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DIALECTICS OF POWER. FOR THE ORGANISATION OF A REVOLUTIONARY CLASS.

AN INTERPRETATION OF HANS-JÜRGEN KRAHL POLITICAL THOUGHT.

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INDEX

List of Abbreviations

NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
SDS	Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund
US	United States

INTRODUCTION

At the heart of dialectics is the idea that everything in reality comprises contradictions or opposing forces. These contradictions are not static but dynamic, constantly interacting, influencing each other, and leading to change. Change is a process driven by the resolution of contradictions. It is not a simple linear progression but a complex, conflictual process where opposing forces clash, leading to the development of new forms, ideas, or conditions. Dialectical thinking emphasises the interconnectedness of all phenomena. No event, idea, or process can be understood in isolation; everything is part of a larger system of relationships. For instance, economic, political, and social forces are all interconnected in dialectical analysis, and changes in one area can lead to transformations in others.

Power is the social, economic, political and cultural arena. It is dynamic: constantly being contested, negotiated, and transformed. Power is dialectical because it involves both the exercise of domination and the response of resistance. Whenever power is exerted by one group, there is a counterforce that challenges or resists it. Power is not simply about maintaining the *status quo* but also about the potential for transformation. Through struggle and conflict, power relations can change, evolve, and sometimes reverse. Power operates dialectically through a process of negation, where the existing power structure is challenged (negated) by opposing forces and new power relations emerge. However, this new power is not entirely disconnected from the old as it often incorporates elements of the previous structure in a transformed way. This process is what Marxist dialectics refers to as the 'negation of the negation.' Power exists within the broader totality of social relations. It is not just about individual acts of domination or resistance; it is embedded in larger systems of production, ideology, and social organisation. The possibility of liberation or emancipation arises from the dialectical nature of power. Because power is relational and contested, oppressed groups can challenge and transform power structures through struggle.

Hans-Jürgen Krahl (1943-1970) examines the economic and social structures of late capitalist systems of control, highlighting the violence embedded within social

relations, the isolation of individuals, and the distortion of human connections. There is a link between advanced capitalism's forms of domination and socialisation and the configuration of human consciousness. Women and men have internalised the relations of domination: the constitution of one's interiority is regulated by external norms, by economic devices of power that prescind from the subject, but shape it, mould it. The subject is first and foremost, an object, an abstract entity shaped by market dynamics, abstract labour and ideology. This became quite evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, where there was skimming over the life worth preserving and the life that can outlive the market engine, as well as perish for it. Decisions to keep open during pandemic peaks affect layers of the population that are already vulnerable, such as non-white people, who often work on the margins of society, the elderly, the disabled, people suffering from pre-existing illnesses, Indigenous people, the homeless, immigrants crowded at state borders, and prisoners concentrated in jails (Butler 2022). The pandemic, and in particular the fact that people are dying and have died from work, has allowed us to revisit Krahl. In reopening factories and revitalising the economy, what is prioritised is not human life in the most literal sense, but the life of the economy itself (ibid). Those who consider the health of the economy more important than the health of the population adhere to the belief that profit and wealth are more important than human lives (ibid). The belief that opening factories are in the interest of the less affluent classes leads one to reflect on *Arbeit macht frei*, work makes one free, where work is precisely the place where one is forced to sacrifice one's life, where there are people who "produce are dispensable, are mere replaceable labour-power, are lives that do not count as such" (ibid). During the lockdown, concern for the world was soon replaced by concern for the economy, so closely that the economy came to resemble an organism, a body, on par with men and women (ibid). The organic life that is the economy - and, by extension, capitalism - to preserve its health, does not merely take the lives of bodies at its service, it wants life, it drains lives and expresses the will to sacrifice them. One must fight against political and public institutions and states that mould their actions around violence, establishing entire populations as dispensable (ibid). To refuse to accept the solution that for most of us to survive, some classes of the population must die is to reject "crass utilitarianism in favour of a radical equality of all life" (ibid). What makes it so difficult to talk about the value of lives is the co-option of

the very notion of value by market logic, as well as its subsumption under that of exchange value, hence economic value (ibid). The notion of value is a capitalist yardstick that we must radically question, and Krahl helps us to do so.

Krahl's central concern is bridging theory and practice by organising actions that call for transforming both daily life and political struggle. The organisation aims to free individuals, recognised as distinct subjects, from the oppression and pressures of social relations. Life must embody an emancipatory reality principle grounded in collective potential. The challenge of organisation reflects the challenge of revolutionary existence: "A social democracy survives only through the enlightened and spontaneous activity of politically mature masses" (Krahl 1998). Therefore, merely theorising enlightened consciousness is insufficient; revolutionary experience must begin by putting anti-authoritarian needs into practice as a way to prefigure the realm of freedom. It's crucial to identify the theoretical and practical needs of a movement in struggle. The spaces for confrontation and public discourse must be liberated and capable of creating opportunities for transformation. Relationships formed within this struggle must reject capitalist oppression and subjugation, uniting instead in solidarity. Individual life, alongside relational life, must critique the forms of domination shaping society, from labour to justice, and from the state to its institutions.

Hence, my first research question is:

RQ_1: What are the objective conditions for an emancipatory transformation within advanced capitalism?

Protests, strikes, occupations, and demonstrations aim to initiate a new political phase by building a broad, active, and combative resistance base. The aim is to make a revolution that can subvert the existing order. Anti-authoritarian actions express the desire to escape the violence embedded in stagnant forms of life, which leads to the isolation and distortion of human relations. Anti-authoritarian demands anticipate the realm of freedom through decentralised, spontaneous activities and collective self-organisation to satisfy solidarity-based needs. The challenge is to transform anti-authoritarian revolt into a Marxist learning process, converting the decline of the bourgeois individual into a collective awareness of exploitation in society. The objective

is to turn defensive struggles against fascist tendencies into proletarian revolutions. Revolution signifies the radical transformation of the current system. Revolution is understood as not just a moment of upheaval, but as a continuous process of transformation that reshapes the underlying relations of society, moving towards greater emancipation and freedom. It is a fundamental shift in consciousness and worldview, challenging dominant paradigms and creating space for new forms of knowledge, ethics, and community. Here, violence is necessary as a cathartic act for the oppressed to reclaim their humanity. This creates a tension between the ethical condemnation of violence and the recognition of its role in the liberation struggle.

To reclaim the totality of class consciousness, a unified organisation encompassing scientific intelligentsia, industrial workers, and productive employees is essential. The goal is to cultivate an antagonistic, anti-capitalist, and communist consciousness, organising it from its material conditions and moments of transformation.

Hence, my second and third research questions can be presented as follows:

RQ_2: How do we reconstruct the concept of class consciousness?

RQ_3: How to form an emancipatory, transformative, and revolutionary consciousness?

The revolutionary class will emerge from those who contribute to the creation of ethics (*Sittlichkeit*), where ethics encompasses social institutions and norms, such as the family, civil society, and the state. By class, we refer to a dynamic collective - a plurality that is continuously uniting and forming bonds through shared transformative practices that recognise the diverse practices of individual subjects. In this process of creating ethics, abstract individual freedom gains concrete value by being actualised within the universal human community. In this dialectical process, abstract law serves as the thesis, morality as the antithesis, and the subjective spirit is realised in ethics as the synthesis. The revolutionary class will be composed by intelligible subjects: those women and men who are critically aware of their social and economic collocation, who recognise the domination that occurs in capitalist society and who have the agency to act in the class struggle. They embody the potential of emancipation and are capable of

envisioning another world. The revolutionary class will manifest through the disruption of existing institutions, engaging in struggles and forming innovative organisational processes that will generate a new constellation of institutions.

In the first chapter, I analysed the concept of capitalism, in particular its feature of abstracting from the concrete reality and making society a single barrack. In this context, we will see how abstraction uses ideology and propaganda to commodify every human experience in such a way that the relations that govern the factories are the same that govern leisure and free time. The subjectivity that arises from capitalist relations resembles the one of an object because the relations of domination are internalised by men and women. Concepts such as mystification, reification, reproduction, base, superstructure and expropriation will be explained. In this chapter, the role of war in capitalism will be criticised as a tool to maintain control and repress human needs. With war capitalist and totalitarian agendas are carried out. Finally, we will see the role of state and justice in perpetuating the system of domination. While capitalism is commonly understood as an economic system, its premises reside in the legitimisation and reinforcements provided by the state. As we will see, these problems cannot be overcome with reforms, which can improve living conditions but not change the substantial issue: capitalism. Only a revolution, i.e. the radical transformation of society, can alter the existing order.

In the second chapter, we assess the fundamental aspects of production, from being a process of creating goods and services, i.e. labour, to being the social division of labour, i.e. producing individuals. Here we will see how production is based on exploitation and domination aimed at capital accumulation. The concepts of surplus labour, labour time, capital, abstract labour, exchange value and use value will be discussed. Particular attention will be given to money as the representative of all commodities in a process of continuous abstraction. Nevertheless, production is the process in which emancipation can take place when there is a critical awareness of how capitalism shapes experiences, desires and aspirations. Productivity can be spontaneous and emancipatory. The fact that the scientific intelligentsia has been incorporated into the production process makes it possible to rethink the concept of the proletariat and to organise it as a collective force in history.

In the third and final chapter, we will anticipate the realm of freedom by thinking of how to form an intelligible subject that strikes at the systems of domination and creates new emancipatory paths from which the revolutionary class can seize power and make revolution possible and relevant. To anticipate the realm of freedom, the workers must unite and organise themselves, bridging together theory and practice to open a path in which they can regain the memory of exploitation and develop a class consciousness that is a consciousness of totality. The importance of organising a movement that understands the concrete needs of the masses is underlined: just by that is possible to achieve true happiness and liberation for all. Concepts like totality, critical subjectivity, class consciousness, false consciousness, revolution, *Sittlichkeit*, *Konstitution* and *Verfassung* will be explained. Emancipation and liberation are fluid concepts, that evolve depending on the historical and social circumstances. They are collective aspirations that can be addressed just collectively, both theoretically and practically. Only a consciousness of totality can make emancipatory, antiauthoritarian and communist aspirations universal.

Chapter 1

DIALECTIC OF DOMINION

1.1 The subject in the society of the object

Hans-Jürgen Krahl analyses the economic and social relations of late-capitalist systems of domination, denouncing the forms of violence within social relations, and the isolation and deformation of human relations (Tomba 2011).

Capitalism possesses distinctive features. First, it is grounded on private ownership of the means of production that did not exist in the previous society, i.e. feudalism. Before, regardless of their social background, people had access to necessary resources (food, water, clothing, shelter, tools, land and labour) without having to go through market dynamics (Fraser 2022). With capitalism, previously shared resources become the private property of a small minority and a division is created between producers and owners (ibid). Second, capitalism is founded on the free market of labour. Workers are 'free' in two aspects. In legal terms, workers are not reduced to slavery or forced labour and are free to change jobs and enter into diverse employment contracts (ibid). This does not apply to the totality of people inhabiting the planet; there are borderline cases, such as prostitution. Additionally, workers have free access to the means of subsistence and production. But, in this sense, they lack the resources and prerogatives that would allow them to live outside the labour market (ibid). Third, capitalism is driven by an objective drive: the accumulation of capital (ibid). Everything about labour is aimed at the expansion of its capital. From this perspective, capital is self-valorising, it becomes an end and subject, the ambition and action of each person. Capitalism is, then, an ever-expanding system that seeks to commodify all aspects of human life. Fourth, capitalism operates through markets, as they allocate the main inputs (land, labour, capital, real estate, raw materials, credit) for the production of commodities (ibid). Markets also determine how the surplus will be invested. The surplus is the "collective fund of social energies over those needed to

reproduce a given form of life and to replenish what is consumed in the course of existence" (ibid). Surplus concerns decisions such as choosing how to spend one's leisure time and non-work activities but, within capitalism, these decisions are made not by individuals but by market forces (ibid). In practice, through capitalism, there is a total commodification of time and life ensured by public powers that guarantee its foundations: private property, contracts, stifling of rebellion, and money. The capitalist state operates as a mechanism for managing and perpetuating the system of capitalist production. The state regulates and stabilises the contradictions inherent in capitalism, often through technocratic means and the application of political technology. The state in capitalism acts as a mediator between capital and labour, but its role is ultimately to maintain the conditions necessary for capitalist accumulation and reproduction. Capitalism is not merely an economic system: its economic characteristics depend on underlying conditions that are not economic (ibid). Krahl regards capitalism not merely as an economic system but as a totalising structure that dominates social relations, labour, and human consciousness. Capitalist society is founded on social reproduction, ecology, political power and the constant injection of dispossessed wealth into racialised populations (ibid). Capitalism, as an economic system, is founded on a society structured under the premise that all internal relations are economic. According to Krahl, capitalism is an abstract system of domination. This abstraction manifests in the form of commodity fetishism and the dominance of exchange value over use value, where social relations are mediated through objects and market dynamics rather than direct human connections. Capitalism moulds individuals into passive subjects who are subsumed under the logic of the market and abstract labour. The result is a form of subjectivity that is alienated from authentic human experience and potential. Capitalism, therefore, not only dominates economically but also ideologically, by shaping how people think, act, and relate to one another.

'Late-capitalism' is a term used by Marxists and critical theorists like Krahl to describe the stage of capitalist development that emerged in the latter half of the 20th century and continues to the present day. It is a period of capitalist development characterised by intensified contradictions, inequalities, and crises and the emergence of new forms of resistance and struggle. Its main features are increasing globalisation and unprecedented levels of global economic integration, facilitated by advancements in

technology, communications, and transportation. This has led to the expansion of multinational corporations, global supply chains, and interconnected financial markets, which have reshaped the dynamics of production, trade, and capital accumulation. Advanced capitalism is also where financial institutions and speculative activities play an increasingly central role in the economy. Financialisation refers to the prioritisation of financial markets and profits over productive investment, leading to phenomena such as the proliferation of complex financial instruments, speculative bubbles, and financial crises. In late capitalism, we see the rise of neoliberal ideology and policies, which emphasise free markets, deregulation, privatisation, and austerity. Neoliberalism has led to the erosion of social welfare programs, the dismantling of labour protections, the privatisation of public services, and the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a wealthy elite. With it, there is a proliferation of precarious and flexible forms of employment, including part-time work, temporary contracts, gig economy jobs, and informal labour. This has resulted in increased job insecurity, wage stagnation, and a decline in labour rights and protections for many workers. The increasing role of the state and bureaucracy in managing the contradictions inherent in capitalist production is also part of late capitalism. The state takes on a technocratic character, where political power becomes more about administration and control than democratic engagement. Bureaucracy and technocracy are mechanisms through which the capitalist system stabilises itself and manages social contradictions, often through depoliticising social life and reducing politics to technocratic decision-making. This depoliticisation conceals the underlying class struggles and the domination of capital over labour. Late capitalism involves an intensified integration of ideology into the structures of domination. Ideology no longer simply reflects capitalist interests but becomes a productive force that shapes social relations, consciousness, and subjectivity. In this context, ideology helps sustain the system by normalising the commodification of life and reinforcing the power structures that uphold late capitalism. This integration of ideology into the system's functioning means that late capitalism is also characterised by a deeper and more insidious form of control, where even opposition to the system is often co-opted and neutralised through ideological means. The commodity form becomes a universal mediator of social relations, where everything is reduced to exchange value. This leads to a situation where human interactions and cultural

production are subsumed under the logic of capital, further alienating individuals from authentic social experiences. Late capitalism involves the commodification and commercialisation of everyday life, where consumption plays a central role in shaping individual identities and social relations. Advertising, marketing, and consumerism are pervasive, driving consumption patterns and contributing to environmental degradation and social inequalities. Rapid technological innovation and digitalisation have transformed production processes, communication networks, and social interactions. While technological advancements have the potential to improve productivity and quality of life, they also contribute to job displacement, surveillance, and the concentration of power in tech monopolies. Technology has replaced terror, the repression of the psyche has replaced that of physis, the sense organs are deformed, the pleasures guided and these - technology and repression of the psyche - are the instruments of domination (Krahl 1973).

Subjectivity is moulded by the imperatives of the capitalist system, which turns individuals into consumers and producers of commodified experiences. The result is a form of subjectivity that is disconnected from human potential and creativity, further entrenching the capitalist mode of production. Capitalist society has promised individuals that they could become autonomous, active, subjects but increasingly renders them to passive objects, abstract individuals (Krahl 1998). In social life, an individual experiences him or herself as passive and dependent, while society (composed of individuals) is an unconscious and inauthentic, but active subject (ibid). The individual in a capitalist society is passive and dependent, existing as part of a society that, in contrast, operates within the capitalist system as an active subject, though it remains unconscious and inauthentic. Men and women serve the interests of society, of this abstract entity that is nothing but the will of the ruling class. There's a link between advanced capitalism's forms of socialisation and the configuration of living subjects (Maiso 2018). Individuals have internalised the relations of dominations: their potential is stunted, and social relations reified in impoverished life (ibid). Power dynamics, including relations of domination, subordination, privilege, and oppression mark the subject's condition. These power dynamics can manifest along various axes, such as class, race, gender, sexuality, and ability, influencing individuals' access to resources, rights, and opportunities. Individuals have become character masks,

incapable of acting autonomously and criticising the self (ibid). Women and men are reduced to mere reactions. No longer capable of acting, they react to the stimulus given by the societal system by amplifying its effect and acting as a sounding board. Instead of long-term hopes, desires, expectations, and fears, there are sudden reactions and expectations of immediate gratification and satisfaction (ibid). The subject is "an expression of the antagonism between the needy individual as empirical subject and the needless legal person" as the possessor of good (Krahl 1973). Social life is reduced to a struggle for physical subsistence (Maiso 2018).

The totalitarian character of capitalism is expressed in the reduction of the subject to an object. The consciousness of the subject is a reflection of society and its economic apparatus (Fierro 2014). The subject-object mediation assigns the latter a privileged role: it subsists as an autonomous entity to the subject, it is an object of constitution (ibid). This means that the subject cannot suppress the object - a thing external to him or herself - but can, however, be annihilated by it. Human consciousness, thus, becomes 'thingness'. The thingness of the world is an appearance that drives women and men to shape social relations based on the laws of the market and production (ibid). This thingness has determined the disappearance of class consciousness and, with it, its ability to transcend the power structures of the capitalist world (ibid). The subject does not mediate facts, it is the objects that operate a mystification that cancels out differences in consciousness (ibid). Mystification is the process by which social realities are obscured or distorted, preventing people from perceiving the true nature of their social conditions. Individuals are not the primary agents in interpreting and understanding social facts. Instead, their consciousness and understanding are influenced and shaped by the objects and social relations around them. The mystification operated by objects leads to a homogenisation of consciousness and prevents consciences from seeing through to the coercive mechanisms. Conscience becomes functional to the preservation of the *status quo* of which individuals are mere cogs (ibid). Differences in consciousness that might arise from critical reflection on social realities are cancelled out because the reified objects present a distorted view of reality that individuals accept as given. Commodities are perceived as having intrinsic value, independent of the labour and social relations that produced them. This perception leads to a form of mystification where people see commodities as natural

objects with inherent value, obscuring the social labour and exploitation involved in their production. Ideology plays a significant role in this mystification process. By presenting the capitalist system and its products as natural and neutral, ideology prevents individuals from recognising the exploitative social relations underlying them. This results in a false consciousness where people are unaware of their true social conditions and potential for revolutionary change. For Krahl, overcoming this mystification requires a critical reflection on the social conditions and the reified nature of objects. By demystifying these objects and understanding their true nature, individuals can develop a more accurate consciousness that recognises the possibilities for social transformation and emancipation.

Krahl, influenced by Marxist theory, employs the concepts of 'base' and 'superstructure' to analyse the relationship between economic structures and social institutions within capitalist societies. In organised capitalism, the relationship between base and superstructure must be analysed from changes in the mode of production (Krahl 1973). The base, in Marxist theory, refers to the economic foundation of society, including the mode of production, property relations, and the organisation of labour. It encompasses the material forces of production (such as technology, raw materials, and machinery) and the social relations of production (such as class relations and the division of labour). The base is seen as the primary determinant of social organisation and change, shaping the development of other aspects of society. The superstructure, on the other hand, encompasses the cultural, political, and ideological institutions that arise on top of the economic base. This includes institutions such as the state, the legal system, education, religion, media, and culture. The superstructure reflects and reinforces the interests and values of the ruling class, serving to maintain and legitimise existing social relations. The superstructure is influenced by the economic base but it also has relative autonomy and can exert influence back upon the base. While the economic base provides the material conditions and constraints within which social institutions operate, the superstructure, in turn, helps to reproduce and stabilise the economic base through ideological means. This includes shaping beliefs, values, and norms that justify existing social hierarchies and inequalities. It is the immanent ideologisation of production that smoothes out the difference between base and superstructure (ibid). Indeed, it receives its instructions from formalised images, myths

and symbols summarised in a theory of signs (ibid). Ideological influences permeate the very process of production itself, blurring the lines between economic structures and social institutions. These include culturally constructed narratives, symbols, and representations that shape individuals' perceptions and beliefs about the world. These images and symbols are often disseminated through various cultural and media channels, such as advertising, entertainment, and educational institutions. The theory of signs refers to how meaning is constructed and communicated through symbols and signifiers within a society. This theory emphasises the role of language, communication, and semiotics in shaping individuals' understanding of reality and their social identities. Capitalist ideology is transmitted and reinforced through the manipulation of signs and symbols, which serve to naturalise and legitimise existing power structures and social hierarchies. The superstructure perpetuates capitalist social relations and maintains the dominance of the ruling class. Ideological institutions such as the state, the media, and the educational system serve to reproduce capitalist ideology and suppress dissenting voices. The mass communication media contribute to the subordination of consciences to the dominant power: "Reified consciousness is the unconscious assimilation of standardised ideas and attitudes that perpetuate the existing situation" (Fierro 2014). The culture industry does not respond to consumer needs but creates needs and consumers that ensure the industry's survival, proliferation and reinforcement. *Kultur* (culture) has been subordinated to the laws of production and exchange and has lost its creative spontaneity in favour of its commodification (ibid).

Concrete social relations, experiences, and phenomena are reduced to abstract categories, concepts, or representations that obscure their underlying complexity and historical specificity. Krahl, drawing on Marxist and critical theory perspectives, analyses abstraction as a central mechanism through which capitalist ideology and domination operate within contemporary society. Abstraction dominates in the consciousness through the theoretical and practical work of the scientific and social organisation. Abstract concepts, categories, and ideologies are employed by dominant groups and institutions to justify, legitimise, or perpetuate systems of oppression and control. Abstraction, in this context, involves the simplification or generalisation of complex social realities into oversimplified representations that serve the interests of the dominant group. Abstraction plays a crucial role in the construction and reproduction of

capitalist ideology and false consciousness. Through abstraction, capitalist society naturalises and legitimises its social structures and power relations, presenting them as immutable and inevitable aspects of human existence. This ideological abstraction serves to mask the contradictions and inequalities inherent in capitalist society, perpetuating a state of false consciousness among the dominated classes.

Abstraction defines the capitalist era as the reduction of quality to quantity (Krahl 1973). Subjectivity has lost its qualitative thinking to adapt it to quantifiable elements and becomes in itself heteronomous and integrally valorised (ibid). It has been formalised in a system of signs. Consciousness is deprived of its independence because it has formalised the qualitative concept to adapt it to qualifiable signs (ibid.). From it is demanded a solid use value, it is involved in the exchange and is reified and made object (ibid). Reification, a concept central to Marxist thought, refers to the process by which abstract social relations or human creations are perceived as concrete and natural entities. “Reification implies that people treat each other as things, that in competition subjects reduce each other to objects, annihilating themselves,” reification means “immobilising as an object another subject whom I love, with whom I sleep, drink, eat, talk” (ibid). In capitalist societies, reification occurs when social relations, such as labour or commodities, take on a life of their own and appear as if they are inherent properties of the physical world rather than socially constructed phenomena. Reification obscures the underlying social processes and relations that give rise to these phenomena, leading to a distorted understanding of social reality. “The problem of reification is at the same time that of the real representation of the abstract” (ibid). The challenge posed by reification is also related to the representation of abstract concepts in concrete reality. Abstract concepts, such as capital, labour, or value, must be represented or manifested in concrete social relations, practices, and institutions to be comprehensible and meaningful. The ‘real representation of the abstract’ involves understanding how abstract concepts are instantiated in concrete forms within social reality. At the same time, the challenge of representing abstract concepts in concrete forms poses difficulties in accurately grasping the complex dynamics of capitalist society and its underlying structures.

Abstraction is intertwined with commodification, where social relations and human activities are transformed into commodities for exchange within the capitalist

market. This commodification leads to the reification of social phenomena, whereby abstract categories such as ‘labour,’ ‘capital,’ and ‘commodity’ become fetishised and imbued with a false sense of concreteness and naturalness, obscuring the underlying social relations of exploitation and domination. Abstraction contributes to the alienation and estrangement of individuals from their labour, products, and social relations. Under capitalism, abstraction separates individuals from the concrete processes of production and consumption, reducing their experiences to abstract economic categories and alienating them from the fruits of their labour and the social connections that give meaning to their lives. “The dynamics of the production process in capitalist society do not remain [...] confined to the factories and cannot be contained from outside: [...] those dynamics decisively condition society” (Fierro 2014). Political power boasts of curbing economic mechanisms when in reality it is a reflection of it: the authoritarian state aims to extend factory discipline to the whole of society (ibid).

In the context of scientific and social organisation, abstract concepts and processes can be systematically analysed, modelled, and utilised in a way that allows for precise calculations and predictions. For example, in economics, abstract concepts like labour time, value, and capital can be used to create models that predict economic behaviour and outcomes. This calculable nature of abstraction is tied to the rationalisation processes in modern capitalist societies, where efficiency, productivity, and optimisation are paramount. Abstraction allows for the breakdown of complex social and economic processes into measurable units that can be managed and controlled. For Krahl, abstraction is universal, it is a capacity inherent to human cognition and applicable across various domains of knowledge and practice. Abstraction allows humans to generalise from specific instances, identify patterns, and apply these insights across different contexts and fields, from natural sciences to social sciences and humanities. The universality of abstraction also means that it is a shared cognitive tool among all humans. It is a fundamental aspect of human thought that enables individuals to transcend immediate experiences and conceptualise broader, more general principles. At the same time, abstraction allows for the creation of theoretical models and frameworks that simplify and explain complex social and economic phenomena. It enables critical theorists to dissect and analyse the structures of capitalism, uncovering the underlying dynamics of exploitation, alienation, and power. Abstraction is not

merely a passive tool for understanding; it also actively shapes social reality. The ability to abstract, measure, and generalise informs the organisation and regulation of social and economic life. Policies, institutions, and practices are often based on abstract principles and models that aim to create order and predictability.

Abstract and technical reason becomes concrete in its calculable dominion over nature and humans. It organises and controls things, men and women, factory and clerical bureaucracy, work, and leisure (ibid). The internationalisation of forms of domination makes it difficult to self-organise needs, interests, and desires because the population perceives reality from within the schemes of the dominant society (Maiso 2018). Domination has destroyed the social relations between men and women who treat each other as if they were their objects. The capitalist system integrates the masses into the relationship of economic domination condemning them to apathy in the face of extra-economic violence (ibid). Relations of dominations are adequate for the development of production forces, but they are barbarism and industrial fascism (ibid). Abstraction naturalises social hierarchies by framing them as inherent and inevitable features of society. Dominant ideologies abstract from concrete historical and material conditions to portray existing power relations as natural, just, or ordained by divine order. This abstraction obscures the historical processes and social struggles that produce and maintain hierarchies, reinforcing the *status quo* and discouraging resistance. Inequality is normalised by reducing complex social phenomena to abstract categories that occult disparities of power, wealth, and privilege. Dominant ideologies abstract from the specific experiences and perspectives of marginalised groups, treating them as abstract, interchangeable entities rather than recognising their diversity, agency, and humanity. This abstraction masks the structural injustices that perpetuate inequality and rationalises the unequal distribution of resources and opportunities. Resistance is erased by the marginalisation and silencing of dissenting voices and perspectives. This abstraction perpetuates a false narrative of social harmony or consensus while suppressing dissent and deleting the ongoing struggles for justice and liberation. The new element that capitalism introduces into world history is the legitimisation of political domination, which is the extension of domination over nature to women and men through technological rationality (Krahl 1973). Dominance is legitimised by framing it as necessary for social order, progress, or security. Dominant ideologies

abstract from concrete historical contexts to justify authoritarian practices, militarism and colonialism in the name of preserving stability, promoting development, or defending against external threats. This abstraction delegitimises dissent and resistance by framing alternative visions of society as impractical, utopian, or dangerous. Abstraction can reify power by representing it as an abstract, disembodied force rather than as a product of specific social relations and historical contingencies. Dominant ideologies abstract from the concrete practices and interests of ruling elites, portraying power as an abstract, impersonal entity beyond human control. This abstraction obscures the agency and accountability of those who wield power, reinforcing their dominance and shielding them from scrutiny.

"The reification of the domination of the human over the human is explained insofar as it is an ideal extension of the domination of nature; that domination itself is natural; and it, therefore, becomes a thing" (ibid). The discipline of the factory must justify the domination of the human being over the human being. For this reason, this dominion is placed in close relation to the dominion of the human being over nature (Fierro 2014). "The dialectic of subject and object and the historical articulation given in each case thus express the historical stage reached by the domination of nature and its organisational form, modelled on the division of labour, which is implemented in the relations of individual objects" (Krahl 1973). The relationship subject-object is not a static relationship but it evolves as society develops. In capitalist society, this relationship becomes mediated by technology, labour, and social organisation. The domination of nature is achieved through industrialisation, technological innovation, and the division of labour. This domination, however, also reflects the alienation of human beings from nature, as they increasingly treat nature as a resource to be exploited rather than as something they are a part of. The domination of nature and the division of labour shape the way individuals relate to the material world, often leading to alienation and exploitation. "That domination over nature, which seemed the result of a natural necessity, at the moment when labour becomes technical, is transformed into idealised domination, into value. Consequently, that value, as an abstraction, loses all contact with nature; it is, in a certain sense, nature without mediation, which imposes its dominion over humans" (Fierro 2014). Initially, the domination over nature by humans might appear as a result of natural necessity: humans' exploitation and control of natural

resources are driven by the basic need to survive and thrive. When labour becomes technical, human work is increasingly mediated by technology and technical processes. This technical mediation transforms the nature of labour from a direct interaction with nature to a more abstract, technologically driven process. The technical transformation of labour results in an idealised domination where the value produced by labour is no longer directly tied to nature but becomes an abstract concept. This value is idealised because it is a product of human conception and economic systems rather than a direct outcome of natural processes. Value, in this context, is an abstraction that loses all contact with its natural origins. It is no longer grounded in the physical reality of nature but exists in an abstract form within the capitalist system, such as in the form of money or exchange value. As value becomes an abstraction, it represents 'nature without mediation:' the abstract value system imposes itself on humans as if it were a natural force, even though it is a human-created construct. It appears as an unmediated force of nature, dominating human life and social relations. The abstract value system imposes its dominion over individuals, making them subject to the impersonal forces of the market and the capitalist economy. This system of value becomes a new form of domination that dictates human behaviour and social organisation, often with the same unyielding force as natural necessity once did. Dominion over women and men is, therefore, an extension of dominion over nature, and this organic exchange between humans and nature extends to the reciprocal relations between men and women. In this way, "in capitalism, the relations of production coincide with the forms of relations of the whole of society and abstract labour describes the totality of social organisation and formation" (Krahl 1973). Production relations and social relations between individuals are closely interrelated and interdependent (Fierro 2014). The abstract domination of value over humans limits their freedom and autonomy. By becoming subject to an abstract economic system, individuals lose their connection to the natural world and the concrete realities of their labour. This leads to a form of social domination that is as pervasive and inescapable as natural forces. Constructed manipulation operates the abstraction of qualitative needs and translates social needs into individual needs (Krahl 1973).

Social dominance is anchored in the natural relations between humans and, thus, "these appear irrepressible: the 'natural' division of labour between the sexes serves this

mystification; matriarchy and patriarchy appear primarily as given orders, linked to the sexual division of labour per se" (ibid). The concept of the 'natural division of labour' has historically been used to justify and reinforce systems of dominance and oppression based on gender, race, and other social categories. The idea suggests that certain roles, tasks, and responsibilities are inherently suited to particular groups of people based on perceived biological or essentialist differences. Capitalism perpetuates and reinforces patriarchal structures and gender inequalities. Men are assigned roles associated with breadwinning, public leadership, and decision-making, while women are relegated to domestic tasks, caregiving, and reproductive labour. With capitalism, the division between productive labour and social reproduction is introduced. Social reproduction refers to the forms of provisioning, caregiving and interaction that produce and sustain human beings and social ties (Fraser 2022). Care work is inscribed in practices aimed at the physical and mental well-being of humans which pertain to the domestic sphere (care of children, the elderly, the home) and the sphere of institutions (education, health care) (ibid). This type of labour, unlike commodity production, is mostly non-waged labour that supports wage labour, surplus-value accumulation and capitalism. Social-reproductive labour creates new generations of workers, sustains existing ones and maintains social relations and shared visions (ibid). The proletarian family is both a site of the reproduction of labour power and a space where the ideology of capitalism is reproduced. Within this family structure, capitalist norms and values are instilled, ensuring that the next generation of workers is conditioned to participate in the system. This division of labour is often enforced through cultural norms, social expectations, and institutionalised discrimination, reinforcing men's dominance and women's subordination within the family and society. Reproductive labour is relegated to the domestic and private sphere and its social importance is concealed if not nullified (ibid). The family, as a unit of social reproduction, helps to sustain the capitalist system by reproducing the working class both biologically and ideologically, it maintains the separation between the private and public spheres, with the private sphere often serving as a space where the oppressive conditions of capitalism are normalised. The division of labour between the sexes is a product of capitalist social relations, where women are relegated to lower-paid, precarious, or unpaid labour roles, while men are disproportionately represented in higher-paid and more prestigious positions. This

division of labour serves to maintain women's economic dependence and subordinate status within the capitalist system.

Gender intersects with other axes of power, such as class, sexuality, disability and race, to produce intersecting systems of oppression. Individuals who occupy marginalised positions at the intersections of these categories often face compounded forms of oppression and exploitation. The concept of the natural division of labour has been used to justify racial hierarchies and white supremacy. Historically, racialised ideologies have depicted certain racial groups as naturally suited to perform menial, labour-intensive tasks, while others are portrayed as intellectually superior or morally upright. This racialised division of labour has been used to justify systems of slavery, colonialism, and racial segregation, perpetuating the dominance of white elites over marginalised racial groups. Within capitalism, we have class exploitation and economic inequality. Alongside the mechanism of exploitation continues that of expropriation, that is, the forced confiscation, on an ongoing basis, of the wealth of subjugated and minorised populations (ibid). In expropriation, the 'doubly free' worker is erased, and people no longer possess the status of individuals and citizens with rights, they are unfree and dependent, deprived of political protection and helpless (ibid). Capitalist society divides the world population into two categories: the exploited workers and the dispossessed workers. The exploited workers process raw materials with the help of machinery powered by confiscated energy sources for wages kept strictly low because there is the availability of food grown by indebted labourers on confiscated land (ibid). This division of labour reinforces class hierarchies and economic disparities, enabling the accumulation of wealth and power by capitalist elites at the expense of workers' rights and well-being.

Krahl presses for military engagement against the patriarchal structure of society, racial expropriation and modern forms of authoritarianism (Tomba 2021). He supports the critique of traditional gender roles and norms, pushing for a radical rethinking of family structures, sexual norms, and the division of labour along gender lines. The struggle against patriarchy is integral to the broader revolutionary movement against capitalism: gender oppression and economic exploitation are interconnected and need to be addressed simultaneously. This included advocating for equal rights, and opportunities, and the dismantling of societal norms that perpetuated gender inequality.

Krahl's call for militant engagement is rooted in his belief that systemic change could not be achieved through passive or purely reformist means. He sees militant action as necessary to disrupt and dismantle entrenched systems of oppression and exploitation. His advocacy extends across various forms of struggle, recognising the interconnected nature of different forms of oppression - imperialism, patriarchy, and authoritarianism - and the need for a unified, radical approach to combat them. Krahl presses for militant engagement by encouraging direct action, solidarity with oppressed groups, and a radical critique of existing social, political, and economic structures. Krahl's focus on class struggle implies that social reproduction is not just a process that benefits capital; it is also a site of potential resistance. The reproduction of social relations is never complete or seamless, and cracks in the system provide opportunities for revolutionary movements to challenge capitalist reproduction. In the cure, subjectivation takes place where individuals are constituted as social beings, where the socio-ethical substance (*Sittlichkeit*) in which they move is shaped (ibid). The process of social reproduction is intimately connected to the formation of class consciousness. The conditions under which the working class reproduces itself play a role in shaping its awareness of exploitation and its potential for revolutionary action. As workers become aware of how their lives are subordinated to the needs of capital, they may begin to resist and develop a consciousness that challenges the system. Understanding and addressing these intersecting forms of oppression is needed to achieve true social justice and liberation for all marginalised groups. Challenging the idea of a 'natural' division of labour is essential for dismantling systems of dominance and advancing social justice and equality for all individuals and groups. Krahl's analysis of abstraction is part of his broader critique of capitalist domination and his quest for liberation and social transformation. By unveiling the abstract and alienating nature of capitalist social relations, Krahl seeks to provoke critical consciousness and collective action among the oppressed classes, fostering resistance to capitalist ideology and the creation of alternative modes of social organisation based on concrete human needs and desires. At the same time, Krahl recognises the potential for resistance and social change emanating from within the superstructure, as individuals and social movements challenge dominant ideologies and seek to transform society.

1.2 War serves the capital

Late capitalist society lives in apparent harmony between the threat of destruction at the hands of the atomic bomb and actual social progress (Krahl 1973). There is a paradoxical coexistence of two contrasting realities within capitalist societies. It is from this harmony that the manipulated harmony between individual and socio-political needs derives (ibid). It is implied that the pursuit of social progress within the framework of late capitalism is precarious and fragile, overshadowed by the ever-present spectre of nuclear catastrophe. On one hand, since the development and use of atomic weapons during World War II, humanity has been aware of the catastrophic potential for mass destruction and loss of life that these weapons represent. The threat of nuclear war, whether through intentional conflict or accidental escalation, looms over global society, creating a sense of fear, uncertainty, and existential dread. On the other hand, despite the looming threat of nuclear annihilation, these societies have experienced advancements in various domains, including technology, science, medicine, education, and human rights. This progress manifests in improvements in living standards, increased access to education and healthcare, advancements in civil rights and social justice, and greater global interconnectedness. But progress has a decisive destructive function: “It boycotts the free development of human needs and faculties, it preserves peace through a constant threat of war, it makes growth dependent on the repression of the real possibilities of appeasing the struggle for existence” (ibid). This destructive function of progress manifests in various ways, such as environmental degradation, social alienation, and the exacerbation of inequality. The pursuit of progress hinders the free development of human needs and faculties. Instead of fostering genuine human flourishing and well-being, progress under late capitalism prioritises the interests of profit-driven industries and technological innovation over the fulfilment of basic human needs and the cultivation of human potential. Progress preserves peace not through genuine harmony or cooperation, but through the constant threat of war. In other words, the existence of advanced military technologies and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction serve as deterrents to potential conflicts between nations. This precarious balance of power, however, perpetuates a state of fear

and insecurity, rather than peace. Progress under late capitalism is dependent on the repression of real possibilities for addressing the underlying causes of social and economic inequality. Economic growth and prosperity are maintained through systems of repression and exploitation, rather than through efforts to alleviate poverty, improve living standards, and ensure social justice. The permanent state of war and the need to defend oneself are facets of that domination over nature that is the domination of human beings over human beings (Fierro 2014). The techniques and mentality used to dominate nature are applied to human interactions, leading to systems of domination where some individuals or groups exert control over others. The constant state of war reflects this internalised domination. Just as humans strive to control nature to secure resources and ensure survival, they also engage in wars to control other human groups, secure territories, and maintain power. In a society structured by domination, individuals and groups are perpetually in a state of defence. The need to defend oneself against threats (real or perceived) from other humans parallels the need to protect against natural threats. This perpetual defence mechanism sustains a cycle of conflict and power struggles. War and defence mechanisms are extreme manifestations of alienation.

In the context of global rivalries, what happens is a homogenisation of needs: the external threat creates the common need for security and reassurance by relegating all other needs to individual needs, thus repressing them (ibid). “This repressive action implemented on needs makes it feasible to annihilate any centrifugal thrust and to consolidate the mechanisms of society” (ibid). The agreement of needs is the result of the agreement between constant threat and social progress that paints a picture without deficiencies and disharmonies in which everything seems to be guided by reason (ibid). False rationality hides a totalising irrationality that ensures that growth and progress are pursued through the repression of individual needs (ibid). All this is masked, and hidden, because material misery has been largely eliminated and enjoyments are not lacking: repression is not enacted in overt and blatant forms that, therefore, could create evversive tendencies. Nature is not affected, *physis* is respected in illusory margins of freedom; what is attempted to manipulate is the psyche, which is moved to think it swims in free horizons (ibid). The fact that repression acts on the psyche makes it almost impossible to unravel it: “The individual does not perceive repression, since it

places that enjoyment before [her or] his eyes as the only possible and harmonises [her or] his needs *a priori* with the order of society" (ibid). All this is functional in annihilating every diatribe and antagonism making social change impossible: every conflict is annihilated "by integrating the opposing forces in a system that places general pacification because of progress" (ibid). Society appears universally harmonious and the mechanisms for preserving the *status quo* totalising (ibid). "The constant threat of destruction serves to narcotise consciences to the point that the individual completely loses sight of emancipatory needs and believes that the only needs to be satisfied are those whose satisfaction has been somehow imposed" (ibid). The perception of needs is linked to the historical-social-cultural context: the fact that women and men feel something as a need is because they insert this perception into a precise general behavioural code that is inseparably linked to the context in which they live. The perception of a need is a social fact and society manipulates such needs by fixing *a priori* false needs through which it can sedate individuals (ibid). Most of the needs that prevail today (having fun, relaxing, consuming what is trendy) fall into the category of false needs (Marcuse 1999). Liberation from them presupposes an awareness of the subordination to such needs; the obstacle that arises is the continuous introjecting into minds of false needs as the only possible ones (Fierro 2014). Women and men, potentially, could develop antagonistic attitudes in their private lives, but there is an external tendency that pushes them to conform to the laws of society even when centred tendencies seem to be beyond their control (ibid.). The products themselves manipulate and indoctrinate: they are available to all and this makes it possible to assert that the quality of life is better than in the past and that there is therefore a continual move towards progress thanks to society. This tenor anaesthetises critical thinking, standardising ideas, thoughts, and people. Politicians and the media foster this homologation, cutting off all that is critical and affirming the single thought through banal and empty slogans that are so exemplified that they easily imprint themselves on their minds (ibid).

"What such mechanisms pursue is the elimination of the gap between essence and phenomenon" (ibid). Essence refers to the true nature or fundamental reality of something, while phenomenon refers to the way that thing appears or is perceived. The gap between essence and phenomenon is the difference between what something truly is

and how it is experienced or understood. Individuals' consciousnesses are manipulated to conform to a standardised, collective way of thinking and perceiving reality. When individuals think in the same way, it is easier to control and dominate them. The aim is to make the way things appear (phenomenon) align with their true nature (essence) as defined by the dominant ideology. In Marxist theory, the ruling class controls not only the material means of production but also the intellectual and cultural means of production. This control allows the ruling class to shape the dominant ideology, which in turn influences how people perceive reality (phenomenon) and understand their place within it. From a critical theory perspective, the elimination of the gap between essence and phenomenon through homologation is seen as a form of ideological control: it masks the true nature of social relations (essence) by presenting a distorted but seemingly coherent picture of reality (phenomenon) that supports the *status quo*. By aligning essence with the phenomenon, the mechanisms of homologation help to naturalise and legitimise the existing social order. By eliminating the gap between essence and phenomenon, the ruling ideology makes its worldview appear as the natural and only possible reality. This discourages critical thinking and revolutionary consciousness by making it difficult for individuals to perceive the true nature of their exploitation and alienation. The elimination of the gap supports the creation of false consciousness, where individuals are unable to see beyond the surface appearances (phenomenon) to understand the deeper structures of power and exploitation (essence). "Any attempt to transcend reality even within the historical dimension is nullified, any attempt at opposition is frustrated, and possible transcendence is relegated to a metaphysical dimension that removes all historical consistency from it" (ibid). Any form of resistance or opposition to the *status quo* is thwarted. The system has mechanisms in place that absorb, neutralise, or counteract opposition. Transcendence or the possibility of surpassing current conditions is shifted to a realm beyond material or historical reality. It is moved to a metaphysical or abstract level, which disconnects it from practical, historical efforts for change. By relegating transcendence to a metaphysical dimension, any potential for real historical change loses its grounding in concrete, material conditions. It becomes inconsistent with the historical and material reality, thus losing its effectiveness and relevance. By nullifying and frustrating efforts to change, the system ensures its perpetuation. When efforts for change are forced into a

metaphysical or abstract realm, they lose their connection to concrete historical and social struggles. This serves to pacify potential revolutionary energies by redirecting them away from practical actions and into abstract theorising or spiritual pursuits. For change to be effective and meaningful, it must be rooted in the material and historical context. By removing the historical consistency of transcendence, the system effectively makes it impossible for real, grounded change to occur. Resistance movements and efforts for change are rendered impotent if they cannot operate effectively within the historical and material dimensions. They become symbolic rather than transformative. By revealing the gap between essence and phenomenon, critical theory aims to awaken individuals to the reality of their social conditions and the possibility of transformative change.

Krahl sees war as a product of the capitalist system and its inherent drive for expansion and accumulation. He analyses how imperialist powers, motivated by economic interests and competition for resources and markets, engage in military conflicts to assert their dominance and control over territories and populations. War is a manifestation of the contradictions and violence inherent in capitalist relations of production, it exacerbates social inequalities, perpetuates oppression, and undermines efforts for social justice and solidarity. War is the most violent and detrimental manifestation of capitalist class rule: it is the product of imperialist rivalries between the imperialist classes of different countries (Luxemburg 1980). In other words, war serves the interests of the ruling capitalist classes by maintaining and expanding their power, influence, and control over resources and markets. War results in immense human suffering, loss of life, and destruction of communities, making it the most egregious manifestation of capitalist exploitation and domination. Imperialism is the driving force behind war in capitalist societies. Imperialism refers to the expansionist policies and practices of capitalist states, aimed at acquiring territories, resources, and markets for economic and strategic gain. Imperialist rivalries between different capitalist powers lead to conflicts over control of territories, resources, and spheres of influence, ultimately culminating in wars and military interventions. War is not simply a product of inter-state disputes, but rather of the imperialist classes within different capitalist countries. These ruling classes, representing the interests of dominant economic and political elites, pursue imperialist agendas to maintain and expand their wealth and

power on a global scale. War serves as a means for these ruling classes to assert their dominance, secure access to resources, and preserve the stability of the capitalist system. It represents the expansion of capitalist domination beyond national borders, driven by the need for capital to find new markets, resources, and labour to exploit. Imperialism is a fundamental economic necessity for capitalist states seeking to overcome the limits of accumulation within their territories. In this sense, imperialism is the global manifestation of the same exploitative and oppressive dynamics that characterise capitalism at the national level. It extends the relations of domination and exploitation inherent in capitalism to a global scale. Imperialism perpetuates a global division of labour, where the Global South is subjected to underdevelopment and dependency while the Global North consolidates its wealth and power.

The aims of the warmongers are the monopoly of security and world supremacy, and the means to achieve them are the exploitation and oppression of territories that have not yet been dominated by capital (ibid). National interests are a means of deception to enslave the working class to its deadly enemy: imperialism (ibid). In capitalism, competition is a fundamental principle. This economic competition translates into political and military competition. The need for nations and corporations to dominate markets and resources leads to conflicts and wars, perpetuating a state of defence and aggression. Each war leads to the strengthening of militarism, international quarrels and world economic rivalry, the premises for new wars (ibid). With them, wars strengthen capitalist exploitation and weaken public control as parliaments become passive instruments of militarism (ibid). In war, we find the highest expression of colonialism, imperialism, classism, and capitalism. It consumes from below, wearing away the flesh of the class at the base of the social hierarchy, rising, but never touching the top of the pyramid. The act of opposing the war is an expression of popular repudiation of exploitation, an expression of the active and common will to counter imperialism and, above all, the will to be governed in another way.

War is a decisive historical factor of power; with it comes the defeat of socialism and democracy (ibid). Wars, whether waged between nations or within societies, have often been decisive in determining the outcomes of conflicts, the rise and fall of states, and the redistribution of power and resources. Wars have the potential to reshape political landscapes, alter social structures, and transform international relations. While

socialism advocates for collective ownership of the means of production and the pursuit of social and economic equality, and democracy emphasises the principles of political participation, representation, and accountability; during times of war, these ideologies are undermined or suppressed, as governments resort to authoritarian measures, curtail civil liberties, and prioritise national security over democratic principles. “The constant presence of an external threat pursues the aim of obfuscating minds, of distracting them from the true perception of reality: thus, while gloomy pictures of war and imminent dangers are painted, in reality, a reinforcement of the system is effected” (Fierro 2014). The ideology of domination over nature is used to justify social hierarchies and conflicts. The belief that some groups are naturally superior and have the right to dominate others mirrors the ideology that humans have the right to dominate nature. This belief system underpins the justification for war and social domination. The permanent state of war can be seen as the militarisation of social relations. Capitalist societies often maintain their power structures through military force and the threat of violence, both domestically and internationally. This militarisation reflects the application of domination techniques developed for nature onto human society. The permanent state of war dehumanises individuals by reducing them to instruments of conflict and defence. This dehumanisation is a direct consequence of viewing humans through the same lens as nature to be dominated and controlled. The need to constantly defend oneself creates an environment of structural violence, where social systems perpetuate inequality, fear, and conflict. This structural violence is a reflection of the deeper domination embedded in capitalist societies. The cycle of domination and defence perpetuates itself. The more society is structured around domination, the more it necessitates mechanisms of defence, leading to ongoing conflict and instability.

Militarism and the military-industrial complex are integral components of capitalist societies. Military spending and the arms industry serve the interests of the ruling class, perpetuating social inequality and diverting resources away from social welfare programs and productive investment. For the capitalist class, militarism is indispensable in three respects: “firstly, it serves to defend competing national interests with other national groups; secondly, it constitutes a privileged field of investment for both financial and industrial capital; thirdly, as an internally useful tool to ensure class domination over the working people” (Luxemburg 2009). Krahl highlights the role of

the military in suppressing dissent and maintaining the *status quo*. Given his commitment to anti-imperialism and international solidarity, Krahl opposes imperialist wars of aggression waged by capitalist states. He views such wars as unjust and driven by imperialist ambitions rather than genuine concerns for democracy or humanitarianism. Anti-war movements and efforts to resist militarism and imperialism can be enhanced through grassroots organising and collective action. Anti-war activism is interconnected with other forms of resistance against capitalism, imperialism, and state repression. Anti-imperialist struggles are an essential part of the global proletarian movement. Resistance to imperialism is not just a national or regional issue but part of the broader struggle against global capitalism. The solidarity between workers in imperialist countries and those in colonised or oppressed nations is crucial to the success of the proletarian revolution. Krahl presses for militant engagement against aggression in Vietnam. As a member of the Frankfurt School and a significant figure in the German student movement of the 1960s, he advocates for militant engagement against various forms of oppression and injustice. Krahl viewed the Vietnam War as an example of imperialist aggression by the US, he encouraged militant opposition to this war, seeing it as part of the broader struggle against global capitalism and imperialism. He emphasises solidarity with the Vietnamese people advocating for direct action, protests, and demonstrations to pressure governments and raise awareness about the injustices being perpetrated. He critiques Western policies that supported the war, arguing that such policies were driven by capitalist interests and the desire to maintain geopolitical dominance.

1.3 The public sphere in the state emergency

Krahl denounces a state practice that is decision-making and emergent in all spheres of life, making society a single barrack (Tomba 2021). Actions, policies, and interventions of the state apparatus, including government institutions, law enforcement agencies, and regulatory bodies shape and regulate social life, exerting control over individuals and communities through various mechanisms of governance. The expansive reach of state decision-making and intervention, which extends into every

sphere of social existence, includes not only political and economic domains but also cultural, social, and personal aspects of life. Krahl's concern is about the pervasive influence of the state in shaping norms, values, and behaviours across society. The all-encompassing control exerted by the state transforms society into a uniform and authoritarian space, where individual autonomy and diversity are suppressed in favour of conformity and obedience to state authority.

The capitalist system is a system of integral statism, where there is state coercion, and fascist power structures that have been internalised by individuals, and cultural industry (Maiso 2018). The state has been integrated into all aspects of capitalist society. It plays a central role in regulating and managing the economy, social relations, and political life within the capitalist system. Rather than being a neutral arbiter, the state acts in the interests of capital accumulation and the preservation of capitalist power structures. State coercion, or the use of force or threats of force by the state, is a means of maintaining social order and enforcing compliance with capitalist norms and laws. State coercion takes various forms, including police repression, legal sanctions, and military intervention, and is used to suppress dissent and resistance to capitalist domination. There are authoritarian and hierarchical forms of governance within capitalist societies. The internalisation of fascist power structures occurs through processes of socialisation, indoctrination, and cultural manipulation, whereby individuals come to accept and reproduce authoritarian norms, values, and behaviours that reinforce capitalist hegemony. The cultural industry plays a crucial role in shaping public consciousness, promoting consumerism, and reinforcing dominant ideologies and power structures. Cultural industry is controlled by capitalist interests and serves to perpetuate capitalist hegemony by shaping cultural norms and narratives in ways that support the *status quo*. Domination in the capitalist system operates in the form of conformism, promotes a passive life, and is hidden in exchange, in the institutions of oppression and the coercive power of the state and law. The authoritarian state can exercise economic dominance within the capitalist enterprise “only through the false constitutional delimitations of capitalist sovereignty”, i.e., only by extending the discipline of the factory to the entire society (Krahl 1973). This control may take various forms, including regulations, directives, and interventions aimed at influencing production, distribution, and consumption patterns. The authoritarian state seeks to

shape economic outcomes in ways that align with its political goals and interests. The hierarchical, regimented, and exploitative dynamics of the factory are imposed on society as a whole, shaping social relations, norms, and behaviours in ways that mirror the organisation of capitalist production. This extension of factory discipline to society reinforces the dominance of capitalist interests and maintains social order through coercion and control. Oppressive institutions operate by treating the other like an animal, forcing him or her to work through training, threats, and beatings (Krahl 1998). The threat consists of the possibility of losing the comforts and certainties provided by a certain welfare state. In the capitalist system there is a high degree of sophistication in its means to satisfy needs, the welfare state guarantees material security, making people apathetic (Maiso 2018). The exploitation consists in the fact that human needs are attached to the most elementary forms of fear that the state and the capital might take away the minimum guarantees, political freedom thus derives from economic exploitation (Maiso 2018, Krahl 1998).

Karl Marx, later echoed by Krahl, criticises the fact that the state is separated from civil society: there is a dichotomy between the public and private spheres (Farnesi Camellone 2022). In Marxist theory, civil society refers to the realm of social life outside of the state, encompassing institutions such as the family, economy, education, and cultural organisations. The state, on the other hand, represents the apparatus of political power that stands above and regulates civil society. Political power and public functions are concentrated in the state, it is established as the sovereign and supreme organ of power (ibid). This means that the state has a monopoly on public decision-making and representation of political unity and can impose obedience through the legitimate use of force (ibid). On the other hand, the social sphere emerges as autonomous and separate, individuals are depoliticised because they assert themselves as private (ibid). Capitalist social relations are structured by the interaction between state authority and private interests, as well as the tensions and contradictions inherent in this relationship.

Modern power is configured as a device that maintains inequalities within the functions of command and obedience through the separation of the public sphere from itself (ibid). The state is a repressive apparatus that maintains the capitalist system: it is not a neutral entity but serves the interests of the ruling class, maintaining social order

through ideological and coercive means. Ideological repression operates through mechanisms such as propaganda, education, and cultural institutions, which disseminate ideas that serve the interests of the ruling class and naturalise the existing social order. Coercive repression involves the use of force, including police and military power, to suppress dissent and maintain social control. There is an interlocking system of domination that sustains capitalist societies and includes institutions such as the media, education system, legal system, and cultural institutions, which work in concert with the state to reinforce capitalist ideology and suppress opposition. The state apparatus functions to maintain the existing power relations and to perpetuate the domination of the bourgeoisie over the proletariat: it is a tool of class oppression. The system of domination, to safeguard itself, needs to keep citizens in a state of minority, using repression whenever men and women refuse to be prescribed actions and independently defend their interests (Krahl 1998). The state is "forced into a preventive power struggle" because of its weakness and as a function of the legitimisation of its repressive action (Zaru 2023, Krahl 1973).

In society, the public sphere is constituted as a sphere of exchange between free possessors of goods (Tomba 2021). The public sphere refers to the realm of social life where individuals come together to engage in collective activities, such as political discourse, economic transactions, and cultural exchange. It encompasses spaces and institutions where public deliberation and interaction occur, shaping the shared norms, values, and practices of society. Within the public sphere, one of the primary activities that takes place is the exchange of goods. The exchange involves the transfer of goods, services, or resources between individuals or groups to satisfy their needs or desires. Free exchange is the foundation of parliamentary democracy, such that its defeat would entail the defeat of parliament (ibid). In capitalist societies, parliamentary institutions emerged alongside the development of free market economies, with both being promoted as essential components of liberal ideology. The model of parliament, according to Krahl, is shaped by the principles of economic liberalism, including the promotion of free competition, individual liberty, and private property rights. Free trade, with its emphasis on market deregulation, globalisation, and the free movement of goods and capital, is seen as a fundamental pillar of the capitalist system. Without the economic underpinning of free trade, parliamentary democracy would lose its substance

or legitimacy. In other words, the principles of political liberalism and representative democracy are sustained by the economic imperatives of capitalism, including free market competition and the pursuit of profit. If these economic foundations were to be undermined, the ideological framework of parliamentary democracy would be called into question, as it would no longer serve the interests of capitalist elites or provide a coherent rationale for maintaining the *status quo*.

Enlightenment parliamentarianism and bourgeois enlightenment must be abandoned (Bascetta 1998). Krahl, influenced by Marxist and critical theory perspectives, challenges the notion that liberal democracy and Enlightenment values inherently lead to human emancipation and social progress: he argues that these ideologies serve to perpetuate capitalist domination and maintain the *status quo*. Liberal democracy is a form of bourgeois political rule that serves the interests of capitalist elites. He argues that parliamentary democracy, with its emphasis on representative institutions and electoral politics, masks deeper forms of social inequality and exploitation inherent in capitalist society. Liberal democracy functions to legitimise capitalist power relations and limit the possibilities for genuine democratic participation and social transformation. Parliament and parties are instruments of the authoritarian art of governing (Krahl 1973). Bourgeois enlightenment promotes individualism, rationalism, and progress within the context of capitalist society. Bourgeois enlightenment serves to justify and naturalise capitalist exploitation and domination, obscuring the systemic injustices and inequalities that underlie capitalist social relations. Krahl calls for a critical reevaluation of Enlightenment values and a recognition of their limitations in addressing the root causes of social oppression and exploitation. He advocates for a radical break with these ideologies to pursue alternative forms of social organisation and political struggle that challenge capitalist hegemony and advance the interests of the oppressed and marginalised classes. This involves envisioning new forms of democracy and social solidarity grounded in principles of collective empowerment, social justice, and human liberation. Krahl calls for transformative social and political change aimed at overcoming capitalist domination and realising the emancipatory potential of humanity.

State functions within capitalist societies use justice to perpetuate social inequalities and uphold the interests of the ruling class. State and law are instruments through which

the ruling class maintains its power and privileges, enacting policies that reinforce the existing social order and protect the interests of the capitalist mode of production. State's repressive apparatuses, such as the police, military, and legal institutions, are mechanisms for maintaining social control and suppressing dissent. These apparatuses are used to uphold capitalist relations of production. From this perspective, justice within the context of the state is limited to maintaining order and protecting private property, rather than ensuring fairness and equality for all members of society. The legality of the bourgeois courts can no longer legitimise itself: it is pure and unfounded violence exercising repression in the service of capital (Krahl 1998). Justice has no concept of emancipation or legitimisation (ibid). It reinforces the system by punishing those who want to change the *status quo* and legitimising those who preserve it. In this way, the perpetrators, those who make use of exploitation, violence and brutality, are legitimised because they reproduce the same mechanisms that govern society; while the victims, those who dare to complain about the abuses, set themselves up as antagonists to the state-justice system. Victims of violence denounce the system by appealing to it and thus asking (un)Justice to be fair. In this sense, appealing to the system means legitimising it, preserving it and thus, obeying it by remaining immobile, inert and, once again, victims.

The liberal conceptions of justice prioritise formal equality and procedural fairness within the existing capitalist framework. Such notions of justice serve to legitimise the *status quo* and mask underlying inequalities perpetuated by the state and capitalist system. Instead, Krahl advocates for a more radical conception of justice rooted in the principles of equality, solidarity, and emancipation, which requires challenging or transcending the existing state apparatus. Krahl's understanding of justice goes beyond individual acts of injustice to focus on structural inequalities and systemic oppression. He critiques the capitalist system for perpetuating social hierarchies based on class, race, gender, and other axes of power, which result in unequal distribution of resources, opportunities, and rights. True justice would necessitate challenging and transforming these oppressive structures at their root. In Krahl's view, no court can legitimately arrogate to itself the right to decide what needs should be developed and satisfied, only individuals can decide what needs are true and false (Krahl 1973). Just an emancipatory struggle can pursue Justice. Genuine justice cannot be achieved within the confines of

the existing state and capitalist system but requires collective action and social transformation aimed at challenging existing power relations and creating alternative forms of social organisation. Justice is intimately connected with the struggle for liberation from oppression and exploitation.

Krahl is critical of reformist approaches that seek to address social injustices within the framework of the existing state and economic system. Reformism is responsible for ignoring the brutalisation of all areas of social life (Krahl 1973). Social reforms are not revolutionary instruments, but veiled ways to perpetuate the subordination of workers to capital (Fierro 2014). With social reforms, the working classes are integrated into the capitalist system and this "fusion anaesthetises all opposition under the seemingly reassuring blanket of a coincidence of interests" (ibid). Social reforms smooth out all opposition and class antagonism.

Krahl argues that true liberation requires a radical transformation of society, including the overthrow of capitalist structures and the creation of alternative forms of social organisation. Social reform is a constitutive component of monopolistic capital, "workers' mass organisations, increasingly bureaucratic, are assimilated into the domination structures of the authoritarian state" becoming apparatuses of power that stifle all spontaneous activity (Krahl 1973). Monopolistic capital refers to a stage or condition of capitalism where economic power and control are concentrated in the hands of a few large corporations or firms that dominate a particular industry or sector. Instead of many small or medium-sized firms competing, a few large firms dominate the market, reducing competition. This leads to a situation where a few monopolistic or oligopolistic entities exert significant influence over markets, pricing, and production, limiting competition and consolidating power. In the monopolistic capital structure, these large firms can control key aspects of the economy, including innovation, production techniques, and even government policy through lobbying and political influence. This concentration of economic power results in a fusion of corporate interests with state power. Monopoly capitalism subjugates industry to the discipline of the banks: when money-generating money dominates, economic power is in the hands of the financial aristocracy, i.e. the class that within the production process is in charge of administering the - now autonomous - circulation of money (ibid). Every reform is an instrument of repression that safeguards the existing society and prevents the masses

from independently defending their interests: reformism is the greatest instrument of domination of counterrevolution (ibid). Through social reform, the authoritarian welfare state integrates the organisations of the working class by ensuring the existence of monopoly capital (ibid). This necessitates permanent state interventionism and legitimisation by the welfare state, "two factors that potentially encapsulate fascism, namely the autonomy of the executive over the classes" (ibid). Monopolistic capitalism recognises at the legal and state level the right of association of the wage-earning masses and neutralises them through legislation and social reform (ibid). "The reformist organisations of the wage-earning masses are instruments of the ruling class and serve to transform class antagonisms" into smooth oppositions of interests (ibid). The activity of trade unions, for instance, is mainly limited to the fight for higher wages and shorter working hours: they merely regulate capitalist exploitation (Luxemburg 2009). Their most important function is "to enable workers to realise the capitalist law of wages, i.e. the sale of labour power at the prevailing market price" (ibid). Trade unions operate within the constraints of the capitalist system: they do not fundamentally challenge the system but work to ensure that workers get a fair deal within it. While unions can push for higher wages, their ability to do so is still bounded by the overall market conditions and the prevailing economic environment. They aim to achieve the best possible outcome for workers given these conditions and working within the existing capitalist framework rather than seeking to overturn it.

The theory of adaptation - according to which capitalism evolves and adjusts to survive its inherent contradictions and crises and could adapt and evolve into socialism through gradual reforms without the need for a revolutionary overthrow - and its means - credit system, improved means of communication, business organisations, cartels, raising the standard of living of the working class - alleviate the internal contradictions of the capitalist economy, but do not eliminate the inherent problem of capitalism, nor do they offer a long-term solution (ibid). These adaptations are temporary measures that would ultimately fail to address the root causes of economic crises and social inequalities. "The elimination of the crisis means the suppression of the antagonism between production and exchange on a capitalist basis" and the softening of the contrast between capital and labour (ibid). This is problematic because what it is assumed is that the fundamental contradictions of capitalism can be resolved within its framework.

Capitalism is characterised by contradictions between production (creation of goods) and exchange (market sales). Production is driven by the pursuit of profit rather than human needs, leading to overproduction and underconsumption crises. While temporary measures can mitigate economic crises, they do not eliminate the root causes of these crises. Crises are a manifestation of deeper contradictions within capitalism, such as the tendency for the rate of profit to fall and the overaccumulation of capital. Even if a crisis is temporarily suppressed, the underlying issues remain unresolved. This means that new crises will inevitably arise, as capitalism cannot permanently eliminate its contradictions. The idea that the contrast between capital and labour can be softened is illusory. The exploitation inherent in the wage labour system ensures that the interests of capital and labour are fundamentally opposed. Workers seek higher wages and better conditions, while capitalists seek to maximise profits by minimising labour costs. Reformist approaches that seek to soften the antagonisms within capitalism without challenging its foundational structures are seen as inadequate by Marxists like Rosa Luxemburg and Krahl. These reforms may provide temporary relief but do not address the systemic exploitation and inequality inherent in capitalism. The state is the representative of capitalist society, it is therefore a class state (ibid). The reforms it adopts, therefore, are not a realisation of the control of free workers' society in the organisation of their labour process but are a control of the class organisation of capital over the productive process of capital (ibid). “In the sense of social development, it undoubtedly assumes various functions of general interest, but it does so as long as these interests and social development coincide with the interests of the ruling class. Legislation in favour of workers, for example, is as much in the immediate class interests of the capitalists as it is in the interests of society as a whole” (ibid). The theory of the gradual establishment of socialism through social reforms presupposes a certain development of private property and the capitalist state because it assumes that socialism can be achieved incrementally within the existing capitalist framework (ibid). The gradualist approach presupposes a certain level of development in capitalist economies. This includes advanced industrialisation, a well-developed market economy, and complex financial systems. These elements create the material conditions and wealth necessary to support social reforms. The existence and stability of private property are foundational to capitalist economies. Gradualism assumes that private

property can coexist with increasing socialisation and public ownership through reforms, it does not advocate for the immediate abolition of private property but rather its transformation over time. The theory relies on the capitalist state as an instrument for implementing social reforms. It presupposes that the state can be used to gradually introduce socialist elements into society, such as welfare programs, labour protections, and public services, without fundamentally overthrowing the existing capitalist order. The theory of gradual socialism assumes a relatively stable socioeconomic environment where reforms can be progressively introduced without triggering significant resistance or destabilisation. It counts on the ability of capitalist economies to accommodate these changes without collapsing or reverting to more exploitative forms. It assumes that revolutionary change is either undesirable or unnecessary. Instead, it advocates for a peaceful, evolutionary transition to socialism through legal and democratic means, avoiding the disruptions associated with revolutionary upheaval. Revolutionary socialists, like Luxemburg and Krahl, argue that the gradualist approach overlooks the fundamental contradictions of capitalism. They contend that private property and the capitalist state inherently perpetuate exploitation and inequality, making true socialism unattainable without a revolutionary break.

Trade unions and parliamentary struggle serve as instruments to educate and direct the masses towards the ultimate goal: the conquest of political power, i.e. revolution (ibid). These struggles must not be conceived given immediate results. They serve to improve the material conditions of the workers and to reduce capitalist exploitation. But if the attempt is not made to annihilate such exploitation, all these struggles will never be enough if the *status quo* is not questioned. Trade unions struggle and politics are important because they act on the consciousness of the proletariat, organising it as a class (ibid). If one separates the final aim from the orientation of the movement and considers social reform as an autonomous goal, one will never achieve the conquest of political power and reforms will remain capitalist reforms. Such is a policy of compensation or, in Luxemburg's words, “a cow market policy” (ibid). Reformism automatically leads to abandoning the class point of view, “is a theory of the stagnation of socialism based on the vulgar theory of the stagnation of capitalism” (ibid). Reformism refers to the belief that socialism can be achieved gradually through reforms within the existing capitalist system, rather than through its revolutionary

overthrow. It emphasises incremental changes and improvements, such as better labour laws, social welfare programs, and economic regulations. Reformism leads to a situation where socialism does not progress or develop significantly. Instead, socialism becomes static, unable to achieve its full transformative potential. These interpretations lack depth and fail to grasp the underlying complexities and dynamics of capitalism as analysed in Marxist theory. Because reformism operates on this flawed assumption about capitalism, it inherently limits the potential for true socialist transformation. By relying on gradual changes within a supposedly stagnant capitalist system, reformism itself becomes stagnant. It fails to challenge the fundamental structures of capitalism and thus cannot bring about the deep, revolutionary changes needed for socialism. Instead of seeking to overthrow capitalism, reformism tries to work within its constraints, leading to only superficial changes. The critique is that reformism is an inadequate approach to achieving socialism because it does not address the root causes of capitalist exploitation and inequality, it merely attempts to mitigate the worst effects of capitalism without challenging its core dynamics. The realisation of socialism finds support in the economic foundations of capitalist society (ibid). Capitalism is prone to periodic economic crises due to overproduction, underconsumption, and the falling rate of profit. These crises expose the system's instability and inefficiency, highlighting its inability to meet the needs of the majority. Over time, the increasing exploitation and alienation of workers can lead to greater class consciousness and dissatisfaction. The proletariat, due to their position in the capitalist system, has the potential to become a revolutionary class. As they experience exploitation and alienation, their collective struggles and growing class consciousness can lead them to seek systemic change. The development of productive forces under capitalism creates the material conditions necessary for socialism. The high level of productivity implies that society can potentially provide for everyone's needs, making the abolition of scarcity possible. The Marxist theory posits that the economic base (the mode of production) shapes the superstructure (institutions, culture, politics). As the contradictions within the capitalist base intensify, they create pressure for changes in the superstructure, paving the way for revolutionary transformations. The economic exploitation and social relations of capitalism foster the development of class consciousness among workers, who begin to see their collective interests in opposition to those of the capitalists. The economic

crises and instabilities of capitalism highlight its unsustainability and create opportunities for revolutionary movements to propose socialism as a more stable and equitable alternative. Socialism can only arise out of the internal contradictions of the capitalist economy and the realisation of the working class that it is necessary to suppress them through a social revolution (ibid).

According to Luxemburg, the daily struggle for the improvement of living conditions and democratic battles passes through reforms, but these are the means: the aim is the socialist revolution (La Greca 2009). In *Social Reform or Revolution?* Luxemburg states that what is necessary is a revolutionary process: only from this can a total revolution develop, understood as the moral and material regeneration of humanity (ibid). A revolution, in its making, builds socialism, which in turn builds itself as a socialist revolution in opposition to imperialist barbarism (ibid). Social reform can only be a means of the class struggle, it cannot be its aim as it would simply lead to a patching up of the capitalist regime to save it (Luxemburg 2009). Instead, what it aspires to be is a class struggle against this regime to abolish it, and this can only be achieved through a revolution. A social revolution and a legislative reform differ in their qualitative content: historical revolutions consist of the transition to something qualitatively new, i.e. the transition from one form of society to another (ibid). A movement in struggle that aims at revolution does not base its victories and defeats on the immediate concessions given to it by the dominators but on the qualitative enlargement of the mass base and its organisation (Krahl 1973). Reform is not the yardstick of success, but the progress of the enlightened spontaneity of groups already active or becoming active (ibid). “Reform is an instrument of integration that establishes the domination of the authoritarian state and the mass organisations belonging to it” (ibid). Those who advocate a reformist approach as opposed to the conquest of political power and social revolution do not want the establishment of another society but want to make superficial changes to the existing society (Luxemburg 2009). Abstaining from revolution, reform can only stabilise the economic and political dominance of capital (Krahl 1973). It is important to note that what distinguishes bourgeois society from its predecessor societies is that class domination does not rest on a legal apparatus but on a purely economic relationship (Luxemburg 2009). No law can be found that explicitly justifies class domination over the proletariat, since its subjugation is forced by need, by

the lack of means of production (ibid). Workers do not possess the means of production because economic development does not allow it. They are exploited within the wage system because economic factors determine wages: labour-power has the role of a commodity that possesses the characteristics of producing value and, precisely, more than the value consumed by workers in the means of subsistence (ibid). Consequently, the fundamental relations of capitalist society - those of the domination of one thing over another - cannot be transformed through legislative reforms: they respect the bourgeois base (ibid). Social reform has historically been used as a counter-revolutionary tool (Krahl 1973). “The state made itself the subject of social reform to boycott an association of the wage-earning masses that was adequate to the revolution” (ibid). Reforms are a decisive tool for recognising the organisations of the wage-earning masses and turning them into bureaucratic machines whose function is to make the already deceived masses apathetic under the capitalist system (ibid). The capitalist system must be abolished entirely and this requires a long and fierce general struggle. “Only the radical and provocative actions of the extra-parliamentary movement, those that violently open contradictions within the population” are capable of creating massive opposition (ibid). They must not appeal to the apathetic masses, but to those with an open conscience, first and foremost the young (ibid).

Chapter 2

THE FACTORY REGIME

2.1 Production of exploitation

Production is the process of creating goods or services by transforming inputs, such as raw materials, labour, and capital, into outputs that satisfy human needs and desires. It encompasses various activities, techniques, and methods aimed at generating value and increasing the availability of goods and services for consumption. The production relies on the combination of different factors of production, including land (natural resources), labour (human effort), capital (physical and financial assets), and entrepreneurship (the organisation and coordination of production activities). In the context of Hans-Jürgen Krahl's critical theory, production encompasses more than just the creation of goods and services. Krahl, influenced by Marxist thought, expands the concept of production to include the broader social and political processes through which society is structured and reproduced. For Krahl, production is an economic activity and a social and cultural phenomenon that shapes power relations, social hierarchies, and forms of domination within capitalist societies. “Production is a category of the totality that encompasses all other areas of economic relations in society, distribution, consumption and circulation” (ibid). It is through production that the economic and social systems as a whole are organised. The concept of totality in Marxist theory refers to the idea that society is a complex, interconnected whole. Production determines how resources are allocated (distribution), how goods are consumed (consumption), and how they are exchanged (circulation). Distribution refers to how the products of labour are distributed among different groups in society. The way products are distributed is directly influenced by the mode of production (e.g., in capitalism, distribution is based on class relations and ownership of the means of production). “Distribution is nothing more than the phenomenal form of the division of labour and, with it, of production” (ibid). Consumption refers to how goods and services

are used by individuals and groups. The patterns of consumption are determined by the production process, which creates the goods and dictates who has access to them. Circulation refers to the movement of goods and capital within the economy, including trade, markets, and finance. The circulation of commodities and capital is shaped by the underlying production process. The bourgeoisie deals with production primarily in circulation (ibid). For them, work is intellectual and abstract labour, which does not require organic exchange between men, women and nature (ibid). In their understanding of their work, the bourgeoisie discredits manual workers and passes off the work of the spirit as authentic labour (ibid). Exchange value itself genetically arises in circulation through the contact that communities establish with each other (ibid).

Talking about production implies talking about the production of social individuals (Marx 2020). Production in a society is intrinsically tied to the development and formation of individuals as social beings within a specific social and economic system. Individuals are not isolated beings; their identities, consciousness, and social roles are formed through their participation in the economic and social activities of production. Their subjectivity, relationships, and roles in society are formed within the context of the production process. This process influences their skills, ideas, relationships, and social identities. In capitalist society, for example, people are produced as workers, capitalists, or members of other social classes. The idea is that human history is shaped by the way societies produce and reproduce the material conditions of life. The production process not only creates material goods but also creates and shapes the individuals who make up society. Therefore, when Marx speaks of production, he refers to the creation of social relations and individuals within specific historical and economic conditions. Different modes of production - such as slavery, feudalism, or capitalism - produce different kinds of social individuals with distinct roles, consciousness, and forms of life. Labour, understood as human effort expended in the process of production, is a central component of the production process. Krahl emphasises the significance of labour as both a productive force and a social relation within capitalist societies. Labour not only creates value and wealth but also constitutes a fundamental aspect of social identity, power dynamics, and class struggle. The organisation and exploitation of labour create social inequalities and conflict within capitalist societies. Production encompasses not only labour but also the broader social

relations that govern the production process. This includes relations of ownership, control, and distribution, as well as the division of labour, class relations, and power dynamics within society. The mode of production, as well as the relations of production it entails, shapes the social organisation of production, distribution, and exchange, influencing patterns of wealth, power, and social hierarchies. Production signifies labour and the division of labour, hence subject-object relations and intersubjectivity (Zaru 2023). This allows praxis to be thought of as material social interaction. It is important to understand production in terms of social reproduction, which encompasses the reproduction of social relations, cultural norms, and power structures within society. Social reproduction involves not only the production of goods and services but also the reproduction of labour power, social identities, and ideologies that sustain capitalist hegemony. Krahl highlights the role of production in the production and dissemination of ideology, including dominant ideologies that justify and legitimise capitalist power relations. The cultural industry, media, and educational institutions play a crucial role in shaping consciousness and perpetuating capitalist hegemony through the production of ideological narratives and representations. According to Krahl, production is an instrumental action pervaded by communicative objective acting (Bascetta 1998). ‘Communicative objective acting’ refers to the intentional actions individuals undertake to achieve communicative goals. In the context of critical theory, particularly influenced by thinkers like Jürgen Habermas, this concept often relates to communicative action, which is a form of social interaction based on mutual understanding, rational discourse, and the pursuit of consensus. In critical theory, communicative objective acting is often seen as a fundamental aspect of social life, as individuals engage in communicative actions to interact with others, negotiate meanings, and coordinate activities. However, the effectiveness of communicative action can be influenced by various factors, including power dynamics, cultural differences, and structural inequalities, which may hinder genuine understanding and mutual agreement. Communicative objective acting is the main means of production, subsumption of the real and of sociality in general, it dominates the relations of division of labour, the objectified forms of production, the procedures and behaviour of living labour and the substance of individual commodities (ibid).

Krahl analyses production within the framework of capitalist social relations, which are characterised by the exploitation of labour, the extraction of surplus value, and the concentration of economic power in the hands of capitalist elites. In capitalist societies, production is organised around the accumulation of capital and the pursuit of profit, leading to social inequalities and class divisions. According to Marx, the structure of capital acquires its shape when "two circumstances occur simultaneously: on the one hand, the presence of free individuals, endowed exclusively with their labour capacity, which can be sold and exchanged for existing values; on the other hand, the presence of individuals able to buy the labour capacity of the former" (Fierro 2014). Exploitation operates based on a contract that transforms labour (praxis) into an inert commodity (Krahl 1998). When labour is said to be reduced to productive, it is meant to create exchange value (Martino et all 2021). Labour is, in fact, a reciprocal relation, i.e. it is a free exchange between men and women who recognise themselves in their freedom, only one or the other pretends to ignore that the other is driven by the compulsion of needs to sell themselves as material objects (Krahl 1998). Workers are not free in the face of their misery. They are victims of the competition and antagonism of the workers who are manipulated by the master who sets a minimum price and rejects those who demand a higher wage, on the strength of the competition that exists in the world of work (ibid). The state legally guarantees the institution of private property and with it the possibility of exchanging a quantity of labour-power, i.e. the commodity that the worker brings to the market, for a quantity of wage-earner (Farnesi Camellone 2022). The state dimension is the only public dimension, this exchange pertains to the private sphere; therefore, it is depoliticised as the entire sphere of economic-social relations (ibid).

The capitalist society produces and reproduces the objective spirit of the institutions of domination by legitimising the extra-economic forms of domination that sanction, through ideology and violence, the economic power to dispose of surplus labour and superfluous time (Krahl 1998). Surplus labour is the working time composed of the hours of labour not paid to workers (Farnesi Camellone 2022). According to Marx, the capitalist, namely the holder of the money, remunerates only a part of the working day, that which is sufficient for the material sustenance of the labour-power, and appropriates the remaining hours to enhance the capital (ibid). In other words,

capitalists extract surplus value from workers by paying them less in wages than the value they create through their labour. This process of exploitation allows capitalists to accumulate wealth and capital at the expense of workers' well-being and livelihoods. From the perspective of workers, labour becomes a means of enriching capitalists rather than a source of fulfilment or self-realisation. Goods and capital are measured to determine their value using the labour required to produce use-value as the measuring stick (Krahl 1973). Labour time is reified time, made thing and, consequently, the labour force - the collective body of individuals who sell their labour power for wages - is configured as thing and non-thing (ibid). In other words, time spent in labour becomes a standardised, abstract entity divorced from its social and human dimensions. This reified time is treated as a 'thing' or an objective measure, rather than as a social process shaped by human activity and relations. On one hand, the labour force is treated as a 'thing' in the sense that it is commodified and bought and sold in the labour market like any other commodity. Workers are treated as mere factors of production, whose labor power is purchased by capitalists to generate profit. On the other hand, the labour force is configured as a 'non-thing' in the sense that the individual workers themselves are dehumanised and alienated within the capitalist production process. They are reduced to abstract units of labour, whose worth is determined solely by their ability to perform productive tasks and generate surplus value for capitalists. This dehumanisation and alienation resulted from the reification of labour time and the reduction of human activity to abstract, quantifiable measures. By treating labour time as a reified thing and reducing the labour force to both a commodity and an abstract entity, capitalism perpetuates systems of exploitation and alienation that undermine the humanity and dignity of workers.

Labour time is the economic centre of Marxian surplus-value theory and is the core of the critique of political economy understood as revolutionary theory (ibid). The critique of political economy is the doctrine of the laws of the nature of capitalist development; specifically, it describes capitalist social formation from the aspect of its transformation and abolition - in this sense, it is a revolutionary theory (ibid). The laws of nature arise from the 'naturalness' of capitalist social formation which presents bourgeois society as an eternal necessity of nature (ibid). But such laws imply the tendency towards inevitable sunset: they are possibilities for revolution and

self-liberation (ibid). Labour time is central to this critique because it reveals the underlying mechanisms of exploitation and alienation inherent in capitalist production relations. Exploitation is surplus labour. By focusing on labour time, Marx exposes how capitalist economies systematically extract surplus value from workers, perpetuating inequalities and contradictions that undermine the well-being of the working class. Surplus value is based on the specific exchange of equivalents: the social relationship of individuals regulated by contract (ibid). Surplus value is given by the extra labour effort - the qualitative fact of exploitation - provided by workers: they work six hours to produce the means of subsistence necessary for the workforce and the standard of living in the society in which they live, but they work another six hours to valorize the capital (ibid). These six extra hours, the surplus labour, serve the reproduction of capital, are an unequal exchange and constitute exploitation (ibid).

"Capital is a semblance because it is not a real structure of thing, yet it dominates men" and women (ibid). In Marxist theory, capital is not a tangible thing but a social relation that takes on a material form. It appears as if capital has an objective reality - embodied in money, machinery, factories, etc. - but in reality, it is an abstraction, a social construct that represents the power dynamics between classes. It is not a thing in itself but a relationship between people, mediated through the exchange of commodities and the accumulation of value. Capital is rooted in the process of value creation through labour and the appropriation of surplus value by capitalists. It is an abstract form of domination that operates through economic structures and social relations, rather than through direct, physical coercion. In capitalist society, people's lives are governed by the imperatives of capital - such as the need to accumulate wealth, maximize profit, and engage in market competition - even though these imperatives are not natural laws but social constructs. Capital controls individuals by determining their access to resources, their labour conditions, and their economic opportunities. The domination of capital manifests in how people must sell their labour to survive and how their activities are shaped by the pursuit of profit rather than their own needs and desires. Capital, as an abstract force, dominates workers by alienating them from the very conditions of their existence. This domination is insidious because it is not overtly coercive. Workers are not directly forced to work under threat of violence; instead, they

are compelled by the economic necessity of selling their labour to survive, which is a form of domination mediated through the market and the wage system.

Production encompasses labour and social organisation but has a strong emancipatory potential (Maiso 2018). In this sense, labour is a misfortune that valorises capital, an instrumental activity, and, at the same time, can be a productive force of emancipation that denies the capital (ibid). In labour, it is necessary to capture the moments that produce capital and the moments that destroy it (Martino et all 2021). In capital-producing labour, workers are alienated from the products of their labour, the labour process itself, their fellow workers, and their human potential. This alienation results from the capitalist organisation of production, where workers are treated as mere instruments of production rather than as creative and autonomous individuals. As a result, labour becomes a source of suffering and disconnection for workers, who experience a sense of powerlessness and estrangement from the fruits of their labour. Labour is valorised under capitalism in the sense that it produces value and contributes to the accumulation of capital for capitalists. However, this valorisation occurs at the expense of workers, who are forced to sell their labour power to survive and who receive only a fraction of the value they produce in return. This asymmetrical relationship between labour and capital perpetuates the domination of capitalist class interests over those of workers, reinforcing the perception of labour as a misfortune that benefits capital at the expense of human well-being. However, labour has the potential to be a force of emancipation when workers organise collectively to challenge the power dynamics inherent in capitalist relations of production. By uncovering the exploitative dynamics of capitalist production and distribution, Marxian analysis provides a theoretical framework for understanding and challenging capitalist social relations. The goal of revolutionary theory is to transform society by overthrowing capitalist systems of exploitation and establishing a more just and equitable social order based on the principles of socialism or communism. “In Marxian theory, the reduction of working time means the conquest of free time understood as the time of freedom” where the realm of freedom can be built (Krahl 1973). The Marxian concept of time is qualitative, has emancipatory implications and is central to revolutionary theory. The fact that people allow themselves to be exploited, i.e. to work for the reproduction of capital, has to do with the actual economic relations of domination (ibid). Social

relations must become the predominant productive force (ibid). This happens proportionally to the extent that socially necessary labour reduces in quantity and at the same time increases in quality (ibid). In this way, it becomes possible to satisfy needs in a civilised manner (ibid). A rejection of the relations of domination would imply a material struggle against those economic relations of power (ibid). Through collective action, such as labour strikes, protests, or union organisation, workers can assert their rights, demand better working conditions, and challenge the authority of capitalists. Labour is the source of value in capitalist economies, as it is through labour that goods and services are produced. Workers' labour creates the wealth that capitalists appropriate for their profit. By recognising their role in the production process and the value they create, workers can assert their rightful claim to a greater share of the wealth they produce. This understanding can empower workers to demand fair compensation, control over their work conditions, and a say in decision-making processes within the workplace. Labour can foster self-organisation and autonomy among workers, enabling them to develop alternative modes of production and economic organisation that operate outside the capitalist framework. Worker cooperatives, for example, allow workers to collectively own and manage their workplaces, sharing in the profits and decision-making processes. By taking control of their means of production, workers can challenge the dominance of capital and create more democratic and equitable economic structures. Labour has the potential to transform social relations and reshape the distribution of power within society. Labour and social relations have the same origin: "The progress of the productive forces potentially modifies the position that one takes concerning the other within the system" (ibid). Developing relations means developing society (ibid). Bourgeois society developed within feudal society within economic relations; hence proletarian society can develop within bourgeois society from social relations.

Production is the principle of history and encompasses labour and social relations (Krahl 1973). Production is the fundamental driving force behind historical development. In Marxist thought, historical materialism posits that the mode of production, including the relations of production (the social relations governing the ownership and control of productive resources) and the forces of production (the technological and productive capacities available in a society), shapes the broader

social, political, and cultural dynamics of a given historical epoch. Production is thus seen as the engine of historical change and the primary determinant of social organisation and development. The capitalist social formation is dynamic: it has and continues to develop relations of production and forms of social relations that perpetually revolutionise society itself and drive it to ruin (ibid). For Marx, economic struggle translates into political struggle because it encompasses state, legal and political relations of domination (ibid). It is in the mediation between the two struggles - political and economic - that a revolutionary politics of attack makes its way (ibid). A prerequisite for this is a collective consciousness based on the objective place of wage-earners within the production process (ibid). A consciousness of time that derives from a class consciousness (ibid). Consciousness of time is an awareness of the temporal dimensions of social and economic relations. Time is not only a measure of the duration of activities but also a fundamental aspect of how labour is organised, how commodities are produced and exchanged, and how value is created and appropriated. In capitalist economies, time becomes commodified and quantified, with labour time serving as a key determinant of value and surplus value. Capitalism's focus on productivity and efficiency leads to a sense of alienation and estrangement from the temporal dimensions of human existence. Workers experience a loss of control over their time, as their lives are regimented by the demands of capitalist production. Time spent in wage labour feels disconnected from their own needs, desires, and aspirations, leading to feelings of disconnection and alienation. Internalising economic violence means internalising the working norms of time consciousness, erasing the consciousness that wage-earners have of their place within the production process, thus erasing the memory of exploitation; in short, preventing class consciousness itself (ibid). Capital wants the reduction of working time and its outcome - namely liberation from socially superfluous labour - to appear impossible to people (ibid). Working time is reified and reduced to pure quantitative extension. “The destruction of the emancipative consciousness of time [...] transforms living time into working time” (ibid). In capitalism, however, the emancipative time of living is possible in the time of freedom, the time that constitutes individuality (ibid). Consciousness of time involves an awareness of the temporal constraints and pressures that individuals and social groups face within capitalist societies. Workers are compelled to sell their labour power for

wages, often working long hours under conditions of exploitation and alienation. Capitalists seek to maximise profit by reducing production time, increasing efficiency, and intensifying labour processes. Time becomes scarce and valuable, with individuals and social groups competing for its allocation and control. The consciousness of time is not static but subject to historical change and transformation, shaped by the dynamics of class struggle and social change. By challenging hierarchies and inequalities in the workplace, labour struggles can also contribute to broader social movements for justice and liberation. Workers' demands for fair wages, dignity, and autonomy can intersect with struggles against other forms of oppression, such as racism, sexism, and environmental degradation, fostering solidarity and collective action across diverse social groups. In labour that denies capital, social knowledge takes the form of a diffuse countervailing power that includes all those who collaborate in producing ethics (*Sittlichkeit*), namely the revolutionary class (ibid). Even in competition, understood as practical commercial freedom, which is now the market of all against all, there is an emancipatory content (Krahl 1998). Ideally, it transcends society since in the abstract it opens up the possibility of worldwide relations between individuals unified in a united humanity as it increases the boundaries of local communities (ibid).

2.2 The abstraction of labour

The social division of labour corresponds to the capitalist mode of production, where products are commodity-form as their object constitution is denaturalised (Krahl 1998). In capitalist economies, the division of labour involves the specialisation of tasks and occupations, where different individuals or groups perform specific roles within the production process. This division of labour is not natural but rather socially constructed and maintained within capitalist economic systems. The social division of labour is intrinsic to the capitalist mode of production. Capitalism relies on organising labour into specialised roles to maximise efficiency, productivity, and profit. The division of labour allows capitalist enterprises to streamline production processes and exploit labour power more effectively. In capitalist economies, goods are produced not for immediate use by the producers but for exchange on the market. This process of commodification

involves the transformation of goods into commodities, which have exchange value and are bought and sold in markets. The inherent qualities or purposes of goods are obscured or transformed in the process of commodification. Under capitalism, goods are produced not to meet human needs directly but to generate profit through exchange. As a result, the use-value of commodities - their utility or usefulness for satisfying human needs - is subordinated to their exchange value: their value in the market. The commodity is stripped of its outward and physical qualities and contains a *quid*, an essence, which is configured as "a mere concretion of indistinct human labour, that is, of the expenditure of human labour power, regardless of the form of its expenditure" (Marx 2017). Exchange value becomes the single value that possesses social resonance and, as a consequence, social relations are commodified in turn, they take on the semblance of the commodity (Fierro 2014). These processes reflect the underlying logic of capitalism, where production is oriented towards profit accumulation and the exploitation of labour, rather than meeting human needs or promoting social welfare.

Production is based on the abstract labour of mutually isolated and independent individuals working in private (Kral 1998). This characterisation highlights the atomised and individualised nature of labour within capitalist production processes. Workers are typically employed by private enterprises and work independently from one another, often without direct collaboration or coordination. This isolation of workers from each other reinforces the competitive and individualistic *ethos* of capitalism. In capitalist economies, production is primarily carried out within privately owned enterprises, where the means of production (such as factories, machinery, and tools) are owned and controlled by capitalists. Workers sell their labour power to capitalists in exchange for wages, and production takes place within the confines of these private enterprises, away from public scrutiny or control. The mutual isolation of individuals is ensured by authoritarian politics and technological manipulation (ibid). Such isolation disrupts social relations and empowers the wage-earner class as a class unto itself (ibid). The wage earners are thus endowed with a natural discipline, which is provided by the authoritarian state and political technology. Krahl aims to uncover the underlying mechanisms of exploitation, domination, and alienation inherent in capitalist modes of production. Abstract labour refers to the type of labour that is measured and exchanged in the market as a commodity. In capitalist economies, labour is reduced to a

homogeneous, quantifiable unit of value, divorced from the specific skills, abilities, or needs of individual workers. It is the labour that is measured and exchanged in the market as a commodity. This abstraction of labour allows for the calculation of wages, prices, and profits within the capitalist system. Labour is abstract because it is labour in general: "It rests on a highly developed social division of labour in which in the production of social wealth, not determinate labour but labour in general dominates" (Krahl 1973). Krahl is describing a total indifference towards determined and chosen labour, because individuals switch easily from one job to another as labour is reduced to a means of accumulating money (ibid). The worker, therefore, feels alienated from the productive activity and the object he or she produces: both do not belong to him or her. This means that he or she also perceives a substantial extraneousness towards other people and that interpersonal relations between men and women take on the contours of relations between things (Fierro 2014). Krahl's thought addresses Marxist critiques of alienation to analyse the impact of capitalist production on human experience and consciousness. Capitalist production processes can alienate individuals from the products of their labour, from their creative potential, and each other, leading to feelings of estrangement, powerlessness, and social isolation. The isolation of men and women renders them apolitical, preventing the coalition of the exploited; in fact, the subject is thus subjugated to its productive activities (Krahl 1998). Individuals are subsumed to social production that exists as a fate alien to them, social production is not subsumed to individuals and controlled by them as a common heritage (ibid). In work, there is an infinity of activities juxtaposed, intertwined, and determined but detached from their author, who does not live in them, merely occupies him or herself with them, and exercises them to make a living (ibid). Work is thus configured as extraneousness: each thing is something other than itself, and work is extraneous to the worker (ibid). Things acquire an impenetrable life of their own in contrast with their producers (Krahl 1973). Labour power is robbed of its emancipatory form and autonomous activity and is lowered to a heteronomous status (Krahl 1998). Personal powers are transformed into object-powers and individuals are stripped of the real content of life and live an inhuman existence (ibid). This is the process of reification, that process whereby human labour is regarded and treated as a thing.

“Abstract labour is the idealisation of the technical domination of nature. The fact that the superstructure becomes technocratic refers to the mediation of abstract labour ‘from above’. Ideology as productive force” (Krahl 1973). A technocratic superstructure implies that social and political systems are increasingly dominated by technical and bureaucratic forms of management and control. Decision-making is placed in the hands of experts, managers, and technocrats who implement policies based on efficiency, technical knowledge, and rational planning rather than democratic or ideological considerations. Krahl argues that ideology itself can become a productive force, meaning it actively shapes the production process and not just people’s consciousness. It plays a role in organising and controlling labour, thus becoming integral to the production process rather than simply a reflection of it. “When the domination of nature becomes absolutised to an organised constitution of empirical multiplicity from the logical unity of a pure I-thinker or transcendental subject, it is overthrown into the legitimisation of the domination of” human over human (ibid). The “I-thinker” or “transcendental subject” is a pure, abstract concept of the self - an organising principle of consciousness that gives logical unity to experience. It represents a way of thinking where the self is seen as the centre that organises and interprets reality. In modern philosophy, this subject is often abstract, detached from material conditions, and seen as the organising principle of reality. Krahl critiques this by suggesting that this abstraction - from the individual’s perspective - can lead to an ideology where control and domination become central. When applied to social relations, this abstract domination translates into justifications for social hierarchies and the oppression of certain groups. The same logic used to justify the domination of nature (through control, organisation, and abstraction) is transferred to social relations, justifying the domination of humans over other humans. Initially, the domination of nature is about controlling and organising the material world for human purposes - this is central to industrial capitalism and modern technology. However, Krahl argues that when this principle becomes “absolutised,” it transcends its original scope (the mastery of the natural world) and becomes a way of organising human society itself. There is a technocratic and bureaucratic control in modern society, where the principles of efficiency, rationalisation, and control dominate both nature and human social relations. This leads to the dehumanisation of individuals, as they become objects to be managed and

controlled in the same way that nature is controlled. The domination of nature and social domination are deeply intertwined. Technological progress and control over nature are not inherently positive or neutral, but they reinforce social hierarchies and exploitation. The extension of the logic of nature's domination to social relations also leads to reification that creates alienation, as individuals are separated from their humanity and reduced to mere functions within a larger system of domination. “Dominion over man [and woman] is the *hybris* [hubris] of the abstraction that dominates nature: [...] it is the abstraction of value that, constituting the free worker, becomes the universal medium of social relations” (ibid). Value is not just a measure of economic worth but a social relation that abstracts labour into a general, quantifiable form (exchange value) that can be exchanged through money. The “hybris” refers to the overreach of capitalist society in thinking that it can completely dominate both nature and human beings through abstraction. This abstraction, in the form of value, reduces complex, living systems - both the natural world and human labour - into things that can be quantified and controlled. Just as nature is reduced to resources to be exploited, human beings are reduced to labour power to be commodified. This creates systems of domination where workers are subject to the power of capital, even though they are technically ‘free’ under the law. Workers are ‘free’ to sell their labour, but this freedom is constrained by the necessity of earning a living. The worker's labour power is commodified, and their social relations are mediated by the exchange of value. This commodification of labour is part of the larger process of abstraction that turns all social relations into economic transactions.

Abstract labour is how the capitalist production process is organised and, as such, constitutes the concrete reproduction process of the entire society. It is the “condition of existence of commodity production” (Krahl 1973). Abstract labour is not just a feature of individual workplaces but is fundamental to the organisation of the entire capitalist production process and also the broader social and economic structures of society. Capitalist production is organised around the extraction of surplus value from labour, where workers are compelled to work for a wage that is less than the value they create through their labour. Exploitation occurs through the mechanisms of abstract labour, as it enables capitalists to extract surplus value and accumulate capital. The organisation of production based on abstract labour shapes the distribution of wealth, the allocation of

resources, and the dynamics of social relations within society as a whole. In this sense, abstract labour is a fundamental aspect of the reproduction of capitalist social relations and class divisions.

"The problem of reification is at the same time that of the real self-representation of the abstract" (ibid). Reification refers to the process by which abstract concepts or social relations are perceived as concrete, natural, or immutable. In the context of capitalism, reification occurs when social phenomena, such as commodities or labour, are treated as if they have inherent value or existence independent of social relations and human agency. Reification obscures the social and historical processes that produce these phenomena, naturalising and legitimising existing power structures and inequalities. The problem of reification in capitalist societies is intertwined with the challenge of accurately representing the concrete realities of people's lives. Abstract concepts and categories, while useful for analysing social processes, can become reified and detached from the lived experiences of individuals. Addressing this problem requires a critical examination of how abstract concepts shape our understanding of reality and a recognition of the complex and multifaceted nature of human existence within capitalist societies.

For Krahl, in contrast with Marx, the socialisation of the means of production would reproduce the domination of capital in a totalitarian form and extend abstract labour to every sphere of life, including leisure (Tomba 2021). In a capitalist society, an individual's identity and power are closely tied to their ownership of commodities. By socialising the means of production, the identity and social standing of individuals are no longer based on their ownership status; this, according to Marx, removes the bourgeois class's power derived from property ownership. For Krahl this is insufficient: labour norms would continue to be internalised and relations of domination would survive as fascism (Krahl 1973). The united working class does not fight, according to Krahl, "for the power to dispose of machines as such, but for the collective possession of the means of production as a condition of relations free from domination between men" and women (ibid). Emancipation wants individuals to organise the means of industrial production in such a way that they can establish happy relationships (ibid). Emancipation takes the form of a different organisation of social relations, not of industrial property (ibid). "The more the production process is socialised, the more the

distribution process is based exclusively on exchange, and the more absolute and sacred private capitalist property becomes; capitalist property is transformed from a right over the products of one's labour into a right of appropriation of the labour of others" (Luxemburg 2009). As production becomes more socialised, the means of production (factories, machinery, technology) become more concentrated in the hands of a few capitalists. This concentration of capital strengthens the control of capitalists over the production process. Capitalists own the means of production and employ workers to operate them. The value created by workers exceeds their wages (surplus value), and the capitalists appropriate this surplus. As production becomes more socialised, the scale of this appropriation increases. Initially, property rights in capitalism were conceptualised as the right of individuals to own the products of their labour. However, as production processes are socialised and involve collective labour, these rights transform into the right of capitalists to appropriate the labour of others. The legal and ideological structures of capitalism reinforce the sanctity of private property. Laws, institutions, and cultural norms evolve to protect and legitimise the appropriation of surplus value by capitalists, making capitalist property seem absolute and sacred. The intensification of private property and exploitation generates contradictions within the capitalist system, leading to periodic crises. Overproduction, under-consumption, and economic instability are manifestations of these contradictions. Capital is the overall institutional and economic social relation that systematically determines the relationship between means of production and labour, it is the ability to acquire a workforce on the market (Farnesi Camellone 2022). What distinguishes capital from other forms of appropriation of other people's labour is the fact that the coercion exercised on workers is internal to the production process itself (ibid). The workforce is incorporated into the production process whose material means are already in the hands of the capitalist (ibid). Waged labour is the origin and function of the capital accumulation process (ibid).

Machines, on the other hand, are configured as instruments of domination used in relations of production due to their role in shaping power dynamics, control, and exploitation within capitalist societies (Tomba 2021). Machines, as technological tools utilised in production processes, enable capitalists to exert control over labour. By mechanising tasks and increasing efficiency, capitalists can intensify the pace of work, standardise production processes, and monitor workers more closely. This control over

labour allows capitalists to extract surplus value from workers more effectively, maximising profits at the expense of workers' well-being and autonomy. The introduction of machines and technology in capitalist production processes leads to the rationalisation and bureaucratisation of work. Machines impose standardised procedures and routinised tasks, reducing the need for individual creativity, skill, and decision-making among workers. “Every technical transformation goes against the interests of the workers directly involved and worsens their immediate situation by depreciating the labour force and making work more intense, monotonous and miserable” (Luxemburg 2009). This technological rationalisation serves to disempower workers, alienating them from the production process and reinforcing hierarchical power relations within the workplace. The reliance on machines in capitalist production creates a dependency on technological infrastructure and capital investment. Workers become increasingly reliant on machines for their livelihoods, yet they have little control over the ownership or management of these technologies. Capitalists, who control the means of production, use machines as instruments of domination to extract surplus value from workers and maintain their economic power and privilege. The ownership and control of machines are concentrated in the hands of capitalist elites, exacerbating social inequalities and disparities in power. This uneven development reinforces existing patterns of domination and exploitation, as marginalised communities lack access to the technological resources necessary for economic empowerment and self-determination. In Krahl's view, machines are configured as instruments of domination within capitalist relations of production due to their role in consolidating power, controlling labour, and perpetuating exploitation. The deployment of technology in capitalist economies serves the interests of capitalist elites, reinforcing systems of inequality and oppression while marginalising the agency and autonomy of workers.

Automation can lead to two outcomes: domination and liberation (ibid). It can be the destruction of capital and productive forces but at the same time, workers could be abolished and become a mass of dominated pensioners (ibid). Automation has the potential to lead to liberation in several ways: reducing drudgery, increasing efficiency and productivity, expanding leisure time, empowering workers, innovating, and addressing social and environmental challenges. It can eliminate or reduce tedious and

repetitive tasks, freeing up time and energy for individuals to pursue more meaningful activities. By automating manual labour and routine processes, people can focus on creative, intellectual, or leisure pursuits that contribute to personal fulfilment and well-being. Automation can enhance productivity and efficiency in various sectors, leading to higher output with less input. This can result in greater abundance and resource availability, potentially reducing the need for long working hours and enabling more equitable distribution of goods and services. As automation takes over more tasks, individuals may have more leisure time available for relaxation, recreation, and personal development. This can foster greater work-life balance and opportunities for self-care, socialising, and pursuing hobbies or interests. It has the potential to empower workers by shifting the balance of power in labour relations. By reducing the dependence on manual labour, workers may have more bargaining power to negotiate for better wages, working conditions, and job security. Automation can also enable workers to participate in decision-making processes and contribute their expertise to the design and implementation of automated systems. It can spur innovation and creativity by enabling the development of new technologies, products, and services. As routine tasks become automated, individuals and organisations can focus on problem-solving, innovation, and value creation. This can lead to economic growth, job creation in new industries, and the advancement of society as a whole. It can help address pressing social and environmental challenges by optimising resource use, reducing waste, and mitigating the impact of human activities on the planet. Automated systems can contribute to sustainable development goals by promoting energy efficiency, environmental conservation, and equitable access to resources. Automation is the destruction of capital and labour power as a commodity (Krahl 1973).

At the same time, automation can lead to job displacement and economic inequality, control by technological elites, surveillance, dependency and vulnerability, exacerbation of social divides and loss of human agency. It can result in the displacement of workers from traditional roles, particularly in industries where routine tasks can be easily automated. This can lead to unemployment or underemployment, exacerbating economic inequality and widening the gap between those who control automated technologies and those who are marginalised or excluded from the labour market. The ownership and control of automated technologies are often concentrated in

the hands of technological elites and corporate interests. This concentration of power can lead to domination as a small group of individuals or organisations wield disproportionate influence over economic, political, and social decision-making processes. Technological elites may use automation to consolidate their power and maintain existing systems of privilege and oppression. Automation enables the collection and analysis of vast amounts of data, which can be used for surveillance and control purposes. Automated systems, such as facial recognition software and predictive algorithms, can infringe on individual privacy rights and civil liberties, enabling authorities to monitor and manipulate behaviour in ways that reinforce existing power structures and hierarchies. Society's increasing reliance on automated technologies can create dependencies that leave individuals and communities vulnerable to exploitation and manipulation. For example, reliance on automated systems for essential services such as healthcare, transportation, and communication can leave people at the mercy of technological failures, hacking attacks, or algorithmic biases, leading to disruptions and injustices that reinforce systems of domination. Automation can exacerbate existing social divides and inequalities by disproportionately benefiting those who have access to and control over automated technologies. Marginalised communities in the Global North, including low-income individuals, black people and Asians, and rural populations, may face barriers to accessing automated services or may be excluded from the benefits of automation altogether, further entrenching disparities and reinforcing systems of domination. Automation has the potential to diminish human agency by reducing individuals to passive consumers or users of technology rather than active participants in decision-making processes. As automated systems become more pervasive and autonomous, individuals may have less control over their own lives and destinies, leading to feelings of disempowerment and alienation from the social and political spheres.

Overall, while automation presents challenges and risks, it also offers opportunities for liberation and human flourishing. Addressing risks of domination and oppression requires careful consideration of the social, political, and ethical implications of automated technologies and the development of policies and practices that prioritise human well-being, equity, and justice. By harnessing the potential of automation thoughtfully and ethically, societies can work towards creating a future that

prioritises human well-being, social justice, and environmental sustainability. It becomes necessary to think about the emancipative and qualitative needs of those who work for a wage, making them participants in the practical experience of political struggle (ibid). According to Krahl, men and women can be liberated from work (ibid). Liberation from work is not simply about the cessation of labour but involves a broader transformation of social relations and the reorganisation of society. For instance, advocating for a reduction in the amount of time individuals are required to spend on necessary labour. Through advancements in technology and the reorganisation of production processes, it may be possible to achieve greater efficiency and productivity, thus reducing the amount of time people need to devote to work to meet their material needs. Liberation from work would involve the expansion of leisure time and opportunities for creative expression, personal development, and social engagement. Individuals should have the freedom to pursue activities that bring them fulfilment and meaning beyond the confines of wage labour, such as art, education, community organising, and leisure pursuits. Krahl argues for a reevaluation of the meaning and value of work within society. Instead of prioritising profit and productivity above all else, Krahl advocates for a shift towards valuing work that contributes to the well-being of individuals and communities, promotes environmental sustainability, and fosters social solidarity and cooperation. Ultimately, Krahl's vision of liberation from work involves a radical transformation of social relations and the reorganisation of society along more equitable and democratic lines. This would require challenging and transcending the capitalist logic of accumulation and exploitation, and prioritising the needs and desires of individuals and communities in the pursuit of human flourishing and collective liberation. Krahl's perspective on liberation from work emphasises the interconnectedness of economic, social, and political systems and the need for a holistic approach to social transformation that addresses the root causes of exploitation, alienation, and inequality within capitalist societies. Automation does not necessarily lead to the abolition of domination and oppression: to achieve this goal, a struggle for liberation by those who are aware and ready to act is required (ibid).

2.3 God became time and time is money

In late capitalist production, the package has won out over the product, exchange value usurps use value because it appears as the thing in itself, the true essence of the product (Tomba 2011). In the process of reification, the commodity form has a dual character and is split into two things in itself (Krahl 1973). On the one hand, it is presented as a utility, i.e. the capacity of a good or service to satisfy a given need, its use-value, and as such it is determined by concretely useful labour (ibid). On the other hand, the product is (exchange) value, i.e. the quantity of money or commodity at which it can be exchanged. It is in the barter relation of the commodity that it presents itself as its actual value, the substance of which is determined by the "socially necessary labour for the production of use-value" (Marx 2017). The commodity, in the form in which it appears, is, on the one hand, an object of use, hence a use-value; on the other hand, it is a bearer of exchange-value and hence is exchange-value, but it is such only at the moment when it interfaces with a commodity of a different kind, i.e. in a relation of things among things (ibid). The being-in-itself only pertains to the use-values mediated by the production process, without the being-in-itself the produced use-values could not be appropriate and, therefore, be tangibly useful, i.e., fit for sensible consumption (Krahl 1973). In capitalist society, however, commodity value becomes exclusively exchange value. "The problem of value-form, of the autonomous representation of value in exchange-value, thus coincides with the problem of its reifying self-representation" (ibid). In this process, value erases all sensible qualities of the natural form of the commodity (ibid).

"Therefore, value is a pure social form, in itself indeterminate; its only material foundation consists in the abstract property of containing the expenditure of human labour power in the physiological sense" (ibid). In the work process, the activity of men and women brings about a change to the object of work, and this should be the purpose of such work: the process is extinguished in the product. On the contrary, labour has become a pure object: while this has become objectified, the object is worked. Labour power as such becomes a commodity and the product manifests itself as the product of others' performance (ibid). Social value ignores *in abstracto* the natural use-value qualities of things. Therefore, the social relation is diluted in the equivalent form of the commodity and is mystified as natural property (ibid). "The natural form of the

commodity becomes the form of value [...] only within the value relation" (Marx 2017). "The exchange value of the commodity is thereby the phenomenal form, materialised through a reifying *quid pro quo*, of the social value that is represented in such a thing mode" (Krahl 1973). The exchange value manifests or appears in a particular way within the realm of exchange. This form is observable and tangible, representing the quantitative relationship between commodities in terms of their exchangeability. The exchange value is materialised or made concrete through a process of reification, where abstract social relationships are objectified or turned into tangible things in a process of substitution of a thing with another one. In the context of commodities, exchange value arises through the mutual recognition and acceptance of commodities as equivalent in exchange. Exchange value is the very being of the commodity because it is the form of existence of the commodity insofar as it usurps use value (ibid). The process of production is that process by which the abstract is hypostatised - rendered a phenomenal concept, subsistent in itself, through the abstraction of concepts - to first nature (ibid). Thus, men and women relate to money - abstract exchange-value - by understanding it as use-value: it appears to exist as natural social property (ibid). In other words, money appears to be an inherent and unquestionable aspect of social life, rather than a socially constructed institution shaped by historical, cultural, and economic processes. This perception obscures the social relations and power dynamics embedded within the monetary system, reinforcing the dominance of capitalist ideologies that equate money with individual success, status, and security. "The abstraction of use-values is [thus] rooted in the heart of the social organisation of the capitalist world of production" (ibid). The abstraction of use values involves reducing the diverse qualities and features of commodities to a common denominator, making them comparable and exchangeable in the marketplace. Use-values are abstracted and commodified, transformed into objects of exchange with exchange-values determined by supply and demand in the marketplace. Use value is subsumed into social value through the capitalist production process in which exchange value is the very form of existence of the commodity. Exchange value reflects or represents the underlying social value inherent in commodities, otherwise, the collective worth or significance attributed to goods, services, or activities within a society. The social value of a commodity, then, can be understood as the broader societal recognition or acceptance of its exchange value.

“Value is an existing fiction that, as a false consciousness, has real power over men” and women (ibid). Social value is embedded within the social relations of production and exchange within the capitalist society. In capitalist society, the economy becomes the basis that directly determines consciousness and institutions, legitimising all dominations (ibid). The identity of the ego passes into the products themselves: forms of consciousness and economic structures mutually determine each other (ibid). Social value is objectified or expressed through the material form of commodities.

Exchange value is not inherent in the physical properties of commodities but is instead a social phenomenon rooted in the relations of production and exchange within capitalist society. Critical subjectivity reveals that the thing in itself of the object is only appearance, which only for people has social value, but this value is manifested by lowering a natural tangible form to thing-value (ibid.). Use-values, which for us are mere objects for consumption, are nature-mediated. In capitalism, mediation is an aim in itself that takes the place of a concrete phenomenon, a natural form (ibid). Indeed, “only that what is objectively grounded can be consumed concretely”, only what has its basis in objective reality and has empirical evidence (ibid). The Marxian critique of reification shows that the thing itself - use-value - is pure abstraction and that the value that manifests itself socially in exchange value - the money form - abstracts from concrete labour (ibid). While use-value appears as a concrete quality inherent in commodities, it is a social construct shaped by historical and cultural factors. Use-value is abstracted from the specific material qualities of commodities and generalised as a common characteristic. The value is the pseudo-natural and automatic engine of capitalist development and is the true subject of social progress (Maiso 2018). It qualifies use values because it implies them (Krahl 1973). It is the concept of the commodity employing reification and social abstraction (ibid). Value is ‘pseudo-natural’ because it is constructed and treated as if it were a natural and inherent feature of the world, rather than a social construct. In reality, value is a socially determined abstraction shaped by historical, cultural, and economic processes. The absolute (value) unfolds as capital, that is, as a mere identity referring to itself (ibid). Behind the immediate phenomenal forms of money and products lies an essence: value, an existing abstraction (ibid). Value in a capitalist society manifests itself through the accumulation and circulation of capital. Capital is, essentially, value in motion - value that seeks to

reproduce and expand itself through processes like production, exchange, and investment. Capital refers to itself in that it exists solely for its expansion. In this sense, capital becomes a self-referential system, where the goal of economic activity is not to meet human needs but to generate more capital. “I cannot see, feel, touch, taste value, it is not empirically perceptible, and yet it subsumes use-values” (ibid). Value as abstraction is alienation, exploitation and domination, hence repression (ibid). Value is depicted as a natural and objective force that governs economic relationships and drives societal development. In capitalist economies, the pursuit of profit and the accumulation of capital are central goals that guide economic activity. The concept of value, as measured by prices and exchange relations, serves as a mechanism through which these goals are pursued. Through the competitive dynamics of markets, the pursuit of value drives technological innovation, economic growth, and the expansion of capitalist relations. The pursuit of value and the accumulation of capital are equated with progress and prosperity. This perspective is deeply ingrained within capitalist ideologies, which prioritise economic growth and efficiency as indicators of societal well-being.

The simple value form must be differentiated from the total value form. Whereas in the former case, the product is an expression of value only singular in a single different commodity; in the latter, it expresses the value of an infinite series of commodities, but in a merely contingent equivalent form that does not satisfy the demands of formal universality advanced by exchange (ibid). These demands are met by the inversion of the total value form, i.e. the general form of value that is the money form (ibid). The increasingly general process of formalisation, which in progressive abstraction from the use-value of commodities ensures their universal convertibility into a single general commodity, coincides “with the particular process of reification that guarantees the singular existence of the abstract value of commodities in exchange” and whose general equivalent corresponds to the money-form (ibid). In this sense, the commodity is constituted as two in-itselfs. On the one hand, we have the use-value; on the other hand, we have the product as an exchange-value that appears to us as a thing in itself and together as money. Money has the privilege of representing and symbolising the exchange value, hence the value, of all commodities. Money makes all that heterogeneous homogeneous because everything is money. In determining money as a symbol of exchange value, it becomes society's pledge for its symbolic quality of

signifying something other than its material form (ibid). Money universalised as an international means of payment no longer has the merely symbolic function of representing for exchange the whole world of commodities, “rather it ‘degrades other commodities’ to representatives of money” (Krahl 1973). Money represents exchange value and at the same time is real exchange value (Marx 2020). It is the manifest exchange value, which has severed all connection with the natural product form of existence (Krahl 1973). Labour or labour time is the original money with which all commodities are purchased, every commodity in production is exchanged for labour time (Marx 2017).

Money is configured as the universal representative of wealth; it is the sovereign of commodities over which it exercises absolute dominion (Farnesi Camellone 2022). It symbolically represents in a single existence the totality of the commodity world (Krahl 1973). Incorporating within itself the exchange value of products, it possesses a specific social quality: individuals have alienated themselves by relegating it to the exchanged products (Farnesi Camellone 2022). The power of money is developed in such a way that the exchange relationship is fixed as a power external to the producers and independent of them (Krahl 1973). It is a single movement that sees producers becoming dependent on exchange, exchange becoming independent of them, and the abyss between product as such and product as exchange progressively widening (ibid). Value enhances itself, money generates money without any trace of its origin being left in this form (Marx 2017). Producers who are independent and isolated from the division of labour only come into social contact through the exchange of the products of their labour, therefore, even the specifically social characteristics of their private work only appear within this exchange (Krahl 1973). As a consequence, to producers social relations appear as object relations between persons and social relations between things (ibid). Exchange value exists doubly: as a commodity, as money. Money is the apparent adequate form, but it is interchanged at the price of the commodity and, through this interchange, use-value does not disappear. “In the commodity, the material has a price; in money, the exchange value possesses a material” (Marx 1979).

The money form, as the manifestation of exchange value, abstracts from the concrete labour embodied in commodities, reducing it to a homogeneous measure of value. The objectivity of commodity value, which, at the height of alienation, is

concretised in the money form, exerts such material violence that it cannot be dissolved through conceptual means (ibid). The money form represents the culmination of the process of abstraction and reification, as value is materialised and objectified in the form of money. The dominance of money and the abstraction of value contribute to inequalities, exploitation, and alienation within capitalist societies, perpetuating social divisions and injustices. While critical analysis and theoretical critique are essential for understanding and challenging capitalist social relations, they are insufficient to address the material effects of capitalism on people's lives. Transformative action and collective struggle are necessary to confront and challenge the systemic violence of capitalism, aiming for social change beyond mere intellectual critique. In a society organised around principles of equality and collective well-being, the social value of goods and activities would be determined not solely by their market price, but also by their contribution to the common good and the fulfilment of human needs.

Money is the universal and evanescent form of a social and political configuration in which individuals, dominated by abstractions, are mere supports (Farnesi Camellone 2022). It is sovereign of social relations because it constitutes the only social nexus between mutually different individuals and establishes a space in which equal individuals enter into relations: the owner of money (capitalist) and the owner of labour-power (ibid). The latter brings to the market its capacity for labour that is at one with its corporeity: the living labour that workers offer for sale on the market (ibid). In this process, the worker tries to make money on his or her own but is instead dominated by it (ibid). In the capitalist era, the workforce also takes the form of a commodity that belongs to the worker, while his labour takes the form of wage labour (Marx 2017). It is labour not as an object but as an activity that affirms and stiffens, posits itself as a thing (Krahl 1973). The agents of production, the working men and women, feel completely at ease in these alienated and irrigated forms because they are shapes of the appearance in which they move and live every day (ibid). This coincides with the interest of the ruling class, in fact, “commodity fetishism and the process of reification of capital are expressions of a universal pathology anchored in the base of bourgeois society. [...] Capital is the unfolding of the commodity concept over time. Time becomes the absolute, time becomes money” (ibid). Capital emerges from the production and exchange of commodities and evolves through various stages, becoming

more complex and expansive as it progresses. This unfolding reflects the way capitalism evolved historically, from simple commodity production to more advanced forms of capital accumulation. As capital unfolds, it transforms the relations of production, distribution, and social organisation, and each stage represents a further development of the basic logic of the commodity. As capital unfolds, it progressively shapes society, deepening the commodification of social life and extending capitalist relations into new areas of life and new parts of the world. This process intensifies the abstraction and alienation that characterise capitalist relations. The development of capital is dialectical, it involves contradictions that drive the system forward. For example, the contradiction between use-value and exchange-value within the commodity form is one such tension. Capital seeks to maximize exchange value (profit) at the expense of use-value (human needs). The commodity form, initially limited to the sphere of goods and services, extends to all aspects of life. Labour itself becomes a commodity (labour-power), and eventually, even human relationships and experiences are commodified. This totalising process is what drives the expansion and deepening of capitalism, making capital not just an economic category but a social and cultural one as well. Under capitalism, the economic value of labour is directly tied to the amount of time it takes to produce something. Time is the most fundamental unit of economic calculation and organisation in a capitalist economy. Instead of being a neutral or natural element of life, time is treated as something that can be bought, sold, and controlled. Workers are paid based on the time they work, and capitalists strive to maximize profits by squeezing as much productive activity as possible into each unit of time. Workers are alienated from their labour because they are selling their time and labour power to someone else, rather than working for their satisfaction or needs. When time becomes money, the qualitative aspects of time are overshadowed by its quantitative aspects: how much money or value can be generated in a given unit of time. Capital is value that is valorised, it is an abstraction that presents itself as an eternal necessity of nature where time is dehistoricized (ibid). Capital is not just value in a static sense but value that is in motion. What generates and produces is always the same: exchange value and surplus value as categories of identity (ibid). “This movement is history without history” (ibid).

However, Krahl's critical analysis highlights the social and ecological costs of capitalist development and how value abstraction perpetuates inequalities and

exploitation. There's a totalitarian and destructive predominance of the abstraction of value, understanding the fatal necessity of it provides the condition of the possibility of freedom (ibid). The abstraction of value holds a pervasive and dominant influence. This abstraction dominates social and economic life, shaping individuals' behaviours, aspirations, and interactions within society. While the abstraction of value may seem totalising and destructive, it is also seen as a fatal necessity within capitalist systems. In other words, value abstraction is an inherent feature of capitalist economies, driven by the imperative to maximise profits and accumulate capital. To challenge or transcend capitalism requires a deep understanding of the structural forces and mechanisms that sustain the abstraction of value, including its historical origins, social implications, and systemic effects. By critically interrogating the underlying logic of capitalism and recognising the constraints it imposes on human agency and autonomy, individuals and social movements can identify points of intervention and resistance. This understanding lays the groundwork for envisioning alternative modes of social organisation that prioritise human well-being, solidarity, and democratic participation. There is a dialectical relationship between abstraction and freedom within capitalist societies. While the abstraction of value appears oppressive and all-encompassing, it also opens up possibilities for critical reflection, collective action, and social transformation.

"Discovering the inherent modes of use of things is a historical action" (ibid). How humans use objects or things is not fixed or predetermined but contingent upon historical circumstances and societal conditions. Discovering the inherent modes of use of things involves recognising the historical specificity of human practices and how they are mediated by social, cultural, and technological developments over time. Krahl's analysis is grounded in historical materialism, a key aspect of Marxist theory that emphasises the historical development of human societies through changes in their material conditions of existence. In this context, how material objects are used within specific historical and social contexts reflects the prevailing modes of production, distribution, and consumption characteristic of a given society at a particular point in time. In capitalist societies, the use of things is often determined by the imperatives of profit, commodification, and capitalist accumulation, rather than by human needs, creativity, or social relations. Understanding the historical origins and dynamics of these production relations is essential for uncovering the underlying forces that structure

human activity within capitalist societies. By recognising the historical specificity of human practices and social relations, individuals can develop a critical awareness of how capitalist society shapes their experiences, desires, and aspirations. This historical consciousness may serve as a basis for transformative action aimed at overcoming capitalist domination and realising alternative forms of social organisation and production. History, society, and human praxis are interconnected, historical processes shape and condition human activity, including the utilisation of material objects within social and economic contexts.

2.4 The factory of scientific production

The changing nature of capitalism also changes the concept of the working class (Claussen 2023). In advanced capitalism, the categories of capital and labour are remodelled and the concept of productive labour, hence of the working class, expands from manufacturing and industry to the immaterial sphere (Zaru 2023). Mass intellectuality is subsumed into labour power, so much so that there is no longer a separation between manual and intellectual labour and what Krahl calls the "factory of scientific production" is established (Martino et all 2021, Krahl 1973). Universities and education are not separated from the production of value: intellectual labour can be translated into industrial activity and technique (Martino et all 2021). Production has become immaterial to a great extent and is channelled into the cultural industry that chains the masses to material security and the satisfaction of immediate needs (Tomba 2011). The institutional structures and processes through which scientific knowledge is produced, and disseminated, are legitimised by the capitalist society. Knowledge and expertise have a role in maintaining capitalist hegemony and social control. Scientific knowledge production has become institutionalised within capitalist societies, with universities, research institutes, and scientific journals serving as key sites for the generation and dissemination of knowledge. These institutions are often tied to corporate interests, government funding, and academic hierarchies, shaping the priorities, methodologies, and outcomes of scientific research. Within the factory of

scientific production, scientific research is often guided by capitalist imperatives, including the pursuit of profit, technological innovation, and market competitiveness.

Krahl critiques how scientific knowledge is shaped and constrained by the priorities of capitalist accumulation, leading to the marginalisation of research that does not serve corporate or state interests. Scientific knowledge is not neutral or objective but is shaped by the social interests and power dynamics of capitalist society. Krahl challenges the myth of scientific neutrality and objectivity, highlighting how scientific knowledge is embedded within broader systems of social inequality and domination. He highlights how the scientific intelligentsia serves to legitimise capitalist power and domination through the production and dissemination of ideological narratives and discourses. Members of the intelligentsia often occupy positions of authority and influence within educational institutions, media outlets, and governmental agencies, allowing them to shape public perceptions and social norms. Krahl critiques the role of the intelligentsia in reproducing capitalist ideology and hegemony, arguing that their expertise is often wielded in service of maintaining the *status quo*. The factory of scientific production is characterised by a division of intellectual labour, where researchers are segmented into specialised disciplines and subjected to hierarchical structures of academic authority. This division of labour serves to compartmentalise knowledge production, discouraging interdisciplinary collaboration and critical engagement with broader social issues. Scientific knowledge is often wielded as a form of power and domination by expert elites. Technocratic experts, including scientists, engineers, and policymakers, exercise authority over social decision-making processes, often at the expense of democratic participation and social accountability. Krahl argues that technocratic expertise can reinforce existing power structures and marginalise alternative forms of knowledge and expertise. Again according to Krahl, the sciences have so far not contributed to the theoretical determination of the practical social aims of the production process, which is becoming increasingly technological (Krahl 1973).

The sciences must recover the dimension of the emancipatory interest of reason (ibid). Science should not only aim for technical and empirical advancements but should also be oriented towards promoting human freedom, justice, and the betterment of society. Krahl calls for a reorientation of scientific practice towards human emancipation, integrating critical, ethical, and transformative dimensions into scientific

inquiry and application. Sciences should re-engage with their potential to contribute to human liberation and social progress. Rationality should not be limited to instrumental reason (focused on efficiency and control) but should also encompass critical reason (focused on understanding and transforming social conditions). Sciences must integrate insights from philosophy, sociology, and critical theory to ensure that their advancements contribute to human emancipation. For instance, medical research should prioritise addressing health disparities and ensuring access to healthcare for marginalised communities, rather than being driven solely by profit motives. Science should be oriented towards identifying and dismantling structures of oppression, whether they are economic, social, or political. The emergence of a new cognitive labour force makes it possible to think of a new working class and marks the demise of the bourgeois class (Martino et all 2021). There is the potential for critical engagement and social transformation within the *intelligentsia scientifica*. Intellectuals and scientists have a responsibility to challenge dominant ideologies and power structures, using their knowledge and expertise to advocate for social justice, human liberation, and ecological sustainability. The subsumption of intellectual labour to the process of valorisation has, in fact, two effects: science is inscribed in abstract labour, losing its aura of *Kultur*, and it allows the intellectual to understand himself or herself as an exploited worker (Tomba 2011). The scientific intelligentsia occupies a contradictory position within capitalist society, simultaneously serving as a tool of domination and repression while also holding the potential for resistance and emancipation. Krahl calls for intellectuals to engage in interdisciplinary collaboration, popular education, and grassroots organising to confront capitalist hegemony and build alternative forms of social organisation.

Mass intellectuality, to understand itself, needs to organise itself (Martino et all 2021). Intellectual labour is now embedded in productive labour; this means that industrial workers and all those who perform physical labour no longer make up the totality of the proletariat, nor can they independently form its consciousness (Krahl 1973). The totality of the proletariat in its concept has changed (ibid). Intellectual labour represents the substance of abstract labour and capital (ibid). Knowledge, information, and intellectual processes have become key drivers of capital accumulation. The traditional view of class struggle as a conflict between manual labourers and capitalists must be rethought to include intellectual workers, who also

experience exploitation under capitalism, albeit in different forms. The change in the composition of the proletariat means that revolutionary theory and practice must adapt to address the new realities of labour in late capitalism. It requires an expanded understanding of the working class that includes not only industrial workers but also those engaged in intellectual and creative labour. Once it has found its organisational form, the intellectuals can become the collective theorists of the proletariat (Martino et all 2021). The scientific intelligentsia, while remaining within the capital, can break bourgeois worldview patterns (Fierro 2014). Based on a precise organisation, it can foster the formation of class consciousness and awareness of the mechanisms of domination and control, leading to a spiritual unity of the workers - the only form that allows revolutionary effectiveness (ibid). The intelligentsia has the potential to contribute to consciousness-raising and critical awareness among the working class and oppressed groups. Some intellectuals use their knowledge and expertise to analyse social inequalities, expose injustices, and advocate for social change. They may engage in public education, political organising, and cultural production to challenge dominant ideologies and empower marginalised communities. They may provide strategic direction, ideological guidance, and organisational expertise to grassroots struggles for social justice and liberation. Intellectuals can help articulate the goals and demands of the working class, mobilise support, and develop alternative visions of society. The intelligentsia can serve as mediators between different social classes, facilitating dialogue, negotiation, and compromise. They may play a role in mediating conflicts between labour and capital, advocating for reforms that address the grievances of workers while also appeasing the concerns of the ruling class. What is important to underscore, is that in the labour liberation process, intellectuals must not represent themselves as the centre of the liberation struggle and resistance: their objective place in the production process is that of those who have the privilege to study; they must act to break this privilege (Tomba 2021). Their role is defined within the counteruniversity, they must place their knowledge at the service of the class struggle (Tomba 2021, Krahl 1998). “The positivist diaspora of the individual sciences [...] allows the intellectual to understand him or herself as an exploited worker, to whom his or her scientific product is opposed as an extraneous power and not as a privileged participant in the cultural product” (Krahl 1973). The idealistic self-surpassing of intellectual labour implies both

regress and progress (ibid). On the one hand, the adaptation of the labour of the mind to capitalist production norms hinders intellectuals' understanding of society as a totality (ibid). The qualitative time of reflection is constricted to labour norms and timelines and is reduced to technique. On the other hand, it makes it possible for intellectuals to no longer see themselves as part of the bourgeoisie, it makes it easier for them to experience on their skin the alienation, oppression and exploitation dictated by work that is alien to them and dictated by capital. Capital, however, analytically divides labour into manual and concrete labour, and intellectual and abstract labour (ibid). This means that although the two types of labour do not compose different moments of capital, they are separated within capital in such a way that intellectual labour represents the privilege of extraneous labour, "that is, the social wealth of the level of civilisation that has been achieved by the history of humankind" (ibid). To access the working class, intellectuals must not use mythical images of the proletariat, nor scientific or academic language (Tomba 2021). The language must be translated to be inclusive to all and sundry. It must communicate and involve all the masses, taking into account the specific subjectivity of each, the different privileges, beliefs and political orientations. The language must be simple, with clear goals, means and concrete solutions. Through a work of enlightenment, proletarian processes of reflection are possible (Krahl 1973).

Language is understood as a complex system of communication that encompasses spoken, written, and symbolic forms of expression. Language plays a crucial role in shaping human thought, culture, and social interaction, allowing individuals to convey meaning, share knowledge, and negotiate social relationships. Language, as a medium of communication and expression, becomes constrained and manipulated within the context of instrumental rationality and capitalist social relations. Language is technologically reduced within instrumental relations (ibid). Within the context of capitalist society, language becomes constrained or distorted through the influence of technological, economic, and social forces. Language is instrumentalised or manipulated for specific ends, such as commercial advertising, political propaganda, or bureaucratic administration. In this sense, language is reduced to a tool or instrument for achieving predetermined objectives, rather than being valued for its expressive or communicative potential. Instrumental rationality, as conceptualised by critical theorists like Max Weber and Theodor Adorno, refers to a mode of thinking and behaviour that

prioritises efficiency, control, and the instrumental use of means to achieve predefined ends. Within capitalist social relations, instrumental rationality permeates various aspects of life, including economic production, political governance, and social interaction. Language becomes subject to the imperatives of instrumental rationality and capitalist exploitation within contemporary society. Language is manipulated, commodified, and technologically reduced within instrumental relations, serving as a means of exerting power, shaping perceptions, and maintaining dominant social structures. Krahl's analysis highlights the alienating and dehumanising effects of this process. The life of the mind and language are immediately productive resources (Martino et all 2021). Intellectual and linguistic capacities are commodified and exploited within capitalist society.

Language is functional in perpetuating the manipulation of men and women (Fierro 2014). It loses sight of any cognitive value to assume an imperative one: in language, there is an immediate identification of essence and reality, of thing and function (ibid). Cognitive value refers to the capacity of language to convey knowledge, understanding, and insights about reality. It is the aspect of language that involves thinking, reasoning, and comprehending the world. Imperative value refers to the use of language to command, direct, or enforce action. It is prescriptive, focusing on what should be done rather than on understanding or explaining. The identification of essence and reality refers to the conflation and merging of what something fundamentally is (essence) with its actual existence or manifestation (reality). In this context, language treats these as indistinguishable. Language treats objects not by their intrinsic qualities (thing) but by their roles or uses (function). Essentially, it sees objects in terms of their utility or purpose rather than their inherent nature. When language loses its cognitive value, it stops being a tool for understanding and analysing the world. Instead of fostering critical thinking and knowledge, language becomes a means of issuing directives and commands. Language takes on an imperative function, focusing on what actions must be taken rather than on exploring or questioning reality. This shifts language from a descriptive and analytical tool to a prescriptive and authoritative one. Language, in this context, does not distinguish between the fundamental nature of things (essence) and their actual manifestation (reality). This immediate identification suggests a superficial understanding that does not delve into deeper meanings or

contradictions. Objects and entities are understood and described purely in terms of their functions or roles. This utilitarian perspective reduces things to their practical uses, ignoring their broader or intrinsic qualities. By reducing language to an imperative function, it becomes a tool for maintaining control and order rather than for fostering understanding and critical reflection. When language is used primarily to command and direct, it discourages questioning and critical analysis of the *status quo*. "The structure of the language nullifies any attempt at reflection: the extremely simplified syntax and the tendency to the slogan, to formula, are intended to favour a purely mnemonic acquisition of a concept without any reflection" (ibid). The identification of essence and reality, and thing and function, is related to the concept of reification, where social relations and human qualities are treated as things. This process of reducing complex human and social phenomena to simple functions or commands contributes to alienation, as it strips away the deeper meanings and connections. Language turns communication into a one-way directive rather than a dialogue or exploration of ideas. By reducing language to commands and functions, those in power can more easily enforce their will and suppress dissent. This use of language reinforces existing power structures and limits possibilities for resistance or change. Treating people and objects purely in terms of their functions dehumanises them, reducing their identities and intrinsic worth to their utility. Names in language immediately evoke, at the very moment they are used, values that are universally valid because they are socially imposed. "Names used in language immediately evoke a certain function and generate in the listener a standardised reaction with a manipulative purpose" (ibid). Language no longer contains synthetic *a priori* judgements - which would potentially allow knowledge to progress not based on individual experience (ibid). Such judgements become analytical, and obvious, and do not add to what is already implicit in the subject (ibid). Synthetic *a priori* judgments are the ones that guarantee progress in science. They predicate something that is not implicit in the definition of the subject but attribute this predicate based on an objective calculation, which is not derived from personal experience and is therefore perfectly reliable. An example from Kantian philosophy would be '7 + 5 = 12.' It is *a priori* because we do not need to count anew each time to know if it is true or synthetic. After all, it adds new knowledge by combining the concepts. Analytical judgments are judgments where the predicate is contained within

the subject. They do not add new information but merely unpack what is already inherent in the concept. For instance, 'All bachelors are unmarried.' This is true by definition and does not provide new knowledge beyond the definition of 'bachelor.' When language no longer contains synthetic *a priori* judgments, it means that language no longer provides new, fundamental insights that are universally true and independent of specific experiences. Instead, it only deals with what is already known or implicit within the concepts themselves. Judgments become analytical, meaning they do not extend our knowledge. They only make explicit what is already implicit. This shift suggests a move towards a more superficial use of language where no new, profound knowledge is generated. This change implies that language and knowledge are becoming more tautological, merely reiterating what is already known rather than exploring or discovering new aspects of reality. This limits the ability of language to foster deeper understanding or critical thinking. The transformation from synthetic *a priori* to analytical judgments indicates a reduction in the cognitive depth of language. Language becomes less capable of conveying profound or universal truths and more focused on reiterating the obvious. Analytical judgments do not challenge existing knowledge or assumptions, thus inhibiting critical thought and philosophical inquiry. Without the ability to form synthetic *a priori* judgments, language loses its power to question and expand our understanding of the world. This shift is a tool for ideological control, where language is used to reinforce what is already known and accepted, rather than to explore new ideas or challenge the *status quo*. It aligns with a broader critique of how language can be manipulated to maintain power structures. The absence of synthetic *a priori* judgments leads to philosophical stagnation. If language only reaffirms existing knowledge without contributing new insights, it cannot drive philosophical or scientific progress. "In language, contradictions are integrated, sweetened and deprived of their authentic *vis*" (ibid). Such language "employs images and not concepts makes use of formulas for self-validation, absorbs and neutralises contradictions, does not develop cognitive operations, but immediately associates things and functions" (ibid). Language is ahistorical, it has no consciousness of the past or of time: recalling past events means reflecting on causes, phenomena and any similarities that may awaken evasive feelings in the population. "Society, therefore, operates, as a system of self-defence, a transformation of the universal to the particular and

contingent, it splits up the disturbing elements, it isolates them, since, put together, they could outline a general picture that is difficult to manipulate" (ibid). The 'life of the mind' encompasses a range of intellectual activities and capabilities, including critical thinking, problem-solving, artistic expression, and scientific inquiry. In Krahl's analysis, the life of the mind represents a productive force that contributes to the generation of value, innovation, and cultural development within society. Language enables individuals to convey ideas, emotions, and experiences, as well as to engage in collective action, cooperation, and social coordination. In Krahl's framework, language is considered a productive resource that facilitates social communication, knowledge transmission, and cultural production. But the life of the mind and language are directly involved in the process of production and value creation within capitalist society. Unlike traditional factors of production such as labour and capital, which transform the production process, the life of the mind and language are productive resources that are utilised in their original form to generate economic and cultural value. This highlights the importance of intellectual and linguistic capacities as essential components of capitalist production and social reproduction. Intellectual and linguistic capabilities are not merely passive or secondary aspects of human existence but are actively mobilised and exploited within capitalist society as productive resources. Krahl emphasises how intellectual and linguistic activities are commodified, commoditised, and subjected to capitalist imperatives, leading to forms of alienation, exploitation, and ideological manipulation.

Nevertheless, there is potential for resistance and critical engagement with dominant social structures through the mobilisation of intellectual and linguistic resources for transformative social change. Language, for Krahl, makes possible "a mediation between the critique of political economy and the theory of class struggles, the historical materialism, in a new historical situation" (Krahl 1973). Krahl views language as a medium through which theoretical concepts and analytical frameworks can be interconnected and reconciled. Language facilitates communication and dialogue among theorists and activists, enabling them to articulate and refine their understanding of complex social phenomena. In this sense, language serves as a bridge or mediator between different dimensions of Marxist theory, allowing for the integration of diverse perspectives and insights. Through language is possible to analyse and criticise

capitalist production, distribution, and exchange; in other words, the logic of capitalism, which includes dynamics of exploitation, alienation, and class domination inherent in capitalist social relations. Krahl sees the theory of class struggles as essential for understanding the dynamics of social change and revolutionary transformation. Class struggles encompass a range of social and political conflicts, including labour struggles, revolutionary movements, and ideological contests, all of which reflect underlying tensions between capitalist elites and working-class populations. Historical materialism, a central tenet of Marxist theory, posits that historical development is driven by changes in the material conditions of production and the resulting conflicts between social classes. Historical materialism provides a framework for analysing the historical evolution of society and identifying the underlying economic and social forces that shape human history. Language has a pivotal role in mediating and synthesising different dimensions of Marxist theory, enabling theorists to engage with the complexities of capitalist society and the ongoing struggles for social transformation. Through language, Krahl seeks to integrate the critique of political economy with the theory of class struggles and historical materialism, providing a theoretical framework for understanding and challenging the dynamics of capitalist domination and exploitation.

Chapter 3

FORMS OF ANTICIPATION OF THE REALM OF FREEDOM

3.1 Organising liberation

Krahl's militant engagement becomes praxis within the SDS (*Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund*, German Socialist Students' League), within which his efforts focus on organising it and criticising its methods and apparatuses. Krahl's reflection starts from praxis and ends in praxis: it begins from student struggles and ends in a revolution that can subvert the existing order (Fierro 2014). Running through praxis is a renewed theory: the revolutionary theory. The reconstruction of such a theory involves placing the Marxist categories of historical materialism under critique and adapting them to the contemporary situation (ibid). Krahl's ideological apparatus is critical theory, which places Marxism in a scenario that gives importance to empirical contributions and transformations of the class struggle (ibid).

According to Krahl, academic militancy precludes access to the knowledge of the needs of a happy and liberated life since it projects onto society as a whole relationships that are only university and academic (Krahl 1973). This projection is problematic for several reasons. First, there is a narrow focus on academic issues, which often means that militancy focuses on problems specific to the university environment, such as student governance, curriculum changes, and academic freedom. While these are important, they do not address the broader social and economic issues affecting society at large. By concentrating on issues specific to academia, this form of militancy overlooks or inadequately addresses the broader systemic problems like economic inequality, labour exploitation, and social justice that impact the wider population. Second, academic militancy can isolate broader social movements, and become insular, engaging primarily with intellectual debates and theoretical discussions that do not resonate with or include the wider working-class and marginalised communities. The focus on academic and theoretical issues can lead to a lack of direct, practical

engagement with the real, everyday struggles of people outside the university context, and this disconnect can hinder the development of strategies that address the immediate needs of those outside academia. Third, academic militancy might inappropriately generalise the power dynamics, conflicts, and priorities of the academic environment to society as a whole. Relationships within universities, such as those between students and faculty or among different academic factions, are not fully representative of societal relationships. While critical theory and intellectual critique are essential, Krahl suggests that when academic militancy overemphasises these aspects, it neglects the practical, lived experiences and needs of people striving for liberation and happiness in their everyday lives. Fourth, there might be ideological constraints. Academic militancy often operates within the framework of theoretical analysis and critique, which, while important, can sometimes remain abstract and disconnected from practical, actionable solutions that can bring about tangible improvements in people's lives. There can be an inherent elitism in academic militancy, where the knowledge and discourse produced are not easily accessible or relevant to those outside the academic sphere, thus limiting its effectiveness and inclusivity. Fifth, there might be a lack of holistic understanding. By focusing primarily on academic concerns, there is a risk of not fully understanding or addressing the comprehensive needs that contribute to a happy and liberated life, such as economic security, social equality, and personal freedom. The potential for academic militancy to contribute to broader social movements is limited if it does not bridge the gap between academic concerns and the practical realities of the wider society. By projecting academic relationships onto society as a whole, academic militancy fails to effectively address the fundamental issues that are necessary for achieving true happiness and liberation for all. This critique emphasises the need for a more inclusive and practical approach that integrates academic insights with the concrete struggles and needs of the broader population. The SDS, in its attempt to find access to the working class, made the Leninist and Stalinist mistake of barring itself access to the concrete structure of the needs of the masses (ibid). In agitation, the movement reproduces the same split between work and leisure, between the status of producers and consumers (ibid). Agitation, on the other hand, should refer to the alienated life and enunciate concrete and possible emancipatory needs (ibid). The masses are chained to the misery of manual labour, material security and

self-preservation: these are the preconditions from which to start; a critique of anti-democratic structures of domination is not enough (ibid). According to Krahl, the SDS does not meet the concrete needs of the working class and does not combine the discourse on technique, science and language with the critique of political economy (ibid). Through the SDS, Krahl wants to test if the intelligentsia can become a material force in history, and how it can reach a broad stratum of the population and transform their way of understanding reality (Maiso 2018).

The problem of organising SDS is the problem of finding a medium between theory and praxis, and it demands a transformation of daily life and the forms of political struggle (Zaru 2023, Maiso 2018). There is a dialectical relationship between theory and praxis: they continuously inform and shape each other and, through organisation theory and practice correct each other and become critical. This dynamic interplay ensures that theoretical insights are constantly tested and refined through practical engagement and that praxis is guided by critical reflection. For thought and culture not to be enslaved and to be autonomous, they must tirelessly exercise the activity of interpreting the facts, going beyond the existing, not ascertaining its being, but effectively criticising the system and promoting transformative actions (Fierro 2014). Criticism is an element of liberation: it breaks the appearance of reality (ibid). An active, thinking and criticising subject escapes *a priori* from the chains of objecthood, escapes from the principle of exchange and constitutes itself as an anticipatory form of the realm of freedom. The realm of freedom is a theoretical and aspirational state where individuals and communities are free from coercion and exploitation. It presumes an overcoming of the private egoism of subjects in favour of an organised communist association of individuals who struggle and liberate themselves (Krahl 1973). Anticipating the realm of freedom means anticipating the suppression of the isolation that follows from the production relation that underpins capitalist social formation, i.e. the suppression of abstract labour that renders individuals automated (ibid).

The overall personality to be formed is not an empirical individual or a single communist member, but an intelligible subject (ibid). An intelligible subject is critically aware of her or his social and economic conditions and recognises the structures of domination and exploitation that exist within capitalist society. This subject possesses

the agency to participate in the class struggle, not just reacting to conditions but actively seeking to transform them through rational, collective action. He or she understands the dialectical relationship between base and superstructure, recognising how economic conditions shape ideological forms and vice versa. The intelligible subject embodies the potential for emancipation, capable of envisioning and working towards a society free from oppression and exploitation. The condition of the realm of freedom is transformation, the condition of which is a choral organisation, involving theory and empiricism, in a contribution from all and sundry (Fierro 2014). The organisation has, therefore, the task of anticipating the realm of freedom by clarifying the theory that indulges in subjective *doxa* (opinion) and transforming it into the objectivity of political truth in the struggle of the movements (Krahl 1973).

Nevertheless, capitalism makes the theoretical moment difficult to achieve. It guarantees the satisfaction of immediate needs, does not allow material misery to proliferate, keeps the masses clinging to the material aspect of existence and systematically dehistorizes consciences, which sink into oblivion that does not allow them to grasp the mechanisms of oppression (Fierro 2014). If the repression of society no longer manifests itself in material misery, individuals must find the motivation for a revolution elsewhere. They must oppose the Great Refusal which Herbert Marcuse writes, but enrich it with a concrete, insurgent organisation made up of strategic maxims and tactical rules (ibid). It is important to understand how to reach the consciousness of the masses and the political manifestation of the need for a kingdom of freedom, peace and happiness (Krahl 1973). It is necessary to fight the late capitalist social formation that integrates all organised forms of opposition, from resistance to revolution (ibid). Men and women, if they do not go hungry, "must know why they should risk their lives in the revolution and why they have not only their chains to lose" (ibid). Emancipation is, in fact, the social liberation of women and men, the establishment of relations based on happiness that will organise the means of production.

This is why class consciousness corresponds to a consciousness of totality. Society, indeed, is a concrete totality, a concept based on the critique of knowledge (ibid). The critique of knowledge involves a systematic examination and questioning of the foundations, limits, and implications of human knowledge. This critique is deeply rooted in the traditions of German idealism, Marxism, and the Frankfurt School, and it

seeks to uncover how knowledge is shaped by and serves particular social, economic, and political interests. The critique of knowledge involves an epistemological examination and an ideological analysis. It investigates the basis upon which knowledge claims are made, questioning the assumptions, methodologies, and epistemic frameworks that underlie various forms of knowledge. It also explores the boundaries of what can be known and the inherent limitations of human cognition and perception which includes recognising the potential biases and errors in our understanding. It analyses how knowledge is intertwined with power structures, examining how dominant ideologies shape what is considered valid knowledge and how this, in turn, reinforces existing power relations. It investigates the social and institutional contexts in which knowledge is produced, including the role of educational systems, media, and intellectual elites. In Krahl's critical theory, the critique of knowledge is particularly focused on how knowledge is implicated in the reproduction of capitalist social relations and the maintenance of ideological dominance. Krahl emphasises how knowledge contributes to the process of reification - where social relations are perceived as natural and unchangeable things rather than human constructs - and how educational institutions and intellectual practices serve to reinforce the ideological control of the ruling class by shaping consciousness in ways that support the *status quo* and the importance of linking theory and practice, where the critique of knowledge is not merely an academic exercise but a practical tool for social transformation and revolutionary action. Through the concept of totality, the concept of critical subjectivity - those categories of knowledge and reification that are categories of emancipation and domination that can be interpreted in the medium of knowledge - is re-embraced (ibid). Totality refers to the interconnectedness and interdependence of all aspects of social reality. In Marxist theory and critical theory, the concept of totality emphasises understanding society as a whole, rather than isolating individual parts. Critical subjectivity is the awareness and ability of individuals (or subjects) to critically reflect on and understand their social conditions, it involves recognising how social structures, power dynamics, and ideologies shape individual consciousness and experiences. Categories of knowledge refer to the fundamental concepts and frameworks through which we understand and interpret the world. These categories shape our perception of reality and influence how we think and act. By adopting the concept of totality, critical

theory aims to integrate various aspects of social reality into a coherent whole. This holistic approach allows for a deeper understanding of how different dimensions of society (economic, political, cultural) interact and shape one another. In this context, critical subjectivity is the capacity of individuals to grasp the totality of social relations, recognising how categories of knowledge and reification operate. It is about being critically aware of how one's consciousness is shaped by social structures and how these structures can be both oppressive and emancipatory. Categories of knowledge and reification serve dual purposes: they can be tools of both emancipation and domination. Understanding these categories critically (through the medium of knowledge) involves recognising their role in either liberating individuals or perpetuating their oppression. Knowledge itself becomes a medium through which these categories are interpreted. By critically engaging with knowledge, individuals can understand and challenge the reified social relations that dominate them, thus opening paths to emancipation. By employing the concept of totality, critical theory reclaims and revitalises the idea of critical subjectivity and its emancipatory dimension. A consciousness of totality recognises the systemic nature of capitalism, where every aspect of society is interconnected and influenced by overarching capitalist relations. By analysing and revealing the totality of social relations, critical theorists can help individuals understand the complex and often hidden connections within capitalist society. This theoretical work is essential for raising awareness and guiding effective political action. The revolutionary perspective must be guided by an aetiology of the origins of the logic of exploitation and production, which in turn requires empirical inputs (Fierro 2014). The latter must necessarily be scientific (ibid). For the theoretical-scientific aspect to enter the consciousness of the masses, individuals must perceive that aspect in the immediate dimension of praxis and apply theories in concrete actions (ibid).

Theory cannot and must not ignore the needs of a movement in struggle. Academic and theoretical discussions should not remain abstract but inform and guide real-world political activism. Political actions and strategies should be grounded in robust theoretical frameworks: this ensures that activism is not merely reactive but is informed by a deep understanding of the social and economic structures it seeks to change. The transformation of daily life involves altering the routines, habits, and interactions that reinforce existing social structures. For the SDS, this means

encouraging members to live in ways that reflect their political beliefs, such as through cooperative living arrangements, collective decision-making, and sustainable practices. A shift in cultural norms and values is necessary to support the broader goals of political struggle. This involves challenging consumerism, individualism, and other aspects of capitalist culture in everyday life. Traditional political struggles, such as marches and protests, must be complemented by innovative tactics that can effectively challenge contemporary forms of power. This might include direct action, civil disobedience, and other disruptive methods. Effective organisation requires building strong networks of solidarity both within the SDS and with other movements and communities. This involves fostering a sense of collective identity and shared purpose. The SDS needs to adopt organisational structures that reflect its democratic and egalitarian principles, all members need to have a voice in decision-making processes and leadership roles need to be accountable and rotational. Decentralised forms of organisation can empower local groups and initiatives, making the movement more resilient and adaptable. Educating members about critical theory, the history of social movements, and current political issues is crucial. This education should aim at equipping activists with the knowledge and skills needed for effective praxis. The organisation should foster a culture of continuous learning and reflection, encouraging members to critically engage with both successes and failures in their revolutionary efforts. Transforming daily life and political struggles also involves creating new forms of subjectivity that are aligned with the goals of the movement. This means nurturing individuals who see themselves as active agents of social change and who embody the values - norms shared by a collective subject and influenced by a certain *ethos* - of solidarity, justice, and liberation. The organisation must liberate individuals, recognised as different subjects, from the powerlessness and pressure of social relations (Claussen 2021). Fostering collective empowerment, promoting participatory democracy, facilitating critical education, creating alternative structures, encouraging direct action, challenging ideological domination, supporting personal development and building networks and alliances are necessary steps to achieve liberation. An effective organisation creates a sense of solidarity among individuals, helping them to recognise their shared interests and common goals, this collective identity can empower individuals by providing a support network that enhances their capacity to act and resist oppressive social relations. Through collective

action, individuals can support each other in overcoming personal and structural challenges, this mutual support can reduce feelings of isolation and powerlessness, making it easier for individuals to engage in social and political struggles. A constructive organisation implements participatory democratic processes that give all members a voice in decision-making. By rotating leadership roles and ensuring that power is not concentrated in the hands of a few, organisations can prevent hierarchical domination and encourage broad participation. Providing education on critical theory, social issues, and historical struggles empowers individuals with knowledge and analytical skills. Understanding the structures and mechanisms of oppression helps individuals to recognise their potential for agency and resistance. A functional organisation can develop and promote alternative economic and social structures, such as cooperatives, that operate on principles of equality and mutual aid. These alternatives can provide practical examples of liberated social relations and offer individuals a way to live outside of oppressive systems. Encouraging experimentation with new forms of social organisation allows for the discovery and refinement of practices that better meet the needs and aspirations of individuals. Encouraging direct action and involvement in social movements helps individuals to experience their power to effect change. Direct action can range from protests and strikes to community organising and grassroots initiatives. Participation in direct action fosters a sense of agency and empowerment, as individuals see the tangible impact of their efforts and the potential for collective power. An efficacious organisation works to challenge and dismantle dominant ideologies that reinforce powerlessness and compliance. This involves promoting critical consciousness and alternative narratives highlighting the possibilities for liberation and change and engaging in cultural activities that reflect and promote emancipatory values that can help shift societal norms and expectations. This cultural work is essential for creating an environment where liberated social relations can flourish. A powerful organisation offers holistic support that addresses both the personal and social dimensions of individual lives. This includes providing resources for mental health, well-being, and personal growth, which are crucial for sustaining long-term engagement in social struggles. Creating networks and alliances with other organisations and movements can amplify collective power and provide additional resources and support. Promoting solidarity across different social movements (e.g., labour, environmental and feminist)

helps to create a united front against various forms of oppression and exploitation. More than anything else, a proper organisation should give precise indications of the age of future freedom and the organisational aspects to reach that stage of happiness (Fierro 2014).

The organisational matter, however, is not merely technical but is a spiritual, political and strategic issue of the revolution (Krahl 1973). The spiritual dimension involves the transformation of human consciousness and the development of a new collective *ethos*. This goes beyond mere economic or political changes to encompass a deeper change in how individuals perceive themselves, their relationships with others, and their place in the world. The spiritual aspect provides a moral and ethical foundation for the revolutionary movement, inspiring commitment and resilience among its members. It addresses the existential and emotional needs of individuals, fostering a sense of purpose and belonging. Revolutionary organisation aims to cultivate new values such as solidarity, cooperation, and mutual aid. Politically, the organisation is about challenging existing power structures and creating new forms of governance that reflect the principles of democracy, equality, and justice. It involves the development of political strategies and tactics to confront and dismantle oppressive systems. The revolutionary organisation serves as a vehicle for building counter-power and alternative institutions that can operate independently of the capitalist state. This includes creating grassroots organisations, community assemblies, and worker cooperatives.

Strategy is the theory of organisational practice (ibid). Strategy is not just a set of abstract ideas; it is the theoretical framework that guides practical actions within revolutionary organisations. The concept of praxis, central to Marxist theory, involves the unity of theory and practice. Strategy embodies this unity by ensuring that organisational practice is informed by a coherent theoretical understanding of the socio-political context and objectives. Strategy provides a theoretical basis for why certain actions are taken and how they contribute to the broader goals of the movement. It ensures that organisational practice is purposeful and directed towards achieving revolutionary change. Strategy involves a deep understanding of the social, economic, and political context in which the organisation operates. This theoretical understanding allows the organisation to adapt its practices in response to changing circumstances.

While tactics are the immediate actions taken to achieve short-term objectives, the strategy encompasses a long-term vision for the revolutionary movement: it connects daily activities to the overarching goals of systemic transformation. The emancipatory position of scope must be analytically differentiated, it is not a static representation (ibid). It should be understood as a process that evolves, shaped by changing social, economic, and political conditions. Emancipation is fluid and must be responsive to the specific historical and social contexts in which struggles for liberation occur. This fluidity requires constant re-evaluation and adaptation of strategies and goals. To understand and achieve emancipation, it is necessary to analytically differentiate its various dimensions. This involves recognising the different forms of oppression and exploitation that exist and addressing them in a nuanced way. Analytical differentiation helps avoid reductionism, where complex social phenomena are oversimplified, it ensures that the diverse needs and perspectives of various groups are considered in the pursuit of liberation. Critical theory provides the tools for this analytical differentiation: it helps dissect the structures of domination and oppression, understand their interrelations, and develop strategies for transformative action. Strategic categories must be deduced from the change that the categories of domination - alienation, reification, need, interest - have undergone in highly developed countries - that is, that shift from material to spiritual misery (ibid). There are two fundamental facts from which strategic categories must be derived: the positivistic dispersion of the individual sciences and fascism (ibid). For Krahl, any effective revolutionary strategy must address the fragmentation of sciences by reconnecting the various branches of scientific knowledge with a broader, critical understanding of society. Fascism is a manifestation of the systemic violence and oppression inherent in capitalist societies when faced with internal instability. For Krahl any revolutionary strategy must take into account the threat of fascism as both an actual political movement and a potential outcome of the contradictions within capitalism. Scientific rationality, when divorced from critical reflection, can be co-opted by authoritarian regimes. Fascist states have historically used technology, science, and rationalisation to further their agendas of control and domination. Thus, combating fascism requires not only political struggle but also a critique of how science and rationality are used under capitalist and authoritarian regimes. Any revolutionary movement must address both the fragmentation of scientific

knowledge (and its complicity in maintaining the status quo) and the threat of fascism as a political and social force. The strategy involves continuous critical reflection on organisational practices. It requires evaluating the effectiveness of actions, learning from successes and failures, and refining the approach based on new insights. This process ensures that the organisation remains theoretically rigorous and grounded in a critical understanding of its environment. It helps in avoiding dogmatism and maintaining a dynamic approach. The strategy integrates various struggles (economic, social, and cultural) into a cohesive framework. It acknowledges the interconnectedness of different forms of oppression and the need for a multifaceted approach to revolution. The emancipatory *telos* (purpose) must be realised by revolutionary means (Luxemburg 1976). The organisational problem, therefore, is a revolutionary problem, the organisation is the objective truth and the sensitive translation into material violence of the strategy (Krahl 1973). The organisation embodies the theoretical principles and goals of the revolutionary movement. It represents the material and practical manifestation of abstract ideas and strategic objectives. The success and functioning of the organisation serve as validation or verification of the strategic theories underlying the revolutionary efforts. If the organisation effectively enacts its strategies and achieves its goals, it demonstrates the 'truth' of those strategies in a practical, objective sense.

According to Luxemburg, organisation cannot be determined tactically-manipulative- opportunistically as an instance that provides technical directions for action (e.g. mass strike direction) (Luxemburg 1967). It can be determined at the strategic-political level as the political direction of the entire movement (ibid). Tactical and technical calculations compete with it, but it performs in the revolutionary process the function of mediating the relationship between spontaneous mass action and organised political direction (Krahl 1973). This relationship coincides with the relationship between revolutionary struggle and the immediate struggle, and the organisation determines the path that leads to the realisation of an emancipatory image of purpose, final aim and movement of theory and praxis (ibid). The organisation of existing groups corresponds to the direction of the vanguard strategy and is connected to agitation and propaganda (ibid). Propagandists inductively lead the derived and reified phenomena of the capitalist formation of society back to their objective and essential place in the production process through pamphlets and

polemical writings (ibid). The agitators, on the other hand, point the masses to the essential elements of the capitalist mode of production by deducing them from their phenomena, namely: repression, domination and crisis (ibid). These together prepare the struggle against oppression, illuminating the spontaneity of the movement of the oppressed to transform it into its autonomy: an adult proletariat, no longer a minor, that liberates itself (ibid).

Organisation is the element of praxis closest to theory, strategy is the element of theory closest to praxis (ibid). The theory is non-committal *doxa*: several conceptions and trends can peacefully coexist in it (ibid). The problem of organisation is to transform it into concrete and political class consciousness based on the experience of oppression, hunger, misery and suffering, to make it become a material force (ibid). Action or praxis is the tangle of the individual and disparate actions of men, women and groups, it is an unstructured multiplicity (ibid). The organisation is the medium through which theory and practice mutually permeate and acquire concreteness, effectivity and reality: their objective reality (ibid). The organisation serves as a platform where theoretical ideas are tested, refined, and actualised through practical actions. Similarly, practical experiences feedback into theoretical frameworks, enriching and modifying them. Through the organisation, abstract concepts are materialised. Theories about social change, justice, or emancipation become concrete through organised activities and initiatives. The effectiveness of a theory is measured by its practical outcomes. The organisation is the mechanism through which the effectiveness of theoretical ideas is tested and demonstrated, it is "the criterion of truth of correct theory and practice" (ibid). The organisation's actions bring theory into the realm of objective reality. "Only organisation engages theory, transforms a theoretical opinion into practical truth:" the only way to decide on the truth of a theoretical statement is extraterritorial and practical (ibid). The impact of organised actions on society provides a tangible measure of the theory's validity and applicability. But praxis does not only have a confirmatory function, and theory does not have to bend to praxis, but mediate objective praxis until it becomes adequate to itself (ibid). For revolutionary-critical praxis, it is a matter of proving through theory that praxis is correct or incorrect and not vice versa (ibid). The organisation makes the theory precise to practical commitment and proves its truth (ibid). In this sense, praxis is the criterion of truth and critical action needs the

mediation of the organisation, to be criticised by it in turn (ibid). Only organised action is a component of the revolutionary strategy of a subversive praxis (ibid). Revolutionary strategy involves a comprehensive plan aimed at achieving radical social and political change. It is not random or haphazard but follows a coherent and deliberate course of action. Subversive praxis specifically aims to disrupt and transform the *status quo*. It challenges existing power relations and seeks to create new, emancipatory structures. Organised action ensures that efforts are coherent and directed towards a common goal. Without organisation, actions can be scattered and ineffective. Organised action is not just one part of a revolutionary strategy; it is a fundamental component. It operationalises the strategy and makes theoretical goals achievable. Organised action integrates theoretical understanding with practical execution, ensuring that revolutionary aims are grounded in both sound theory and effective practice. "The organisation translates the theory into the practical experience of the masses and represents the force sensitively manifested by it" (ibid). The organisation involves the masses in the process of enacting theoretical ideas. This engagement ensures that the theoretical principles are not just confined to intellectual discourse but are experienced and enacted by the people themselves.

The organisation represents the collective power of the people. It channels their energy, grievances, and aspirations into a coherent force that can effectively challenge and subvert existing power structures. The organisation is attuned to the needs, conditions, and dynamics of the masses. Indeed, organisation is not merely medium or form, but also material praxis: "It is the objective class *per se*, it objectively constitutes the proletariat and, as in the class struggle, is its sensitively materialised class consciousness" (ibid). The organisation represents the proletariat as a class in an objective sense: it is not just a collection of individuals but a structured entity that embodies the interests, identity, and collective will of the proletariat. The organisation exists as a concrete manifestation of the proletariat's class identity and interests, giving form and structure to the abstract concept of the proletarian class. Through its activities and structure, the organisation helps to constitute the proletariat as a cohesive and self-aware class. It unites workers with a common identity and purpose, fostering a sense of solidarity and collective identity. Class consciousness refers to the proletariat's awareness of their social position, their exploitation, and their collective interests. It is

an understanding of their role within the capitalist system and the need for collective action to change it. The organisation materialises this class consciousness tangibly and sensitively. It translates the abstract awareness of class position into concrete actions, strategies, and practices that reflect the proletariat's collective will and understanding. It is through the organisation that the proletariat's awareness of their collective identity and interests is expressed and acted upon in the class struggle.

Life must witness the development of an emancipatory reality principle that is a collective possibility (Claussen 2021). An emancipatory reality principle would enable and nurture human freedom, creativity, and fulfilment. This new reality principle would be based on values of solidarity, equality, and mutual aid, contrasting with the competitive, individualistic, and exploitative values of capitalism. The development of this new reality must be a collective effort, involving the participation and cooperation of the broader community. True emancipation can only be achieved collectively, not individually. Emancipation requires the other. It involves practical changes in everyday practices, such as creating cooperative workplaces, communal living arrangements, and participatory decision-making processes that embody emancipatory principles. The idea is to cultivate a realistic hope that a different, more just and humane world is possible through collective action and systemic change. The development of an emancipatory reality principle is not a one-time event but an ongoing process that involves continuous struggle and adaptation. It requires a dialectical approach, where theory and praxis inform and shape each other dynamically. This process involves both critiquing existing structures of domination and actively constructing new, emancipatory structures. An emancipatory reality principle seeks to unleash human potential by removing the constraints imposed by oppressive systems, it aims to create conditions where individuals can fully develop their capacities and pursue fulfilling lives, it promotes holistic human development, including emotional, intellectual, and social growth, within a supportive and nurturing community context. Part of developing an emancipatory reality principle involves overcoming the reification and alienation characterising capitalist societies. It's about restoring human agency and subjectivity against the objectifying forces of commodification. This means prioritising human-centred relations over commodified interactions, fostering connections and mutual recognition. The problem of the organisation of the SDS is the problem of the

revolutionary existence: “a social democracy lives only thanks to the enlightened and spontaneous activity of the politically mature masses” (Krahl 1998). Achieving this principle requires revolutionary changes in political and social organisation. It involves dismantling oppressive structures and creating new institutions that reflect emancipatory values. Social democracy must be direct, and immediate, all participants must decide on political actions and aims by direct vote (ibid). The anti-authoritarian character of the movement is expressed through individual conduct and forms of life (Martino et all 2021). They are realised through the spontaneity of organisational devices, the new sensibility, the aesthetic ethos, social cooperation, and the praxis that emerges from the struggle against violence and exploitation to obtain new ways and forms of life, in short, another life (ibid). Existence must have a transformative form.

Actions, strikes, occupations, and demonstrations, serve to open up a new phase in politics and create a broad base of resistance that is active and combative (Krahl 1998). Organised political action is the medium between theory and practice that can manifest the violence of domination and thus the necessity of its overcoming (Zaru 2023). The SDS made possible the unity of action between students and workers (Krahl 1998). It is through the practical experience of political struggle that one gains access to the working class.

Luxemburg poses the problem of organisation from the assumptions that constitute all political power. The realisation of any political power necessarily passes through unanimity on the objectives to be pursued and the means to be used in action, which must produce a homogeneous will that creates the energy of action (Luxemburg 1980). Unity is only possible through the unrelenting exposing of divergences, convergence on principles and tactics and the capacity for action (ibid). To do this requires ruthless and meticulous criticism and total clarity concerning goals and the means to pursue them (ibid).

3.2 For a transformation of the subject

To regain the totality of class consciousness, a common organisation between the scientific intelligentsia, industrial workers and productive employees is needed

(Tomba 2021). “For class consciousness to truly form as a party consciousness of the totality, the theoretical moment of scientific socialism, albeit transformed and mediated, must translate into the consciousness of the masses and enter into their experience” (Krahl 1973).

Scientific socialism is a term used to describe the theoretical framework and methodology for understanding and transforming society based on the works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. It is distinguished from earlier, more utopian, forms of socialism by its grounding in a rigorous analysis of historical and material conditions. Scientific socialism is based on historical materialism, which explains that the development of human societies is primarily determined by material conditions rather than ideals or ethical principles. This perspective emphasises the role of economic factors and class struggles in shaping history. At the core of scientific socialism is the concept of class struggle, which posits that the history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggles. The conflict between the capitalist class and the working class is seen as the driving force of social change. Scientific socialism provides a detailed critique of capitalism, examining how it operates and its inherent contradictions. This includes the exploitation of labour, the creation of surplus value, and the tendency towards economic crises. Unlike utopian socialism, which often relied on idealistic visions of a better society, scientific socialism emphasises the need for practical revolutionary action based on a scientific understanding of social dynamics. This includes organising the working class to overthrow the capitalist system and establish socialism. The proletariat, or working class, is identified as the revolutionary class capable of bringing about socialism. Scientific socialism argues that the proletariat’s position within the capitalist system makes it the agent of revolutionary change. Changes in the mode of production - a combination of productive forces (e.g., labour, tools, technology) and relations of production (e.g., ownership, class relations) - are seen as the primary drivers of historical change. The abstract and complex theories of scientific socialism must be adapted in a way that they resonate with the concrete realities faced by the working class. This means translating theoretical concepts into practical terms that reflect the daily struggles and conditions of the workers. The theoretical insights of scientific socialism must be adapted (transformed) and made relevant (mediated) to the practical and everyday experiences of the working class. This

involves making complex theories accessible and meaningful to the masses, which means that workers should see the relevance of these theories in their own lives, understand how their struggles are connected to broader systemic issues, and recognise the need for collective action. In this sense, the concepts of empirics and theory are partisan within scientific socialism and articulate knowledge of the social totality (ibid). The goal is for the working class to develop a holistic understanding of their social reality, recognising the interconnectedness of various forms of exploitation and oppression. This comprehensive awareness allows them to strategise and act collectively towards revolutionary change. For theory to be effective, it must penetrate the lived experiences of the working class, becoming part of their daily reality and practical understanding. Consciousness must constitute the moment of the proletariat's class consciousness (ibid). The task that awaits scientific socialism is to create a social-revolutionary fantasy: an unavoidable assumption for formulating class consciousness is the formulation of a concrete utopia (ibid).

The level of reflection must be choral, spread throughout the class, and collective. Only in this way can political praxis take place: with a consciousness of totality spread throughout the class and not elitistically only in the central committee (Fierro 2014). Consciousness of totality implies having a global perception of facts that refuses to break down into contingency. "This consciousness will have a subjective and objective component: the former is connected to socio-historical circumstances; the latter seems unable to fully express these conditions and has a *quid* of unconsciousness" (ibid). The subjective component refers to the personal and collective experiences, perceptions, and awareness of individuals and groups within the working class. It is shaped by socio-historical circumstances, meaning it is influenced by the specific historical and social contexts in which people live. For example, a worker's awareness of exploitation is shaped by their daily work experiences, interactions with employers, and the broader socio-economic environment. The objective component refers to the material conditions, structures, and realities of society, such as the economic and political systems, and how they function independently of individual consciousness. The objective component represents the broader systemic and structural realities of capitalism that exist independently of individual perceptions. However, not all aspects of these objective conditions are fully comprehended or recognised by the working

class. There are underlying dynamics and structures that remain hidden or unconscious, which means the working class might not fully grasp the totality of their exploitation and the mechanisms of capitalist domination. Thus, consciousness cannot simply express what men and women actually did and thought in certain socio-historical circumstances (subjective component), but must also be able to reach the ideas that women and men would have had if they had been conscious (objective component) (ibid). A social class endowed with the consciousness of totality can, from the specific interests of its class, extend those interests to the whole of society, and make them universal, because it has conceived society itself in its concrete historical totality (ibid).

The category of totality needs the dimension of empiricism, otherwise, reflection on the genesis of class consciousness is obliterated (Krahl 1973). The category of class consciousness is formed based on the relationship between theory and empirics linked to the materialist concept of production (labour and division of labour) (ibid). The materialist concept of empirics is linked to use-values, needs and interests; the concept of theory proper to the critique of political economy is linked to abstract labour, the categories of commodity, surplus value and accumulation (ibid). From a materialist, empirical perspective, analysis begins with concrete realities - what people need and how they interact with the material world to meet those needs. This is the practical, everyday dimension of life that directly relates to people's material conditions. When we shift to the level of theory in Marxist analysis, we deal with these abstract categories that explain the underlying dynamics of capitalism - how labour is commodified, how value is created and appropriated, and how the capitalist system reproduces itself through accumulation. Two layers of analysis are interconnected: the materialist concept of empirics (which deals with tangible, concrete realities like use-values and needs) and the concept of theory in political economy (which addresses the abstract, systemic processes of capitalism like surplus value and accumulation). Empirics is grounded in the practical, everyday experiences of individuals as they navigate the material world, focusing on how they satisfy their needs and interests through use-values. Theory, on the other hand, abstracts from these concrete realities to explain the structural processes of capitalism. The critique of these categories shows how society is ruled by exploitation, reification and crisis (ibid). The concept of production implies the possibility of spontaneous and rational activity: the domination of nature and the

emancipation of women and men on the very ground of nature (ibid). Production is constitutive of civilisation and culture (*Kultur*), i.e. the progress of needs which, based on the division of labour and impulsive renunciation, goes beyond the natural reason of self-preservation (ibid). The way we produce, distribute, and consume resources determines the structure of society, from economic systems to cultural values. Production is seen as the driving force behind the evolution of civilisation. Human needs are not static but evolve as society develops. As production advances, so do the needs and desires of individuals within that society. The development of new forms of production leads to the emergence of new needs and new ways of living. For example, the Industrial Revolution created not only new goods and technologies but also new social needs, like the need for education, leisure, and the consumption of mass-produced goods. The progress of civilisation involves not just the advancement of material conditions but also a form of self-restraint or self-denial imposed by the division of labour. Impulsive renunciation is a process of self-denial or self-discipline that individuals undergo as they participate in this divided and specialised form of labour. This renunciation refers to the sacrifices workers make - suppressing their impulses, desires, and individual autonomy to conform to the demands of the production process. As society advances, human needs and motivations become more complex and less tied to mere survival. Through production and the division of labour, individuals and societies develop needs that go beyond the basic instinct to survive - they encompass cultural, social, and intellectual aspirations. Production both drives the advancement of civilisation and imposes limits on individual autonomy and fulfilment. But the production, tending towards progress and the liberation of needs, makes possible an autonomous life activity linked to political spontaneity (ibid). It is precisely a high level of civilisation that enables the satisfaction of needs that is the historical prerequisite for communicating the truly emancipatory interest of reason to the masses (ibid). The realm of freedom, which lies beyond material production, becomes a theoretical possibility first and then of social praxis (ibid). Class consciousness consists of two moments - theoretical and practical - and is partisan consciousness of the totality, it is the consciousness of productive consumption (ibid). If the two moments of consciousness are unlinked, the consciousness of totality loses the determination of proletarian partisanship, it loses the consciousness of consumption as a moment of spontaneous and

emancipatory productivity (ibid). A political consciousness of totality without history is an impossibility. An agitation of the masses that does not take this assumption into account will make it impossible to constitute a consciousness in which the nexus between social production and spontaneity lives, making the emancipatory needs of a happy life equally impossible to be released (ibid).

The category of totality unfolds in three moments: “class consciousness, organisation and commodity form in the background of second nature”. (ibid). For Krahl, class consciousness is a key moment in the unfolding of totality because it is through this awareness that a class can act collectively to challenge and transform the existing social order. It represents a subjective component of the totality, as it is linked to the socio-historical circumstances and the lived experiences of the working class. The organisation is the practical manifestation of class consciousness, enabling coordinated efforts to effect social change. It represents the bridge between theory and praxis, ensuring that the insights gained from class consciousness are effectively utilised in the struggle against capitalist domination. The commodity form is part of the objective reality of capitalism, illustrating how social relations are reified and alienated through market transactions. It signifies the material conditions under which class consciousness and organisation must operate, highlighting the economic dimensions of the totality. Second nature is a concept derived from Marx and the Frankfurt School, referring to the social and economic systems that humans have created, which appear as natural and immutable as the first nature (the natural world). In the context of Krahl’s theory, second nature underscores the idea that the capitalist mode of production and its accompanying social relations have become entrenched and normalised to the extent that they are perceived as natural. This background shapes and constrains the development of class consciousness, organisation, and the commodity form. In the second nature, we find the reification of all social relations and the subjectification of the objective conditions of labour and means of production (ibid).

Traditional theories of class consciousness tend to break it down into its economic and political elements, neglecting the meta-economic and constitutive role of wealth and civilisation exercised by productive subjectivity - potential class consciousness (ibid). Economic elements of class consciousness refer to how workers come to understand their exploitation under capitalism - how their labour is

commodified, how surplus value is extracted by capitalists, and how their economic interests are opposed to those of the capitalist class. Political elements focus on how workers translate this economic awareness into political action - forming unions, engaging in strikes, and organising movements to challenge capitalist exploitation and seek political representation. Krahl suggests that there are deeper forces at play - such as how wealth, civilization, and culture are produced and organised within a society. These forces shape class consciousness in ways that are not purely reducible to economic transactions or political conflicts. By focusing only on the economic and political dimensions, traditional theories miss the broader, constitutive role that productive subjectivity plays. This refers to how individuals and groups create meaning, culture, and social relations through their productive activities, which in turn shapes their consciousness. Wealth and civilization here are not just material wealth but also the broader social and cultural structures that are produced through human labour and interaction. These structures form the basis of what Krahl calls a potential class consciousness - a consciousness that recognises not only the economic exploitation but also the broader cultural and civilisational implications of capitalist production. Productive subjectivity is the idea that human beings are not just passive objects of economic forces but active creators of social reality. In producing goods, services, culture, and ideas, people are also producing their subjectivity - their understanding of themselves and the world around them. Potential class consciousness emerges from this productive subjectivity. It is not just an awareness of being economically exploited but also an understanding of how one's labour and creativity contribute to the overall social fabric - how wealth and civilisation are constructed through collective human effort. This potential class consciousness includes a realisation that the working class is not just economically oppressed but also culturally and socially vital. The working class produces the wealth, culture, and social organisation of society, and this productive capacity holds the potential for a revolutionary transformation of society.

The liberation of women and men from oppression must be affirmed concretely and explicitly and not confined to abstract scenarios. A conscious organisation demonstrates that ideas are firmly rooted in class consciousness: the degree of class consciousness is a reflection of the rooted and settled organisation (Fierro 2014). Lack of awareness of issues or actions denotes immaturity of the movement and sluggish

organisation. Solid organisation presupposes a delineated and precise goal and is not confined to utopian scenarios. “Only the revolutionary class sees in the end the road that leads to its realisation and sees in the problems [...] the solution of the problems and the way to solve them” (ibid). The theory of organisation and the theory of revolution are united dialectically, they are interdependent: revolution guides and determines organisation and organisation *a posteriori* legitimises revolution by guaranteeing its realisation.

“Empirical investigations and a critique of ideology are needed to make visible those economic and political mechanisms that operate in the real conscientious constitution of the dominated masses [...] and prevent the formation of class consciousness” (Claussen et all 1973). New empirics cannot only take into account class theory or the critique of political economy but must extend to the social sciences, sociology and psychology (ibid). One must take into account the entire landscape that intersects the labour process, socialisation, education, income, leisure, consumption, etc. (ibid). The revolutionary theory, to be such, must indicate the conditions for a change in society and, to indicate these, it must first describe the conditions that prevent the formation of class consciousness: the false consciousness (Krahl 1973). False consciousness is a concept rooted in Marxist theory that refers to a distorted understanding or misperception of one’s social and economic reality. False consciousness prevents individuals from seeing the true nature of their exploitation under capitalism. For example, workers may believe that their economic difficulties are due to personal failings, bad luck, or external factors, rather than understanding them as systemic problems inherent to capitalism (such as exploitation by the capitalist class). Individuals with false consciousness may accept or even support the existing social order and capitalist ideologies, believing that it is either natural, inevitable or the best possible system. This leads to complacency or a lack of desire to challenge or change the system, despite its inherent inequalities. False consciousness is perpetuated by the ruling class through ideology. The dominant ideas are disseminated through various institutions such as the media, education, and religion. These ideologies serve to justify the *status quo* and make it difficult for the working class to recognise the underlying structures of exploitation. False consciousness obscures the true interests of the proletariat. Instead of seeing their collective power and potential to overthrow the

capitalist system, workers may be divided along lines of race, nationality, religion, or other factors that distract them from their shared class interests. Overcoming false consciousness is key to developing class consciousness - an awareness of one's true class position and the systemic nature of exploitation. This awakening is essential for revolutionary potential because it leads to the recognition that change is possible and that collective action can challenge the capitalist system. Language serves as the constitution of forms of consciousness - it is a principle of society as a product of consciousness and distinct from abstract work (ibid). Through language, individuals and societies express their thoughts, beliefs, values, and ideologies. It is not just a tool for communication but also for conceptualising the world and forming collective consciousness. Society, in this view, is not only shaped by material conditions (such as labour and production) but also by the way language constructs and reflects consciousness. Language plays a key role in mediating social interactions, shaping power relations, and creating shared understandings. Language reflects the complexities of human consciousness and contributes to its development.

The creation of a new subject is the result of the creation of new social relations that convey political praxis (Tomba 2021). Subjectivity has an emancipatory dimension because it fosters awareness, critical reflection, agency, class consciousness, resistance to reification, cultural critique, and autonomy (Krahl 1973). These elements are essential for individuals and groups to recognise their oppression, envision alternatives, and take collective action towards liberation. Existential protests want alienated individuals to be voluntarily free (Krahl 1998). Class consciousness is seen as a precondition for emancipation. Emancipation deals with the concrete categories of happiness, the pleasure principle, and liberation - categories that appear abstract because they refer to a system that can only be constructed beyond this society and not within it (Krahl 1973). It is the ability of men and women to abstract from the nature to which they belong as corporeal individuals to represent to themselves the liberation and happiness that must be produced even by the bloodiest means. The women and men who have to liberate themselves are subjectively part of the nature that surrounds them objectively and from which they can increasingly emancipate themselves through production (ibid) "The leap from the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom can only be made based on necessity itself" (ibid). With a critical awareness of the

structures of exploitation and oppression, the working class can effectively challenge and transform these conditions. The goal is to form a consciousness that is antagonistic, anti-capitalist and communist, and to organise it from its conditions of existence and demands for transformation (Bascetta 1998). Realising subject autonomy in the proper sense is only possible if we understand the intertwining of productive materiality and the relational world (ibid). Social relations must act in the rational sphere and stem the imperatives of instrumental action to create a dialogue free from domination (ibid). Interactions and relationships within society should be governed by reason, rationality, and critical thinking. The rational sphere here refers to a domain where individuals engage with each other based on logical argumentation, mutual respect, and understanding, rather than coercion or manipulation. In the context of critical theory, particularly the work of Habermas, the rational sphere is akin to the public sphere where individuals engage in discourse to reach mutual understanding and agreement. It is a space where communicative action (interaction aimed at reaching understanding) prevails over instrumental action (interaction aimed at success or control). Instrumental action refers to behaviour oriented towards achieving specific ends, often through means that can be manipulative or coercive. These actions are typically goal-oriented and pragmatic, focusing on efficiency and utility rather than ethical considerations or mutual understanding. This can lead to alienation and the perpetuation of power structures that hinder human connection and understanding. To stem the imperatives of instrumental action means to limit or control the dominance of such goal-oriented behaviour in social interactions. It implies moving away from treating human relations as a mere means to an end. A central aim of critical theory is to achieve emancipatory outcomes by promoting dialogues that are free from domination. This means creating conditions where people can communicate without being subject to coercion, manipulation, or inequality, thereby enabling true democratic participation and social change. In a dialogue free from domination, participants engage as equals, without one party exercising undue control or influence over another. This ideal dialogue is characterised by openness, reciprocity, and mutual respect, allowing for understanding and consensus-building.

Forms of relationship must be created that break away from oppression and subjugation to the ruling class and oppose this with the principle of solidarity (Krahl

1998). Class consciousness is not just an individual awareness but a collective one. It entails recognising oneself as part of a larger class with shared interests and struggles. This collective identity is crucial for building solidarity and fostering collective action. Solidarity builds ways of relating to each other that allow a detachment from the oppression and subjugation of the ruling class (Maiso 2018). Solidarity is "a situation that, through mutual discipline, generates future freedom and brings together the individual members of the unit of action. Solidarity is the overall conscious will" (Krahl 1973). Solidarity refers to a unity or agreement of feeling or action among individuals with common interests or purposes. It involves mutual support and a sense of shared responsibility within a group. The 'overall conscious will' refers to the collective intention, awareness, and determination of a group. It is the unified resolve and deliberate action of a community or social group that is fully aware of its goals and the means to achieve them. In sociological terms, the 'conscious will' of a group can be linked to the concept of collective consciousness, which is the set of shared beliefs, ideas, and moral attitudes that operate as a unifying force within society. Solidarity emerges when individuals within a group or society align their wills to form a collective will, consciously acting in pursuit of common objectives. This collective will is not merely an abstract concept but a driving force that manifests in coordinated actions, strategies, and mutual support.

Class consciousness can only arise based on the exploitative logic of late capitalist society (Fierro 2014). Class consciousness involves recognising the socio-economic structures that shape one's life, including the modes of production, distribution of resources, and power relations within a capitalist society. It is an awareness of the systemic inequalities and exploitation inherent in these structures. Revolutions must arise from struggles against capitalism's strategies of domination (ibid). Political consciousness is formed through the experience of the nexus between economic and extra-economic violence (Krahl 1973). Indeed, purely economic struggle integrates the masses into the relations of domination and renders them apathetic (ibid). An authentic class consciousness is formed through the experience of oppression and struggle because these experiences provide the practical and emotional foundations for recognising and understanding one's class position, the nature of exploitation, and the need for collective action. However, it does not arise mechanically and organically in

the course of struggle but in the organised mediation between economic and political consciousness (ibid). Through daily interactions with oppressive systems and structures, individuals come to recognise their position within the class hierarchy. Experiencing low wages, poor working conditions, and a lack of control over one's labour helps to concretise the abstract notion of class. Direct encounters with exploitation and inequality reveal the systemic nature of these issues, highlighting how the economic system benefits the ruling class at the expense of the working class. In the process of struggling against oppression, individuals support each other, strengthening bonds and building a collective will. This mutual support is crucial for developing a class consciousness that goes beyond individual grievances. Struggles involve efforts to educate and organise, helping workers to articulate their demands, understand their rights, and strategies for more effective resistance. These activities help to transform individual awareness into collective political consciousness. Through the process of struggle, individuals encounter various ideologies and political theories that help to frame their experiences and guide their actions.

The critical theory in Krahl is intended to be political-practical, it should articulate the potential for social transformation available in advanced capitalism, so grasp social reality from the point of view of its transformation (Martino et all 2021, Maiso 2018). Existential radicalism can give birth to new forms of individuality that break with the authoritarian and oppressive environment of contemporary society (Maiso 2018).

The class mediates superstructure and base to preserve their difference which prevents social unanimity (Krahl 1973). Class structure, particularly the relationship between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, actively shapes and influences both the base and the superstructure. Classes interact with and mediate between these two layers of society, influencing their development and dynamics. The mediation by classes ensures that the economic base and the ideological superstructure remain distinct yet interrelated. This distinction is crucial because it highlights the contradictions and tensions within society, such as those between economic exploitation and ideological justification. If there were no distinctions or contradictions between the base and superstructure, society achieve a false sense of unanimity or consensus. This unanimity obscures the underlying class struggles and the potential for revolutionary change. By

preserving these differences, class mediation ensures that social conflicts and contradictions remain visible and active, preventing the illusion of a harmonious and unified society. “Class mediates between the abstraction of production and circulation [the economic base] and the ideological abstraction of the superstructure” by actively engaging in and shaping both realms, thereby highlighting and negotiating the inherent contradictions and interactions between them (Fierro 2014). The capitalist class owns and controls the means of production. Their interests lie in maximising profit and maintaining the *status quo*. They shape economic policies and practices to sustain and enhance their economic power. They use ideological institutions (education, media, politics) to propagate values that support capitalism, such as individualism, competition, and consumerism. They shape laws and policies to protect private property and capitalist interests. Bourgeois individuality is formed precisely based on private property, is realised on the free market and lives on the anxiety of profit and the terror of ruin (Krahl 1973). Proletarian individuality, on the other hand, is constituted within the sphere of production and exploitation and is realised in the organisation of the class struggle (ibid). The working class provides labour in exchange for wages. Their interests lie in improving working conditions, and wages and reducing exploitation, their final goal is to overthrow the *status quo*. They are directly affected by and respond to the dynamics of production and circulation. They challenge the dominant ideology through labour movements, social activism, and alternative narratives. They push for ideologies that emphasise equality, solidarity, and social justice. The bourgeois individual, therefore, is formed in exchange, the proletarian individual in the organisation and spontaneity of the class struggle where he or she experiences the dialectical overcoming of abstract labour (ibid). “Production and class struggle determine the constitution of the proletarian family” (ibid). The struggle for better wages, working conditions, and social rights (like access to education, healthcare, and housing) influences the stability and well-being of working-class families. Structure, functions, and relationships are not static or naturally given but are historically and materially shaped by the economic system (production) and the political struggles that arise within that system (class struggle). The proletarian family, therefore, is not an isolated unit but one that is deeply interconnected with the broader socio-economic structures and conflicts of capitalist society. Its constitution is determined by how the

family relates to production (e.g., as a unit of labour power) and how it participates in or is affected by the class struggle (e.g., through union activities, social movements, or state policies). Family is a site where larger social forces play out. The conditions of production and the pressures of class struggle influence everything from family roles to the autonomy of its members. The organisation of the class struggle, the association of workers and intellectuals, constitutes the specificity of the proletarian ego, its self-awareness as producer and the organisation of chaotic multiplicity into the political unity of a no longer fetishistic objectified world (ibid). Classes mediate the contradictions between the economic realities of production and circulation and the ideological narratives that justify them. For example, while the economic base may prioritise profit over welfare, the superstructure might propagate meritocracy and fairness. The ongoing struggle between classes ensures that these contradictions are not resolved but remain active sites of conflict and negotiation. From this perspective, workers want to become capitalists, not eliminate capitalism, and society points to a trajectory: that one can progress up the capitalist pyramid, that by working and feeding the system one can climb its walls. “Manipulation demands that the oppressed do not even know they are suffering” (ibid). Meanwhile, viral time vertiginously atrophies and is reduced to working time. When individuals are not producing they are consuming, living according to factory hours. The masses not only have to buy self-packaged items, they have to devour them in closed packages and their homes must resemble huge warehouses (ibid). Economic interests, albeit as extraneous as unproductive consumption, encapsulate the emancipatory needs for a better life from which political consciousness has distanced itself (ibid).

Class consciousness goes beyond the class itself: it is not a sum of the feelings and ideas of those who make it up but is an autonomous formation (Fierro 2014). A class consciousness implies the tendency to overcome class and the creation of autonomous formation by the population (ibid). Class consciousness inherently carries the potential to transcend existing class structures. When the working class becomes fully aware of its exploitation and unites around common interests, it strives to abolish the conditions that create and sustain class divisions. This overcoming is a revolutionary process. It suggests a move towards a classless society where the economic and social hierarchies that define class are dismantled. This aligns with Marxist goals of achieving

socialism and, eventually, communism, where class distinctions are eradicated. As class consciousness grows, the population begins to organise itself independently of the dominant capitalist structures. This means forming their institutions, communities, and modes of production that operate on principles of collective ownership and democratic control. Autonomous formations are expressions of self-determination and self-governance. They represent the population's ability to create and manage their own social, economic, and political structures without relying on the existing state apparatus or capitalist enterprises. Worker cooperatives, communes, grassroots political organisations, and community-controlled resources are practical embodiments of these autonomous formations. The formation of autonomous structures by the population is a direct challenge to capitalist and authoritarian state power, embodying the revolutionary shift towards a new, liberated social order.

3.3 The anti-authoritarian uprising

The anti-authoritarian uprising is an expression of the decadence of the bourgeois individual, in which the ideology of a liberal public sphere is lost and communication becomes free of domination (Tomba 2021). Every anti-authoritarian tendency exposes individuals' need for authoritarianism: most men and women are unable to preserve their autonomy (Fierro 2014). The importance of the anti-authoritarian phase lies in this fact, in breaking away from the bourgeois ideological heritage that favours relations of domination between men and women (ibid). In the current scenario, where the logic of profit and the separation of individuals dominates unchallenged, it is necessary to question bourgeois forms and achieve emancipation through a communist struggle (ibid).

The anti-authoritarian uprising is the collective and revolutionary efforts aimed at challenging and dismantling authoritarian structures and practices in society. The uprising seeks to promote democratic participation, social equality, and human emancipation. It actively opposes the concentration of power in state and corporate hands, which is seen as a source of oppression and exploitation, it advocates for the decentralisation of power and the establishment of participatory democratic structures

that allow for greater direct involvement of individuals in decision-making processes. The movement emphasises grassroots participation and the creation of decision-making processes that are inclusive, transparent, and democratic, it favours horizontal organisational structures over hierarchical ones, ensuring that power is distributed more equally and that all voices are heard. The movement prioritises political education to raise awareness about the nature of authoritarianism, capitalism, and the possibilities for emancipation: education is seen as essential for empowering individuals to participate effectively in the liberation struggle. It seeks to cultivate a critical consciousness that enables individuals to recognise and resist oppressive structures and to envision alternative ways of organising society. This also means, recognising the interconnectivity of the struggles against authoritarianism with the battle for justice, and against racism, sexism, and environmental degradation. Such movement seeks to create and promote a counter-hegemonic culture that challenges dominant ideologies and values, this involves fostering alternative cultural expressions that reflect emancipatory principles and subverting dominant narratives that justify and perpetuate authoritarianism, replacing them with narratives that highlight the potential for liberation and solidarity. Social change starts with personal change, so the anti-authoritarian uprising begins with transforming individual consciousness to change social structures, from the point of view that understanding that personal liberation is interconnected with collective emancipation. It adopts a holistic approach that addresses various dimensions of life, including economic, social, cultural, and political aspects, in the pursuit of a more just and liberated society. The movement involves militant engagement against various forms of oppression, including patriarchal structures, modern forms of authoritarianism, and imperialist aggressions such as those witnessed in the Vietnam War or more recently in Ukraine. It calls for the radical transformation of existing social relations and institutions, advocating for revolutionary change rather than mere reforms. The anti-authoritarian uprising advocates for self-management and autonomy of communities, allowing them to govern themselves without external coercion, it supports collective decision-making processes that empower individuals and communities to take control of their own lives and destinies. The movement emphasises the unity of theory and praxis, understanding that theoretical insights must inform practical actions and that practical experiences should refine and develop theoretical

understandings. It seeks to transform daily life by aligning everyday practices with emancipatory principles, ensuring that the liberation struggle is embedded in all aspects of life. With the anti-authoritarian uprising, we assist in the death of the bourgeois individual and its social realm, funded by individualism, private property, and competitive self-interest.

The crisis of the bourgeoisie world is due to the inherent contradictions within bourgeois society and the failures of its ideological promises. The supposed freedom and equality of the public sphere - on which the bourgeoise has the domain - are revealed as illusions, as true democratic and free communication are undermined by underlying power structures, coercion, ideological manipulation and interests. By advocating for communication free of domination, the anti-authoritarian uprising seeks to overcome the reification and alienation inherent in capitalist social relations. It aims to humanise social interactions. It is necessary to transform the anti-authoritarian revolt into a Marxist learning process, thus translating the death of the bourgeois individual into the experience of what is exploitation in this society (Tomba 2011). The death of the bourgeois individual signifies the breakdown of the ideological framework that sustains bourgeois identity and values. As the ideological veil lifts, individuals become more aware of the exploitative structures of capitalism, recognising how their labour and lives are commodified and controlled by capitalist interests. The crisis of bourgeois individualism undermines the belief in personal success through hard work alone. This realisation fosters a shift from individualism to class consciousness, where people see their struggles as part of a broader collective experience of exploitation. This transition helps build solidarity among workers and marginalised groups, who now see their shared interests in opposing capitalist exploitation. Individuals come to understand that their economic and social disadvantages are not personal failings but results of systemic exploitation and class domination. The decadence of the bourgeois individual includes the recognition of widespread alienation in capitalist society: women and men see how their labour is alienated from them, how they are alienated from their products, their fellow workers, and their human potential. This involves a critique of consumerist ideology, which distracts from the realities of labour and exploitation. The crisis of bourgeois identity reveals how exploitation intersects with various aspects of identity, such as race, gender, and nationality. People see how bourgeois norms perpetuate not

just class exploitation but also racial, gender, and other forms of oppression. The commodification of human relationships can be challenged, pushing towards the humanisation of social relations. The theoretical understanding of the death of the bourgeois individual translates into practical engagement, where individuals and groups actively organise, protest, and develop alternatives to capitalist exploitation. The goal is to transform defensive struggles against fascist tendencies into proletarian revolutions (Bascetta 1998).

Anti-authoritarian protest documents the will to emancipate oneself from the violence of atrophied forms of life, the root of isolation and the deformation of human relations (Claussen et all 1973). Anti-authoritarian needs are an anticipation of the realm of freedom within practical forms of decentralised spontaneous activity and collective self-organisation of a solidary satisfaction of needs (ibid). Anticipating the realm of freedom means educating individuals in emancipatory practices that have as their ultimate purpose the determination of the individual from the self (Krahl 1973). Class consciousness must be enlightened in such a way that it is autonomously able to understand the correctness or falsity of the system's directive instances (ibid). Anti-authoritarian needs represent a desire to reject and dismantle all forms of authoritarian control and domination, whether political, social, or economic. These needs are rooted in the pursuit of human emancipation from oppressive and hierarchical structures that limit individual and collective freedom. By expressing and acting on anti-authoritarian needs, people begin to take practical steps toward creating conditions that resemble the realm of freedom. The articulation and pursuit of anti-authoritarian needs carry the potential for radical transformation of society. They represent a break from the repressive and alienating conditions of capitalist and authoritarian systems. In the framework of historical materialism, the development of anti-authoritarian needs can be seen as part of the historical progress toward greater human freedom. They reflect the evolving consciousness and material conditions that drive revolutionary change. From a Marxist perspective, the realm of freedom is linked to the abolition of class society and the end of alienated labour. Anti-authoritarian needs are thus connected to the broader struggle for socialism and the creation of a classless society.

We must strike at the mechanisms of domination through the radicality of the basic democratic instance and the democratic practice of collective forms (Bascetta

1998). Democracy must become the subversive practice of social transformation, questioning every human plan (ibid). The anti-authoritarian revolt is a struggle against the state and bourgeois justice, against the organised power of capital, it is opposition to every political form of representation (Claussen 2021, Krahl 1998). It is a critique of the traditional system of education, the traditional family and the forms of intimacy (Maiso 2018). One must fight for relationships free from domination by subverting social norms and oppressive institutions (Krahl 1998, Maiso 2018). Subverting social norms and oppressive institutions involves a combination of critical theory, militant activism, and the creation of alternative social structures. Expose ideological constructs through the use of critical theory to reveal how social norms and institutions perpetuate oppression and serve the interests of the ruling class. By exposing the ideological underpinnings of these norms, individuals can begin to question and reject them. Deconstruct the myths of meritocracy, individualism, and freedom that mask the realities of exploitation and domination and show how these myths maintain the *status quo*. It is necessary for active resistance: direct action and militant resistance against oppressive institutions. This includes protests, strikes, sit-ins, and other forms of civil disobedience that disrupt the normal functioning of these institutions. Also, building solidarity among diverse groups oppressed by these norms and institutions: unified movements can exert greater pressure and create more substantial change. Change begins at the personal and communal levels. Transforming daily life involves adopting practices that reflect anti-authoritarian and emancipatory values, such as mutual aid, cooperative living, and democratic decision-making. One needs to criticise oneself to transform society. For this purpose, it is important to implement educational programs that emphasise critical thinking, social justice, and empowerment. Education should aim to raise awareness of systemic oppression and equip individuals with the tools to challenge it. We also need to build institutions that are examples of alternatives to oppressive systems, such as cooperatives, collectives, and autonomous zones that operate based on principles of equality, cooperation, and direct democracy and push for social policies that dismantle systemic racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination. This involves advocating for policies and practices that redistribute wealth and resources more equitably, and work towards economic systems that prioritise human needs over profit.

"All the central institutions of society, including those of the labour movement, are moments of the late-capitalist system that in themselves are incapable of developing an alternative to this system" (Claussen 2023). Central institutions, including those ostensibly aimed at advocating for workers' rights, are deeply embedded within the structures and logic of late capitalism. This means that they operate under the same principles of commodification, bureaucratic control, and hierarchical organisation that define capitalist society. These institutions tend to reproduce the same social relations and power dynamics that they aim to challenge. Institutions within late capitalism are often co-opted or neutralised by the system. This can involve bureaucratisation, where the original radical aims of an organisation are diluted or redirected to align with the *status quo*. The systemic constraints of late capitalism limit the ability of these institutions to conceive and implement truly transformative alternatives. They are often bound by legal, economic, and political frameworks that inhibit radical change. The labour movement, which initially emerged as a radical force for workers' rights and social change, then became institutionalised. In this process, it focused more on negotiating within the existing system rather than challenging the system itself. Labour organisations prioritise achieving incremental reforms within the capitalist framework (e.g., better wages, and working conditions) rather than pursuing revolutionary changes that would overthrow the capitalist system. The interconnectedness of societal institutions means that changing one part without addressing the underlying systemic issues is insufficient for developing a true alternative. Meaningful change requires moving beyond institutional reform to radical praxis that addresses the root causes of oppression and exploitation. This involves questioning and transforming the foundational structures of society. Engaging in prefigurative politics means building and practising the values and structures of the desired future society in the present. This includes creating communities and networks that embody principles of mutual aid, direct democracy, and collective decision-making. The struggle in any area of society is not a struggle for another model of the state or economy but is a struggle for the decay of the state, the mercantile economy and money (ibid). The political task is to integrate the articulation of emancipatory needs into revolutionary politics against the existing system (ibid). "The emancipatory, critical and self-critical character of historical

materialism is a prerequisite for a new organisational conception and a theoretical foundation of a new politics" (Claussen et all 1973, Claussen 2023).

In the practical struggle, it is necessary to develop a theory that makes the proletariat, its linguistic world and its consciousness understand late-capitalist domination (Krahl 1998). Theory must unmask and explain this domination, expand privilege beyond universalities, and give rise to a political awareness that allows new ways of intervention and collective learning in which wage labourers and students can participate together enabling new forms of political experience (Krahl 1998, Maiso 2018). Praxis constitutes both the precondition and the realisation of the theory itself (Zaru 2023). Critical theory must give rise to authentic praxis and criticise the *status quo* (Fierro 2014). It becomes dangerous to the existing order when it is configured as potentially evasive, capable of capturing the masses (ibid). This begins when the analysis of the mechanisms of domination is exposed without frills (ibid).

The revolutionary experience begins with putting anti-authoritarian needs into practice in forms of anticipating the realm of freedom (Tomba 2021). By revolution, means the radical transformation of the existing (Martino et all 2021). First of all, we need to make visible the latent, abstract violence that pervades the forms of socialisation and shapes the psyche of individuals (Maiso 2018). Second, we need new forms of political action and agitation in a process of social awareness carried out by active minorities (ibid).

The class struggle must be translated into a new organisation and a new form of political praxis (Tomba 2021). We must determine the theoretical and practical needs of a movement in struggle, build a confrontation and a public space without etiquette, liberated, in short, capable of opening up possibilities for transformation as it experiments with them (Bascetta 1998). Revolution must become an issue of everyday political struggle. Only then can the question of organising a political party that is a materially visible expression of working-class consciousness and its revolutionary protagonists be raised concretely (Krahl 1973). The organisation of a revolutionary party can only be organised from a revolutionary theory, i.e. that doctrine which describes society under the aspect of its transformability (ibid). The emancipation movement must be extra-parliamentary and, therefore, refuse to bow to the traditional coercive *Realpolitik* that institutionalises the politics of opposition in parties and

parliament (ibid). *Realpolitik* focuses on the practicalities of power and national interests rather than adhering strictly to ideological doctrines or ethical norms. It is concerned with what works and what is achievable in the real world, rather than what should ideally be done according to moral or ideological standards. This philosophy often takes a Machiavellian approach to politics, meaning it accepts that sometimes the ends justify the means. Leaders may employ deceit, manipulation, and other morally ambiguous tactics to achieve their goals. Not bowing to *Realpolitik* means refusing to have revolutionary principles compressed into the pluralism of a politics of alliances and compromises (ibid). The emancipation movement of students and workers - the SDS - does not reject legality but refuses to collaborate within traditional political institutionalisations because their bureaucratic and administrative function stifles any emancipatory activity (ibid).

In the class struggle, consciousness is constituted, but there is no class struggle without prior consciousness (Martino et all 2021). Consciousness becomes the political battleground (ibid). Every act and action is a human change of circumstances, but not every act also changes human existence (Krahl 1998). Only radical action changes circumstances and the human existence operating in them, and is inscribed in the revolutionary practice of a voluntarist subject (ibid). The task ahead is to unite the proletariat of all countries into an active revolutionary force to become the decisive factor in political life, to form a revolutionary class fighting against imperialism and for the suppression of war (Luxemburg 1980). The victory of socialism is the victory of the conscious struggle of the international proletariat against imperialism and its method: war (Krahl 1973). It is through a strong international organisation that the proletariat can stand up against its national bourgeoisie (Luxemburg 1980). The natural laws of capitalist society have nothing qualitatively natural in them, so they can be overcome: their abstract existence is based on the producers' false consciousness of their production (Krahl 1973). The crises of capital open the door to the objective possibility for the proletariat to break the economic power structures that terror forced them to internalise, to break the apparent naturalness of capital's legality and to illuminate the dark memory of exploitation (ibid). Only in this way can the reconstruction of class consciousness and a revolutionary subjectivity in the class struggle materialise. "Liberation either takes place with the consciousness and will of the exploited or it does

not take place at all" (ibid). The proletariat is not determined solely based on its role in the production process: proletarian modes of behaviour do not derive immediately and exclusively from its economic position; but also according to the degree to which it can be organised (ibid). This requires a unified understanding of its tasks and interests (Luxemburg 1980). It is necessary to educate the masses on the capacity for political action, the spirit of initiative, and international cohesion in mass action to develop political and trade union organisations (ibid). Every means must be adopted to transform the anti-authoritarian and anti-militarist sentiment of the masses into political consciousness and unity of action (ibid). Finally, tactics and political action must be united so that, at every step, political and ideological contradictions must be brought out: every word must be a blunt truth (ibid). To organise the working masses for class struggle and communist constitution, the technical discipline of the factory must be transformed into the practical discipline of solidarity relations between proletarians (Krahl 1973). Emancipation must be global and total.

Anti-authoritarian consciousness encompasses all the moments of an anticipated and substituted class consciousness: consciousness of emancipation and totality (ibid). It is anticipated and substituted because it has not found party consolidation in the workers' provocative actions, but is empirically present in the scientific intelligentsia (ibid). This consciousness has failed to realise that spontaneous praxis can create the historical conditions for the formation of class consciousness (ibid). Anti-authoritarian consciousness is genetically located in the class of intellectuals because it arises, on the one hand, from the contradiction of a technological democracy divorced from the substantial content of the bourgeois emancipatory phase; on the other, from the ideological liberalism of fair exchange, parliamentary communication and autonomous individuality (ibid). The problem lies in the fact, experienced partly by the SDS, that a political movement of intellectuals can hardly fit into proletarian organisations, remaining in relationship with the petty-bourgeois sphere of *Kultur*. If anti-authoritarian consciousness is unwilling to conform to the theoretical-scientific standards of reflection or submit to the demands of socialization through political struggle, it becomes incapable of enduring the level of abstraction necessary for guiding empirical action both theoretically and practically. This implies limitations that prevent it from escaping the activist frenzy in favor of engaging in a long-term strategic discussion

rooted in historical development (ibid). The anticipation of the liberated society in the organisational forms of political struggle is a mediation of freedom and constraint (ibid). The constitution of an intelligible subject requires individual subjects to abstract rigidly from their needy singularity for the freedom of each to coincide with the freedom of all according to universal law and to create relations free from domination (ibid).

The inevitable defeats are not meant to roll back the revolution, they must instead become its driving and midwifery force that gives the revolution its first real validity (ibid). The revolution must proceed relentlessly, raging forward, beyond the gaping graves, or perhaps, precisely because there are some, towards the great objectives (Luxemburg 1963). A movement that seeks to restore historical legitimacy to the emancipatory urge for revolution cannot assess success and defeat based on any immediate concessions that are wrested from the dominators (e.g. reforms), but according to the class expansion of the mass base and according to its qualitative organisation (ibid). "The progress achieved in the enlightened spontaneity of already active groups and in the activation of hitherto immobile groups is historically much more important than the facilitation and rights possibly granted by the dominators" (ibid). Only the intensity of spontaneity and conscious organisation therefore provides an objective criterion for assessing the success and defeat of mass actions (ibid). The dialectic of defeat is nourished by the confusion of fronts in the class struggle (Krahl 1973). Clear distinctions between opposing forces (e.g., the working class and the capitalist class) are crucial for effective organisation and action. When these distinctions become confused or unclear, revolutionary groups experience internal conflicts and divisions, weakening their collective power and making it easier for the ruling class to maintain control. These boycotts a clear class consciousness, the premise of a revolutionary policy that is strategically and tactically clear (ibid). "The dialectic of defeat and revolution presents itself as a dialectic of catastrophe and catharsis that clarifies the fronts of the class struggle and that alone makes possible the delineation of a revolutionary strategy and tactics" (ibid). To the midwifery function of defeats corresponds a pedagogical function of counterrevolution and revolutionary struggle (ibid). Revolution necessitates counterrevolution, its experience has an Enlightenment significance that generates class consciousness and creates such men and women who

are free for liberation (ibid). The counterrevolution fomented by the bourgeoisie is a historical necessity: defeat is as subjectively inevitable as it is objectively necessary, it is the antithetical medium of the revolutionary process (ibid). For the necessary continuation of the revolt, defeat can be a necessary moment, it can form a conscience and free the movement from reformist illusions (ibid). The organisational question, consequently, must address the problem of revolutionary counter-violence (ibid).

Class consciousness and initiative are activated by restructuring the bureaucratic system and political and trade union organisation: officials must be instruments of the masses and organisation must be from the bottom up; both must serve as weapons for the class struggle (Luxemburg 1980). Priority must be given to mobilising women and youth and building propaganda aimed at the organised working masses so that the class struggle becomes a revolutionary school for the masses (ibid). We must also deny all material and moral support to the government, which neglects social duties, deceives the people and deprives the masses of their rights (ibid). All taxation, just and unjust, feeds and serves official politics, the servant of those in power. The blocking of all financial means is a necessity in the struggle against government power. To stop paying taxes is to block the functioning of the government machine and make the currency of the rich obsolete. Freeing ourselves from the shackles that rule and command us starts with not financing them, from no longer living under duress that shows itself as the satisfaction of basic needs and fictitious freedoms. At the same time, the interests of the proletariat must be guaranteed, such as food supply, social policy, education, the fiscal system, the right of association, assembly and the press, personal freedom and freedom of movement and justice (ibid). These must be ensured by the masses united, not by the state. One must fight for the abolition of any standing army, for the absolutism of the state of siege and secret diplomacy; to oppose Republic and Democracy, the decision-making power of the people in domestic and foreign policy (ibid). Inside and outside parliament, one must help destroy the lie of class harmony (ibid). Rebellions and agitations must reflect social and political dissatisfaction and strengthen them by all means (ibid). We need to develop the preconditions for large-scale mass actions and complement them with political content and purpose, transforming them into conscious conflict against institutionalised politics and class capitalist domination (ibid). And, where actions and uprisings occur spontaneously, they must be promoted and

transformed (ibid). Revolutionary tactics require the movement to carry out agitational and publicist activities, such as newspapers for factories, productive employees, and neighbourhood newspapers (Krahl 1973). In these, there must be an argumentation such that the theoretical categories of alienation and domination are understood by all and a mediation of these categories with the concrete experiential content of all (ibid).

3.4 The constitution of the revolutionary class

"What is still missing is a revolutionary theory of late capitalism. And it remains to be clarified whether it is to be understood as a critique of political economy, or already - as is implicitly assumed by Marcuse and systematically taken up by Habermas - as a critique of political technology" (ibid). The critique of political technology refers to the examination of how technological advancements and systems of control and administration influence and perpetuate the capitalist system. It involves looking at how technology is used for social control, domination, and the maintenance of power structures. On one hand, in some works like *One-Dimensional Man*, Herbert Marcuse critiques how advanced industrial societies use technology and bureaucracy to create conformist and controlled social orders, limiting individual freedom and critical thought; on the other hand, Jürgen Habermas focuses on how technological and administrative systems shape rationalisation and communication in society, and explores the potential for communicative action to resist and transform these systems. Krahl wants to determine whether a revolutionary theory should primarily critique the economic foundations (e.g. class relations, modes of production) or should it extend to the technological and administrative mechanisms that underpin and perpetuate these foundations. Krahl's efforts are to integrate the two approaches: a comprehensive revolutionary theory must account for how technological advancements influence economic structures and vice versa. What is needed is a nuanced revolutionary theory that addresses the multifaceted nature of late capitalism. This theory must encompass both traditional economic critiques and the contemporary analysis of technological and administrative mechanisms to offer a robust framework for understanding and transforming the capitalist system. This dual focus ensures a more holistic critique

capable of addressing the complexities of modern society. The theoretical elaboration must, firstly, pass through an immanent knowledge of modern positivism and criticise the institutions and methodologies it draws from mathematics, the natural sciences and the analytical procedure (ibid). The self-reflection of the individual sciences from the perspective of the critique of knowledge is a constitutive moment of the class consciousness of the scientific intelligentsia (ibid). If the scientific producer does not understand that the division of labour is the form of organisation of experience, he or she cannot understand himself or herself as an exploited producer (ibid). Against the culture industry, one must oppose the concepts of a concrete utopia mediated by the critique of knowledge. Through reflection, facts are transformed on a logical level and society appears under the aspect of its transformability: a better society is prefigured. Only reflection - which is the essence - can break the false naturalness of social facts (ibid). Second, it must give rise to the need for the organisation of qualitative empiricism that refers to the production of use-values, the satisfaction of needs and the creation of interests (ibid). The structure of the needs of the masses cannot be accessed by theoretical deduction but through the experience of political and class struggle (ibid). Thirdly, it needs to actively work within the university to ensure that it practically and inexorably critiques the content of the sciences it is supposed to impart (ibid). The movement must rise in a collective and mass manner to a new level of reflection and change the content of agitation and propaganda to a theoretical elaboration that establishes a link between the abstract categories of the totality and the concepts referring to the satisfaction of needs: intellectuals must become the collective theorist of the proletariat (ibid). The critique of positivism, the access to the concrete structure of the needs of the masses and the rebellion against the traditional content of the sciences together provide the framework within which to elaborate the categories of revolutionary theory.

The Marxian critique of political economy has a double meaning in revolutionary theory (ibid). Firstly, it unveils the social relations of domination and false forms of consciousness by analysing the commodity and demonstrating its fetishistic character; secondly, it exposes the historical and social dynamics of the capitalist course, whose crises conform to laws of nature open up the possibility of revolutionary situations (ibid). In the crisis, the proletariat is opened up to the possibility of

penetrating the norms of labour time and surplus labour that the original accumulation had internalised (ibid). It is in this contradiction that the possibility of regaining memory of exploitation and breaking the naturalness of the development of fetishisation, mystification and reification opens up (ibid). Production in itself provides an index of emancipation (ibid). Class struggles indicate that production has not yet been organised into free relations, into an association of autonomous women and men (ibid). Within competition, there is the possibility of uniting proletarians, and there is the possibility of synthesis into a unity (ibid).

The revolutionary class will be formed by those who collaborate in the production of ethics (*Sittlichkeit*), whereby ethics is meant the set of social institutions and norms such as the family, civil society and the state, and by class is meant a qualified plurality, the expression of an ongoing process of unification and the formation of a bond based on a shared transformative practice that takes into account the multiplicity of practices of singular subjects (Bascetta 1998, Farnesi Camellone 2022). In the production of ethics, abstract individual freedom acquires real value by being concretely objectivised and realised in the universal human community. In this dialectic, the thesis is abstract law, the antithesis is morality, and the synthesis is the subjective spirit realised in ethics. "The proletarian class struggle is an ethical war" (Krahl 1973). Love is the dimension of ethics: only in it can the oppressed human nature, by suppressing projection and constitution, reopen its blinded eyes and perceive a new, unseen world (ibid). "All knowledge is love for the oppressed particular. [...] The love of the emancipated is the love of the mutually oppressed. What is oppressed, which is neither male nor female, is woman: Sappho is the original image of theory. Intuition has the same form as mimesis: *eidae*" (ibid). Knowledge is not neutral; it is tied to an ethical commitment to the oppressed. Solidarity and collective liberation are rooted in mutual recognition of shared oppression. Theory, at its core, is connected to the personal, emotional, and embodied experiences of individuals, particularly those who are marginalised. Theory is not just an intellectual exercise but is deeply intertwined with emotions, love, and the lived realities of oppressed people. Sappho represents a form of knowledge or theory that is intimate, intuitive, and based on deep emotional and social connections. Intuitive knowledge mirrors reality or experience in a way that is similar to how mimesis operates. In other words, intuition allows for a direct,

empathetic understanding of the world, much like how mimesis seeks to represent reality. Krahl's statement ties together knowledge, love, oppression, and gender in a way that challenges traditional notions of theory and knowledge. He suggests that true knowledge is rooted in solidarity with the oppressed and that the path to emancipation involves a deep emotional and intellectual engagement with those who are marginalised. By invoking Sappho, Krahl emphasises that theory is not just abstract reasoning but is deeply connected to personal experience, intuition, and love. In this framework, 'woman' symbolises the oppressed, and knowledge becomes an act of love and solidarity with those who are marginalised.

The class struggle brings the *Verfassung* (material constitution) back into the *Konstitution* (formal constitution) (Zaru 2023). Whereas the material constitution means the complexity of social, economic and legal relations that exceed the system of simple constitutional guarantees; whereas the formal constitution means the charter of fundamental rights and the legal-positivist model of the organisation of state powers (ibid). The limitation of the formal constitution, the *Konstitution*, lies in the fact that it "is unable to comprehend the antagonism inherent in that part of *Verfassung* that belongs to the sphere of production" (ibid). The formal constitution is limited because it operates primarily at the level of legal and political formalities, it does not address or resolve the deeper economic conflicts and inequalities embedded in the production process. Constitution is a reflection of the theory of knowledge of bourgeois law: it is an expression of the repressive and abstract institutionalisation of legal subjectivity, of the second nature of law, church and state (Krahl 1973). The constitution gives rise to the fascist projection because it expresses the objective spirit of capital and does not reflect on the moments of its genesis (ibid). These conflicts are central to the overall structure (*Verfassung*) of society. To overcome this problem, Krahl proposes a *Konstitutionkritik* capable of reconstructing the nexus of production and constitution, "that is, capable of holding together a critique of political economy and critique of politics" (Zaru 2023). *Konstitutionkritik* involves critically analysing the constitution not just as a set of legal and political rules (*Konstitution*) but as part of the broader socio-economic structure (*Verfassung*). This critique seeks to uncover and address the fundamental economic and social relations that underlie and shape the formal constitution. Krahl argues that these two spheres - *Konstitution* and *Verfassung* - cannot be understood or transformed in

isolation as they are interconnected. The formal political constitution is deeply influenced by the underlying economic relations of production. A critique of political economy involves analysing the capitalist system, focusing on the relations of production, class struggle, and the dynamics of capital accumulation. This critique reveals how economic structures and processes shape social relations and power dynamics. A critique of politics examines the formal political institutions, laws, and governance structures. It looks at how political power is exercised, how laws are made and enforced, and how political authority is legitimised. By proposing a *Konstitutionkritik* that holds together the critique of political economy and the critique of politics, Krahl emphasises the need to understand and address the interplay between economic and political structures. This integrated approach would analyse how economic power and class relations influence political institutions and vice versa. In essence, Krahl's *Konstitutionkritik* aims to develop a holistic critique that not only focuses on legal and political forms but also deeply engages with the underlying economic realities. This integrated critique would be capable of informing more profound and transformative social change, addressing both the symptoms (political and legal issues) and the root causes (economic structures and relations) of societal problems. A comprehensive critique that bridges the gap between economic and political analysis involves exposing how economic inequalities and class struggles shape political institutions and laws and revealing how political structures reinforce or mitigate economic exploitation and power dynamics.

In Krahl's theoretical framework, there is no reflection on the "categorical constitution (*Verfassung*) of class consciousness as a non-empirical category" (Fierro 2014). Krahl's work does not delve into class consciousness as an abstract, philosophical concept (non-empirical category) but rather engages with it in more concrete, practical terms related to actual social and economic conditions. This reflects a focus on the lived experiences and material conditions of the working class, aligning with a Marxist emphasis on praxis and the interplay between theory and practice. In the Krahlian dialectic, ideology cannot be separated from an analysis of the categories of production and class struggle: without them, it would be impossible to conceive of a political praxis (ibid). Indeed, the "moment of the interpretative synthesis of the multiple" would be missing. (ibid). 'Interpretative synthesis' refers to the process of

integrating various elements into a cohesive interpretation. This involves not just combining these elements but actively interpreting their significance and relationships to each other to form a coherent whole. The 'multiple' denotes the diverse, heterogeneous elements that need to be synthesised. These can be different social experiences, economic conditions, cultural phenomena, or theoretical perspectives that exist within society. The term 'moment' signifies a critical point or phase in this process of synthesis. It is the juncture at which the diverse elements are brought together and their relationships are interpreted to form a unified understanding. This process is essential for developing a comprehensive critique of society. It allows theorists and activists to see how different aspects of social life - such as class relations, economic systems, cultural norms, and political structures - interconnect and form a larger system of domination or emancipation. The interpretative synthesis of the multiple is inherently dialectical. It involves recognising contradictions, tensions, and interactions between different elements and synthesising these into a dynamic understanding of social reality. For instance, let's consider Krahl's analysis of late capitalist society. He looks at economic conditions, class structures, cultural norms, and political institutions as distinct yet interconnected elements. The moment of interpretative synthesis involves bringing together these diverse elements to form a coherent critique of how late capitalism operates and perpetuates social domination. This synthesis helps to uncover the underlying mechanisms and relationships that sustain the system. In essence, the 'moment of the interpretative synthesis of the multiple' is about integrating various dimensions of social reality into a coherent, critical understanding that can inform both theory and praxis with a holistic understanding, a critical insight and a strategic action.

The constitution of class consciousness must integrate the two moments - theory and praxis - and ensure their fusion (ibid). Class consciousness must become "party consciousness of the totality" and this consciousness can only form if the theoretical-scientific moment enters the phase of experience (Krahl 1973). The critique of political economy, through scientific procedures, makes evident the reification of society that must enter into the consciousness of the masses: reification "must be perceived in close connection with praxis and not subsist in an avulsed dimension of empirics" (Fierro 2014). "Criticism is the theoretical life of revolution" (Krahl 1973). The validity of the constitution must be critically examined in the light of the genesis

inherent in projection (ibid). Projection means the way future possibilities and societal ideals are projected into the formation of the Constitution. It involves how certain visions, goals, and ideologies influence the creation and evolution of the constitutional order. To understand and evaluate the legitimacy and effectiveness of a society's constitutional order, one must analyse its origins and the ideals or visions that were projected onto its creation. Only a consciousness born through projection can unveil the logic of oppression and exploitation linked to exchange value (ibid). The problem is that the capitalist system uses fascism's strategies to hinder this possibility (ibid). It flaunts the limits of its origins (constitution) and downgrades social struggles to *bellum omnium contra omnes* (the war of all against all) (projection) (ibid). The projection has a controlling function: it mediates the constitution into forms useful for domination (ibid). It expresses the bourgeois *status quo* and eliminates all reflection on the genesis, annihilating the historical dimension: reflection is brought back to the manipulated material-empirical sphere and obstructs any attempt to valorise the theoretical moment (ibid). The class must create an effective interrelationship between the immediate moment of needs and that of critique because such a relationship breaks the rift between the fixity of the constitution and the mediation of projection (ibid).

The revolutionary class will express itself through the sabotage of current institutions, through forms of struggle and unprecedented organisational processes that will produce a new institutional constellation (Martino et all 2021). Human revolution is no longer possible only through the unmasking of the ruling class: it acquires concreteness through a denunciation of the filth produced by late capitalism (Krahl 1973). Things must be denounced in order to make men and women free to enjoy things (ibid).

For Krahl, it is important to take the social revolutionary movements of the Third World as an example (Krahl 1998). There, anti-authoritarian consciousness is expressed through radical politics that rejects compromise and breaks away from the politics of peaceful coexistence (ibid). This is also made possible because, in the Global South, exploitation is not veiled (ibid). In the Global South, people fight for freedom because they are aware that they do not have it; there, corruption is transparent to the masses. In contrast, Western countries float in the murky waters of guaranteed comfort. Governments are equally corrupted by power, money and vested interests, but as long as

we can buy what we want and take a week's holiday, anything goes. The material, the private is what we have elected as fundamental, and we have become enslaved and immobile for fear of losing these securities. Instead, the Third World is freer than ever because it disobeys. The exploitation of Third World countries is a fundamental aspect of global capitalism, and therefore, their revolutionary movements are part of a global struggle against the same system. Krahl's approach is dialectical, viewing the liberation struggles in the Third World as dialectically related to the revolutionary potential in the West. The success of Third World movements inspire and catalyse revolutionary change in the core capitalist countries.

The entire world is dominated by the logic of oppression and the logic of exploitation (Fierro 2014). While the former is more evident in the Third World - where the conditions of misery are more pronounced - exploitation operates in a more camouflaged manner using state and law (ibid). Western bourgeois society spreads wealth and material progress while keeping bodily misery at bay, ensuring high levels of development and culture that mask forms of domination (ibid). The essential material needs of the masses are ensured through the commodification of labour and the constraint that this material security can only be guaranteed through subordination, otherwise worse prospects (ibid). It is thanks to the welfare state that the Western masses are in a condition of authentic slavery. To annihilate these forms of enslavement, according to Krahl, solidarity between peoples would be the first move (ibid). It is through contact with Third World movements that authoritarian consciousness is formed: looking at places where there is opposition to a capitalist system that shows itself without frills (ibid). The resistance of the Vietnamese people against the US apparatus of violence, the socialist model of Cuba and the struggles of the guerrillas in Latin America have created a new fact: the newness of the revolution (Krahl 1973). If transforming the *status quo*, and making a revolution is possible in a certain country, then it is necessary for all of us, sons and daughters of workers, to support the revolution in the only way it is possible: by making a revolution of our own (Luxemburg 1980). Only by rebelling against our governments can we in turn make the impossible real and the extraordinary natural. Only through disobedience is it possible to be governed in another way. Change is not possible on their terms and using their tools. The vote, and the parties, are bastions of Western freedom and democracy and

continue, time after time, to offer the only thing they can offer: injustice and inequality. Revolution is the only instrument that truly defends the cause of freedom, progress and democracy. A mediation - an organisation - is needed between the protest movements in the West and the Third World liberation movements. The example of the actuality of revolution in the Third World gives us the possibility of developing a political morality of refusal to compromise that can initiate the creation of autonomous organisational forms of the population (Krahl 1973). It is the basis for creating a type of organisation, historically adapted to the current power structure of the state, that rests on autonomous initiative groups within the university and the factories (ibid).

Revolution, before the revolution, is what is most impossible and fantastic (Luxemburg 1980). It is after the first battle and the first victory that it becomes simple, natural and due (ibid). The Russian Revolution was made possible without organisation: the working masses lacked a press, trade unions and political assemblies (ibid). What made it possible was the fighting spirit, determined will and courage of the masses (ibid).

For Marx, revolution is a pre-existing fact that the proletariat cannot create, it can only transform (Krahl 1973). Although bourgeois society has developed a refined system of needs - i.e. a system based on the fair exchange of equivalents and organic composition of capital - it has not yet achieved full political power and has yet to eliminate feudal and absolutist remnants (ibid). According to Marx, there is still a revolutionary bourgeoisie that has not been able to seize political power in the state - and it is in this arena that the proletariat moves (ibid). Class struggles and revolutions are actual but produced by the bourgeoisie (ibid). In late-capitalist relations of domination, we are faced with the imperative to transform defensive struggles against bourgeois fascist development battles into proletarian revolutions (ibid). Whereas bourgeois revolutions are contingent, concern politics and constitute second nature; the course of proletarian revolutions must be overcoming contingency and false consciousness (ibid). Bourgeoise revolutions primarily focused on political change - shifting power from the aristocracy to the bourgeoisie - and aimed at establishing new forms of political governance, such as democratic or republican states. They focus on the reorganisation of the state and its institutions rather than fundamentally altering the economic base of society. They are contingent, meaning they are dependent on

particular historical circumstances: they are not necessarily inevitable or based on deeper historical or material laws but are responses to specific conditions. In contrast, proletarian revolutions - those led by the working class to overthrow capitalist society - are understood differently in Marxist theory. These revolutions must go beyond the contingency of bourgeois revolutions: instead of being mere reactions to specific conditions, proletarian revolutions aim to overcome the contradictions of capitalism itself. Overcoming contingency implies that proletarian revolutions are based on a deeper understanding of the historical and material processes that drive society. Proletarian revolutions must aim to overcome the false consciousness - all the misleadings that make them understand the capitalist system and their exploitation as natural or inevitable - by raising class consciousness - helping workers understand their real position in the capitalist system and their potential to create a new, socialist society. Bourgeois revolutions do not fundamentally alter the underlying structures of exploitation; they merely replace one form of domination with another. These revolutions create new forms of second nature. Proletarian revolutions, on the other hand, must go beyond merely reshaping the political order; they must fundamentally transform the economic base of society, thereby dismantling the structures of second nature and creating a truly emancipated society. Revolutionary consciousness is formed in interaction with the revolutionary bourgeoisie and the frustrations, disappointments and disillusionments suffered at the hands of the bourgeoisie that has come to power and the proletariat at the mercy of nationalist ideology (ibid). Only in the proletarian revolution do women and men learn to make history with conscience (ibid).

Non-violence is the ideology of the ruling class, used to justify its violence (Krahl 1998). For this reason, according to Krahl, violence can be historically legitimised in situations of social oppression. The ruling class advocates for non-violence while simultaneously engaging in various forms of structural and direct violence to uphold their dominance. This hypocrisy serves to delegitimise the resistance and revolutionary actions of the oppressed, framing them as irrational or illegitimate. By promoting non-violence, the ruling class can pacify resistance, prevent revolutionary actions that might threaten their power and use the ideology of non-violence to position themselves as morally superior. This moral high ground is used to justify the use of state violence against those who do not comply with the non-violent approach, labelling them

as criminals or terrorists. The ideology of non-violence allows the state to legitimise the use of police and military force against dissenters. When protesters or revolutionaries resort to violence in response to systemic oppression, the state can then portray them as threats to public order, thereby justifying violent repression. The state is an instrument of power of the ruling class disguised as the bearer of the real universal interest (Krahl 1973). True revolutionary change requires confronting and overcoming the violence inherent in the capitalist system, which includes the use of force. Liberation of the oppressed class is impossible without a violent revolution, without destroying the apparatus of state power created by the ruling class (ibid). Revolutionary praxis involves a critical assessment of the means necessary to achieve liberation, this includes recognising when non-violent tactics are insufficient and when more radical actions are required to dismantle oppressive structures. Women and men are faced with the task of realising - even through violence - freedom, which corresponds to the renunciation of violence (ibid). To do this, it is first necessary to recognise violence in its nuances, which include economic, cultural, judicial and social violence. The violence of revolution differs from state violence in that it is the mediation of men, women and history (ibid). Revolutionary violence has been mediated by the active participation of men and women in history. It is a conscious, deliberate act aimed at altering the course of history and creating a new social order. This mediation reflects the intentional and collective efforts of people to challenge and transform oppressive systems. Revolutionary violence arises from historical necessity and the pursuit of justice. It is a response to the intolerable conditions imposed by capitalist exploitation and state repression. As such, it embodies the aspirations and struggles of the oppressed for a just and equitable society. Revolutionaries make history with conscience and their use of violence has emancipation as its goal (ibid). The state, on the other hand, has exploitation as its goal, state violence is institutional and systematic, perpetuating the *status quo* and suppressing dissent, it is impersonal, bureaucratic, and often hidden behind legal and ideological justifications. Revolutionary violence is morally and ethically distinct from state violence because it seeks to dismantle unjust structures rather than perpetuate them. The legitimacy of revolutionary violence is derived from its aim to liberate people from oppression and to create a society based on justice and equality.

CONCLUSION

Through the work of Hans-Jürgen Krahl, I have tested these research questions:

RQ_1: What are the objective conditions for an emancipatory transformation within advanced capitalism?

RQ_2: How do we reconstruct the concept of class consciousness?

RQ_3: How to form an emancipatory, transformative, and revolutionary consciousness?

The objective condition for an emancipatory transformation within advanced capitalism is the unification of the scientific intelligentsia and the workers in a global revolutionary movement that fights for the concrete transformation of the existent. This organisation recognise the systemic oppression that crosses society as a whole, inhibits human expression, alienates individuals and relegates them to a position of subordination. The global proletariat not only is capable of understanding the complex system of domination but criticises it in a scientific, holistic and coherent manner. The criticism of the capitalist social, political and economic relations is what informs their dismantling practice. The theory unmasks the bourgeoise world, the revolutionary praxis demolishes its institutions and solidarity across the globe builds an uprising that refuses every compromise in favour of an interconnected and new organisation that will transform the real of freedom into concrete reality. The unification of the global proletariat presupposes a collective intelligible subject that has common will and consciousness.

The reconstruction of a class consciousness begins with understanding the practical and theoretical role that one has in the capitalist production process. The class consciousness recognises the elements of exploitation and domination and inserts them in the broader context of the political, social, religious and cultural environment. Thus, it is a consciousness of totality. Comprehending one's position in the capitalist society is

the first step towards developing emancipatory needs. In producing goods, services and ideas, we produce ourselves, and our subjectivity, we shape the world around us and, even, possible and unforeseen worlds. It is from understanding one's role in society that the systemic violence of domination arises in its disruptive force and, from it, the need to live differently. It is from individual needs that one can claim a liveable life. "Claiming a liveable life means claiming the power to live at the head of a given life, to preserve one's life and to wish to live", it means manifesting the awareness that there are other ways of living and that one can distinguish between liveable and unlivable forms of life (Butler 2022). 'Living' is partly defined as living on a planet that is liveable and dwelling in it with a body that must be safeguarded by structures and infrastructure, and that means being part of a common world and sharing it (ibid). In these movements - starting from understanding the place that we occupy on this planet, passing into developing needs and distinguishing a certain type of life from another - the subject implicity accepts the idea that there are common conditions that make life worth living. This means that what is true for my life is also true for any life and that, therefore, personal well-being cannot be separated from collective well-being (ibid). In this sense, this I, this life, subtends a We, subtends this Other life, a common path in which egocentrism dissolves (ibid). "The condition of possibility of the self, consequently, is the support and presence of other bodies, thus of other living processes and social institutions, on which every human creature depends and to which it is necessarily connected" (Butler 2022). Consequently, we have the possibility of transforming the relationships between us and the planet into relationships of mutual support and help, we understand that the battle for living and not surviving is a shared one. The principle of solidarity must be opposed to one of domination of one another. It is through solidarity that is possible to imagine a common liberated world and to fight united for a shared happy future. These are the conditions for developing a class consciousness.

This class consciousness is emancipatory, transformative, and revolutionary because it starts from an assumption: our role in the capitalist production process is to enhance someone else's capital, to feed a certain ideology according to which some people are more dispensable than others, and some lives matter more than others. What can be said about humanity, is that we have all a common destiny: consume and

produce. There is a sort of fatality and necessity in this from which emancipatory and transformative ways of living can be built. In all these activities we are all interconnected: in the acts of consume and produce we all have to interact with at least one other person. What is underlined in these activities is the Other and the Us. I cannot touch a body or an object without being touched back. I cannot produce without another person who consumes my labour, I cannot consume if there is not a person who produces that service or object. The interconnectivity of lives is tied with the obligation to organise the world according to a principle of radical equality. The working class, through its experiences of exploitation and struggle, will develop an awareness of its collective interests and its role as a revolutionary agent. Class consciousness is not just an intellectual recognition of one's position within the capitalist system; it is developed through struggle, organising, and collective action. Revolutionary praxis connects theory and experience, deepening class consciousness through active engagement in the fight for emancipation. Revolutionary consciousness involves not only a transformation of society but also a transformation of the self. This means recognising how we are shaped by the systems of oppression we seek to dismantle and working to overcome internalised oppression and privilege. Personal transformation is part of the collective process of liberation. Forming an emancipatory, transformative, and revolutionary consciousness is a multi-faceted process that involves critical awareness, collective struggle, theoretical reflection, dialectical thinking, solidarity, ethical commitment, and strategic action. It is a dynamic and ongoing process that evolves through engagement with the world and with others. Revolutionary consciousness is not just about understanding oppression but about actively working to dismantle it and build a new, emancipatory society. Through this process, individuals and communities can develop the capacity to imagine, fight for, and create a world based on justice, equality, and freedom.

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