

## **What is Socialist Affect? Rethinking Marx's Communal Society**

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### **Abstract**

This paper re-envisioning Marx's critique of capitalism and vision for a communal society from the perspective of the interdisciplinary field of affect theory, contending that renewed attention to the question of embodiment in Marx's works opens up new areas of exploration in his critical project. Reading Marx through Spinoza and Deleuze, I argue that Marx's critique of capitalism challenges not just exploitation in the form of appropriation of surplus labor or multiple forms of alienation, but also involves criticism of the appropriation of affective capacity, understood in Spinozan terms. Investigating affect in Marx's work enables us to understand this communal society as one where the amplification of bodies' affective capacities as well as the connections between these bodies are organized in a way that feeds back into the development of the individual and into an overall cooperative increase in the productive forces of society. This transformation in the relationality and development of affect, I contend, returns individual bodies to their species-being. Unlike capitalism – which develops affective capacity but appropriates the potential of these “vital forces” – in communism the affective development of each body is conducive to the communal development of these capacities. Affect theory thus provides a productive medium for reconsidering embodiment and materiality in Marx and for exploring socialist affect.

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“What experience generally shows to the capitalist is a constant excess of population, i.e. an excess in relation to capital's need for valorization at a given moment, although this throng of people is made up of generations of stunted, short-lived and rapidly replaced human beings, plucked, so to speak, before they were ripe. And indeed, experience shows to the intelligent observer how rapidly and firmly capitalist production has seized the vital forces of the people at their very roots...” (*Capital, Vol. I*, 380).

### Introduction: An Affective Marx?

What happens to Marx's philosophical project and critique of capitalism when we read him and affect theory on a singular theoretical plane? Marx opens his “Theses on Feuerbach” by critiquing “all previous materialism” – Feuerbach included – for conceptualizing “things, reality, sensuousness [...] only in the form of the *object or of contemplation*;” Feuerbach's problem, in Marx's view, is not conceiving sensuousness “subjectively,” “as *sensuous human activity, practice*” (“Theses on Feuerbach” [hereafter TF], I; emphasis Marx's). But what is this alternate materialism advocated by Marx? How does Marx take real sensuous activity into account, and how does his and Engels's historical materialism avoid the deficiency of Feuerbach's attempted materialism, which appeals to “*abstract thinking*” and “*sensuous contemplation*” without “conceiv[ing] sensuousness as *practical, human-sensuous activity*” (TF, V; his emphasis)? More pointedly, how does affect theory enable a re-envisioning and an enlivening of Marx's materialist project? What is the affectivity of Marx's philosophy and critique of capitalism, and what distinctive concepts and critical articulations emerge from such an affective reading of Marx? What is Marxist, socialist, or communist affect?

This paper explores these questions through by theorizing the resonances between several components of Marx's work and a Deleuzean-Spinozan affect theory. From different moments in the ‘early’ Marx, I develop a figure of the affective Spinozan-Marxian body in terms of the

capacity to affect and be affected, mobilizing Spinozan concepts of affect, *conatus*, and power. I engage an affective reading of the body's "essential powers" in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* (hereafter *EPM*) and practical activity, production, consciousness, and species-being in *The German Ideology* (hereafter *GI*) in order to intensify the connection between Marx and Spinoza and to draw out the affectivity at play in Marx's thought. I then turn this emergent affective figuration of Marx to his critique of capital, primarily as it unfolds in the *Grundrisse* [hereafter *G*], where I argue for a vital affective component of his critical project. Here, I argue that Marx theorizes what I call the tension of capitalist affect: on the one hand, capitalist social formations amplify affective capacities and productive forces; on the other, they seize those powers for capitalism's own reproduction while destroying the bodies involved in the actualization of that capacity. In the conclusion, I briefly sketch some initial modes of thinking through what a Marxist-communist affect would entail.

Marx read Spinoza in 1841, specifically the *Theologico-Political Treatise* and some of Spinoza's correspondence (Yovel 1989, 78; Bowring 2014, 24–26). Yovel makes the argument that many have systematically underappreciated the Spinozism of Marx, contending that Spinoza is "almost as deeply rooted" in Marx's thinking as Hegel and that Marx "used Spinoza's thought far more than he admitted" (1989, 78). Marx sparsely makes direct reference to Spinoza. The most prominent citation occurs in the Introduction to the *Grundrisse*, where he contends that the "identity of production and consumption amounts to Spinoza's thesis: *determinatio est negatio*" (*G*, 90).<sup>1</sup> Even with the scattered direct reference, Yovel argues "Spinoza is almost always present in Marx's thought" in a way that "surpasses his direct mention by name" (1989, 79). He sees Marx as reorienting a Spinozan philosophy of immanence<sup>2</sup> in a more economic and dialectical way, writing that Spinoza's muted presence is most striking in Marx's critique of religion, theorization of the relationship between humans and nature, and in the relation between Marx's ethical vision

and his understanding of the scientific quality of his critique of capital (1989, chap. 4). Althusser makes several scattered references to Spinoza vis-à-vis Marx in his contributions to *Reading Capital* (Althusser and Balibar 1979)<sup>3</sup>, and Montag (2008, ix) notes in his preface to Balibar's *Spinoza and Politics* that many Western Marxists have turned to Spinoza in times of "crisis within Marxism." The most prominent of contemporary "Spinozist Marxists" are Hardt and Negri<sup>4</sup> in their *Empire* trilogy (2000; 2004; 2009), emphasizing Spinozan power and the joyful affects in their theorizing of the revolutionary multitude.

Given this genealogy, it should not be surprising that I too turn to Spinoza to think with Marx. In doing so, though, I seek to work with a particular rendering of Spinoza, a Spinoza present in contemporary affect theory, transmitted through Deleuze (1988; 1990) as the relay point.<sup>5</sup> The shared move that so-called Spinozan Marxists make is to read Spinoza as a materialist, and perhaps *the* exemplary materialist (Boros et al. 2009).<sup>6</sup> The particular materialities I find most generative for thinking through Marx's project in an encounter with affect theory involve Deleuzean-Spinozan concepts of affect, *conatus*, and power. Here, I turn away from the Spinoza of Negri (with and without Hardt). Grattan (2011) incisively critiques Hardt and Negri's elaboration of Spinoza, arguing that they fail to engage the full range of Spinozan affect and are not *sufficiently* materialist in their rearticulation of Spinoza in light of contemporary political-economic conditions; Ruddick (2010) favors Deleuze's Spinoza over Negri's, contending that Negri does not effectively think through the concepts of multitude and difference vis-à-vis Spinoza. I do not seek to provide a 'representative' account of Spinoza, but to follow Deleuze (in his work on Spinoza [Deleuze 1988; Deleuze 1990] and other canonical philosophers) in asking what lines of flight, planes, and problems we can generate from the kinds of affirmative reading practices he deploys. Reading Marx beside Spinoza and connecting them through affect and bodies changes the directions, relations, and compositions of our receptivity to them.<sup>7</sup> This

theoretical endeavor responds to Grattan's provocation to practice "thinking Marx 'with Spinoza'" (2011, 16).<sup>8</sup> I pursue Spinozism in Marx, but for this becomes a particularly affect- and Deleuze-inflected mode of Spinozan affect, *conatus*, and power that encounters Marx in my reading. As I trace resonances between Marx and a Deleuzean Spinoza, I seek to both intensify the connection between Marx and affect theory and to provide a generative reading of affect and embodiment in Marx's philosophical project and critique of capital.

### **Essential Powers and Affective Capacity**

This section briefly engages Marx's account of the "essential powers" of the body in a particularly dynamic passage from "Private Property and Communism" in the third of the 1844 Manuscripts as a way of beginning to unspool the important concepts from Spinoza that will resonate with Marx throughout this essay. Here, the materialism I take up is that of the sensing, relational, and I would argue affective Marxian body. In a discussion of the changing relationality of the body through different socioeconomic formations, Marx conceptualizes the body in a way that productively networks with Spinoza's conception of power, the body, *conatus*, and affective capacity; these become throughout this paper the most vital nodes of Spinoza's thought in elaborating an affective Marx.

In this process of self-objectification, where "*man himself* [*sic*] becomes the object," the "objective world becomes everywhere for man in society the world of man's [*sic*] essential powers" (*EPM*, 107-8; his emphasis). It is the introduction here of the concept of "essential powers"<sup>9</sup> that opens a connection to Spinoza. Deleuze describes how for Spinoza an

individual is first of all a singular essence, which is to say, a degree of power. A characteristic relation corresponds to this essence, and a certain capacity for being affected corresponds to this degree of power. [...] Thus, animals are defined less by the abstract notions of genus and species than by a capacity for being affected, by the affections for which they are 'capable,' by the excitations to which they react within the limits of their capacity (Deleuze 1988, 27).<sup>10</sup>

That is, for Spinoza, we must define individuals by their characteristic relations and essential power, where “all power [*potentia*] is inseparable from a capacity for being affected” (97). Thinking with Deleuze and Spinoza, Marx’s account of the body co-acting with objects and others becomes affective. In Marx’s consideration of this body in relations through the register of “essential powers,” we can think in terms of capacity to affect and be affected. Indeed, Marx’s interest in this part of the text lies in the interactivity of bodies and objects, in the effects they generate on another and the relations they construct. Marx’s “essential power” is itself relational, in a way that furthers the resonance with Spinoza. The product of an interaction between body and object “depends on the *nature of the objects* and on the nature of the *essential power* corresponding *to it*” (108; emphasis Marx’s). Not only do human bodies have particular essential powers in the form of affective capacity, but objects do as well. The effects of any composition of individual(s) and object(s) are constituted by the affective capacities of those individuals and objects. A Deleuzian-Spinozan affect theory approaches these kinds of interactions similarly: things “act differently according to the objects encountered” and respond by way of “the affections that come from the objects” (Deleuze 1988, 21). For both Marx and Spinoza, essential powers – as the capacity to affect and be affected – interact, causing transformations in the things encountering one another, and being transformed in the process.

For Marx, subjectively “my object can only be the confirmation of one of my essential powers and can therefore only be so for me as my essential power is present for itself as a subjective capacity” (*EPM*, 108). The mode through which an individual perceives and interacts with an object is shaped by the particularity of their essential powers. Or, in more Spinozan terms, one’s own capacity to affect and be affected and one’s own affections of which they are capable delimit the potential kinds of compositions that may be possible. Marx explains this through recourse to the senses, wherein “the sense of an object for me goes only so far as *my* senses go

(has only sense for a sense corresponding to that object)” (108; emphasis Marx’s). Essential power in general, and the senses in particular, correspond to the characteristic relation of any given body. Individuals, for Spinoza, “designate the complex organization of the existing mode in any attribute,” the composition of “extensive parts [...] pertain[ing] to a singular essence of mode under a characteristic relation” constituted by “the degrees of power” (Deleuze 1988, 76–77). The singularity of the organization of the modes compose an individual and form its particular ways of encountering and interacting with other bodies. When Marx contends that one’s subjective senses and essential powers shape their relation to objects, I argue we should read this in terms of Spinoza’s theorization of the individual and its defining affective capacities.

My reading of Marx on essential powers helps us begin to develop the affectivity of this thought, of interacting bodies generating effects and affects in encountering other bodies. In this affective register, we can understand the Marxian-Spinozan body as one determined by its characteristic affective capacity to affect and be affected, and as constantly interacting with bodies and objects; the outcome of these interactions is constituted by the respective affective capacities. This discussion of essential powers – and thus, I’ve argued, of a kind Spinozan affect – occupies only a few pages in the *Manuscripts*; however, the rest of this paper demonstrates that something like this conception of the body is at work throughout Marx, from his earlier writings to his more developed critique of capital and sketches of a future communist society.

### **Historical Materialism, Activity, and Consciousness**

Marx and Engels’s articulation of their historical materialism, especially in relation to their discussions of consciousness, activity, and matter, provides us another set of resonances between the Marxian project and affect theory. In many ways, their materialism as elaborated in the early sections of *The German Ideology* begins with the body, and particularly its practices, productive capacity, and relations. It extends, as I will demonstrate, the connections I am creating between

Marx and strands of affect theory. Marx and Engels insist that, contra Feuerbach's ultimately idealistic materialism, their historical materialism proceeds from "the real individuals, their activity and the material conditions of their life, both those which they find already existing and those produced by their activity" (*GI*, 36-37). The "first premise" must then be "the existence of living human individuals," and the "first fact to be established is the physical organisation of these individuals and their consequent relation to the rest of nature" (37). They clarify "physical organization" by describing it as the way humans engage in producing actual material life, a "definite form of activity" in which individuals "express their life" and constitute a "definite *mode of life*" (37; their emphasis). Historical materialism begins from the active body that gains importance and definition through the way it relates to objects, nature, and others and, most importantly, through the way it produces what is necessary for the continuance of life. This production is not merely instrumental, but helps create the meaning of 'life' and 'the human'. Marx and Engels construct a close connection between the fabrication of what is necessary for life and life itself: "producing their means of substance" means humans are involved in "producing their material life" (37).

For Marx and Engels, production of the means of subsistence is the fundamental core of human activity and produces life itself. For Deleuze's Spinoza, something striving for and working to persist in its own existence is *conatus* (Deleuze 1988, 21). Both theories engage the experience and real activity of perpetuating being as a fundamental characteristic of life and elaborate this effort as not purely instrumental but instead as creative of meaning for life. Furthermore, both situate this essential mode in relation to the material environment. In pursuing *conatus*, we are "prompt[ed]" to "act differently according to the objects encountered" such that Spinozan *conatus* is conditioned "by the affections that come from the objects" (Deleuze 1988, 21). For Marx and Engels, the production of means of subsistence is shaped by the "physical



organisation” of humans and the material conditions in which they act, especially the “nature of the means of subsistence” (*GI*, 37). Thus, the production of the means of subsistence – which is also the production of life – involves an active creation and transformation of objects and conditions as well as a shaping by those objects and conditions.<sup>11</sup> In the resonance with Spinoza, we might say that the Marxist notion of production of the means of subsistence as a “definite mode of life” (37) necessarily implies a capacity to affect – the real activity of production through transforming material conditions – and the capacity to be affected – being formed in part through these material conditions. Indeed, the Spinozan *conatus* invokes affective capacity, involving as it does both the “tendency to maintain and maximize the ability to be affected” (Deleuze 1988, 99) as well as the “effort to augment the power of acting” and the capacity to affect (101). The physically organized Marxian human produces that which is necessary for it to persist in its body and thus produces life; its material environment also shapes it in its organization and capabilities, such that the human individual is not the only actant. When we proceed, as Marx and Engels do, from the real, productive human body in certain material conditions, we can lead ourselves, again, to the Deleuzean-Spinozan body.

The discussion of consciousness by Marx and Engels in *The German Ideology* further deepens the connection with Spinoza vis-à-vis the body. Consciousness and bodily activity work in a constant feedback with one another, although in this text Marx and Engels give primacy to material activity and production. The materiality of the active body generates consciousness. “The production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness” for Marx and Engels “is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men – the language of real life:” “conceiving, thinking, the mental intercourse of men at this stage still appear as the direct efflux of their material behavior” (*GI*, 42). In this sense, humans “are the producers of their conceptions, ideas, etc.” when considered as “real, active” humans “conditioned by a definite

development of their productive forces” and by “the intercourse corresponding to these” (42).

Consciousness is not some originary or primordial entity that imposes form upon the active body.

Instead, real activity produces consciousness. By arguing that consciousness emerges out of

persons’ “actual life-process” and thus “ascending from earth to heaven,” Marx and Engels situate themselves in opposition to German idealism “which descends from heaven to earth” (42).

Humans in their account, “developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with this their actual world, also their thinking and the products of their thinking;”

consequently, it is “life that determines consciousness” (42). Marx and Engels’s historical

materialism renders practical activity as the primary initiator of consciousness. There is no such

thing as “pure” “consciousness” or “mind” independent of “matter” and the activity of matter (49).

Given Marx and Engels’s commitment to dialectics, there cannot be only one-sided movement

where activity wholly determines consciousness with no other processes at work. At some point in

historical development, “real, positive science” begins, which involves “the expounding of the

practical activity, of the practical process of development of” humans and replaces “empty phrases about consciousness” with “real knowledge” (43). This mode of thought engages and develops

upon real practical activity. Much as their materialism foregrounds in general the active

production of the means of subsistence and the life-process itself in the theoretical imperative of

historical materialism, on the level of the individual-in-relation, it underscores the dynamism and

productivity of the body in the generation of thought.<sup>12</sup>

Moreover, in some ways, Marx and Engels engage a variety of the classical Deleuze-

Spinoza question, “what can a body do?” Spinoza provokes us, in Deleuze’s rendering, to consider

that we “do not even know what a body is capable of” and “do not even know of what affections

we are capable, nor the extent of our power” (Deleuze 1990, 226). At best, we know through

reason about our “power of action” as “the sole expression of our essence,” but only abstractly; in

this situation we “do not know what this power is, nor how we may acquire or discover it,” and must pursue the actions of the body (226). Posing the issue in this way argues against a Cartesian primacy of mind over body and compels one to seek knowledge of the powers, affects, and capacities of the body in order to “discover, *in a parallel fashion*, the powers of the mind” (Deleuze 1988, 18; his emphasis). Deleuze asserts that Spinoza’s parallelism is one of his great “practical theses” and is crucial to his materialism. Challenging traditional ontologies and epistemologies – especially Cartesianism – Spinozan parallelism “disallows any primacy of” mind over body, or vice versa, and implies that the body and the mind surpass “the knowledge we have” of them (18). Here, “all that is action in the body is also action in the mind” (88). Marx and Engels pose a different – yet echoing – problem of what the body can do. In their case, it matters what practical activity and production a body engages in. Humans learn and develop powers of the mind because they actualize the powers of their body.

Through the resonances I have been theorizing among materialism, the production of the means of subsistence, *conatus*, affective capacity, and life, we intensify the connection between Marx (and Engels) and (Deleuze’s) Spinoza and continue to draw out the affectivity at play in Marx’s thought. I continue to develop this affective figuration of Marx – from the earlier reading of the body in “Private Property and Communism” to this interpretation of early passages from *The German Ideology*, to those readings to come – to provide a grounding from which to theorize the affective component of Marx’s critique of capital.

### **The Tension of Capitalist Affect**

In the previous sections, I read Marx’s materialism for its affective, Deleuzean-Spinozan lines of flight, and in this section I pursue these lines to see where they take us in regards to Marx’s critique of capital. Theorizing the Marxian body in terms of affective capacity, *conatus*, and power opens up an additional component of Marx’s critique. Here, the historicity of Marx’s

materialism is crucial. The capacities of the body are constituted historically; what it is a body can do is shaped by the material conditions of a given social formation. Broadly, the body-as-affective-capacity I read in Marx's works does not exist in the same configuration transhistorically, but instead varies in its capacities as well as its expressions and relations of that capacity in response to material conditions. The essential powers of different kinds of bodies in a feudalist social formation will differ from those bodies under capitalism, and both will vary in relation to a future communism. A Deleuzean-Spinozan reading of Marx directs us to examining the particular configuration and relations of affective capacity of bodies in different epochs, and of course in capitalism most prominently. My engagement with Marx's critique of capitalist affect thus becomes a necessary mode of this aspect of his affective historical materialism.

When we follow these lines of flight and read Marx affectively, the reach of his critique of capitalism expands. We might summarize Marx's critique as focusing on alienation and/or exploitation (particularly the appropriation of surplus labor), with any number of composite sub-concerns. I argue that an affective reading of Marx should lead us to consider a connected third feature of his project: in my reading, not only does Marx condemn capitalism for the alienation and exploitation it engenders, but he also identifies and critiques what I will call the tension of capitalist affect. On the one hand, capitalism amplifies the potential affective capacity – understood as the capacity to affect and be affected – of bodies and things through its development and organization of productive forces; on the other, capitalism transforms this increase in productive forces so that it enriches the bourgeoisie while immiserating the proletariat. Marx is, among many other things, a theorist of relationships of economic and social power. As I will demonstrate, affect is a crucial aspect of these modes of power. The amplified force of the laboring body and of the machine is productive, and it affects and is affected by other bodies and machines. Indeed, it does so for Marx to a greater extent under capitalism than at any other point

in history. Capitalists, however, redirect these intensified forces and powers for their own enrichment and increased power, while systematically depriving the laboring body of its real capacity to affect and be affected. In “striv[ing] toward the universal development” of productive forces (*G*, 540) capital creates the *potential conditions* for bodies and machines to engage in ethical, mutual, affectively enriching encounters. In actuality, it seizes this potential for its own perpetuation. Capitalism seizes the vital forces of the affective, laboring body, and this constitutes the central injustice of what I argue is Marx’s critique of capitalist affect.

My contention emerges from a close reading, inspired by Spinoza and Deleuze, of the linked recurring concepts of living labour capacity, vitality/vital forces, and capacity more broadly, primarily as Marx mobilizes them in the *Grundrisse*. This cluster of related terms expresses a creative, productive force that is not confined within the contours of a delimited human body. Drawing on my earlier reading of the essential powers, I argue that Marx’s account of labor and capitalism can be read as an account of affective capacity, where concepts such as living labor capacity or vital forces are capacities to affect – to create, to give form, to valorize, to give power to, to transfer capacity, and so on – and to be affected – to enter into relation with the product of labor, with other laborers, with the process of production and be changed by these relations. Deleuze’s Spinoza seeks to define an individual not in terms of a static classification scheme, but by “the affects of which it is capable,” its “affective capacity,” the “capacities for affecting and being affected” (Deleuze 1988, 124). When we situate this conception on the same plane with Marx’s account, I argue we open the way to read the laboring body – in its living labor capacity and vital forces, especially in the interaction of these capacities with other bodies, with capitalist social formations, and so on – as an affective body.

Marx regularly depicts labor in an abstract sense in terms of bodily capacity. In a general relation to capital, “labour is the merely abstract form [...] which exists only as a capacity, as a

resource in the bodiliness of the worker” (G, 298). Labor that is “present in time” in a form that will “form the opposite pole to capital” is “*value-creating, productive labour*” and “can be present only in the *living subject*, in which it exists as capacity, as possibility” (272; emphasis Marx’s).<sup>13</sup> That which encounters capital becomes as a capacity emanating from the body. Labor-as-capacity situates Marx on a plane with Spinoza’s Deleuze. Marx does not define labor or the laboring body in terms of some static essence or inert property; labor is a dynamic, generative capacity. What does this labor capacity do? It moves, creates, actualizes, affects, and is affected. When it comes into “contact with capital” as well as means and relations of production, it is “made into a real activity” and “becomes a really value-positing, productive activity” (298). Labor capacity acts: it is the subjective “activity [...] as the *living source* of value” and “*general possibility* of wealth” (296; Marx’s emphasis). More broadly, “labour capacity” is the “*creative power* of the individual” (307; emphasis Marx’s).

Labor capacity flows through bodies and relations as a potential power and interacts with other materialities. It is transformed by these interactions, turned as it is into real productive labor and depleted through the activity of laboring. This capacity also transforms those materials through its creative, value-giving power. We can read labor as affective capacity especially in Marx’s account of the absorption of labor by capital in the production process. In “being employed,” labor transforms the “raw material” of production by being “materialized” as a “modification of the object” that also “modifies its own form” (300). Here, labor capacity in its actualization affects the material and the labor process. In this sense, labor is, in a particularly vivid articulation “the living, form-giving fire” (361). It is also affected by the raw material and by the laboring process. Once “set into motion,” labour capacity is “expended” in the form of “the worker’s muscular force etc.” such that the worker “exhausts himself” (300). In this instance labor

capacity is used up in its encounter with material and labour process, and the body it flows through becomes tired and needful of replenishment.

Once we read Marx in terms of Deleuzean-Spinozan affect and theorize the body and labor capacity in terms of affective capacity, we extend new zones of Marx's critique of capitalism. Marx, of course, demonstrated a clear awareness of capitalism's world-historical power; his ruthless criticism involves a deep apprehension of the revolutionary force engendered by capitalist formations.<sup>14</sup> This extends to his account of affective capacity under capitalism, which exhibits both an appreciation of the way capitalism amplifies affective capacity and a sharp critique of the appropriation of affective capacity for a select few. This appropriation oppresses the many and deprives them of the potentially-increased force that capitalism develops. If I am correct that we should read something like general affective capacity into Marx's discussion of forces – in this specific instance an increase of population – then the particular level and configuration of forces involved in labor are constituted historically: all "*natural forces of social labour*" are "historical products" (*G*, 400; his emphasis). The social formation of capital, in its "universalizing tendency," "strives towards the universal development of the forces of production" (540). In my reading, it seeks to organize bodies and materials such that productive capacity can be maximized and universally distributed: capitalism aims at, and to some extent enacts, a mass amplification of the capacity to affect and be affected. By combining labor, developing powers, constantly expanding, and so on, capitalism generates this continual dynamic regeneration of affective capacity in order to perpetuate itself. In constantly encountering and seeking to further displace barriers to its own development and reproduction, capital requires an ever-increasing capture of affect. It "tear[s] down all the barriers which hem in the development of [...] exploitation and exchange of natural and mental forces" (*G*, 410). Capitalism needs labor to be more efficient, to affect and be affected at an ever-increasing rate if it is to extract more surplus labor and thus reproduce and expand. It

needs the creative power of labor capacity to be directed at the creation of goods for capitalist circulation. It requires situating many workers and their capacities together in the same spatial and temporal site – i.e. combining labor – to overcome the limits of the working day (cf. 399-400). Generally, capital “*is productive*” as because it “incessantly whips onward with its unlimited mania” the “development of the productive powers of labour” (325; emphasis Marx’s). Capitalism does not only produce particular social and economic relations, or particular forms of ideology, or specific types of worker-subjects, but also directly produces an intensification of affective capacity.

The very “concept of capital” contains “the concentration of many living labour capacities” (G, 590). Viewed as a general society-wide formation, it demands an amplification of these forces directed to its own reproduction and expansion. Capital does more than this, however; it also comes to posit itself as the exclusive agent conducting this power. In doing so it conceals the actual bodies generating and actualizing these forces as well as the effects on these bodies of capitalist processes. All the “social powers of production are productive powers of capital,” and the “collective power of labour” becomes “the *collective power* of capital” (585; emphasis Marx’s). Capitalist processes collectivize and increase affective capacity in a particular mode of production, then put it to work for the benefit of capitalists and the extension of capitalism, but in a way such that capitalism itself appears as the bearer of this power. The individual body realizes the capacity of living labor, but capitalism seizes this force as its own. By placing a mass of workers in the same location and compelling them to work toward the same end and in the same production process, “capital appears as the collective force of the workers, their social force, as well as that which ties them together, and hence as the unity which creates this force” (587). Capitalism, as discussed in the previous paragraph, must amplify affective capacity for its own perpetuation. In this process, it comes to posit itself as the bearer and organizer of this collective force. Doing this renders the forces themselves – those of laboring bodies – invisible in a



particularly affective form of fetishism. By standing in as representation and unity of concentrated forces that in actuality result from the realization of labor capacities in the form of exploited laboring bodies, capitalism conceals the fact that the amplification of overall or total capacity it engenders also directly enervates and destroys the very bodies from which this affective capacity was extracted and realized for profit and further growth.<sup>15</sup>

It is in this sense that, as marked in the epigraph to this essay, “capitalist production” has “rapidly and firmly [...] seized the vital forces of the people at their very roots” (*Capital* [hereafter *C*] *Vol. I*, 380). When Marx makes this claim, we must read it affectively. Vital forces are not (or at least not only) metaphorical, nor does the statement refer exclusively to the way capitalism conducts and oppresses the proletariat (although it certainly does that). Capitalism captures the essential powers of individual bodies, their capacity to affect and be affected; it is the usurpation of creative, generative, affective force. It makes labor capacity a force for capital alone. The worker becomes “nothing other than labour-power for the duration of [their] whole life,” directing all the worker’s time and activity – education, intellectual development, sleep, social intercourse, the “free play of the vital forces” of “body and mind,” and so on – to the “self-valorization of capital” (375). Capitalism is affective and cannot exist outside of the concomitant intensification and redirection of affective capacity.

When capital and labor encounter one another under conditions of capitalism, capital “buys [labour] as living labour, as the general productive force,” while the worker sells their labor and thus “surrenders its *creative power*” (*G*, 307; Marx’s emphasis). In this exchange, the creative power of labor capacity “establishes itself as the power of capital,” and “capital appropriates [labour as productive force], as such” (307). The buying and selling of labor power is also the appropriation by capital of affective capacity. The purchase by capital is a procurement of the worker’s “vitality,” the “objectified labour contained in his vital forces” (323). Capital “realizes

itself through the *appropriation of alien*” living labour capacity (307; emphasis Marx’s). It vitally depends on this affective capture for its own perpetuation. Consequently, “every increase in the powers of social production [...] the *productive power of labour itself*” – and as I have discussed, this increase is something required and continually produced by capitalism – “enriches not the worker but rather *capital*; hence it only magnifies again the power dominating over labour; increases only the productive power of capital” (308; Marx’s emphasis). Any amplification of affective capacity accrues to capital at the expense of the worker, and any increase in the power of the worker increases the power of capital and its domination of labor. Capitalist processes appropriate the worker’s vital forces and essential powers. As Negri contends, “Capital can only subtract life, can only mortify labor” (Casarino and Negri 2004, 180). If we read Marx across his works as exploring the relationships of economic and social power, then we must theorize the affective component of that power that I have elucidated. Ultimately, the “natural animating power of labour [...] becomes a *power of capital*, not of labour” (*G*, 357; emphasis Marx’s). Capitalism seizes the “value-creating possibility [...] which lies within” the laboring body and becomes “master over living labour capacity” (453). Capitalism engages in the constant capture of affective capacity, and this constitutes a central mode of Marx’s critique of capital in my reading.

In making this argument, I diverge from some strands of the analytical attention paid to affective or immaterial labor over the past twenty years. In his article “Affective Labor,” Hardt claims that affective labor is “immaterial, even if it is corporeal and affective, in the sense that its products are intangible: a feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement, passion – even a sense of connectedness or community” (1999, 96). Hardt in his article (93), as well as Hardt and Negri in *Empire* (2000, 290–292), trace the importance of theorizing affective labor to what they variably call the postmodern, post-Fordist, postindustrial, and informational of the economy. In this account, the increasing shift to knowledge economies, service jobs, carework, computing, and

so on makes affective labor more important in late capitalism than in earlier stages; indeed, for Hardt, while affective labor has never been entirely outside capitalism, “economic postmodernization” has “positioned affective labor in a role that is not only directly productive of capital but at the very pinnacle of the hierarchy of laboring forms (1999, 90). In this sense, affective labor “has become firmly embedded as a necessary foundation for capitalist accumulation and patriarchal order” (100). Drawing on my account of Marx, I would disagree that there is some *subset* of labor that is affective and becomes especially prominent in late capitalism. As I have demonstrated, *all* labor is affective labor – at least from the perspective of a Spinozan reading of Marx. When Marx critiques industrial capitalism, he is critiquing the organization of affective labor, among other things. In thinking of affective capacity as the ever-present power of the active body as I have elaborated, it becomes difficult to localize affective labor in only one particular kind of labor or economic-temporal formation. It is not that the postindustrial, post-Fordist economy newly centers affective labor and displaces other modes of laboring activity, but that the post-Fordist economy organizes and directs that affective labor differently than earlier modes of capitalist production, perhaps even making it more prominently affective. A factory worker performs affective labor: it is a different sort of affective labor than that of a migrant careworker or a restaurant server or a freelance graphic designer, but is affective nonetheless.<sup>16</sup> When Lazzarato, for example, contends that immaterial affective labor is “the labor which produces the informational and cultural content of the commodity” through post-Fordist changes in labor processes and in activities not always traditionally understood as work (1996, 133), and “appears as a real mutation of ‘living labor’” (138), he obscures the way that the labor of industrial labor, including Marx’s account of such labor and of living labor capacity, is affective. The affectivity of labor is not bounded to a period of late capitalism but is powerfully present, with severe effects on laboring bodies, in earlier modes of capitalist production.

*Ethics and Affect in the Critique of Capital*

The vital affective component of Marx's critique opens up even deeper resonances with a Deleuzian Spinoza, in this case in the realm of power and ethics. As elaborated earlier, Spinozan power is closely tied to the capacity to affect and be affected. There is always both a "*power of acting*" and a "*power of being acted upon*" manifesting affective capacity (Deleuze 1988, 27; emphasis his).<sup>17</sup> For Deleuze, this conducts us to a Spinozan ethics – which Deleuze insists is a form of ethology – centered on affective capacity and power as the criteria of this ethics. In his reading, Spinoza constructs an ethics where "everything that is bad is measured by a decrease of the power of acting" and affecting, while "everything that is good [is measured by] an increase of this same power (72)."<sup>18</sup> Interacting bodies constitute this ethics, appraising goodness or badness in terms of the effects of interactions on these bodies. Hence, "the good is when a body directly compounds its relations with ours, and with all or part of its power, increases our" own power (22); consequently, "goodness is a matter of dynamism, power, and the composition of powers" (23). The bad, conversely, "is when a body decomposes our body's relation" and "combines with our parts, but in ways that do not correspond to our essence" (22). Within this ethical framework we can classify encounters into two sorts. Joyful encounters involve interactions where "power is added" to the interrelating bodies such that the affective capacity and "power of acting" are "increased or enhanced," while sad encounters generate "a subtraction" wherein affective capacity and power of acting are "diminished or blocked" (27-28).<sup>19</sup> The ethical imperative thus becomes one of organizing a maximum of joyful encounters so that bodies interact in ways that mutually increase affective capacity and the power of acting. Goodness and badness in terms of contingent changes in the body's power and affective capacity comprise the "two modes" of "existence" (22).

"Everything that involves sadness serves tyranny and oppression," asserts Deleuze's Spinoza: "everything that involves sadness must be denounced as bad, as something that separates

us from our power” (72). Capitalism, in my reading of Marx, is denounced on precisely these grounds. Marx, obviously, was deeply attuned to the oppression and destruction wrought by capitalist production. I contend that theorizing Marx in relation to Deleuze’s Spinoza draws out an affective ethical component to his critique of capitalism. What is capitalism, for Marx, if not an organization of sad encounters that systematically decreases the capacity and power of the proletariat collectively and individually? The laboring body under capitalism is constantly acting in a way that actualizes its capacities and powers, yet these powers are seized by capital, leaving them powerless and dulled. The encounters between laborer and laborer, laborer and boss, laborer and machinery, and laborer and capital are all sad encounters. The capacity and power of the labouring body enmeshed in capitalist formations is methodically diminished, and from the perspective of Spinozan affect and ethics, this constitutes oppression that must be denounced. This is one of the reasons that I find it so necessary to go back to Marx himself in relation to affect and to Spinoza.<sup>20</sup> Marx is perhaps the most incisive critical analyst of the material practices, relations, and conditions that organize life as a series of sad affects and encounters. Ruddick notes that the turn to Spinoza in critical theory has “invigorated a radical ethico-politics of ontology,” one “embracing [...] an indwelling, vital, and immanent concept of power as *potentia*” that is “set against a parasitic capitalism” (2010, 24). Marx, I contend, provides a uniquely important mode of such theorizing given his vivid articulation of what I have called the tension of capitalist affect. Any affect theory proceeding from Spinoza will benefit from the sort of encounter with Marx that I have elaborated. That is, once we read Marx’s critique of capitalism for its resonances with Deleuzean-Spinozan affect, not only do we generate a newfound apprehension of the affective register of that critique, but also add to the critical repertoire of affect theory.

Spinoza theorizes that “in sadness our power as a *conatus* serves entirely to invest the painful trace and to repel or destroy the object which is its cause. Our power is immobilized, and

can no longer do anything but react” (Deleuze 1988, 101). To a large extent, this describes Marx’s account of capital: he details the painful traces of capitalism on the laboring body (cf. *C Vol. I*, chap. 10; Cvetkovich 1992, chap. 7), the constitution of the proletariat as a revolutionary class meant to destroy capitalism, the cause of its Spinozan sadness, and immobilization of the power of the proletarian body and its subsumption to the powers of capital. Capitalism produces a “throng of people [...] made up of generations of stunted, short-lived and rapidly replaced human beings, plucked, so to speak, before they were ripe” (*C Vol. I*, 380). In its ongoing need to absorb and put to use labor capacity, capitalist production quickly uses up the forces of the body themselves, “shortening the life of labour-power, in the same way as a greedy farmer snatches more produce from the soil by robbing it of its fertility” (376). Capitalism requires the amplification of affective capacity, but in realizing this necessity it depletes the source from which it seizes that capacity in the first place. Marx intensely describes this depletion of forces and bodies: capitalism “oversteps [...] the merely physical limits of the working day,” granting only “the exact amount of torpor essential to the revival of an absolutely exhausted organism” and leaving only “diseased, compulsory and painful” labour-power, “produc[ing] the premature exhaustion and death of this labour-power itself” (375-6). Perhaps when Marx writes about the “vampire-like” quality of capital, the way it “lives only by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks” (342), we ought to think of capital as the affect vampire, sucking the capacity, force, and power from the depleted bodies it leaves behind.

### **The Future Communal Body: Toward a Theory of Communist Affect**

Of course, for Marx the “universality towards which [capitalism] irresistibly strives encounters barriers in its own nature, which will, at a certain stage of its development, allow it to be recognized as being itself the greatest barrier to this tendency, and hence will drive towards its own suspension” (*G*, 410). Given my reading of Marx thus far, I would argue that the affective

tension of capitalism – it amplifies affective capacity to ensure its own reproduction, but seizes that affect and systematically destroys the bodies involved in the realization of that capacity – contributes to the collapse of capitalism theorized by Marx. Capitalism seeks to universalize the development of productive force, even if it can only ever do so partially. As Marx notes, this tendency also constitutes a limit for capitalist development as well as a precondition for the overthrow of capitalism and generation of a communist society. The “working-out of the productive forces” – in my reading the amplification of affective capacity – constitutes a “barrier to *capital*” because its “entire development process proceeds in a contradictory way” (541; emphasis Marx’s). This contradiction, though, “is fleeting, and produces the real conditions of its own suspension” (541-542). As capitalism creates “the *highest development of the forces of production*,” it also generates the possibility for the “richest development” of individuals and their capacities (541). In amplifying affective capacity yet seizing it for the gain of capitalists and the reproduction of capitalism, capitalist production develops the power and force that can – and in Marx’s project will – overthrow it. Capital “possesses” this “tendency” towards the “free, unobstructed, progressive, and universal development” of productive force, but “since capital is a limited form of production,” this tendency “contradicts it and hence drives it towards dissolution” (540). Capitalism initiates a movement of capacities and powers in the direction of their universal development, which would in turn generate real freedom. However, it seeks to halt this movement, appropriating these intensified forces and destroying the bodies them. This, Marx argues, proves impossible; once unleashed, these affective capacities will work towards their own realization in free conditions, overthrowing the capitalist formation seeking to contain and capture them. If capitalism “produces, above all, its own grave-diggers” (*Manifesto*, 483), then its death is in part affective, and the grave-diggers include the renewed communist force of proletarian affective capacity.

Affectively reading Marx's materialism and critique of capital as I have done in this essay thus necessarily provokes the question of the affectivity of the future communist society he envisions. My account of the affective component of Marx's critique of capital provides the crucial departure: if capitalism systematically amplifies affective capacity force but redirects this intensified force for its own reproduction while destroying the bodies that actualize such a capacity, then communism (among other things) coordinates productive activity so that intensified affective capacity and productive force are organized to feed back into the development of individual bodies and the overall cooperative augmentation of the forces of society. The communal society of the future would be one of joyful encounters, in which, to rephrase Marx and Engels in the *Manifesto* (491), we shall have an association, in which the free development of affective capacities realized by each is the condition for the free development of affective capacity for all. That is, in communism bodies affect and are affected by other bodies such that their individual and collective powers are continually augmented.

Communism would not just be communal direction of the means of production, but would be the communal amplifications of affect, force, and capacity. Capitalism, especially in the way it produces relations between individuals mediated through the exchange value of commodities, produces "universally developed individuals" who, while experiencing alienation and exploitation, have the "universality and comprehensiveness of [their] relations and capacities" developed (*G*, 162). Capitalism robs the potentiality of such relations and capacities for its own gain and reproduction, but develops them nonetheless. Only a communal development and organization can fully actualize the powers, capacities, and forces appropriated under capitalism, where the interaction between bodies does not enervate the many while enriching the few, but conducts the intensification of the capacity and forces for all. When we surpass "the limited bourgeois form" which, I have argued, seizes affective capacity and destroys the bodies realizing that capacity, we



find – in a passage that would be just as at home in Spinoza, or in Deleuze and Guattari – the “universality of individual needs, capacities, pleasures, productive forces,” the “absolute working-out of” the “creative potentialities” of human bodies, the “development of all human powers as such the end in itself,” and the individual who “strives not to remain something he [*sic*] has become, but is in the absolute movement of becoming” (*G*, 488). In the end, this is what Marx describes as real or true wealth: “the appropriation of [one’s] own productive powers,” one’s “presence as a social body,” the “development of the social individual” (*G*, 705). We should, ultimately, read such an expansive vision affectively, especially considering the vivid resonances between Marx and Deleuzean-Spinozan affect that I have traced throughout this paper.

What is the communal development and becoming of creative potentialities, capacities, and human powers in themselves, if not a Spinozan ethic where “powers, speeds, and slownesses [are] composed” such that “individuals enter into composition with one another in order to form a higher individual, ad infinitum” and “capacities can compound directly to constitute a more ‘intense’ capacity or power” (Deleuze 1988, 126)? The free development of the individual and the community in Marx is in part a development of affect, constantly raising bodies in their individuality and relationality to higher, more intense capacities and power. From the standpoint of Deleuze and Spinoza, affective capacity is in the end never a matter of the disconnected or atomized body for which another poses a limit or constraint, nor of “utilizations or captures,”<sup>21</sup> but “of sociabilities and communities” (Deleuze 1988, 126). Communism’s *community* involves a set of affective relations that reciprocally amplify affective capacity, creating sociabilities that mutually enrich power. The most fully realized individual in a Spinozan framework seeks out such sociability, and persists in a social organization that enables such relations. As Deleuze renders it, “that individual will be called *good* (or free, or rational, or strong) who strives, insofar as he [*sic*] is capable, to organize his encounters, to join with whatever agrees with his nature, to combine his

relation with relations that are compatible with his, and thereby to increase his power (1988, 22-23). At the root of these interrelated conceptions of goodness, freedom, and rationality lies affect in general and the active pursuit of encounters with others that mutually amplify affective capacity more specifically. Marx's most fully realized individual similarly depends on communality. As he and Engels write, "personal power (relations)" can only be seized from their appropriation by the division of labor by individuals in community: "only within the community has each individual the means of cultivating his gifts in all directions; hence personal freedom becomes possible only within the community" and in "real community the individuals obtain their freedom and in through their association" (*GI*, 86-87). The active taking hold of one's bodily powers and the communal development of relations cannot be separated from one another. Only in community can individuals mutually amplify their capacities for affecting and being affected.

There it thus an additional affective sense of Marx and Engel's claim that the "real intellectual wealth of the individual depends entirely on the wealth of his [*sic*] real connections" (*GI*, 59). In terms of affect, the *connections* of individuals as capacities, if augmenting and enhancing to all, condition the expansion of any individual power or movement toward free development. This, I argue, is one aspect of the kind of individuality "not antithetical to a Marxist tradition": it is not "the individual' conceived as isolated, atomized, exclusive in *his* possession, disconnected from larger social fabrics" (Petchesky 1990, 4). Instead, this is the free individual as a social being, a species-being, whose "human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual" but "in its reality" is "the ensemble of social relations" (*TF*, VI). Affect is an inextricable element of this social ensemble – once one theorizes the body as capacity and power – and becomes a precondition for the actualization of the human essence or of free individuality. As such, it comprises one quality of the "just community" that "is required for the full development of free individuality" (Gould 1980, xiv) when it takes the form of joyful encounters that compound

capacities. In Gould's reading of Marx, justice in the "communal society of the future," understood as "a condition for the self-realization of all individuals," "designates social relations in which agents mutually enhance each other" (171). These reciprocal social relations, I claim, must include affect, and they prove to be a particularly Marxist articulation of a society of Spinozan joyful encounters. Conceptualized as a fundamental constitutive force and as a rubric for analyzing interacting bodies, any just communist society must provide for affective self-realization – the increase in the capacity to affect and be affected and mutual enhancement as a set of joyful encounters, forming augmentative compositions of bodies.

One component of these affective relations under communism might be the formation of what Spinoza calls common notions. These notions, arrived at and formed through joyful affects, are "representation[s] of a composition between two or more bodies, and a unity of this composition," one "express[ing] the relations of agreement or composition between existing bodies" (Deleuze 1988, 54).<sup>22</sup> A basic question for living beings thus becomes "knowing how we manage to *form*" enriching compositions of bodies and the common notions that embody them in an ideational sense (55; his emphasis). Joyful affects and joyful encounters – those amplifying the power to act and be acted upon – work as the conduits for and catalyzers of common notions in the becoming-rational of material, living modes in relation. In this sense, rationality and affect are sutured together, as reason takes the form of both "feelings that *agree* with reason" in the "effort to select and organize good encounters" that "inspire us with joyful passions" as well as "feelings that *are born* of reason" in the "perception and comprehension of the common notions" to "deduce other relations" oriented toward new, "active" experiences (55-6; emphasis Deleuze's). Upsetting Cartesian (or other traditions') attempts to bifurcate reason and the feeling body, Spinozan common notions "represent the composition of real relations between existing modes or individuals" and hence capture *embodied, material* relations (57). Common notions supplement

joyful affective relations with some degree of reasoned design, enabling the more intentional pursuit of compositions of bodies that increase the capacity for affecting and being affected.

Once we read Marx affectively, I think, communism can be theorized as the organization of the creation of common notions. At a very basic level, if Marx's vision of communism entails the systemic, communal, reciprocal amplification of affective capacity, then the baseline possibility for forming common notions vastly expands when compared to capitalism or feudalism. The widespread augmentation of these positive affects in communism raises the quantity and quality of the joyful encounters that are able to be represented, and generates a more intense and active social reservoir of the joyful affects that provoke and conduct the forming of these common notions. The connection between Marx and common notions runs deeper, though. As I noted above, Marx and Engels state that "it is clear the real intellectual wealth" of people "depends entirely on the wealth of [their] real connections" (*GI*, 59). What is the work that the "intellectual" is doing in this assertion? The concept of common notions can help us to think through the intellectuality of these connections in a way that stays true to the historical materialist emphasis on consciousness and the intellectual as always contingent on the active body. Once the connections between people are such that they reciprocally amplify affective capacity in a concatenation of joyful encounters, these real, material, embodied affective connections can enable the intellectual representation of them as well as intentional and social effort toward their communal organization. That is, affectively enriching connections under communism create the conditions required for the ideational comprehension of the connections. There is thus some conceptual specificity to the *intellectual* wealth of the individual depending on their real conditions: this formulation, I think, suggests something like a Spinozan common notion, and especially so once the Marxist project is read affectively.

Consciousness – a “social product” – “only arises from the need, the necessity of intercourse with other” humans (*GI*, 49). Communism, though, can move this intercourse beyond the realm of necessity into an active seizing of social relations to amplify affective capacities. That is, in the pursuit of compositions that enhance power, consciousness can reach true intellectual wealth in its active striving for connection and intercourse. Common notions enable the active grasping of relations as opposed to the mere necessity of relations. Perhaps, then, species-being, as it can be realized in communism, may be read in terms of affect and common notions. Humans realize themselves as species-beings only in “free, conscious activity,” where “man [*sic*] makes his life activity itself the object of his will and of his consciousness,” and does so in a social sense (*EPM*, 76). This seizing of life activity as object(ive) resembles, I think, the active expression of affectivity in Spinoza’s common notions; both involve a constructive act that appropriates human capacities for a specific trajectory for enmeshed individual-communal life. Marx writes that one’s “general consciousness” is “only the *theoretical* shape of that of which the *living* shape is the *real* community, the social fabric,” while the “*activity* of my general consciousness, as an activity, is therefore also my *theoretical* existence as a social being” (*EPM*, 105; italics his). This communal vision contrasts with Marx’s “present day,” the rule of private property, where general consciousness “is an abstraction for real life” (105). Conscious activity, properly social, grasps the real lived relations of the community, providing some sort of theoretical account of these relations. Only then does one’s “existence for the other and the other’s existence for” them constitute the “life-element of the human world,” a bond with the species and with nature as a “*foundation*” of “*human* existence” (104; Marx’s emphasis).

The common notion marks where the human “becomes free or frees himself [*sic*],” a “com[ing] into possession” of the “power of acting” in composition with others, generating “adequate ideas from which active affects follow” (Deleuze 1988, 70-71). Realizing species-being

involves this sort of freedom. It is a positive apprehension of the capacity for relating to and interacting with others in a mutually enriching way to actualize the species-connection between individuals. This requires the positive transcendence of private property, enabling a “*sensuous* appropriation for and by” the human of “the human essence and of human life,” appropriating “total essence in a total manner” (*EPM*, 106). The element of active seizing is what shifts these movements and processes into the realm of common notions, as Marx’s repeatedly emphasizes the need for positively appropriating essence, capacity, life, activity, relations, the social fabric, existence, and reality. This, given my reading throughout the essay, should be understood affectively: the affectivity of Marx’s understanding of bodies, relations, activity, production, and life itself situate these species-being appropriations in the affective register. Freedom, once private property is overcome and real community is achieved, involves not just intense, reciprocal affective compositions of bodies, but the forming of common notions that grasp the forces at play in such socialities and strive for the open-ended organization of joyful affects and encounters.

For Deleuze’s Spinoza, the formation of common notions proceeds through a trajectory of reasoned grasping of the compositions of bodies. The first, most basic common notions are the least general ones, forming a composition between two bodies, a relation generating joyful affects. This has the potential to create cascading active affects; if this intensification occurs, the first common notion and these spiraling affects produce the “force to form common notions that are even more general”, ones that compose bodies that do not agree with each other in full or are contrary to one another in some way (Deleuze 1988, 56). From “these new common notions, new affects of active joy follow,” replacing sad affects and encounters (56). That is, common notions, fostered in the proper environment, express tendencies to expand and extend themselves, drawing in greater bodies, relations, affects, and so on. Perhaps this is the task of a proletarian movement or class struggle for the Spinozan Marx. Class-consciousness might take the form, from the

standpoint of affect, of creating and propagating common notions, drawing sensing, affective bodies together in greater numbers and intensity to overcome modes, forces, and relations of production that organize sad encounters. Simply being situated similarly with regard to the means of production – or to the social organization of affective forces – is not enough;<sup>23</sup> common notions that can flourish and realize species-being in communism must be struggled for and actively realized by feeling-bodies.

This, ultimately, is the sort of theoretical and ethical venture that unfolds from mobilizing an affective, Spinoza-inflected reading of Marx. Close attention to the resonances between affect theory and Marx himself reanimates his critical project, elucidating the generative, affective mode of his materialist philosophy, critique of capital, and vision for a future communist society.

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<sup>1</sup> Marx's footnote reads: "'Determination is negation', i.e., given the undifferentiated self-identity of the universal world substance, to attempt to introduce particular determinations is to negate this self-identity" and refers to a 1674 letter from Spinoza to J. Jelles (*G*, 90n11). Hegel also emphasizes the notion that determination is negation as central to Spinoza's thought (cf. 1896, 3:252–90), at one point deeming "*determinatio est negatio*" "Spinoza's great saying" (Hegel 1892, 1:252).

<sup>2</sup> Deleuze and Guattari read Spinoza as the foremost philosopher of immanence: "Spinoza, the infinite becoming-philosopher: he showed, drew up, and thought the 'best' plane of immanence – that is, the purest, the one that does not hand itself over to the transcendent or restore any transcendent, the one that inspires the fewest illusions, bad feelings, and erroneous perceptions" (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 60; also see 1994, 48–49). If Yovel and Deleuze and Guattari are correct, it is even more worth explicitly extending the Deleuze (and in the case Guattari) – Spinoza connection to Marx as I do here. Notably, one of Althusser's more extended discussions about Marx and Spinoza (1979, 187–89) situate them as thinkers of a kind of immanence, albeit within Althusser's structuralism.

<sup>3</sup> Most strikingly, Althusser writes that Spinoza and Marx provide the great, "unprecedented theoretical revolution[s]," and in this sense, "from the philosophical standpoint" we "can regard Spinoza as Marx's only direct ancestor" (1979, 102).

<sup>4</sup> Negri has long been a prominent theorist of Spinoza, including his book-length treatment of Spinoza (1991), which contains few mentions of Marx but does make the intriguing gesture at a Machiavelli-Spinoza-Marx "vein of thought" that "counters the 'sublime'" tradition of Hobbes-Rousseau-Hegel (1991, 265n26). For an overview of his engagement with Spinoza situating his Spinozism vis-à-vis Marx, Deleuze and Guattari, Foucault, and others, see his interview with Casarino (Casarino and Negri 2004).

<sup>5</sup> The Deleuzian Spinoza is one of several Spinozas we have available to us today; on the variety of the different Spinozas, so to speak, see Vardoulakis's edited collection (2011). For another particularly affective rendering of Spinoza – in this case vis-à-vis Negri and Deleuze – see an excellent article by Susan Ruddick (2010).

<sup>6</sup> This is not a wholly uncontroversial move – see Boros et al. 2009 for claims that some Marxists misread Spinoza's materialism.

<sup>7</sup> This is one of the reasons why I am interested in Deleuze's reading of Spinoza: Deleuze performs, I think, this kind of theoretical-methodological initiative, and it is this particular sort of endeavor that I seek to connect to and carry out with Marx and the other thinkers of this study.

<sup>8</sup> In more detail, Grattan argues that "it is just as likely that a more nuanced and detailed investigation into the Spinozist half of 'Spinozist Marxism' yields a new way of imagining not only the present, but organizing the future" (2011, 13). To this, I would add that such a project, in my own particularly affect- and Deleuze-inflected reading, seeks also to reinvigorate our receptivity to Marx in the present, going back to Marx himself to generate a different kind of Spinozist Marxism.

<sup>9</sup> "Essential powers" is Milligan's translation of Marx's *Wesenskräfte*, which Milligan describes as "powers belonging to me as part of my essential nature, my very being" (108n1); this understanding is consistent with my Spinozan reading of Marx. He refers back to discussion in his "Note on Terminology" of the complexity of translating *Wesen* into English, which notes both the complexity of Marx's concept of "essence" (the most direct translation), as well as other colloquial and Hegelian shadings of the term (Milligan 1988, 11–12). The other prevalent translation of the Manuscripts, by Gregor Benton, also uses "essential powers" in the passages I work with here.

<sup>10</sup> Elsewhere: "...define bodies and thoughts as capacities for affecting and being affected, many things change. You will define an animal, or a human being, not by its form, its organs, and its functions, and not as a subject either; you will define it by the affects of which it is capable. Affective capacity, with a maximum threshold and a minimum threshold, is a constant notion in Spinoza. Take any animal and make a list of affects. [...] [D]efine bodies, animals, or humans by the affects they are capable of" (Deleuze 1988, 124–125).

<sup>11</sup> Of course, these constantly feed back into one another; for example, in discussing the "real" individuals and the "material conditions of their life," the latter include both the conditions "they find already existing" as well as those "produced by their activity" (*GI*, 36–37).

<sup>12</sup> This is the sort of theoretical and ethical venture that unfolds from mobilizing an affective, Spinoza-inflected reading of Marx. Close attention to the resonances between affect theory and Marx himself reanimates his critical project, elucidating the generative, affective mode of his materialist philosophy, critique of capital, and vision for a future communist society.

<sup>13</sup> Interestingly, immediately after this formulation in the *Grundrisse*, Marx notes that "this marginal remark is an anticipation, must first be developed, by and by" (272). Even in the text itself, Marx creates openings for lines of flight that he may only anticipate and need some further development. Clearly, many of these anticipations are taken up and elaborated in the volumes of *Capital*. I want to explicitly pursue the affective anticipations of such remarks.

<sup>14</sup> For example, in the famous description of the global, revolutionary scope of capitalism from he and Engels in the *Manifesto* (475–476).

<sup>15</sup> Indeed, "progression, this social progress" – in my reading the social intensification of affective capacity – "belongs [to] and is exploited by capital" (*G*, 589).

<sup>16</sup> Negri's theorization of affect, labor, and value (1999) is more compelling, as it does bound affective labor to the degree that Hardt's article does. Ruddick (2010, 31–33), though, effectively critiques Negri's affect for still positioning affective labor as the vanguard of labor in the contemporary setting, asserting that "we cannot presume that affect is suddenly 'present' at work as was not there previously" (33), among other points. Grattan (2011, 7–8) notes that Negri in his account of affect problematically emphasizes only the power of acting, thus ignoring the power of *being acted upon*. In different ways, each of these accounts are consistent with my own critique of aspects of the affective labor literature.

<sup>17</sup> On power, in addition to my earlier discussion of Deleuzian-Spinozan power vis-à-vis Marx on "essential powers," see Deleuze 1988, 97–99.

<sup>18</sup> Deleuze argues this replaces a morality based on Good and Evil with an ethics based on good and bad (1988, 23) and thus situates Spinoza in a "lineage from Epicurus to Nietzsche" (72). One might note here that Marx himself wrote his doctoral thesis on the philosophy of nature in Democritus and Epicurus.



<sup>19</sup> Deleuze elsewhere explains it thus: “An existing mode is defined by a certain capacity for being affected (III, post. 1 and 2). When it encounters another mode, it can happen that this other mode is ‘good’ for it, that is, enters into composition with it, or on the contrary decomposes it and is ‘bad’ for it. In the first case, the existing mode passes to a greater perfection; in the second case, to a lesser perfection. Accordingly, it will be said that its power of acting or force of existing increases or diminishes, since the power of the other mode is added to it, or on the contrary is withdrawn from it, immobilizing and restraining it (IV, 18 dem.). The passage to a greater perfection, or the increase of the power of acting, is called an affect, or feeling, of joy; the passage to a lesser perfection or the diminution of the power of acting is called *sadness*” (1988, 49-50; emphasis Deleuze’s).

<sup>20</sup> Grattan argues that too much Spinozist Marxism – especially that of Negri, with and without Hardt – effaces the way that affect is not only joyful encounters or increases in the power to act; Spinoza also carefully theorizes the ways that encounters may be – and often are – harmful and diminishing of the power to act (2011, 7-8). The problem is that avoiding the possibility of harmful or sad encounters, or erasing them from one’s theory – as Grattan asserts Negri too often does – cannot in fact rid the world of sad affects and harmful encounters. Instead, because they are part of existence, “coming to terms with potential causes of sad affects is crucial to critical practice (7).

<sup>21</sup> As Gould notes throughout her work on Marx’s social ontology (1980), conceptualizing the individual and the community as necessarily opposed to one another is, for Marx, a result of “the limited forms that they [the two concepts] take in both social life and social theory under capitalism” as dichotomous and conflictual (xii).

<sup>22</sup> Elsewhere: “...when we encounter a body that agrees with ours, and has the effect of affecting us with joy, this joy (increase of our power of acting) induces us to form the common notion of these two bodies, that is, to compound their relations and to conceive their unity of composition” (Deleuze 1988, 118-19).

<sup>23</sup> This would remain solely in the realm of “passive” affects and “inadequate” ideas; see Deleuze 1988, 50-51; 82 as well as Ruddick 2010.

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