

THE STRUCTURAL ANALOGY

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A

THE SPECTACLE

1

The wealth of societies in which the cybernetic mode of production prevails appears as an immense accumulation of spectacles.

2

The spectacle is the sole production of cybernetic society. It is made up of signs that convey information. The production of signs can therefore be understood only as an intermediate moment entirely subordinated to this end. A sign acquires meaning - that is, becomes a bearer of information - only through its confrontation with the organized whole of other signs; only then does it acquire its information value.

3

The spectacle lies beyond the commodity; it results from the substitution of the sign for use-value and of information value for exchange-value.

4

A sign is the representation of a lost use-value. That is why it has been said to be the use-value of representation.

5

Information is exchange-value carried to its highest degree of abstraction.

B

EXCHANGES

6

Spectacles cannot go to the market by themselves, nor can they exchange themselves with one another. We must therefore turn our attention to their guardians and conductors, that is, to their organizers. We shall call them LOGICIANS. These latter must establish themselves as organizers of the movement of spectacles, a movement that brings about their confrontation, as signs, with the whole of the other signs: the moment in which they acquire their information value and realize themselves as spectacle.

C

INFORMATION OR CIRCULATION

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Information is a spectacle like the others, but it acquires an additional significance because it is the common mediator of all the other spectacles; it makes possible the confrontation through which signs are realized as spectacles.

8

The metamorphosis of spectacles - from signs into information, then from information back into richer signs because they now carry information, that is, into realized spectacles - is an essential fact of cybernetic society.

9

The circulation of spectacles, or their orchestration, requires a centralized and unitary organization, because the complexity and number of exchanges of information and signs are such that they could not proceed properly if the organization of exchanges did not possess the practical means of controlling all of them.

9 Bis

For it is circulation that structures, and nothing else, because it raises the question of qualifications. Yet, in order to perpetuate itself, circulation must also be de-structuring, given the qualifications of the transformations it requires if the spectacularist world is to grow richer. From the outset, it therefore requires a logic that unifies it in three respects:

it mints currency (common information, which implies and controls communications from the beginning);

it is ideology (the status of the world that must be accepted in order to remain within it);

it makes law (the norm that renders the operations of the production system compatible).

Logic, which unifies by separating, simply materializes the contradiction contained in the need to maintain circulation: the contradiction between unity (the fragmentation of the things that circulate) and centralization (common values).

D

THE GENERAL FORMULA OF CYBERNETICS

10

The circulation of spectacles is the starting point of cybernetics. It appears only where historical conditions have allowed the full development and unification of capital up to the emergence of the first production crises of capitalist societies. The spectacle then presents itself as a satisfactory resolution of those very contradictions. The modern history of cybernetics goes back to the end of the nineteenth century.

11

The general formula of cybernetics is: structure 1 - spectacle - structure 2.

12

The circulation of spectacles has no other purpose than to realize a structural surplus-value; translated into concrete terms, this is a surplus of power for the organizers, because the structure that constitutes the form of their organization is enriched. The spectacle is its instrument.

E

ORIGIN OF ORGANIZATIONAL FORCE

13

Structural surplus-value does not arise from the structure itself, nor even from the spectacle, but from the exploitation of the labor-power of those who produce all social wealth without owning it: producers of signs and of organization, reduced to being the builders, spectators, and victims of their own productions -

the spectacles ("Everything that was directly lived has moved away into a representation," G. Debord). The proletariat of the cybernetic age is the most dehumanized in all history, and nothing worse can any longer be conceived. Cybernetic society is indeed the last social order still capable of separating human beings into two classes, while ensuring the maximum exploitation of those whom it dispossesses.

F

PRODUCTION OF SIGNS & PRODUCTION OF SURPLUS-VALUE

14

There is one sign that lies at the origin of all the others: life. This sign, creator of all signs, is the only good possessed by a certain social class: the proletariat. The continuous purchase of this sign, exchanged for a place within the machinery of cybernetic society, will form the basis of the production of the spectacle. Of course, life considered as a sign is the negation of life itself.

15

Life no longer destroys itself in order to reproduce itself (in play, in love...). It must not dissipate itself just anywhere, in ways that are unproductive for the logicians. It will therefore negate itself within structures. Proletarians become elements of these structures. This is why the production relation of cybernetic society takes the name ELEMENTARIAT.

16

All moments of vitality (what are called the passions) are thus reduced to the state of labor forces, added to the productive forces previously mobilized (culture and manufacturing), that is, sold by proletarians to their traditional masters.

17

The production of structural surplus-value is the principal activity of cybernetic society; the circulation of spectacles is the visible moment in which this surplus-value is realized, but circulation as such does not create structural surplus-value. The surplus-value of the sign is constituted in the sector of sign production, through the surplus labor of the proletariat that produces them. In the sector of sign circulation, information is then constituted, conferring on the sign the value that completes it as spectacle. Such a process is itself productive of signs (the process of circulation is not impersonal: it takes place through increased participation by the proletariat in structures), with the same proletariat participating in the spectacle, the sign of its first dispossession now enriched a second time by the representation of its own lost life. Since human vitality in its entirety is a source of social value, the proletariat never ceases to produce signs that the logicians know how to use.

G

VARIABLE STRUCTURE & CONSTANT STRUCTURE

18

The organization of the sector of sign production requires that a part of the structure always be invested in it; this represents the form of power exercised by the class of organizers over the sector producing the materials necessary to its activity: this is constant structure (because it cannot, through a movement of its own, modify its state).

19

The organization of the sphere of circulation of spectacles constitutes the other part of the structure, representing the form and direction that exchanges must take during the metamorphosis of spectacles; this uninterrupted movement of exchanges manifests power in action (which realizes its structural surplus-value): this is variable structure.

H

THE RATE OF STRUCTURAL SURPLUS-VALUE

20

The rate of structural surplus-value is given by the ratio:

Surplus labor

Necessary labor

With the highly refined novelty that:

Surplus labor = surplus labor in the production of signs + surplus labor in participation in spectacles.

I

THE WORKING DAY - THE WAGE

21

The working day is equal to the entire day, including sleeping time; the cybernetician can say that all human beings work fraternally for the glory of the spectacle.

22

The concept of "everyday life" precisely defines the workplace of cybernetic production, because it is the meeting point of productive structures. The maintenance of labor-power is remunerated by a piece of information: qualification. Every exchange between individuals, without exception, is dominated by the politics of qualifications.

23

Time is now divided infinitely by the productive act. One is never completely "one's own." Modern poverty is this very deprivation (deprivation of the pleasure of living, that is, of the free use of the passions), which has two poles: boredom (being bound to the workplace) and anxiety (the problems of employment).

J

RATE & MASS OF STRUCTURAL SURPLUS-VALUE

24

Cybernetic society makes itself master of labor and life; that is, it succeeds in bending labor-power and life in motion - or the worker himself - under its law. The intelligentsia ensures that the proletariat performs his task and participates in the realization of the spectacle with the required degree of intensity. This intensity determines the rate of his surplus-value.

25

Since the intensity of the proletariat's alienation is at its maximum, as we have just seen, the sum of surplus-values can vary only if the mass of signs produced increases, since its rate is fixed; and this entails an increase in the number of spectacles in motion.

K

UNIT OF SIGN PRODUCTION

26

It can be seen that an increase in the mass of spectacles can be obtained only through a multiplication of the equivalence classes that control production: an increase in the division of labor. At the limit, the same act of production must be productive in the greatest possible number of structures.

27

The division of activities is pushed to its ultimate extreme so that the enrichment of structure may be as great as possible. All social activities are subjected to this iron law, because it is absolutely vital for cybernetic society to compartmentalize all the moments that make up its movement, so that the metamorphosis of spectacles may take place with maximum intensity: the confrontation of signs with the whole of the other signs, a period in which the unification of all separations makes it possible, through a kind of gigantic communion, to justify the existence of a happiness of living. But also because the slightest breach in this compartmentalization would tear away the gentle mask of cybernetic management, allowing everyone to feel the horrible emptiness of a dead world.

L

THE LAW OF CYBERNETIC ACCUMULATION

28

The metamorphosis of spectacles is the nerve center of the cybernetic mode of production. The accumulation of structures, which is both the result and the origin of the metamorphosis of spectacles, is the law of this mode of production. The growing movement of enrichment of structures is at the same time the enrichment of the power of the logicians; this is a simple consequence of the law, since the ruling class directly benefits from this accumulation. The existence of a proletariat, which is the driving force of this mode of production, lies at the origin of this law. The movement of spectacles must proceed continuously; yet its consequence is the enrichment of the overall structure, and therefore an increase in the volume of spectacles in motion. Stagnation or interruption of the movement of spectacles, because of the void thereby created, would produce an explosion of very great violence: either to demand the resumption of the movement of spectacles (as the structure itself more or less provides for), or to bring the history of alienation definitively to an end.

29

Thus, from its birth, the power of the logicians bears the tragic mark of its decline. This explains how little violence it expends in eliminating capitalism, of which it is the direct offspring, because its activity, alienated to that of the bourgeoisie (in the era of managing), is far more comfortable in every respect. It emancipates itself from the latter only when pushed by events, that is, when brought into direct competition with the proletariat once capitalist functioning is truly exhausted, which means that no cybernetic reorganization of capitalism is any longer viable. Presenting itself then as the class that organizes proletarian consciousness, the sole holder of human rationality, the intelligentsia accomplishes the last possible split in History: the split between the means of production and their organization (a split added to the two preceding ones - between the means of production and the producers, and between the producers and their products). "The worker does not produce himself" (G. Debord); he does not himself produce the organization of his own production; he produces an independent power: the organization of production.

M

THE PROCESS OF CIRCULATION OF STRUCTURE

30

The process of circulation of structure takes the form of a circular movement in which there are three distinct poles which, considered in their unity, produce the phenomenon called cybernetic production. These are: the information structure, the productive structure, and the spectacularist structure. The analysis of the spectacle has brought to light three facts - the sign, the spectacle, and information - to which the three structures defined above correspond.

31

The first circuit of structure is: Information 1 - Spectacle 2 - Sign 1 - Spectacle 2 - Information 2, where Information 2 is richer than Information 1. This is the law of the circuit of the information structure, expressing the way in which it is enriched (surplus-value of information structure). It is, for example, the cycle of the use of spectacles within the population and their informationist recovery.

32

The second circuit of structure is: Sign 1 - Spectacle 2 - Information 2 - Spectacle 3 - Sign 1. This is the law of the productive structure, expressing the way in which it is enriched (surplus-value of production structure). This is what encourages the continuation of sign production.

33

The third circuit of structure is: Spectacle 2 - Information 2 - Spectacle 3 - Sign 2 - Spectacle 4, where Spectacle 4 is richer than Spectacles 3, 2, and 1 (surplus-value of spectacularist structure). And what follows is the increase in the spectacle of order itself.

N

THE THREE FORMS OF THE CIRCULATION PROCESS

34

These three circuits have in common that each contributes to an increase in the general structure by increasing each of the three components of that structure, and also that each manifests itself as a particular metamorphosis of one of the components of the structure.

35

These three circuits are also distinct because they operate on moments of the cybernetic process that cannot be reduced to one another and that call for forms of social organization distinct in their origins (for example, the university, urban planning, the mass media, taken in a very broad sense: sectors that validate information, signs, and spectacles). Considered globally, their triple metamorphosis realizes the process of enrichment of the organizational structure and, correspondingly, the enrichment of the power of the logicians.

O

CIRCULATION TIME

36

Three times correspond to the three circuits, and the entire problem for the class of organizers is to ensure that the circular movement of the cybernetic production process is as rapid and as fluid as possible. This problem is difficult to solve because, for a linear variation in the mass in motion, one must expect an exponential increase in the difficulties of circulation, and therefore in circulation time. This is why the time of the logicians is a pseudo-cyclical time, just like that of their ancestors: the bourgeois.

P

CIRCULATION COSTS

37

The need to reduce circulation costs lies at the origin of the relative increase of constant structure in relation to variable structure. In cybernetic society, circulation costs are the organization of circulation (and no longer its price).

Q

THE TURNOVER OF STRUCTURE

38

The overall structure, or cybernetic society as a whole, performs, by virtue of all its internal cycles, a pseudo-turnover, strangely resembling a snowball rolling down a slope, condemned as it is to increase its volume.

R

THE LAW OF THE TENDENTIAL FALL IN THE RATE OF PROFIT

39

The rate of profit of structure is given by the ratio of the rate of structural surplus-value to the mass of structure.

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The rate of structural surplus-value is constant in the cybernetic mode of production because, as we have seen, exploitation is carried there to an extreme degree. Consequently, as the mass of structure constantly increases (as a result of surplus-value), the rate of profit decreases in parallel, tending toward zero.

41

The fall in the rate of profit of structure and accelerated accumulation (the increase in the mass of structure) are merely different expressions of the same process: both express the growth in the number of spectacles undergoing realization. Accumulation, for its part, accelerates the fall in the rate of profit insofar as it implies the concentration of organization on a larger scale and, consequently, a higher composition of structure. On the other hand, the fall in the rate of profit also increases the intensity of the concentration of organization, that is, its transformation into stronger organization.

42

Moreover, insofar as the rate of profit of structure is the driving force of cybernetic production (the interest the logicians have in continuing their activity), just as the valorization of structure is its goal, its decline slows the formation of new sectors of organization and thus appears as a threat to the development of cybernetic production.

43

It can now be seen that the exploitation of humanity, by the very fact that its purpose is to concentrate something inhuman, does not possess the means to continue indefinitely. A point must be reached at which the continuation of subjugated production would expend more structure than it created, circulation costs becoming greater than the expected surplus-value.

44

The cybernetic mode of production encounters, in the development of the forces of organization, a limit that has nothing to do with the production of organization as such. This particular limit demonstrates the narrow and doomed character of the cybernetic mode of production; it demonstrates that this is not an absolute mode of production of organization, but rather that, at a certain stage of its development, it comes into conflict with its further development, with no hope this time of seeing a new class relation arise within it that might save domination, as cybernetics itself had saved it when the capitalist social system was failing. The class of logicians is the last that will be able to claim dominion over the human species; its reign is a sad history. At first resigned to the pitiful role of capitalism's watchdog, it is threatened, when proletarian unrest precipitates its emancipation, by the dreadful prospect of being prematurely eliminated - which would, however, spare it (as will have been understood) from

disappearing tragically at the end of a short and uncertain period of absolute power. It will have had time to expose to the universe the hideous face of absolute inhumanity that had been preparing its advent for millennia: that of the least autonomous and most powerful class in History. The proletariat of modern cities already knows whom it is dealing with, and who its worst enemy is; it would do well to know it very well!

(SUPPLEMENT TO SECTION F: PRODUCTION OF SIGNS AND PRODUCTION OF SURPLUS-VALUE)

17 bis

The division between sectors of production and realization could previously be located in time. In the cybernetic age, it can be located only in a multi-linear space. Time as it had been considered (cf. Marx: "surplus-value arises only from the prolonged duration of labor") was purely a one-dimensional space. From now on, the owner of labor-power must sell it only for a determinate space, for if he sells it in one block, once and for all, he sells himself. For this reason, he is a free worker. Yet "the value possessed by labor-power and the value it can create always differ in magnitude." The irreducible question of realization is now: all the time, but here and elsewhere; reproduction followed a circle; it is now inscribed within a sphere. The growth of structure follows the laws of topology, which define the possibility of closure in every case, that is, of enrichment through the exchange-based use of products of passion.

17 ter

Without even speaking of the vicissitudes of class struggle (the problem of overflow), the topological possibility of realizing surplus-value is resolved in a manner just as problematic as in the commodity system, with the value of information regulating the whole of exchanges for as long as it can; which means that the informational mass in circulation must be sufficient to realize the value of spectacles.

(MODIFICATION OF SECTION G: VARIABLE STRUCTURE AND CONSTANT STRUCTURE)

18 bis

The organization of the sphere of circulation of spectacles constitutes the other part of constant structure, which represents the form and direction that exchanges must take during the metamorphosis of spectacles; this uninterrupted movement of exchanges manifests power in action (which realizes its structural surplus-value).

19

Another part of the structure, transformed into qualifications, changes value in the course of production. It reproduces its own equivalent plus an excess, a surplus-value which can itself vary and be greater or smaller. This part of the structure constantly changes from a constant magnitude into a variable magnitude. That is why we shall call it the variable part of the structure, or more briefly: variable structure.

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