Being-in-Capital: A Study in the Existential and Sociological Conditions of Post-Industrial Capitalism

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BEING-IN-CAPITAL: A STUDY IN THE EXISTENTIAL
AND SOCIOLOGICAL CONDITIONS OF
POST-INDUSTRIAL CAPITALISM

EDGAR MAURICIO LLAMAS

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Edgar Mauricio Llamas
To E. A.

Without you, none of the philosophy in all the world takes flight.
BEING-IN-CAPITAL: A STUDY IN THE EXISTENTIAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL CONDITIONS OF POST-INDUSTRIAL CAPITALISM

by

EDGAR MAURICIO LLAMAS, B.A.

THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

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Acknowledgements

The completion of any work, but especially a long one, is much like the reaping of a harvest. Consequently, writing the acknowledgements is equivalent to the farmer, in the middle of his harvest, thanking each speck of soil, blade of grass, and drop of rain for what they’ve done. In other words, it’s impossible to do them all justice. But some blades of grass stand taller than others.

This work would not be what it is without both the material and personal support of my mother and father. Though life is intrinsically full of challenges and obstacles to be surmounted, at the very least, I was born to parents that have encouraged me, without reservation, to study what I wanted. I could not have asked for anything better.

It is sometimes a fault of mine that I let myself be absorbed by philosophy; that is, I tend to think of myself as only a philosopher. My friends – Brittany, Hector, Riley, Max, Neil, to name only a few – have done me the repeated favor of reminding me that this is not so. There is no better company to reunite with after one exits the monastery, so to speak.

On a more professional note, each and every one of my professors of philosophy deserve recognition. Through each of them, I’ve seen the pursuit of such a beautiful and wonderful field embody itself in different ways, and this is owed to both their friendliness and intelligence as persons. Out of these professors, three stand apart: Drs. Chris Lay, Steve Best, and Jules Simon. Dr. Lay, I thank for his friendship and conversations about movies, music, and whatever else one wouldn’t expect a pair of philosophers to be interested in. Dr. Best, I thank for his repeated reminder – and status as a living example – that the purpose of philosophy is not to only interpret the world, but to change it. As for Dr. Simon, for whom my gratitude cannot be adequately expressed in a single sentence, I thank, with the sort of admiration a student can only have for his teacher, for his unfailing support and interest in my progression as a philosopher.
Fig. 1: Gustav Klimt – *Death and Life* – 1915
Preface

A dear professor and friend of mine told me some years ago that all good philosophy is self-reflexive – that is, it allows us to put into words those forces, emotions, and structures that peer over our shoulder, from manger to coffin. Such clarity is the renewed and continued prize that the study of philosophy awards us, but it also comes at a cost. Becoming aware of what has given birth to the form and content of our everyday experiences simultaneously reveals to us what is wrong with them. Simple “facts” of life – poverty, anguish, hunger – are no longer presented to us as eternal and ephemeral phenomena that seem to have just been willed out of nothingness; instead, they are revealed as specific confluences of social and historical processes that are themselves available for explication. With this, the weight of all the world, so to speak, comes down upon us, and for the first time, we know our finitude, powerlessness, and apparent inability to alleviate the suffering of others. Of course, the more stubborn among us do not see this judgment as final, but rather as a choice: either we resign ourselves to what is, or struggle to create what could be, even if such struggle is ultimately fruitless.

But this realization merely leaves us with the knowledge that there is a problem. Now the question is what must be done about it – and such a question is a terribly difficult one. It is a question whose answer is not decided in a single decisive moment. Instead, it is like a war of attrition, with both belligerents dedicating themselves to research, to adaptability, searching for that one answer that will finally break the stranglehold, for better or worse. Each of us, as human beings, confront this stranglehold, and our specific methods of coping with this lack of air vary.

My own lies in the study of philosophy. I have been fortunate in that I have studied under professors that have repeatedly reminded me of one fact: philosophy is anything but abstract and idle, and in those rare instances that it is, it should not be. Wielded properly and adroitly, it can
serve as a powerful tool for social change. This drive has been the inspiration and genesis of this thesis.

Yet the pursuit of any drive requires a certain measure of resolve, in order to fend off whatever obstacles pose themselves along the path. Many of these seem innocuous enough. Like any other child educated in the United States, I was indoctrinated by the school system into believing that the nation was a beacon of progress: the more time passes, the more injustices will simply fade away. Embarrassments in the country’s history that disprove this idyllic conception of history, such as the proto-fascist Ku Klux Klan, were barely paid attention to, if they were mentioned at all. Again and again, I was educated into viewing the United States as the champion of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. I steadily grew disillusioned with this premade vision as I aged, but the culmination of my disillusionment did not occur until November 2016. At the time, I was reading the works of the neo-Marxist Frankfurt School, which already cast the political climate of modern America in a very unfavorable (but illuminating) light. This, combined me with the disappointing choice (to put it lightly) that the American electorate made in the same month, spurred me into realizing then that the ideals of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness were not truly meant for me, nor for many others. They never were and they never will be. It is very easy to speak of such rights – it is another thing to grant them.

But to do so would require a reversal of what is for what could be. Poverty has a cause, hunger has a cause, the sheer boredom and alienation that mark everyday life under modern society have a cause, and this cause – at least in part – is capitalism. As the very structure that determines the daily rhythms of our lives, it cages us into one class or the other. If we are of one class, we spend 40 years, or even more, repeating an empty cycle of working to live; working to both keep ourselves alive and line the pockets of those exploiting us, who cast their relationship to us as one
of benevolent philanthropy. If, however, we are of the other class, we can savor a life of comfort and excess and go dance on the backs of the bruised, with caviar in one hand and wine in the other. Such wrongness is not exactly hidden from us either. Directly visible from the border highway in El Paso, there is a smattering of homes in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, that are very obviously barely able to stand. Meanwhile, the chairman of Western Refining, an oil company on this “right” side of the border, enjoys a net worth of over a billion dollars. It is hard to swallow such a “fact” of life.

Of course, despite my Marxism, I do not pretend at pure altruism either. There is a degree of self-interest in my politics as well. Jean-Paul Sartre’s existential novel Nausea contains a passage that has proved very personally resonant to me, and encapsulates what I mean much more pleasantly than I could ever express it:

Nothing happens while you live. The scenery changes, people come in and go out, that’s all. There are no beginnings. Days are tacked on to days without rhyme or reason, an interminable, monotonous addition. From time to time you make a semi-total; you say: I’ve been travelling for three years, I’ve been in Bouville for three years. Neither is there any end: you never leave a woman, a friend, a city in one go. And then everything looks alike: Shanghai, Moscow, Algiers, everything is the same after two weeks. There are moments – rarely – when you make a landmark, you realize that you’re going with a woman, in some messy business. The time of a flash. After that, the process starts again, you begin to add up hours and days: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday. April, May, June. 1924, 1925, 1926. That’s life. (Nausea 39)

This feeling – of nothingness, of monotony and boredom – is one that I would argue is endemic to existence. It cannot be avoided, though its severity and specific expression wanes from moment to moment. No matter its particularities, however, we each react by attempting to cover it over with
some meaningless pastime; some empty hobby to mask the sheer emptiness of what goes on. Most of the time, we succeed. The anxiety fades under an interminable din of office telephones ringing, idle talk at a bar, glasses clinking, and the repeated punctuation of an alarm clock in between, and we convince ourselves that this is freedom. Should this existential tightrope snap, though, the ready-made “advice” for us is to attempt to rectify this issue within ourselves; our happiness, after all, is solely our responsibility. Certainly, there cannot be any sort of external state of things that is causing such rampant suffering.

Or at least that is what certain actors would like us to uncritically believe. This characterization of existence under capitalism raises a question – not coincidentally, the one that inspired this thesis. To put it flatly: are the material conditions of capitalism amenable to an authentic life, in which we can be true to ourselves? My answer is a resolute no, but with a few qualifications. I conceive of existential authenticity as possible within capitalism, but isolated to only a few scattered pools of resistance. The authentic life is thus caged by the very material system of capitalism, and consequently, we have no choice but to submit to the gunpoint drudgery of labor that is not our own, of working to live rather than living to work:

And the worker, who for twelve hours weaves, spins, drills, turns, builds, shovels, breaks stones, carries loads, etc. – does he consider this twelve hours’ weaving, spinning, drilling, turning, building, shovelling, stone breaking as a manifestation of his life, as life? On the contrary, life begins for him where this activity ceases, at table, in the public house, in bed.

(“Wage Labour and Capital” 205)

Surely, things can get better than this. But much hazier is how we may make revolution reality. The proletariat, the fabled revolutionary class of Karl Marx’s theory of history, has so far failed to fulfill its destiny, preferring instead the falsity of fascism to the truth of liberation. And, when it
grows bored with fascism, it reverts to a cursory faith in a liberal democracy that gives both the left and right wings of capital free play. The power of capital appears to be absolute, with no end in sight. So, we come to the burning question: what is to be done?
Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is threefold: firstly, to argue for the possibility of a Heideggerian Marxism through demonstration; secondly, to attempt to establish the foundation for a future phenomenology of capitalism; and thirdly, to attempt to redress Karl Marx’s weak theory of alienated subjectivity. I do this through the gradual development of a new concept that I have come to call being-in-capital. The first chapter is thus generally dedicated to preparation, concretized through a familiarization with Martin Heidegger’s system of thought, as embodied in four of his works: Being and Time, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” the “Letter on Humanism,” and “The Question Concerning Technology.” Following this engagement with Heidegger, we come to Karl Marx’s Capital, Volume One, “The German Ideology,” and “The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844,” whose purpose is to supply the materialist half of being-in-capital. The third chapter seeks to investigate being-in-capital as an effect of the post-industrial decline of Detroit, Michigan. Concluding the thesis are a few words on the difficulties involved in the creation of a Heideggerian Marxism.
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Introduction

The answer begins with the frank acknowledgement, as we have already done, that the proletariat does not seem likely to seize the means of production any time soon. It then continues in asking why this is the case. The 20th century seemed to sound out the death rattle of capitalism, and then, as surely as the revolution seemed at hand, it faded into nothingness. There are many explanations one can ascribe to this: the degeneration of the Soviet Union into totalitarian bureaucracy, the constant intervention of Western capitalist powers, the material state of the countries that claimed to be on the path to communism, and so on. But it is my view that one of the most salient reasons, although it tends to go unnoticed, is that Marxism tends to not address us. By this I mean that, while its critiques of capitalism are unmatched, its great weakness is its lack of a compelling theory of subjectivity – and there is hardly a way to convince anyone to wave a red flag without understanding how they experience their subjectivity. This is the same problem the theorists of the Frankfurt School attempted to correct with Freudian psychoanalysis, after the horrors of the Holocaust led them to a similar sort of despair.

My answer is thus founded on a desire to bring a stronger theory of subjectivity to Marx. Thankfully, we do not have to start from scratch in pursuing it; the study of our experience of the world and how we apprehend it has long been the concern of phenomenologists. So, we turn to one of their cardinal saints: Martin Heidegger. In his Being and Time, he tells us of an existential category he refers to as Geworfenheit in the original German – translated, “thrownness.” Though the complexities and particularities of this term alone could probably fill another thesis, I find that introducing it here, in an informal manner, will explain why I chose to revisit both Heidegger and Marx.
At the start of the preface, I metaphorized the obtaining of philosophical awareness as not unlike a feeling of having the world come down on us. In that moment, whether reached through formal study or not, we come to terms with the fact that, without choice or prior warning, we have been \textit{thrown} into the world. We have been thrown into a certain conglomeration of historical, social, cultural, and political factors, none of which we have had any opportunity to decide on for ourselves. We question why they have intruded upon our lives, but they reply with only silence – and this is a very frustrating silence. We are given no choice: we must contend with them as we come to comprehend both ourselves and our relation to them. Thus, we find ourselves \textit{in} the world and recognize that we have been thrown into it. Our past, shaped by these conglomerations, is inescapable: always there, looming, to be confronted and reconciled with our present and future, if possible.

Of course, the elaboration of this concept of \textit{Geworfenheit} naturally leads one to ask about the specifics of their own thrownness. Piece by piece, we construct a general image of the society in which we live, noting its major forces, e.g., religion, the family, the economy, schools, etc. This general image is able to be taken both as its own object of study and, when recognized as deeply influential to our own development as human beings, as \textit{part of us}. This is central to \textit{Geworfenheit}, and, in truth, to Heideggerian thought as a whole. The human being, called \textit{Dasein} ("there-being") in Heidegger’s works, is therefore inseparable from history. Dasein is always \textit{in} history, in society, and it cannot ever rid itself of this thrownness. To do as much, even if it were possible, would be to lose both its identity and its ability to determine its possibilities of being-in-the-world, whether authentic or inauthentic.

What is part of us is what matters to us – and this is the question that orthodox Marxism cannot answer. When a mass of workers in a country rife with poverty and lack of education asks
what it can offer them, it answers with great narratives about history, about the proletariat coming to conquer its own alienation through a series of class struggles. To someone with little familiarity with Marxist thought, this is nonsense. And the characterization of one as “proletarian” functionally covers over one’s Being – though there is little doubt that Marx’s ultimate desire for communism was founded in a desire for freedom, the proletarian is not only a proletarian. He probably does not even think of himself as such, considering the lack of class consciousness in most parts of the world.

So, the question “What matters to the proletarian?” emerges. Phrased more suitably for our efforts, “What matters to you?” Philosophically, I believe the way to answering this is through a rehabilitation of Marx via a Heideggerian phenomenology of capitalism. I conceive of this phenomenology as revolving around a number of sources of intelligibility: the tool, the sign, Das Man, the artwork, and language. It is through these sources that, gradually, Dasein gains its understanding of itself and its thrownness. Each of these five finds a specific expression in a new concept I refer to as being-in-capital. Being-in-capital itself has its own way of being, while simultaneously provoking a change in Dasein’s self and world-understanding via the five sources of intelligibility.

The first chapter, then, will be solely dedicated to Heidegger, who will serve as the phenomenological half of my analysis. Four of his writings will be covered: Being and Time, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” the “Letter on Humanism,” and “The Question Concerning Technology.” From Being and Time I draw the concepts of Dasein, alêtheia, Zuhandenheit, the Mitwelt, and Das Man. The remaining writings will then build upon this foundation in order to segue neatly into Marx, who will be the subject of chapter two. From him, I take Capital, Volume One, particularly the section on the fetishism of commodities, “The German Ideology,” and “The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844.” In the third and final chapter, I bring the two men together
in order to perform an applied analysis of the material-existential conditions of the city of Detroit, Michigan, and make most apparent this phenomenon of being-in-capital. I close with a few words on the work that remains to be done, if our goal is the creation of a Heideggerian Marxism.

Something else remains to be said. Although they are not the subject of this thesis, several other theorists have found the combination of Marx and Heidegger particularly fertile. Most notably, Herbert Marcuse, Kostas Axelos, and Gianni Vattimo and Santiago Zabala have tried to synthesize Heideggerian phenomenology with Marxist materialism. A fully developed Heideggerian Marxism has not yet come into being, however. Each of these philosophers have begun from similar grounds, but their ultimate ends and focuses have rarely coincided. To complicate matters further, perhaps the most significant contribution, Marcuse’s, was abandoned in its infancy. Marcuse lost hope when his teacher and friend, Heidegger himself, embraced the fascist dogma of the National Socialists. The antipathy that developed between these two, emblematic of the larger conflict between Marxists and Heideggerians, was then reinforced by perhaps the most aggressive Marxist critical theorist of all, Theodor Adorno, who committed entire lectures to dismantling Heidegger’s “cult of death” (138).

Clearly, the project of Heideggerian Marxism is not something easily undertaken – but it is undertaken with all due seriousness. And it is certainly not something I can complete in 120 or so pages. But what I may do is become the dwarf that stands on the shoulders of giants, and add my own small contribution to the question at hand. Now, we may begin.
“Higher than actuality stands possibility.”

Martin Heidegger

“Philosophers have thus only interpreted the world; the point, however, is to change it.”

Karl Marx
Fig. 2: Edvard Munch – *The Kiss* – 1897
Somewhere in the National Gallery in Oslo there is a painting named The Kiss. Its contents are relatively mundane – two figures, a man and woman, are embracing one another. Their arms form a sort of cradle, lending one the impression that they are melting into each other. Neither the face of the man or woman can be seen clearly. Their features are blurred, distorted, obscured by the kiss they share. Though the pair clearly serve as the focal point of the painting, the light of a small window disrupts the otherwise gloomy background.

To me, The Kiss is a remarkably quotidian artwork. There are no great depictions of miracles, as in those pieces dedicated to venerating Christ or other religious figures. As the lovers’ faces are smoothed over, their identities do not matter – the painting is not a portrait. Nor is The Kiss intended to commemorate some crossroad in history; there are no revolutionaries, tyrants, or guillotines within its frame. All we are presented with is, very simply, a kiss. On the one hand, we might be somewhat frustrated with this apparent lack of detail. We begin to wonder who perhaps were this man and woman that Edvard Munch painted in 1897, what their lives were like, where their homes were. Did they stay lovers? Were they happy? Did they exist at all in the world or did Munch simply dream them? Of course, none of these inquiries of ours will receive an answer. At the time of the writing of this thesis, Munch has been dead for 76 years.

The only recourse we have is to consider what The Kiss might mean for us as individuals. Naturally, this meaning would be particular to each person admiring the painting. It could be that the embrace of the lovers reminds one person of someone in their past. In someone else, it might awaken hope that they will find themselves in a similar pose soon. For the happiest among us, The Kiss would likely inspire a phone call to their partner. The Kiss is ambiguous in this way – but it is
due to this ambiguity that each admirer of the painting can find something in it for themselves. Munch’s work seems to symbolize an experience that all of us will share at some point in our lives. There is no one among us that has not been or will not be one half of the subjects of *The Kiss*.

Because of this seemingly universal relevance, *The Kiss* embodies a special sort of philosophical significance. It tells us something of Being – of what it means “to be,” to exist in the world. This question takes us from the realm of art to the realm of philosophy, as the question of Being has long been the domain of philosophers. Out of all of them, however, there is one that distinguishes himself in his study of the nature of Being: Martin Heidegger. Thirty years after *The Kiss* was completed, Heidegger ignited a philosophical revolution with the publication of his magnum opus, *Being and Time*. Its introductory pages form an accusation, a sharply written one. Heidegger charges the past two millennia of philosophical thought with gradually entombing this question, telling us, quite acerbically, that:

> It is said that ‘being’ is the most universal and the emptiest concept. As such it resists every attempt at definition. Nor does this most universal and thus indefinable concept need any definition. Everybody uses it constantly and also already understands what is meant by it.

(*Being and Time* 1)

It is not difficult to see how this error has ingrained itself so deeply in our intellectual traditions. In everyday conversation, we say that things “are” insofar as they exist in physical space. We say that the book “is in” the library, or the bourbon “is in” the pantry. We are not *technically* incorrect in describing them like this. But to say that we “are” in the world in the same style as the bourbon or the book “are” is to confuse the Being of humanity for the Being of objects, and face Heidegger’s stern condemnation as a consequence. The question at the heart of *Being and Time*, then, emerges: “What do we mean by the expression ‘to be,’ especially as it relates to human beings?”
For the sake of practicality and relevance, however, we will not labor through the entire structure of Being as it is described in *Being and Time*. To do so would lead us into territory much more precarious and difficult than Heideggerian Marxism, which is already a challenge in itself. Consequently, if we are to ultimately stay theoretically relevant to being-in-capital, we must limit our coming analysis of *Being and Time* to four major concepts: *Dasein*, *alētheia*, *Zuhandenheit*, and *Das Man*. Each of these will prepare us for the transition to Marx, especially after we delve into Heidegger’s later writings.

§2. Dasein

Consider all the standard explications of humanhood that seem to surround us whenever we think philosophically. Perhaps most readily and uncritically, we tend to define human beings as purely biological or anatomical beings – a particularly-shaped arrangement of a brain, heart, lungs, etc. But alternatively, if we look to some of the constitutions and treatises of the political history of the earth, we could argue that a human being is an individual and rational being endowed with inviolable rights. If we instead adopt a Freudian lens, individual humans become a confluence of irrational and unconscious psychological drives. None of these conceptions of humanity necessarily or certainly cancel one another out, but they do not get to the heart of Being. To a biologist, a human being “is” that arrangement of organs. To a certain kind of political theorist, a human being “is” a rational individual with God-given natural rights. To a Freudian psychoanalyst, a human being “is” Eros and Thanatos. “Is” is always followed by a predicate, a descriptor. “Is” in itself is not their concern – but it is Heidegger’s, and ours as well. As a result, since “to be” is a much more complicated phenomenon than these partial explanations can accurately encompass, it would be somewhat inappropriate and misleading to call us “just” human beings. We must be named something else, something more descriptive of what it means to be: *Dasein*. That is
Heidegger’s name for us and the ontological structure of our individualized existences. Dasein is the being that, as he writes, “…does not simply occur among other beings. Rather [Dasein] is ontically distinguished by the fact that in its being this being is concerned about its very being” (Being and Time 11).

The bourbon and book, as simple objects, lack any sort of capacity for self-awareness. Non-human animals are in a similar predicament. In spite of possessing the ability to react to instinctual need and physical stimuli, they do not reflect on their lives. Insofar as it comes to the faculty for awareness of its own life, Dasein stands alone. Its ontic and ontological differentiation from other beings does not mean, however, that Dasein somehow chooses to enter the world of these beings from time to time. Dasein is instead equiprimordial with existence; it is always already in the world, concerned with it, soliciting it, and molding it. As Heidegger declares,

being-in is not a ‘property’ which Dasein sometimes has and sometimes does not have, without which it could be just as well as it could with it. It is not the case that human being ‘is,’ and then on top of that has a relation of being to the ‘world’ which it sometimes takes upon itself: Dasein is never ‘initially’ a sort of a being which is free from being-in, but which at times is in the mood to take up a ‘relation’ to the world. This taking-up of relations to the world is possible only because, as being-in-the-world, Dasein is as it is. (57)

This sentiment is expressed most cohesively in the literal translation of Dasein itself: “being-there.” Being-in is thus revealed as an existential – or fundamental category of Dasein. Both Dasein and the book and bourbon are “in” the world, but their mode of being-in is irreconcilably distinct. What must be explicated now, then, is one of the essential modes of being-in of Dasein.

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§3. Being-in-the-World

Our interpretation of Dasein as being-there introduces us to another problem. We have established that being-in is an existential of Dasein. But being-in, left as it is, really only signifies a non-descript category of general hereness or thereness. It is as if we ended our sentences about Dasein abruptly, not providing any helpful information, e.g., “Dasein is.” This is true, but what we want to know is what Dasein is \textit{in its world} – what it is preoccupied with, working on, and so on and so forth. This is the only manner in which Heidegger will be made useful as a partner to Marx later on in this thesis. The transcendental structures of the phenomenon of Being must be filled with \textit{real} phenomenological content in order to be of any relevance to us. Otherwise we simply remain in the same sort of abstract, metaphysical description that Heidegger castigated at the beginning of \textit{Being and Time}.

The quandary that preoccupies us now is how Dasein experiences the world – how it \textit{encounters it}, how it is \textit{there}. This encountering is marked by a mood of concern: “’Ich bin’ [‘I am’] means I dwell, I stay near…the world as something familiar in such and such a way” (\textit{Being and Time} 55). Dasein “dwells” only in a place it is concerned about, in a place that matters to it. Dasein is \textit{involved} in the world, unlike a physical object such as the book or bottle of bourbon. It interacts with its world. It does not perceive it passively. Thus, the being-in-the-world of Dasein is defined by its possibility of \textit{taking care}. Dasein is concerned about and cares for its world. Heidegger tells us,

With its facticity [or actual way of being], the being-in-the-world of Dasein has already dispersed itself in definite ways of being-in, perhaps even split itself up. The multiplicity of these kinds of being-in can be indicated by the following examples: to have to do with something, to produce, order and take care of something, to use something, to give
something up and let it get lost, to undertake, to accomplish, to find out, to ask about, to observe, to speak about, to determine…These ways of being-in have the kind of being of taking care of [Besorgen]…The term “taking care” has initially its prescientific meaning and can imply: carrying something out, settling something, ‘to straighten it out.’ The expression could also mean to take care of something in the sense of ‘getting it for oneself.’

(57)

Notice that Heidegger adheres to relatively ambiguous descriptions here, as evidenced by his repeated use of the word “something.” Dasein is always already involved with the world – that much is clear, but how it is involved with its world changes according to the Dasein we are taking for our object of study.

This is a somewhat difficult concept to grasp immediately, but it can be clarified relatively easily. The Being of my Dasein is not the same as the Being of the Dasein of a subsistence farmer. This is to say, very simply, that our lives are unlike one another’s. We are concerned with different things. We take care of the world in different ways. The world reveals itself to us in a manner singularized to us. For instance, if our minds were suddenly exchanged, and I awoke in his bed and he in mine, both of us would find ourselves deeply confused. He would likely take a look at this thesis and feel somewhat lost. Correspondingly, I would stand in the middle of his crops and throw my hands up in frustration and bewilderment. Dasein is individualized in this way – though all of us share in its general structure, the particular content of said structure changes from circumstance to circumstance; from one world to another. Thus, what distinguishes me from the subsistence farmer is the content of our being-in-the-world.
§4. ἀλήθεια, the Tool, and the Sign

We can shed further light on this by dedicating a little more attention to this phenomenon of “world.” It is the case that being-in-the-world and taking-care-of have a certain kind of modality to them. The world does not appear to us in one mode at all times. To “know” part of the world is to “know” one of its modes of presentation. Taking-care-of something in any particular region of engagement with the world (understood as the center of Dasein’s dwelling and not as the literal physical “world”) can only be done with knowledge of said region. To refer back to our examples of the biologist, sociologist, and psychoanalyst, they each “know” a given “clearing” of the presentation of the world. This might be made more apparent if we apply this to a certain object – say, a hand. If I look at my hand as a biologist, it consists of five fingers, each made of bone, muscle, ligaments, tendons, and so on. A sociologist might see my hand as the mechanical tool that actuates the labor that allows me to survive in my particular material conditions. A psychoanalyst could say that my hand, assuming it is a common theme in my dreams, signifies something entirely unlike a hand. Their knowledge is what allows them to take-care-of their analyses in such distinct ways. The world, then, much like existence itself, is not simply one static “thing” that can be understood coldly, at a distance. Neither is taking-care-of. The existential world discloses itself according to the manner in which we phenomenologically appropriate it. To know something is an activity on the part of Dasein, and the conditions of this activity change according to the worldliness of the world Dasein is immersed into.

The worldliness of the world announces itself through alētheia, or unconcealment. Alētheia is Heidegger’s theory of “truth,” in a manner of speaking. But unlike the other formulations of truth that have persisted throughout the history of philosophy, unconcealment is interpretive. The truth of the world and of the objects that reside within it are not disclosed to Dasein as eternal and
unchanging “essences,” but as repositories of meaning, in which a vast network of hermeneutic
references is contained. This idea of Heidegger’s, too, is somewhat unintuitive, but it can be ex-
emplified as such – this time last year, I decided to take upon myself the task of modifying a certain
part on my motorcycle. In doing my work, I had to resort to using several tools, including a torque
wrench. Thus, in the moment that I took the wrench into my hand to either loosen or tighten the
engine bolts, I was engaged in a specific “mode” of unconcealment. The existential what-for of
the torque wrench showed itself to my phenomenal consciousness as a torque wrench, and as a
result, I was able to use it in-order-to work on my motorcycle, toward the larger goal of modifying
it, for-the-sake-of protecting it in the event of a drop. This hermeneutic path is in turn representative
of the equipmental mode of unconcealment that is most proper to the use of a torque wrench. All
of this occurs intuitively and unconsciously – it is not as if I had to think about every turn of the
wrench.

The significance of this movement is that alētheia is distinguished not as the essence of
truth, but as the phenomenological ground through which truth shines. The worldliness of the
world materializes in the manifold “truths” that a certain object contains. Given that the torque
wrench possesses the phenomenological character of Zuhandenheit (“handiness”) and is located
within a specific referential situatedness – as revealed by the fact I would not use a hammer to turn
a bolt – truth would come about through a recognition of its referential situatedness and the inter-
pretation of it as such. Joseph Rouse supplies us with another example:

One cannot encounter a rook as such without some grasp of the game of chess. In
Heidegger’s terms, the ‘discovery’ of chess entities (pieces, positions, moves, or situations)
presupposes a prior ‘disclosure’ of chess as the context in which they could make sense.
The ‘being’ of rooks or knights is their place within the game; that is what confers their intelligibility as the entities they are. (125)

Unconcealment, then, is phenomenologically prior to truth. Truth is always there to be discovered – but the only manner in which this can occur is through a phenomenological appropriation on the part of Dasein.

Our analysis has hitherto generally adhered to Zuhandenheit as the mode in which alētheia expresses itself. We have taken for our objects of investigation physical tools through which Dasein concretizes its projects. This is not a fault on our part: equipmental handiness is what largely guides Dasein’s everyday navigation of the world. We are in the mode of Zuhandenheit when we type on our laptop computers, drive our cars, clean our kitchens with a rag, etc. This is how we discover that the “hammerness” of the hammer suits itself to driving and pulling nails, and the “wrenchiness” of the wrench suits itself to tightening and loosening bolts.

But handiness is hardly limited to these “proper” tools. What of those moments in which Dasein is not working on anything at all? It appears that situations such as these propel both Heidegger and us into an explanatory abyss – handiness, as it has been articulated so far, cannot adequately make sense of these situations. Even so, this is a merely superficial problem that dissolves as soon as we consider the other ways that Dasein moves through its world. Suppose that Dasein, bored with its daily routine, visits a nearby forest. It is late afternoon – the sun is far past its apex. The individual Dasein we are taking for our example enjoys solitude, and quietly, placidly, it breathes in the forest air. Suddenly, though, Dasein is jolted out of its stillness. Phenomenologically, it has detected certain claw marks on the trunks of several trees. They do not seem unthreatening, as if they belonged to a small prey animal. Choosing caution, then, Dasein decides to go home – it has no interest in being hunted by some predator. In a similar situation, another individual
Dasein could be lounging in the sun on a beach a few hundred miles away. It feels the warmth of the sun on its skin, closing its eyes in pure serenity. This moment only lasts for a few seconds. While Dasein’s eyes are shut, a cluster of dark storm clouds appears on the horizon, cracking and flashing with lightning. Aiming to protect itself, Dasein takes its towel into its arms and goes to continue its rest in safety.

Neither of these instances repeat the sort of “practical” handiness that we have been working with so far. Instead, Dasein reacts to these modifiers. It appropriates them as signs, which “…are themselves initially useful [handy] things whose specific character as useful things consists of indicating [Zeigen]” (Being and Time 76). Dasein does not take these signs for itself in nearly the same manner as the hammer or torque wrench, but nonetheless, it listens to its indications and changes its behavior accordingly. With this knowledge in mind, we move onward.
Fig. 3: Edvard Munch – *The Scream* – 1893
§5. The *Mitwelt* and *Das Man*

The introduction of sign-reference allows us to transition to the next relevant point from *Being and Time*. Certain signs that Dasein encounters in the everyday world imply the presence of others. Perhaps Dasein finds an old axe strewn amongst the trees in the forest, or the sandals of a child buried in the sand of the beach. The phenomenological recognition of these objects by Dasein brings Dasein into the *Mitwelt* – the with-world. Dasein sees that other objects and signs are part of the being-in-the-world of other Dasein, and so acknowledges that these objects are useful *for* other Dasein. These Dasein are encountered as such:

The field…along which we walk ‘outside’ shows itself as belonging to such and such a person who keeps it in good order, the book which we use is bought at such and such a place, given by such and such a person, and so on. The boat anchored at the shore refers in its being-in-itself to an acquaintance who undertakes his voyages with it, but even as a ‘boat which is unknown to us,’ it still points to others. The others who are ‘encountered’ in the context of useful things in the surrounding world at hand are not somehow added on in thought to an initially merely objectively present thing, but these ‘things’ are encountered from the world in which they are at hand for the others. (*Being and Time* 115)

The structure of relationality that was revealed through our discussion of *Zuhandenhheit* is here preserved, but simultaneously adapted to the phenomenon of *being-with-one-another*. As Dasein engaged with the tools surrounding it through concern, it deals with other Dasein in the mode of *solicitude*. Other Dasein must be grasped *as* other Dasein, and the manner in which my own Dasein cares for them similarly depends on the character of the *Mitwelt* I share with that particular Dasein. I “care” for my friends in a fashion that is unsuited to the way I “care” about my mother. The same holds for how they care for me.
Their manner of relating to my individual Dasein can manifest itself in either an authentic or inauthentic expression, which is decided by how they choose to concern themselves with the projects I myself, as Dasein, care about. Heidegger advises us that:

[The solicitude of the other] can, so to speak, take the other’s ‘care’ away from him and put itself in his place in taking care, it can *leap in* for him. Concern takes over what is to be taken care of for the other. The other is thus displaced, he steps back so that afterwards, when the matter has been attended to, he can take it over as something finished and available or disburden himself of it completely…In contrast to this, there is the possibility of a concern which does not so much leap in for the other as *leap ahead* of him in his existentiell potentiality-of-being, not in order to take ‘care’ away from him, but rather to authentically give it back as such. (118-119)

Despite the effort Heidegger’s language usually solicits from the reader, again, we can put forth a simple illustration.

Love, as emotion and action, serves as perhaps the most visible motivator for both inauthentic and authentic taking-care-of-another. It takes the shape of the former when, in its intensity, it suffocates the object of love. In our concern for someone else, we may unintentionally commit the error of stifling them for the sake of protecting them. To exemplify: in January 1952, the equally renowned and reviled Marxist revolutionary Ernesto “Che” Guevara embarked on the journey that would eventually become his *Notas de viaje*. It was not an especially well-planned trip, as Che was only accompanied by his friend, Alberto Granado. Their only method of transportation was a 500cc Norton motorcycle that, tragically, broke down about halfway through the nine months they were away. Che’s voyage through South America, which thrust him into the viscera of capitalism
— poverty, suffering, hunger, exploitation — is often credited as instrumental in his becoming the Che that entered history.

Doubtlessly, Che seized his authentic potentiality-of-being-a-self in doing this. But suppose that his mother and father, out of their love for him, had not let him leave Argentina. Anxious over what could happen to their eldest son, they would have leapt ahead and overridden the authentic manifestation of the care of Che, as Dasein. Immediately, they would have suffocated it with an emphatic “No.” The Dasein of Che would have thus been forced to languish in the mire of inauthentic everydayness just a little longer, putting off its own-most potentiality-for-being-a-self in the frustrating indetermination of “One day.”

As for authentic love, there is a quote from the German philosopher Walter Benjamin that could best encapsulate it: “The only way of knowing a person is to love them without hope” (One-Way Street 62). Loving someone without hope, without expectation, is what makes this leaping-ahead authentic. This sort of love ultimately constitutes a recognition on the part of Dasein that the Dasein of others is just as much an individual self as it is itself, and that, if it is to authentically bring their possibilities back to these others, it cannot project its own desires and ambitions on them. In short: authentic leaping-ahead is characterized by a help that does not smother the potentiality-of-being-a-self of Dasein. It is the love that emerges when two people let one another be, in all their projects and possibilities, and care for each other anyway.

So it is that we are introduced to the quite ponderous matter of who Dasein is. Dasein’s immersion into the Mitwelt “revolutionizes” it. It must now take hold of who it is, in view of these others. Consequently, Heidegger’s analysis of being-with is perhaps one of the most foundational sections of Being and Time. Significant effort must be dedicated to understanding it and unpacking
it in its entirety – it is imperative that we do this if we are to produce an ultimately fruitful investigation of a Heideggerian Marxism.

Our exegesis on Heidegger began with *The Kiss*. It told us something of Being, of something we all share in. Being-with-one-another, then, may be adequately represented by another of Munch’s artworks – a much more famous one, at that. Four years prior to his completion of *The Kiss* in 1897, Munch produced a much darker composition: *The Scream*. It is everything *The Kiss* is not. Rather than embodying that sense of melting into one’s love, as *The Kiss* did, *The Scream* thrusts its viewer into profound nothingness. An uncomfortable identification with the solitary figure at the center of the painting occurs. It is standing on a bridge, underneath a red sky. The shape is vaguely humanoid, but much like its counterparts from *The Kiss*, not much else can be said about it. Its clothes do not indicate any sort of wealth, social class, or national origin. Neither the background nor foreground communicate anything substantial about either the time period or location, save for a few ships in the distance. There are two shadowy shapes lurking behind the principal figure, seemingly walking away, oblivious to its anxiety. Yet the most striking aspect of the painting is the figure itself – it is locked into a piercing scream, hands clasped to its face. It is not looking straight ahead, toward the spectator, but a little off to its right. Besides the orientation of its eyes, though, we are not granted any further clues as to just what is making the screamer scream.

Heidegger would likely have an answer for us. As in the case of *The Kiss*, the identificatory features of the screamer are nondescript, blurred. Because of this, the screamer lends itself to the interpretation that it is not one particular person, but perhaps a representation of humanity in general. The possibilities that we could project on the character and history of the screamer are near limitless. It could be a man or woman, wealthy or destitute, or something else that does not even occur to us. Its specific reasons for screaming change according to the persona it “adopts,” but
nonetheless, it screams, primally and existentially. If we take Munch’s screamer as a precursory symbol for Dasein, we may bring Heidegger and Munch together once more – Dasein, as the screamer, screams because it has lost itself. It has been dispossessed of its own potentiality-for-being-a-self, deprived of its own authentic individuality by an unseen, omnipresent authority. That is what the figure within *The Scream* cannot help but look at. Dasein has lost itself. Heidegger characterizes this relationship formally, like so:

…Dasein stands in *subservience* to others. It itself *is* not; the others have taken its being away from it. The everyday possibilities of being of Dasein are at the disposal of the whims of others. These others are not *definite* others…One belongs to the others oneself, and entrenches their power. ‘The others,’ whom one designates as such in order to cover over one’s own essential belonging to them, are those who *are there* initially and for the most part in everyday being-with-one-another. The who is not this one and not that one, not oneself, not some, and not the sum of them all. The ‘who’ is the neuter, *the they*. ([Being and Time](https://www.beingandtime.com/) 122-123)

The they, also called *Das Man* in the original German, is the invisible lawgiver, the unseen authority to whom we appeal in everyday life. When we look for a source of guidance on how to handle our possibilities as Dasein, very often, we resign ourselves to the choices that the they has already prescribed for us. We say what *they* say, think how *they* think, and do what *they* do just because it *is* what *they* do. When the they speaks, it voices out the shallow, incessant conversation that pretends at providing a structure, eternally true and entirely unquestionable, to our years upon this earth.

Dasein relates to the they in three particular ways: *distantiality, averageness, and leveling-down*. The first of these is not very difficult to grasp. Individual Dasein always takes its first steps
into comprehending its own Being at a very young age, especially in adolescence. Without warn-
ing, it seems as if we are cast into an “existential crisis,” to use the popular term. Details about the
being-with-one-another of our own individual Dasein – who we care about and who we are in
relation to them – grow a little clearer, at times gradually and at others, violently. We start to es-
establish ourselves as separate from those around us, from the pronouncements of the they. We un-
cover the distance that has and always will be present between us and them, and

…there is constant care as to the way one differs from them, whether this difference is to
be equalized, whether one’s own Dasein has lagged behind others and wants to catch up in
relation to them, whether Dasein in its priority over others is intent on suppressing them.

(122)

To give an example – let us say someone is raised Catholic. Uncritically, they accept the dogma
they were taught in Sunday school and at Mass. They go so far as to receive their First Communion
at the age of nine. Over the course of some six years or so, their relationship with God slowly
atrophies. They stop attending Mass, and rarely ever pray, but for some reason, continue identify-
ing as a believer. Then, they slowly begin to ask themselves, “Why do I believe in God?” Ulti-
mately, they arrive at the conclusion that they did so because they were simply taught to by others.
They find this unsatisfying, and so they become an atheist. Naturally, this would provoke all sorts
of reactions from the other Dasein that surround them; some of whom would push to bring them
back into the faith every chance they get. They are uncomfortable with the distance which separates
their Dasein from that of Das Man, and so they seek to erase it.

But as we have seen, the they is the existential-ontological expression of the neuter. It is
neither nonbeliever nor theist, man or woman, rich or poor. It cannot be explicitly identified with
a specific class of Dasein that has chosen a certain mode of Being or been thrown into a certain
kind of facticity. The they is just as likely encountered in a relatively simple five-minute conversation with a stranger as with one of our closest friends. Moreover, we should not make the mistake of believing here that the relationship between Dasein and the they is wholly antagonistic – Das Man is as much an existential of Dasein as Zuhandenheit or the Mitwelt are. Ultimately, it is part of Dasein, part of its they-self. The they does not actively and maliciously choose to cover over Dasein’s authentic possibilities, it simply does because that is the constitution of its Being in itself. And in doing this, it exercises its everyday character, averageness, upon us. From Heidegger, once more:

Overnight, everything that is original is flattened down as something long since known. Everything won through struggle becomes something manageable. Every mystery loses its power. The care of averageness reveals, in turn, an essential tendency of Dasein, which we call the leveling down of all possibilities of being. (123)

So, it is the case that distantiality, averageness, and leveling down converge into the larger existential of Dasein known as publicness. Publicness “disburdens” Dasein of the question of how to navigate its world, what to be concerned with, how to be concerned with whatever it is concerned with, and so on (124).

§6. Being and Time – End

The they will play a heavily significant role in our applied analysis of Heideggerian Marxism. For the moment, however, we are finished with it. We may now summarize the disparate elements of Being and Time as a unified whole for the first time. As was mentioned at the very start of all this, Heidegger fervently opposes a conception of the self as sundered from its world. The only way existence can be understood is to let it be; to comprehend that existence is not defined by a soul or essence, but to see that existence only is by its relationality to and in the world.
All existentials “belong” to Dasein in that they constitute part of its structure of care, but *alētheia* (“unconcealment”) is what lets Dasein know and interpret the world. Everyday practical objects, such as the torque wrench and hammer, reveal themselves through unconcealment as tools to be concerned about and used in a particular way. The being of these tools consists in their *what-for*, what they are handy for. Signs, as well, possess the character of handiness and are distinguished from one another by the specific referential situatedness that is their what-for. A stop sign “tells” Dasein something quite unlike a “construction ahead” sign.

These objects and signs, in turn, allow Dasein a glimpse of others that inhabit its *Mitwelt*, or with-world. Dasein meets “…them ‘at work,’ that is, primarily in their being-in-the-world (*Being and Time* 117). Individual Dasein distinguishes itself from these others by its own being-in-the-world. But individual Dasein falls prey to the proclamations and whisperings of the they in its everyday existence, and so becomes the they-self. Authentic Dasein disperses itself when it obeys the commands of the they. Nonetheless, this does not mean that *all* instances of being-with-one-another entail a manifestation of the they. As recounted above, caring-for-one-another can take on authentic or inauthentic forms, through the existential of *solicitude*. The authentic variant respects the autonomy of the possibilities and care of individual Dasein, but its counterpart does not – it suffocates it.

We have now come to the terminus of our discussion of *Being and Time* – but there is so much more to be said about Heidegger yet.
Fig. 4: Vincent Van Gogh – Shoes – 1886
I should confess at this point that my predilection for using artworks as explanatory tools for philosophical concepts is, sadly, not very original – Heidegger beat me to this 85 years ago with his presentation of “The Origin of the Work of Art.” The lecture can be thought of, to a certain point, as an expansion on the concepts of Zuhandenheit and alētheia. But it is especially notable (and significant for us as Heideggerian Marxists) due to Heidegger’s novel examination of Van Gogh’s painting *Shoes* as an existential-phenomenological “nexus” of sorts. The relevance of this will be made evident later on, in chapter two of this thesis. A disclaimer: we will not throw ourselves as unreservedly into “The Origin of the Work of Art” as we did *Being and Time*; some concepts are shared between the two texts, and there is only so much one can write before a thesis becomes a dissertation.

Structurally, Heidegger employs a similar method in “Origin” as in *Being and Time*. As the history of Being has been gradually forgotten by the canon of Western philosophy, so, too, has the essence of the artwork. The Ancient Romans, as the successors to the Greeks, committed the first transgression, and so cast the West into “rootlessness” (“The Origin of the Work of Art” 149). This historical tendency has ultimately led us to cover over things in their thingliness, or to forget their character of thingliness altogether. The work of art is thus simultaneously thingly and artistic, producing a very special sort of phenomenological crossroads. As he says, But even the much-vaunted aesthetic experience cannot get around the thingly aspect of the artwork. There is something stony in a work of architecture, wooden in a carving, colored in a painting, spoken in a linguistic work, sonorous in a musical composition. The thingly element is so irremovably present in the artwork that we are compelled rather to say conversely that the architectural work is in stone, the carving is in wood, the painting
in color, the linguistic work in speech, the musical composition in sound…But what is this self-evident thingly element in the work of art? (145)

The thingliness of the artwork is always present, but the arthood of the artwork cannot be collapsed into the thingliness either. It continuously “…makes public something other than itself; it manifests something other; it is an allegory” (145). In other words, an artwork is not appropriated solely as either an artwork or a simple smattering-together of colors on a canvas. It contains a certain hermeneutic manifold within it that only is as such because of the interplay between thingliness and arthood.

What must be investigated now, then, is how the thingliness and arthood of an artwork reveal themselves to Dasein. The following quote from Heidegger, albeit lengthy, is worth reproducing in its entirety, as it essentially contains the very heart of what will become crucial for us:

From the dark opening of the worn insides of the shoes the toilsome tread of the worker stares forth. In the stiffly rugged heaviness of the shoes there is the accumulated tenacity of her slow trudge through the far-spreading field and ever-uniform furrows of the field swept by a raw wind. On the leather lie the dampness and richness of the soil. Under the soles stretches the loneliness of the field-path as evening falls. In the shoes vibrates the silent call of the earth, its quiet gift of the ripening grain and its unexplained self-refusal in the fallow desolation of the wintry field. This equipment is pervaded by uncomplaining worry as to the certainty of bread, the wordless joy of having once more withstood want, the trembling before the impending childbirth and shivering at the surrounding menace of death. This equipment belongs to the earth, and it is protected in the world of the peasant woman. (161)

As analogues to thingliness and arthood, earth and world thus constitute, when taken together, a constant tension that at times leans one way, and at another, in the other. Here world can be
understood in the same manner in which we interpreted it in *Being and Time* – Dasein’s world shines through its care for it. The “world” of the peasant woman is revealed through the tools that are part of her concern, or circumspect heedfulness, with the world (much as it was for the subsistence farmer). She keeps her shoes nearby – they matter to her.

The notion of the “earth” is a bit harder to resolve. Speaking very, very approximately, it can be typified as those sorts of things that do not easily lend themselves to Dasein’s attempts to comprehend them. As Heidegger mentions, color:

…shines and wants only to shine. When we analyze it in rational terms by measuring its wavelength, it is gone. It shows itself only when it remains undisclosed and unexplained. Earth thus shatters every attempt to penetrate it. It causes every merely calculating importunity upon it to turn into a destruction. (172)

Color is simply, when appropriated phenomenologically by Dasein, *color*. When Dasein employs the mode of taking-care that presents color to it as wavelength, hue, shade, etc., color “in itself” disappears from view. These physical properties constitute a technical understanding of color, but they are *not* color itself. The primal, phenomenal experience of color is shoved aside in favor of this. To tie this matter a little more explicitly to *Shoes*, Heidegger explicitly categorizes the shoes as belonging to the earth. But here is where the tension between world and earth emerges – the shoes, understood as shoes, can *only* be grasped by Dasein if they are located within the equipmental, concernful world: “Only here [in the field] are they what they are” (159). Yet the only way that we could approximate any explanation of the shoes’ “being-in-the-earth,” to coin a rather crude term, is to *shatter* our phenomenological experience of it into a dry recounting of physical facts. Any attempt to know the shoes *explicitly* buries them, a little further each time. Shoes are not merely leather nor laces – they are much more than that. The thing (and by extension, the
artwork) cannot be taken as a discrete object for abstract, metaphysical, or scientific analysis if the goal is to understand it as it is. Rather, it must be given the opportunity to be in its very thingliness or arthood, in the world or earth. An artwork is not merely a confluence of oils or a canvas within a frame, nor is a hammer merely a union between wood and iron. The relationality of Dasein to its world, as expressed through its totality of involvements, has bearing still.

The locked horns of the earth and world are what makes artwork so revolutionary for Heidegger (and so momentous for us). The artwork is precisely the most transparent “host” to the struggle between the earth and world because it does not open itself up to the world as tools do. Dasein cannot concern itself with the Zuhandenheit of an artwork because it does not possess the character of Zuhandenheit. It cannot take-care-of it with its own hands. When faced with a work of art, Dasein has no choice but to stand back and be immersed – in all its interplay within and of the earth and world. And this dynamicity is not, following so much else in Heidegger, some metaphysical pairing that is aimlessly floating out in Platonic space, ready to be exhumed by the rational consciousness. Instead:

The world is the self-opening openness of the broad paths of the simple and essential decisions in the destiny of a historical people. The earth is the spontaneous forthcoming of that which is continually self-secluding and to that extent sheltering and concealing. World and earth are essentially different from one another and yet are never separated. The world grounds itself on the earth, and earth juts through world. (174)

Our interpretation of Heidegger has hitherto not engaged with the historical, but we are now brought before this concept of the “destiny of a historical people.” The effect of the historical on Dasein is indispensable for our creation of a Heideggerian Marxism, and so we would be fools to leave it unexamined.
Following his words on *Shoes*, Heidegger brings his view to a simple Greek temple, standing “…in the middle of the rock-cleft valley” (167). For the sake of explanation, let us assume that this temple is very stereotypically Greek. If we enter and stand in the center of its interior, we are surrounded on all sides by a series of colonnades. The pillars themselves are of the Doric variant, the earliest of the Greek architectural orders. The floor is a mosaic of brilliant white marble. Directly opposite us, at the far end of the temple, is an enormous statue of a god. Let us refrain from saying which god of the Greeks it is. All we are aware of is that it is present – but not in the sense that it literally and physically descended from Mount Olympus and stood with us. The god is “present,” but remains unseen. It is “present” in that it lives in its significance to the historical Dasein of the Greeks. As the home of the god, the temple:

…first fits together and at the same time gathers around itself the unity of those paths and relations in which birth and death, disaster and blessing, victory and disgrace, endurance and decline acquire the shape of destiny for human being. The all-governing expanse of this open relational context is the world of this historical people. (167)

To stay within the analogy a bit longer: if the people of the culture who once built the temple were the Spartans, perhaps the famous warriors ritually prepared themselves for battle under the stern countenance of Ares. If, instead, the temple was consecrated in the name of Vesta, the Roman goddess of the family, it would have been populated by a group of vestal virgins, tending to the fire of the sacred hearth. Further still, if the temple served to venerate Kukulkan, the feathered serpent of the Mayan pantheon, it may have bore witness to the arrival of many human sacrifices to Xibalba, the underworld.

In our initial discussion of *Being and Time*, we spent some time on the existential of *alētheia* – Dasein’s method of apprehending truth. Recall that *alētheia* is not synonymous with
truth; it is the phenomenological ground through which truth shines. In order to discover the truth of beings as the beings they are, we must first be phenomenologically receptive to them. We must recognize them as situated within a referential network, as the torque wrench revealed its being as a tool with the bolt and the motorcycle all those pages ago. In doing this, we are within \( \text{alētheia} \) – and also within the temple and the artwork. Heidegger writes,

Truth happens in the temple’s standing where it is. This does not mean that something is correctly represented and rendered here, but that beings as a whole are brought into unconcealment \( \text{[alētheia]} \) and held therein…Truth happens in Van Gogh’s painting. This does not mean that something at hand is correctly portrayed, but rather that in the revelation of the equipmental being of the shoes beings as a whole – world and earth in their counterplay – attain to unconcealment. (181)

The work of art, then, as temple, sculpture, painting, or whatever else, makes apparent the relation of the earth and world for historical Dasein. Through the artwork, we are told \textit{what matters to historical Dasein}. As the peasant kept her shoes close by, so does a historical people leave theirs by the door to their temple.
Fig. 5: Shadow of Kukulkan descending the steps at Chichen Itzá, Mexico, 2009
§8. “Letter on Humanism”

As should be evident by now, Heidegger has a habit of asking his colleagues, living or dead, to reexamine their “foundational” assumptions. It is not that what they have thought and written is necessarily wrong – it is that they have not thought deeply enough. The “Letter” is likely one of the clearest manifestations of this habit of Heidegger’s. Though some of it contains Heidegger’s most fecund words on Marx, it was really written in response to Jean-Paul Sartre. In 1946, Sartre had just introduced the French academy to his “Existentialism is a Humanism,” a short lecture that laid out the central principles of his take on being, nothingness, and freedom. Part of it reads:

…there is at least one being whose existence comes before its essence, a being which exists before it can be defined by any conception of it. That being is man, or as Heidegger has it, the human reality. What do we mean by saying that existence precedes essence? We mean that man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world – and defines himself afterwards…there is no human nature, because there is no God to have a conception of it. Man simply is. Not that he is simply what he conceives himself to be, but he is what he wills, and as he conceives himself after already existing – as he wills to be after that leap towards existence. Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself. (“Existentialism is a Humanism” 349)

So is the famous existentialist motto born: “Existence precedes essence.” At the center of humanity, in Sartre’s view, there is a condemnation to be free – because there is no essence, divine or otherwise, to guide us, we are solely responsible for the choices that we make. These choices are precisely how we make ourselves into humans. Existentialism consequently becomes our path to
attaining authentic freedom as human beings. It is only through the courageous acceptance of the “essencelessness” of existence that existentialism becomes a humanism.

At first glance, Sartre’s words appear vaguely Heideggerian. If our acquaintance with Heidegger was somewhat cursory and undeveloped, we could not blame ourselves for thinking as much. But Sartre’s assertion that existence precedes essence relies on a much older philosophical thesis – one that Heidegger expressed fervent disapproval for in *Being and Time*. Once more, from Sartre:

And at the point of departure there cannot be any other truth than this, *I think, therefore I am*, which is the absolute truth of consciousness as it attains to itself. Every theory which begins with man, outside of this moment of self-attainment, is a theory which thereby suppresses the truth, for outside of the Cartesian *cogito*, all objects are no more than probable, and any doctrine of probabilities which is not attached to a truth will crumble into nothing…this theory alone is compatible with the dignity of man, it is the only one which does not make man into an object. (361)

It is true that the “Letter on Humanism” was written as a response on Heidegger’s part to Sartre – but with a little effort, we can see how Heidegger distinguishes his own phenomenological-existential ontology from Sartre’s Cartesian existentialism. The two are irreconcilably incompatible, and not nearly as related as we might believe. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger dismissed the Cartesian schism between the subject and its world as fundamentally opposed to the always-already-involvedness of Dasein: “It is not the case that human being ‘is,’ and then on top of that has a relation of being to the ‘world’ which it sometimes takes upon itself” (*Being and Time* 57).

Through this antagonism, the concrete goal of the “Letter on Humanism” rises: a humanism that is conscious of its own Being as Dasein must be rediscovered, and not buried once more.
through a false pretension at freedom. When it comes to humanism, the metaphysicians, from Descartes to Sartre, have not thought deeply enough. The sundry explanations they have offered up – *animalitas, zoon logon echon, cogito* – none reach the truth of Being, preferring to substitute it for their own postulations: “Every determination of the essence of man that already presupposes an interpretation of beings without asking about the truth of Being, whether knowingly or not, is metaphysical” (“Letter on Humanism” 226). Their accounts all rely on the stagnant bifurcation between “existence” and “essence,” in which the latter is arbitrarily assigned at some other point to the former. For them, man *is* something else. On the other hand, for Heidegger, Dasein *is*.

The dualism of existence and essence conceals Dasein’s Being from itself. We dealt with an analogous phenomenon over 20 pages ago with the cases of the biologist, sociologist, and psychoanalyst. But where they covered over the being of objects through the carrying-out of their analytical projects, what is noteworthy about the “Letter” is that it turns to language, as both obscurer and illuminator of Being itself.

Though the obscuring of Being by dint of language occurs virtually every day and multiple times a day, let us invoke a more “visible” instance of it: President Ronald Reagan’s 1982 speech to the British Parliament, Thatcherite at the time. More than halfway through, he proclaims:

> In an ironic sense Karl Marx was right. We are witnessing today a great revolutionary crisis, a crisis where the demands of the economic order are conflicting directly with those of the political order. But the crisis is happening not in the free, non-Marxist West, but in the home of Marxist-Leninism, the Soviet Union. It is the Soviet Union that runs against the tide of history by denying human freedom and human dignity to its citizens. (Reagan)

The simplest and most obvious implication of Reagan’s propagandizing is that the capitalist West is the only civilization that *does* respect the freedom and dignity of humanity; it is the only union
that has obeyed history. That communicating this was likely Reagan’s intention should not come as a surprise to anyone even casually familiar with the history of the Cold War.

But this is secondary to the metaphysical leadenness of Reagan’s words. The speech depends on a certain metaphysical belief: that humanity has a nature, and that this nature is best respected by capitalism. Because – and here I speak with plainly Marxist bias – humanity is intrinsically selfish and exploitative, so the oft-heard argument goes, the system that rules it must reward selfishness and exploitation. Forgotten are all the real, material conditions that contributed to the Soviet Union’s onerous position in 1982, to say nothing of its fall nearly ten years later. With the postulation of a fixed human nature that is in “harmony” with the forces of capital, the “failure” of Soviet-Marxist communism is postulated as the consequence of being against nature itself.

Intertwined with this is the American fondness for natural rights theory, concretized in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. According to this political-metaphysical tradition, each individual human has a set of inviolable natural rights that are granted to him or her by a Creator, and any and all governments must be checked from time to time so that their respect of these rights is assured. Presumably, Reagan’s promulgations of “human freedom and human dignity” are derived from said tradition, which reaches deep into the metaphysical thought of the Enlightenment. But if we critique said tradition more carefully – if we begin to think more deeply, as Heidegger would have us do – Reagan’s words dissolve into air. “Freedom,” “dignity,” and even “human nature” are loaded words. They belie a very particular and limited image of human beings, in which the Being of Dasein is hidden away and exchanged for the “rational” and “autonomous” subject with inviolable rights (or, for short, the “liberal subject”). This sort of metaphysical backing is the only thing that permits such things as the myth of “pulling oneself up by their bootstraps” to arise. It is also the only thing that can inspire Sartre’s Cartesian existentialism.
But the more salient point is that Reagan uses *language* to apprehend humanity in this restricted, inauthentic way, as the liberal subject. For him and the metaphysicians that made his speech possible, “there is” an essence that determines the Being of humanity. But what we, as Heideggerian Marxists, are concerned with is the phrase “It gives.”

We are preoccupied with the “It gives” due to a particularly cryptic (but paradoxically most enlightening) statement of Heidegger’s: “Language is the house of Being” (“Letter on Humanism” 217). Language is what allows Dasein to “stand out” within the clearing of Being, within what we have referred to so often as *alētheia*: “Language is the clearing-concealing advent of Being itself” (230). Being, as delineated and *given* to Dasein by language, is itself socially, culturally, and *temporally* conditioned. By “temporally,” I mean something very similar to “historically,” but with the added note that this temporality *belongs* to Dasein. Dasein is *in* time, and not in the same way a clock tells time; coldly, separately. Dasein only *is* as such due to time, its thrownness from the past, projection into the future, and *recognition* of it via our present use of language:

Man is rather ‘thrown’ from Being itself into the truth of Being, so that ek-sisting in this fashion he might guard the truth of Being, in order that beings might appear in the light of Being as the beings they are. Man does not decide whether and how beings appear, whether and how God and the gods or history and nature come forward into the clearing of Being, come to presence and depart. The advent of Beings lies in the destiny of Being. (234)

And this historic quality of Being is shared, amongst a certain people and within a certain historical moment. Through their communication with one another, they enter into *discourse*, the specific existential of Dasein that gives language its power of illumination:

Discoursing is the ‘significant’ structuring [*Glieder*] of intelligibility of being-in-the-world, to which being-with belongs, and which maintains itself in a particular way of
heedful being-with-one-another. Being-with-one-another talks in assenting, refusing, inviting, ceding, furthermore as ‘making statements’ and as talking in ‘giving a talk…’ Discourse necessarily has this structural factor because it also constitutes the disclosedness of being-in-the-world and is prestructured in its own structure by this fundamental constitution of Dasein. What is talked about in discourse is always ‘addressed’ in a particular view and within certain limits. In all discourse there is what is spoken as such, what is said as such when one actually wishes, asks, talks things over…In this ‘something said,’ discourse communicates. (Being and Time 156)

Dasein agrees to abide by these “certain limits” whenever it participates in discourse. At every stage of history, there is a certain boundary that determines what is intelligible; it structures what is able to be said and how it is said. This boundary morphs from moment to moment and from people to people. The historically-inherited Being of a people, as Dasein, is thus found in language. It was also present in the artwork and temple from “The Origin of the Work of Art.” Dasein, through the temporally sensitive expression of language, comes into the light of Being. Dasein comprehends itself and its historical givenness by giving itself back to itself through language. It is as if Dasein, through the use of language, places a mirror in front of itself. Behind it stand all its situatedness in history, sociality, culture, and materiality. This is still a deeply complicated phenomenon, but Heidegger’s words may permit us some respite:

‘German’ is not spoken to the world so that the world might be reformed through the German essence; rather, it is spoken to the Germans so that from a fateful belongingness to the nations they might become world-historical along with them. The homeland of this historical dwelling is nearness to Being. (“Letter on Humanism” 241-242)
What the peoples of the world must do, then, is reclaim themselves. The natural question is why they have not yet done so. To this we reply: because these peoples have had their Being liquidated, and have it liquidated each day. They have lost it to the empty words of the they, as the ideals of freedom and dignity were lost to the vacuous impositions of Reagan’s speech. It is thus the task of Dasein to continually restore its authentic potentiality-of-being-a-self from the inauthentic oblivion it has been consigned to by Das Man.

So, if we are to create a truly humanistic humanism, the essential alienation of Dasein must be recognized. For Heidegger, there is only one “metaphysician” who realized this: Karl Marx. In regard:

Homelessness is coming to be the destiny of the world. Hence it is necessary to think that destiny in terms of the history of Being. What Marx recognized in an essential and significant sense, though derived from Hegel, as the estrangement of man has its roots in the homelessness of modern man. This homelessness is specifically evoked from the destiny of Being in the form of metaphysics, and through metaphysics is simultaneously entrenched and covered up as such. Because Marx by experiencing estrangement attains an essential dimension of history, the Marxist view of history is superior to that of other historical accounts. But since neither [Edmund] Husserl nor – so far as I have seen till now – Sartre recognizes the essential importance of the historical in Being, neither phenomenology nor existentialism enters that dimension within which a productive dialogue with Marxism first becomes possible. (243)

In order to better comprehend what Heidegger intends here with “homelessness,” let us hear the voice of the they in all its sonorousness and persistence. How Dasein loses itself to the they must
be seen, shifting and evolving. With a little more hard work, too, we might be able to begin this productive dialogue.
Fig. 6: Still from John Carpenter’s *They Live* (1988)

Despite their being each other’s most significant political enemy, fascists and Marxist communists are united by a common theme: the contention that capitalism has dissolved all hitherto-existing social relations in all its manifestations. What distinguishes the fascist from the Marxist is what he proposes as a solution. No matter the variant of fascism he subscribes to, always, he longs for a return to a mythologized past – a reassertion of social hierarchies, of national identity. Man over woman, white over black, wealthy over destitute. Volk over Fremdvölk. These are the eternal and natural distinctions that have allowed humanity to become what it has, or so the fascist argues. The Marxist instead looks to the future, to the possibility of a classless society, to the freedom of a world-community whose relations do not revolve around the homelessness and emptiness of exchange and consumption. From his (and my) perspective, the social strata that the fascist cherishes so enthusiastically have, in their wake, left unprecedented amounts of suffering and repression. In truth, they continue to – and so they should be the last thing we ever return to. And to settle for the present state of things when a better world is possible is to admit that such suffering is morally permissible.

“The Question Concerning Technology” is Heidegger’s own attempt at explaining this phenomenon of the dissolution of all sociality. He does not fault capitalism outright – if he did, the possibility of a Heideggerian Marxism would be much more obvious and this thesis would have little purpose. Rather, what has shrouded over Being in the modern age for Heidegger is technology, understood phenomenologically.

We must remember – for Heidegger, the essence of truth consists in Dasein’s ability to perceive things as the things that they are. The rook, the motorcycle, the wrench; all of these are given their essences by the phenomenological appropriation of Dasein. They are understood as
part of a referential network, which changes according to the mode of unconcealment Dasein is choosing to take for itself. We have made this point multiple times by highlighting how the same object can be phenomenologically apprehended as really a manifold of interpretations: a human being becomes the liberal subject or the center of unconscious drives, a bobby pin becomes a lockpick or a bookmark, etc. We do not need to make it again. What is now both our concern and Heidegger’s is what the phenomenological essence of technology is; to be more exact, how it functions as a mode of unconcealment. It will be best comprehended if we first set up its negative, as a sort of “pure” unconcealment that we may compare it to later.

At the start of every project there is a cause – really four causes, in Heidegger’s view. They can be seen in the mode of production that an artisan engages in when he chooses to create something new and sets off to work upon it. In doing so, he gathers them:

For centuries philosophy has taught that there are four causes: (1) the *causa materialis*, the material, the matter out of which, for example, a silver chalice is made; (2) the *causa formalis*, the form, the shape into which the material enters; (3) the *causa finalis*, the end, for example, the sacrificial rite in relation to which the required chalice is determined as to its form and matter; (4) the *causa efficiens*, which brings about the effect that is the finished, actual chalice, the silversmith. (“The Question Concerning Technology” 313-314)

The chalice, as the product of these four causes, is *indebted* to them. They outline its referential network, so to speak. The silver is that which gives the chalice its color, luster, pliability, etc. A chalice surely is able to be interpreted as a chalice by virtue of its shape; it would make little sense to make a ring of silver and call it a chalice. The *causa finalis* is the reason why it is being made. It indicates its significance for Dasein. The silversmith is the *causa efficiens*, but not in the way we would normally think. By virtue of his hands and eyes the chalice does come into physical
existence, but the phenomenological weight of such a creation is not in this newfound physicality. Rather, “The three previously mentioned ways of being responsible owe thanks to the pondering of the silversmith for the ‘that’ and the ‘how’ of their coming into appearance and into play for the production of the sacrificial vessel” (316). The ‘that’ and ‘how,’ as we have explicated from “The Origin of the Work of Art” and the “Letter on Humanism,” are socially, historically, culturally, and materially determined. As Dasein, the silversmith “imparts” the temporality and specificity of his own Being into what he creates.

The four causes exemplify the phenomenological phenomena of *physis* and *poiēsis*, or “bringing-forth” (317). These two are unlike each other in that *poiēsis* is contingent on another actualizing its coming-to-presence, e.g., the silversmith for the chalice. *Physis*, on the other hand, is what presences from itself – for instance, the birth of a butterfly from the chrysalis of a caterpillar. According to my reading, I would venture to say that both *physis* and *poiēsis* – but especially the latter – are a “practical” acting-out of *alētheia*. To quote Heidegger:

> Bringing-forth brings out of concealment into unconcealment. Bringing-forth propriates only insofar as something concealed comes into unconcealment. This coming rests and moves freely within what we call revealing [*das Entbergen*]. The Greeks have the word *alētheia* for revealing. The Romans translate this with *veritas*. We say ‘truth’…” (317-318)

Bringing-forth, as the practical manifestation of *alētheia*, is thus the *phenomenological basis for production*. But as there are starkly different modes of production – the tribal, ancient, feudal, and capitalist modes, to use Marx’s theory of history – there is also a multitude of modes of unconcealment. To speak in a slightly Heideggerian Marxist way, because production has been almost completely technologized and mechanized through capital, it has lost its character of authentic bringing-forth. Gone are the days in which the simple laborer would look to satisfy his own needs
or those of the community around him. Capital, as perhaps the most globalizing force the world has ever come across, has overwhelmed the laborer – and labor must always endeavor tirelessly to appease what its exploiters demand of it. Consequently, technological modernity has, in its repeated revolutionizing of itself, become its own mode of unconcealment: “Technology is a mode of revealing. Technology comes to presence in the realm where revealing and unconcealment take place, where alētheia, truth, happens” (319).

It is through alētheia that the phenomenology of capitalism brings itself into view for the first time. Production under technologized and industrialized capital has lost its character of bringing-forth, to the point of alienating the producer from the very process of production itself. What must now be extolled, then, is how capitalist production accomplishes this trampling-over of poiēsis and physis. As its own ground of unconcealment, technological modernity is much more aggressive in its relating to unformed masses; it is not a bringing-forth, but a challenging-forth, for the sake of storing the energies found therein for later use. Heidegger provides us with the case of the river Rhine:

The hydroelectric plant is set into the current of the Rhine. It sets the Rhine to supplying its hydraulic pressure, which then sets the turbines turning. This turning sets those machines in motion whose thrust sets going the electric current for which the long-distance power station and its network of cables are set up to dispatch electricity. In the context of the interlocking processes pertaining to the orderly disposition of electrical energy, even the Rhine itself appears to be something at our command. The hydroelectric plant is not built into the Rhine River as was the old wooden bridge that joined bank with bank for hundreds of years. Rather, the river is dammed up into the power plant. What the river is now, namely, a water-power supplier, derives from the essence of the power station. (321)
Because of technological modernization, the river is no longer permitted to be a river. It is instead challenged-forth and set-upon, leading to its distortion into a fuel source. It is robbed of its physis and turned into something else altogether: Bestand, or standing-reserve.

The organization of the earth into standing-reserve is arranged under the familiar commanding principle of “maximum yield at minimum expense” (321). The similarities to the capitalist mode of production are becoming evident at this point – but, to drive the point home further, it is not solely the earth that falls victim to the inauthentic mode of unconcealment endemic to capitalist modernity. We ourselves, as Dasein, are subject to it as well:

The forester who measures the felled timber in the woods and who to all appearances walks the forest path in the same way his grandfather did is today ordered by the industry that produces commercial woods, whether he knows it or not. He is made subordinate to the orderability of cellulose, which for its part is challenged forth by the need for paper, which is then delivered to newspapers and illustrated magazines. The latter, in their turn, set public opinion to swallowing what is printed, so that a set configuration of opinion becomes available on demand. (323)

The forester of the modern age has fallen prey to modernity, through the material basis of capitalist production and the ideological reinforcement of the inauthentic words of the they. But he is not standing-reserve either – he is its actuator, its executor. It is only through Dasein that alētheia can collapse into the mode of unconcealment for capitalist modernity that finally finds its name: enframing.

Enframing stands contrary to poiēsis and physis. Where they let things be, enframing takes them for itself and does with them what it will. It is through enframing that the oceans of the earth become little more than oil wells; that all the laborers that accompany the capitalist as inhabitants
of the earth become exploitable sources of wealth; that Dasein – at least within the context of “The Question Concerning Technology” – loses itself to Das Man, the they. The they is the whispering ghost that sounds out the ideological justification of the present state of affairs. It is what, innocently and sweetly, voices: “This is the way things are, always have been, and always will be.” To make the first thoroughly Heideggerian Marxist statement of this thesis: the they is the unthought whisper that, with a rueful face but a hidden grin, tells us that capitalism has always ruled humanity – and always will. Under the dictatorship of the they, “Everyone is the other, and no one is himself” ([Being and Time](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Being_and_Time) 124). To this I would add: “Neither under capitalism.”
Fig. 7: Monument to Karl Marx – Chemnitz, Germany
Chapter 2 – Marx & Being-in-Capital

§10. Marx – Preparation

We have produced from our analyses of “The Origin of the Work of Art” and “The Question Concerning Technology” two fundamental points: firstly, that our phenomenological modes of being-in-the-world are historically determined; secondly, that these modes are responsive to material entities and processes, such as technology. The existential categories that we discussed as part of Being and Time are therefore not the “content” of being-in-the-world but rather the “forms” which hold the specific, concrete expressions of Being at a given historical moment. The question that now arises is how these forms are influenced – or curtailed – by capitalism (and by history as a whole). Given that Being is historically and materially delineated, and that these delineations are brought to light via concrete phenomenological activity, it follows that the interpretive and productive possibilities of Being are at least partially determined by the directives according to which our concrete phenomenological activity is organized. In other words, what we do and what we say are shaped, in some manner, by the material mode of production – in our case, capitalism. This is one of the central assumptions that underlies the very possibility of a Heideggerian Marxism, and one that we would do well to keep in mind as we progress through the following pages.

A few words should be said before entering into the analysis proper. While my interpretation of Heidegger has been relatively orthodox so far, I do not intend to give Marx the same treatment. The “mechanical” element of his critique of capitalism is more or less preserved in its original form, as is his theory of history, but one of my two goals in this second chapter is to remedy what I have said I see as a glaring flaw in Marx: his description and conception of alienation as it arises in the labor process. I am simply not convinced by “species-being” or anything resembling it, at least as a persuasive theory of subjectivity. In addition, I should mention that I am not
understanding capitalism as *solely* a material mode of production. This is a common view in Marxist scholarship and critical theory, but it is worth repeating nonetheless for the purpose of clarification. Following the neo-Marxists, I take as a basic assumption that the process of alienation does not end concurrently with the working day. It is instead reproduced by a great social and cultural totality that, in reproducing itself, remakes capital and its ideological justifications as well. Toward this end, we state our work for this second chapter: because the overarching object of this thesis is to produce a basis for both Heideggerian Marxism and a phenomenology of capitalism, we must say, at last, what constitutes *being-in-capital*.

We will proceed along the following path: *Capital, Volume One*, as Marx’s own submission to the canon of the great philosophical works of history, will occupy us first. Much like *Being and Time*, however, it is a weighty and overwhelming tome. Out of a sense of practicality, then, we will limit our engagement with it to the famous fragment on the fetishism of commodities. Marx’s idea that each commodity contains a whole network of social relations, while only being grasped as a simple object, is the last philosophical thesis we must investigate before we are ready to describe *being-in-capital* in full. This task of description is what we will do next, after a summarizing of the major points that have filled this thesis thus far. Though I am hesitant to reveal prematurely exactly what *being-in-capital* consists of in these paragraphs, suffice it to say that its essential elements consist in, in addition to Marx’s fetishism of commodities, the four causes and interplay between earth and world that Heidegger detailed in “The Question Concerning Technology” and “The Origin of the Work of Art.” Walter Benjamin, whom I have already mentioned once in this thesis, will do us the favor of bringing everything to fruition by providing the final link.

Once this theoretical exegesis of *being-in-capital* is completed, we turn to the second of Marx’s works, “The German Ideology.” Engaging at length with it will sensitize us to the fact that
being-in-capital, like its host system, has gestated in and throughout history. The genesis of being-in-capital is dependent on the degree of advancement of productive technology; therefore, to best comprehend it, we must investigate how such productive technology has progressed through each revolution and intensification of the means, forces, and relations of production. Moreover, “The German Ideology” will alert us to the possibility that the phenomenological and material have always coexisted in and through one another, thereby providing support for Heidegger’s “productive dialogue” with Marx (“Letter on Humanism” 243). This being said, we cannot hope to create a comprehensive account of the entire phenomenological history of Dasein – such a task would be difficult and lengthy for even the most accomplished and diligent philosophers, and could likely fill an entire book, if not several.

Marx’s “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844” will be the third – and for this chapter, final – object of our attention. In treating them, our creation of a Heideggerian Marxism will begin to take flight, so to speak. We will tread once more through the five sources of intelligibility that we articulated in the first chapter – the tool, the sign, Das Man, the artwork, and language – that we surveyed through Heidegger, but we will now examine them as they appear, reconstituted, in capitalism. Finally, once we are finished with these three elements of Marxist thought, we will be fully equipped to examine the phenomenology of capitalism as it has manifested itself in that city that we know for all the wrong reasons: Detroit, Michigan.
Fig. 8: Pepsi – 2021
§11. The Fetishism of Pepsi and the Secret Thereof

Contemporary life seems to be full of such oddities that it seems almost as if they were planted there as some sort of joke. Capitalist corporations routinely display astounding levels of ignorance and cynicism in their efforts to increase their profits, so there are many instances one could take as encapsulating commodity fetishism. In truth, this fetishism surrounds us in everyday life. But, at least in recent memory, hardly any other case drew such attention than the advertisement aired by PepsiCo, Pepsi soda’s parent company, some four years ago. The ad itself is so brazen in its lack of awareness that it has become somewhat of an easy target for anti-capitalist critiques, but it is precisely because of this that it is worth investigating.

The cursory plotline of the ad revolves around three perspectives: a Muslim woman, poring over dozens of photographs strewn over a table; an East Asian man, inexplicably playing a cello on a rooftop; and lastly, the American celebrity Kendall Jenner posing for a photo session alongside a busy street. The street itself is not populated by cars, as it would be otherwise, but by a great procession of protesters carrying signs that, for the most part, remain illegible. The few messages that can be read are predictably purged of any truly revolutionary content and reduced to hazy appeals to a concept of social justice that is equally hazy.

As the protesters make their way down the street, Jenner takes notice of them and joins in. Interspersed throughout are a series of jump cuts that nearly always emphasize two elements: the happiness of the protesters, and the ubiquity of Pepsi. Jenner is immediately handed a can of the drink upon joining the movement, and, after presumably spending some time with them, she comes to the head of the mass. Facing them are a line of policemen whose purpose is to either redirect the protesters’ path or contain them outright. Then, Jenner approaches one of the police, so dutifully keeping the peace, and offers him a drink of Pepsi. The protesters cheer and laugh and smile.
in response, and the police officer, now refreshed by the cool, sweet taste of Pepsi, looks to one of his fellow officers and purses his lips in a half-smile, as if to say, “Don’t you think they might have a point?”

The ad was pulled from public exposure very quickly, following a (thoroughly deserved) negative reaction. But what remains philosophically interesting for us is the ad’s positioning of Pepsi, the product, as the panacea through which racism and police brutality – and presumably all social ills – have been magically solved. No longer is there a need for nightsticks, riot shields, and police dogs: we have Pepsi now. It is essentially part and parcel of marketing tactics to attempt to persuade the potential consumer to associate some desirable quality (e.g., virility, happiness, youth) with the product being advertised, so the positioning itself is nothing new. But what do we call this identification between the actual, physical commodity being sold, and the qualities it purports to give us? We look to Marx for a response:

There is a definite social relation between men, that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things. In order, therefore, to find an analogy, we must have recourse to the mist-enveloped regions of the religious world. In that world the productions of the human brain appear as independent beings endowed with life, and entering into relation both with one another and the human race. So it is in the world of commodities with the products of men’s hands. This I call the Fetishism which attaches itself to the product of labour, so soon as they are produced as commodities, and which is therefore inseparable from the production of commodities. (Capital, Volume One 321)

What Marx speaks of is certainly not difficult to see. If one has been raised in a religious environment, whether in a church, synagogue, mosque, or temple, some object has been fetishized. As a *fetish*, the object is endowed with certain powers, transcends its physical limits, and most
importantly, brings its deity to presence. In Christianity, the crucifix summons the presence of Christ; during Mass, the bread and wine come to be His body and blood; the baptismal font washes away the stain of original sin, invisible as it may be. Therefore, a fetish represents a concretization of something ethereal, or transcendental, in the particular, contingent, empirical world of human-kind. But the commodity is not immediately a fetish. It is instead made such by virtue of its being exchanged, its exchange-value. For Marx, all objects contain this and a use-value. The function of either is more or less apparent from their names, but in order to make full use of both them and this advertisement that so very obviously displays the fetishism of commodities, we will continue with it.

For the sake of explanation, let us suppose that Pepsi is our absolute favorite drink, and that we are entirely enraptured by the willingness of PepsiCo to support the recent protests against police brutality. The ad has achieved what it was designed to do in our case. Pepsi, as a drink, contains a use-value for us. Surely it is not the kind of drink we would reach for if we were severely dehydrated, but, nevertheless, its sugar, calories, and status as a consumable liquid do provide us with some of the energy that we require to subsist. It fulfills the same role as any other type of food. But we now venture to the nearest supermarket and buy a few more boxes than we normally would, bursting with eagerness to display our support as well. We gloss over the fact that a few hundred exploited workers were involved in every moment of production that culminated in our purchasing the Pepsi from the supermarket, only concerning ourselves with our newfound status as socially conscious rebels.

In this new worth that we now ascribe to the can of Pepsi, its exchange-value is uncovered. Standing in the supermarket aisle, we notice that we must pay a significantly higher price for the Pepsi than, for instance, a pack of bottled water, but this matters little to us. Pepsi, as a commodity
now able to be exchanged, has had its value multiplied tenfold. This is the dream of any corporation whose products are sold on the market, and Pepsi aside, it is seen most clearly in objects made from precious metals or gemstones. A golden wristlet contains no use-value beyond glamorizing part of its wearer’s body, and it is far outranked in terms of utility when compared to something much less ornate and much more practical, such as a hammer. Even the best hammers will, at most, cost a few hundred dollars, but a golden wristlet will exact a much more painful price. Use-value inheres in the object, but exchange-value does not, as it is only found in the act of exchange which, in turn, necessitates a platform of commodity exchange: a market. The social prerequisite of exchange-value is expounded upon by Marx:

As a general rule, articles of utility become commodities, only because they are products of the labour of private individuals or groups of individuals who carry on their work independently of each other…Since the producers [of these articles] do not come into social contact with each other until they exchange their products, the specific social character of each producer’s labour does not show itself except in the act of exchange. In other words, the labour of the individual asserts itself as a part of the labour of society, only by means of the relations which the act of exchange establishes directly between the products, and indirectly, through them, between the producers. To the latter, therefore, the relations connecting the labour of one individual with that of the rest appear, not as direct social relations between individuals at work, but as what they really are, material relations between persons and social relations between things. (321)

So, the can of Pepsi, along with the act of purchasing it, are transmuted into an act of social protest, as legitimate as the most desperate struggles against tear gas, fire hoses, and rubber bullets (or so PepsiCo would have wished).
A few more words remain to be said. As we will determine once we come to “The German Ideology,” the fetishizing of commodities does not occur at the same time the commodity itself is made, and neither is every object a commodity. A commodity satisfies a social need, and it must be available for exchange. As for the fetishizing of all commodities, it is a historical process that mirrors the advances in productive technology that themselves mark the transition from one stage of material history to the next. We glean two things from this. On the one hand, the commodity is stamped with the social and technological character of the labor that produced it, and this labor is expressed in the act of exchange, in exchange-value. On the other, because capitalism is that society in which the production of commodities is prioritized more than ever before, and actualized through mass industrial production, it is the stage of history that has fulfilled all the prior requirements for the fetishizing of all commodities.

§12. Summation of the Work So Far

With the inclusion of commodity fetishism, we are finally ready to bring forward being-in-capital as such. The rest of the chapter will thus be dedicated to either doing this or demonstrating how being-in-capital manifests itself in the everyday experience of Dasein in capitalism. But, given that the past 50 pages or so have seen us tread through some especially dense philosophical concepts, it is worth restating some of them here, as we have slowly been laboring toward this moment since the start of this thesis.

Our examination of Being and Time was necessitated due to the fact that we are utilizing Heideggerian phenomenology as our basis for this entire endeavor. Without Heidegger’s most influential work, we could not have hoped to comprehend sentences replete with terms such as “Dasein” or “being-in-the-world.” This would have rendered our project little more than a confusing mishmash of vaguely philosophical-sounding words. His other works – “The Origin of the
Work of Art,” the “Letter on Humanism,” and “The Question Concerning Technology” were included so that we could identify five sources of intelligibility, which, later on, we will use to make evident the phenomenological totality of capitalism. Taken together, these four works function as the Heideggerian skeleton to which we will now affix a Marxist flesh.

The first of the five sources of intelligibility is the tool. Though Dasein has a multitude of ways in which to comprehend and shape its world, it enters into the mode of Zuhandenheit, or “handiness,” when it grasps a certain tool with its hand. Our employment of the tool leads us to uncover the world in such and such a way through Dasein’s faculty of unconcealment, or alētheia. Tools can be either physical, or, in the case of the second source of intelligibility, a sign. Both are phenomenological “spotlights” through which Dasein delineates its possibilities, whether interpretive or material.

The proliferation of the sign leads us to consider the third source of intelligibility: the Mitwelt. When Dasein enters this with-world, it is forced to begin to understand itself in relation to other Dasein. It is through these others that Dasein views itself as part of a certain kind of people at a certain time; without them, it cannot take hold of the whole of its own identity with both hands. Lurking within the Mitwelt is Das Man, or “the they.” As we said so many pages ago, the they is the neuter; it is not a particular person or group of people, but rather like an invisible lawgiver that determines what is and is not intelligible at a point in history. Its clearest expressions are in phrases like “You know what they say,” but it need not be referred to explicitly in order to exact its power. The they causes Dasein to lose itself in the phenomenon of average everydayness, or publicness, with its authentic potentiality-of-being-a-self ultimately being obscured from it.

We moved to “The Origin of the Work of Art” so that we could draw out the structure of the fourth source of intelligibility, the artwork. Following Heidegger’s use of Van Gogh’s Shoes as
his explanatory vessel, we noticed that the artwork contains an interplay between earth and world. The earth is that raw and unadulterated phenomenal experience of such and such a thing that eludes rational analysis. As we said, color can be explained in terms of hue and saturation, but this does not get at what color is. The world, on the other hand, is the referential totality that the artwork reveals to Dasein. The shoes of the peasant, framed within Van Gogh’s painting, grant us a glimpse of the being-in-the-world of the peasant as Dasein. The unique arrangement of creases in the leather allows us to surmise the fields she may have walked. We saw the same sort of relation in the Greek temple. As a work of art, the temple brought to presence the god it was meant to exalt; through ritual, the god was given life, and through this unity of temple and ritual, we learned that such artworks divulge to us what matters to a people.

The “Letter on Humanism” merited its inclusion on two grounds: it is the only piece of writing in which Heidegger addresses Marx by name, stating that a “productive dialogue” may be established with him since Marx’s theory of history is, in essence, a history of alienation. Besides this, it introduced us to the fourth source of intelligibility: language. Through our example of Reagan’s speech to the British Parliament, it was made evident that, even in the most innocuous and idle conversations, we tend to grasp Dasein not as Dasein, respecting its full range of possibility, but rather habitually force it into a predetermined conception of “human nature.” Hence, to someone such as Reagan, Dasein was not Dasein, but rather the propagandized liberal subject, endowed with God-given rights that only the United States could ever respect.

Lastly, “The Question Concerning Technology,” as perhaps the most direct piece of social criticism Heidegger produced, guided us through the “essence” of technology. Through the phenomenological lens of enframing, all becomes standing-reserve. Natural energies are no longer permitted to be what they are, but they are instead challenged-forth for the sake of “maximum
yield at minimum expense” (“The Question Concerning Technology” 321). Enframing and standing-reserve stand in contrast to poiēsis and physis, which are, respectively, modes of bringing-to-presence that consist in either something else or in itself. In the case of the former, the four causes – materialis, formalis, efficiens, and finalis – determine from what, into what, how, and for what reason an object is made. This bears similarity to “The Origin of the Work of Art” in that the object, too, represents the opening of a phenomenological world.

From Marx, we have only taken his theory of the fetishism of commodities so far. We have done this in order to establish that the commodity is, in addition to being a phenomenological world, a referent to the material-historical organization which spawned it. So, a commodity produced under capitalism refers to capitalism; one created under feudalism refers to feudalism, and so on. The unity of the phenomenological and material in the commodity is what, at long last, permits us to see being-in-capital for ourselves. We turn to that now.

§13. Being-in-Capital as Such

Each commodity, from such a point of view, becomes much like Van Gogh’s Shoes – but where the shoe displayed to us the world of the peasant whose feet they armored, the commodity calls repeatedly to a power that, though produced by man, is experienced by him as an alien power. This power, for us, is capitalism. Hence each commodity takes upon the phenomenological aspect of a “fetish-artwork”; as the Cross summons Christ, so does the commodity summon capital. The commodity, much like a missionary sent to a world that refuses to prostrate itself before his alien god, preaches and proselytizes to Dasein. It tells it, very sweetly, of the eternality and naturality of capitalism, of its pleasures and excesses. Our instinct is to cover our ears and look away from the savage and brutal efficiency of this new deity to some sort of alternative that is kinder, gentler, more just, but we are denied this. We cannot help but be astounded at the plenitude. We see it in
our supermarkets, warehouses, and the homes of the wealthy. The sheer ubiquity of the commodity echoes the omnipresence of God, and Dasein, weak before this unyielding assault, is gradually pulled away from its home in the temple. Deprived of this source of self-knowledge, it begins to fill this new vacuum with the image of capitalism. The penitent and pilgrim, at home in their temples, are exiled and remade into the consumer and commodity:

The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his ‘natural superiors,’ and has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous ‘cash payment.’ It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervour, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation. It has resolved personal worth into exchange value, and in place of the numberless indefeasible chartered freedoms, has set up that single, unconscionable freedom – Free Trade.” (“Manifesto of the Communist Party” 475)

So, as each commodity embodies the aspect of a fetish-artwork of whatever material system delivered it to the world, it envelops both material and phenomenological qualities. This is to say that each commodity receives a sort of inscription upon being brought-forth: materially, the productive organization of the society which spawned it; phenomenologically, its demonstration of a world as an artwork. The inscription specific to capitalism constitutes, at last, what we know as being-in-capital.

§14. The Aura and the Four Causes

But we cannot end here. If we do, then this thesis will only pretend at a Heideggerian Marxism by mechanically employing both men’s terminology in the same sentences. We must push forward and delve into this notion of the commodity containing an “inscription” that is
simultaneously material and phenomenological. Funnily enough, we look to a Marxist – albeit an unusual and heterodox one, much like us – for our starting point.

Walter Benjamin is the thinker who will aid us in completing our bridging-together of Heidegger and Marx. Earlier, our engagement with him was limited to only a single sentence from One-Way Street, his collection of aphorisms, but now we are preoccupied with a 1935 essay of his titled “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility.” My reading of it is, admittedly, suffused with a Heideggerian spirit – but I get the impression that Benjamin would not have objected to this too much, for reasons we will work through. The purpose of the essay is to examine the effect of mass production on the artwork, which, one might imagine, bears upon being-in-capital. The first of Benjamin’s relevant theses follows:

In even the most perfect reproduction [of a work of art], one thing is lacking – the here and now of the work of art – its unique existence in a particular place. It is this unique existence – and nothing else – that bears the mark of the history to which the work has been subject. The here and now of the original underlies the concept of its authenticity…The whole sphere of authenticity eludes technological – and, of course not only technological – reproduction. (“Technological Reproducibility” 103)

So, something is lost from the artwork once it undergoes mass mechanical reproduction. This is not at all hard to see. Private collectors with plenty of funds at their disposal would likely pay millions for the original of The Scream, or the Mona Lisa, or Guernica, but none (assuming they are in their right minds) would pay the same sum for a copy of these artworks, whether repainted on historically-accurate canvas or printed on a two-dollar ceramic mug. The reason for this is because that thing that makes the original the original has been severed from its copies. Benjamin calls this severed and discarded quality the “aura” of an artwork:
The authenticity of a thing is the quintessence of all that is transmissible from its origin on, ranging from its physical duration to the historical testimony relating to it...And what is really jeopardized when the historical testimony is affected is the authority of the object, the weight it derives from tradition. One might focus the aspects of the artwork in the concept of the aura, and go on to say: what withers in the age of the technological reproducibility of the work of art is the latter’s aura. This process is symptomatic; its significance extends far beyond the realm of art. It might be stated as a general formula that the technology of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the sphere of tradition. By replicating the work many times over, it substitutes a mass existence for a unique existence.

(103-104)

The structure of the inscription begins to appear, but, before we attempt our fusion, we must make note of the historical genesis Benjamin ascribes to the aura:

The uniqueness of a work of art is identical to its embeddedness in the context of tradition. Of course, this tradition is thoroughly alive and extremely changeable. An ancient statue of Venus, for instance, existed in a traditional context for the Greeks (who made it an object of worship) that was different from the context in which it existed for medieval clerics (who viewed it as a sinister idol). But what was equally evident to both was its uniqueness – that is, its aura. Originally, the embeddedness of the artwork in the context of tradition found expression in a cult. As we know, the earliest art works originated in the service of rituals – first magical, then religious. And it is highly significant that artwork’s auratic mode of existence is never entirely severed from its ritual function. In other words: the unique value of the ‘authentic’ work of art always has its basis in ritual. (105)
Benjamin’s inclusion of the ritual as the birthplace of the artwork touches directly on the Greek temple that Heidegger considered in “The Origin of the Work of Art.” The temple is the site of the openness of the historical Dasein of the Greeks, and within its walls, their god, simultaneously an emblem of what matters to them, is brought into presence through the rituals meant to honor it.

This bringing-forth admits of a structure in itself. We uncovered it during our time with Heidegger’s “The Question Concerning Technology.” Though we were more concerned with enframing and standing-reserve the first time around, we did make note of the four causes. Here we repeat Heidegger’s introduction of them:

For centuries philosophy has taught that there are four causes: (1) the *causa materialis*, the material, the matter out of which, for example, a silver chalice is made; (2) the *causa formalis*, the form, the shape into which the material enters; (3) the *causa finalis*, the end, for example, the sacrificial rite in relation to which the required chalice is determined as to its form and matter; (4) the *causa efficiens*, which brings about the effect that is the finished, actual chalice, the silversmith. (“The Question Concerning Technology” 313-314)

Heidegger identified the silversmith as the cause to which the other three are indebted. His relationship to them is not one of simple causality, in which one physical object simply results in the creation of something else. Rather, it is through his handiwork, itself conditioned and mediated by his historical being-in-the-world, that the chalice is allowed to become what it is; in other words, it is through the smith’s Being that the chalice is given avenue to “presence” into unconcealment. This is the nature of its indebtedness to him, and it is what earns the silversmith his status as *causa efficiens*.

We also take special issue with the *causa finalis*. The reason why the chalice was created in the first place, like nearly everything else in this thesis, is historically sensitive. Even if a
people’s rituals continue to venerate the same god over thousands of years, then their reason for doing so changes. And even if their reason for doing so stays the same, their manner of constructing the ritual object evolves. The *causa efficiens* is therefore historically sensitive as well. *Materialis* and *formalis* likely not as much, but surely, it must be conceded that a phenomenological change occurs when the forging of a silver chalice is the result of a series of machines, and not a silversmith situated in history as Dasein. Thus, the *causa finalis* behind the creation of a statue of Venus is markedly unalike that which inspired the crafting of a crucifix, and, as Benjamin has written, its respective creators reflect such dissimilarity. The context of tradition that led to the gestation and ultimate birth of either is distinct: “…this tradition is thoroughly alive and extremely changeable” (“Technological Reproducibility” 105).

The “presencing” of a god via the fetish-artwork is therefore not something static – the ritual and its objects, in correspondence with the historical sensitivity of the four causes and means, forces, and relations of production, all evolve over the course of millennia. This evolution is, as we have repeatedly stated, both material and phenomenological. In regard to the former, the creation of a silver chalice presupposes the availability of silver, of tools, of the knowledge necessary to mine, process, and shape it, a market in order to procure everything, and lastly, the silversmith himself. Phenomenologically, through the four causes, the silversmith, as a historical Dasein in that particular moment in history and in respect to his particular ritual, brings the chalice to presence. In this act of creation, of bringing to presence, the silversmith has imparted his Being into the chalice. As much as it is made of silver, it is “made” of his Being. It summons him, as it is something only he could have made.

But as the present dissolves into the past, the relationship between the silversmith and the object of his labor is transformed. Its historical sensitivity leaves it vulnerable to changes in the
material mode of production and, as the nature of such production advances and mutates, he finds himself less and less involved in the making of new chalices. He is, after all, only one man, and a man who tires, at that. He is no match for the new industrial technologies that have severed him from the object of his labor. A change has transpired.

Industrial capital and mass production have come to the world, and these provide the foundation for being-in-capital, as a discrete phenomenon, to come about. So, we ask: what occurs to the *causa finalis* and *causa efficiens* following the advent of capitalism, more specifically, following the advent of mass capitalist commodity production? A partial answer has already been supplied for us by Benjamin: “It might be stated as a general formula that the technology of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the sphere of tradition. By replicating the work many times over, it substitutes a mass existence for a unique existence” (104).

Capitalism severs, in Heidegger’s language, the *causa finalis* from its *causa efficiens*. The hands of the silversmith, worn and calloused from years of creating chalices for the sake of those rituals meant to honor his gods, are replaced with production line and wheezing smokestack. His labor, once the conduit for the *poiēsis* of his Dasein and that of his people’s, is now reduced to a litany of empty, cynical imitations. Objects essential to the self-knowledge of a historical Dasein are ripped from their original context and sold, much like everything else, for a certain quantity of money.

The phenomenological consequence of such a detachment is that, deprived of the awareness of historically-determined alternative possibilities of Being that lie outside of the logic of capital, Dasein has no choice *but* to submit to its power. It ceases recognizing itself *as* Dasein, as a being-in-the-world with the potentiality-of-being-a-self. With an air of resignation, prompted by the unerring rhythm of capital, Dasein starts to know itself as a commodity. Those of us already
familiar with Marx know that human beings, through their labor-power, are forced to sell themselves as commodities in order to live. This is not in question. But what we now know through being-in-capital is how this transformation may be experienced subjectively as well. Consciously or not, Dasein becomes absorbed into the great cycle of production and reproduction that maintains the façade of ideological superiority so necessary to capitalism, and a phenomenological “stickiness” takes hold. Because, as we saw in “The Question Concerning Technology,” it is the danger of industrial technology that we perceive the world as only what can be measured, calculated, and exploited, and because this technology is intrinsic to capitalist mass production, Dasein falls prey to the danger. It enframes the world and itself.

“All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned…” (“Manifesto of the Communist Party” 68). Every identity, despite appearing revolutionary and subversive at its incipience, is absorbed into the inhuman quantification of exchange-value, as something calculable and exploitable. Dasein no longer sees a man by way of the Mitwelt, letting him appear as the Dasein that he is, but as a pair of hands to be extracted of surplus-value. Dasein no longer sees a woman but a body to be exploited. Dasein no longer sees anyone at all, reducing them to the status of useful or useless things, and Dasein no longer sees itself, being forced to sell itself as useful to an employer. This, then, is being-in-capital.
Fig. 9: Ryōan-ji (The Temple of the Dragon at Peace) – Kyoto, Japan – 1450
§15. The Concrete Manifestation of Being-in-Capital

But it must be seen how being-in-capital manifests concretely. Otherwise, we remain lost in the dizzying heights of philosophical theory, not ever returning to earth. The best way to achieve this is through the use of, as we have done so many times already, an example. Some come to mind with minimal effort: Che Guevara’s visage on shirts produced in sweatshops, each home to legions of exploited proletarians; the fake Mayan-Aztec bas-reliefs dispiritedly placed inside every Chipotle restaurant, whose origin is none other than Denver, Colorado; the rapidity with which the reunified German state began to sell off parts of the Berlin Wall. But these, while indicative of the cynicism and soullessness that capitalism contains in its very spirit, would not serve us in the way that we need. The object of our focus must be a discrete cultural and historical icon that has been rid of its past.

Japan, as one of the hotbeds of Zen Buddhism, contains many rock gardens. The monks, housed in their monasteries, count it among their duties to maintain these gardens, which is no small feat. The gardens – for instance, Ryōan-ji, in Kyoto, pictured above – are simple, but only deceptively so. The sand that forms the sea all in between the rocks must be raked, so as to give the impression each pebble flows together, like water. The gardens are steeped in, and symbolic of, a great tradition that simultaneously comes to embody the expression of Zen Buddhism in Japan. Should we try to subject the composition of Ryōan-ji to scientific analysis, then we witness the same phenomenological collapse of the rock garden as we did with the earth. It is true that the rock garden is a specifically-arranged collection of pebbles, vegetation, and stone, but to describe it purely as such is to cover over what it is. Ryōan-ji thus seems to speak – but not to us. It is a very strong claim to say with certainty that only particular people or kinds of people are privy to
its mysteries, but surely, we can say that a Buddhist monk, especially one that has tended the rocks for many years, hears its voice better than we.

Enter the great virtual marketplace, Amazon, whose transformation of global trade and consumption would challenge the faith of even the most devout of monks. With an unprecedented level of convenience and quickness, each of us – provided we have the necessary funds available – can order nearly anything on Amazon. Some days later, after journeying through a dizzying spiderweb of shipping lanes and warehouses, whatever we ordered is placed on our doormat, wrapped in a neat little box with the Amazon logo plastered on one side or the other. It is a process we have done dozens, if not hundreds, of times. However, one afternoon, one commodity among the otherwise endless sea of commodities catches our eye more than the rest: a small desk replica of a Japanese Zen Buddhist garden, complete with (artificial) sand, rocks, and bonsai trees. Soon after noticing its low price, we make our purchase and anxiously await it in the mail.

It arrives in the morning. We rush to retrieve the package, although some of our excitement becomes consternation as we hurry a little too quickly, spilling coffee on our shirts. We are now in a state of agitation – which, as we all know, is the ideal state to be in when one plans to ponder the mysteries of Zen Buddhism. Time passes, and the coffee dries. Our garden is now fully assembled, and with half-drunk coffee mug set aside, we pull it near. Our fingers grip the wooden rake meant for carving lines in the sand.

This moment encapsulates all we have worked out so far. It is such a simple thing to idly play with a replica of a Zen Buddhist garden, so far removed from its historical and cultural context for Dasein, but it is another matter entirely to know it. In interacting with it, the commodity is given a voice – like the artwork, it speaks. But where the artwork would speak to us of its history, the earth, and the world, the commodity only addresses us in half-measures and distorted whispers,
as if it is voicing itself to us while submerged under many meters of water. It does this because it is nothing but a copy, a liquidated, commodified, and fetishized referent to a history that itself has been liquidated, commodified, and fetishized. As a fetish born from capitalist mass production, it bears the schism between *causa finalis* and *causa efficiens*: there are no centuries of Japanese Zen Buddhism ingrained in it, and there is no monk to diligently care for it, to bring it into Being. Instead, it was made in some Chinese, Indian, or Latin American factory somewhere, completely severed from any semblance of either Japanese history or Buddhism. Commodified and miniaturized, the only purpose of this toy Zen garden is to satisfy our momentary whims – whims that anyone else, regardless of age, sex, gender, race, culture, history, and so on, could have had.

When a Buddhist monk sits on the landing of Ryōan-ji, he knows the rituals the space demands of him, and through them, knows himself. Respectfully, he kneels and bows his head, ready to meditate. Conversely, when we sit at our desks, momentarily entertained by this play of plastic rock, artificial sand, and crudely painted moss before us, no such demand is exacted upon us. We have already paid the price of admission – and this is where the phenomenological consequence of the split between *causa efficiens* and *causa finalis* is seen in its concreteness. Ryōan-ji speaks to the Dasein of the monk because he has ears to hear it; the commodity speaks to no one in particular. Of course, we already know this “no one” as Das Man. Recall how Heidegger spoke of the they in *Being and Time*:

> One belongs to the others oneself, and entrenches their power. ‘The others,’ whom one designates as such in order to cover one’s own essential belonging to them, are those who are there initially and for the most part in everyday being-with-one-another. The who is not this one and not that one, not oneself, not some, and not the sum of them all. The ‘who’ is the neuter, the they...Everyone is the other, and no one is himself. The they, which
supplies the answer to the *who* of everyday Dasein, is the *nobody* to whom every Dasein has always surrendered itself, in its being-among-one-another. (*Being and Time* 123-124)

The commodity thus speaks to Dasein only as it remains faceless, skinless, without a history. It entices Dasein into its timelessness, engulfing it in the void that remains when Dasein no longer recognizes its historical possibilities of Being: capitalism.
Fig. 10: Paul Klee – *Angelus Novus* – 1920
§16. “The German Ideology” – Preparation

Now to trace out the historical progression of being-in-capital. Despite the fact that it liquidates history and severs Dasein from its past, its emergence as a phenomenon admits of its own historical development, and that is what we busy ourselves with now. This development runs parallel to the degree of technological advancement that is expressed in the material organization of a given society. As the means, forces, and relations of production transform and intensify from stage to stage of history, so does the schism between *causa efficiens* and *causa finalis* widen. The culmination of this widening comes in the genesis of industrial capitalism.

But to best comprehend this process, we must engage with Marx once more. We do this simply because there is no understanding Karl Marx, capitalism, or being-in-capital without understanding his theory of history. Precisely for the sake of this understanding, however, we would do well by cheating just a little and getting ahead of him. Owing to his philosophical training in Hegel and the rest of the German Idealists, Marx moves through history dialectically rather than sequentially. This adds a remarkable level of richness to his work – but it also impels the reader to juggle multiple contradictions at once, opening up the possibility for confusion and distortion. So, if we state openly and clearly ahead of time the historical tendencies that are outlined in “The German Ideology,” along with some philosophical points that are central to his system – and our own – in general, we will both contextualize the work and allot ourselves more space in which to demonstrate the gradual detachment of *causa finalis* from *causa efficiens*.

The first – and most crucial – of these points that we must make note of here is the Marxist conception of the human being. Near the start of “The German Ideology,” Marx intimates to us the following:
Men can be distinguished from animals by consciousness, by religion or anything else you like. They themselves begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to produce their means of subsistence, a step which is conditioned by their physical organisation. By producing their means of subsistence men are indirectly producing their actual material life. ("The German Ideology" 150)

For Marx, then, production is the essential faculty that both defines and concretizes the Being of human beings. To take it even further, production plays such a central role in Marx’s historical and philosophical systems that he can be said to view man not as “man,” empty and vague concept that it is, but as homo faber – in Latin, “man the maker.” Therefore, “The German Ideology,” as a whole, can be read as a historical account of the productive powers of man, or – to be a little more faithful to Marx’s Hegelian roots – the journey of man conquering his own alienation via his powers of production. This puts him in quite a bit of tension with Heidegger, as Marx has committed the cardinal sin of covering over the Being of Dasein with the restricted and short-sighted Being of homo faber: We will revisit this later as we move through “The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844.”

The second point concerns the development of these powers, which are themselves organized and limited along two matrices: the forces and relations of production. To supply an example of the former: my copy of The Marx-Engels Reader was printed here, in the United States. We can imagine that this book came about through a combination of different contributions. Obviously, Marx and Engels had to labor all those years ago to produce the words that would eventually be printed, but out of necessity, there had to be some other forces in place – workers, machines, or both – that gathered up the necessary cellulose for the paper, the chemicals for the ink, and so on. Moreover, someone or something had to bind together the loose reams of paper into a book, set
printing press to it, and later ship it off to the bookstore I purchased it in. Thus it is the case that this single copy of *The Marx-Engels Reader* necessitated a multitude of laborers and kinds of labor: editors, publishers, technicians, printing presses, loggers, and so on and so forth. Taken together, all of these fonts of labor form the forces of production.

The relations of production are very slightly more difficult to grasp, but still quite indispensable to our understanding of capitalism (and indeed, any mode of production). Part of our analysis of *Being and Time* discussed the existential category of the *Mitwelt* – the “with-world.” Dasein cohabitates the earth with other Dasein, and it derives part of its self and world-understanding from these others. Dasein cannot exist sundered from the *Mitwelt*, and the nature of the *Mitwelt* is historically conditioned. The relationship between *homo faber* and his community is similar in Marx. Each historical mode of production, whether the ancient city-state, the feudal manor, or the capitalist manufacturing plant, contains within itself a set of social relationships that are *intrinsic* to that mode of production. So, the ancient city-state *necessitates* the slave-master and slave, feudalism necessitates the lord and peasant, and capitalism necessitates the bourgeois and proletarian. It is “part” of capitalism that I am in a relationship of dependence with my landlord, that the proletarian is paid a wage for their labor, etc. The relations of production are therefore the materially necessary set of social relationships that each human being, whether oppressor or oppressed, must enter into at a given point in history.

This oppressive element of the relations of production finds its clearest expression in the larger distinction between propertied and propertyless. We may deviate from “The German Ideology” for a moment and look to *The Communist Manifesto* in order to clarify this. Everyone knows of the specter haunting Europe, but what is relevant for us follows closely behind:
The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes.” (“Manifesto of the Communist Party” 473-474)

Lastly, both the forces and relations of production have, generally speaking, advanced, intensified, and multiplied over the course of history. This is what has led to the sundering between the *causa finalis* and *causa efficiens*. Their separation is parallel to that of technology and the division of labor. In turn, the intensification of all these “…develops gradually with increase of population, the growth of wants, and with the extension of external relations, both of war and of barter” (“The German Ideology” 151). We will see this for ourselves as we progress through “The German Ideology.” Our preparatory points and patterns are thus uncovered:

1. The history of humanity begins when it produces its own life, i.e., when it labors to clothe itself, house itself, feed itself, *through its own productive powers*. We call Marx’s conception of the human being *homo faber* (“man the maker”).
2. The forces of production are comprised of all the productive powers within society, whether artificial or human. The relations of production are those social relationships that are necessitated by the material mode of production. Each historical stage admits of its own organization of these two, and each transition between the stages represents a simultaneous intensification and revolutionizing of the forces and relations.
3. History is the history of class struggle.
4. The upshot of these intensifications is threefold: the division of labor becomes more specialized, productive technology is rendered more efficient, and the peoples of the world enter into increasingly dependent relationships with one another via economic globalization. This is referred to by Marx as *intercourse*.

The Marxian theory of history is roughly organized along these four patterns. They serve as the wheels of the engine of history, with humanity as its director. We may now begin with “The German Ideology” in full.

§17. The Tribe

The first mature organization of the forces and relations of production in human history is found in the *tribe*. Marx comments: “[The tribal form of production] corresponds to the undeveloped stage of production, at which a people lives by hunting and fishing, by the rearing of beasts or, in the highest stage, agriculture” (151). In the tribal epoch, which ended some 12,000 years ago, there is no such thing as trade or globalization, beyond the passing contact one nomadic tribe might have with another. The concept of property (at least in the way we comprehend it today) is nonexistent. Industry is limited to the simple production the tribespeople engage in in order to sustain themselves, and the performance of this “industrial” labor is divided into two roles: the hunter and gatherer. The complexity of the relations of production is confined to the power exercised within the tribe by “patriarchal chieftains” over the rest of its members, but Marx does not consider this a class antagonism in the usual sense – the hierarchy between the chieftains and the tribesmen is merely social, ungrounded by material actuality (151).

We will not trouble ourselves here with a very detailed inquest into the Being of the tribe since productive capacity is virtually absent, especially understood in comparison to the later stages of history. Moreover, because intercourse between disparate nomadic tribes is, as we have
said, very limited, the simple object only rarely rises to the status of a fetishized commodity. Nevertheless, one can think of some objects, laden with cultural significance, that later become commodities, e.g., tobacco pipes utilized by Native American nomadic peoples for religious purposes, or masks employed by African tribes for their coming-of-age rituals.

§18. The Ancient City-State

After a few thousand years, the tribe settles and agrarianizes. This signals the arrival of Marx’s second historical stage: the ancient city-state, which “…proceeds especially from the union of several tribes into a city by agreement or by conquest, and which is still accompanied by slavery” (151). The clearest instances of tribes coming together in this way is in the founding of the great ancient civilizations, e.g., Ur, Babylonia, Egypt, etc. Concomitant with the settling of the tribes into city-states is an uptick in, as Marx writes, population and trade. Commercial routes, such as the old Silk Road that linked Europe to Asia, are established. The city appears for the first time in history as a social and economic hub, as a center of production.

It would be an error to claim here that Marx casts class struggle as a sort of precondition to history. The dialectical opposition between the propertied and propertyless is only the result of the material movement of history itself. We have already seen that the very idea of property was not yet in existence during the time of the tribe, but by the time of antiquity, it has come into being:

Beside communal ownership we already find…private property developing, but as an abnormal form subordinate to communal ownership. The citizens hold power over their labouring slaves only in their community, and on this account alone, therefore, they are bound to the form of communal ownership. It is the communal private property which compels the active citizens to remain in this spontaneously derived form of association
over against their slaves… The class relation between citizens and slaves is now completely
developed. (151)

As is it still the case more than 2000 years later, the material domination of the slave-master over
the slave is concretized in the ownership of property.

In agreement with our fourth pattern, the relations and forces of production see their first
intensification. Now that the residents of the city have had their physical needs (food, water, shel-
ter, etc.) met in such a way that those outside of it have not, they are able to rely on others for the
satisfaction of some of their wants. It is not difficult to see this unfolding. If we say, for example,
that Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt, suddenly desired a new necklace to further entice Mark Antony,
she would first need to overcome several obstacles. If we assume that she wishes that her ne-
ccklace be made of gold and lapis lazuli, these must be sourced, extracted, refined from raw material,
molded, assembled, then imported. Thankfully for her, the Nile is a natural provider of gold, but
the lapis lazuli must instead be sent to Egypt from far-off Bactria. Moreover, she must find and
hire a craftsman that is both able and willing to assemble her necklace. She would probably have
no trouble with this, considering no one would turn down the pharaoh.

Let us pause here for a moment. Materially, this example of Cleopatra and the craftsman
that we have created is fairly straightforward. In this particular transaction, that is itself conditioned
by the ancient mode of production, the forces of production are represented by the craftsman and
all the laborers, enslaved or otherwise, involved in supplying him with the resources necessary for
the forging of the necklace. The relations of production are visible as well. As the primary class
distinction in the ancient world was between the citizen and the slave, the slaves involved in the
gathering of the gold and lapis lazuli had no choice but to enter into that relationship of dependence
with their masters. As property themselves, they were necessarily beholden to the interests of the citizens, which, in this case, include both the craftsman and Cleopatra.

But what distinguishes the ancient mode of production from that of the tribe, at least for our purposes, is the emergence of a market. *Capital, Volume One* imparted to us that the commodity is only fetishized if it is able to be exchanged, which, of course, presupposes the availability of a market that serves as a platform for such exchange. And with the genesis of the market comes the genesis – though certainly not the terminus – of the separation between *causa efficiens* and *causa finalis*. This is because, as mass production has not yet come into being, any commodity, whether a golden necklace requisitioned by the Queen of Egypt or a simple reed pen made by a royal scribe, is still situated within the context of tradition. The necklace and pen are indeed commodities because they satisfy a need, but they have not yet been fetishized. This is all in keeping with our earlier discussions of the dual phenomenological and material nature of the commodity as embodied in the four causes and the progression of the forces, means, and relations of production, but here, now, we see it concretely. If we must represent visually the current unity between *causa efficiens* and *causa finalis* at this moment in history, then, very simply, we may say it is found in the maker’s marks the artisans of old would leave upon their creations: their hands brought the object to presence, and because of this, their historical Being is inscribed upon it. As the silver chalice was brought to presence by the silversmith, himself immersed in history as Dasein, so are the craftsman and scribe responsible for, respectively, the necklace and the pen. There is, as of now, no empty void to be filled by the phenomenological inscription of capitalism, and capitalism itself has not yet entered the world.
§19. Feudalism

Marx presents us to his third stage of history with a crucial addendum: “The third form of ownership is feudal or estate property. If antiquity started out from the town and its little territory, the [feudalist] Middle Ages started out from the *country*” (“The German Ideology” 152). The ancient mode of production has now fallen to the wayside, with its dependence on slave labor alongside it. Slaves are, of course, still in existence during feudalism, but they have been supplanted as the major productive force by two major groups: the “enserfed small peasantry” in the country and the artisanal guildsmen in the city (152).

For the moment, let us fixate on the serfs. We know that justice, along with physical protection, were some of the privileges that a serf could expect in return for binding himself to the lord’s manor. Of course, this would come at a price: the serf would only be allowed these privileges so long as he labored somehow on the land of the lord, encircled by the walls of the castle. The medieval manor thus constitutes the archetypal image of feudalist society. The noble lord, of royal blood and issued his estate by the monarch himself, resides in its towers. Far below, but still within its walls, is a mass of serfs, involved in the upkeep of this tiny pocket of civilization – a blacksmith, sweating over his bellows; a cook, stocking the larder; a farmer, picking away at the crops of the harvest of 1184. This, then, is the form of class struggle unique to the rural expression of feudalism, an inseparable component of the feudal relations of production:

The hierarchical structure of landownership, and the armed bodies of retainers associated with it, gave the nobility power over the serfs. This feudal organisation was, just as much as the ancient communal ownership, an association against a subjected producing class, but the form of association and the relation to the direct producers were different because of the different conditions of production. (153)
But as we have already said, the serf was not the only productive class during the Middle Ages. Accompanying them in their productivity were their urban counterparts, the artisans: i.e., the cobblers, smiths, tailors, masons, and so on.

These craftsmen organized themselves into the historical ancestor of the modern corporation, the *guilds*. Marx explains for us their genesis:

> The competition of serfs constantly escaping into the town, the constant war of the country against the towns and thus the necessity of an organised municipal military force, the bond of common ownership in a particular kind of labour, the necessity of common buildings for sale of their wares at a time when craftsmen were also traders, and the consequent exclusion of the unauthorised from these buildings, the conflict among the interests among the various crafts, the necessity of protecting their laboriously acquired skill, and the feudal organisation of the whole of the country: these were the causes of the union of the workers of each craft in guilds. (176-177)

A little scrutiny reveals the form of struggle unique to the guild. In their innately hierarchical structure, the guilds provided a career path for the aspiring craftsmen of the feudal era. So, if some young man in medieval Berlin decided to become a glazier, he would be directed to the workshop of a local master, himself a glazier with decades of experience and the owner of a workshop. Now formally accepted as an *apprentice*, our glazier-in-training would, to an extent, replicate the dependency of the serf upon the lord with his master. He would not be paid a wage, as the serf is not, but would instead be given food and shelter in return for his work. Employed alongside him would be the higher-ranking *journeyman*, who, in contrast, had the right to demand a wage, and was not tied to the workshop of the master. An antagonism is thus present within the guild as it is in the manor, but it is not as strictly class-based nor as obvious in its brutality:
The journeymen and apprentices were organised in each craft as it best suited the interests of the masters. The patriarchal relationship existing between them and their masters gave the latter a double power – on the one hand because of their influence on the whole life of the journeymen, and on the other because, for the journeymen who worked with the same master, it was a real bond which held them together against the journeymen of other masters and separated them from these. And finally, the journeymen were bound to the existing order by their simple interests in becoming masters themselves. (177)

There is something that we should discern here, as it bears upon our preoccupation with *causa efficiens* and *causa finalis*. In contrast to the bourgeoisie that would later follow, the medieval guild represents a sort of union between production and commerce. Of course, the two are still in tension with one another, but what is striking is that each member of the guild “…had to be versed in a whole round of tasks, had to be able to make everything that was to be made with his tools” (178). The owner of each productive workshop, owing to their skill in their trade, participated in the generation of their own livelihood.

Hence, despite the fact that the fissure between *causa finalis* and *causa efficiens* has grown in conjunction with the advancement of the means, forces, and relations of production, total separation is still not at hand. Because the urban guildsmen are still involved in the production of the commodities they offer for sale, and because the serfs remain more or less isolated to their lords’ manors (thereby not having access to the market), the schism is yet again delayed. Dasein and its self and world-understanding are still rooted in the context of tradition, though these roots continue to shrink with each passing year. And there is no clearer glimpse of this coming rootlessness than in the provenance of a certain class of people whose function is not to produce, but to manage and sell the labor-power of others:
The next extension of the division of labour was the separation of production and commerce, the formation of a special class of merchants; a separation which, in the towns bequeathed by a former period, had been handed down…and which very soon appeared in the newly formed ones. (178)

This collective is none other than the infamous bourgeoisie, though they are still very small and weak. The arrival of the bourgeoisie on the world stage sounds out the death rattle of feudalism.

§20. Mercantilism and Manufactures

Though capitalism – meaning that free-market system which takes private property, commodity production, and the struggle of proletariat and bourgeoisie as its essential features – came into being in roughly the 14th century, it has expressed itself in three forms as of the present moment: mercantile, industrial, and finance. The former of these continued from about the time of the European Renaissance to the Industrial Revolution. Industrial capitalism, its time of birth being somewhat obvious owing to its name, can be said, very approximately, to have ended in the mid-20th century or so – at least for the West. Finance capitalism is thus the variant under which we live. Following Marx, the former two are the only ones we will address explicitly (at least until we come to Detroit).

As has been the case with the prior transitions from stage to stage of history, the forces, relations, and means of production undergo a revolutionizing: the comparatively limited and simplistic productive capacity of the guild, unable to respond to the enormous pressures of now-global demand, is gradually replaced by great corporate manufactures (as of now only barely industrializing). Marx comments:

The immediate consequence of the division of labour between the various towns was the use of manufactures, branches of production which had outgrown the guild-system.
Manufactures first flourished, in Italy and later in Flanders, under the historical premise of commerce with foreign nations. In other countries, England and France for example, manufactures were at first confined to the home market…manufactures depend on an already advanced concentration of population, particularly in the countryside, and of capital, which began to accumulate in the hands of individuals, partly in the guilds in spite of the guild regulations, partly among the merchants. ("The German Ideology" 180)

Moreover, whereas feudalism was marked by an emphasis on immovable capital, e.g., the manor of the lord or the workshop of the guild master, mercantile capitalism is, more than anything else, fixated on trade. Of course, such a dependence on trade also fosters a need to control it, and such control was determined via the struggle for great intracontinental and transcontinental shipping lanes. Whereas, to paraphrase Marx, Rome never became more than a city due to its lack of material power over its subjects, here the political power of a nation fuses with its productive capacity:

With the advent of manufactures, the various nations entered into a competitive relationship, the struggle for trade, which was fought out in wars, protective duties and prohibitions, whereas earlier, the nations, insofar as they were connected at all, had carried on an inoffensive exchange with each other. Trade had from now on a political significance. (181)

Socially, the birth of capitalism carries with it a plethora of consequences. We gleaned from our time with Cleopatra and the feudal lords and peasants that, though intercourse (meaning economic dependence) between peoples is endemic to all forms of material production, what changes between each is to what extent. Whereas the Egyptian Queen was, at most, reliant on the sourcing of lapis lazuli from Bactria, now, under mercantile capitalism, an English aristocrat in London is granted the ability to enjoy a cigar whose leaves were cultivated in Cuba. The world market gradually comes into view. All the skill of the journeyman and apprentice cannot compete against
legions of barely compensated “unskilled” proletarians. The feudal social order slowly falls victim to the march of history:

With the advent of manufacture the relationship between worker and employer changed. In the guilds the patriarchal relationship between journeyman and master continued to exist; in manufacture its place was taken by the monetary relation between worker and capitalist – a relationship which in the countryside and in small towns retained a patriarchal tinge, but in the larger, the real manufacturing towns, quite early lost almost all patriarchal complexion. (182)

In response to increased demand and globalization, the division of labor grows once more in specialization and multiplicity – and now, such specialization and multiplicity have outgrown the need for human eyes and limbs. Their labor is now outsourced to great machines, able to work much faster, more efficiently, and far longer than any human being. Such machines entice the bourgeoisie like nothing else, as the ideal worker is one that does not need to rest, or be paid, fed, housed, or clothed. The relative sophistication of the artisans of the feudal era is no longer found, as industry casts all of human society into the great Marxist dichotomy of proletariat and bourgeoisie; as part of the former, a great productive mass whose role diminishes as alienated automation progresses; as part of the latter, their employers, landlords, creditors, and so on.

Industrial capitalism has come into the world, and this is where Dasein enters the void. But rather than looking to Heidegger to explain for us once more how such alienation has come about, let us stay with Marx just a while longer:

[Big industry] forced all individuals to strain their energy to the utmost. It destroyed as far as possible ideology, religion, morality, etc., and where it could not do this, made them into a palpable lie. It produced world history for the first time, insofar as it made all civilised
nations and every individual member of them dependent for the satisfaction of their wants on the whole world, thus destroying the former natural exclusiveness of separate nations. It made natural science subservient to capital and took from the division of labour the last semblance of its natural character. It destroyed natural growth in general, as far as this is possible while labour exists, and resolved all natural relationships into money relationships… [Its first premise] was the automatic system. (‘Manifesto of the Communist Party’ 185)

To repeat ourselves: even God finds a price. Following Benjamin, with the advent of mass production, the aura is lost from the original object. Nothing orients Dasein in the world any longer, and capitalism rushes to fill this void.

So, to summarize: though the sundering of *causa efficiens* and *causa finalis* finds its prerequisites long before the arrival of industrial capitalism, it is only with the advent of mass production that the sundering is complete. As the forces, means, and relations of production are intensified and revolutionized in accordance with advances in productive technology, Dasein wanders further and further from its historically-derived self and world-knowledge. This self and world-knowledge is itself gathered from a multitude of sources of intelligibility that, like the means, forces, and relations of production, are historically sensitive. Before the birth of industrial mass production, these sources of intelligibility – being the tool, the sign, the artwork, language, and *Das Man* – look to history when they speak to Dasein. They are as the shoes of the peasant, revealing Being to Dasein. When industrial mass production appears, however, the connection between these sources and history is liquidated. Capitalism takes advantage of this liquidation, and rushes to fill the vacuum. Dasein, now reeling and disoriented from a radical shift in its self and world-understanding, has no recourse but to view itself and its companions as beings *in* and *of*
capitalism. The world is no longer the world – it is a storehouse of calculable and exploitable energies. Dasein is no longer Dasein, but a laborer, itself a fetishized commodity. The gradual separation between \textit{causa efficiens} and \textit{causa finalis} is thus, at the risk of speaking too forcefully, the basis for the history of alienation in a Heideggerian Marxism.
Fig. 11: Laurence Stephen Lowry – *A Manufacturing Town* – 1922

But what is this alienation, as originally envisioned by Marx? I have written that part of the work of this second chapter is to remedy what I view as a flaw in Marx, i.e., his theory of alienation. We have heretofore provided the remedy through our concept of being-in-capital, but we have not yet completed our diagnosis of the malady, and we cannot rationally have one without the other. Therefore, we must turn to Marx’s most extended analysis of alienation (Verfremdung) as such: “The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844.”

As we prepared ourselves for “The German Ideology” with an outright declaration of the general patterns of Marxist historical materialism, we must do the same for the “Manuscripts.” Especially, we should clarify here that the philosophical basis for the alienation Marx speaks of in the “Manuscripts” is markedly dissimilar to the alienation Heidegger describes in Being and Time. This is because, where Heidegger employs a novel variant of phenomenology to relay the structure and experience of Dasein’s being-in-the-world, Marx instead works from the method of his grandest philosophical influence, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel: more specifically, his dialectic. We will not dive into the complexities of the dialectic, as doing so would (again) blur the lines between a thesis and a dissertation. This being said, there is one feature of Marx’s appropriation of the dialectic that we must make apparent if we are to grasp the “Manuscripts” at all.

In truth, we have already mentioned it. During our piecing-together of being-in-capital, we noted that Marx differs from Heidegger in one very significant respect, i.e., for Marx, the human being is not Dasein, but homo faber. This “essence,” of the human, Marx writes, consists in his ability to create, to produce:

Men can be distinguished from animals by consciousness, by religion or anything else you like. They themselves begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin
to produce their means of subsistence, a step which is conditioned by their physical organisation. By producing their means of subsistence men are indirectly producing their actual material life. (“The German Ideology” 150)

Marx’s specific term for this essence is species-being, and it is, to speak very generally, what is alienated from humanity through labor that is neither self-directed nor self-governed. Each proletarian, whose necessary activity in capitalist society is to sell his power as a laborer in order to live, is thereby alienated from himself:

But the exercise of labour power, labour, is the worker’s own life-activity, the manifestation of his own life. And this life-activity he sells to another person in order to secure the necessary means of subsistence...He does not even reckon labour as part of his life, it is rather a sacrifice of his life. It is a commodity which he has made over to another. Hence, also, the product of his activity is not the object of his activity. What he produces for himself is not the silk that he weaves, nor the gold that he draws from the mine, not the palace that he builds. What he produces for himself is wages, and silk, gold, palace resolve themselves for him into a definite quantity of the means of subsistence, perhaps into a cotton jacket, some copper coins and a lodging in a cellar. And the worker, who for twelve hours weaves, spins, drills turns, builds, shovels, breaks stones, carries loads, etc. – does he consider this twelve hours’ weaving, spinning, drilling, turning, building, shovelling, stone breaking as a manifestation of his life, as life? On the contrary, life begins for him where this activity ceases, at table, in the public house, in bed. (“Wage Labour and Capital” 204-205)

The alienated worker thus never enjoys the fruits of his own labor, instead being forced, under threat of poverty and death, to relinquish his life for the sake of producing the life of others. He receives a meager compensation, most of which is spent on the most basic necessities for existence,
e.g., food, housing, water, electricity. The modern proletarian endures some 40 years of this, at minimum.

But what is returned to the human being at the end of history, for Marx, is this species-being. Communism is meant to embody the real, material resolution of all the contradictions that have defined the organization of human society thus far, and more than this, it is the end of alienation. It is the final reconciliation between the beautiful and remarkable potentiality of the human being and the suffocation of it via alienated labor:

…while in communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd, or critic.” (“The German Ideology” 160)

Species-being is thus the assumption that underlies the whole of the “Manuscripts,” and the Marxist concept of alienation cannot be comprehended without it.

But species-being does not suffice if we are to totally understand the nature of alienation. It is, to me, an overly abstract and metaphysically leaden manner of grasping alienated subjectivity, described in much the same way a physicist describes the movement of the cosmos than explored in its immanence. That is why we have chosen to argue for this new concept of being-in-capital. Moreover, the method of Daseinsanalyse Heidegger has supplied to us in the works we have investigated has, as we have said, allowed us to structure the derivation of Dasein’s self and world-understanding according to five sources of intelligibility: the tool, the sign, the artwork, language,
and *Das Man*. The limiting of the sources to only these five is a practical move on my part, as Dasein is infinitely more complex than to ground its identity on only five entities.

So, we return to them in full. The very last task that remains for us in this chapter is to demonstrate how these five sources of intelligibility appear *in* capitalism, and how they consequently determine the nature of Dasein’s self and world-understanding. We do this by navigating through five corresponding Heideggerian *Daseinsanalysen*. Accompanying (and at times contrasting) these will be the four types of alienation that Marx, working from his notion of species-being, detailed in the “The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844.” Finally, we will close by looking to Detroit.

§22. Dasein I & Alienated Product

This Dasein is a quite poor one. Not so poor as to be homeless or entirely isolated – she has a steady job at a *maquiladora* in Mexico, where she has been tasked with putting together respirator masks, to be used later in American hospitals. At home, she has three small children waiting for her. Her husband works at a nearby automotive shop. Their income, when combined, allows them to get by – from paycheck to paycheck, at least. Their basic necessities are met, but always tenuously, uncertainly. Because of this, she experiences a strange sort of anxious boredom in her everyday life. At least partially, this is because her weekly routine is so monotonous. From Monday to Friday, and sometimes Saturday, her day is taken up with shifts at the plant. Sunday is the only time she is able to “rest,” though she preoccupies herself with providing for her family then.

She wishes that she could spend more time with those that matter to her, but there is no necessity as powerful as economic necessity. She accepts this, although it is not as if she had much of a choice in doing so. In response, she dutifully wakes each weekday morning at five (and
sometimes on Saturdays), readying herself and making sure to leave breakfast prepared for her children. Upon arriving to the manufacturing plant and clocking in, she dons the usual hairnet, facemask, and protective apron. Taking up at her usual post, she greets 19 of her other coworkers – all 20 of them involved in the production of a single respirator mask. She indicates to her supervisor that she is ready to work, and the engine of the assembly line groans. Scattered parts of silicone and surgical steel begin their crawl, and it will not end until some 10 hours later.

Some hours in, to distract herself, she recalls certain moments in her childhood. Those activities for which we all have some degree of talent tend to reveal themselves during childhood, and her talent was drawing. She silently laments that she never had the opportunity to pursue it. If she had, she wonders to herself, she would have created great artworks that, more than anything, would have given her a voice. She would have spoken through these artworks, and those with ears to listen would have heard her.

Translated into philosophical terms, the dolorous position of our maquiladora worker is analogous to the silversmith’s: we can imagine him expressing a similar lament once he has been replaced by machines that have no Being of their own or, in truth, any concern for it. This form of alienation – that of the worker from the product of their labor – is, in a certain manner, the form of alienation most central to being-in-capital. It also corresponds most directly to Dasein’s self and world-understanding as derived from the tool, through the phenomenological faculty of Zuhandenheit. Though, by now, many pages separate us from our initial investigation of alētheia and Zuhandenheit, their relation has not changed. We uncover the world practically, materially, when we work on or endeavor to create something. Zuhandenheit is the phenomenological mode Dasein enters into when it produces something, anything, and as we read in “The Question Concerning
Technology,” this production, embodied in the four causes, constitutes an imparting of Being into the object.

This is what we mean when we say that this maquiladora worker speaks through the object. A drawing of hers represents a *poiēsis*, a bringing-to-presence, of only something she could have ever said, but the mass capitalist industrialization that has reduced her to the status of one machine among many does not allow her this. Instead, it stifles her voice:

The worker becomes all the poorer the more wealth he produces, the more his production increases in power and range. The worker becomes an ever-cheaper commodity the more commodities he creates. With the *increasing value* of the world of things proceeds in direct proportion the *devaluation* of the world of men. Labour produces not only commodities; it produces itself and the worker as a *commodity* – and does so in the proportion in which it produces commodities generally. This fact expresses merely that the object which labour produces – labour’s product – confronts it as *something alien*, as a *power independent* of the producer. The product of labour is labour which has been congealed in an object, which has become material: it is the *objectification* of labour. ("The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844" 72)

Dasein injects its Being into the tools that it takes into its hands, but this Being, under capitalism, is snuffed out. She is not allowed her role as *causa efficiens*. It, and she, fall prey to the liquidation that comes to characterize being-in-capital. The world that Dasein makes, through the application of its own labor, is thus perceived as, as Marx writes, an alien power – a power that is not known as historical, but falsely grasped as eternal.

Compounding this is the proliferation of the sign that is so prominent in advanced capitalist societies. Each day, this Dasein is bombarded with a great plague of advertisements, every one of
them promising her some desired quality (provided she can afford it). The advertisement is indeed a fantastic example of a phenomenological sign, but at the same time, it is too simplistic to adequately communicate just how deeply being-in-capital is ingrained into Dasein today. We spoke of the sign as *announcing* something to Dasein, as providing it with a series of signposts with which to orient itself along one path or another – and even on a monotonous factory floor, there are plenty. Our Dasein straightens and works a little harder whenever she spots one of her managers walking by, their suit and tie distinguishing them from the simple garments of her and her coworkers.

§23. Dasein II & Alienated Production

Let us now continue onward to another Dasein, quite unlike our first. We are no longer in a Mexican *maquiladora*, but in the city of Prague, back when it still belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. At this moment in history, the city finds itself on the precipice of a great social and economic upheaval, like most of Europe. Industrialization has now started to crawl into all aspects of Austro-Hungarian society, and with it, bureaucratization. In the city’s old center, our second Dasein, a young man, busies himself with the daily toil of an insurance investigator. He freely admits to himself, along with his family and friends, that he very much dislikes his occupation. In truth, it is really only that kind of employment sought out so that one can pay the bills. So, to feel as if he is actually living, this Dasein occupies his nights and free time in general with the writing-out of a series of strange, surrealistic short stories, in which the protagonists tend to find themselves lost in great bureaucratic mazes.

He knows for a fact that only he, only his imagination, could have birthed these stories. Much like the maquiladora worker, thinking of her drawings half a world away and a century in the future, his creativity, embodied in the production of these writings, allow him an expression of
his unique historical Being. Not so when he is in the mire of the insurance company, neck-deep in contracts and legal texts. The production that occurs here could be performed by anyone else, and this, indeed, is the second way in which the worker is estranged – from the act of production itself:

[this labor] does not belong to his essential being; that in his work, therefore, he does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind. The worker therefore only feels himself outside his work, and in his work feels outside himself. He is at home when he is not working, and when he is working he is not at home. (“The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844” 74)

There is no dignity to the repetitiveness and soullessness of his work at the company. He is not at home in this labor, as he is when he is penning his stories. Nevertheless, this imposed-upon labor appears as a necessity from the point of view of this Dasein, whose Being is routinely covered over by such tasks. After all, he has to pay his bills. The company does not preoccupy himself with his Being either, being only concerned with the matrices of efficiency, productivity, and profit.

This form of alienation harmonizes most readily with the artwork, as another source of intelligibility. “The Origin of the Work of Art” characterized the wrinkled shoes of the peasant woman as being indicative of her unique Being – and the same holds for the stories of this unnamed author, so concerned with metamorphoses and penal colonies. When we read his writings, we come to know him, come to know his world, his individual configuration of history, society, culture, of Being. So, it is the standardization and mechanization of production that no longer speaks to the Being of Dasein, and no longer permits it to speak through it either. The artwork, whose creation is gradually colonized by marketing executives, producers, publishers, and so on, is no longer a conduit of Being. It is a conduit of capital.
§24. Dasein III & Alienation from Others

Our third Dasein is a young woman, employed at a small tech company founded only a few years ago in San Francisco, California. As is so common with corporations that aim to exude an air of anything but exploitation (despite that being exactly what they do), this particular one insists on fomenting a culture of familiarity between its employees. The whole corporate structure, from the lowliest technician to the owner, is therefore cast into some sort of perverse remaking of the nuclear family. Corporate social events are a regular feature, and the offices themselves have been remodeled. The cubicle is now an artifact of an antiquated past. Though desks are still present, our Dasein, when sitting at her computer, is in the midst of a sea of faces, all of which have a clear line of sight to one another. At one corner of the office is a space for small lunches and coffee breaks, and at the other, even piles of well-worn beanbags, meant to convince one that work does not have to be work.

But the most apparent apprehension of this Dasein-not-as-Dasein comes in the form of language. The higher-level managers and executives always put forward a great effort to grasp each member of the company as a member of the family, and any attempt at discussing the matter of pay, or of working hours, is seen as disruptive to the family. The corporate memos reflect this, always making sure to remind everyone of the need for cooperation, for deference. Of course, this is all nominal: it is intrinsic to being-in-capital that this Dasein stands in opposition to others. Though our startup employee is addressed by her coworkers (and addresses them in turn) with casual amicability, she is engaged in an antagonism with them. Her levels of productivity, efficiency, and profit generation are constantly under the gaze of her supervisors, and her fellow workers stand ready to take her place should she be deemed unsatisfactory and fired from her post. It is not that being-in-capital somehow corrupts these Dasein morally; rather, it pressures them
materially into viewing one another as a competitor, an adversary. Other Dasein are no longer Dasein, with their own potentialities of Being. They are obstacles in our pursuit of higher wages, prestigious promotions, and gainful employment:

If the worker’s activity is a torment to him, to another it must be delight and his life’s joy…If his own activity is to him an unfree activity, then he is treating it as activity performed in the service, under the dominion, the coercion and the yoke of another man. (“The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844” 78)

The bonds of community dissolve. For Marx, we stand in opposition to these others; for Heidegger, we lose ourselves to them. We have argued that being-in-capital is distinguished by the fact that the commodity, inscribed with the phenomenology of capitalism, speaks to no one at all. We see this repeated here – in the dissemination of labor that is neither freely chosen nor addressed to each Dasein’s potentiality, Dasein loses itself to the they. Our examination of being-in-capital has, at last, come to an end.
Fig. 12: Mariners’ Church & Renaissance Center – Edgar M. Llamas – Detroit, MI – 2019
Chapter 3 – Detroit

§25. The Motor City

This would be an awfully sour note to end the thesis on. Heidegger already tends to be parodied as a philosopher of doom and gloom, and Marx as one of revolutionary rage and violence. If we simply threw our hands up in surrender now, we might as well have never started the work, given that its ultimate purpose aims toward liberation and not despair. We must remember what we asked at the beginning of all this: “What matters to you?” The entire premise of this thesis flows out of this question. As we have said, while Marxism is unmatched in its ability to describe the historical and economic movements of capital and its predecessors, it is not concerned with what matters to the proletarian – and liberation consists, at least partially, in the recognition and respect of what matters to us. This is why we have come to involve Heidegger, and why we have come to investigate being-in-capital. Our ambitions have been to lay the foundation for a Heideggerian Marxism, a phenomenology of capitalism, and lastly, to provide a remedy for Marx’s weak theory of alienated subjectivity.

Our theoretical exposition of being-in-capital has come to an end. But there is still the matter of how it is seen in a living and (barely) breathing city – one whom, by virtue of its past, is very relevant for our ambitions. Detroit, Michigan was once one of the most prosperous and populated cities in the United States, rivaling other major urban centers like Los Angeles, New York City, and Chicago. But, shortly after the end of World War II, it underwent a change. Employment, once abundant and well-paying, fled to other parts of the world. Social ills that had long plagued the city, such as an immense lack of housing and racial discrimination, intensified. A mass exodus occurred, leaving Detroit severely depopulated. A heart of industry and opportunity decayed into a smattering of abandoned manufacturing plants and crumbling homes.
Neither its past nor its future are simple. Today, it is as if the Detroiter stands at a crossroads, tempted by the Devil on one side, and enticed by the unknown on the other. And the city is full of these little oppositions – small restaurants in Mexicantown teem with life while, only a few blocks away, the ghosts of towering smokestacks, of what was, haunt the earth. High-rise apartment buildings, now gentrified, loom over the city’s center while some of its unhoused wander the streets, looking for whatever means of subsistence they can find. Pictured above, the Renaissance Center, General Motors’ global headquarters, stands impossibly over the very small, very old, and very frail Mariners’ Church. It is as if the edifices themselves are now asking the Detroiter, “What way?” And the answer is not apparent. There is no returning to the past as, in a manner of speaking, capitalism has come and gone. The future remains unknown. The only thing that is left is the reclamation of the present.

Detroit is thus important to this thesis on two grounds: it allows us to see the emergence of everyday being-in-capital more acutely, and it can serve fantastically well as a site for possibly resisting it. How it will be resisted is outside of the scope of this thesis – and not out of practicality either. As a historical community, only Detroiter can answer for themselves what they desire for their future, their present, and for the integration of the past. Much like the prior work we have completed, though, being-in-capital’s presence in Detroit requires preparation.

The key to understanding the relationship of Detroit to capitalism is its history; more specifically, the history of the second half of its 20th century. That will be our first concern, and we will primarily employ sociologist Thomas J. Sugrue’s The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit as our guide to piecing it all together. I should stipulate here that this thesis, being largely concerned with capitalism, has heretofore treated class as the primary determinant element in Dasein’s being-in-the-world. We cannot do the same from here onward. Detroit
was, and remains, a deeply segregated city, and it absolutely cannot be understood as a phenomenon without referring to race at all. And being-in-capital, like capitalism itself, exerts its influence on different Dasein in differing ways.

Upon concluding our recounting of Detroit’s recent history, we will turn to a book written by a native of the city: *Detroit: An American Autopsy* by Charlie LeDuff. The text is similarly laden with historical, economic, and sociological facts (albeit to a lesser extent than Sugrue’s), but we are not interested in it for this. Rather, what it will do for us is permit us a glimpse into the real, concrete methods in which being-in-capital comes to influence, and even reconstitute, Dasein’s interpretation of the world and of itself. Following all this – and following more than a hundred pages of dense philosophical and sociological labor – we return to Heideggerian Marxism as such for a few final words. There are still many questions regarding it that this thesis leaves unanswered, and they must be acknowledged. They may be revisited in a future work.

§26. Panic in Detroit

Detroit is a city of crises – but it was not always so. At the turn of the 20th century, it became home to the three great American automotive manufacturers: Ford, Chrysler, and General Motors, along with other, now-defunct companies like Packard and Hudson. Spurred forward by what would later be termed Fordism, these new industrialists revolutionized Detroit’s landscape, along with the nature of its means, relations, and forces of production. As recounted by Thomas Sugrue: “Factories, shops, and neighborhoods blurred together indistinguishably, enmeshed in a relentless grid of streets and a complex web of train lines. To the casual observer, the design of Detroit seemed anarchic” (18). This anarchy, at least at the time, was one of growth. The originating of a massive automotive industry in the city – and the resultant explosion of employment – drew thousands to it, hoping to make reality their own version of the American Dream. Detroit’s first crisis
came in the Great Depression of 1929, but its turnaround was swift, great, and unexpected. The great global war against fascism, World War II, breathed new life into Detroit. War, more than just requiring the logistics of soldiers and officers, requires the logistics of great machinery and materiel, and the automotive industrialists seized upon the opportunity like no other:

Between 1940 and 1947, manufacturing employment in Detroit increased by 40 percent, a rate surpassed only by Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Chicago. Demand for heavy industrial goods skyrocketed during World War II, and Detroit’s industrialists positioned themselves to take advantage of the defense boom…making metropolitan Detroit one of the birthplaces of the military-industrial complex. Observers christened the city ‘Detroit the Dynamic,’ the ‘arsenal of democracy’ for a war-torn world. Almost overnight, Detroit had gone from one of the most depressed urban areas in the country to a boomtown…The rapid expansion of wartime production drastically reduced unemployment in the city. Between 1940 and 1943, the number of unemployed workers in Detroit fell from 135,000 to a mere 4,000. (Sugrue 19)

The influx of new laborers was both American and non-American, but more importantly, mostly black: “Fewer than 10 percent of Detroit’s population at the outbreak of World War II, African Americans comprised more than a quarter of the city’s residents by 1960” (22). Given the general social climate of the United States at the time – Jim Crow in the South and “casual” racism in the North – these African-Americans came to Detroit *en masse* in a phenomenon referred to as the Great Migration.

Their arrival did not go unnoticed. Detroit took upon the unpleasant (to put it euphemistically) status as a hotbed of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s, and the visible violence of the Klan was accompanied by the subtle violence of structural racism. The new black residents of the city more
or less congregated in the neighborhood called Black Bottom, but when, for lack of space or unsuitable dwellings – both of which would be a recurring problem in Detroit’s history – they tried to move outward into the white areas of the city, they faced the discrimination they looked to escape when they left the South:

White neighborhoods, especially enclaves of working-class homeowners, interpreted the influx of blacks as a threat and began to defend themselves against the newcomers, first by refusing to sell to blacks, then by using force and threats of violence against those who attempted to escape the black sections of the city, and finally by establishing restrictive covenants to assure the homogeneity of neighborhoods. (24)

The covenants, in particular, are especially good at provoking indignation. So deep-seated was the legal enshrinement of racist superiority at this point in the country’s history that Detroit’s black population were left to their own devices, even in the midst of a housing shortage:

More than 80 percent of property in Detroit outside of the inner city (bounded by Grand Boulevard) fell under the scope of racial restrictions…A typical racial covenant stipulated that property along Seebaldt Avenue between Firwood and Beechwood Avenues on Detroit’s near Northwest Side ‘shall not be used or occupied by any person or persons except those of the Caucasian race.’ (45)

And, to make matters worse, Detroit’s city planners were convinced that the ideal parts of the city to raze for the construction of highways were the already-overpopulated black neighborhoods, further displacing the families therein (47). Surely, with this sort of oppression, one cannot blame the city’s African-American population for rioting; neither in 1943 nor in 1967.

This discrimination was not confined to the realtor’s office. Banks and other moneylenders “…systematically refused to lend to blacks who were among the first to move to all-white
neighborhoods or to developers building new homes for blacks near white neighborhoods…blacks found it almost impossible to get conventional home financing” (47). And the factory floor, which promised financial security for its new workers, kept its promise only selectively. The racists that sought to keep black workers out of their neighborhoods for some perceived inferiority, whether moral or intellectual, did the same there: “Race became a proxy for a number of characteristics that [employers] believed would affect the efficiency of a work force and the profitability of a firm. Many employers, basing their decisions on racial stereotypes, assumed that black workers would be unproductive, prone to high absenteeism, and unreliable” (95). In the comparatively rare instances African-Americans were hired, they were often placed into the most undesirable positions, e.g., as janitors, or in those parts of the automotive plants in which the workers regularly risked their lives. They were the last to be hired and the first to be laid off – and so, although all of Detroit’s population, white or black, American or non-American, bore the pain of the city’s deindustrialization, none were subjected to more of its severe effects than its black population.

Detroit’s deindustrialization is generally pointed to by the casually familiar with the city as the reason for its decline. This is more or less accurate, but the mechanism of “deindustrialization,” like any other historical phenomenon, is caused by a number of constituent events and processes. These must be grasped if the city’s decline is to be understood holistically. Sugrue identifies quite a few contributing factors, but they can more or less be reduced down to two general tendencies: corporate decentralization and technological automation. Both can be very easily interpreted as an outpouring of the ever-present capitalist desire to increase his profit margins, but their manifestation has not been the same.

The flight of industrial corporations from Detroit can be said, roughly, to have begun in the 1950s: “In 1950, 56 percent of all automobile employment in the United States was in Michigan;
by 1960, that figure had fallen to 40 percent” (128). And their motivations for leaving the city and setting up elsewhere were far from an act of philanthropy. Rather, “…decentralization was not simply a response to the inexorable demands of the market; it was an outgrowth of the social relations of production itself. Decentralization was an effective means for employers to control increasing labor costs and weaken powerful unions” (128). Detroit, being a center of industrial production, perhaps showcased the struggle between capital and labor better than any other – but, of course, a member of the bourgeoisie, having vast wealth at his disposal, is able to relocate his enterprise much more easily than a proletarian can move elsewhere to find employment. Though the United Auto Workers and Teamsters indeed were powerful, to name only a few of the labor unions active in Detroit at the time, that influence could never have stretched across the entire nation.

Compounding this initial transgression is the arrival of automation. The first offense was committed by those corporations that chose to leave Detroit; the second, by those that remained and sought to replace their workers with machines. The allure of automation for the bourgeoisie is plain. One worker may produce one clock in 20 hours, but a machine can triple or quadruple that speed. And most importantly for the capitalist, it does not need to be repeatedly paid, only purchased, then maintained. Sugrue writes in regard,

Automation offered two major benefits to manufacturers: it promised both to increase output and to reduce labor costs…Before the introduction of automated engine production at Ford’s Cleveland plant, it took 117 workers to produce 154 engine blocks per hour; after automation the same output required a mere 41 workers. (130)

Moreover, much like decentralization, it had the consequence of severely limiting the power of labor in determining its own future and standard of living. Machines do not argue, go on strike, or
damage corporate property as an act of resistance. They only produce, and it is this that further seduces the capitalist to them.

As would be expected by now, Detroit’s black community suffered the worst of automation’s effects. Sugrue offers up the example of one of Ford’s manufacturing plants, located in River Rouge, just south of Detroit itself:

The plant was also the largest employer of blacks in the Detroit area…In 1950, Rouge workers assembled all Ford and Mercury engines; by 1954, Ford had shifted all engine production to the new automated Cleveland plant…Stamping, machine casting, forging, steel production, glassmaking, and dozens of other operations were shifted from the Rouge to new Ford plants throughout the 1950s. As a result, employment at the Rouge fell from 85,000 in 1945, to 54,000 in 1954, to only 30,000 in 1960…Where 950 workers made piston connecting rods at the Rouge, they were replaced by two units of 146 workers each at Cleveland and Dearborn, resulting in a net loss of 804 jobs in the Detroit area. (132-133)

The capitalists that found their fortune in Detroit chose to grow it elsewhere. And what they left in the stead of their wealth became, in essence, a carcass, of a city and of a people. The city’s decline has continued up until the present moment, with the municipal government filing the largest bankruptcy case in American history in 2013 (Davey and Walsh). The tragedy is ongoing – but so many pages ago, we asked the question: “What matters to you?” Now we ask it to the Detroiter.

§27. Inner City Blues

Charlie LeDuff, a native of the city, opens his book *Detroit: An American Autopsy* with the following:

This is a book about living people getting on with the business of surviving in a place that has little use for anyone anymore except those left here. It is about waking up one morning
and being told you are obsolete and not wanting to believe it but knowing it’s true. It is a book about a rough town and a tough people during arguably some of the most historic and cataclysmic years in the American experience. It is a book about family and cops and criminals and factory workers. It is about corrupt politicians and a collapsing newspaper. It is about angry people fighting and crying and snatching hold of one another trying to stay alive.” (LeDuff 11)

The philosophical question that underlies this entire thesis is expressed in this. We have heretofore spoken of capitalism and Heideggerian Marxism and being-in-capital, but what is truly at stake in a city such as Detroit is the contradiction between structure and agency. Though we may accept or deny it, our agency, our potentiality-of-being-a-self, is limited and determined by great powers that appear to stand over against us. And these structures themselves, almost paradoxically, are created by nothing other than human agency.

But, we now wonder, how does a people react when the structures they threw their Being into have left them? What is left to be done when the only things that remain are the corpses of prosperity and joy, suffusing the air with a miasma of poverty, addiction, disease, and crime? This is why we look to LeDuff’s book. It is one thing to describe the phenomenological structures of the everyday lived experience of Dasein, and valuable work indeed. But these structures do not take flight, in all their fullness and philosophical potency, until they are filled with historical, social, and phenomenological content. Dasein – and the proletarian – find life when they become a Dasein and a proletarian, caught in the river of the world, struggling against its currents.

Though this thesis has steadily descended from the peaks of philosophical theory, it is Detroit: An American Autopsy that, at last, permits us to glimpse the human refuse of capitalism, and its continued dominion over them via being-in-capital. The first of these glimpses comes in the
form of LeDuff’s encounter with Mike Nevin, “a balls-out, high-energy guy with a potato nose and an outrageous mullet hairdo – short in the front, party in the back” (48). Nevin, noticing LeDuff’s presence, spoke of his situation to the journalist:

‘In this town, arson is off the hook. Thousands of them a year, bro. In Detroit, it’s so fucking poor that fire is cheaper than a movie. A can of gas is three-fifty and a movie is eight bucks, and there aren’t any movie theaters left in Detroit, so fuck it. They burn the empty house next door and they sit on the fucking porch with a forty, and they’re barbecuing and laughing ‘cause it’s fucking entertainment. It’s unbelievable. And the old lady living next door, she don’t have insurance, and her house goes up in flames and she’s homeless and another fucking block dies.’ (49)

Recall that being-in-capital constitutes a change in Dasein’s self and world-understanding. There is a mode of being-in-the-world that is caused by and unique to capitalism, and this mode is structurally delimited and phenomenologically experienced. We see an instance of it here. In a city that has not been left starved and beaten by repeated exoduses of both capital and human beings, no one bothers to burn a house out of a need for entertainment. For warmth, maybe, but then one must ask why it would be more helpful to burn a shelter than stay inside it. Again, LeDuff has an answer:

A square mile of industrial decay, scavengers had descended upon [the abandoned Packard plant], ushering in a marathon game of cat and mouse. The scavengers, looking for metal to sell at the scrap yard, light a section of the building on fire. After the firemen dutifully extinguish the blaze, the scavengers return to help themselves to the neatly exposed girders and I-beams that form the skeleton of the structure. (51)

Nevin replies, dejectedly, “It’s like we work for the fucking scrappers” (52).
Another example involves LeDuff’s own brother, Billy, who was employed at a machine shop at the time the book was written. Some time before, he had been working at Quicken Loans, handling mortgages and making a comfortable amount of money. LeDuff describes his brother as “a semi-brilliant guy, great with numbers,” but the real estate crash of 2008 displaced him. (88). At the mercy of great macroeconomic forces like the millions of laborers that preceded him, Billy saw his wealth evaporate. And this evaporation, in the manner it always forces the disenfranchised to get creative in the most tragic ways possible, forced him as well: “There was no health care offered here. What constituted a dental plan came from a toolbox. That is, my brother attempted to take out an abscessed molar with a pair of pliers. The molar snapped below the gum line” (89).

The third iteration of being-in-capital happens a few days later after LeDuff’s visit to his brother Billy. Frankie, another of LeDuff’s siblings, calls him late at night. Frankie liked to spend his time in Detroit exploring its many abandoned buildings, not to scavenge, but to document what is left when someone leaves. That night, at the Roosevelt Warehouse on 14th and Marantette, Frankie found a frozen body at the bottom of an elevator shaft; feet up, barely visible (121). Charlie calls the Detroit Police Department, and – quite lazily – they send out a patrol car. The situation snowballs, growing in both intensity and absurdity, until the fire department arrives, armed with chainsaws to free this John Doe from his icy prison. As LeDuff and his brother exit the office of The Detroit News later that night, “A tall British cameraman could only laugh at the attention the frozen man was now getting. ‘The people actually alive in this city can’t get an ambulance to show up and Mr. Freeze down there has half the fire department helping him’” (126). The slovenliness and frigidity which with the police – over the course of “two days and five phone calls” – responded to the dead man’s body led LeDuff to write an article about him, but more specifically, about the callousness with which a human being’s death was treated (127). LeDuff speaks:
Bailouts, credit-default swaps, international trade blocs. These things were too amorphous, too complex to get your mind around. But a human being left in a crumbling elevator shaft. Everyone could understand that. Had it reached the point of anarchy? a [sic] reporter from Barcelona asked me by telephone. Funny things happen when you run out of money, I told her. (128-129)

“Funny things” indeed. Although what seems most reprehensible about a man forgotten at the bottom of an elevator shaft is that it belies a sense of resignation, of defeat. The inanity of such a death, recognized as such anywhere else, appears to be taken as normal in Detroit. And when it is not, it is looked upon as a piece of sensationalistic entertainment, same as cheap pornography or an abandoned home, going up in flames.

The last instance of being-in-capital we will grapple with from Detroit: An American Autopsy concerns a 15-year-old girl named Martha Barnett. In a truly tragic case of a gangland hit gone wrong, she was killed in a drive-by shooting by someone named DeAndre Woolfolk. She – nor anyone else in the car – were Woolfolk’s target, but the car she rode in was almost identical to that of the mark’s (201-202). LeDuff was told Martha Barnett’s story by a Detroit detective, and out of journalistic interest, he visited her grandmother, also named Martha. He asked her about her granddaughter, and she told him about her funeral:

‘So many people was [sic] there, so many young people. I didn’t know all those young people loved so much. Well, in the middle of the funeral, during the songs, the funeral director stopped the music right there in the middle of the service, and he brought me in the back room and was asking how I was gonna pay for it. I didn’t rightly know. I should have passed the hat right there. Everybody would have given, praise God. But I didn’t pass
the hat. So I had her cremated. I had to borrow and beg just to do that. Even her father chipped in.’ (208)

At the risk of sounding less like a stereotypically disinterested academic, if such is the sort of society we endure – a society in which a grieving grandmother is coldly asked how she’ll pay for her granddaughter’s funeral, *in the middle of it* – then there is little about it worth saving.

This is the effect of being-in-capital. Deprived of the material means to a full, joyful, healthy life, a few arsonists entertain themselves by lighting an empty house on fire. Frankie LeDuff, lacking health insurance, botches a tooth extraction with a pair of pliers, as if he were a deformed screw stuck in the machines at his shop. Johnnie Lewis Redding, unceremoniously dead at the bottom of an elevator shaft, annoys the police into retrieving his body (138). Martha Barnett, grandmother, is given no choice but to cremate Martha Barnett, granddaughter – for a reason as compelling as *cost*.

This is the world that being-in-capital reveals to Dasein. This is the void. Actuated through the commodity and expressed in the voice of *Das Man*, it causes Dasein to address itself, other Dasein, and the world as a rent to be charged, a price to be paid, a check to be cashed. The simple joy of seeing things and people as what they *are* dissolves, falling prey to capitalist-technological enframing, as the woodsman fell prey in “The Question Concerning Technology.” We appear to be caught in being-in-capital’s web, without any sort of outstretched hand to save us from its encroaching fangs. And this web is enmeshed with the structure and rhythm of our everyday lives. Imagining the end of the world is easier than imagining an alternative. But perhaps it does not need to be imagined – only made reality. History, as the product of all humanity, has marched on, regardless of the machinations of popes, presidents, emperors, and all civilizations. And this world seems invincible to us. But, then again, “So did the divine right of kings.” (Le Guin)
§28. The Question of Heideggerian Marxism

We are finished – or, at least, finished for the time being. The only remnant of work we have left now is to explicitly address some of the themes and questions that surround this thesis; some of which have been intentionally avoided, some of which have not. In the introduction, I mentioned that a fully developed Heideggerian Marxism has not yet been born. Its history is a long and difficult one, and not one that can be dispensed with easily. More than only struggling with reconciling Karl Marx and Martin Heidegger, it also requires that one take a definitive position upon such concepts as humanism and anti-humanism, the value of industrial progress versus ecological preservation, and so on. Dedicating time to these questions would have certainly turned a thesis into a dissertation, to reference a bit of a running joke over the last 116 pages.

Perhaps the gravest matter is Heidegger’s political history. The specter of communism haunts Europe, but the specter of Nazism may – or may not, depending on who one asks – haunt *Being and Time* and the rest of the Heideggerian canon. This is in itself a very contentious point of debate within academic philosophy, but, in the writing of this thesis, I have decided to interpret Heidegger’s works as separate from his flirtation with fascism. To me, certain parts appear so potentially liberatory as to be nearly anarchistic. This being said, such a position must be historically and philosophically justified if Heideggerian Marxism is to be fully developed.

Our ambitions, as we said, were threefold: to argue for the possibility of a Heideggerian Marxism, to provide a stronger alternative to Marx’s theory of alienated species-being, and to create the bedrock for a larger theory of subjectivity. This last endeavor – while being the most philosophically fruitful, in my opinion – is also the most complex. Therefore, being-in-capital was (and is currently not) intended to supply a complete framework through which to comprehend Dasein’s self and world-understanding. The five sources of intelligibility are, as stated, not nearly
enough to complete such a task. Dasein, the being for which its Being is an issue, is infinitely more complex than only five sources. So, a robust theory of subjectivity lies far beyond only these 117 pages.

Relating to this possible theory of subjectivity is the matter of existential authenticity and inauthenticity. Some readers may recall that, in Chapter 1, I made free use of such terms. This is due to the fact that Heidegger employs them. In truth, I have deliberately avoided making a definitive statement on the problem of existential authenticity as it relates to being-in-capital. This is because doing so, in my opinion, veers a little too closely to arbitrarily defining some experiences as “false” and others as “true.”

The very last point concerns the motivation behind this thesis: liberation. Though I have not said it as explicitly as possible, the attentive reader will have almost certainly surmised by now that this work is deeply anti-capitalist. The reason for this is because capitalism, despite being touted as the greatest and most productive period of human history by its supporters, has come at a cost – a cost that is rarely acknowledged, because we are rarely made to acknowledge it. Especially here in the West, it is all too easy to cover over the price paid in blood with the price paid in dollars. Liberation consists at least partially in the recognition and respect of what matters to us. But capitalism is only concerned with what matters to the wealthy, the bourgeois. It resolves historical Being into the void.

As Charlie LeDuff has written, “…the Detroiter may be the most important American there is because no one knows better than he that we’re all standing at the edge of the shaft” (7). His situation seems hopeless – but he has not yet jumped. Neither have we. And so, the final question comes to light: will we?
Fig. 13: René Magritte – *The Lovers II* – 1928
Bibliography


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Curriculum Vita

Edgar M. Llamas is a native of El Paso, Texas. After spending his adolescence becoming familiar with the works of the existentialists, he began his philosophical studies at the University of Texas at El Paso in 2013. He matriculated in 2018 with a minor in communication. The same year, he enrolled in the university’s Master of Arts program, again in philosophy. In addition to working as a teaching assistant since then, he has presented his work at two conferences: “Image-Subject: The Dissolution of Liberal Hyperreality and Its Resulting Potential” at the University of New Mexico, and “Dwelling and Nothingness: On the Reclaiming of Being in a Post-Industrial City” at the University of Detroit Mercy. His academic interests generally lie in the fields of phenomenology, critical theory, and semiotics. He hopes to continue developing these in the pursuit of a doctoral degree. As of April 2021, he was celebrating the completion of his master’s thesis.