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*Umemoto Katsumi  
and the Global Crisis of Humanism*

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When one thinks of philosophy in Japan, the name Umemoto Katsumi is not the first to come to mind. Next to the famous Kyoto School philosophers, such as Nishida Kitarō and Tanabe Hajime, the name Umemoto Katsumi casts an indistinct shadow. However, the penumbra of Umemoto's works is particularly important in the context of modern Japanese intellectual history because he critically engaged the Kyoto School philosophers from a perspective that was at once sympathetic and critical. In particular, Umemoto began his academic career by writing an undergraduate thesis on the medieval Buddhist thinker Shinran, under his mentor Watsuji Tetsurō and later turned to Marxism; hence he had a foot in both the so-called conservative and progressive Marxist camps. This put him in a unique position to develop a theory of subjectivity based on a critical reflection on both the Kyoto School philosophers and his contemporary Marxists. The significance of Umemoto's thought lies in the fact that he contextualizes and develops Japanese philosophy from the point of view of Marxism, taking Marxism beyond the sphere of technological determinism.

However, most scholars have overlooked Umemoto's significance because they have failed to contextualize his thought in relation to the global crisis of humanist thought and to further connect this crisis to the dynamic of global capitalism. Victor Koschmann and Rikki Kersten have each devoted sections of their respective books to the work of Umemoto Katsumi. Koschmann, whose book contains a chapter on Umemoto, draws on the work of Ernesto Laclau and Chantalle

Mouffe to chide Umemoto and postwar Marxists for fixing the meaning of history from the outside and consequently undermining the possibility of subjectivity.<sup>1</sup> In other words, because discourses of historical materialism often downplay morality, they bestow meaning to history through a teleological narrative of necessity. Our present practices potentially have meaning because history is moving towards socialism and this goal can serve as a standard for action.

A key issue here is the concept of totality. Although many postwar Japanese thinkers rejected concepts of totality associated with Nishida and other prewar thinkers, they reproduced a vision of totality in history in a Marxist frame. Before one evaluates or examines such judgments, one must ask whether totality exists merely in discourse or whether history itself entails a type of totalizing dynamic. If totality is merely a discursive imposition, then of course Umemoto and others can be criticized from the standpoint of contingency or particularity. However, Umemoto's own discourse goes towards showing that capitalism itself entails notions of totality, in particular an alienated totality, and overcoming this alienation becomes the goal of history. From this perspective, the limitations of Umemoto's philosophy do not stem from his insistence on the concept of totality, but rather from the way in which he understands this concept in relation to capitalism.

In what follows, I interpret Kyoto school philosophy and Umemoto Marxist theory as different critiques of alienated totality. Umemoto understood alienation as being inseparable from the history of capitalism and his discourse on morality aimed at overcoming both alienation and capitalism. If this ethical obligation has its origins not outside of history but emerges from history and capitalism, then Umemoto's

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1. In Koschmann's own words, "to a greater or lesser degree, each attempt to make a place for shutaisei seemed to require a renewed appeal to the plentitude of metahistory as an external, determinate process that alone could provide shutaisei with its necessity and meaning. But each time shutaisei was reconnected to the supplement of an external history, its claim to free subjectivity was subverted by its own supplementarity function as the completion of a closed metahistorical system" (Victor J. Koschmann, *Revolution and Subjectivity in Postwar Japan* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995], 148). Kersten makes a comparison between Umemoto and Eduard Bernstein, but laments that "Eventually, Umemoto modified his rhetoric, altered his terminology, and professed adherence to that orthodoxy" (Kersten, *op. cit.*, 90).

work is especially significant for us today.

I will begin with a discussion of the context of the crisis of humanism since the 1930s and then proceed to analyze Umemoto's theory of political and human alienation. In the final section, I will attempt to contextualize Umemoto's theory of alienation and morality in relation to the logic of capitalism. This final move is particularly relevant in Umemoto's context because he himself theorizes capitalism in order to overcome it. Thus the final section of the paper attempts to probe whether Umemoto's theory is adequate to its object.

### *The Global Crisis of Humanism*

Umemoto Katsumi was born a few months before the beginning of the Taisho period in 1912 and had all of his education in Japan. During this period, the Japanese philosophers Nishida Kitarō and Tanabe Hajime, two pioneers of the Kyoto school were extremely influential. Umemoto had already begun to read Nishida's philosophy in Mito Higher School and eventually studied ethics with the famous thinker, Watsuji Tetsurō at Tokyo Imperial University. In 1937, he wrote a graduation thesis on the medieval Buddhist thinker Shinran. After graduation he eventually taught ethics at the Mito Higher School and at this point, he began to avidly read about Marxism. At first glance, it appears as if we can summarize Umemoto's intellectual trajectory as a merging of Japanese influences with Marxism. While this is no doubt true, in this section I contextualize the work of the Kyoto School in terms of a larger intellectual current critical of humanism, a current that would make Buddhism especially attractive to Japanese thinkers in the 1930s and 1940s.

As Stefanos Geroulanos has recently argued, the period since around the late 1920s could be characterized by a crisis in humanism.<sup>2</sup> There are many factors to this crisis, but put simply, the crisis emerged as people doubted the various reconstructions of ethics after Nietzsche's

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2. Stefanos Geroulanos, *An Atheism that is Not Humanist Emerges in French Thought* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).

famous utterance that God is dead. In other words, with the death of God, the foundation of morality became obscure. In response, various Neo-Kantian philosophers hoped to ground ethics in human subjectivity. Geroulanos points out that until the late 1920s, French academics attempted to develop a humanism based on Neo-Kantianism, which was inextricably connected to a view of progress based on the West.

Among the various effects of this trend was the belief in progress and science, which entailed certain epistemological and metaphysical assumptions. For example, when the Japanese aesthetician, Kuki Shuzō visited France in 1929, he claimed that French philosophy was characterized by an emphasis on objectivity, an emphasis on metaphysical Cartesian dualism, inner observation and a striving to be social.<sup>3</sup> These characteristics were linked to Western civilization and progress in science, especially since scientific concepts of objectivity often entailed Cartesian dualism and positivism.

However, this would all change the following year.<sup>4</sup> In 1929, in Davos, Martin Heidegger and Ernst Cassirer had a famous debate concerning “What is Man?” According to many of the attendees, including Jean-Paul Sartre, Emmanuel Levinas and other soon to be well-known figures, Heidegger clearly won this debate and this entailed the death of a particular type of humanism. The attack on humanism would find further expression in Heidegger’s magnum opus, *Sein und Zeit*, published the same year. In short, Heidegger’s work questioned a number of the assumptions that Kuki believed were predominant during the period, such as Cartesian dualism.

Umemoto was exposed to Neo-Kantianism at Mito Higher School at approximately the period when intellectuals were experiencing the way in which Martin Heidegger was destroying the ground on which Neo-

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3. Kuki Shuzo, “General Characteristics of French Philosophy,” in Steven Light, *Shuzo Kuki and Jean-Paul Sartre: Influence and Counter-Influence in the Early History of Existential Phenomenology* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press), 1987, 92–95. Stefanos Geroulanos, 49.

4. Readers will of course note that this is precisely the year of a global crisis in capitalism and clearly the crisis of humanism and evolutionary thought is intimately connected with this larger crisis. The precise connection between the two would be interesting to explore, but goes beyond the scope of this essay.

Kantianism stood. Starting with the publication of Heidegger's *Being and Time*, there were successive attacks on the autonomy of the subject and the foundations of ethics. This line of thinking had an extreme impact on France, where famous thinkers, such as George Bataille, Alexandre Kojève and Jean-Paul Sartre were all influenced by this trend. More specifically, Heidegger's concept of Dasein seriously undermined the autonomy of the human being by stressing that human beings are constituted by their relations and practices and by their relation to Being. During the 1940s and into the postwar period, Sartre and Heidegger both hoped to avoid the nihilistic consequences of denying the existence of both God and human autonomy.

Although Geroulanos periodizes this attack on humanism starting with the 1930s, in both Europe and Japan there is a larger trajectory to this thought. For example, when Nietzsche famously proclaimed that "God is dead," he was by no means happy with the Cartesian subject or any humanistic enterprise. Indeed, Heidegger's Dasein is anticipated by the cluster of concepts found in Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra* or in Hegel's phenomenology of spirit.<sup>5</sup> In fact, in both prewar and postwar France, leading thinkers in this anti-humanist trend, such as Georges Bataille and Jean Hypolitte, were influenced by Nietzsche and Hegel respectively. Japanese scholars drew on versions of Buddhism mediated through readings of Hegel and Nietzsche to reconstitute thought in modern Japan and this reconfiguration made it easy for intellectuals to affirm some type of breakdown of the subject at almost the same time as the idea of the modern subject emerged in Japan.

One can say that the idea of the modern subject emerged with a number of other epistemological shifts encircling the Meiji period beginning in 1868. Initially, intellectuals of this period, such as Fukuzawa Yukichi related subjectivity to an enlightenment narrative of progress, which extolled European development. However, by the end of the Meiji period around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as problems with Western influenced capitalist development became apparent, scholars drew on

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5. This suggests that although one might periodize the crisis of humanism in relation to the 1929 economic depression, the roots of both this mode of thinking and this economic crisis lie deeper in the logic of capital.

combinations of German Idealism and religions such as Buddhism in order to construct a vision of Japanese and Asian philosophy.

Nishida Kitarō was perhaps the most famous of these thinkers, and one who exerted a significant amount of influence on the Japanese left during the postwar period and on Umemoto in particular. The Japanese word for subjectivity, *shutaisei*, was coined by Nishida and a couple of decades before the crisis of humanism spread in France, Nishida was already developing a theory of subjectivity that decentered the role of the human or of the conscious subject. In one of his most famous works, *An Inquiry into the Good (Zen no kenkyū)*, he stressed the importance of “pure experience,” which emerged before the separation between subject and object. Such concepts and Kyoto School philosophy in general surround Umemoto’s attempt to construct a humanist Marxism in a world where the human was being undermined.

### *The Kyoto School in Postwar Japan and the Antinomies of Humanism in Marxism*

The position of the Kyoto School in Postwar Japan was complex. On the one hand, if one says that the early postwar period in Japan was an “age of philosophy,” then it is not surprising that people were extremely enthusiastic about the works of the Kyoto School. Koschmann points out that people would line up to purchase copies of Nishida Kitarō’s work and Tanabe’s *Philosophy as Metanoetics (Zangedō no tetsugaku)* was a best seller.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, Japanese Marxists were critical of Kyoto School philosophers for two reasons. First, Kyoto School philosophers, and Nishida and Tanabe in particular, often explicitly placed the nation over class conflict and therefore directly attacked Marxist theory. Secondly, the prewar discourse of fascism was associated with the Kyoto School philosophers. Thus immediately after the war, the Association of Democratic Scientists (Minka), which was an organization that tried to continue prewar Marxist organizations such as the

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6. Koschmann, 88.

Proleterian Research Institute and the Materialists Study Group aimed to criticize the Kyoto School.<sup>7</sup>

However, postwar Japanese Marxists were by no means unified with respect to their view of Kyoto School and this split is connected to an antinomy within Marxist theory. On the one hand, Marxism is ostensibly about human emancipation and consequently entails some type of humanism, but on the other hand, Marxists have stressed the laws of history, which are primarily governed by a dialectic between the forces of production and the relations of production. Most postwar Marxists stressed the latter aspects and this led to a discourse that pitted the science of history against subjectivity. But a number of Marxists would attempt to combine their prewar interest in the Kyoto school with a Marxist vision of history. In short, they would have to reconcile the antinomy between subject and object or between science and subjectivity in a manner that points in the direction of Marxist practice. Umemoto would be one of the most outspoken advocates of subjectivity during the early postwar period and he would combine ruminations on the early Marx with a critical appropriation of ideas from the Kyoto School. Moreover, he tried to place these concepts back into the context of a Marxist theory of history. This combination would meet limits, as we shall see in the midst of his discussion in “On the Limits of Human Freedom.”

### *Umemoto's “On the Limits of Human Freedom”*

“On the Limits of Human Freedom” is an essay often discussed because it is an essay that sparked the famous “subjectivity debate” in 1947, which Kiersten and Koschmann have both analyzed. In particular, the Marxist philosopher, Matsumura Kazuto attacked this essay as veering off the course of Marxism into a voluntaristic affirmation of subjectivity. Rather than going into the above debate, I will outline some of the possibilities of the essay in relation to the larger context of Marxist philosophy.

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7. Koschmann, *ibid.*

The essay begins with a camouflaged attack on Tanabe Hajime's essay, "The Immediate Necessity of Political Philosophy" (*Seiji tetsugaku no kyūmu*) published in 1946. Tanabe had attempted to conceive of democracy as a dialectic between freedom and equality, which would eventually be synthesized in a totality symbolized by the emperor.<sup>8</sup> Thus Umemoto begins his 1946 essay with the following lines.

It appears that social democracy is being provided with a philosophical foundation and is being praised by the intellectuals. They say that as a result of the development of liberalism, equality became alienated and through this, freedom was placed in danger. In response to this, the equality of communism is greatly praised but, this implies alienating freedom again and then uniting the two once again.<sup>9</sup>

One could argue that Umemoto is also interested in uniting freedom and equality, but he sees the problem as lying deeper and as one that cannot be resolved by the state. In particular, Umemoto focuses on freedom in capitalist society and the limits of political emancipation. In this context, Umemoto draws on Marx's essay "On the Jewish Question," citing the phrase that one must return man to himself. This passage stems from a larger discussion in which Marx makes the following point.

Human emancipation will only be complete when the real, individual man has absorbed into himself the abstract citizen; when as an individual man in his everyday life, in his work, and in his relationships, he has become a species-being; and when he has recognized and organized his own powers (*forces propres*) as *social* powers and so that he no longer separates this social power from himself as *political* power.<sup>10</sup>

Marx makes a number of distinctions which play a key role in Umemoto's conception of freedom. The distinction between the politi-

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8. Koschmann, *ibid.* 90–92.

9. Umemoto Katsumi, "Ningenteki jiyū no genkai," in *Yuibutsushikan to dōtoku*, 9. C.f. Koschmann, 96.

10. Karl Marx, "On the Jewish Question," in *Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Tucker, 46.



cal or the state and society actually represents a split in the individual with the emergence of capitalism. In capitalist society, individuals are simultaneously people who pursue their own interests in civil society and at the same time they are represented politically by the state. Marx calls the former “*bourgeois*” and the latter “*citoyen*.” As bourgeois human beings are concrete individuals going on the market to sell their labor power in order to procure use-values. The state establishes the conditions for the sale of labor power and represents the individuals in civil society. This representation finds its expression in the concept of citizenship and national community, but apart from occasional moments, people’s identity as citizen remains abstract and meaningless. In other words, people’s social and political power remains alienated from them as it is congealed in the state and the nation attempts to legitimate this alienation. Another side effect of the separation between civil society and the state is that the laws that form the conditions of civil society, that is, the conditions of the capitalist market, do not appear as political.

Umemoto explains this distinction with reference to the transition from feudalism to capitalism and the displacement of moral personality.

Liberalism politically liberated the modern citizen from feudal fetters. However, because this was originally the liberation of the egoistic spirit of city-dwellers from that which constrained them, feudal society disintegrated into atomized self-interested individuals and moral personality floated in the air. Modern capitalist society is formed out of such self-interested individuals and through this formation all of the members of this society are reified. Humanity is completely fragmented. In such a society, no matter how much one longs for the moral personality floating in the air, this can only end in being a demand (*yōsei*).<sup>11</sup>

In feudal society, people were directly subject to hierarchical and political relations such as those between serf and lord. As feudal society transformed into one based on the market, human relations were no

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11. Umemoto Katsumi, “Ningen jiyū no genkai,” in *Yuibutsushikan to dōtoku*,

longer mediated by overt political power, but rather human life was mediated by the market and by labor. Umemoto adds that this leads to a moral fragmentation and moral alienation. He uses the term “bunkenka (物件化),” which implies both reification and atomization. As a result, one’s moral personality or communal or species being floats in the air and as long as relations remain capitalist, there will be no way of grasping this. His project is of course to reunite people with their moral personality, which will itself involve an ethics. In other words, Umemoto will attempt to develop an ethics to restore one’s ethical and political agency, but this will involve locating a subject who can effect this change—a subject that is not reified or atomized. In light of this project, he will draw on the thought of Nishida Kitarō.

### *Umemoto’s Critical Inflection of Nishida’s Nothingness and Historical Agency*

We have already mentioned Nishida’s early work in which he attempted to ground subjectivity in what he called pure experience. However, in the 1920s one of his most famous students, Tanabe Hajime constantly criticized him for not accounting for history, action and society. In short, Tanabe contended that Nishida’s philosophy was mystical, focusing only on the experience of the subject. In response to this criticism, in a series of essays, Nishida constantly attempts to relate his philosophy to issues of history and action. There are many examples, but from the following passage from his famous essay, “Absolutely Contradictory Self-Identity” (*Zettai mujunteki dōitsu*), we see his emphasis on historical subjectivity.

As I already mentioned, the individual is absolutely creative as individual. The individual is individual simultaneously as forming the world and as an element creating the world and creating his or herself. The world that moves from the created to that which creates in a contradictory self-identity is a world that transforms from one form to another. It is the world in which form is self-determining as I mentioned in the beginning that the present is self-determining. The

world of absolutely self-contradictory self-identity between multiplicity and unity must form itself from the above-mentioned standpoint. It must reveal its formative act. The form that forms itself in such a manner is a historical species. The latter plays a subjective role (*shutaiteki yakumoku*) in the historical world.<sup>12</sup>

Although he does not use the term “nothingness” in this passage, the contradictory self-identity of the subjectivity he described is similar to the concepts such as nothingness, since they transcend existing boundaries between creator and created or subject and object. Nishida here connects his ontology of fundamental subjectivity to history and action, but the consequences of this action remain vague and underdetermined. There has been a huge debate about the extent to which Nishida’s or Tanabe’s philosophies could be linked to fascism, but eventually, Nishida and Tanabe claim that the above creative subjectivity should be mediated by the state, by species and by the emperor.

Umemoto attempts to develop Nishida and Tanabe’s legacy in a different direction. This requires a paradigm shift that places an analysis of capitalism at the center and then tries to conceive of nothingness in this context. As he notes in another essay: “Nothingness is a fact of consciousness that emerges when one subjectively understands the negative transformation of historical reality. But it is not the origin of reality.”<sup>13</sup> In other words, nothingness should not be understood ontologically, but rather something like Sartre’s *pour-soi*, as a type of consciousness. Although Sartre attempted to combine his understanding of subjectivity with Marxism, there was still a sense in which Sartre’s *pour-soi* was undetermined. Umemoto will try to contextualize subjective-nothingness and indeed the transformation of historical reality in the logic of capitalism using the concepts of first and second nature. He writes,

Real history takes place in the realm of this second nature, and

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12. Nishida Kitarō, “Zettai mujunteki dōitsu,” in *Nishida Kitarō tetsugaku ronbun shū*, ed. Ueda Shizuteru (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2009), 17–18.

13. Umemoto Katsumi, “Yuibutsu shikan to dōtoku,” 93.

through a dialectical relationship between the individual and the totality, real contingency, which creates necessity, always depends on the determination of the individual... There is probably no anxiousness about the fact that the self cannot grasp itself as a totality or that the self cannot see through itself. Moreover, such anxiousness develops in the world of human action where subjects encounter other subjects, the historical world in the original sense, where the self develops. If one tries to grasp the conditions that made such freedom possible, humanity must break free from totality. However, one cannot break free by reflecting on one's consciousness. People call this [that which makes freedom possible] nothingness. Mysticism grasps this nothingness without mediation in the form of direct intuition and this mistake has often been pointed out. It is a fact that the shadow of this unmediated nothingness is the symbol of class oppression... Dialectics tries to grasp this nothingness as it is auto-determined by the object—namely nature and society—but to the extent that this stops at the level of thought, in the end, one can only end at interpreting its shadow.<sup>14</sup>

Umemoto understands nothingness in relation to first nature and second-nature. First nature is the realm of the natural-sciences, which other Marxists of the time stressed. By emphasizing science, Marxists could highlight the objective laws of history rather than subjective nothingness. However, Umemoto points out that history takes place in the realm of second-nature which asserts itself as an alien totality, while at the same time is made by human beings. In his words, social totality “always depends on the determination of the individual.” The totality of capital requires us to reproduce it through the purchase and sale of commodities. Although we create and reproduce this totality, it confronts us like nature—a second-nature. The goal of history, in Umemoto's view is to overcome this second nature; this overcoming is the condition for the possibility of making history.

... through the leaping development of natural science, human free-

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14. Umemoto Katsumi, “Ningen jiyū no genkai,” in *Yuibutsushikan to dōtoku*, 22–23.

dom greatly expanded. In this case, one can remember Bacon's words about how science is a way in which human beings control nature. However, there appears for humans a second nature, namely "society." To the extent that one does not understand the mechanisms that pervade "society," it becomes an unstoppable destiny that transcends the various members of society... Through human beings grasping and bringing this second nature under "planned and conscious control," the external force that controlled human beings up to this point, comes under the control of human beings... "Only after this point do human beings begin to consciously make their own history."<sup>15</sup>

The above passage separates history in capitalism, which Marx sometimes referred to as pre-history, and a history that is made by human beings. From this perspective, Umemoto's discussion of subjectivity is also doubled. To the extent that we are subject to this "unstoppable destiny" governed by the logic of capital, we are not subjects; rather, something like society or capital is the subject. We become subjects only when the historical logic of capital is negated. But from another perspective, there must be a subjectivity that is capable of making the transition from pre-history to history. In the conclusion of I deal with each of these in turn.

### *Conclusion: Beyond Umemoto—Capital as the Subject of History*

Umemoto does not explain in detail what the nature of this "unstoppable destiny" is, nor does he refer to capital as subject. Indeed, one of the unfortunate tendencies of postwar Japanese Marxism was that those who discussed subjectivity focused on the early Marx, while those who were more interested in the laws of history focused on *Das Kapital*. But the significance of the above doubled nature of subjectivity can only be understood by grappling with Marx's mature works. Both Chris Arthur and Moishe Postone have argued that capital should be

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15. Umemoto Katsumi, "Ningen jiyū no genkai," in *Yuibutsushikan to dōtoku*, 15–16. The last citation is from Engels.

understood as subject and there is textual evidence to show that Marx thought of capital as a subject.<sup>16</sup> When Marx discusses the “General Formula of Capital,” he makes the following remark.

On the other hand, in the circulation M-C-M both money and the commodity function only as different modes of existence of the value itself, the money as its general mode of existence, the commodity as its particular or, so to speak, disguised mode. It is constantly changing from one form into the other, without becoming lost in this movement; it thus becomes transformed into an automatic subject... As the dominant subject (übergreifende Subjekt) of this process, in which it alternatively assumes and loses the form of money and the form of commodities, but preserves and expands itself through all these changes, value requires above all an independent form by means of which its identity with itself may be asserted.<sup>17</sup>

Marx calls “value” the subject, but clearly value in motion in the M-C-M’ circuit is none other than capital. Thus Marx describes a situation in which human beings are not the subject; rather even when they think that they are in control of their lives, the larger historical trajectory that conditions their lives is governed by capital. But as Umemoto suggested, we are constantly reproducing capital through our daily activities. Marx makes this argument in the chapter on the “Simple Reproduction of Capital,” when he writes,

Therefore, within the limits of what is absolutely necessary (*abosolut Notwendigen*), the individual consumption of the working-class is re-transformation of the means of subsistence that were externalized by capital for labor-power, in new labor-power exploitable by capital.

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16. I will not explain in detail Postone and Arthur’s respective theories, but I have dealt with both of their work in another essay, “Reconfiguring Historical Time,” in *History and Heteronomy*, UTCP Booklet 12, 2009. See Moishe Postone, *Time, Labor and Social Domination: A Reinterpretation of Marx’s Critical Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1993). Chris Arthur, *The New Dialectic and Marx’s Capital* (Leiden: Brill 2004).

17. Karl Marx, *Capital* (London, Penguin, 1990), 255.

Thus the individual consumption of the worker remains a moment in the production and reproduction of capital, whether inside or outside the factory, state of working, and so on, or inside or outside the process of labor, exactly like the cleaning of the machine, whether it happens during the labor-process or during breaks.<sup>18</sup>

That is even individual consumption, which is often thought of as a private act feeds the logic of capital in a number of ways. It is of course part of an M-C-M' circuit, but Marx's point is that the working class are themselves capital and thus even replenishing their muscles and brains implies reproducing capital.

The above insight about capital or value in motion being the subject of history has implications that go beyond mere working-class politics. Rather, even those people who are not directly connected to the production of surplus-value, such as those who in the service sector and those who teach or perform intellectual labor, are still caught up in the dynamic of capital and reproduce this dynamic through their various consumption practices. The work they do also promotes the reproduction of capital in some way, whether it be through educating the next generation of middle management or through servicing machines to produce value more efficiently.

This leaves us with a question: How can we overcome the logic of history as capital and create a subjectivity of resistance—a history of resistance, if not history as resistance against history as capital. Given the totalizing power of capital, Nishida and other philosophers claimed that the beginning of both subjectivity and history was negative moment, but they did not understand how this nothingness was complexly articulated in relation to the capital. Nor did they discuss how such negativity should be historically mobilized in order to create a new world and a new mode of subjectivity.<sup>19</sup> This was Umemoto's project of overcoming second-nature. Today in a world in which capital as

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18. Karl Marx, *Capital*, 717.

19. How such a subjectivity should be mobilized in relation to capitalism is a complex issue and much hinges on how one understands the contradictions of capitalism and the possibility of its overcoming. A full discussion of this issue will have to wait for another occasion.

second-nature looms larger than ever, this project continues to be meaningful and even morally necessary.