

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY: ‘AUTONOMY’ AND ‘REPRODUCTION’?

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What do we mean when we speak of 'autonomy' and 'reproduction' in the field of contemporary art? What kind of objects do these terms encompass, what are their histories, and what internal logical relations can we identify between each of these concepts? And what can we say about how they operate in a philosophical discourse about art and within political theory and practice? In this text, I will analyse 'autonomy' and then 'reproduction', though in the understanding that this method of categorical isolation must be overcome if we are to reach towards the relationship of the two terms.

The Schema for Art

For a long time, I have been interested in how art is both like and unlike socially necessary abstract labour. Abstract labour is Marx's category for the social form of labour in a capitalist society. It is abstract because abstract value, represented by the exchange of money for labour, is what equalises all the different kinds of specific and concrete private labours. This equalisation is then what we call abstract socially necessary labour, and it sets the value of labour power and all other commodities insofar as they contain labour time, measured by this social average rather than in every specific case.¹ All labour in a capitalist society is thus at the same time concrete – insofar as there are specific kinds of labour performed by individuals in specific circumstances to fulfil a variety of needs and desires – and abstract – insofar as it is mediated by abstract value which applies across all of social production and which is expressed most purely in the form of money. This double character of labour reflects and is reflected by the double

character of value in capital, namely use value, which is on the side of the concrete and particular, and exchange value, which is on the side of the abstract and universal.² Importantly, neither side can be separated from the other: our notion of use is coloured by our capacity for exchange ('do I really need this?'), and, whatever job we do, we better make sure it pays us enough to consume the use values we need (or want). This has important political consequences, affecting, among other things, the way in which politics is mediated in and by art.

According to the labour theory of value, art is not part of abstract socially necessary labour, because the activity of the producer in art is neither determined by labour discipline, the quantity of the wage, nor the productive investment of capital. Of course, an artwork may contain socially necessary abstract labour, whether it is the input of commercially available materials or the apparatus of mediation and production that includes everybody from administrators to installers to critics to cleaners. If art is seen as not just distinct from labour in capitalist modernity, but itself a product of the division of social labour, then it is evident that art also 'expels' labour as one of its conditions, on a systemic and on a conceptual level. This 'formal autonomy' from wage labour and capital is what renders artistic production both a material and an ideological exception to the capital relation, for modernist Marxist critics such as Theodor W. Adorno, and this exceptionality is called 'autonomy' – that which gives itself its own law, a definition established by Kant in relation to reason and also in relation to art, or rather, where art meets reason in aesthetic judgement. Art does, however, have a relationship to labour: like capital, it appears to be formally (or principally) free from labour, but is utterly dependent on it. Although

both art and labour are subjugated by the social relations of capital, art's position in the relations of production makes it appear to be independent of social relations in a way no other kind of social activity can claim to be. The subordination of labour is ideally repeated in art: this is indispensable for the formal freedom, or *autonomy*, of art to take effect. Art must be seen as non-labour or transcendent in relation to labour, and this status was codified in what has yet to be fully dispelled – the Romantic-era concept of 'genius' – which was already in use by theorists of the aesthetic in the 18th century, including Kant himself. Yet both art and the subordination of labour are engendered by the division of social labour created to suit the needs of the real, not formal, freedom of capital. Art is thus subordinated to capital too, but under formally better conditions. It should be added here that this formal freedom was also often attributed a critical content, certainly in Marxist aesthetic theory such as Adorno's: a freedom whose roots were structural to capitalist social relations as much as to its own immanent laws. Art introduces a discrepancy into that which exists, thus posing a challenge to a world organised around work, accumulation, and power. Art is capable of displacing reality and disclosing its contingency.³ Further, art, as a principally social activity without predetermined use or outcome, is a source and site for the development of autonomy in its sense of free individuality. This would be evoking the universal individual that Marx posited both as the human being in communism and as a trajectory that bourgeois society has already begun to chart, in its perverse and limited way.⁴ Ideologically speaking, and as Adorno noted, art is both a protest against the brutality of the world and a confirmation that this brutality has limits, preserving hope, akin to the role of religion: redemptive in its negation.

This is what in critical theory was called the dialectics of negation and affirmation. More militant producers and theorists, though derided by e.g. Adorno as apostles of a problematic ‘commitment’, would over the decades and in specific conjunctures attempt to make this dialectic an immanently politicising force in art production.

The stand-off between art’s ‘negative’ and ‘affirmative’ ideological role persisted from roughly the beginning of art’s ideal and critical autonomy in modernity through the decades following World War II. Modernity here simply denotes the emergence of capitalism and the accompanying decay of feudal and religious matrices of support for artistic production. In modernity, art was situated as a circumscribed realm of freedom and purposeless creation in relation to the otherwise merciless ‘natural’ laws of property, exploitation, and expansion of economic and state rationality. For the most part, art was not industrialised and persisted according to artisanal and mystified relations of production, supported by private wealth or by state cultural support in the 20th century. Art was supposed to take a sceptical or even hostile stance to both these phenomena (the power of money and the power of the state). Thus, art was sustained materially by the social arrangements it was supposed to negate ideally. As we saw above, Adorno called this problematic existence for art a dialectic between autonomy and heteronomy. In this framing, art’s immanence to its own laws is a historical development which cannot simply be negated by fiat, certainly not from within art, as for example when art declares that there is no longer any boundary separating it from other aspects of capitalist social life, hoping thereby to overcome that life’s strictures. Art was opposed to the world (autonomy), but it was also part of it (heteronomy).

Consequently, it was always divided against itself: every expansion of art threatened art with its own disappearance, as the contours between art and the rest of the social world grew increasingly less distinct.⁵

However, according to conventional judgements, art is considered, since approximately the post-war period, to have entered its 'contemporary' period. This is not simply a convenient yet facile art historical periodisation. While the transition from 'modern' to 'contemporary' is undoubtedly a marketing issue as well as a taxonomic matter for historians and editors, the shift from one to the other has a further economic and theoretical resonance. We can initially identify a shift in the dynamic: modernity is a category in process (it is always related to 'modernising', a progressive temporal tendency). The contemporary, on the other hand, implies, or has become, a temporal tautology (artistic contemporaneity inertly coexists with our present, or aligns itself with the times, is simply of 'the times').

The power of capital to subsume areas of social activity which are not directly value producing has massively expanded 'in our time' and it has changed the conditions for art as an economic, as well as extra-economic, entity. This means that within the relations constituting the totality, there is a significant sense in which art has been displaced from the autonomy – relative or absolute – that was imputed to it in the modern period, or in the period of modern art. Art now enters much more directly into circuits of valorisation, be it in luxury manufacturing, brand enhancement, the 'experience economy', tourism, or gentrification. Its importance as an asset class has grown tremendously since inflated asset values, and the speculation in them, first became a significant basis for economic growth in the 1980s. It has also become much more

visible in the disciplinary domain, with aspects of 'socially engaged practice' commonly included in the agendas of neoliberal social management, often in areas 'plagued' by disinvestment and 'diversity'.⁶ If these developments reflect additional and more direct roles for art as a commodity or as social palliative, there is a further shift in the exclusive relations between art and labour, as object-critical and post-studio practices emulate various social services, whereas waged labour is encouraged to view itself as 'creative' in the most simplified and exploitative terms.

Under these conditions, the meaning of autonomy must also shift, as well as its relation to the heteronomy of extra-artistic reality as Adorno charted it in the recent past. In terms of labour, art has traditionally been the most individualised, opaque, and competitive of economic sectors, which is why it was the perfect prototype for labour markets defined by escalating precarity and 'human capital' investment strategies. Art has thus overseen an expansion of abstract labour fashioned in its own, albeit fetishised, image, even as its own production conditions have remained largely the same, which is to say, non-industrialised. This is not to downplay the counter-example of large and professionalised 'factories' operated by a handful of artist-entrepreneurs such as Damian Hirst, Takashi Murakami, or Olafur Eliasson, nor the global scope of the sale, exhibition, and discourse of art which has been established since the 1990s. These examples remain marginal, however, in the typical production conditions of art, which continue to unfold on a personalised and feudal basis structured by the artist-gallery-collector nexus and the opaque markets in which these actors move.

Nonetheless, despite all these contiguities and instrumentalisations, autonomy remains a presupposition

for art, surviving close to a century of deconstruction and institutional critique. We don't need to demonstrate its survival on the level of discourse, because the survival of art itself as a distinct and highly invested form of social activity testifies to it. When we say that autonomy remains a presupposition for art, we mean autonomy as a style, as a marketing strategy, as a simple commodity niche. An easy example of this persistence of autonomy would be the distinction of art and design, which today is perpetuated by institutional and critical channels, whose own 'value' and legitimacy is derived from the contribution they make towards the reproduction of the distinction. Yet, in a certain fundamental sense, art can be conflated with autonomy 'itself', as its production is not bound by the determinations that constrict most other forms of social production in capital: art is endowed with the ability to suspend and displace all of these determinations *within its own sphere*. But then what happens to the critical or political content of artistic autonomy, to the autonomy of aesthetic judgement that Kant called 'purposeless purposiveness'?⁷ To the status of art as a critical observation post, looking out on the rest of society, a sphere of 'research and development' generating dubious products with no immediate application? Unlike the marketing concept 'autonomy', this *critical* concept of autonomy is now in serious trouble. Like anything that has been held to exist in relative autonomy from the capital relation at one time or another, such as education, social welfare, or even labour itself, it has been affected, if not overtaken, by the effort of capital to expand throughout and progressively to subsume all of social life, in response to its ever more limited and short term prospects for valorisation.

If we recall the earlier point that art, like capital, expels labour and declares a formal freedom from it while being

just as subordinated to capital as any other form of social production (indeed, because art electively assumes capital's formal freedom as one of its own laws, we might argue that it is *more* subordinated), we can further say that this is possible because art is mimetic of capital in a very specific way: art mimetically assumes the role of the automatic subject of value. Thus, its subordination is not like the subordination of labour – it is not a form of subsumption – but rather an integration with markets, i.e. in the sphere of circulation and, when it comes to the production of subjectivity, of self-determining creative agency, in the sphere of ideology. This is the mimetic aspect which remains to be further determined.

Marx calls capital a 'subject' because it is self-positing, and also because it produces the (social, material) conditions which are at the same time its presuppositions. The world exists for capital, much as the world exists for the subject in Kant, insofar as the subject emerges in the transcendental synthesis in its relation to the world. It is likewise 'automatic', because it increases itself, realises itself as a condition of its continued existence without the intervention of any other agency extraneous to it: once a capitalist mode of production is established, capital survives by constantly positing the conditions it needs to reproduce and survive as the conditions for that society to reproduce and survive (wage-labour, property, and the commodity).⁸ Kant's universality of aesthetic judgement finds its modern correlate in the universal capacity of creativity, which aligns the labouring subject with the automatic subject of capital. This is how art acts to socialise capital through images of creativity and flexibility which work in a wider context dedicated to abolishing the practical autonomy of labour via economic restructuring, legal constraints on organising, and the retrenchment of social insurance, mediated by the

jargon of 'employability' and 'human capital'. This turn highlights the only apparent compatibility between the two kinds of autonomy at stake: the autonomy of the commodity, which constitutes *heteronomy* for the autonomy of art, or at least used to.⁹ It is in this sense that we can talk about a growing proximity between contemporary art and abstract labour as social forms. Taking this into consideration, art's prospects for autonomy certainly seem to have dramatically shifted, if not wholly expired, since Adorno's analysis was first published.

Now we are in a position to situate the beginning of the decay of the autonomy of art as a presupposition of artistic production to the autonomous subject of the artist herself. This decline in the autonomy of the artist is often connected to the debut of the readymade, which, as has been noted on many occasions, firmly established the sovereignty of the artistic subject over the contingent object of art.¹⁰ The older universality of the 'genius' was thus joined to the irresistible tendency of nominalism ('anything which I call art is art'). The judgement 'this is art' thus migrated from an object to the subject, which ensured that the power – or the autonomy – of the art institution as the certifier of this art grew.¹¹ Thus, anything which appears in the field of art is art, and this remains the most solid institutional guarantee of artistic autonomy. But, as we have already seen, the critical potential of this development became etiolated a long time ago. The ability of art to 'accumulate' all social phenomena as instances of itself comes to resemble what capital does, in its self-expanding movement as the automatic subject. The nominalist gesture then appears symptomatic of art as a scene of, and vehicle for, the 'mimetic subsumption' of all non-value producing sectors. By this, I mean to say that art becomes a kind of production whose social power

need only refer back to its own laws of motion (autonomy), rather than to any 'useful' or 'rational' economic basis of the kind adduced by economic reformists as the source and impetus of social development. In that case, the 'de-functionalizing'¹² of social reality and its circuits of use and exchange as performed by the readymade and its subsequent iterations comes up against a limit, that is, the limit that capital – trying to valorise itself in increasingly 'dysfunctional' ways in the current infinite 'downturn' – demonstrates to us on an hourly basis.

And at this point we arrive at the category of speculation, which casts the 'function' discussed hitherto in another light.

Elsewhere, I have referred to art as a primary example of the 'speculative' within the current phase of capitalism, and also to the relationship between artistic and financial speculation. To say that art is 'speculative' is at first glance to impute to it a form or method of thinking and doing which is open ended in its relationship to means and ends and, thus, to (social) values and (economic) value. As already noted, anything which transpires in the field of art, even if it is identical in form to what transpires anywhere else, is very different in *function*: its function may alter or be erased altogether. This then is the phenomenology of art's autonomy, which itself can be shown to have evolved from a philosophical and political positing of autonomy as a state of properly human and historical creativity, invention of and control over the conditions of life, or, in Marx's terms, 'species-being'.¹³ Speculation then seems to stand for the indeterminacy of autonomy, the openness to possible ends that belongs to a humanity finally taking on the law-giving maturity that Kant cited as autonomy's core feature. If we understand speculation in this sense, we can draw a provisional link between 'the speculative' and Marx's

positive evaluation of idealism as a force for movement and change vis-à-vis the stagnation augured by the 'mechanical materialism' of 18th century Enlightenment thinkers.¹⁴ The transcendental idealism of Kant is key here for Marx, though perhaps less so than the absolute idealism of Hegel, with its restless dialectical spiral. For Hegel, the speculative marks the place of autonomy for the human with regard to nature; it demonstrates the resistance of the subject to objectivity, giving her a principle of alterity within the totality. Autonomy is the point at which the subject thinks herself 'complete', before she encounters objectivity and realises that she is not, and that she has to universalise the reflection of the objective in the subjective in order to surpass autonomy and thus sublimate individuality in the universal.

Proceeding or returning from here to a more structural analysis, we can situate speculation with relation to art by reference to the division between intellectual and manual labour, for which art acts as a sort of apotheosis. Why? Because it is in art that the division is sublated as mental labour: regardless of which task is done by the artist, it is not performed under compulsion and was an outcome of the inspiration that distinguished the artist from the artisan, although this inspiration is now professionalised in the ways that we associate with art practice today. Of course, the manual labour involved in artistic production is often outsourced, but the point is that, irrespective of who does what, the artwork is ultimately appropriated to the discrete identity of the artist. For Alfred Sohn-Rethel, all speculative thought, including, but not limited to, philosophy or art, is a product of the division between intellectual and manual labour. He traces this division to the emergence and predominance of abstract exchange (money) in the ancient world.¹⁵ Abstract exchange separates what is produced from how and who

produces it, and makes all labours equal, as we saw earlier with the description of abstract labour. Art then can be seen as one mediation of this abstraction, the abstraction which Sohn-Rethel describes as a 'social synthesis': the principle which organises how we live together in the form of a society premised on a collective experience of separation. We are literally connected by abstraction.

However, if art is the expulsion, rejection, or concealment of labour, it can also be the case that the recognition of art as itself a form of labour is where the speculative nature of art can take on a different guise. The performative disclosure of labour in art or art as labour may question the use value attached to labour while deploying a politics of labour as a negation of the conservative instincts attached to a norm of 'uselessness' in art. This may be done in order to confront a conservative notion of art as speculation with a more directly transformative one, which remains linked to the *social* character of art – which is to say, to the material practice of human labour – *in spite of its speculative character*. Speculation can turn into antagonism at times when the negativity of art in relation to use combines with the negativity of labour in relation to capital. The antagonistic possibilities or capacities of speculation viewed through the prism of labour, which cannot be cut away from its 'utopian' or undetermined side, further allows us to draw distinctions between the autonomy of art as status quo and the autonomy of the artist as a political entity in becoming. This touches once more on the 'de-functionalization' of the subject, that is, on the invention of the subject as a process immanent to art. Such a line of analysis begins to take us some distance from the modern concept of artistic autonomy, which in Adorno's terms was a 'windowless monad', reflecting its conditions but not itself acting on

them.¹⁶ Likewise, it may be helpful to retain and revise, rather than relinquish, other Adornian maxims such as that art is an 'absolute commodity', because it has no use value, only exchange value, and that this one-sidedness is one of the sources of its autonomy.¹⁷ That precept could now be said to ground art's *speculative* power but not its autonomy, if we consider that commodities from luxury trinkets to structured financial products are also 'all exchange' without an atom of use value, and that contemporary art is just as socially useful as these luxury goods on a *systemic* level. A 'speculative power', on the other hand, is a power that issues from the contradictions that traverse contemporary art. Art still enjoys its autonomy of production, and for the same reason it maintains a high degree of critical energy; but this doesn't alter the fact that contemporary art is highly capitalised, or that it is constantly instrumentalised in the stylisation of capital accumulation worldwide.¹⁸

What now seems impossible to ignore is that art must directly confront the conditions of its own production as art in order to claim any kind of autonomy, *de facto* or *de jure*: an autonomy which then has to immediately open up onto the prospects for autonomous social activity in general. To do this, art has to confront its own character as an institution of reproduction – a service, an ambience, a deliberate dissolve between labour and signification – in order to ground its autonomy, that is, to once again stage that autonomy as problematic negativity in relation to capital. In other words, if the modern stakes for the autonomy of art had to do with severing itself from productive labour, conceivably to counter a world where mental and manual labour brutalised some and idealised others, the only hope for autonomy in contemporary art is for art to understand itself in relation to *reproductive labour*.

Why 'reproductive labour' rather than 'productive'? Reproduction is invisible, gendered, racialised, and biopolitically managed. It appears in art as an index of liberation movements in the 1970s, especially feminism. Production is visible and political; it echoes heroic Minimalism or early Soviet artist-engineers and artist-technocrats. Not all instances of production emulated within or transplanted into the field of art are as they seem. For example, Jens Haaning's *Middelburg Summer* (1996), which was a textile factory – with mainly Turkish workers – placed in an art centre and carrying out its normal operations therein, can be taken as an instance of the politics of reproduction in art, in the sense that art centres normally displace migrant-staffed textile factories in the process of urban gentrification; and also in the sense that the city is a contested territory in reproductive struggles, which can of course *also take the form of wage struggles*. In no small part due to feminist art historical scholarship and curating, the classic example of the incursion of reproduction into the field of art is now Mierle Laderman Ukeles and her early 1970s 'maintenance art', which involved moving the peripheral acts of institutional upkeep (cleaning, guarding) into the foreground as artistic performances themselves. In her 'Maintenance Art Manifesto' (1969), she questioned why the artistic practice she pursued in her studio and the housework she did at home should be kept so inviolably separate, and consequently, she questioned what regimes of domination and exclusion were propped up by the abjection of 'maintenance' and the concomitant elevation of 'art.' Ukeles thus sullied the sovereignty of the art institution – which by that point had come to ratify many artists, usually male, who identified their practice with industrial work or bureaucracy – with the banality of 'maintenance'.

At the same time she sullied the autonomy of art with the heteronomy of domestic labour. Her gesture exemplified the political valence of revalorising reproduction as art: challenging the radicality of contemporary art by forcing it to look at its own *conditions*.

Thus, it is through the lens of reproduction that feminist art and curating in the 1970s, along with currents such as the Black and Chicano art movements in the US, the Art Workers Coalition, and others, forced art to recognise its relationship to labour, and to a politics of labour. Reproduction consequently revises the situation of autonomy, politicising the once merely 'critical' and mimetic relation of art to its others. We can also see a complicated and equivocal development of this tendency in the current era's interest in the educational and discursive in art, which, replaying '60s conceptualism in the era of financialisation, once again makes the process stand in for the object – and which thus, in a dematerialising gesture, switches critical attention towards the (pre-)conditions of artistic production.

Footnotes

- 1 See Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Volume 1, Ben Fowkes (trans.), London: Penguin, 1990, pp.128–29 and pp.138–39.
- 2 See Isaak Illich Rubin's discussion of abstract labour in *Essays on Marx's Theory of Value*, Miloš Samardžija and Fredy Perlman (trans.), New York: Black Rose Books, 1990, p.151.
- 3 This is the bedrock of all theories of art as a pedagogy in social change which rest on the concept of displacement of what seems natural and everyday. This can be seen in modernism from the 'making strange' (*ostranenie*) of Russian Formalism to Brecht's *Verfremdung* and as a broad strategy in contemporary art for much less defined critical ends, as in e.g. 'structural film' and

- all the practices that cluster around reflexivity as an ethic and device. The autonomy of art is here seen not as a presupposition but as a basis for praxis, as a means of exploiting the peculiarity of art's structural role in capitalist social relations as already something 'apart'.
- 4 In no small measure due to the alienating principle of exchange that is capable of dissolving ossified relations of e.g. personal or customary dependence.
 - 5 'Art and artworks are perishable, not simply because by their heteronomy they are dependent, but because right into the smallest detail of their autonomy, which sanctions the socially determined splitting off of spirit by the division of labour, they are not only art but something foreign and opposed to it. Admixed with art's own concept is the ferment of its own abolition'. Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, Robert Hullot-Kentor (trans.), London and New York: Continuum, 1997, p.4.
 - 6 Though the debates on 'social practice' are extensive and cover a broad range of critical positions, some of the well known interlocutors include critics and curators such as Claire Bishop and Grant Kester. For a fairly recent examination of the relationship between art and urban redevelopment, particularly in the United Kingdom, see Josephine Berry Slater and Anthony Iles, *No Room to Move: Radical Art and the Regenerate City*, London: Mute, 2009.
 - 7 The phrase is thus presented in the Pluhar translation of the *Critique of Judgment*, although the immediate context is not quite germane to a discussion of aesthetics – we are here in the section on 'teleological judgement'. See Immanuel Kant, *Critique Of Judgment*, Werner S. Pluhar (trans.), Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987, p.310.
 - 8 In the first volume of *Capital*, Marx refers to capital as the 'automatic subject' in 'The General Formula for Capital': 'It is constantly changing from one form into the other, without becoming lost in this movement; it thus becomes transformed into an automatic subject. If we pin down the specific forms of appearance assumed in turn by self-valorizing value in the course of its life, we reach the following elucidation: capital is money, capital is commodities [...] For the movement in the course of which it adds surplus-value is its own movement, its valorization is therefore self-valorization [*Selbstverwertung*]. By virtue of being value, it has acquired the occult ability to add value to itself. It

brings forth living offspring, or at least it lays golden eggs'. Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*: Volume 1, Ben Fowkes (trans.), London: Penguin, 1990, p.255. Here we can understand that the notion of a frictionless self-production has resonant links also with a certain de-socialised but accepted notion of artistic genius, which functions ex-nihilo to turn indifferent material contents into artistic value.

- 9 We can say that a mark of the contemporary, since e.g. pop art, is that the heteronomy of the commodity becomes a site of critical value for an art exhausted with the enclosures of 'high culture'.
- 10 We can look at this from the standpoint of the relationship between art and abstract labour, as Claire Fontaine do in their 'Ready-Made Artist and Human Strike: A Few Clarifications': 'But we are not going to trace a genealogy of transformation in the domain of the production of art objects; what interests us here is what happened in the domain of the production of artists [...] In an era that has been qualified as post-Fordist, one in which on-demand has replaced stock, the only goods still produced on an assembly line – that of the education system – without knowing for whom, nor why, are workers, including artists'. Claire Fontaine, 'Ready-Made Artist and Human Strike: A Few Clarifications', http://www.clairefontaine.ws/pdf/readymade_eng.pdf. Conversely, we can assess the 'readymade' as the marker of the art institution's 'primitive accumulation' of the whole of social reality, as does Andrea Fraser: 'The institutionalization of Duchamp's negation of artistic competence with the readymade transformed that negation into a supreme affirmation of the omnipotence of the artistic gaze and its limitless incorporative power. It opened the way for the artistic conceptualization – and commodification – of everything'. Andrea Fraser, 'From the Critique of Institutions to the Institution of Critique', *Artforum*, 44, no.1, September 2005, p.282.
- 11 Thierry de Duve, *Kant After Duchamp*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998.
- 12 'The status of art as a space for the de-functionalization of subjectivities: singularities emerge there emancipated from any utility. As a purely aesthetic space, the world of art harbors a potential critique of the general organization of society, and of the organization of work in particular'. See Claire Fontaine, 'Ready-Made Artist...', op. cit.
- 13 The concept of species-being could be summarised by saying that the human is a species whose proper being is to invent itself.

- See Karl Marx, 'Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts', *Early Writings*, Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton (trans.), London: Penguin, 1992, pp.328, 386.
- 14 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 'Theses on Feuerbach' in *The German Ideology*, New York: Prometheus, 1998. Thesis One reads: 'The chief defect of all previous materialism (that of Feuerbach included) is that things [*Gegenstand*] reality, sensuousness are conceived only in the form of the object, or of contemplation, but not as *sensuous human activity, practice*, not subjectively. Hence, in contradistinction to materialism, the *active* side was set forth abstractly by idealism – which, of course, does not know real, sensuous activity as such.' p.569.
 - 15 Alfred Sohn-Rethel, *Intellectual and Manual Labour: A Critique of Epistemology*, Martin Sohn-Rethel (trans.), Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1978. This is a development which the recent film by artists Anja Kirschner and David Panos, *Ultimate Substance* (2012), seeks to evoke.
 - 16 Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, Robert Hullot-Kentor (trans.), Bloomsbury Academic: London, 2013, p.6.
 - 17 *Ibid.*, p.31. It should also be stated here that I am deliberately abiding by Adorno's discussion of 'use value' to refer specifically to use value in a bourgeois capitalist sense, i.e., 'instrumentality', and not to the more developed and technical discussions of use value in Marx or other commentators. See also Stewart Martin, 'The Absolute Artwork Meets the Absolute Commodity', *Radical Philosophy* 146, pp.15–25.
 - 18 This should not be read as a comment which applies exclusively to the 'laundering' operations performed on money when it is invested in the art market, but more broadly to the legitimating faculties imparted by the institution of art to less inspiring processes of value extraction such as real estate speculation. Having said that, as some writers have recently observed, the art market is not 'really' a market in the sense that it is extremely informal, unregulated and secretive: similar to the relation of art to 'the real', the art market highlights the fictionality of all markets. See also Suhail Malik and Andrea Phillips, 'Tainted Love: Art's Ethos and Capitalization' in Maria Lind and Olav Velthuis (eds.), *Contemporary Art and Its Commercial Markets: A Report On Current Conditions and Future Scenarios*, Sternberg Press: Berlin, 2012, pp.209–240.