

## Zachary De Jong Reimagining the Oikos

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**Abstract:** We are currently living through a time in which the line dividing capital and state has dissolved behind repair, where free-market economics and rules of governance have become nothing more than a totality of bio-political control for capitalist and subjective fixes, and, where the distinctions between corporate hegemony, policy making, free-speech and mainstream media have become seemingly non-existent. This text attempts to act as a remedy to this by examining and analyzing some of the key tenets of what must be done in order to create a post-capitalist society, and move towards a reimagined *oikos* and *oikonomia*. It focuses largely on the necessity of moving away from subjectivity-centered thought, and towards a new form of materialist universality.

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### Introduction

This paper seeks to examine the possibility of creating a post-capitalist society on the basis of the complete reimagination of the *oikos* and *oikonomia* (as it stands in its capitalist sense). In order to understand how this new existence could function, we need to examine the fundamental basis on which it is founded. Thus, it is necessary to examine some very basic structures, their lineage, and how they

work in today's state of liberal-democratic-capitalism, in order to show how and why they must be overturned. Thus we need to examine some basic tenets concerning subjectivity, symbolic and economic exchange, the role of science in forming not only our decision making, but the structure and form of radical change, the structure of governance and representation, and finally how all of this relates to living in common, in a new shared space not entrenched in the current imaginary of infinitely increasing representation.

While the idea of moving toward a post-capitalist future, or even a post-capitalist *oikos*, is certainly not a novel idea, it is indeed something that must be explored with some urgency if society, and the planet (including all of the beings on it), have a chance of surviving a life worth living. This is especially true in the time we are living in when the line dividing capital and state has dissolved behind repair, when free-market economics and rules of governance have become nothing more than a totality of bio-political control for capitalist and subjective fixes, and, when the distinctions between corporate hegemony, policy making, free-speech and mainstream media have become seemingly non-existent. Thus in our current state we are left with only two options, create a new space, a new system of exchange, and a new form of governance, or be brutally crushed under the weight of capital's contradictions.

### 1.0: Ego and Reification

Before we begin, it is worth noting why the conception of *oikos*, and with it, *oikonomia*, are important terms and concepts with which to work. The word *oikos*, in Greek, literally translates into house/household, and is the root of the word *oikonomia*, or, economy. Thus the conception of the economy is always-already based in social relations, on relations of the household, and on relations of power and subjugation. More particularly, on the subjugation of women, and femininity as such. Thus, reimagining the *oikos* entails not simply reimagining the household, but reimagining power relations, subjectivity, the economy, gender, patriarchy, political organization, in short, the entire structure of not only society, but the space of society, and our role in it. Likewise, contemporary thinkers such as Agamben, Kolozova, and Haraway, have all put the terms to use in the form of radical critiques of how things are in order to point towards a more egalitarian future.

Now, concerning the *oikos*, it is impossible to begin speaking to the space which we inhabit and must transform without talking about not only the way in which we inhabit it, but the way in which we create the conditions of our habitation (in the dual sense of our habitus there in). It would be a perhaps crude reduction, without supplying the necessary proof which cannot be done within the space of this paper (but is expertly done by the likes of Katerina Kolozova and François Laruelle, and even, to a lesser extent, Henri Lefebvre elsewhere) but not at all unfair to say, that the history of Western thought has always already been plagued by our own human projections, that our thought has hitherto largely (with a few exceptions) remained ensnared in subjective self-certainties and tautologies which blind us from understanding the world outside of our myopic and subjectivity-centered analyses. Katerina Kolozova has gone to great and painstaking lengths throughout her oeuvre to show that philosophy, and philosophical thought (which is by absolutely no means reducible to the formal discipline of philosophy as such) works precisely through a form of willful forgetting (not dissimilar in some ways to Heidegger's forgetting of forgetting). This willful forgetting reduces the entire existence of materiality to minded-subjects and reaches its apotheosis in Hegel, who represents an all-consuming mega-mind of teleologically ordained idealism which conveniently presents, oxymoronically, an opaque but ever shifting system of contradictions and dissolutions which can only be realized by us, the chosen beings, the Israelites of the entire universe.<sup>1</sup> According to Kolozova, this phenomenon can be defined as subjectivity-centered thought,<sup>2</sup> that is, thought which has its locus in the subject as a philosophical category, thought which claims that it is more real than real itself, or again, that it has authority or claim over the real as such.<sup>3</sup> Although we will continue to return to this point,

<sup>1</sup> Katerina Kolozova, "The Radical Dyad of the Non-Human: Thinking Inequality Beyond Identity as Reification,"

*Historical Materialism Conference Online*, (2020): available at:

[https://www.academia.edu/44964430/The\\_Radical\\_Dyad\\_of\\_the\\_Non\\_Human\\_Thinking\\_Inequality\\_Beyond\\_Identity\\_as\\_Reification?email\\_work\\_card=view-paper](https://www.academia.edu/44964430/The_Radical_Dyad_of_the_Non_Human_Thinking_Inequality_Beyond_Identity_as_Reification?email_work_card=view-paper)

<sup>2</sup> See for instance: Katerina Kolozova, "The Artifact of Non-Humanity: A Materialist Account of the Signifying Automaton and Its Physical Support in a Fantasized Unity," *Philosophy Today*, 65:2 (April 22, 2021); Katerina Kolozova, "Examining the "Principle of Philosophical Sufficiency": Of Ontology and its Philosophical Limitations," *The Comparatist*, 44 (2020), 182-195.

<sup>3</sup> Kolozova's remark is based on Laruelle's theory of the problem of the "principle of sufficient philosophy," or PSP, which amounts to "philosophical decisionism" – philosophy taking charge of not postulating what the real is but also treating the postulate as the Real itself (in its generality, or abstraction as generalization). François Laruelle, *Philosophy and Non-Philosophy*, Trans. Taylor Adkins (University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 12,

what is crucial to take away from this, for the time being, is the necessity of freeing ourselves from the perverse ambition to conquer and assimilate knowledge and the real, as well as the need to objectify every non-human entity (this of course applies to humans as well, as long they are not the "right" ones, the poor, the oppressed, the migrants, the sans papiers, and women, especially as they are treated as a merely socio-economic-political category) which is its necessary correlate. In other words, there is no possibility of creating a new space of thought or living if we refuse to realize that our existence as subjects must be discarded and replaced by a form of communal being which does not acquiesce to the tautologies of our own thought. Now, this idea of overcoming subjectivity-centered thought is clearly not divorced from the material conditions we inhabit, the issue is not to simply oppose ideas, as *eidos*, with other ideas, without a material shift. Thus the concept of the idea as existing outside of any material circumstances, or originating purely in human minds, must be erased, yet, the concept of the possibility of an idea (of a radically reimagined society) as inherently material must be radically affirmed. To say, for instance, that matter is indeterminate means precisely that there is a level of incalculability, but this absence of perfect calculus, this concept of reimagining is what allows for material change itself<sup>4</sup>. However, maintaining such a relation does not mean that we should make abstract claims based outside of matter, but that the effects of matter must give rise to something more than what appears as is. In other words, our political imagination must be material, and by doing so must in some ways rely on ideas, ideas, however, whose origin is not grounded in the beyond, or in subjectivity. Thus, the very concept of a given space of relations is always already both material and concrete.<sup>5</sup>

However, one must also err on the side of a certain form of pragmatism, while also crucially acknowledging that language, and our relations to it, are also material. Sloganeering of the sort "workers

77, 99.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example: Alain Badiou, *Being and Event* (Bloomsbury, 1998); Thomas Nail, *Marx in Motion: A New Materialist Marxism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

<sup>5</sup> This is the precise opposite stance of someone like Aleksandar Dugin, who imagines community purely based around the material incorporation of an always already metaphysical ideal which is retroactively transubstantiated into matter. We must, therefore, insist on the opposite, those things which we call ideas are made possible only by matter itself and the suffering of being, and do not exist in a realm beyond, nor do they exist simply in the subjective mind. For more on Dugin see: Aleksandr Dugin, *The Fourth Political Theory* (Eurasian Movement: 2012).

of the world unite,” or “we are the 99%” nonetheless reflect, or betray, an egoistic teleology or a stagnant reformism respectively. The structure of any given society, when looked at from a materialist stance, must be founded on the dissolution of subjectivity-centered thought, regardless of the specificities of cultural or linguistic instantiations. What matters then, in a certain sense, is a universality of the concrete (and not, so to speak, a concrete universality à la Hegel). I will return to this phenomenon in more detail later on, the important point for now is realizing the futility of attempting to create economic, social, or political change without first shifting the very focus of our thought itself, and thus the very nature of what it could mean to be a subject, or, perhaps, even a post-subject.

In accordance with this, and taking an important lesson from Lacan, it is pivotal to understand that subjects do not simply become subjects by way of a top-down interpellation. It is not a mere matter of responding to the Master’s call and thus realizing your identity and belonging therein and concretizing the Other’s, qua symbolic order, existence and legitimacy (this is of course also present in Althusser’s analysis). Rather, the relation is always already twofold. The reification of subjects as this or that subject (as capitalist subjects, as liberal subjects, as democratic subjects, etc...) always-already requires a reciprocal relation of subjective volition and desire, and a second order form of objective over-determination, none of which are divorced from material determinations, or conditions, such as the means of production.<sup>6</sup> However, the distinction between determined subjects and willing subjects blurs the line between the subjugated and the subjugators (even if it is a form of self-subjugation, not unlike those who bow before their fictitious gods, and besides, what is capitalism if not an endless religious ceremony). For the sake of clarity, I am by no means suggesting that we do not know who the direct victims of our oppressive systems are (in the sense of those who bear the brunt of said oppression, even if it is in an abstract way also created by them), rather I want simply to point out that it is not as simple as merely seizing the means of production, or enacting immediate political change (which is absolutely necessary of course) but of also shifting our perspective which allows us to change the

overdetermined relations so that we can seize anything at all (or do anything post seizure). Whether it is the dissolution of any category of subject, or the razing of the subject to a universal and materially constituted conduit of change, such as in Badiou, some form of transformation is needed. Again, our material conditions, and subjective and psychological relations toward them are not so easily parsable. It is not idealist to think in this way, it is rather the un-idealizing of subjective relations in order to understand them materially, in order to understand the apparently abstract as materially and reciprocally conditioned. Again, Kolozova shows this in great detail<sup>7</sup> (especially in relation to real abstractions and the syntax of the real), but we will go over this more fully in a subsequent section.

Firstly, however, let us briefly further this point concerning the subject’s relation to their own reification,<sup>8</sup> or at the very least, their subsumption into a socio-economic-political order which is sustained precisely by their own functioning therein. Again, this reciprocal relation between interpellation and structure is key. The flattering of space into a monotonous time, or rather, time’s becoming nothing more than a flattened space is part and parcel of this relation.<sup>9</sup> What’s repeated is always what is configurable within a parochial set of reasons, norms, and ideologically internalized presuppositions. Space, and we could even talk of imagined spaces, space outside of the confines of what exists, become compacted.<sup>10</sup> Likewise, along these same lines, Agamben shows us how the role of law and liturgy (in this context, in relation to monks), creates a suffocating existence owing to the imposition of the rule of law, rendering them not only the result of their repetition, but also unable to distinguish the act the law demands from their carrying out of the very same law.

The text of the rule is [...] not only a text in which the distinction between writing and reading tends to become

<sup>7</sup> Katerina Kolozova, “Philosophical and Speculative Economies of the Vanishing Body,” available at <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fsoc.2018.00026/full>

<sup>8</sup> To be clear, we must, as Kolozova and many others point out, including Samo Tomšič, distinguish between alienation and reification. Humans, as such, are always alienated in a certain way, while reification is effectually an issue of capitalism

<sup>9</sup> Ray Brassier, “Pricing Time: Outline and Discussion on Suhail Malik’s ‘The Ontology of Finance,’” *Identities: Journal for Politics, Gender and Culture*, 14:1-2, (2011), 86-128.

<sup>10</sup> Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Duke University Press, 1992), 64.

<sup>6</sup> See Adrian Johnston’s elucidation of Lacan’s concept in relation to Slavoj Žižek here: Adrian Johnston, *Badiou, Žižek, and Political Transformations: The Cadence of Change* (Northwestern University Press, 2009).

blurred, but also one in which writing and life, being and living, become properly indiscernible in the form of a total liturgicization of life and a vivification of liturgy that is just as entire [...] In the rule, there cannot be a liturgical section, because... the whole life of the monk has been transformed into an Office.<sup>11</sup>

Of course by law here we do not merely mean what belongs to the judicial branch, but the tacit demands of the ruling ideological, and materially existing structures<sup>12</sup> (we will further this analysis of law further on). Thus the creation of any given subjectivity is always an act of repetition, to an adherence to a law which does away with a form of life that can no longer be extricated from it, even if it is foundational for its creation. At the same time, known or unknown to the subject, these liturgical repetitions are necessary for sustaining the entire economy of their existence in relation to a given hegemony (this does not mean economy only in the sense of markets etc). Thus, as Agamben says elsewhere, “liturgy and oikonomia are [...] strictly linked, since as much in the songs and the acclamations of praise as in the acts of the priest, it is always only the “economy of the saviour that is meant”.<sup>13</sup> Thus, as we will see later on, the entire conception of law and social contract must be fundamentally reimagined, if we are to reimagine the *oikos*.

## 2.0 Formalist or Formless Objectivity:

In a certain sense we could say that the flattening of time, as just discussed, is matched by the absolutization of extension, a regression towards a Cartesian metaphysics in which the body can still be affected by the mind, despite somehow being immaterial toward it.<sup>14</sup> This is seen most regularly in the concretization of identity whereby a subject sees itself as fully formed, separate from its body, and yet always in complete control. Thus, it is presupposed, if only unconsciously, that the primacy of thought is always on the side of subjec-

tivity, even if this subjectivity is nothing more than an empty extension. However, it should be noted that the split between objectivity and subjectivity also no longer exists as a strong dualism per se; instead, the subjective is absolutized into a formless objectivity. The pure fungibility of capitalism, and the impossibility of anchoring identity in anything stable is mirrored in the infinite sprawl of techno-space, where categories such as the means of production, and ownership of one’s labour become infinitely more dissolute<sup>15</sup> while, simultaneously transforming our subjectivity into an absolute but empty and alienated objectivity, an auto-reification, and an objectivity without content or form (we will come back to this point in the proceeding section).

Now, by techno-space we do not merely mean the space which is “occupied” by technology, or by the internet or anything of that nature, although this is also included, but rather the entirety of space as a bio-political means of technique, and its relation to digitality, only in so far as we understand digitality as specifically subordinated to a form of capitalist, and identitarian abstraction and exchange—subordinate to a space of reasons which always values pure exchange, as opposed to use value. Thus it is also important not to view technology, tout court, as necessarily promoting these traits. As Donna Haraway points out vis-à-vis the cyborg and the *oikos*, it can actually act as a subversive force: “No longer structured by the polarity of public and private, the cyborg defines technological polls based partly on a revolution of social relations in the *oikos*, the household. Nature and culture are reworked; the one can no longer be the resource for appropriation or incorporation by the other.”<sup>16</sup> Thus questions such as what does it mean to be a labouring instagram influencer, to profit purely off of advertising? are not dissimilar to questions of what it means to produce a car in a factory. Both are questions of capitalist abstraction, and the reduction of the body to a spectral relation of exchange.

Furthermore, if we briefly look at the role of Aesthetics in contemporary societies (primarily Western societies) we can further derive

<sup>11</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *The Highest Poverty: Monastic Rules and Form-of-Life* (Stanford University Press, 2013), 82.

<sup>12</sup> See also: Katerina Kolozova, “VIOLENCE: The Indispensable Condition of the Law,” *Angelaki* 19:2 (2014), 99–111.

<sup>13</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government* (Stanford University Press, 2011), 173.

<sup>14</sup> For this relation between metaphysics, capitalism, and space see: Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Blackwell, 1991).

<sup>15</sup> Katerina Kolozova, “Poststructuralism, Chapter in the Forthcoming Oxford Handbook of Feminist Philosophy [under contract].”

<sup>16</sup> Donna Haraway “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and SocialistFeminism in the Late Twentieth Century,” in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (London-New York: Routledge), 149–181.

what constitutes this formless objectivity. What is presented by, from, and to us, what is reflected back in the world of a techo-space which appears all encompassing and which makes us forget that this space is indeed itself nothing more than matter, and in the case of the literal internet, nothing more than underwater tubes, power-lines, and satellites?<sup>17</sup> If, as Walter Benjamin write, the introduction of aesthetics into political life leads to war, and in particular fascism<sup>18</sup> then what occurs when political life is entirely internalized, when material connections become voided by spectral subjective projections, when the only thing that matters is itself aesthetics, and finally, when we have already been reduced to bare life, when bare life has become integrated into the very functioning of the political system. It seems at first glance to be a war against oneself as a self, or perhaps, rather, the subject becomes the plane for every war, as reflecting nothing more than an empty category of representation. Every war is grounded in subjectivity, on nationalist subjectivity, on identitarian subjectivity, on capitalist subjectivity, on subjectivities which simultaneously view themselves as objective. To specify, what I mean is not that wars are not based on material circumstances, but that the *urgrund* of war is always based in a distorted subjectivity, a subject-centered subjectivity, so to speak, in which the material world is subjected to and treated as abstractly separated from the world of self-hood, and the world of matter, in short, when it loses all form. It is precisely this individually ideological conception that Kolozova outright rejects via her appeal to Marx's third party perspective. What this perspective entails, in its simplest possible form, is a moving away entirely from the concept of objects as being constituted by subjects, or in our case, the self-objectification of subjects as formless objects, and instead insisting on viewing ourselves as objects amongst other objects, as being viewed by other objects, and thus both materially, and as it were, universally connected. As Marx himself states: "To be objective, natural and sensuous, and at the same time to have object, nature and sense outside oneself, or oneself to be object, nature and sense for a third party, is one and the same thing."<sup>19</sup> Thus, as we will continue to see, it is only by mov-

ing away from subjective projections, and moving towards materialist ways of organization that a new *oikos* can be created.

### 3.0 On the Construction of Law and Commons:

In order to understand how a post-subjective foundation of law, and furthermore a post-subjective understanding of social institutions and organizations could exist, means moving beyond both subjective dissolution qua absolute democracy, (such as it is in Rousseau, for example), and absolute particularism, as it is in Western contemporary democracy, or what Badiou in the *Logics of Worlds* coins democratic materialism. Let us define our terms more clearly. Rousseau, in the social contract, insists on an infallible, indivisible common will. A people is a people only insofar as it subjects its particular wills to the general will which is itself a metaphysical concept which can only be secured by way of an extrajudicial command from a legislator.<sup>20</sup> Thus the particular is always subservient to the general will, and is essentially privatized, while the general will is always excessive, in excess, but nonetheless guided by a higher force. Thus it does not escape a certain state of exception, and instead remains trapped in a philosophical self-certainty. Current liberal democracies (in general),<sup>21</sup> however, function by removing any generality of will, what matters, in the last instance, is quite simply the particular will as such, devoid of any genericity or universality (outside of the universality of the commodity form). By voting and deciding on our own best interests we are meant to be voting and deciding on what is best for the whole. Law, the governance of subjects—both legal and in general—cannot but be borne out of the same fabric of the very subjects it wishes to govern. This is the oldest metaphysical sleight of hand.

Natural law, or nature itself, is said to be pre-subjective, yet wielded over subjects as a sort of unavoidable and inviolable necessity for said subjects—an internalization of the vestiges of what it can never fully know, and the embodiment of particular ideological axioms which are said to be eternally true. The language of natural law, in

<sup>17</sup> See for instance: Paul Cockshott, *How the World Works: The Story of Human Labor from Prehistory to the Modern Day* (Monthly Review Press, 2020)

<sup>18</sup> Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 19.

<sup>19</sup> Karl Marx, "Critique of Hegel's Philosophy in General," *Manuscripts*. Available online here: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/hegel.htm>

<sup>20</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and The First and Second Discourses* (Yale University Press, 2002), 180.

<sup>21</sup> Illiberal democracies are of course not a solution to this, nor do they follow an identical logic. In fact, in many ways their logic mirrors that of the Rousseauian absolute democracy as it is described above more than what we would consider liberal democracy to be in the West.

its democratic-capitalist sense (both absolute and particular), is always-already couched in the language of rights, whether they be individual or collective. These rights, however, are always also tied to a form of representation, that is to say, they do not concern life as such, but the right to project and see reflected a form of limited, and particular life. This is particularly true of the liberal democracies of the West. The issue with this is that representation as such does not allow for a universal or prelingual right, a right to a society not dominated by that which exists, by, as it is in Western democracies, capitalist particularity, by formless objectivity. Again, this must be taken in conjunction with the necessity of creating a thought which is not subject-centered. The language of rights becomes immediately problematic when subjected to this form of limitation. The language of rights in liberal democracy is always-already the language of individual freedom, even if what is understood is universally so. Freedom means nothing else but this, and in fact we are no longer even trapped in the genericity of Kant's reasonable subject who obeys the universal (via the infinity of their will) and creates the sovereign through the apotheosization of individually universal reason (all reasonable individuals can reason the same communally, there is a form of archimedean access point that allows the individual and the common to unite through formality).<sup>22</sup> Instead, even this form (although equally subject-centered) of universality is gone. The liberal capitalist subject behaves in the last instance as the internalization of a Kantian form of reason. Language and reason fail, but only when describing the outside world. The noumenon has become the self, and phenomena has become the other, everything which is not the self, or which cannot be said to be generated by the self. We legislate ourselves absolutely, and the genericity of will which was once meant to serve the universal is transformed, in its postmodern mutation, into a pure voluntarism. Now, rights and representation cannot but be understood as reinforcing this phenomenon, the very structures of our questions concerning freedom revolve around this, the democratic language we generate is never a neutral appeal, (just as nature itself is never a neutral appeal), but a call to and from an isolated and atomized individuality, an individuality which is subjected to the logic of the fungibility and self-valorization of capital. Walter Benjamin, in a searing and polemical excoriation of this form

of representation, unflinchingly identifies the intrinsic link between fascism and representation, between the abolition of private property—a right in excess of representation—and the horrors that can arise when representation is divorced from this.

The growing proletarianization of modern man and the increasing formation of masses are two aspects of the same process. Fascism attempts to organize the newly created proletarian masses without affecting the property structure which the masses strive to eliminate. Fascism sees its salvation in giving these masses not their right, but instead a chance to express themselves. The masses have a right to change property relations; Fascism seeks to give them an expression while preserving property.<sup>23</sup>

What's crucial to take from this is twofold: firstly, that representation, both in the metaphysical and political sense (although the line can often become blurred), itself cannot be a self-qualified good, and secondly, that in order to change the structure of society, and, as it were, the structure and understanding of subjectivity as something extra individual, it is necessary to also change property relations, to change material relations, and to reclaim a right to life that is not bound to the infinite sprawl of commodity circulation, and a life of capitalist alienation. Katerina Kolozova brilliantly punctuates what is necessary in order to escape this situation, and move towards a new form of socialism: "The precondition for such order is the "right" to life that is pre-legal and yet again law enabling: the establishment of the new social contract relies on the axiom according to which value is materially determined and is thus nonalienated from physicality and without the tendency to subjugate and exploit it for the production of "value".<sup>24</sup> Here, Kolozova correctly identifies one of the most crucial aspects needed to transform the *oikos*, a transformation which is, as she says, "[...] the precondition of the political-economic transformation toward a socialist *oikonomia*."<sup>25</sup> For Kolozova, there is a direct equation between 'value' and 'meaning'. The brute senseless part of being, matter without intention, matter without meaning, is also matter without value, matter which

<sup>23</sup> Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," 20.

<sup>24</sup> Katerina Kolozova, *Capitalism's Holocaust of Animals: A Non-Marxist Critique of Capital, Philosophy and Patriarchy* (Bloomsbury, 2020), 109.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>22</sup> See, Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (Cambridge University Press, 1999).

is not transposed, or perhaps we could even say transubstantiated into meaningful, productive and reproductive power. The prelingual right to life, is the right to a value-less meaningless life. This of course does not mean that life is meaningless, that it is disposable, but rather that our conception of being tout court needs to free itself from the transcendental index of value. In other words, the human conception of both humanity, and animality, must be minimized to the furthest possible extent. The truth of being is its irreducibility to meaning—freed from the overdetermination of the transcendental qua symbolic order (as it exists as a purely symbolic and not scientific extension), and freed from the pretension to conquer and domesticate the real for subjective and philosophical purposes. Even more crucial here, however, is the need to move away from exchange-value, and towards an economy of use-value. Without this crucial step, it is utterly impossible to change either the *oikos* or *oikonomia*.<sup>26</sup> Insofar as human beings (and animals) are reduced to mere resource, while simultaneously being valued only abstractly and alienly as exchange value, the possibility of a new society remains a mere fantasy.

What could a social contract of the pre-legal actually look like? What is it that could bind life together without relying on representation, empty rights, identitarian struggles, and the promotion of exchange value? Such a social construct must always begin as prior to, just as the real is prior to thoughts' appropriation of it. However, we must also safeguard against the filling up of this prior with content, or absolutizing it such that it becomes a type of capital N nature, lest we fall into a trap of atavism, and create value under a new name. Furthermore, a subject of such a contract, what we have been calling a post-subject, or what could otherwise be deemed a non-subject, must always be a materialist subject devoid of the concept of surplus-value, and which is determined by a certain immanence of suffering, of solidarity to the human condition, which is always al-

<sup>26</sup> In a recent review of Katerina Kolozova's *Holocaust of Animals* published in *Identities: Journal for Politics, Gender and Culture*, Oscar Pichardo Isaak correctly points out that it is also necessary to completely restructure currency itself along the same lines in order to do away with the primacy of exchange-value, and that this can only be done through a complete abandonment of the valorization of surplus and the commodity form—adding that recent innovations in currency, such as bitcoin, and other blockchain based currencies, do not by themselves allow for a revolution in this sense, but can allow for future revolutionary conceptions of a use-value based currency. Oscar Pichardo Isaak, "An Algorithmic Socialism in Defense of the Lived Without Life: A Political Proposal through Capitalism's Holocaust of Animals by Katerina Kolozova," *Identities: Journal for Politics, Gender and Culture* 18:1-2 (2021).

ready the condition of living beings as such. Thus, we could say axiomatically that what is needed for a new social contract, and thus a new *oikos*, is an end to the self-valorization of the commodity form, an end to complete particularity, an end to subjectivity-centered thought, and finally, an end to a system of value (amongst many other things, most notably that of the dismantling of patriarchal structures).

#### 4.0 Decentered-Subjectivity and Minor Politics

A key tenet of surpassing subjectivity-centered thought is the overcoming of master discourses, without diluting the idea of universality, so that we do not end up with either a democratic-capitalist relativism, nor any form of totalitarianism. This is expressed succinctly by Deleuze and Guattari in their book on Kafka when they state: "There is nothing that is major or revolutionary except the minor, to hate all languages of masters."<sup>27</sup> For Deleuze and Guattari, a minor political stance is defined by a sort of formal disjunction, an emptying out which also pushes to the limit the internal consistency of an expression. The point is not to enact a Marxist archeology (Jameson, Adorno, etc), to prove step by step the ideological import of a text, or, to simply reveal, via deconstruction, the contingency of language— its inevitable relatedness/situatedness. Rather, the minor is a revolutionary split inherent not only to the said, but to the possibility of expression itself, or in Lacanian parlance, it is an issue not only on the level of the statement, but on the level of enunciation. Thus, in order to create a society based around use value and universalism, and not surplus value and particularism, it is necessary to dislocate the subjects' relation to the whole, that is, to de-center it, without merely recentering and internalizing it, such that a minor discourse becomes a major or master discourse of the self. In such scenarios, it becomes almost impossible to imagine anything outside of one's own perception, which is indeed, fundamentally, one of the cornerstone effects of capitalism. As Jelisaveta Blagojević states: "What late capitalism has produced is the claustrophobic maneuver of positing that everything is always already included, calculated, possible, thinkable: so, what it took from us is precisely the notion of the "outside" that has been, for a long time, linked to

<sup>27</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 26.

the domain of madness, to the domain of literature, or to that of revolution.”<sup>28</sup> This revolution for Blagojević, following Deleuze and Guatarri, is always minor, it is always a disjunction that does not allow itself to fall into dogma, which includes, of course, the dogma of logo-centrism, but rather opens up an entire new space for imagination, for imagining radically new possibilities. However, it is worth nothing that this outside is not so much spatial as temporal, it is an immanent torsion present in the present. “Non thinking,” according to Blagojević, is thinking according to a different logic, a different way of understanding which is not always-already swallowed by the hegemony of the current situation, but, which nevertheless does not call upon trans-historical teloi, or axioms, to initiate change. Change is made possible in a certain way through subjective self-dissolution, by abandoning one’s anchoring in the here and now, and thus the ideologies and sedimented logic that appear as otherwise unavoidable. However, we should also be wary about the way Deleuze and Guatarri attempt to move past any meta-narratives, and especially Marxist meta-narratives. Deterritorialization does not by itself lead to radical change, or at least not change that doesn’t always change the same. While the dissolution of the subject is certainly critical, it cannot be taken as sufficient, and can even be easily corrupted as in the case of Nick Land. What Land shows us, is that it is possible to assert a sort of (un)radical (as ungrounded) and staunchly anti-anthropocentric materialism which nonetheless relies on a sort of mystical, and metaphysical beyond. In other words, what we can learn from his writing is that the opposite of subjective idealism is not necessarily materialism (or any of its variants) but rather non-subjective idealism, or what Land himself calls, following Deleuze and Guatarri, virtual materialism.<sup>29</sup> What replaces human hubris—anthropocentric thought—in Land, is the complete abolition of the human mind (as uniquely privileged in any way) in favour of the infinite sprawl of multiplicity. This multiplicity, however, in no way implies a socialist *oikonomia*, but, as is the case for Land, quite the opposite, the embracing of the infinite flux of capitalist circulation. Thus, we must fully oppose this rhizomic fluidity to a Marxian conception of motion. This is laid out brilliantly by Thomas Nail in *Marx in Motion*:

<sup>28</sup> Jelisaveta Blagojević, “Thinking WithOut,” in *After the Speculative Turn: Realism, Philosophy, and Feminism*, ed. Katerina Kolozova and Eileen A. Joy (Punctum Books, 2016), 98.

<sup>29</sup> Nick Land, *Fanged Noumena: Collected Writings 1987-2007* (Urbanomic, 2011), 325.

For Marx, all beings are sensuous objects. This does not mean that everything is made of static blocks of atomistic, discrete stuff following mechanistic laws— as we know from the doctoral dissertation. Objects are continually produced because matter flows. These flows then constantly fold over themselves again and again to produce and reproduce stable cycles of sensation. Objects are not merely passive, suffering things. Again, for Marx, objects are both active and passive, both producing and consuming at the same time. They objectify the contradiction between essence and existence through continual modulation.<sup>30</sup>

Here too the distinction between constant movement and mutation must be properly separated from the idea of capital’s constant dissolution of relations. The movement as a kind of flux is actually an antidote to the objectification of capital fixes, but only if we understand it as doing away with the subject-object relation in a material way, without, simultaneously, relapsing into the naivety of an object oriented ontology. Capitalist circulation and Marx’s movement have nothing in common, or rather, what they have in common is a common understanding about the dissolution of totality as such. However, for Nail’s Marx, constant motion does not mean constant abstraction and the exploitation of value, but the precise opposite. Motion is in a sense the materialization of both subject and object; it does away with the distinction in order to allow for a sensuousness of both.

## 5.0 On Science and Revolution

Political revolution is also always-already a scientific revolution, and an act of formalization. It is the changing and redefining of terms, and the opening up of possibilities through a universal shift in our understanding, which is universal particularly because of its simplicity, its minimization is also simultaneously its expansive potential, the distillation of vast complexities into relatable signs. There is no paradigm shift in politics which is not simultaneously a shift in science, a shift in political power and organization. The formalization of politics is not to be conflated with raising it to the absolute, all procedures of formalization are inherently procedures of universal-

<sup>30</sup> Nail, *Marx in Motion*, 44.



ization, that is to say, they do away with the imported vestiges of subjectivity-centered thought in order to reach a minimally transferable truth. Here, both Badiou and Kolozova, although ultimately disagreeing on what is meant by formalization, show solidarity to the universal by rejecting the apotheosization of subjectivity. As Badiou states in relation to language and mathematics: "The existence of a common language is also the existence of a shared Idea. The effectiveness of mathematics in the sciences is due precisely to the fact that mathematics formalizes the scientific idea. Politics equally needs the capacity to quickly formalize the analysis of a situation and the tactical consequences of this analysis. This is the sign of a strategic vitality."<sup>31</sup> A shared strategy, and a common language, however, cannot simply mean the adjustment of political vocabulary. Inventing a new word for communism, or worker's strikes, or solidarity does not in itself bring about change. What's needed for a common language is a common structure of language. Thus language is not only a tool for communication, but a reflection of the possibilities of change. According to Kolozova, the transferability of scientific knowledge qua formalism is made possible by a form of cloning, and an adherence to the syntax of the real, which functions through a process of minimization. Formalism is in a certain sense simple, simple in that it takes complex ideas and renders them intelligible in short but pungent formulas that nonetheless do not make claims of authority over the real, thus making them universally transferable, without importing undo meaning. "One can only clone the effects that betray a certain syntax, but the rest remains enmeshed with the real, and poetic and philosophical language becomes unavoidable."<sup>32</sup> That being said, we must also distinguish this form of formalism, from what is known simply as scientific consensus. Far too often this word is thrown around as a form of master discourse, we are meant to trust blindly in a barrage of facts, facts that often betray philosophical, ideological, and political underpinnings. In such a case sciences becomes Science, a form of usurpation over the real and sensuous which appears to exist on its own two feet. For precisely this reason we must also be careful here. Creating an *oikos* based around the primacy of scientific thought runs the intrinsic risk of becoming a society based on instrumentalization, and mechanicity, the type of society that Heidegger, amongst many

others, so strongly warns us about. The key to combatting this, is understanding the limits of thought, and the indeterminacy of matter itself, insisting instead on a material formalism that moves beyond either positivism or idealism, and towards a materialist and scientific *oikos*.

### Conclusion:

While this paper does not provide any concrete conclusions on what must be done, it has tried to act as a minimal prolegomena to what a reimagined *oikos* could look like, at least abstractly, or, at the very least, lay out some of the core steps we would need to take to even begin imagining it. If we do not insist on moving away from subjectivity-centered thought, if we do not change property relations, if we do not emphatically insist on creating an economy based on use-value instead of exchange-value, and if we do not understand the importance of a materialist relation to science then we will be unable to change the society we live in, a society which is dominated by spectral abstractions, and alienated subjectivities, a society which valorizes isolation and control, and dismisses universality and being in common. Thus, we must continue to imagine new ways of constructing the future, new ways of constructing the economy, and finally new ways of constructing the *oikos*.

<sup>31</sup> Alain Badiou, *Greece and the Reinvention of Politics* (Verso, 2017), 27.

<sup>32</sup> Kolozova, *Holocaust of Animals*, 84.