overhead horizontal wheel and gambrel sticks transported gutted hogs from the killing floor to the cooling room. Still, manual lifting of the dressed hogs from station to station was required. By the early 1860s, the system was further improved by mounting a grooved wheel on a continuous overhead rail, eliminating the need for manual lifting of the carcass from the dressing table to the cooling room. Finally, in 1867, a suspension apparatus for weighing hogs refined the system. They were removed from the drying room, hung on hooks and transported along a horizontal rail, when a worker then pulled a lever, elevating the carcass above the rail and measuring its weight.[38] "The consolidation and increased mechanization of Cincinnati's meat packing industry set the stage for the flow production systems of the early 20th century",[39] especially the Union Stock Yard's system, in which the disassembly line was perfected and brought to complete effectiveness, inspiring Henry Ford's assembly line at the Ford Motor Company.[40]

4. Inhabitants. Depending on the degree of mechanization, there may artisanal master butchers and other skilled workers in abattoirs.

At La Villette, for example, according to traditional French meat culture, the "philosophy of French *abattage*" remained almost intact in the transition from the private slaughterhouses scattered all over Paris to consolidated, public abattoirs. This philosophy dictated the coordinated work of six men under the supervision of a *patron boucher* – a *maître garçon*, two or three *garçons bouchers*, a *baladeur* (literally, "walkabout"), who brought the animals from their holding pens, a *dégraisseur* ("degreaser"), who removed the fat and the organs from the abdominal cavity and, finally, a young apprentice called the *agneau* ("lamb").[41] Chicago's Packingtown also had skilled laborers. Alongside salaried men who were paid a regular wage despite fluctuations in the supply of farmed animals, there were "pacemakers", who sped up the lines.

Alongside the skilled workforce, unskilled laborers hired for precarious hours through a contingent process. At the Union Stock Yard, for example,

> At the crack of dawn, men and women assembled outside the meat plants. Sometimes crowd of hundreds or even thousands would wait for the straw bosses and employment agents to appear and chose new employees. Representatives of the company went out into the crowd and picked those that seemed the strongest

38 Gordon, "From Slaughterhouse to Soap-Boiler", pp. 64–5.

39 *Ibid.*, 66.

40 As Ford stated, "The idea came in a general way from the overhead trolley that the Chicago packers use in dressing beef". Henry Ford, *My Life and Work*, Garden City, New York, 1922, p. 81.

41 Claflin, "La Villette", pp. 34, 36.

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> or most skilled. There was no bargaining as to wages or hours; the agent simply tapped the man or woman he chose and told them, "Come along!".[42]

Day laborers were common in Europe, as well. At La Villette, people, almost exclusively men, gathered in the early morning outside the front gates on rue de Flandre and, on high-volume days, the *patron boucher* hired workers from these groups.[43] When women were first hired at slaughterhouses, they worked only on meat inspection. For example, in 1887, Berlin's Central Viehhof, where inspectors were often trained veterinarians, hired its first female trichinosis inspectors. This development, celebrated by contemporaries as an epochal change, aligned seamlessly with the prevailing gender stereotypes and the associated division of labor. As one author wrote at the time,

> A new era has come for the city administration two dozen young ladies were hired as meat inspectors. From the critical eye and judicious care of these ladies – and who would want to doubt the presence of these attributes in gentle widows and blossoming maidens – we can confidently expect that they will stop the insidious attack of the terrible hair worm that has caused so much damage in Berlin.[44]

Since the time of its opening, Chicago's Union Stock Yard employed a large number of women in the packinghouse. They were not allowed to use knives, however, and were restricted to canning. A strike in 1894 ended this restriction, and women were employed in every department, except the slaughter floor. Many workers were Polish and Lithuanian immigrants, the most represented immigrant groups. Others included Irish and Germans and, later, African Americans in the packinghouse. Children from the so-called "Back of the Yards" – i.e. the extremely poor and haphazard working-class neighborhood that developed to the south and the west of the packing plants – also had to work, for very low pay, in Packingtown. To contribute to their families, they continued to work, and often falsely reported their ages after 1893, when the State of Illinois prohibited child labor under the age of fourteen.[45] In addition to the employees in productive roles, other professionals and subjects, such as public health inspectors, veterinarians, meat inspectors, police officers, animal welfare associations' inspectors, administrative staff, sellers, buyers, train drivers, cleaners, guards, animal handlers, wholesale butchers, commissioners, market professionals, cows (beeves, calves), pigs, horses, sheep, hogs, chickens and microbes were part of the slaughterhouse.

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42 Pacyga, "Chicago", pp. 156, 157.

43 Claflin, "La Villette", p. 37.

44 Quoted in Brantz, "Animal Bodies, Human Health, and the Reform of Slaughterhouses in Nineteenth-Century Berlin", p. 84.

45 Pacyga, "Chicago", pp. 155–9.

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A utopian slaughterhouse, envisaged by the British physician, leader of the temperance movement, and sanitation campaigner, Benjamin Ward Richardson, served as a model. In 1876 in his book *Hygeia*, he writes,

> The slaughter-houses of the city are all public, and are separated by a distance of a quarter of a mile from the city. They are easily removable edifices, and are under the supervision of the sanitary staff […] All animals used for food […] are subjected to examination in the slaughter-house, or in the market, if they be brought into the city from other depots. The slaughter-houses are so constructed that the animals killed are relieved from the pain of death. They pass through a narcotic chamber, and are brought to the slaughterer oblivious of their fate. The slaughter-houses drain into the sewers of the city, and their complete purification daily, from all offal and refuse, is rigidly enforced […] The buildings, sheds, and styes for domestic food-producing animals are removed a short distance from the city, and are also under the supervision of the sanitary officer; the food and water supplied for these animals comes equally, with human food, under proper inspection.[46]

4.2.1 Excursus: Abattoir or Packinghouse? A False Dilemma

In the literature, an essential, qualitative distinction is drawn between the European and the American slaughterhouse model.[47] The designated prototypes are, respectively, La Villette and the Union Stock Yard, or the abattoir and the packinghouse. For example, the construction of the new Peralvillo slaughterhouse in Mexico City brings about a common, "bloody industrial dilemma" regarding the adoption of one model over the other.[48] The key difference lies in their levels of industrialization and automation: the abattoir is seen as less sophisticated in machinery, while the packinghouse has a higher degree of technological integration. For instance, the workers at La Villette, "believed that they were working in concert, unlike the automatons in an industrial American factory".[49] Similarly, as Lee reports, a British Journalist in 1905 commented that, "at Chicago there are […] no slaughter-*houses* at all".[50] Unlike Europe, Chicago had only slaughter "factories", where animals were treated as raw material to be processed for maximum profit. Many Europeans were horrified by Packingtown's conditions, although some admired the facility.[51] European slaughterhouses were often naively appreciated as bucolic. For instance, in 1910, the

46 Quoted in Peter Atkins, "The Urban Blood and Guts Economy", Atkins (ed.), *Animal Cities*, p. 87.

47 Marcus Doel, *Geographies of Violence: Killing Space, Killing Time*, Sage, London 2017, p. 76.

48 Pilcher, "Abattoir or Packinghouse".

49 Claflin, "La Villette", p. 37.

50 Lee, *Meat, Modernity, and the Rise of the Slaughterhouse*, p. 7. [emphasis added]

51 Kenneth D. Rose, *Unspeakable Awfulness: America Through the Eyes of European Travelers, 1865–1900*, Routledge, London, 2014.

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American consul C.P.H. Nason, examining a series of reports on the organization of municipal slaughterhouses in Europe requested by the U.S. government, praised the Grenoble abattoir for its resembling a "pleasure resort or a miniature exhibition grounds".[52] As Lee underlines, "Nason may have found the Grenoble establishment to be like 'a pleasure resort' because it retained a small-scale, artisanal sensibility alien to the American factory system". In the eyes of French commentators, such as sanitation specialist Jean de Loverdo, the Grenoble project was like every other French slaughterhouse, "a bland box that strove for functional efficiency".[53]

As ideal types, the abattoir and the packing house are situated within a continuum, punctuated by analogous technological innovations, scientific discoveries, and reforms. The contingent dynamics and diverse contexts surrounding every real slaughterhouse and its development give different shape and trajectory to these elements. Taking into account hygienic reforms and meat inspection regulations reveals this multi-trajectoried continuum. Hygienic concerns are deeply intertwined with the institution of the slaughterhouse. Indeed, the hygienic movement was a prominent actor in the setting up of European municipal slaughterhouses, while a lack of concern for hygiene in favor of profit was considered as a characteristic of American models, such as in Chicago. There are two major facets of this issue.

First, the meaning or definition of "hygienic" changes over time, as we shall see in more details below. La Villette, for example, responded to mid-century hygienic needs, based on the so-called miasma theory, focused upon environmental concerns about the presence of farmed animals and private slaughterhouses in the city of Paris. Nevertheless, since the 1880s, La Villette started to be considered an obsolete, "repulsive", "unhealthy" and an "inconvenient" system, according to Loverdo.[54] Another observer noted in 1906, "This establishment has no unity of design. Groups of pavilions are crowded together, separated by streets where animals, vehicles, meat, manure all mix and mingle. […] As a result, surveillance is impossible, sanitary inspection is insufficient and filthiness is the rule".[55] This quote reflects concern along the lines of miasma theory, and by the end of the nineteenth century, bacteriology and the discovery of microbes compounded these environmental concerns, and La Villette became completely hygienically untenable. Also in the 1906, the US responded to similar hygienic concerns. The Pure Food and Drug Act and the Federal Meat Inspection Act, signed by President Theodore Roosevelt, federally regulated the adulteration of meat and meat products and ensured sanitary conditions and inspection of production facilities. These laws drew upon many precedents, provisions, and legal experiments from individual states, and upon meat inspection laws

52 Quoted in Lee, "Siting the Slaughterhouse", p. 46.

53 *Ibid.*, 47.

54 Quoted in *Ibid.*, 62.

55 Quoted in Claflin, "La Villette", p. 27.

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from the 1890s related to exportation.[56] Likewise, Upton Sinclair's 1906, muckraking novel, *The Jungle*, was not the first criticism of the meat industry's hygiene. An outcry over unsanitary conditions and inadequate inspection was already in the air, fomented, for example, by *Progressive Era* publications of the day. Sinclair's book acted as catalyst for what became a public emergency of meat consumption and slaughterhouse conditions. In Europe, epizootics and zoonoses triggered epidemic conditions, which similarly raised the issue of slaughterhouses to public debate. For example, slaughterhouse reforms in Berlin and the creation of the Central-Viehhof abattoir were triggered by the discovery of trichinosis in relation to numerous deadly outbreaks.[57] In Britain, the first legislative steps toward slaughterhouse and livestock markets inspections were triggered by the outbreak of a cattle plague in 1865.[58] These debates were heavily carried out by the newspapers, in which a French veterinarian wrote, about La Villette's need for hygienic improvements,

> The refusal to implement changes made no sense […]. Was it because municipalities did not want to spend money to reconfigure the spaces, or because butchers were unwilling to abandon traditional methods? Most likely, he concluded, it was because the general public had no opinion: it just wanted its meat, cheap and in large quantities.[59]

4.3 Industrial Farming: An Interlude

The modern slaughterhouse, defined here as a centralized and mechanized space for the killing and dismembering of animals, could not have functioned without the concurrent evolution of animal husbandry. This other fundamental institution of zootechnics underwent significant changes, partly influenced by shifting slaughter requirements and capitalist interests. For efficient disassembly of animals, it is necessary that, "The specimens arriving from the farm are equivalent products to each other and all of them are commensurate with the machines that have to handle them, which in turn are calibrated to the size, strength, weight of the *normalized* animal body".[60]

For machines to properly grip the bodies of animals, they have to be of standardized form and measurements, or "the exemplary body of a species, in the sense that

56 Food and Nutrition Board Institute of Medicine (US), *Cattle Inspection: Committee on Evaluation of USDA Streamlined Inspection System for Cattle (SIS-C)*, 1990, pp. 8–9.

57 Brantz, "Animal Bodies, Human Health, and the Reform of Slaughterhouses in Nineteenth-Century Berlin", pp. 74–5.

58 Perren, "Filth and Profit, Disease and Health", pp. 140–5.

59 Quoted in Lee, "Siting the Slaughterhouse", p. 62.

60 Piazzesi, *Così perfetti e utili*, p. 152.

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it is an interchangeable piece of a model of a species".[61] In other words, "the species is perfected and specialized in the same way as the tools used for its containment, for its nourishment, for its killing. They are made for each other".[62] Benedetta Piazzesi, in a study on the genealogy of zootechnics and industrial farming, highlights the shed, or the regime of perpetual housing, as the fundamental zootechnical apparatus to standardize the body. In this regime, unlike the seasonal housing formula, animals only leave their cages when they have to be transferred to another facility to fulfill another function (e.g. from a growth plant to a fattening one) or to be slaughtered. Feeding, manuring, reproduction, etc. are all performed inside the shed.

Feeding, or, better said, fattening operations under this model fully preclude the animals' "self-sufficiency" and freedom which they would have, for example, during the grazing period in seasonal housing formula, or when they are raised in backyards or, left free to wander the city (as in the case of pigs and poultry). Continuous housing enables the constant management and control of the feeding and movement of animals, and often leads to their immobility. Alongside the sheds, barns and haystacks stock large amounts of long-lasting food to feed ever larger masses of animals throughout the year. Improvements in chemistry made this feed more and more artificial, less expensive and more profitable. The zootechnical branch of "rational feeding", which started to develop as early as the 1770s, merged with the nutrition science to generate calculated feed analyses to determine nutrient supply.[63]

Diet experiments were conducted by comparing heterogeneous combinations of food to determine the basic elements of animal nutrition that led to the most efficient weight output. The first experiments were still tied to old agricultural products, such as wheat, peas, potatoes, and milk, and, were therefore, limited by the seasonality of fodder crops.[64] At the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, industrial waste and grains coming mainly from the dairy industry, distilleries and breweries were experimentally introduced. Cheaper, spent grains from breweries and distilleries spread in urban farms as a feedstuff for cows and pigs. Given the proximity of these urban factories, it was more convenient to buy their nutritionally richer spent grains, than buying large quantities of fodder from the countryside. This facilitated a new synergy between factories and farming that took the place of the old one between fields and farming. These new industrial, manufactured and

61 *Ibid.*, 82.

62 *Ibid.*, 137.

63 See, for example, *Experiments on fattening hogs* in Arthur Young, *Annals of Agriculture: And Other Useful Arts. Vol I*, Bury St. Edmund's, London 1784–1815, Vol. 1, pp. 332–51.

64 In 1810, a German scientist named Albrecht Daniel Thaer developed the first feed standards by comparing potential feedstuffs to meadow hay and assigning a 'hay value' as a comparative measure. Donavyin Coffey *et al.*, "Review of the Feed Industry from a Historical Perspective and Implications for its Future", *Journal of Applied Animal Nutrition*, vol. 4 (2016), p. 1.

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concentrated feedstuffs were easier to transport and to store, as well as more nutritious than the traditional fodder transported from the countryside.[65]

Under the perpetual housing regime also animals' excreta, or manure, became an object of rational management, orientated toward dung collection and sale, and, after the introduction of chemical fertilizers, toward disposal. The "charmed circle", to use the expression of one commentator, between cities and their peri-urban manured region also experienced this process.[66] In the late-eighteenth century until the 1880s, large cities across Europe and North America had implemented a circular system of constant recycling of vast quantities of dung from urban animals, mostly horses, cows and sheep. In some cases, such as in Paris, human waste was also turned into agricultural fertilizers, called *poudrette*, when mixed with other substances (charcoal, gypsum, ashes, earth, peat, or sawdust) and after having undergone a drying process in special plants. Manure was collected and transported by wagons and by train to a peri-urban region, where it was utilized in horticulture and hay-making. These in turn provided sustenance for urban animals and humans. The system of collection was based mainly on private deals between owners of individual stables, farmers and gardeners, but there were also collection points where vast amounts of manure were accumulated. An observer in London recalls,

> Here we have a striking example of town and country reciprocation. The same wagon that in the morning brings a load of cabbages, is seen returning a few hours later filled with dung. A balance as far as it goes is thus kept up, and the manure, instead of remaining to fester among human beings, is carted away to make vegetables.[67]

This circle gradually broke. By the 1860s, hay and oats from the peri-urban areas was struggling to compete with imported corn, which produced cheaper provender. The practice of feeding urban animals with spent grains from distilleries also

65 The animal feed industry took off in the 1880s. The first corn gluten was manufactured in 1882. In the 1890s, meat scraps were the first by-products to be recognized for their superior nutritional value and adopted by the commercial feed industry. The 1890s also introduced the incorporation of brewing by-products into animal feed, and the Purina Mills in 1894. *Ibid.*, 2.

66 Quoted in Peter Atkins, "The 'Charmed Circle'", Atkins (ed.), *Animal Cities*, p. 63.

67 London had a flourishing manure-horticulture integrated system, although probably not as intensive as in Paris, where at its peak between the 1840s and the 1880s, one million tons of town dung was responsible for 100,000 tons of primeur vegetables delivered to the central markets. In London, "the broader manured region […] was initially the radius of convenient cartage, about five to ten miles at the beginning of the century, expanding with better roads to perhaps 15 to 20 miles and, later, with railway carriage, as far as 50 miles". It was ideally organized in concentric circles; the outer one was devoted to the production of fodder and the inner one to that of fruit and vegetables. *Ibid.*, 53, 54, 58.

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contributed to this decline. The usage of fresh animal manure declined under the competitive pressure of guano imported from Peru[68] and more affordable industrial chemical fertilizers. As Peter Atkins noted, "manure became a 'bad' after having for so long generated a virtuous circle of fertility and prosperity".[69] It went from being profitable to being useless and associated with disease, creating bad smells and dust and attracting flies. Manure was to be discarded, and its removal often cost a fee.

New fertilizers, like the new feeds, were more concentrated, more powerful, and more practical to transport; in short, more effective. In the nineteenth century, calcium superphosphate and industrial fertilizers were rapidly produced, marketed and distributed. The chemical compound was developed by treating bone purchased from slaughterhouses with sulfuric acid, in the early 1840s by English entrepreneur, John Bennet Lawes, and English agronomist, Joseph Henry Gilbert.[70] Additionally, German scientist Justus von Liebig's identification of the mineral nutrients of nitrogen, potassium, and phosphorus and their essential role in plant growth led to the development of nitrogen-based fertilizers.[71] As Piazzesi underlines,[72] the advent of fertilizers in the fields and artificial mashes in sheds' troughs is preceded by a long process of discovery within modern chemistry concerning the transformation of matter, inaugurated in 1661 with *The Skeptical Chemist* by Robert Boyle. English agriculturist Jethro Tull and Scottish physician and medical professor Francis Home did a lot to advance the chemistry of soils, plant and animal products, leading to a better understanding of fertility and spontaneous functionality. In the 1730s, Tull identified the fundamental process of crushing soil and improved the seed drill.[73] In the 1750s, Home experimented with different substances for fertilizers, comparing the performance of manure with compounds extracted artificially, such as organic nitrogen, ammonium carbonate. Home was looking for the single active, extractable and reproducible ingredient underlying plant nutrition, setting the path towards industrial chemical fertilizers.

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68 Gregory T. Cushman, *Guano and the Opening of the Pacific World: a Global Ecological History*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2013.

69 Atkins, "The 'Charmed Circle'", p. 66.

70 For an overview, see A. E. Johnston, "Lawes, John Bennet and Gilbert, Joseph Henry", *Encyclopedia of Soils in the Environment. Vol. 2*, ed. by Daniel Hillel, Elsevier, Amsterdam, 2005, pp. 328–36.

71 William H. Brock, *Justus von Liebig: The Chemical Gatekeeper*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997.

72 Piazzesi, *Così perfetti e utili*, pp. 53–66.

73 Laura B. Sayre, "The Pre-History of Soil Science: Jethro Tull, the Invention of the Seed Drill, and the Foundations of Modern Agriculture", *Physics and Chemistry of the Earth, Parts A/B/C*, vol. 35, no. 15–18 (2010), pp. 851–9.

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Animals were no longer working in the fields, eliminating yet another reason to leave the shed. Animate energy, i.e. provided by oxen and horses, had long been used for hauling plows and harrows, pulling carts and grinding corn, using a horse mill. In the 1790s, rudimentary experiments with the steam engine in agriculture signaled the first mechanization, leading to the replacement of animal labor-power with steam power.[74] David Grigg writes,

> The availability of cheap iron and the need for more powerful equipment led to the rise of the modern agricultural implements industry which from the 1840s provided iron ploughs, drills, reapers, steam threshing engines, in the 1870s reaper-binders and elevators, in the 1890s the first milking machines, combine harvesters and tractors.[75]

Between the end of the 1850s, when John Fowler patented the first practical cable-drawn system of steam plowing, and the mid-twentieth century, horses virtually disappeared from the fields.[76] The high cost of engines and implements, however, made this equipment inaccessible to small farmers. Horses were also useful on farms with small awkwardly shaped fields.

The need to leave the shed for reproduction was also eliminated. The first artificial insemination experiment was conducted in 1779 by Italian Catholic priest, biologist and physiologist, Lazzaro Spallanzani, using dogs.[77] This was a crucial step in the development of eugenic systems that transformed the zootechnical sector during the nineteenth century. This technology, together with selection and crossbreed-

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74 For further reference on steam power, see Clark C. Spence, *God Speed the Plow: The Coming of Steam Cultivation to Great Britain*, University of Illinois Press, Champaign, 1960; and Raine Morgan, *Farm Tools, Implements, and Machines in Britain: Pre-history to 1945: A Bibliography*, University of Reading and the British Agricultural History Society, Reading, 1984. On mechanization of English agriculture in general, see W. Harwood Long, "The Development of Mechanization in English Farming", *The Agricultural History Review*, vol. 11, no. 1 (1963), pp. 15–26; and Edward J.T. Collins, "The Rationality of 'Surplus' Agricultural Labour: Mechanization in English Agriculture in the Nineteenth Century", *The Agricultural History Review*, vol. 35, no. 1 (1987), pp. 36–46.

75 David Grigg, "The Industrial Revolution and Land Transformation", M. Gordon Wolman and F.G.A. Fournier (eds.), *Land Transformation in Agriculture*, John Wiley and Sons, Hoboken, 1987, p. 93.

76 "Prior to the third quarter of the nineteenth century the impact of machinery in agriculture was slight compared with that in manufacturing industry. Some operations such as barn work and hay and corn harvesting had been largely mechanized by 1880 but, up to the Second World War, many were still performed by hand labour and large numbers of workers were still required for seasonal tasks such as hop- and fruit-picking and vegetable cultivations". Collins, "The Rationality of 'Surplus' Agricultural Labour", p. 36.

77 Ernesto Capanna, "Lazzaro Spallanzani: At the Roots of Modern Biology", *Journal of Experimental Zoology*, vol. 285, no. 3 (1999), pp. 178–96.

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ing, was called "rational breeding", and optimize animal reproduction to satisfy urban growth. Robert Bakewell is one of the firsts to use "rational breeding" for commercial purposes. His Leicester Longwool sheep still remains the most successful modern long-wool cross. His two-pounder ram and his Midland black horse, for example, were famous across the U.K. because of their high-quality, which refers to their capacity to mature quickly, or "natural propensity to acquire a state of fatness, at an early age, and, when at full keep, in a short space of time". In achieving this, "Bakewell's success as a breeder was founded on his ability to meet market demands by producing a better beast for the butcher".[78] Breed societies and prize competitions emerged around the practice of rational breeding. In 1799, the Smithfield Club, which was the most well-known, organized the first public expo. Clubs were devoted to collect and protect ideal prototypes of animal strains, while prize competitions connected these models with the zootechnical population of the country, encouraging breeders to innovate existing phenotypes.

Innovations in eugenics are driven by the separation and fragmentation of productive sectors and of the processes to which animals are subjected. Selection procedures aim to design breeds to serve specific purposes. Animals are shaped in view of a single, exploitable characteristic, which thus becomes their sole value. This, together with the export of the most successful breeds, leads to a drastic decline in the range of breeds and, consequently, of diversity.[79] The rationalization of eugenic practices inside farms is advanced, first, by the scientific recognition of Darwin's theory of evolution and, second, by the establishment of genetics,

78 David L. Wykes, "Robert Bakewell (1725–1795) of Dishley: Farmer and Livestock Improver", *The Agricultural History Review* (2004), pp. 38, 44.

79 For example, after England's pursuit of Argentina's wheat and meat industry, cattle barons in Argentina began to import English cattle breed designed to produce fattier and more desirable meat, such as English Shorthorn, as early as the 1820s. In 1879, Scottish Aberdeen Angus were interbred with Argentine Criollo cattle, which were heartier and able to reproduce at higher rates under nutritional constraint. This process sacrificed the initial potential for cross-fertilization and increased diversity. "In sync with the majority of commodity producing agribusinesses, which thrive on assembly line processing of like products for efficiency, the range of cattle breeds available to the market dwindled from 57 registered breeds to the active use of less than five dominating breed type". Lopez-Duran and Moore, "Meat-Milieu", p. 259. In some cases, imported European breeds suffered from the unfamiliar climate and environmental conditions of tropical and semi-tropical areas, such as in Brazil. "The quality of animals in Brazil, in relation to the vegetation […], also hindered livestock improvement in several areas across the country. The local *crioulo* was quite small and lean, 'weighing on average not more than 400 lbs. when dressed'; by way of comparison, a purebred weighed approximately 1,000 lbs. European breeds did not adapt easily to the tropical climate of central Brazil, and as a result, contrary to experiences in temperate areas of the continent, these imported animals were severely affected by heat, humidity and cattle ticks". Lopes, "Struggles over an 'Old, Nasty, and Inconvenient Monopoly'", p. 355.

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incorporating Mendel's discoveries. There is a certain degree of circularity between Darwin's theory and the breeding farm, because Darwin's own scientific methods were dependent upon intuitive zootechnical practices and rational breeding of the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[80] As Piazzesi underlines, Darwin and Pasteur both consider scientific laboratories a *conditio sine qua non* in the production of "highly-selected – and therefore serialized – animals of the new factory farming".[81] The normalized animal becomes an exchangeable specimen, suited to the methods of the laboratory. The perpetual housing regime at the center of industrial farming symbolizes the modern and capitalist restructuring of rural economy and of the birth of zootechnics as such, in which animal farming is separated from agriculture. The coinage of the word "zootechnics" by French agronomist De Gasparin in *Cours d'agriculture*, published between 1843 and 1851, definitively established the separation of the two kinds of knowledge and practices on a descriptive and normative level. Unlike the circularity of the previous model based upon the sixteenth-century farm,[82] the patriarchal rural industry, and the peasant family – to recall Marx's expression introduced in the previous chapter – where the field and the shed create a closed, autarchic system by integrating fodder, manure, and animal labor-power, the new, zootechnical complex of modern agriculture is an open, *input* and *output* system, which functions according to capitalist commodity production. To use again Piazzesi's words:

> Fodder, manure and labor-power are the substances of this exchange [between livestock farming and agriculture] which is only defused when each of them finds a substitute by the industrial world: feed, fertilizers and steam engines are the new

80 Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection: or, the Preservation of Favored Races in the Struggle for Life*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2009, pp. 22–5; and Piazzesi, *Così perfetti e utili*, pp. 101–9.

81 The link between farm and evolutionism is of primary importance. "As Darwin started to use animal breeding to explain the natural history, linking them in a mutual epistemological field, he naturalized zootechnics on the one hand, and artificialized nature on the other. The main concept of evolutionism is that of 'natural selection'. In Darwin's choice of these two otherwise oxymoronic words, we can begin to understand and evaluate the importance of his indebtedness to breeders' knowledge and to its conceptual implications. By speaking of nature through the concepts and categories of zootechnics, Darwin radically transformed the representation of nature itself. Natural history, based on the model of zootechnics, is thus combined with industrial production to become a colossal factory of living beings. Industrial breeding appeared to Darwin and to his – and our – contemporaries as the rationalized continuation of nature". Benedetta Piazzesi, "Scientific Bestiarium: The Living, The Dead, and The Normal", Mariaelisa Dimino et al. (eds.), *Bestiarium. Human and Animal Representations*, Mimesis International, Milano, 2018, pp. 95–6.

82 Piazzesi, *Così perfetti e utili*, pp. 25–39.

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> factors in a relationship that no longer links agriculture and livestock farming, but both to the rest of the industrial production apparatus.[83]

Consequently, the restructuring of the zootechnical institution can be seen as the precipitate of previous scientific rationalization processes that only intervene *over the course* of the distancing of animal farming from the countryside. It is generally accepted that the introduction of crop rotation and enclosures encourages the adoption of the perpetual housing regime and contributed to consolidating it.[84]

4.4 Notes on Pre-Capitalist Slaughter

Overall, the modern abattoir is defined by several essential architectural features, both exterior and interior, *mechanization* being one of them. The abattoir is "a directional, heavily (but not totally) mechanized space set aside for the purpose of mass sanitized killing".[85] It functions as a big, enclosed area, a "town", where every phase of meat production and every actor involved, are concentrated and under the purview of one actor, the owner (whether a private or public subject). The large-scale slaughterhouse is a specialized place for the killing of animals for consumption. *Centralization*, or "agglomeration", is abattoir's second essential feature. The peculiarity of the nineteenth-century abattoir, on a descriptive level, can only be understood via an understanding of the pre-industrial, pre-capitalist system of institutionalized animal killing for food based on small-scale private and artisanal slaughterhouses, characterized by dispersal and privacy.[86]

Regarding dispersal, there was no single, nor mono-functional space where animals were slaughtered and carcasses were dressed. Instead, there were many scattered places where these operations occurred, such as household backyards in the cases of chickens and hogs, and butcher's sheds in the case of cattle. Such dispersion and variety of place was matched by the variety of equipment and tools for slaughter and carcass-handling (poleaxes, knives, hooks of various dimension, ropes, pulleys, boxes wrappers, hampers, packages, work tables, rings fastened to the floor or walls,

83 *Ibid.*, 129.

84 Mark Overton, *Agricultural Revolution in England: The Transformation of the Agrarian Economy 1500–1850*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996; Robert C. Allen, "Tracking the Agricultural Revolution in England", *conomic History Review* (1999), pp. 209–35; and Robert C. Allen, "The Nitrogen Hypothesis and the English Agricultural Revolution: A Biological Analysis", *The Journal of Economic History*, vol. 68, no. 1 (2008), pp. 182–210.

85 Otter, "Civilizing Slaughter", p. 105.

86 *Ibid.*, 90, 94.

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wooden bars, prytches),[87] from very domestic and rudimentary ones to more sophisticated ones in butchers' stalls and shops. Slaughterhouses were typically small, composed of one or two rooms. This made the separation of living animals from fresh meat impracticable, so that cattle and sheep witnessed in terror as other animals were killed. Not only were slaughterhouses small, they were also dark, often windowless, poorly ventilated, and without tap water-supply.

Privacy, both in the sense of out of public sight and in the sense of property rights, was a central feature of pre-modern slaughterhouses. Only the master butcher and his assistants, if there were any, were allowed to be inside slaughterhouses, together with animals and microbes. Non-desired attention from public inspectors or others was easily barred. Small slaughterhouses implied a sort of "one to one" ownership; animals were the private property of those who killed them. Families slaughtered their own poultry and hogs raised in their backyard. Butchers bought cattle at the market, which they personally slaughtered and sold as meat. As Otter describes,

> In the early nineteenth century, […] butchers bought living animals from local or large regional markets, killed them in innumerable small private slaughterhouses and then sold the meat themselves or to markets […]. When contemporaries used this word "slaughterhouse", though, they did not refer to a structure built with the explicit and sole purpose of killing animals and dressing carcasses. They simply referred to any building in which slaughter happened to take place. So there was usually *nothing technically or architecturally distinct about the slaughterhouse* […] Elsewhere, we find references to "shed" or "old washhouses" being used for slaughter. […] Slaughterhouses thus intermingled with domestic houses: sometimes the former were entered through the latter, and from the outside both might be indistinguishable. Butchers might even dispense with all pretense of distinction and choose to kill animals in their own front rooms.[88]

An 1845 report states,

> Most of the slaughtering-houses […] are in the midst of the town, in a long narrow alley passing from the main street to a parallel street at a considerable distance. Those slaughtering-places are very confined, and generally have a muck-yard attached, which is filled with the offal, dung, and blood, taken from the animals, and most offensive effluvia are constantly flowing from the purifying masses; the

87 "A prytch is a stout stick of wood about two feet long, provided at each end with a stout iron point. The point at one end is forced against the carcase, while the other point is slipped into little shallow holes in the floor which are termed 'prytch-holes'". Quoted in Atkins, "The Urban Blood and Guts Economy", p. 85.

88 Otter, "Civilizing Slaughter", pp. 90–91. [emphasis added]

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> bloody matter, moreover, flows in streams along the open channels towards the covered sewers in the streets.[89]

Slaughter sites were quite literally innumerable, considering the almost complete absence of a systematic counting of them. For example, in London alone in 1873, before the first national regulation of slaughterhouse structures (the 1874 Slaughterhouse & c. Metropolis Act and the 1875 Public Health Act), there were 1500 estimated licensed private slaughterhouses,[90] which does not account for illegal and unlicensed ones. In addition to butchers, there were other meat vendors, such as peddlers, meat-sellers with mobile stands, or female meat-sellers, known in French as *regratières*,[91] meat purveyors who sold food from their homes or corner stalls or plied regular routes with horsedrawn carts.[92] All these figures often sold their own illegally butchered meat, as well as recycled meat scraps.

During the late nineteenth century, this heterogeneous scenario was gradually replaced by the modern institution of the slaughterhouse. Small-scale slaughterhouses, however, endured well into the first half of the twentieth century, coexisting with the new system.[93] Nevertheless, the introduction of the centralized abattoir system qualitatively redefined whole meat production and distribution, eventually winning out over the former customs. This came with conflicts, new political trajectories and adjustments stemming from the emerging rapport between the slaughterhouse (the production and supply of meat) and the capitalist dietary *dispositif*.

4.5 Forming the Dietary *Dispositif*: Context and Knowledges

4.5.1 Context Analysis: Slaughterhouse Reforms in the Conflict between Health and Wealth

Following the first phase of HMPA, i.e. context analysis, the structural backdrop of new slaughterhouse policy and related conflicts within the formation of the dietary

89 Quoted in Atkins, "The Urban Blood and Guts Economy", p. 84.

90 MacLachlan, "A Bloody Offal Nuisance", p. 247, Figure 1.

91 Watts, "The Grande Boucherie, the "Right" to Meat, and the Growth of Paris", p. 20.

92 Horowitz, "The Politics of Meat Shopping in Antebellum New York City", p. 173.

93 For example, there were around a hundred private slaughterhouses in Manchester in 1897, 131 in Birmingham. Otter, "Civilizing Slaughter", p. 103. There were still 450 private slaughterhouses in London in 1898, killing an average of only two cattle per week. MacLachlan, "A Bloody Offal Nuisance", p. 248.

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dispositif is marked by a bigger conflict "between Health and Wealth".[94] Bruno Latour summarizes it as follows,

> The conflict between health and wealth reached such a breaking point in the mid [nineteenth] century that wealth was threatened by bad health. "The consumption of human life as a combustible for the production of wealth" led first in the English cities, then in the continental ones, to a veritable "energy crisis". The men, as everyone said constantly, were of poor quality. It could not go on like that. The cities could not go on being death chambers and cesspools, the poor being wretched, ignorant, bug-ridden, contagious vagabonds. The revival and extension of exploitation (or prosperity, if you prefer) required a better- educated population and clean, airy, rebuilt cities, with drains, fountains, schools, parks, gymnasiums, dispensaries, day nurseries […] Such an upheaval of cities was seen not as a revolution but as a harmonization, in Stokes's words, between "national health" and "national prosperity and morality". The favorite metaphor of the time, the difference in potential, defined a vast energy source into which all the actors of the period could plug themselves in order to advance their concerns for the next fifty years.[95]

In this upheaval of cities, slaughterhouses played a crucial role, along with, and sometimes prior to,[96] drains, sewage systems, parks, etc. Meat embodied, in a quasi-literal sense of nutrition science and the discourse on protein and *calories*, that energy crisis, as well as a conflict between affordable (wealth) and nourishing (health) meat for the working classes and soldiers.

This general conflict in terms of health and wealth aligns with the structural reconstruction presented in the third chapter, particularly the structure and relations represented in Diagram 3 and the ensuing conflict. This conflict is structurally rooted in the contrasting logics governing the production of goods and the reproduction of individuals, the social reproduction *stricto sensu*. Capital's imperative of

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94 Bruno Latour, *The Pasteurization of France*, trans. Alan Sheridan and John Law, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1993, p. 19.

95 *Ibid*., 18.

96 This is the case of Moscow's abattoir. In Moscow, slaughterhouse reforms were opposed because they were considered of lesser importance than other public services, such as the sewerage system. As a municipal deputy claimed in 1885, "Considering the absence of public services in the city, the organization of the new slaughterhouse can be compared to the following: we were given a man, sick from eternal dirt, crippled, in rags, uncombed and hungry and were told to put him in order – but instead of cleaning, dressing and treating him, we would only wash his feet, only the toes, and give him shiny shoes. In my opinion, the slaughterhouse is no more than shiny shoes in the matters of urban accomplishment". Quoted in Mazanik, "'Shiny Shoes' for the City", p. 221.

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endless valorization (production of wealth), here related to the processes of production of absolute surplus value, constitutes an immanent tendency toward the destruction of labor-power (bad-health), the reproduction of which is still organized according to pre-capitalist forms. Historically speaking, "in the liberal competitive capitalism of the 19th century […] the imperative of production and [social] reproduction appeared to stand in direct contradiction with each other". In the nineteenth century, men, women and children equally were squeezed into factories and mines, working long hours in unsustainable conditions, women and children being paid a pittance or even nothing. Human health clashes with wealth, leading to the era's "energy crisis", "a crisis of social reproduction among the poor and working classes, whose capacities for sustenance and replenishment were stretched to breaking point".[97] On another level, it is a moral crisis, or a moral panic among the middle classes, who were scandalized by this situation.

The historical process of crisis resolution unfolds through multiple transformations at the level of *dispositifs*, beginning in the late nineteenth century and solidifying in the twentieth. In this context, transformations and conflicts within the *dispositifs* of the capital-form and nation-state form also play a significant role. Fordism, in which standardized mass products were produced on the assembly line for mass consumption, became part of the means of subsistence and wages were raised (for white, full-time production workers). Concomitantly, under the aegis of the incipient welfare state, the response to social crisis had two distinct trajectories of conflict. On the one hand, the rise of workers' struggles and the formation of strong trade unions, labor parties and socialist parties led to the successful introduction of a legal workday,[98] regulations concerning occupational health and safety and a legal minimum wage. As Heinrich writes, " If capital does not encounter resistance in the form of strong trade unions or similar associations, then excessively long working time, unhealthy and dangerous working conditions, and starvation wages will be imposed that prevent the reproduction of labor-power".[99] On the other hand, the ascendance of middle-class reformers and measures to address the physical and moral well-being of workers, necessary for the long-term utilization of their labor-power created a bridge between capitalism and the conditions of life. This led to the emergence of the concept of "hygiene" and the bourgeois hygienists' movement. As underlined by Coleman, hygienists had extensive and expansive biology-based concerns,

> The hygienist attended to the essential conditions of existence – food; supply and purity of water; *presence and absence of human, animal,* and other wastes; the condi-

97 Nancy Fraser, "Contradictions of Capital and Care", in *New Left Review*, vol. 100 (2016), pp. 100, 105.

98 Marx, *Capital I*, Chapter 10, pp. 340–411.

99 Heinrich, *Karl Marx's Capital*, p. 207.

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> tions of bodily and mental activity, including above all work, shelter, or protection from the elements – and realized that all of those possessed an underlying economic character.[100]

The major structural transformation occurring in the solution of the crisis, however, is the formation of the anthropological form, as illustrated in Diagram 2. The anthropological form qualifies life as distinctly human, which capital puts at risk. Hygienists refer to this concept of life as *bíos*, as essentially *human* existence. Along these lines, the anthropological form contends that social reproduction is qualified as the reproduction of the human population. It is precisely within the historical process of this form's materialization that the hygienist movement questions the meat-slaughterhouse-animals complex and its reforms.[101] The slaughterhouse becomes a "political space" because, to echo Rancière, it is the subject of conflict, a dispute over the social/political, private/public divide. Are meat provisioning and production private or public affairs? What role do animals occupy? Does this alter the spatial allocations determined by the prevailing police order? Are these spaces being relocated or reshaped?

4.5.2 Knowledge I: Meat and Nutrition Science

There were two key nodes of the slaughterhouse reform debate: meat and animals. Hygienists and various other scientists made the case for the importance of meat in the framework of national health and class concerns, i.e. inside the physical and moral hygiene framework vs. wealth. For example, already in 1783, in the French *Encyclopédie* the "bread and meat"[102] binomial was established, sanctioning the idea of meat as a vital food for the whole population. In 1864, zoologist and degeneration theorist, Edwin Lankaster, proclaimed, "We find in the history of man that those races who have partaken of animal food are the *most vigorous, most moral*, and

100 William Coleman, *Death is a Social Disease: Public Health and Political Economy in Early Industrial France*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1982, p. 202. [emphasis added]

101 With regard to the production of human individuals, the constitution of a specific *dispositif* comprising different institutions, knowledges and practices is crucial. This includes the formation of the nuclear family and "sexuality". Foucault, in *The History of Sexuality*, identifies "four great strategic unities" performed by the *dispositif* of sexuality: hysterization of women's bodies; pedagogization of children's sex; socialization of procreative behavior; psychiatrization of perverse pleasure (pp. 104–5). Other elements of the *dispositif* are: the ideal models of "housewifization", the creation of a new, intensified meaning of gender difference and sexual binarism and masculine authority over women and children, especially within the family. Maria Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour*, Zed Books, London-New York, 1998; Fraser, "Contradictions of Capital and Care", pp. 195–208; and Aloe and Stefanoni, "Anatomia della nazione", pp. 373–4.

102 Quoted in Watts, "The Grande Boucherie, the "Right" to Meat, and the Growth of Paris", p. 23

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most intellectual races of mankind".[103] A British veterinarian asserted, in 1875, "The consumption of flesh appears to be proportioned to the degree of activity of a people [...] Its use is largely on the increase [among the British]".[104] A popular nineteenth-century saying, "meat is muscle",[105] uses the consumption of animal meat to metaphorize human muscular strength. As doctor and hygienist Benjamin Ward Richardson stated in 1893, "the animal substance which today may be beef, mutton or pork, may tomorrow be human substance, part and parcel of man, bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh".[106] Meat not only was a power source for people, but it also made them. According to economist Otto Hausburg, the first director of Berlin's public slaughterhouse, "Healthy and inexpensive meat is a question of survival for these [lower] classes, especially for the large number of manual laborers".[107]

Meat's increased importance, production and consumption marked a nutritional transition in Western Europe, North America and Australia.[108] The scope of this major dietary change, "ranged from eliminating any threat of famine to the founding of highly frequented restaurants and the emergence of *grande cuisine*".[109] The transition is not a "result of long and slow evolution". Rather, "traditional diets were revolutionized by economic and social changes that took place in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, changes all associated with the industrial revolution",[110] and, significantly, with the advent of the capitalist society.

The modern diet was mainly based upon the rise of animal products – surely meat, but also milk, cheese, eggs, butter, and fish – and on the decline of the starchy staples – bread, potatoes and legumes, which dominated the early-nineteenth-century diet. Considering the total calories available per capita per day, in the early nineteenth century, starches accounted for 65–75 percent, and constituted the main source of protein, while animal source food products rarely provided more than 15 percent. In Germany, for instance 16 kg of meat were consumed per capita per annum in 1816, which increased to 51 kg by 1907. French meat consumption rose from 117 calories per capita per day in 1803–12 to 275 calories in 1894–1904.[111] Britain

103 Quoted in Otter, "Civilizing Slaughter", p. 89. [emphasis added]

104 Quoted in *Ibid*.

105 Brantz, "Animal Bodies, Human Health, and the Reform of Slaughterhouses in Nineteenth-Century Berlin", p. 71.

106 Quoted in Otter, "Civilizing Slaughter", p. 89.

107 Quoted in Brantz, "Animal Bodies, Human Health, and the Reform of Slaughterhouses in Nineteenth-Century Berlin", p. 71.

108 Barry M. Popkin, "Nutritional Patterns and Transitions", *Population and Development Review* (1993), pp. 138–57.

109 Smil, "Eating Meat", p. 609.

110 David Grigg, "The Nutritional Transition in Western Europe", *Journal of Historical Geography*, vol. 21, no. 3 (1995), pp. 247, 250.

111 *Ibid.*, 248, 254.

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was accelerated in this process, earning, already in 1890, the description of "the greatest beef-eating country in the world".[112] British per capita consumption rates roughly tripled during the nineteenth century to almost 60 kg by the year 1900.[113] Other countries in Europe, especially Mediterranean ones, which were slower in transitioning to capitalism, looked at meat consumption in leading Western cities, such as London and Paris, as an example to be reached. Meat was the food of the progress, "the food of the future",[114] as an enthusiastic Spanish journalist wrote in 1881.

Addressing the knowledge dimension of the *dispositif*, this new special status for meat was authorized by several scientific discourses in the mid-nineteenth century, most of all by processes of "nutritionalization of the modern food system", a "socio-technical process"[115] based upon nutrition science. The very idea of "nutrition transition" was legitimized by the empirical and statistics-based discourses around calories, protein, per capita, etc. Nutrition science has its origins in the early to mid-nineteenth century, along with other disciplines such as physiology, biochemistry, and physics, leading to dietetics as a distinct paramedical profession.[116] Its first area of incubation, experimentation, and application is the production of animal feeds, which started as early as the 1700s with "rational feeding". German chemist, Justus von Liebig, drawing on the work of Antoine Lavoisier, Francois Magendie, Jons Berzelius, William Prout, Gerrit Mulder and others, is deemed the father of nutrition as a biochemical science. His influence and fame, also tied to the development of fertilizers, has been compared with that of Louis Pasteur in the field of microbiology. Geoffrey Cannon writes, of von Leibig and Pasteur, "Both men possessed astounding energy, both courted the ruling classes; both smashed the reputations of fellow scientists whose views were holistic and ecological; and both facilitated the supremacy of current conventional science and practice".[117]

It is plausible to argue that Latour's theory of Pasteur's success is also applicable to Liebig's. Latour argues that bacteriologists' success largely resulted from a process of mutual translation and "mutual appropriation" guided by a "common cause".[118]

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112 Quoted in Otter, "Civilizing Slaughter", p. 89.

113 Smil, "Eating Meat", p. 610.

114 Quoted in Guardia et al., "Meat Consumption and Nutrition Transition in Barcelona", p. 205.

115 Jane Dixon, "From the Imperial to the Empty Calorie: How Nutrition Relations Underpin Food Regime Transitions", *Agriculture and Human Values*, vol. 26, no. 4 (2009), pp. 321–33, p. 321.

116 Geoffrey Cannon, "The Rise and Fall of Dietetics and of Nutrition Science, 4000 bce-2000 ce", *Public Health Nutrition*, vol. 8, no. 6A (2005), p. 702.

117 *Ibid.*

118 Latour, *The Pasteurization of France*, pp. 26–34, 41–9; Nancy Tomes, *The Gospel of Germs: Men, Women, and the Microbe in American Life*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1999; Michael Worboys, *Spreading Germs: Disease Theories and Medical Practice in Britain, 1865–1900*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000; and Anne Hardy and Mikael Hård, "Common

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As we shall see more in details below, bacteriologists translated in their own terms the hygienists' precepts and sanitary agenda, addressing topics set by them to get financial support for their research. Conversely, the hygienists translated in their own terms the doctrine of microbes and to seek more solid and structured explanations of disease. Liebig, and nutrition science in general, adopted the hygienists' sanitary agenda to address the need of feeding the poorer classes. This complementarity is reflected in the 1884 hygiene exhibition in London, which brought together "several fairly complex orders of knowledge, constituting in short whatever may render life healthy and even comfortable",[119] as one reporter of the time put it, among which one could find Liebig soup (see below) alongside with pasteurized milk.

Indeed, nutrition science establishes a one-to-one link between food components, previously separated in laboratories, (fat, protein, minerals, water, carbohydrates, salts, etc.) and the physiological functions each of these nutrients performs (increase in muscle mass, protection, etc.). According to the health-wealth dyad, food must be selected on the basis of its components. Its appearance and taste do not matter. What matters is the "metabolic fate of food".[120]

From this perspective, it is possible to account for the fact that the birth of nutrition science coincided with protein isolation and the discovery of its role in accelerating the growth of plants, animals and humans by von Liebig in the 1840s. Protein, a term coined in 1838 by the Dutch agricultural chemist Gerrit Mulder, was then identified as the "master nutrient"[121] of the Western diet. This implicitly meant animal protein was. Von Liebig, indeed, identified meat and especially muscle tissue, which was believed to contain special nutritive qualities, as the richest source of this powerful component. Thus, "eat meat and eat more of it" was the command. As Cannon states,

> It was then that von Liebig and his followers throughout Europe and then the USA blazoned chemistry as the solution for plant, animal and human breeding, and even as containing the secrets of life itself. This was the time when the priorities of chemical nutrition ceased to be conceptual and experimental, and became dictated by social, economic and political factors. *Its prescription was protein of animal origin*. "A vastly more important question than even the victualling of the navy […] is that of victualling of the masses at home", wrote a British commentator. "What

Cause: Public Health and Bacteriology in Germany, 1870–1895", *East Central Europe*, vol. 40, no. 3 (2013), p. 324.

119 Quoted in Latour, *The Pasteurization of France*, p. 24.

120 John Coveney, *Food, Morals, and Meaning: The Pleasure and Anxiety of Eating*, Routledge, London, 2006, p. 23.

121 Cannon, "The Rise and Fall of Dietetics and of Nutrition Science", p. 702.

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> is at the moment deteriorating the lower stratum of the population? – the want of a sufficient supply of nitrogenous food […] why should we not have meat too?".[122]

Von Liebig's Extract of Meat structures the problem around social class reproduction. In his suggestion for a "rational system of diet"[123] outlined in 1847, von Liebig included a formula for producing beef extract. He considered its diffusion to the public and to governments as a "matter of conscience"[124] and committed himself to discover every viable means of producing beef extract on a commercial scale. He believed that the extract would be a cheaper substitute for meat, delivering its nutritional benefits to those unable to afford the real thing. Von Liebig launched the Liebig company in the middle 1860s, in partnership with George Christian Giebert, a German engineer building roads and railroads in Brazil, after rejecting a number of offers from entrepreneurs in Mexico, Australia, and North America, in the 1850s. The company was headquartered at Frey Bentos on the Uruguay River on twenty-eight thousand acres of land purchased by Giebert, along with cattle. The company "was foundational to the industrialization and growth of enormous cattle industries in Argentina, Uruguay, and southern Brazil".[125]

During this time, chemical nutrition was in an experimental phase and an emerging capitalist phenomenon, co-opted by social, political and economic factors; it was both a "philosophy of life" and an "instrument of the state".[126] A key element of bourgeois progressivism is common to both areas. Von Liebig was, as were other men of science, caught up in this conflict and, therefore, inserted in blending the trajectories of physical and moral hygiene. He too, with his government-supported laboratory in Giessen, is concerned with the "victualling of the masses". Wilbur O. Atwater, disciple of von Liebig and the "Father of American Nutrition" pioneered nutrition science in the U.S., and was devoted to analyzing animal rather than human food, until the late 1870s.[127] During his studies in Germany,

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122 *Ibid.* [emphasis added]. The difference between nitrogenous and nonnitrogenous foods was stressed by von Liebig who assumed that nitrogenous foods and proteins were responsible for building tissue, whereas nonnitrogenous aliments maintained body heat and respiration.

123 Justus von Liebig, *Researches on the Chemistry of Food*, Taylor and Walton, London, 1847, p. XXX; and Mark R. Finlay, "Quackery and Cookery: Justus von Liebig's Extract of Meat and the Theory of Nutrition in the Victorian Age", *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, vol. 66, no. 3 (1992), pp. 404–18.

124 *Ibid.*, 111.

125 Archie Davies, "Unwrapping the OXO Cube: Josué de Castro and the Intellectual History of Metabolism", *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, vol. 109, no. 3 (2019), p. 839.

126 Cannon, "The Rise and Fall of Dietetics and of Nutrition Science", p. 702.

127 Buford L. Nichols, "Atwater and USDA Nutrition Research and Service: A Prologue of the Past Century", *The Journal of Nutrition*, vol. 124, no. suppl_9 (1994), p. 1725S; Harvey Levenstein, "The New England Kitchen and the Origins of Modern American Eating Habits", *American Quarterly*, vol. 32, no. 4 (1980), p. 371.

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he became acquainted with the so-called Wolff standards for animal feed based on digestible nutrients, brought them to the attention of American researchers in 1874, and finally published them in 1880.[128] Atwater saw the analogy between animal food intake and bodyweight and human food intake and labor power. In the 1890s, provided scientific backing for a Democratic Party, *lasseiz-faire* businessman who campaigned on, "breaking through the Malthusian knot [to] improve the lot of the working classes without resort to labor unions, unnatural increases in wages, or other measures which went against the immutable laws of supply and demand".[129] A nutritious diet, which was synonyms with higher intakes of cheap protein and fat was crucial to accomplish this task. "It was their greater intake of protein and fat that made American workers more productive than their German counterparts,"[130] wrote Atwater in a letter to the democrat.

The imperative to eat animal protein went hand in hand with the adoption of the calorie as the metric for human energy requirements. Quantifying human energy required a modified calorimeter, not to be used to measure the combustive energy of explosives as it had been designed to do, but to measure human energy expenditure under controlled conditions. Carl von Voit, with German government support, built a human calorimeter with a chamber designed to measure individual protein requirements. Rubner, one of von Voit' students, further improved his mentor's calorimeter by making it first self-registering. He used it on a dog to prove that the first law of thermodynamics applies also to living organisms.[131] In the 1880s, Rubner was the first one to determine energy equivalence among foodstuffs and to outline "standard values". His studies included infants, growing children and the elderly. Rubner reached worldwide fame by the early twentieth century, and held positions of prominence, including chair of hygiene in Marburg and Berlin. From this position, he advocated for a "rational nutrition" program for mass feeding.[132]

As mentioned, von Voit supervised Atwater during his studies in Germany, where Atwater and Rubner worked together as colleagues under his guidance. Indeed, the first U.S. human calorimeter, developed in 1894 by Atwater, was based upon von Voit and Rubner's. Atwater also revised Rubner's caloric intake recommendations, defining the energy equivalents of the American Diet. As a scientist employed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, he strenuously advocated for the

128 Coffey et al., "Review of the Feed Industry from a Historical Perspective and Implications for its Future", p. 2.

129 Levenstein, "The New England Kitchen and the Origins of Modern American Eating Habits", pp. 371–72.

130 Quoted in *Ibid.*, 372.

131 For an analysis of the importance of Max Rubner in the history of nutrition science, see Corinna Treitel, "Max Rubner and the Biopolitics of Rational Nutrition", *Central European History*, vol. 41, no. 1 (2008), pp. 1–25.

132 *Ibid.*, 2.

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incorporation of the calorie system within public policy, obtaining great success and influencing U.S. Foreign Policy, "as the calorie was deemed to be an 'irrefutable and passionless yardstick'".[133] Atwater's legacy reached from Germany and Britain to the U.S., though Britain was leading nutrition science between roughly 1850 and 1920.

By correlating nutrition science with food regimes analysis, scholar Jane Dixon shows the fundamental role that the discipline has played in social reproduction and in developing the two food regimes. She writes, "The social history of nutrition politics reveals that food regimes were in part based on the trade in human energy and health as much as a trade in commodities and capital". Thus, "food regimes are nutritional regimes". From this perspective, the first food regime coincides with the regime of "the master nutrient and the imperial calorie […] The calorie and protein as quantifiable sources of human energy exchanged for a quantifiable sum of money or money equivalent ('credit') was pivotal to the legitimacy of the 1st Food Regime".[134]

4.5.3 Knowledge II: Animals and Miasma Theory

Within the health vs. wealth polemic, a particular issue raised by hygienists is that of public nuisance caused by slaughterhouses. As Otter points out, chronicles on animal nuisance are, "rather monotonous […] Phrases are repeated, recycled, muttered seemingly without needing conscious manipulation". In their repetitiveness they "tell […] us one thing: the public presence of blood was becoming a problem worth commenting on at length".[135] Not only blood, but also fecal matter, guts and manure feature in reports of the animal nuisance caused by slaughterhouses.

In 1847, a *Times* editorial described the Smithfield Market in London as a "monster nuisance". It read,

> There is a slaughter-house […] The stench is intolerable, arising from the slaughtering of the cattle, and from the removal too, after they are slaughtered, of what I may call the evacuations of the faecal matter, the guts and the blood and the hides of the animals; and when they clean the guts out, the matter is turned out; some of the heavier parts of the manure are preserved to be carted away, but a great deal of it is carried away by the water into the sewers.[136]

A butcher liveryman observed in the same 1847,

133 Dixon, "From the Imperial to the Empty Calorie", p. 324.

134 *Ibid.*, 323, 324, 325.

135 Otter, "Civilizing Slaughter", p. 91.

136 Quoted in Atkins, "The Urban Blood and Guts Economy", pp. 80, 82.

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> The filth, garbage, and impurities of every description generally to be found in slaughter-houses, in almost every stage of decomposition, contribute their quantum of deadly exhalations to the atmosphere of the slaughter-house, and then, after having impregnated the neighbourhood with offensive and unwholesome effluvia, are consigned to the sewers, by which they are ultimately conveyed to the Thames, to increase the noxious exhalations from its banks, or, detained in their progress through those notoriously defective channels, to breathe forth at every loophole putrescence and disease![137]

Another source of animal nuisance was urban dairy cowsheds. A commentator reported in 1852 that, "Animals, fed upon improper food, give milk scarcely fit for use, their sheds reek with an abominable odour; and not long since the public mind was disgusted with an account of cows kept […], in underground sheds, where, for a long time, they never saw the light of day".[138] This description pales in comparison to the description of a nightman's yard, given by a doctor exploring the East End of London in 1848:

> On two sides of this horrid collection of excremental matter, was a patent manure manufactory. To the right in this yard, was a large accumulation of dung, & c.; but, to the left, there was an extensive layer of a compost of blood, ashes, and nitric acid, which gave out the most horrid, offensive, and disgusting concentration of putrescent odours it has ever been my lot to be the victim of.[139]

As John Simon, the first Medical Officer of Health for the City of London, stated in 1854,

> Tallow-melting, whalebone-boiling, gas-making, and various other chemical proceedings, if not absolutely injurious to life, are nuisances, at least *in the ordinary language of the law*, or are apt to become such. It is the common right of the neighbourhood to breathe an uncontaminated atmosphere; and, with this common right, such nuisances must, in their several degrees, be considered to clash.[140]

One public health official commented in 1895 that, "the sounds heard and smells carried from the slaughter-houses, makes them perhaps the greatest of all nuisances in a large city".[141] Slaughterhouses were considered never-ending sources of noisome

137 Quoted in MacLachlan, "A Bloody Offal Nuisance", p. 238.
138 Quoted in Atkins, "Animal Wastes and Nuisances in Nineteenth-Century London", p. 38.
139 Quoted in *Ibid*., 26–7.
140 Quoted in *Ibid*., 30. [emphasis added]
141 Quoted in Otter, "Civilizing Slaughter", p. 91.

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filth, affecting the sanitary conditions of neighborhoods and corrupting the general air of the city.

The concept of "nuisance" was a precise legal concept, referring to something injurious or obnoxious to the community, due to "environmental wrongs".[142] In the medieval period, a nuisance could be subjected to trial in the magistrate's court. In the 1830s, 40s and 50s the category became one of the principal legal tools of public health movement.[143] A nuisance came to be viewed as "injurious to the life" of the community, a degree of hazard that nullified the difference between the purely legal meaning and the health meaning. As highlighted by Atkins, it was animal nuisance that acted as, "a catalyst to both medical and sanitary theories of the environment".[144] Until the first regulations against animal nuisance and the establishment of boards of health in the nineteenth century, European and American cities were full of animals, everywhere. The animals were not solely those *en route* to cattle markets or private slaughterhouses, but also those employed in urban animal agriculture, which the cities relied on for transportation, waste management and food supply.[145]

The exclusion of farm animals from cities was often marked by conflicts amongst various interest groups, such as city councils, boards of health, inhabitants of poor neighborhoods, butchers, owners of piggeries, owners of urban cows and distilleries and their respective Leagues or Corporations. Removal of pigs from the urban environment proved particularly challenging in most cities, not only because of the opposition to reforms by interest groups, but also because, pigs served the function of household waste disposal. This implementation of industrial waste disposal systems made pigs disappear from the cities and secluded them in industrial farms at the peripheries.[146] Poultry were the last farm animals to be banned in the early twentieth century.

Urban pigs and milk cows also disappeared because of the hygienist's opposition to the integrated system of piggeries, cowsheds and distilleries, responsible for the particular public scandal of "drunken pigs". After long and fierce debates, municipal acts dismantled this system. This problem was sometimes related to opposition to the consumption of alcoholic beverages, as in North America. The temperance movement frequently played a pivotal role in advocating against urban animals, such as

142 Atkins, "Animal Wastes and Nuisances in Nineteenth-Century London", p. 27.

143 *Ibid.*, 28.

144 Peter Atkins, "Introduction", in Atkins (ed.), *Animal Cities*, p. 14.

145 Brinkley and Vitiello write, "Horses were the fastest means of transport. Hogs cleaned up household slop. Chickens scratched at the waste that the pigs left behind. Sheep and goats grazed on the commons, keeping the grasses short. Many urban families kept or boarded dairy cows for a supply of fresh milk." Brinkley and Vitiello, "From Farm to Nuisance", p. 113.

146 On urban farming (milk cows and pigs) in London and the U.K. see Atkins, "Animal Wastes and Nuisances in Nineteenth-Century London", pp. 38–46.

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in New York in the 1840s, when it prompted criticism of milk dairies, attributing the contamination of milk to the alcoholic diet of distillery cows.[147]

Odor is evoked insistently and with more disgust and disapproval than any other animal nuisance. Commentators wrote of, "intolerable stench", "deadly exhalations", "offensive and unwholesome effluvia", "abominable odour", "the most horrid, offensive, and disgusting concentration of putrescent odours". Blood, guts and manure are the worst nuisances because their main property is foul smell. For example, in London, "the Metropolis Buildings Act (1844) defined offensive trades mainly with smell in mind: blood boilers, bone boilers, fellmongers, slaughterers of cattle, sheep, or horses, soap boilers, tallow melters, and tripe boilers".[148] The depth of aversion to bad smell is explained by the process of "miasmification", accepted within medicine from the late eighteenth century until at least the 1890s. This perspective began to wane with the groundbreaking discoveries of Pasteur and Koch in microbiology, which established germ theory, proving that microorganisms – not toxic miasmas – were responsible for infections, thereby revolutionizing medicine. According to the miasma theory of disease, simply put, "all smell is disease".[149] This theory in part underwrote the first Public Health Act in 1848. *Copland's Dictionary of Practical Medicine* (1834–1856) describes the perceived hazards of urban animals and their by-products within this framework,

> Certain […] causes of disease, of no mean importance, particularly marsh miasmata, and noxious animal exhalations, act directly upon the organic nerves of the lungs, and on the blood itself, through the medium of absorption.
> The putrefaction of animal substances has been supposed by many to occasion disease in those who come within the sphere of the exhalations thus produced, and even to generate a malady which has become infectious, and has, partly thereby, and partly from other concurring causes, prevailed to an epidemic, or even pestilential, extent. It is not, however, merely dead animal bodies, or considerable collections of putrid matter, but also heaps of filth exposed in the streets, or animal excretions and exuviae, subjected to a warm and stagnant air, and neglect of domestic and personal cleanliness, that are thus injurious. These latter may be less energetic agents than the foregoing; but they more frequently exist, and are more common concurrent causes.[150]

147 Brinkley and Vitiello, "From Farm to Nuisance", pp. 123–5.

148 Atkins, "Animal Wastes and Nuisances in Nineteenth-Century London", p. 29.

149 Edwin Chadwick, the prominent English sanitary and social reformer author of the fundamental *Report on the Sanatory Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain* (1842) is Quoted in MacLachlan, "A Bloody Offal Nuisance", p. 240.

150 Quoted in Atkins, "Animal Wastes and Nuisances in Nineteenth-Century London", p. 23.

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The language of this entry reflects a broader orientation to the aerist theory dominating medicine since ancient times, based on the sense of smell and the idea that epidemics were airborne diseases, caused by corrupt air or noxious exhalations. The study on miasma was a main branch of this in the nineteenth century. Alain Corbin explains,

> The nose, as the vanguard of the sense of taste, warns us against poisonous substances. Even more important, the sense of smell locates hidden dangers in the atmosphere. Its capacity to test the properties of air is unmatched. The increased importance attributed to the phenomenon of air by chemistry and medical theories of infection put a brake on the declining attention to the sense of smell. The nose anticipates dangers; it recognizes from a distance both harmful mold and the presence of miasmas. It is repelled by what is in a state of decomposition. Increased recognition of the importance of the air led to increased acknowledgment of the importance of the sense of smell as an instrument of vigilance. That vigilance produced the guidelines for the reordering of space when the rise of modern chemistry made that reordering unavoidable.[151]

Corbin, in his robust social-historical investigation on olfactory theories and smell in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, shows that odor was a medical concept, olfaction was medicine's privileged sense, and the nose was a precise instrument with an ancient origin. These ideas were rooted in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. in the work of Hippocrates and his disciples at Kos which had underlined the influence of air on fetal development, the formation of temperaments, passions and language and stressed the virtues of perfumes against diseases and plague.[152]

Galenus' and Crito's beliefs in Hippocrates and ancient medicine spanned the centuries, integrating with other knowledge, particularly from the mechanistic tradition. This culminated in a set of medical principles that shaped neo-Hippocratic medicine, epidemiology, and the "pneumatopathological" interest in the latter years of the eighteenth century.[153] These were the disciplines on which "atmospheric vigilance", also called "olfactory vigilance", was based. The fundamental principle of the aerist theory asserted that,

> As the physical properties of air acted collectively and individually, so the composition of its contents governed the health of organisms. Sulfur, stinking emanations, and noxious vapors threatened its elasticity and posed threats of asphyxia;

151 Alain Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant: Odor and the French Social Imagination*, trans. Miriam L. Kochan et al., Berg Publishers, Oxford, 1986, p. 7.

152 *Ibid.*, 13, 17.

153 *Ibid.*, 62.

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> metallic acid salts coagulated the blood of the capillary vessels; emanations and miasmas infected the air, incubated epidemics.[154]

Since the 1770s, chemists pursued the study of olfactory elements and atmospheric toxins, and outlined a scientific vocabulary based upon smell. The science was called osphresiology (literally, the science of smells). It started with Linneaus, followed by Dr. Hippolyte Cloquet's *Traite des odeurs, du sens et des organes de l'olfaction* published in 1821, updated in 1845 and finally expended in 1885.[155] These scientists strove to develop a nose-based lexicon to define the molecular components of atmosphere and to identify the stages of putrefaction with the objective of eliminating "the vagueness of the putrid" and better comprehending infection. Corbin writes,

> Air was no longer studied as the area of generation or of the burgeoning of vitality, but as the laboratory of decomposition [...] Henceforth this vigilance had manifold aims: to detect irrespirable gases and particularly 'airs', and to discern and describe hitherto imperceptible viruses, miasmas, and poisons.[156]

Olfactory vigilance was key. The science sometimes generated confused, tricky and ambiguous classifications, beyond a few certain elements, such as fixed air, sulfuric acid, inflammable air, volatile alkali and liver of sulfur. Fixed air, humidity and the process of lysis were the central elements of putrefaction theory since the studies conducted by the German physician Johann Joachim Becher in the latter half of the seventeenth century.

Decomposition was considered to be an internal, continuous movement, kept in check by the natural cohesion of the parts, represented by fixed air transmitted by the blood. The humidity and fetid odor that emanated from decomposing or diseased bodies was understood as the odor of fixed air in search of new combinations. If someone accidentally inhaled these putrid miasmas, their equilibrium of internal forces (decomposition-cohesion) was compromised, making them vulnerable to plagues, fevers, gangrene, syphilis, scurvy. Thus, to prevent the escape of fixed air, aromatics were administered to dead or sick bodies.[157]

If it was believed that blood transmitted fixed air, it is easy to understand why urban slaughterhouses had to be under "special surveillance" within the smellscape of the city. As Corbin puts it,

> The urban slaughterhouse was an amalgam of stenches. In butchers' narrow courtyards odors of dung, fresh refuse, and organic remains combined with foul-

154 *Ibid.*, 13.

155 *Ibid.*, 36.

156 *Ibid.*, 14–15, 16.

157 *Ibid.*, 16–34.

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> smelling gases escaping from intestines. Blood trickled out in the open air, ran down the streets, coated the paving stones with brownish glazes, and decomposed in the gaps […] The malodorous vapors that impregnated roadways and traders' stalls were some of the deadliest and the most revolting; they "make the whole body susceptible to putridity". Often the stifling odors of melting tallow added to this foul-smelling potpourri.[158]

The revolution in chemistry brought about by Lavoisier not only discredited the theories of the aerists, but also favored physicochemical analyses over sensory impressions, questioning the equation between stench and bad air. Nevertheless, the scientific discourse on miasma was not affected, at least until it was superseded by bacteriology. Miasma, indeed, was not air, rather "a substance added to air". As a physician made clear in 1838, "The dangerous thing […] chemistry has not taught us about; but our senses are more discerning than chemistry; they clearly demonstrate to us the presence of noxious putrid matter in air where men have stayed for a long period".[159]

The dichotomy between the healthy and the unhealthy stayed rooted in olfaction in a systematic way, entrenched within new public health reforms, until Pasteur's and Koch's discoveries. The hygienist movement was particularly concerned with social health and order, and sense of smell was a faculty possessed by the general public. They promoted *olfactory vigilance*, that is, the reading of city's olfactory state through miasmatic networks. Such social measurement of odor, however, inscribed and codified a social dichotomy of stench, with the "deodorized bourgeoisie" on the one hand and "the foul-smelling masses" on the other.[160] Corbin explains,

> Olfaction was caught up in the refinement of nineteenth-century practices and divisions. The subtle interplay of individual, familial, and social atmospheres helped to order relationships, governed repulsions and affinities, sanctioned seduction, arranged lovers' pleasures, and at the same time facilitated the new demarcation of social space.[161]

Such an attitude represented the waning fascination with body odors of late eighteenth-century vitalist thought, which looked to odors for their benefits to physical and sexual performance and linked them to diet, climate, occupation, and temperament.[162] It was also a move away from Neo-Hippocratic analysis based on the influ-

158 *Ibid.*, 31.

159 Quoted in *Ibid.*, 113–4.

160 *Ibid.*, 55.

161 *Ibid.*, 141.

162 "Strong-smelling effluvia were a sign of intense animalization and evidence of the vigor of the individual and the race. Thus it was discovered that very ancient therapeutic practices

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ence of topography, nature of the soil, climate, direction of winds, etc. The problem was now the "stench of the poor" or the "secretion of poverty". This stench, according to medical science, was an animal one. This characterization only became more entrenched after the cholera pandemics of the 1830s. Not surprisingly, knackers, gutters, butchers, cattle drivers and urban cow herds, along with sewer workers, drain cleaners and workers in refuse dumps, were at the top of the list of "stinkers" (in its double meaning: olfactory and moral). In a framework where "all smell is disease", "doctors and sociologists had just detected that a type of population existed which contributed to epidemic[s]: the type that wallowed in its fetid mire".[163]

The concept of animal nuisance has both social significance and class content. "The unpleasant odor of the proletariat remained a stereotype for at least a quarter of a century, until the attempts at moralization, familialization, instruction, and integration of the masses began to bear fruit".[164] Animals' smells and miasmas, which emanated from carcasses, blood, dung, skin, hair, clothes, the sweat of slaughtermen, butchers, etc., were anathema to the hygienist dream of a deodorized, healthy city. *Hygeia* is a utopia described in an address to the British Health Department of the Social Science Congress as model of the healthy city of the future. In Hygeia there are pollution controls, factories are out of town, railroads and sewage are underground, roads are all paved, slaughterhouses are publicly supervised, no dwellings are underground and many have roof gardens, hospitals are efficient; public street cleaning and laundries are under state supervision, burials are performed without embalming or a caskets, there are no carpets, no one smokes or drinks alcohol and everyone exercises.

Animal nuisance's intrinsic connection with the miasmification of medicine, rather than a vague repulsion toward animals or cruelty *per se*, accounts for hygienists' efforts to reform slaughterhouses from the mid-nineteenth century onward. Accordingly, sight, visibility and concealment are decreasingly important within social attitudes towards slaughterhouses.[165] Blood flowing in the streets, the presence of live animals in markets and their excrements and secretions are not so

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had a scientific basis. The cure for any ailment arising from insufficient animalization was traditionally sought in stables containing young animals". For more detail see *Ibid*., 25–43. An interesting example of this change concerns stables. In the vitalist conception, the warm air in the barn, soaked in animal odors and humors, is beneficial for both animals and humans. Cows could maximize the milk yield and men could be reinvigorated. For this reason, stables were almost windowless, non-ventilated and in a perpetual semi-shade. In the framework of miasma theory this stagnant and fetid air come to be regarded as very unhealthy.

163 *Ibid*., 142–61.

164 *Ibid*., 148.

165 Fitzgerald and Taylor, "The Cultural Hegemony of Meat and the Animal Industrial Complex"; and Twine, "Revealing the 'Animal-Industrial Complex' – A Concept and Method for Critical Animal Studies".

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much repellent to the sight, as to the sense of smell. Visibility belongs instead to the discourses against cruelty to animals and humanitarians, which argues that the spectacle of violence towards animals is morally degrading, especially to children, and advocates for its concealment.[166]

4.5.4 Knowledge III: Meat, Animals, and Bacteriology

Despite the proximity of animals to urban life and the frequency of epizootics, panzootics[167] and zoonoses in the nineteenth century, a connection between the health of animals and that of the humans who depended on them for food, labor, or companionship went conspicuously unnoticed.[168] As historian Anne Hardy highlights:

> Although animal disease became a concern of central government following the disastrous epidemic of cattle plague of 1865–66, it was not until the very end of the century with the spread of new bacteriology that any significant attention began to be paid to possible direct connections between human and animal disease.[169]

Hygienist concerns about diet, nutrition science, animal nuisance and smell-based theory of miasmas and decomposition were the primary motivator of health reforms and laws dealing with animals (slaughterhouse reforms, meat inspection laws, cattle disease acts). The chief risks to human health coming from animals could be mitigated via the centralization of meat production, and the resulting removal of animals, carcasses and manure from urban streets. Meat poisoning, as it was called,[170] was also explained by miasmatic theory. By the nineteenth century, two kinds of diseases associated with foodstuffs were recognized: one linked with adulteration

166 See Chiara Stefanoni, "The Politics of Smell and The Morality of Sight: Challenging 'Slaughterhouses with Glass Walls' in Animal Advocacy", Gwen Hunnicut, Richard Twine and Kenneth Mentor (eds.), *Violence and Harm in the Animal Industrial Complex: Human-Animal Entanglements*, Routledge, New York, 2024, pp. 71–83.

167 Clive A. Spinage, *Cattle Plague: A History*, Springer Science & Business Media, Berlin, 2003.

168 Anne Hardy, "Animals, Disease, and Man: Making Connections", *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine*, vol. 46, no. 2 (2003), pp. 200–15.

169 Anne Hardy, "Pioneers in the Victorian Provinces: Veterinarians, Public Health and the Urban Animal Economy", *Urban History*, vol. 29, no. 3 (2002), p. 374.

170 "It was not until the later 1880s that the generic term 'food poisoning' emerged: before this, and still occasionally for decades thereafter, episodes were usually described by the precise item of food involved: 'cheese poisoning', 'meat poisoning', 'pork-pie poisoning'. It was only when the central medical department began collecting outbreaks in the 1880s that the term food poisoning came into use, initially in inverted commas. The 1880s was the key decade in which the concept of bacterial food poisoning displaced that of ptomaine poisoning, among interested researchers and public health administrators". Hardy, "Food, Hygiene, and the Laboratory", pp. 294–5.

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and the second with foods apparently incapable of adulteration, such as meat and fish. Decomposition theory, however, could explain the corruption of animal-based foods. Illness was ascribed to chemical poisons, to putrefactive alkaloids or to toxins known as "ptomaines" released in the process of putrefaction without affecting the texture and taste of the food. In these cases, sanitary inspections, which consisted of seizing and destroying consignments of diseased or decayed (i.e. smelly) meat, presented a problem of identification. Additionally, the consumption of meat from diseased animals was prohibited not because it may transmit disease, but because the flesh of sick animals was thought to decay more rapidly.[171] The concept of disease transmission and contagion was largely unpopular within the scientific community, rendering the notion of animal-human contagion seem like science fiction.[172]

Miasma theory is an essentialist theory of "morbid spontaneity", the anticontagionist belief that disease arises spontaneously from within the body itself.[173] As the French clinician Hermann Pidoux, a champion of anticontagionism in the debate over tuberculosis around 1865, put it, "When I speak of spontaneity […] I am considering the organism in its milieu, that is […] surrounded by agents of hygiene, […] by stimuli that are sufficient or insufficient, regular or irregular, favorable or harmful, healthy or unhealthy".[174] He identified three categories of influencing causes: "appreciable external causes" (e.g. "ignorance, overwork, malnutrition, unsanitary housing, [and] deprivation of all sorts"), "appreciable internal or pathological causes" (e.g. "laziness, habits of luxury and flabbiness, excess at

171 Hardy, "Pioneers in the Victorian Provinces".

172 "At the root of this entrenched indifference to the potential for the transfer of disease between man and animals lies the opaque nature of that transfer itself. The major infectious scourges of the animal kingdom – distemper in dogs, cattle plague and foot-and-mouth, sheep rot, liver fluke, bovine pleuropneumonia and swine fever – do not apparently transmit to man. Salmonella and other food-poisoning organisms of animal origin are usually transmitted in apparently wholesome foodstuffs: it was only with the advent of the public health laboratory after 1918 that they began to be commonly related to the ingestion of contaminated foodstuffs. Tuberculosis, tapeworms and trichinosis take long enough to develop that the pathway of causation can be obscure. Of the animal diseases that were known by the Victorians to be transmissible, glanders, rabies and anthrax were all of relatively rare occurrence in man. Moreover, glanders and rabies were transmitted by inoculation – by the entry of infected pus through wounds and abrasions on the skin, by the saliva in the bite of a rabid dog. Anthrax was transmitted by the handling of infected hides and hair, and only very rarely through the consumption of infected meat. These three, it could be argued, were essentially accidental transmissions, which could be avoided by due care and attention. In any general context, they did not represent a large threat to human public health". *Ibid.*, 375.

173 David S. Barnes, *The Making of a Social Disease: Tuberculosis in Nineteenth-Century France*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1995, p. 43.

174 Quoted in *Ibid*.

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table, [and] the torment of ambition") and "constitutional predisposition".[175] Anticontagionism's interests intersected with those of the hygienists in the search for external causes for disease. As Pidoux asserted, "we partisans of the spontaneous degeneration of the organism under the influence of [various] causes that we are *seeking out everywhere*, in order to combat the disease at its roots".[176] Contagionism and anticontagionism, however, were sometimes conflated. Early-nineteenth-century medical textbooks were known to include descriptions of "contagious miasms [sic]".[177] The only consensus seemed to be, as underlined by Latour, that diseases had,

> strange and erratic behavior […] Disease appeared sometimes here, sometimes there; sometimes at one season, sometimes at another; sometimes responding to a remedy, sometimes spreading, only to disappear. […] Sometimes cholera passes, sometimes not; sometimes typhus survives, sometimes not. Indeed, the doctrine of "morbid spontaneity" was the only really credible one.[178]

The biggest source of frustration for the hygienists was this unpredictability of diseases which could be caused by almost everything and thus had to be fought everywhere at once, dependent upon "the heavens, weather, morals, climate, appetites, moods, degrees of wealth, and fortune",[179] as Latour puts it. This variability and the consequent diagnostic schema – "accumulation of advice, precautions, recipes, opinions, statistics, remedies, regulations, anecdotes, case studies"[180] – resonates with the method of "seeking out everywhere" inherent in anticontagionism. "At the time – that is, before Pasteur had made himself necessary to the hygienists – one thing was certain: the doctrine of contagiousness was inadequate to fulfill the hygienists' goals".[181]

Thus, the formation of the dietary *dispositif* from the perspective of the knowledge represented by the hygienist movement is anchored primarily to the miasmatic theory. As Latour points out about the relationship between hygienists and Pasteur's bacteriology,

> Where would the hygienist movement have gone without Pasteur and his followers? In its own direction. Without the microbe, without vaccine, even without the

175 Barnes, *The Making of a Social Disease*, p. 44.
176 Quoted in *Ibid.*, 46. [emphasis added]
177 Dorothy Porter, *Health, Civilization and the State: A History of Public Health from Ancient to Modern Times*, Routledge, London, 2005, pp. 61–147.
178 Latour, *The Pasteurization of France*, pp. 21, 32.
179 *Ibid.*, 63–4.
180 *Ibid.*, 20.
181 *Ibid.*, 22.

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> doctrine of contagion or the variation in virulence, everything that was done could have been done: cleaning up the towns; digging drains; demanding running water, light, air, and heat.[182]

Building mechanized and centralized slaughterhouses could be added to this list.

> What the hygienist movement did with Pasteur it would have done anyway without him. It would have made the environment healthier. The vague words "contagion," "miasma," and even "dirt" were enough to put Europe in a state of siege, and it defended itself by cordons sanitaires against the infectious diseases. Of course, terrible diseases got through the cordons, but sometimes there were victories, and that was no small achievement.[183]

The anticontagionist miasmatic framework, however, that supports the doctrine of morbid spontaneity, had a practical issue that seems to acknowledge bacteriology. Latour, again, writes,

> [Miasmatic doctrine] encouraged skepticism. Steps could be taken, of course, but against what? Against everything at once, but with no certainty of success. It was difficult to arouse enthusiasm and sustain confidence in programs of reform and sanitation that all rested on this inconstant constant: "Confronted by this periodically recurring fatality, we remained powerless, unarmed, and, as the poet has it, 'weary of all, even of hope".[184]

Although large sums of money were put towards public health measures and disease prevention, illness continued to rage. Political debate and conflicts arose around this issue, and certain powerful groups, particularly slaughterhouse organizations, claimed that reforms advocated by the hygienists were detrimental. Hardy describes the situation thusly, "The urban meat trade and the wider national agricultural system were too powerful for any minority medical opinion to achieve effective influence".[185] In London, as an exemplary case, weather sometimes masked animal smells and miasma, and it was not always possible to define where a certain animal nuisance came from. As a sanitary report on sickness and mortality affecting London's poor East End in 1838 stated,

> Dwellings thickly crowded with inhabitants stand all around the slaughterhouses, yet here, where the materials for the production of the worst form of

182 Latour, *The Pasteurization of France*, p. 23.

183 *Ibid.*, 25.

184 *Ibid.*, 33

185 Hardy, "Pioneers in the Victorian Provinces", p. 377.

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> fever are most abundant, scarcely a case has occurred, even during the present epidemic. On the other hand, in the passages, courts, and alleys, on the very opposite side of the street from the houses of which there are no drains into the common sewer, fever of a fatal character has been exceedingly prevalent.[186]

Latour again points out,

> What the microbe and the transformation of microbiology into a *complete* science did was to make long-term plans of sanitization *indisputable*. They offered, literally, a real guarantee of municipal investments. How could the hygienists convince city councils to throw themselves, for instance, into a public drainage program if there were still any dispute "in high places" as to its harmlessness? However, as soon as the scientific argument was closed, they could guarantee the municipalities a good return on their investments.[187]

Thus, it was in the interest of the hygienists to settle the scientific dispute, hence their enthusiastic adoption-through-translation of bacteriology.[188] The new bacteriology was grafted onto morbid spontaneity, replacing the miasmatic doctrine as to the etiology of disease through a process of translation. The task of the period was "to reconcile contagions and morbid spontaneity". What had to be explained was "not contagion but *variation* in contagiousness in terms of environmental circumstances".[189] Indeed,

> Contagionism as a general doctrine was powerless, but the Ariadne's thread, making it possible to connect a ship, a train, a particular topography, a system of water supply, brought together both the traditional investigation and the new agent. Before, *everything* had to be taken into account, but in a disconnected fashion; now the hygienist could also take everything into account, but *in the order* laid down by the microbe's performances. It is easy to imagine the extraordinary enthusiasm of all the hygienists called upon to discover the traces of an enemy that seemed so

186 Quoted in MacLachlan, "A Bloody Offal Nuisance", p. 238.

187 Latour, *The Pasteurization of France*, p. 54.

188 Latour reconstructs the process of translation between the hygienists and the Pasteurians as, "'We want to sanitize,' say the hygienists, expressing in their own way the forces of the period and the conflicts between wealth and health. 'All your good intentions are diverted, confused, parasitized,' say their enemies. 'This parasite that diverts and confuses our wishes, we see it and reveal it, we make it speak and tame it,' say the Pasteurians. 'If we adopt what the Pasteurians say, seizing the parasite with its hand in the bag, we can then go as far as we wish,' say the hygienists. 'Nothing will be able to divert our projects and weaken our programs of sanitization.' In spreading the notion of the Pasteurians as revealers of microbes, the hygienists, who claimed to be the legislators of health, spread themselves". *Ibid.*, 41.

189 *Ibid.*, 64.

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> erratic as to summon up the whole explanation of morbid spontaneity. Without abandoning anything of the past, they were becoming stronger.[190]

In the end, "what were once miasmas, contagions, epidemic centers, spontaneous diseases, pathogenic terrains, by a series of new tests, were to become visible and vulnerable microorganisms".[191] The microscope – and the faculty of vision – replaced the nose and the sense of smell as privileged instrument of medicine.[192] The laboratory gradually took the place of the smell-cartography of the city and its socially dispersed methods. As Corbin notes,

> The alliance between germs and dirtiness – now identified with filth and dust – remained unchallenged. There were fifty to sixty times more microbes in the poor man's dwelling than in air from the most evil-smelling sewer, declared Marie-Davy in 1882. Stench was no longer morbific, but it signaled the presence of disease. The masses had lost their monopoly on infection, but they remained the greatest threat.[193]

Thus, the establishment of bacteriology alleviated *in part* the contradiction between health and wealth "by shifting the interest from 'sick paupers' to 'dangerous microorganisms'".[194]

Within the framework, living animals and meat (the latter here considered in relation to poor health outcomes, including illnesses, rather than as a source of energy, as is the case in the perspective of nutrition) were no longer constituted as noisome bodies. Animal smells, one might say, were no longer pursued in the air. Rather animals' bodies were "micro-corporealized" in terms of the microorganism inhabiting them.[195] Blood and intestines were not a health hazard because they stank, but because they contained microbes. Animals and meat were uniformly subjects of inspection (before and post-slaughter), as advocated since at least the 1850s by

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190 *Ibid.*, 45.

191 *Ibid.*, 82.

192 "The macrocosm of the town, sanitized by the hygienists, and the microcosm of the culture of the bacilli, sanitized by the Pasteurians […] All the great macroscopic problems of hygiene, it was believed, had been found to be solvable by the Pasteurians on the small scale of the laboratory: the same went for the main disinfectants, the safety of the Paris drains, the harmlessness of the sewage farm at Gennevilliers, problems of quarantine. In each case, thanks to this identification of the macro- and microcosm, Pasteur's laboratory was expected to provide the final opinion that would settle the matter". *Ibid.*, 67.

193 Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant*, p. 226.

194 Latour, *The Pasteurization of France*, p. 254.

195 The foundation of parasitology by the scientist and poet Francesco Redi in 1684 was eloquenlty entitled *Osservazioni intorno agli animali viventi che si trovano negli animali viventi* (*Observations on Living Animals, that are in Living Animals*).

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an emerging group of veterinarians[196] that campaigned for greater involvement in the public health. It became more and more fundamental as new human-animal transmissible diseases and bacilli were discovered (trichinosis, pleuro-pneumonia, foot-and-mouth disease, anthrax, chicken cholera, salmonella, swine tuberculosis, bovine tuberculosis), especially after Koch's discovery of the tubercle bacillus in 1882.

The growing "bacteriologyzation" of medicine and veterinary medicine made inspection procedures indispensable, even if their widespread implementation was questioned,[197] representing another push – originating within the knowledge dimension of the *dispositif* – for the reform and centralization of slaughterhouses. Indeed, supervision and daily inspections both of animals and meat were almost impossible where the slaughter trade was decentralized. A case in point was the pathway to reform in Berlin.[198] Following the discovery of the causes of trichinosis in the 1860s, and the dissemination of trichinosis-related anxieties, medical experts and hygienists promptly advocated for state involvement in meat inspection procedures. It wasn't until 1881, however, that the Berlin Central-Viehhof finally opened its doors.

Bacteriology seemed indisputable by the 1880s, much to the favor of hygienistist arguments. Newly built slaughterhouses, from Mexico City to Moscow, were constructed based upon modern scientific principles, and were thus viewed as state-of-the-art. In this field of knowledge, the veterinarian is the sole expert and highest authority. The physical, or architectural homes of this knowledge were the library, the auditorium and above all the laboratory. Latour explains the need for the laboratory on slaughterhouse campuses thusly,

> All the Pasteurian [bacteriological] "applications" were "diffused," as we say, only if it was previously possible to create *in situ* the conditions of a laboratory. The pasteurization of beer or milk, hermetically concealed containers, filters, vaccines,

196 See Hardy, "Pioneers in the Victorian Provinces".

197 "The dangers of diseased meat, or meat from diseased animals, were not suddenly regarded as serious just because of the new scientific understanding of tuberculosis. Science neither initiated the matter nor settled it. The chain from beasts diagnosed with tuberculosis to meat on a domestic table was a long one. The links were as contested in the era of bacteriology as they had been in the 1860s when pleuropneumonia was the chief cause of anxiety. Science moved understanding on, but questions of the transference of disease from animals to the humans that consumed them, and the unpredictability of the consequences of eating meat from livestock diseased in one degree or another, remained […] A complex web of changing sanitary, veterinary, municipal and commercial contests, conducted through professional and personal conflicts and rivalries, fuelled a public debate about the dangers of unwholesome food and turned it into a major political issue". Paul Laxton, "This Nefarious Traffic: Livestock and Public Health in Mid-Victorian Edinburgh", Atkins (ed.), *Animal Cities*, p. 109.

198 Brantz, "Animal Bodies, Human Health, and the Reform of Slaughterhouses in Nineteenth-Century Berlin".

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> serums, diagnostic kits-all these served as proof, were demonstrative and efficacious, only in the laboratory. If these applications were to spread, the operating room, the hospital, the physician's office, the wine grower's winery, had to be endowed with a laboratory.[199]

4.6 Politics: Actor Analysis in the Struggle for Slaughterhouse Reforms

According to the second step of HMPA, the analysis of the various actors involved in this conflict will be developed, outlining their hegemony projects. This takes into account the general strategy to solve the wealth vs. health contradiction, the implementation of this strategy in slaughterhouses-animal-meat policies and their social basis, and, finally, the power resources of these actors.[200] Beyond this scope, there remain other strategies, practices, and actions which do not directly pertain to any hegemony projects, yet remain relevant to the field of struggle.

4.6.1 The National-Social Hegemony Project: Hygienists and Animal Advocates

The general strategy of the national-social hegemony project to solve the national wealth vs. health conflict was to call for the state to meet national health needs through administrative, legislative and institutional means. The dominant approach of the project is primarily statist:

> An approach which appealed to persons of varying political persuasions, […] characterized by the belief that the state, by administration and legislation, should assume the main role in public health reform and management. Public health could not be left up to individuals. Statists believed it was the state's responsibility to maintain the health of its citizenry, and public health experts should function as advisors to the state.[201]

The project, however, also incorporates some liberal elements.[202] In the first half of the century, certain prominent fractions of the project, such as Villermé in France, argued for the installation of factories by justifying or minimizing their polluting effects. Since the 1860s, after the assimilation of bacteriology, hygienist concerns could weld with large investments of capital both state-owned and private-owned

199 Latour, *The Pasteurization of France*, p. 90.

200 Buckel et al., *The European Border Regime in Crisis*, pp. 18–9.

201 Ann Elizabeth Fowler La Berge, *Mission and Method: The Early Nineteenth-Century French Public Health Movement*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992, p. 1.

202 *Ibid.*, XII.

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in the building of new infrastructures. Regarding strategies related to slaughterhouses-animals-meat policies, a call for public or state-run centralization was intended to enable control and regulation on the production processes of meat and by-products in order to guarantee public health and place limits on the free market and meat trade organizations.

The national-social project was based upon a constellation of medicine, pharmaceuticals, chemistry, statistics, civil and military engineering, public administration, and economy. The hygienists were predominantly physicians, traditionally considered the public health experts *par excellence*, but there were also pharmacist-chemists to perform laboratory experiments, veterinarians to manage epizootics and inspections, engineers and architects to design new infrastructures and administrators. The socio-structural base of the project, thus, was a middle bourgeoisie of scientific experts or professionals.[203] Central actors in the project were health councils, committees and commissions, and national academies that spread across Europe and to the Americas, riding hygienism's wave of institutionalization, professionalization, and disciplinary development.[204] These institutions were "government sponsored,"[205] and, although the hygienist movement was not an official movement or a party,

> many hygienists functioned in an official capacity. Most held government positions, or positions dependent on the good will of the "authority", working at hospitals, in the prison system, on vaccine commissions, and at medical faculties and professional schools […] Public hygienists were members of the "Establishment".[206]

They were also founders, editors, and frequent contributors to influential journals that served as an organ of propaganda, such as the *Annales d'hygiene publique* in France or the *Archiv für Hygiene* in Germany. From these positions, hygienists pursued their strategy mainly through sanitary reports and statistics, followed by recommendations for moralizing reforms. With ever-increasing influence inside public administrations, especially after their "marriage" with bacteriology in the 1870s, hygienists became more and more effective at enacting legislation.

According to Rancière's *dictum* on politics, new or previously unaccounted-for political subjects on the stage suggests dissensus. But why was it the hygienists who brought this rupture and not the movement for animal rights, which emerged at the same time? The advocates of animal rights, drawing on philosophers like Jeremy

203 *Ibid.*, 9–41.

204 For an overview of national peculiarities of France, Germany, Britain, Sweden and the U.S., see Porter, *Health, Civilization and the State*, pp. 96–162.

205 La Berge, *Mission and Method*, p. 22.

206 *Ibid.*, 22–3.

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Bentham in England and Wilhelm Dietler in Germany, could have raised the question of animals as "political subjects". When Henry Salt wrote *Animals' Rights: Considered in Relation to Social Progress* in 1892, a text at the apex of radicalism in the trajectory of the nineteenth-century reflection on animal treatment, he took seriously Thomas Taylors' parody of women's rights in his rhetorical question, "if women have rights, why not animals too?"[207] Salt answered "Yes, animals too". In doing so, he both affirmed a process of political subjectification, as women protested the denial of the principle of equality, and analogized or theoretically extended that principle via the actions of animal rights advocates.

Although animal rights theory was not directly aligned with the theory of Kantian, indirect moral obligations, according to which cruelty and violence against animals is prohibited to prevent cruelty and violence against humans, animal welfare associations adopted a position that, in practice, was not that different. According to Andreas-Holger Maehle, "A comparison between the conclusions of Kant and Bentham as exponents of the two concepts reveals an almost complete consensus: both of them accepted a speedy killing of animals in slaughtering or in the eradication of vermin".[208]

Thus, these two theories converged for a fairer treatment of animals, in part based upon the Bible or belief in animal souls. Animal protection societies, vegetarian societies, and anti-vivisectionist movements,[209] were committed to the enforcement of animal protection laws and the education of the general public. The "civilizing" or moralizing task primarily relied upon the argument that cruelty to animals would have a brutalizing effect on humans. Humanitarian pamphlets described the slaughterhouse as a primordial experience for children to peek in the doorway, or "peer through cracks in the fence, with the usual juvenile delight in sensational developments".[210] Such fear and repulsion were especially directed to

207 Thomas Taylor, "Quid Rides? [PSEUDONYM]," *A Vindication of the Rights of Brutes*, Edward Jeffery, London, 1792.

208 Andreas-Holger Maehle, "Cruelty and Kindness to the 'Brute Creation': Stability and Change in the Ethics of the Man-Animal Relationship, 1600–1850", Manning et al. (eds.), *Animals and Human Society*, p. 94.

209 The prevention of cruelty movement and the anti-vivisectionist movement can be referred to as the "two distinct but overlapping movements," which together compound "the first wave of the animal rights movement". Margo DeMello, *Animals and Society: An Introduction to Human-Animal Studies*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2012, p. 402. Anti-vivisectionist groups attracted a greater radicalism pushing toward the complete abolition of animal experimentation, while the societies against animal mistreatment aimed at regulating it, with a moderate and prudent strategy of lobbying the powerful (members of the governments, aristocrats, judges, lawyers) with whom they cultivated close contacts. Harrison, "Animals and the State in Nineteenth-Century England", pp. 804–9.

210 MacLachlan, "Humanitarian Reform, Slaughter Technology, and Butcher Resistance in Nineteenth-Century Britain", p. 110.

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the lower classes, employed in the meat production sector from cattle transport to slaughter. According to Salt, the repugnant task of butchery could be delegated only to a "pariah class".[211] H.F. Lester, lawyer and founder of the Model Abattoir Society (1886), described the kill-floor worker as "an unclean creature", and stated, "the ranks of slaughter-men are habitually made up from dregs of the population".[212] This fear is primarily a classist and racist fear of social disorder, or phobia of the "low moral quality" of the poor and the marginalized, which was, once again, a hygiene issue. From the 1830s, a racist view related to animal welfare was increasingly directed towards the Mediterranean region, claiming the "inhumanity of southern European races."[213] Cruelty towards animals cast as particularly Latin, citing French vivisection, Italian brutalities and Spanish bullfights as examples. Moreover, the racist framing of Jewish ritual slaughter (*shehitah*) reflected a broader level of antisemitism, especially in Germany and Britain.[214] *Shehitah* was denounced by the humanitarians as a cruel technique because the traditional "casting" process (throwing the animal to the ground) and lack of stunning did not respect humane slaughter requirements. In sum, as Ritvo notes regarding the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA), it "feared social chaos and tended to focus on what it viewed as the disturbingly irrational behavior of the uneducated and insufficiently disciplined segments of society".[215] The same was true for all other animal protection associations spreading in Europe and the U.S.[216]

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211 Salt, *Animal Rights: Considered in Relation to Social Progress*, p. 61.

212 Quoted in MacLachlan, "Humanitarian Reform, Slaughter Technology, and Butcher Resistance in Nineteenth-Century Britain", p. 111.

213 Quoted in *Ibid.*, 108.

214 Dorothee Brantz, "Stunning Bodies: Animal Slaughter, Judaism, and the Meaning of Humanity in Imperial Germany", *Central European History*, vol. 35, no. 2 (2002), pp. 167–93; Robin Judd, "The Politics of Beef: Animal Advocacy and the Kosher Butchering Debates in Germany", *Jewish Social Studies*, vol. 10, no. 1 (2003), pp. 117–150; and, MacLachlan, "Humanitarian Reform, Slaughter Technology, and Butcher Resistance in Nineteenth-Century Britain", pp. 115–7, 123–4.

215 Ritvo, "Animals in Nineteenth-Century Britain", p. 109.

216 The world's first animal welfare interest group, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, which in 1840 become the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals under the patronage of Queen Victoria, was founded in 1824 in London by Richard Martin, a Member of Parliament from Galway, to enforce Martin's act of 1822, "to prevent cruel and improper treatment of Cattle". In 1837, the first German animal protection society was established in Stuttgart, followed by the foundation of analog associations in 1839 in Dresden and Nuremberg. In 1844 the first Swiss animal welfare society was founded. In 1843, the French *Société protectrice des animaux* was created. In 1857 Sweden passed a more radical law against the abuse of captive animals regardless of property aspects. In 1866, Henry Bergh, a New York City gentleman, who traveled in Europe and Russia as a diplomat, founded the American Society the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, modeled after the RSPCA. In the late 1860s, the ASPCA served as model for other SPCAs and humane groups that sprung up around the country, be-

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In the modern framework of capitalist rationalization, the previous organization of animal utilization for human purposes became antiquated, painful, and inefficient".[217] The principle that guided animal rights groups, imposing "their 'bourgeois moral sensibilities' as a corrective to lower class cruelty", was "that it was wrong to inflict *avoidable* suffering on any animal".[218] "Avoidable" meant without purpose in the normal functioning conditions of modern meat production.[219] For example, beating a cow while driving her to a private, urban slaughterhouse was no longer useful in a context where cows were easily driven to the kill floor through an accurately designed path of pens and corridors. Beating a cow in this context would be considered abusive, gratuitous violence. Actions and practices that would be considered abuse outside of this framework, such as the imprisoning of animals inside confined spaces, is considered functional and therefore legitimate. Hence, the reforms against cruelty to animals stood against an obsolete, "uncivilized" system of organization of animal exploitation (the pre-capitalist one), its institutions (decentralized slaughterhouses, city livestock markets) and its representatives (butchers, slaughtermen, urban cows' owners, cattle drivers, cattle dealers, meat traders, street vendors, etc.).

The chief objective of reform struggles was the abolition of old, private slaughterhouses and the introduction of municipal, centralized, and licensed abattoirs where the humane slaughter could be implemented and surveilled. MacLachlan writes,

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ginning with Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and San Francisco. By 1890, thirty-one states had such organizations. Spain enacted its first animal protection law in 1877 prohibiting the maltreatment of dogs. These societies were variably connected: e.g. representatives from different countries mutually attended annual meetings of other European societies; RSPCA, undoubtedly the leader among the societies, launched in 1862 a special fund for continental operations or prevented the Prince of Wales from attending bullfights while visiting Lisbon and Madrid in 1876. Harrison, "Animals and the State in Nineteenth-Century England"; Ulrich Trohler and Andreas-Holger Maehle, "Anti-vivisection in Nineteenth-Century Germany and Switzerland: Motives and Methods", Rupke (ed.), *Vivisection in Historical Perspective*, pp. 149–87; Helena Striwing, "Animal Law and Animal Rights on the Move in Sweden", *Animal Law Review*, vol. 8 (2002), pp. 93–106; David Favre and Vivien Tsang, "The Development of Anti-Cruelty Laws During the 1800's", *Detroit College of Law Review* (1993), p. 1; DeMello, *Animals and Society*, pp. 403–5; Harrison, "Animals and the State in Nineteenth-Century England", p. 803; and Loïs Laimene Lelanchon, "Detailed Discussion of Anti-Maltreatment Laws in France and Spain", *Animal Legal & Historical Center* (2013), https://www.animallaw.info/article/detailed-discussion-anti-maltreatment-laws-france-and-spain

217 Otter, "Civilizing Slaughter", p. 93.

218 MacLachlan, "Humanitarian Reform, Slaughter Technology, and Butcher Resistance in Nineteenth Century Britain", p. 110.

219 Piazzesi, *Così perfetti e utili*, pp. 159–63.

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> Such abattoirs would be large enough that they could provide vocational training in the butcher crafts before young men engaged in the huge responsibility of humane slaughter. A larger production scale would permit slaughtermen to become specialized and more skilled in their task within a more detailed division of labor. And new public abattoirs would be engineered so that cattle could walk calmly to the slaughter chamber unstressed and oblivious to their fate.[220]

The main principle for humane slaughter was the stunning of animals before killing. Experiments were made with electrocution and carbon dioxide gas, slaughter masks, and later with firearms in the form of a cartridge-propelled captive bolt.[221] This principle seems to reflect the purviews of hygienists, animal rights groups, and sanitation advocates, alike.

Animal rights societies, despite being actors in this *dispositif* with a trajectory of their own, fit within hygienists' strategy and social-national project. Moreover, some animal welfare advocates were also involved in the public health movement, deriving from the same social basis of urban, bourgeois scientific experts. There were other social bases, of course that also contributed to associations against animal suffering, such as educated rural and urban clergy and certain reform-minded aristocrats.[222] In anti-vivisectionist and vegetarian groups, spiritual and religious concerns drew those who were worried about "a scientocratic and materialistic view of the world"[223], while the welfarist groups, more characterized by professionalism and expertise, drew members from the medical and scientific communities, especially lawyers and veterinarians.[224]

4.6.2 The Conservative Hegemony Project: Butchers

The conservative project is essentially reactionary to the strategies of the other hegemony projects, and thus lacks a general strategy. Regarding the slaughter-

220 MacLachlan, "Humanitarian Reform, Slaughter Technology, and Butcher Resistance in Nineteenth-Century Britain", p. 115.

221 *Ibid.*, 117–21.

222 *Ibid.*, 111. The British Council of Justice to Animals counted two dukes, two duchesses, three earls, three countesses, five lords and ladies, a major-general, and an archdeacon among its eighteen vice-presidents in 1911. Lee, *Meat, Modernity, and the Rise of the Slaughterhouse*, p. 269.

223 Maehle, "Cruelty and Kindness to the 'Brute Creation'", p. 100; and Richard D. French, *Antivivisection and Medical Science in Victorian Society*, Princeton University Press, Princeton and London, 1975.

224 "By the 1860s [the RSPCA's expertise] was frequently being drawn upon by the public, by the police and by politicians". Moreover, it "encouraged the professionalization of groups concerned with animal welfare. It consistently upheld the veterinary surgeon's status, which needed 'to be raised higher for his own good, and for the better treatment of animals'". Harrison, "Animals and the State in Nineteenth-Century England", pp. 808–9.

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houses-animals-meat policies, the conservative project's strategy is to carry on "the old regime's market culture of paternalism", where meat supply was entirely controlled by meat "cartels", powerful associations of urban, licensed butchers in reciprocity with cattle traders and rural agricultural interests, bounded by "tradition and a clear sense of hierarchy".[225] These associations, after struggling against competition from non-member meat vendors and butchers, caused by internal liberalization and the abolishing of apprenticeship requirements, arranged themselves against the threat posed by the new health reforms and "alien meat"[226] coming from foreign markets. The objective was to defend the butcher's private property interests and his "right to slaughter his cattle upon his own premises", as a British' parliament paper put it in 1847.[227]

The social basis of the conservative project was multilayered, reflecting the processes of enrichment of meat trade associations. On one side, it was composed of powerful family firms, connected to wealthy merchants and landowning nobles. On the other side was the more recent "growing middle class of shopkeepers and petty capitalists". Central actors in this project were butchers and meat craft organizations, such as London's Worshipful Company of Butchers, chartered in 1605, the National Federation of Meat Trades (NMFTA) established in 1888 and the *Syndicat de la Boucherie de Paris*, created in 1811. These societies inherit the sense of corporate identity and spirit of service that characterized eighteenth-century guilds and semi-guilds. They continued to advocate for apprenticeship and artisanal craft as routes to expertise in the field, challenging the qualification of outsiders (both humanitarian dilettantes and veterinarians) to regulate the trade. They also drew on private property rights and *lasseiz-faire* economic policies, safeguarding the interests and rights of master butchers and meat traders against the incursion of government and big capital. "They saw themselves as honest victims of a reform fad, heroic small traders whose dogged determination and craft organization would prevail over a growing agro-industrial monopoly and officious interference from municipal bureaucrats and public health authorities", according to MacLachlan.[228] These societies often had active political representatives, from the municipal to the national level. Butchers' associations also published specialist journals, such as the *Meat Trade Journal* in Britain where they "publicly refute the reckless and inaccurate assertions of reformers, and [...] defend their craft from unflattering portrayals".[229]

225 Horowitz et al., "Meat for the Multitudes", p. 1065.

226 Lopes, "Struggles over an 'Old, Nasty, and Inconvenient Monopoly'", p. 372.

227 Quoted in MacLachlan, "A Bloody Offal Nuisance", p. 230.

228 *Ibid.*, 230.

229 MacLachlan, "Humanitarian Reform, Slaughter Technology, and Butcher Resistance in Nineteenth-Century Britain", p. 125.

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4.6.3 The Liberal Hegemony Project: Meatpacking Companies

The liberal project's stakes in the health vs. wealth conflict were on the latter side. They promoted the primacy of economic growth, high-profit rates, and competitiveness by means of industrial exploitation in Europe and colonial expropriation. Regarding the slaughterhouses-animals-meat policies, the liberal project presents a schism between "national-liberal" and "international-liberal" fractions. The former was occupied with liberalizing national meat trade. The latter fraction, emerging in the 1870s, was framed around colonial and national relations and liberalized trade between European nations (cattle trade first and then, after the introduction of refrigeration, meat). The strategy was to take over the meat production and consumption process, centralizing them in for-profit corporations. In this context, big business interests intersected with the national-social project of sanitary reforms, posing a threat to local meat economies and local butchers. The strategy of liberal centralization peaked with the idea of meatpacking facilities embodying the promise of affordable, abundant and safe meat for the masses.

The liberal project's social basis reflected two main factions, the middle-class bourgeoisie and the industrial, financial bourgeoisie. Central actors in this project were large corporations, big meat and railroad companies, together with their allies in city halls and health departments. Federal governments, particularly those of the U.S. and Brazil, were paradigmatic in favoring, through federal research and financial support, the liberal strategies regarding meat production and new interest groups, such as cattle suppliers aligned with domestic and foreign investors.[230] In terms of power, the actors in this project possessed substantial material resources enabling lobbying, to influence state policies, as well as marketing and advertising. The project was also supported by scientific expertise and think-tanks, marked by a positivist attitude. Economic interests and new sciences (chemistry, nutrition, etc.) came together almost completely within the liberal project, harnessing amounts of political, material and social power.

4.6.4 Escape Strategies: Animals

Conflicts surrounding slaughterhouse reforms had tremendous impact, of course, upon the animals about whose bodies and skin these policies were made. These animals, however, were not merely a passive resource to be managed or governed according to this or that strategic or legal objective. From a non-anthropocentric perspective, cows, pigs, cattle, etc. can be considered political agents that enact escape strategies with their everyday practices of refusal, avoidance, sabotage. In

230 Brinkley and Vitiello, "From Farm to Nuisance"; Lopes, "Struggles over an 'Old, Nasty, and Inconvenient Monopoly'".

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the last decade, different perspectives and reflections on the concept of animal's political agency and resistance have emerged broadly within the debate on human-animal relations, particularly in the field of CAS.[231] Foucauldian approaches (e.g. Piazzesi)[232], traditional Marxist and (post-)operaist approaches[233] and (liberal-)democratic theory (Kymlicka and Donaldson,[234] Meijer[235]) represent the main voices in this conversation and reflect a variety of modes of animal exploitation and human-animal power relations across many species and contexts. Despite their differences, each orientation to CAS undermines a fundamental *topos* of anthropocentrism which sees non-human animals as voiceless, and therefore excluded from politics.

One important approach to the issue of animal political agency in the conflict around slaughterhouses and meat is the framework proposed by Sarat Colling called "animal without borders" inspired by transnational postcolonial feminist.[236] This perspective draws also on animal geography and the exclusion and inclusion of animal bodies in urban spaces, focusing on the notion of the border. Animals, indeed, trespass borders: escaping, running, hiding, jumping over the fences that keep them locked up, or breaking through them. These violations call into question, "who has the power to create and dismantle borders – whether the dividing lines between nation-states or the walls of a slaughterhouse – and who has the power to cross them at will",[237] which reverberates within the power dynamics inherent to the surrounding environment.

In nineteenth-century cities, animals were everywhere. Pigs and hogs wandered the streets. Cattle, oxen and sheep were driven from the countryside, ports and rail yards to the city markets and urban slaughterhouses. Urban dairy cows crowded the sheds. Horses and dogs drew carriages and coaches. Each of these contexts was inscribed with violence toward and the constraint of animals who answered back by kicking, biting, running, escaping, bolting, refusing, pecking, and so on. Escape

231 See for an overview, Chiara Stefanoni, "Resistenza animale: un'introduzione", Enrico Giannetto (ed.) *Di stelle, atomi e poemi. Verso la physis*, Aracne, Roma, 2019, pp. 57–71.

232 Piazzesi, *Così perfetti e utili*.

233 While not belonging to the field of CAS and not being specific to animal resistance, Søren Mau's discourse about the "autonomy" of animals as a recalcitrant and oppositional factor to the capitalist transformation of agriculture can be considered an approach within this field. Mau speaks about a struggle of capital "for hundreds of years" against nature, in which he includes animals. Mau, *Mute Compulsion*, p. 294.

234 Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka, *Zoopolis: A Political Theory of Animal Rights*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2011.

235 Eva Meijer, *When Animals Speak: Toward an Interspecies Democracy*, NYU Press, New York, 2019.

236 Sarat Colling, *Animals without Borders: Farmed Animal Resistance in New York*, MA thesis, Brock University, 2013; Sarat Colling, *Animal Resistance in the Global Capitalist Era*, Michigan State University Press, East Lansing, 2021.

237 *Ibid.*, 109.

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strategies provoked traffic hazards, congestion and accidents that came to be considered animal nuisance, provoking complaints and leading to administrative ordinances, such as Paris' ban on harnessing dogs due to a widespread fear of accidents. According to police regulations,

> Considering that, contrary to previous regulations, merchants, butchers, bakers, tripe butchers and others routinely use carriages pulled by dogs for the transportation of goods;
> That these small carriages, whose manoeuvrability is difficult because of the dogs' *unruliness*, rush daily to the covered markets and outdoor markets at the very hours that adjacent roads are the most congested by pedestrians and vehicles of all types; that these carts, despite their drivers, slip between other carriages and frequently cause inextricable traffic hold-ups and annoyances;
> That these animals are forcibly overworked sometimes *irritates* them to such a point that several drivers and even passers-by have already been seriously *injured*;
> Finally, considering that dog-driven vehicle traffic in the capital is a permanent cause of accidents, and that the large number of these animals increases, in frightening proportions, the danger of rabies and that this is a perpetual, and unfortunately well-founded, fear in the population, is one of the calamitous scourges that the municipal authority must prevent by all available means.[238]

Dogs' "unruliness", together with health concerns, manifested politically and within the urban environment. To be sure, there is no party of the animals with general political objectives, nor a movement in its traditional meaning, nevertheless in their everyday practices of "waywardness",[239] they display their will to determine the conditions of their own lives and liberation. Although non-deliberately, these practices have effects on social forces and their projects. What Papadopoulos, Stephenson and Tsianos say about human escape strategies can also be applied to animals. They write, "[Animal]'s escape, flight, subversion, refusal, desertion, sabotage or simply acts which take place beyond or independently of existing political structures of power force sovereignty to respond to the new situation which escaping [animals] create, and thus to reorganise itself".[240]

238 Quoted in Sabine Barles, "Undesirable Nature: Animals, Resources and Urban Nuisance in Nineteenth-Century Paris", in Atkins (ed.), *Animal Cities*, p. 183. [emphasis added]

239 Buckel et al., *The European Border Regime in Crisis*, p. 19.

240 Dimitris Papadoupoulos et al., *Escape Routes. Control and Subversion in the Twenty-First Century*, Pluto Press, London, 2008, p. 43.

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4.6.5 Process Analysis

It was meat production's centralization as a hegemonic political project that defined the main policy that emerged out of the struggles between the hegemony projects outlined so far. The debate around the reforms has been everywhere quite intense, long and fought on many fronts: municipalities and councils, courts, press, academies. Despite the specific features of individual cases, the dynamic of the debate has had recurrent tropes. A first phase in which hygienists' call for governmental intervention in the problem of animal nuisance and meat unwholesomeness fails to achieve effective results. This practical failure was due to prevalent internal and national liberalization policies favoring the free market, the rights of private butchers and conservative organizations over public health concerns. Local inertia, lack of direction from central governments and the absence of universal consent from the medical and scientific communities regarding zoonoses also contribute to holding back reforms. Hygienists' prolific publications, however, have increased public awareness of bacteriology and of health problems associated with meat production, influencing consumers' choices and, eventually, progressively achieving legislative and institutional victories. The national-social project of slaughterhouse centralization is therefore hegemonic, constituting one of the pillars at the center of the welfare state and recasting the health vs. wealth conflict under the aegis of the nation-state.

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Conclusion

In this book, I have aimed at constructing a systematic and materialist intersectional logic for understanding how animal domination and exploitation are articulated in capitalist societies to advance our comprehension of the contemporary state of these problems. I have developed a framework that productively accommodates the contradictions that so far have weakened critical animal studies and advocacy. At the same time, I have sought to address the Left's – more particularly the eco-socialists' – under-theorization of urgent animal questions to bring to light the potential for radical change that a non-anthropocentric critical theory of society may have.

In the first chapter, I began by examining intersectionality, tracing its development within Black feminism and ecofeminism. This historical-conceptual review made clear the strengths of intersectionality for social criticism, particularly its ability to provide dynamic, multilayered frameworks for analyzing society, subjectivity, and domination. Intersectionality functions at the empirical micro-level, offering inclusive, multiple optics, and multiple-issue analyses that foster political solidarity among oppressed groups. At the macro-level of analysis, however, it struggles to provide a cohesive understanding of the broader structures that underwrite intersecting dominations. As we saw, Val Plumwood's critique of Western culture's dualisms explains the symbolic and discursive construction and maintenance of power structures. Plumwood is too focused, however, on cultural critique, and includes the critique of capitalism under the umbrella of cultural dualism. This under-theorization of the social lacks a robust theory of society and its material structures.

Through an exploration of various analyses of capitalism within critical animal studies, we saw certain shortcomings of the Marxist traditions that they draw upon. On one side, economic reductionism and determinism from traditional Marxism present key roadblocks, while on the other, the humanist philosophy of history, centered on alienation and inherited from the Frankfurt School, introduces its own limitations. These frameworks ultimately prioritize animal domination as the original model of domination, a model that capitalism merely intensifies. This "continuist" approach overlooks the fundamental elements of a capitalist society and the structural and qualitative changes that animal domination underwent during the capi-

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talist transition. In short, they fail to establish a clear relationship between animal domination and capitalist society.

In order to sufficiently elaborate this relationship, along with a theoretical framework for critical social theory, other readings of Marx were necessary, specifically the New Marx Reading. Central to this perspective is the recognition of Marxist materialism as a *theory of the social forms of material reproduction*. These social forms are historically specific modes of organizing relations of exchange, production and beyond. They do not manifest themselves empirically, but are rather fetishized – both reified in things and institutions, and naturalized in "objective forms of thought". Marx's analysis of social forms like commodity, money, capital, and credit, reveals that these are neither natural nor free from domination and exploitation. Instead, they are the means of class separation, and therefore reproduce class domination and exploitation. These forms and their interconnections constitute the non-normative dimension of the social.[1] They mediate the socialization and social cohesion of individuals "behind their backs" and appear to be natural forces with "inherent necessities" beyond individual control. As a result, in capitalist societies, the decisive relations of domination and exploitation are impersonal, embedded in these autonomous forms.

Thus, the Marxian method of form-analysis is needed to decipher and to analyze these forms, and to perform an abstract conceptual reconstruction, an "anamnesis of the genesis", of social forms and their interconnection. Form-analysis considers the social logics of reproduction and the naturalization of domination and exploitation inherent in capitalist production. The conceptual reconstruction of these logics, or the abstract structural connections, that shape power, knowledge, and subjectivity, effectively describes a given historical society as a capitalist one, and grasps the *differentia specifica* between capitalist and pre-capitalist contexts. This abstract level of analysis, however, does not explain how these structures actually manifest historically, nor how social changes occur. To remedy this, I proposed the additional concept of the *dispositif* – Foucault's term for networks of institutions, practices, and knowledge that effect subjectivation. While form-analysis provides the "skeleton", *dispositifs* offer the "flesh", describing the normative dimensions of the social and the concrete, historical variability of conflicts. Unlike impersonal domination, which refers to relatively permanent social bonds determined by the social forms, the *dispositif* are conflictual, involving power struggles between social forces and strategies, what in this book I refer to as *politics*. Loosening Rancière's distinction between politics and police, politics is understood as the disagreement over the assumptions and "naturalness" of social order. The theoretical framework known as Historical Materialist Policy Analysis (HMPA) maps social forces and strategies within specific

1 Meißner, *Jenseits des autonomen Subjekts*.

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policy fields as an armature for conflict analysis. Within this framework, politics has a specific historically meaning in the process of material reproduction.[2]

I developed a novel theoretical framework via the following research questions: a) How can we provide socio-material depth to an intersectional perspective? and b) How can we frame capitalism in a non-reductionist, non-economistic way? The aim was to enable a critical analysis of society that is both materialist and intersectional. Both of these terms had to re-examined in contrast to their traditional meanings. The notion of social materiality must be considered in a non-reductionist sense by overcoming the distinction between economic/cultural and base/superstructure. A first expansion occurs intensively, or vertically, by integrating social form analysis with the concepts of *dispositif* and politics to include both the formal-abstract level and the historical-concrete level as analytically distinct dimensions of materiality. This allows for the identification of structural constants alongside agent-institutional variables in the analysis of capitalist societies. This is the first way in which materiality becomes irreducible to the economic, opposing the base-superstructure distinction, according the Marxist notion of "objective forms of knowledge" and Foucauldian *dispositif*, which both refer to the epistemic-cultural dimension (ideology, to use Althusser's term) as an acting agent in the process of material reproduction.

Through this analysis, a redefinition of intersectionality arises. Capitalist social complexes in any given period can be understood as interlocking, partially overlapping networks of *dispositifs* corresponding to various social forms. Indeed, multiple social forms can share certain institutions, practices or knowledges within networked configurations. This makes it possible to analyze the intersections between different *dispositifs* and to identify the nodal points at which meshes of power, and their subjectivizing effects, intersect. A key example is the state. As an institution, it is present in almost all *dispositifs* of social forms. Thus, not only the political form of the state as an institution, but also politics as practice, are implicated in all *dispositifs*. Another, concrete example from the history of the dietary *dispositif* traced in Chapter 4 is nutrition science. Within this field knowledge, there is an intersection of the dietary *dispositif*, in the refinement of the rational feeding of animals, and the *dispositif* of generativity, in which the home becomes a place for the consumption of a meat-oriented diet.

2 This perspective distances itself from and critiques the ontologizing of politics seen in Rancière, Laclau, Mouffe, and others, where politics is hypostatized as the continuous, conflictual foundation of society. Despite their differences, these authors share the belief that no supra-individual, socio-economic structure of the social space exists prior to its formation, which they view as the direct result of struggles and contingent social practices. This overlooks the social significance of the autonomy and particular independence of material reproduction inherent in capitalist social conditions. (I thank Francesco Aloe for highlighting the importance of emphasizing this point).

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A second expansion occurs extensively, or horizontally. In Chapter 3, drawing on the insights of 1970s Marxist feminists and following Engels, social materiality is conceptualized as a *unified reality*, a single process of material production and reproduction "of immediate life" with a double character. It encompasses both the production of goods and services, as well as the production of individuals. This unified process unfolds in a context shaped by different types of social relations, governed by social logics that are interconnected, but irreducible to one another. Alongside Marx's analysis of the social forms governing the capitalist production of goods and services, and the transversal political form briefly discussed in Chapter 2, my analysis identifies the social forms organizing the production of individuals as labor-power under capitalist conditions. Here, we encountered a second anti-economistic logic, capable of recognizing specific forms, organizing gender relations, human-animal relations and "race" relations – often relegated in standard Marxist theory to cultural or superstructural – as fundamental elements of the material reproduction processes of society as a whole.

Regarding intersectionality, this horizontal extensive movement allows for an analysis that provides tangible substance to the "interlocking systems of domination," "overarching structures of domination," or broader "landscapes of power" of traditional intersectional scholarship. As explored in Chapter 3, the transition from pre-capitalist societies, in which production and generative reproduction within peasant families were unified, to the capitalist separation of the forms of production of goods and services and the forms of producing individuals revealed certain structural dynamics linking not only capitalist forms of production with generative reproduction, but also with the anthropological form. This framework allowed an understanding of the social form of animal domination and exploitation in capitalist societies, addressing the blind spots in both Marxist feminist and traditional Marxian-Engelsian analyses. The identification of these forms of the production of individuals is a step towards identifying and establishing a clear relation between animal domination and capitalist societies.

Form-analysis served as the initial stage in operationalizing the materialist logic for the animal question, and led to an abstract-conceptual reconstruction of the anthropological form of the production of individuals within the specific conditions of capitalist societies. First, we brought to light the constitution of this form of domination, understanding constitution as its anatomy, structure, and internal composition – the *forma formata*. With the support of diagrammatic representation, this reconstruction clarified that the synchronic structure of the continuous reproduction of separation between human and non-human animals coincides with the coupling of goods and services production with the form of generative reproduction. This form produces humans as gendered subjects and as labor-power, while simultaneously distinguishing them from animals as commodities. Thus, animals are ex-

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cluded from the human category, yet included as consumable means of subsistence to support the reproduction of labor-power within private households.

Secondly, by introducing a diachronic perspective, we considered the development and emergence of the form, its *forma formans*. Its critical roles in resolving the crisis of social reproduction, caused by capital's destructive tendencies, are in its transformation of generative forms into the modern nuclear family and the establishment of capitalist production of means of subsistence, particularly concerning meat. It is at this moment that the transition from domesticity to post-domesticity occurs. This shift brings an end to *societas* as a closed unit and nucleus for the production and reproduction of human and animal individuals, as well as for the production of goods and services. It is important that these are social forms describing the social logics by which corresponding relations are organized. They are compatible with, but distinct from, the logics of commodities and capital. A key payoff of this analysis was a more thorough comprehension of the interlocking structure of domination within capitalist societies, particularly in relation to class, gender and human-animal relations. This analysis is essential because it allows us to de-naturalize the fetishized anthropological form, recognizing it as the specific means by which human-animal relations are organized in capitalist societies, along with its effects of power, subjectification and knowledge production. This perspective reframes human/animal separation and meat-oriented nutrition as concrete social solutions enabling the production of human individuals as necessary for the reproduction of capitalist societies, and not as trans-historical biological survival.

It is worth clarifying that form-analysis of the anthropological form sheds light on the anatomy of animal domination within capitalist societies in general, relating it to other forms of domination. This analysis does not, however, answer whether capitalist society collapse if it ceased to exploit animals by replacing them with plant-based alternatives. It is reasonable, however, to suggest that capitalist society would be profoundly transformed if it were to abandon animal exploitation, with particular consequences on the production of labor power. The inverse proposition, would animal exploitation end if capitalist society collapsed, is clearly unrealistic. Animal exploitation and domination take many other forms, historically, even if these forms are not capitalist. This is evident in proposals from ecosocialists like Wallace and others,[3] who envision a future where animals are collectively used on a small scale.

Finally, form-analysis (Diagrams 2 and 3) allowed us to investigate the historical process leading to the materialization of the anthropological form, thereby arriving at a conceptual definition and analysis of the dietary *dispositif* that performed the so-called "nutrition transition" toward a meat-based diet. This transition was the

3 Rob Wallace et al., "COVID-19 and Circuits of Capital", *Monthly Review*, vol. 72, no. 1 (2020), pp. 1–13.

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result of a complex entanglement of knowledges, institutions, practices, and conflicts that arose in response to what contemporary commentators called the "health vs. wealth" crisis, in which capital's imperative for endless valorization and surplus value production posed a threat to the production of labor-power. Social reproduction, *stricto sensu*, continued to be organized according to pre-capitalist forms, which proved incompatible with the inherently accelerating scale of capitalist production (Diagram 3). A pivotal question was the role of the meat-slaughterhouse-animals complex and the reforms introduced by the hygienist movement, which led us to label the process as "hygienizing meat". Chapter 4 untangled this network of relations, beginning with an analysis of the modern slaughterhouse as an institution. The new slaughterhouse emerged as a centralized, mechanized, multi-dimensional complex, located away from urban centers for the streamlined killing of animals and meat production. It was a concrete solution to hygienic concerns aimed at promoting good health and preventing poor health. Von Liebig and nutritional science addressed the former concern with the discovery of protein. Miasma theory addressed the latter by equating odor with disease and identifying blood as having the most dangerous smell. Later, Pasteur and bacteriology synthesized these ideas, asserting that nutritious meat comes from healthy animals. "Centralization" and "separation" emerged as key principles. Animals were removed from crowded city streets, household courtyards, and small urban markets and concentrated in abattoirs. They were taken from the small, cultivated peasant fields, where they roamed for grazing, manuring, and reproducing, and concentrated on industrial farms. This represents the historical process that led to the zootechnical transformation of animals and the capitalist organization of their production – the shift from a pre-capitalist way of producing crucial means of subsistence to a fully capitalist mode.

Numerous case studies showcased diverse and variable historical processes behind the materialization and constitution of this form, as well as the political trajectories, strategies, and social actors, mapped through HMPA methods. These cases included: La Villette and its tradition of artisanal butchers; the Union Stock Yard and its "swamps"; Cincinnati's mechanized wheel; Moscow's public abattoir with its auditorium; debates over animal nuisance in London and the moral outrage raised by cattle driven to Smithfield Market; the French debate over contagionism and anti-contagionism; the English Humanitarian League's advocacy for humane slaughter; and the frequent, mid-nineteenth-century insistence by observers on "the most offensive and disgusting" odors of blood, manure, and animal carcasses.

References to history and tracing the genealogy of the *dispositif* were essential for denaturalizing, and thus, importantly, politicizing, the domination and exploitation of animals and meat-based diets, in addition to formal analyses. The organization of human-animal relations in capitalist societies is neither given, nor the result of a technological teleology, nor an intensification of either primal or pre-capitalist human domination over animals. Tracing the knowledges, institutions, actors, and

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trajectories of the scientific, philosophical, moral, and political debates surrounding mid-nineteenth-century slaughterhouse reforms demonstrates that this organization emerged amid hesitations, discontinuities, contestations, delays, divergent interests and antagonisms, not least among these animals' resistance. Indeed, "at any moment, history could have taken a different turn, small or large". Politics, as a practice of conflictual relationality, may take the forms of emancipation, radical critique and suspension of domination, or the stabilization and preservation of domination. While a degree of structure is provided by *dispositifs* and social forms, there is no strict functionalism, as political action does not conform consistently to social forms. These trajectories of conflict traversing *dispositifs*, or the materialization of social forms, can lead toward social change, if not toward emancipation.

To conclude, I go back to the third chapter, in which two important points arose: 1) The moment when the "golden" structure of the anthropological form operates at its peak corresponds with the highest level of reification and naturalization of class, gender, and species domination; and 2) Tendencies toward social reproductive crises inherent to capitalist production cause a disruption of this form's equilibrium – specifically, of the coupling of capitalist form with gender form, and the corresponding *dispositifs*. In light of current socio-ecological crises, pandemics, wars, and even the resurgence of nuclear threat, we may ask whether we are at a historical juncture in which capitalism's systematic blindness to the conditions of its own existence has led to a contradiction between social reproduction and the valorization process. Are we experiencing a phase of disruption?

A particularly clear instance of disruption with respect to the anthropological form was the COVID-19 global pandemic beginning in 2020. A missed encounter with what many at the time called a "challenge to change" became a bitter disappointment for animal advocates and CAS scholars. In 2020, it appeared that the social reproduction of the human labor-power was threatened by a virus originating from wild animals, whose transmission has been closely linked to the global capitalist circuit of industrial animal agriculture. After only two hundred years, what once served as a solution to a social reproductive crisis, the separating and centralizing of commodified animals to provide safe, affordable meat for the "victualing of the masses", ceased functioning and instead threatened human life. The COVID-19 crisis was inextricably tied to billions of animals' lives, to the production processes of meat and animal-sourced food in general, and to the *dispositifs* of animal oppression that materialize the anthropological form. A prominent direction of political conflict arose towards abolishing the separation itself and, along with it, other specific separations characteristic of capitalist societies. Yet, this trajectory had scarcely moved beyond the wishful thinking of voices advocating the "destabilizing potential of crisis and its promises of revolution" and was overshadowed by a world that responded to the crisis by further widening human-animal separation (for example, by exterminating all infected minks in Denmark in November 2020, or ordering meat-

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processing plants to remain open, invoking a Korean-War-era law from the 1950s, as U.S. President Donald Trump did in April 2020)[4]. Nonetheless, the anthropological form remains disrupted.

The ambition of this book has been to provide a better understanding of species domination within capitalist society, generating two main outcomes. The first is epistemic: to challenge the naturalization of domination and exploitation by addressing the form-determination of "objective forms of thought", bringing them back to the materiality of underlying social relations. The second is political: to orient the practice of conflictual relationality toward a complete transformation of the daily practices of (re)production of animal life – human and non-human alike – by replacing the existing ones and halting the perpetual reproduction of class, gender, and human-animal separation – in other words, a struggle against reification.

The goal is not simply to disrupt but to dismantle the anthropological form, to interrupt the mechanisms of the production of individuals and the *dispositifs* of sexuality and family, and to break the structural coupling that incorporates animals as means of subsistence and reproduction of labor-power.

Abolishing this present state of things can only be achieved through a real movement.

4 Katherine Faulders, "Trump Signs Executive Order to Keep Meat Processing Plants Open under Defense Production Act." ABC News, 28 Apr. 2020, abcnews.go.com/Politics/trump-sign-executive-order-meat-processing-plantsopen/story?id=70389089 accessed 9th June 2025.

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