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TIME AND MONEY
PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION AND THE CRITIQUE OF CAPITAL

From now on every philosopher must be a theologian, that is, must have faith, and every theologian must be a philosopher, that is, must seek cognition; they must join forces to achieve the interpretation of Being, the one true, living and whole interpretation.

*Margarete Susman*¹

The highly speculative argument I want to follow in this paper is that religion is not a matter of metaphysics, but of politics. Not just in the sense that it is an alternative, or merely an addition, to the other political discourses of our time that are secular, but that capitalism itself is a religion, since it has its own rituals, values and pieties. For this reason alone, it cannot be dislodged by democratic thought, however important its insights are, because it has, and will increasingly make, government irrelevant. The only answer to capital is life. Only to the extent that religion redeems life does it offer us a new way of thinking. But how are we to oppose life to capital? Capital offers us an illusion of a future without end which in reality is the end of the future. Against this nihilism of time, I contrast a messianic temporality whose future is the interruption of the present, rather than its endless repetition.

I have organised this paper into four parts: The first section describes the familiar Marxist immanent critique of capital, and shows that what is at the heart of this critique is time: capital essentially robs us of our time by inventing a new temporal myth, which is nothing less than a secular redemption that promises all and gives nothing. In the second section, I then investigate this mythology more deeply through Guy Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle*. In the third, I engage with Philip Goodchild's subtle and powerful analysis of the role and function of money in capital and its creation of a new piety in his book *Capitalism and Religion*. Finally, I conclude with a comparison of this critique of capital with Rosenzweig's description of redemption in *The Star of Redemption*, where eternity is experienced *in* rather than *outside* of time.

a). Marx's Immanent Critique of Capital

Traditionally, philosophy of religion treats God as though it were an object possessing attributes that could prove or not prove its existence. Since Kant, God has been translated from an object to an idea. It expresses an ethical teleology of human existence. Modern atheism is not about whether God

¹Susman, Margarete. "Franz Rosenzweig *The Star of Redemption* (A Review)." *Franz Rosenzweig's 'The New Thinking'*. Edited and Translated from the German by A. Udoff and B. E. Galli. Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1999. 141.

exists or not as an object, but whether one needs this idea in order to live. Nowhere, for example, in Nietzsche's writings, does he waste one word on the obsolete dispute about whether we can prove God's existence. What matters to him are actual religions, Judaism and Christianity, for example, and whether these beliefs say 'no' or 'yes' to life. Similar to Feuerbach and Freud, Nietzsche argues that religious beliefs are merely projections of hidden desires and wishes, which the self does not know. The aim of the understanding of religion is to unmask this murky and opaque realm which has concealed itself through the worthy statements (or some times not so worthy) of religious believers. All of this is known by us, but is there another way of understanding religious belief not as a projection but as an introjection? The projection thesis says that religious belief is merely the externalisation of the hidden world of the subject, but could not the arrow go the other way around? Could what people say about the word God be a response to their experience of reality, rather than just a projection of their inner lives? Could it express something about the world, our relations to other people and things, rather than just a projection of our unconscious repressed desires? Is it possible to conceive of religious belief being on the side of life, rather than against it? Perhaps it offers us a way of speaking about reality in a way that other discourses do not without being a flight into fantasy and the wildest dreams, and it too has its own system of thought and philosophy.

Philosophers have a strange way of speaking of reality, as though it were made up of tables and chairs (medium sized dried goods, I think Austin called it), but our reality today is capital, which is real in the sense that it determines every aspect of our lives. What is at the heart of capital is a certain determination of time, which ensures that it flows in one direction and not another. Why might religious belief be of any interest to us when we consider the nature of time in capital? My only answer to this question is that it offers us a different image of time. Not, to underline my previous point, as a projection of the subject, but as a time in which the subject finds itself. It does not surprise me, again thinking of Walter Benjamin, that he needed his friend Gershom Scholem's studies of Judaism in order to develop a different image of time against capital. What is important is that Scholem did not treat Judaism as a dead object of anthropology, ethnology or sociology, but as a living tradition that still had something to say to us, which could make us think about the world in a different way.

Crisis is not an event which happens to capitalism from the outside, since it has no 'outside'. On the contrary, it is the 'outside' of any society that has existed. As soon as any civilisation comes into contact with capital, it is destroyed and obliterated. Whoever thought that the Incas and Aztecs had any chance? And who now thinks that China is a Communist state? It rips through every society at an alarming speed, destroying all traditions and cultures, so that everything is re-created in its image (if the traditions and culture remain, then they do so only as a parody, as a continual theme park of different cultures mixed together, and they are ultimately commodified - you buy your traditions as part of a 'life-style'). Since capitalism is the outside of every society, it is always in a permanent state of crisis. Crisis is not something that happens to it from the outside, rather it is the crisis, the

'omni-crisis'.² This is why, strictly speaking, there can be no alternative to capitalism, and any 'anti-capitalism' that seeks or hopes for such a means of escape will be doomed to failure, and descend into romanticism and nostalgia, as though the pre-capitalist was something to be celebrated and desired. Marx himself, who is taken by many to be opposed to capitalism, knew this, and reminded his readers again and again, as in the famous opening pages of *The Communist Manifesto*, that we have much to thank capitalism for against the old world, and that any possibility of freedom could only be *within* capitalism, and not outside of it.

If capitalism destroys the traditional forms of power, then this does not mean that it does not exert its own control of life in a different, and perhaps for this very reason, more invidious and insinuating manner, which is even harder to undermine because impossible to confront. The crisis at the heart of capitalism is not between an 'inside' and an 'outside', but the growing interiorisation of capital itself within life. As capital hits the edge of the geographical world and internalises every space within its regime, then the only way that it can go further is inward, and this intensification is inseparable from the institution of its own time structure. The conflict is not between two spaces, one within, and the other without, but between two times, and more specifically two futures, one a projection and the other an introjection. Any displacement of the power, influence and control of capital can only be *immanent* to temporal life, and not through the illusion of an external space, which imagines that some time in the past there was an idyllic community before capital, where individuals were authentic, and which can be reconstructed after capitalism has been defeated. There is nothing in our world that could act as a fixed point or stable image from which we could reconstruct this fabled lost world, since capitalism has turned everything into kitsch and caricature. Even if we could recreate it, the social conditions that once made them possible no longer exist, so that they would soon starve of the oxygen of actuality. What is outside capital is not social in the sense, but what resists it within society, which is life itself. Only from this source can it extract wealth and income, but it cannot engulf and surround it completely, since life, not capital, is reality. Life and capital are not opposed to one another externally. Rather life is the *immanent* cause of capital, even though it miraculously presents itself as the efficient cause of life. It says 'without capital you cannot live', but the truth is that without life, capital would be barren and sterile, and like the vampire without blood, it would soon die and waste away.³

The famous section on machinery in Marx's *Grundrisse*, is a classic example of such an immanent critique of capital.⁴ Capitalism, Marx argues, only reaches

² This phrase is borrowed from Hardt and Negri, see *Empire*. Harvard: Harvard UP, 2001. 197.

³ As Deleuze and Guattari write, 'Machines and agents cling so closely to capital that their very functioning appears to be miraculated by it.' See, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Pref. by Michel Foucault, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane. London: Athlone Press, 1984. 10-11. The metaphor of vampires is Marx's.

⁴ Marx, Karl. *Grundrisse*. Translated with a Forward by Martin Nicolaus. London: Penguin Books, Inc., 1973. 699-712.

its full scale of development when the machine is added to production. At this point, production is no longer just the brute exploitation of labour, but comes under the decisive influence of technology. Rather than machines working for human beings, human beings work for machines. Rather than human beings being creative, innovative and imaginative, it is the machines which are radical and subversive. Yet even in this inversion of the relation of labour to the machine, there is an emancipatory moment. For what the machines make possible is more free-time that capital cannot steal from us. Ultimately what capital robs us of is time. The more time we have to spend in the accumulation of capital, the less time we have for anything else. Being free is nothing less than having time to be free, otherwise freedom is just an idea, and not an actuality. Marx's extraordinary idea is that the more the efficiency of production is placed on the side of the machine (constant capital), the less that labour power (variable capital) needs to be exploited. In this way, labour is freed from the tyranny of the working day, and as capitalism develops it becomes less and less dependent on labour. The conditions for the 'emancipation of labour' are therefore internal and not external to capitalism. The creation of wealth becomes inversely proportional to the amount of labour time which is spent in producing it, and mass industrialised labour is no longer a necessary factor in production.⁵ It is no longer the quantity of time that matters, but the intelligence, creativity and spontaneity of labour producing ideas rather than things. By freeing labour from the tyranny of the production line, the machine eventually liberates it from wage slavery, and thus effects a social transformation that Marx believed would blow the 'material conditions' of society 'sky high'.

To understand why Marx thought that this would necessarily be so, we need to go back to the distinction between the formal and real subsumption of labour under capital as it is described in the appendix to the first volume of *Capital*.⁶ Labour is not an abstract metaphysical definition of what it means to be a human being, which distinguishes it, for example, from the chimpanzee; rather it is an historical notion through and through. There is no such thing as 'labour in itself'. The nature of labour changes as human beings change, and human beings change as it does. The most fundamental shift in the change of labour takes place within capitalism, and the reason for this is that here for the first time labour can no longer be conceived as individual. All labour, even when we think of it as individual, is now forever social. This is the necessary outcome of the capitalist mode of production. The more that it breaks the labour process under Taylorism into discrete productive processes, the more, at the same time, does it collectivise this labour in order to produce the product, which is the final outcome of the process itself. And yet, and this was Marx's great discovery, the purpose of labour within capitalism is not merely to produce thousands of different products or commodities that were never available before, but more importantly to produce surplus value. If we change the example to one that is possibly

⁵As Hardt and Negri write, 'in the expression of its own creative energies, immaterial labor thus seems to provide the potential for a kind of spontaneous and elementary communism.' Hardt, 294.

⁶See, Marx, Karl. *Capital Volume 1*. Introd. by Ernst Mandel, trans. Ben Fowkes. London: Penguin books, 1990. 1019-38.

closer to home to those who are reading this article now, then the purpose of professors is not only to teach students and write papers, they also have to be seen to produce a profit for the university, and no one's life means a damn thing unless they are producing a profit which is worth more than it costs to employ them. We are all eternally in debt to the investment that is paid in order to employ us, and we will never be able to work enough to pay off this debt, because surplus value must always be extracted from our labour.

The forward momentum of capitalism is always to decrease the cost of necessary labour time, so as to increase the value of surplus labour. This is what is really meant when management talk of 'efficiency gains' or 'increased productivity', whose purpose, like the alchemy of old, is always to get more from less. This expansion of capital across society, however, is not uniform, but takes place, Marx argues, across two stages: the *formal* subsumption of labour under capital, and then, its *real* subsumption. In the first, capital merely takes over the existing modes of production, such as artisanal work, and extracts surplus value from them without changing the nature of work at all. Here the effects of capital are purely local, and it is perfectly possible for capitalist relations to co-exist within non-capitalist modes of production (and for most of human history this has always been the case). There comes a certain level of scale, however, of the first subsumption, when it transforms itself into the second. Here, on the contrary, the power of capital is global and not local. We can no longer distinguish between society and capital, rather it invades every particle, element and moment of our lives. It extracts surplus value constantly, repeatedly and without interruption. Society is capital and capital is society, and there is now no outside to capital at all. There is no social relation which is not immediately a capitalist one. In the formal subsumption of labour under capital, it is only the specific productive activity, making nails for example, which is appropriated by capital. In the real subsumption, on the contrary, it is the whole of our lives, and we cannot think of the justification, legitimation or even sanctification of any human activity which is not immediately capitalist. What, for example, is the function of the university except to prepare the student for work, and why should we invest in their lives except to make them more productive?

This difference, therefore, is not merely quantitative but qualitative. We experience these subsumptions, in our everyday existence, very differently. In the first, there is life, on the one side, and on the other, the factory. In the second, there are only factories, whether these factories are prisons, schools, universities or indeed real ones. In the first case, only the individual activity of labour is seized in order to produce surplus value. In the second, it is the whole of life itself. There is not a single moment of our existence, even when we are not actually working, which is not accounted for in terms of profit. Even our leisure time has become a way of making money for others, and perhaps today the most profitable. If we are not producing, then we should consume, even those commodities we do not need. It has become our highest duty. This is why Marx will argue that we should not see the change from formal to real consumption as merely part of a continuous development of capital, but as a fundamental 'step-change'. 'With the real subsumption of labour under capital,' he writes, 'a complete (and constantly repeated)

revolution takes place in the mode of production, in the productivity of the workers and in the relations between workers and capitalists.⁷ The more that capitalism subsumes labour globally, the more it socialises labour, and the more that labour is socialised, the more resistance flows through the whole of society. Real subsumption, he believed, revolutionises society, and cannot fail but do so, and thus capital sows the seeds for its own eventual destruction and abolition.

b). The Time of Capital

How does capital conceal the crisis and contradictions that Marx believed would eventually tear it apart, since it is clear that it is just as powerful, if not more so, today, as it has ever been? The answer to this question is that it projects an image of time. It promises a future that would redeem every debt and sacrifice we have made. Capitalism is messianic, but it is a pseudo-redemption, for the reality of its future is in fact death and destruction. Debord describes this time of capital through a speculative anthropology in *The Society of the Spectacle*.⁸ Humanity, he argues, understands itself through time. It is the becoming temporal of nature. Without time there could be no consciousness or self-understanding, but this time itself has different historical forms. There is no *a priori* temporal form of the human understanding. We have not always lived under the same time, just as much as we have not always lived under the same sun. The first forms of human consciousness exist only in the moment which repeats itself endlessly without change. What is retained is only what the oldest members of the community can remember, and when they die it too disappears. Time passes forever to be lost. With the development of more complex civilisations, this passing away of time is experienced as something horrific and fearful. For it is nothing less than the annihilation of a culture in a heartless and cruel universe. What does it matter to the stars that nothing remains of lost civilisations, but ruins and toppled monuments? The first promise of a religious time is the preservation of a people in a temporal cycle that protects it against the ravages of this absolute destruction. It replaces the endless repetition of birth and death with rebirth and renewal: what dies comes back again and is reborn in the new spiritual calendar year. The natural year can take its place in this religious cycle, but only as *spiritualised*. This is the time, Debord suggests, of sedentary agricultural peoples. It is the 'negentropic' time of culture and civilisation which acts as a dam against the general entropic flow of the universe, as though this little human race could raise its skinny fists (with the help of the gods) against the ever growing death of the universe. History, however, breaks the endless cycle of religious time. It is irreversible and linear, rather than repetitive and circular. It is the speed of battles, conquests and adventures, but is a human linear time, rather than a mythic natural one. Once a civilisation has been destroyed on the battlefield or wiped out by disease, it cannot appear, except as a museum piece or an intellectual curiosity for tourists. History, as Benjamin famously remarked, is

⁷Marx, Capital, 1035.

⁸The Society of The Spectacle. Translated by. D. Nicholson-Smith. New York: Zone Book, 1994. 91-117.

written by the victors and never the vanquished.⁹ The time of history is the time of Europe which has recast the whole of the world in its own image. It signals the entry of a new kind of death into the human world, not the death of nature, but of capital.

Historical time, in its earliest stages, is merely the time of kings and lords. The vast majority of the population still lives within the time of a spiritualised nature. These societies, Debord adds, are 'cold'. For although they are fully immersed in historical time, they mimic natural time. The whole purpose of these cold societies is to keep change to a minimum, to act as though nothing was shifting, though beneath the apparent smooth surface there is actually wild turbulence and turmoil which presages the arrival of capitalism. From a time of no change or very little, we arrive suddenly at a time of constant change. Every society must heat up. What is good is new, what is bad is old. All time becomes 'just in time'. The succession of generations which marked the passing of time becomes the succession of time marking the passing away of generations. Capitalism is the speeding up of linear time to an almost impossible tempo. It is the time of work and factory measured by the pseudo-cyclical time of the clock. The moving of the hands around the clock, or the soundless click of the digital image, is the empty and hollow echo of the spiritual cycle. Not the repetition of the year, renewal and rebirth, but the infinite repetition of endless 'nows' constantly replacing one another in the rhythm of the conveyor belt. This cyclical time is not natural, it is not tied to the passing of time, rather it is transformation of time into pure exchangeability, where time is everywhere the same in every place in the world: the lifeless, hallucinatory time of airports and call centres. This pseudo-cycle merely disguises the dead time of irreversibility. It makes it appear as though one second follows the other, and the new is forever happening, but in truth it is always the *same* moment.

It is for this very reason that the quality of time has been reduced to an abstract quantity, and a false value of time has been invented. It is said that we value time, but what we esteem is the length of time, not its intensity: the weekend and the holiday is merely the pseudo-natural time opposed to the pseudo-cyclical time of work. We imagine that at home minutes and hours are measured by the movement of the sun and moon across the sky, and not by the minute hands of the office clock, but our leisure time is merely storing energy to be expended at work. We rest to get over work, we do not get over work to rest. It is work that punctuates the time of leisure, and not the other way around. This is why our leisure or free time, which Marx believed would liberate us, as technology replaced labour, has in fact only imprisoned us even more. For all we think about when are not at work is that we *will* have to work the next day. Even worse, the leisure time that we do spend has itself become a commodity. Such is the melancholy of our times. As Debord writes, 'modern society's obsession with *saving time*, whether by means of faster transport or by means of powdered soap, has the positive result that the average American spends three to six hours daily watching television.'¹⁰

⁹ Benjamin, Walter. Illuminations. Ed and intro by Hannah Arendt. London: Fontana Press, 1992. 255.

¹⁰ Spectacle, 112. (Italics in the original).

What chance has Marx's revolution against this transformation of the whole of life into a standing reserve of capital? Can we really still see the revolutionary and transformative power of capital as he did? The time of capital is the time of the eternal present, as though the whole of the world were a frozen sea of immense whiteness. It is the cold harsh light of innumerable offices, as the second hand of a clock moves ever slowly around the clock face. It is the illusion of constant change in complete immobility, where one day is pretty much the same as any other. Yet hidden deep inside this tedium there is the dull presentiment of an absolute disaster. We are forever caught in the moment before a sudden transition from stability to chaos (will the end be today, tomorrow, will it never happen?) where the difference between them is almost imperceptible, a differential calculus of terror and horror.

c). The Value of Time and Money

Is there a different relation to the future which is not merely the repetition of an endless present? The answer to this question is what is at stake in Philip Goodchild's extraordinary book *Capitalism and Religion*. The decisive word in this title is the conjunction 'and'. Capitalism and religion are not antithetical as some might assume, but capitalism is a kind of religion of its own, the religion of money. Beneath this new cult, founding and sustaining it, is an experience of time. Capitalism projects a future without end, and therefore an endless time without a future. Is there another future other than this hypothetical one that would justify the infinite progress of the present? It is the messianic future, which interrupts the present, freezes it in time, rather than letting it flow endlessly on. Why do we need to interrupt the present? Because, beneath the joyful progress of the present that capitalism promises unto the future, is concealed the real, as opposed to the hypothetical, future, which is death and destruction: capitalism is a perverted religion in that it promises much only to take it away (similar to the false promises of metaphysics), whereas we need to postulate another experience of religion which removes the veil away from the present, only to preserve its true promise.

There is no doubt that there are great problems with the word 'religion'. Philosophy conceives of religion as an illusion, wish fulfilment or hallucination. Yet it only does so, so that it can see itself as sober, real and objective. Without the illusion of religion, the positiveness and factuality of philosophy would not be possible. We know the world is made just of facts, because it is *not* the illusion of religion, as though it were a real choice between the opening lines of Genesis and natural science. But what if there were a reality of religion that was neither the reality of philosophy, nor the illusion that it says that it is? This reality would then demonstrate the illusion of philosophy which is the opposite side of its matter of factness. And what is this reality which reveals the illusion of thought? Life. Religion must say 'yes' to life that thought always reduces to an abstraction. It has nothing else to do. When it comes to what is at issue here, then it must disclose the illusion of capital as the future of death, as the great destroyer of life. It is the religion of death that conceals itself as the religion of life, as opposed to the religion of life which reveals the religion of death. This is what it means to say that

religion is always on the side of the poor and oppressed. It is on the side of the life of the world, whereas capitalism is thought gone mad. It, on the contrary, is the very antithesis of creation. It says that the suffering of the present will be redeemed in a future to come, but this future never arrives, and will never arrive because of the time-structure of capital itself which is the endless present. Thus, it does not lie. It believes in its promises, but time itself takes them away. What does arrive from the future, however, is something else, which it might have a presentiment of, but its promises always allow it to repress, which is death. Death is the *real* future of capital that its hypothetical future conceals.

There are, therefore, two futures of capital: one is real and the other imaginary. What is real is the misfortune and ruin that spreads through the world, which is then covered over by a sleight of hand that promises a secular redemption, such that capitalism becomes the solution to the disaster that it creates. In the future all will be paid off. Yet if there is no future, if the future does not come, then nothing is paid, and the disaster happens. It becomes the reality of the illusionary future which it was meant to pay off. The only way to break this bewitchment is to pay attention to the reality that it attempts to cover over by continually postponing the inevitable into a future without end. And this is only possible through a completely different orientation to time: a future with an end. Before we can think about this other kind of time, however, we need to understand in more detail why capitalism is a particular form of time that has imprisoned us, and for this reason we need to read the fifth chapter of Philip Goodchild's book entitled 'Value'.¹¹

Ever since Kant, he argues, time has been the way in which philosophy has represented the true meaning of subjectivity. Time is not an exterior form in which the subject finds itself, rather it is its very interiority. The subject is time and nothing else. It is not a substance in time, rather its very substance is time. What Kant also teaches us, however, is that the subject cannot be *thought* unless it has an object, for only in that way can its interiority be externalised and likewise become an object for thought. This process is what is described in Kant's famous schematism in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Time acts as a bridge between the internal world of the subject and the external world of experience, and thus allows the subject to understand itself. In this way, it is not I who determine time, but rather time which determines me, and it is not thought that make time possible, but the other way around. It is time that makes thought happen. 'Time,' Goodchild writes, 'is not merely an inert, determinable medium of thought, it actually determines thought and experience.'¹² Time immediately connects me to the outside without the slightest action on my part, for without this 'outside', I would have no determinate content whatsoever: the subject would merely be an empty form. But how do we think this outside? Kant thought it in terms of the object of

¹¹ Goodchild, 127–47.

¹² Capitalism and Religion, 129. Deleuze emphasises the same reversal of time and subjectivity in his second book on cinema (and he too links this insight to Kant) when he writes that 'time is not the interior in us, but just the opposite, the interiority in which we are, in which we move, live and change.' Cinema 2. Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta. London: Continuum, 2005. 80.

experience, the object constituted by natural philosophy as described by Newton's *Principia Mathematica*. We need, in terms of the argument of this paper, to think of this externalisation of the subject as it is linked to history, rather than a pure transcendental form. In the sense, as Goodchild writes, that 'one's most personal desire may be shaped by the most exterior, distant and impersonal forces.'¹³ Today the most powerful of these forces is money. What I value, even when I value myself, is what can be measured by money. Without this evaluation, I am completely at a loss how to calculate the worth of something. But how is value ascribed to money? The answer to this question is time. Time, as the interiority of the subject, is what allows this subject to be externalised and captured by what lies outside of it. When Aristotle explains the invention of money, he does so through a spatial necessity. The distance between cities required the existence of money in order to facilitate trade. But this spatial necessity, in fact, conceals a more important temporal condition. For without the temporal split between buying and selling, and thus the promise of future exchange, the spatial distance between the cities would never be overcome.¹⁴ It is this link between time and money that allows for the total deterritorialisation of the subject, which is no longer tied to any certain place or time, but it opened onto a time that is no-one's, which is merely described philosophically and formally in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*.

Money, however, is not just the form of the commodity, but a commodity itself. As such wealth becomes the ultimate external value worth living and dying for. I am as valued and valuable as long as I have money, or better, money has me. There is no external scale apart from this one. As capital, money is increasingly, as famously described in Marx's formula M-C-M, detached from the subject through its own autonomous production: money begets money. Even my personal purchases, in which I see my own essence reflected, are only possible because of this impersonal circuit. Here we end up with a curiously reversed world: I do not accumulate in order to satisfy my needs, rather I have needs in order to accumulate. Before I can be, I first of all have to be captured by capital, for without it, I have no determinate content. Here is the explanation for the particular *Grundstimmung* of our age: powerlessness, apathy and boredom. We live our lives completely in thrall to an external force over which we have no control whatsoever: 'A formidable interdependence bound humanity together under the seal of guilt. Everyone was part of the System. But only few were conscious of being part.'¹⁵

Time is the structure through which money captures us from the outside. We measure our lives in relation to it, rather than evaluating it in relation to ourselves. It is not human beings who have replaced God as the transcendent

¹³ Goodchild, 127.

¹⁴ For Aristotle's explanation of money, see also Alliez, Eric. *Capital Times*. Translated by G. Van Den Abbeele. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1996. 1-9.

¹⁵ Words of a schizophrenic, whose sanity only makes more apparent the madness of our world. See, Bosseur, Chantal. *Clefs Pour l'Anti-Psychiatrie*. Paris: Seghers, 1974. 10. Listen also to opening track of Godspeed You Black Emperor's *F# A# (Infinity)*, 'The Dead Flags Blues (intro)', for the expression of the same sentiment which I take to be utterly realistic precisely because it is so extreme. Godspeed you Black Emperor. *F# A# (Infinity)*. Chicago: Kranky, 1998.

source of all values, but money which has replaced human beings. Money is not a projection of our interiority, rather our internal life is a projection of money; it is the screen on which our life is played. Time and money increase in power in relation to themselves. As the old saying goes, time is money, and money is time. This conjunction is the *raison d'être* of capitalism. Time is the medium through which the control of capital steps outside of the factory gates and determines the direction of society as a whole. Without this conjunction of time and money, capital would not be able to find a place deep within our souls. There would be a time of life outside of capital, an interiority that could not be captured by the exterior relation of M-C-M. We are entirely placed outside of ourselves in the circuit of capital. Through time, money, in the form of capital, ensures that everything, even our souls, must have a price.

This relation entirely subverts the importance of life. Take for example, Goodchild suggests, the mechanism of finance capital.¹⁶ The fundamental class difference in post-industrial capitalism is not between those who own capital and those who work, but between those who exchange commodities in order to live, and those who do so in order to make profit. In the latter, present exchange is measured against future profit, and in the short term huge losses can be borne, whereas in the former, exchange is measured against the immediate continuation of life - do I have enough to eat? It is speculation, however, rather than subsistence, which determines the rate of exchange. Finance capital has no interest in life, nor in the suffering endured by the majority because of the mobility of capital. It goes where the money is, and globalisation will only lead to the increased exploitation of the poor by the rich. There is no incentive for finance capital to solve the problem of subsistence, for there is no way to create money from morality. The sole purpose of money is to create more wealth for the wealthy and the expectation of profit over the satisfaction of human needs, even if this will mean, as global warming appears to suggest, the final extinction of the human species itself. The future of capital is the opposite of subsistence and survival. To survive is to face death every day, but for capital there is no death, there is only the continued and permanent promise of future exchange. The future of exchange and the future of life are completely and entirely incompatible.

Capital does not face death in order to overcome and defeat it, for it does not even recognise death. It 'only deals,' as Goodchild writes, 'with promises, expectations and simulations,' which allow it to avoid totally the reality of suffering and death that it leaves in its wake.¹⁷ Again, the fundamental difference between subsistence and speculation is a difference in time, and more specifically a difference in relation to the future. For subsistence, the future is the imminent arrival of death and disaster, whereas for speculation, it is the infinitely postponed promise of future exchange. The difference between these two futures, however, is not an absolute separation. For the future that subsistence experiences is increasingly caused by the future of speculation, which attempts to conceal it by the promise of future exchange.

¹⁶ Goodchild, 136-7.

¹⁷ Goodchild, 142.

One future is real, and the other is false, for without life there can be no exchange. The illusion at the heart of capitalism is that there can be an exchange without life. How can we make this hallucination visible? Only through a different orientation to time, where the future is brought into the present rather than indefinitely postponed. Such is the continued importance of Rosenzweig's description of the specificity of Judaism in *The Star of Redemption*, even though historical events might have made his analysis more problematic. What is important here is a dual conception of time, one in which time is the infinite repetition of the present, and where the future is experienced as the empty time of endless possibilities, and the other, where time is interrupted by the future and called to judgement once and for all.

d). Beyond Time and Money: Rosenzweig's *The Star of Redemption*

It would be absurd, as anyone who has read or tried to read, to attempt to summarise, as a conclusion to this essay, the whole of *The Star of Redemption* and the varied and multiple insights that it has into history, language and religion. We might speak of it as having two major currents: one, crudely put, is its anti-Hegelianism, which is evidenced by its refusal of the idea of totality or system thinking in its opening pages, and the second, the continued importance and relevance of Judaism as a living tradition to modern thought (these two, of course are not unconnected, since it is precisely Hegel who argued that Judaism had ceased to be pertinent because of the system).¹⁸ The refusal of the System with a capital 'S' does not mean that *The Star of Redemption* is not systematic. You can be systematically against the System. It is organised around the figure of the Star of David that we can see on the frontpiece of the book. If you look closely, you can see that this star is made of two triangles inverted one on top of the other. This explains the division of *The Star of Redemption* into three parts: the triangle in its normal position, inverted, and then both superimposed upon one another. But what do these triangles mean? Here, we must go back to the influence of Hermann Cohen on Rosenzweig's thought. In fact, it is quite impossible to understand the latter without the former.¹⁹

¹⁸Strictly speaking, we should say, the refusal of a certain view of a system. Rosenzweig did not reject the idea of a system *tout court*, since this would be the abandonment of thinking completely for a hazy kind of mysticism that he saw in the writings of Buber, for example. Rather he sought the reformulation of systematic thought in terms of *relation* rather than *reduction* of the whole and its parts, as he writes in a letter to Rudolf Ehrenberg on 1 December 1917: 'System is *not architecture*, where the stones compose the building and are there for the sake of the building (and for no other reason); system means that every particular has the drive and the will toward *relation* to all the other particulars, the whole lies beyond the periphery of its conscious vision, it sees only the chaos of particulars, into which it sends its feelers.' (italics in original). As quoted by, Wiehl, Reiner. "Experience in Rosenzweig's New Thinking." *The Philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig*. Ed. Paul Mendes-Flohr. Hanover and London: UP of New England, 1988. 42-3.

¹⁹The key work here is Hermann Cohen's *Religion of Reason: Out of the Sources of Judaism*. Translated with an introduction by Simon Kaplan. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995. Rosenzweig also became a student of Cohen's after he turned down an academic career.

From Cohen, Rosenzweig takes religion to be the experience of relation. The three elements of the relation, which correspond with the three points of the triangle, are God, man and world. We can certainly think these elements abstractly, but we cannot live them so. They only have a lived religious meaning in their relation to one another. Religiously, therefore, you can only testify to the *correlations* between them, such as between man *and* God, God *and* world, or man *and* world, but never man, God or world in abstraction - this is how metaphysics tries to deduce them, as though these terms were not relata but substances in themselves that one could prove in isolation. The priority of the relation over the relata means that these correlations are not constructed from the self-identity of the terms in the relation. Rather, in being in relation to one another, these terms begin to lose their self-identity.²⁰ The three correlations between the elements, man, world and God, are called by Rosenzweig, creation, revelation and redemption, and which thereby form the tripartite organisation of *The Star of Redemption*. It is the last correlation, redemption, that we are concerned with here.

What does redemption mean for Rosenzweig? Here again Cohen might be our initial guide.²¹ The peculiarity of the Jewish religion, he argues, is that it is immediately and directly ethical and political. The idea of God is not first of all metaphysical, from which an ethics or a politics is deduced, but its *only* meaning is ethical and political, and its highest expression is in the Messianic Idea, where social justice comes to the world as a whole. Cohen contrasts this spiritual vision of Judaism with the Greek experience of the world, which is one of permanent war punctuated by intervals of peace. The idea of the Messiah in Judaism (always a political and social vision of the world, as opposed to the personal and individual viewpoint of the idea of the Messiah in Christianity) is the hope that in the future the past and present can be redeemed and that world history is not merely the repetition of the same violence and injustice against the weak and the oppressed.

Cohen's understanding of the importance and singularity of Judaism is always tempered by Kant. He understands the idea of the Messiah, therefore, teleologically. The unity of humankind through social justice is a *future* goal or purpose that should determine our political decisions and choices in the present (again Cohen stresses that this way of thinking of the synthesis of time from the point of view of the future is impossible for Greek thought). In terms of the argument of this essay, what is decisive here is the conception of time that is at the heart of Cohen's reworking of the Kantian idea. It is a

²⁰ As Stéphane Moses writes, 'l'intuition originelle de l'homme, du monde et de Dieu, intuition qui sous-tend toute expérience, porte non sur les réalités les plus élémentaires mais sur les premières formes de la vie. La conjonction *et* désignera plus tard dans le système la sortie des éléments hors d'eux-mêmes.' (italics in the original). [The original intuition of man, world and God, an intuition which underlies every experience, concerns not the most elementary realities, but the first forms of life. The conjunction *and* will designate later in the system the exit of the elements outside of themselves]. Système et Révélation: La Philosophie de Franz Rosenzweig. Édition no. 2. Paris: Bayard, 2003. 60.

²¹ See, 'The Messianic Idea' in Cohen, Hermann. Reason and Hope: Selections from the Jewish Writings of Hermann Cohen. Edited, translated, with an introduction by E. Jospe. Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1971. 122-7.

synthesis that begins from the future rather than from the present. We might speak, therefore, of two kinds of time structures: one, the synchrony of time and money, which is always the endless repetition of the present, and the other, the diachrony of time and redemption, which is the interruption of the present by the future. It re-orientates the present by separating it from the past as merely its indefinite continuation. Or as Cohen puts it more straightforwardly and prosaically, it is 'the fact that things are today as they were yesterday does not necessarily mean that they have to be like that tomorrow.'²²

When we come to Rosenzweig's own description of Judaism in the first book of the third part of *The Star of Redemption*, 'The Fire or the Eternal Life' (*Das Feuer oder das ewige Leben*), we must understand that what is central to it is this particular Jewish experience of time and social justice. Religion is not a matter of a world beyond this world, which is best left to philosophers and metaphysicians, but the world as it currently is. Not, however, as it justifies itself in the present in a continuous circuit of self-referential arguments and positions, but how reality could be transformed by a future which breaks and ruptures this circle. Its ambition, as Robert Gibbs notes, is 'to bring eternity into the world'.²³ Judaism breaks with or breaks the perpetual flow of time. Its conception of a future is more than one that is merely the continuation of the present in terms of an indefinite series of now points vanishing into an imperceptible beyond, whose eternity is merely that of counting, where one can always add one more number to the last one. This other future of Judaism is also not merely the passive future of the present, which is simply the expansion of the moment, but the active intervention of the future that illuminates the present in its totality and transforms it through eternity. What distinguishes eternity from the mere repetition of the same is that it holds the whole time in itself. In the linear conception of time, time vanishes in the incessant replacement of one moment by the other. It includes the future only to abolish it in the next instant. Nothing holds fast in the great river of time, everything is swept away (and worldly civilisation is just the desperate attempt to dam the flow of time, each great nation or people believing that it has defeated time). Eternity does not prolong measured time to a vague end. Rather it calls to an end the illusion of its interminable 'never-endingness', which conceals the entropy of time. The 'now' of Messianic time, is not the 'new' that is constantly replaced, but the *in-stant*, where time is frozen in the stationary moment. Eternity is not a moment outside of time, banished to the endless cycle of 'before' and 'after', but enters into time by seizing it in another direction towards justice and peace.

There is a parable by Borges, writing within the Christian tradition, where he writes of the return of the Messiah.²⁴ Diodorus Siculus, Borges reports, says that god has been lost and broken, and that as we walk through the streets of our cities at night all of us feel that something eternal has been lost. What we

²² Cohen, *Reason and Hope*, 126.

²³ Gibbs, Robert. *Correlations in Rosenzweig and Levinas*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992. 106.

²⁴ Borges, Jorge Luis. *Labyrinths*. Ed. Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby. Pref. by André Maurois. London: Penguin Books, 1970. 274-5.

have we lost is a face, and we nostalgically yearn to be that pilgrim long ago who saw the face of Christ in a woman. If we could see and know this face, then we might no longer doubt the existence of the Son of God. Perhaps, Borges adds we might have already, sometime ago, seen it in the face of a stranger walking down the street, but we did not recognise it. Maybe some aspect of this face is there in everyone, or we might see it in our dreams and never remember it when we wake up. In certain forms of Messianism, the kingdom of God is not projected far into the future, as though it were the end of time, but it is always alongside us, and every moment is bathed in its light. It is we who fail to see it.

Rosenzweig says that for the Jew the world is always double.²⁵ Every relation to something in the world, to a 'this', is also a relation to a 'that' in a world to come. The present and the future worlds are not separate or divided from one another, as though the future were something that took place along the line of the present but far away, as though the present were a journey into the future that was always open and indefinite. Rather the future of redemption exists *along side* the present, as a moment within or deep inside the present, a *that* world together with a *this* one. Thus, in blessing things, the Jew is turned in two directions at once: towards this world in which things are used and consumed, but also to that world to come. The world to come is not a utopia, if we mean by that word a world which is different from our own, made from different material and reality, but it is the same world related to in a different way.

The Australian moral philosopher Raimond Gaita speaks of an episode that happened to him in his youth, which one could say his philosophy has continually circled around ever since.²⁶ As a 17 year old he worked in a psychiatric hospital in which the patients were treated like animals in a zoo. They were treated brutally, he says, by the psychiatrists and nurses, and one can imagine by himself as well. He had got used to treating them that way. This was his and their world. It is possible that one can lose one's humanity in the eyes of others. One day the patients were visited by a nun who responded to them with respect and dignity. In her eyes, they had regained the humanity that they had lost in the eyes of the others. What Gaita felt, and has always remembered, was the burning shame he experienced when his own behaviour towards the patients was revealed by the attitude of the nun. What he is pointing to is not the nun herself, or even the patients, but how the whole of his world, in that moment, had become something very different. It revealed to him what he was, what the psychiatric hospital had become for the patients, and how it had transformed them into brutalised animals. The nun's behaviour, he writes, had 'the power of revelation'.²⁷ Nothing had changed in the world at the level of predication; rather the world as it was had become something totally different, and this is why he will write later that this revelation cannot be opened up by any 'epistemic

²⁵ Rosenzweig, Franz. The Star of Redemption. Trans. Barbara E. Galli. Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2005. 326-27.

²⁶ Gaita, Raimond. A Common Humanity: Thinking About Love and Truth and Justice. London: Routledge, 2002. 17-20.

²⁷ Gaita, 19.

route', because it has nothing at all to do with judgment about the world (what the patients really were, for example), but a different relation to them, in which something else could be said about them (they really were human beings like us after all, they didn't deserve to be treated like animals).²⁸ The relation precedes what is said, and not the other way around. When I think about what writers like Benjamin and Rosenzweig write about redemption, I always think about Gaita's example. I mean it is something very small and ordinary, and not metaphysical and theological (if that is what we think theology is), but one in which the world is completely and wholly transformed (like, for example, when one falls in love). On the other hand, capital is quite monstrous, if we could really see it. Its only value is money, where the common humanity we share is transmuted into an absolute system of exchange, and where the difference between us is increasingly and exponentially transformed into an indifference of a future without us.

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²⁸ Gaita, 22.

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