Haben Sie schon einmal darüber nachgedacht, daß das, was die Menschheit heutigentags noch denkt, noch denken nennt, bereits von Maschinen gedacht werden kann, und diese Maschinen übertrumpfen sogar schon den Menschen…

(G. Benn, Probleme der Lyrik)

In the Grundrisse, Marx presented capital as a continual revolution.¹ Capital destroys nature and space. It ‘strives…to annihilate space by means of time’,² destroying the limits of human nature by expanding the sphere of needs and the variety of production.

Value excludes no use value, i.e. includes no specific kind of consumption, etc., intercourse, etc., as absolute condition, and likewise every degree of the development of the social productive forces, of intercourse, of knowledge, etc., appears to it as a barrier which it strives to overcome.³

Nature, as well as human nature, becomes an artifice, a work of art. The capitalist mode of production leads to the creation of an artificial nature that plays on the need to have needs. It satisfies and creates new needs, filling the world with commodities.

¹ Marx’s definition is ‘beständige Revolution’: Marx 1983b, p. 447; Marx 1986a, p. 465. See also Marx 1983b, p. 323; Marx 1986, p. 337.
Needs are met even before they arise, so that the commodities themselves create the need, relieving the individual of the burden of having new needs. Human imagination has thus become the imagination of capital. Advertising is our contemporary poetry, speaking directly to the most intimate of our desires. The sing-song chanting of the auctioneers in the 1976 film *How Much Wood Would a Woodchuck Chuck* represents, as Werner Herzog reminded us, the last form of the poetry of capital.

The dissolutive power of capital was described in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. Within the capitalist mode of production,

> all fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses, his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind.\(^4\)

It is difficult to imagine a cruder apology for the revolutionary bourgeoisie. However, the apology itself reveals the problem: the bourgeoisie 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. . . . The bourgeoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honoured and looked up to with reverent awe. It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage-labourers. The bourgeoisie has torn away from the family its sentimental veil, and has reduced the family relation to a mere money relation.\(^5\)

This expansion of the sphere of needs, which comes as the consequence of the production of a superabundance of commodities, is called by the name of consumerism. It enhances and transforms human nature, finally resulting in an unprecedented animalisation of the human in Calypso’s timeless garden.

From the moment it came into existence, the capitalist mode of production has produced a new type of human. With the early image of the Robinsonades, the hostile behaviours of individual atoms were hurled into a meta-historical state of nature, thus creating a logical-historical circularity capable of immobilising transformation and producing the elements of economic and political modernity: individuals. This image has acted beyond all expectations, bringing about the complete animalisation of the human, who lives in a world without history. Value has supplanted use-value, such that the

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