

Living Currency
By Pierre Klossowski
Translated from the French by Jordan Levinson

A letter from Michel Foucault to Pierre Klossowski regarding the book *Living Currency*, winter 1970

Dear Pierre,

I should have written to you as soon as I first read *Living Currency*; it knocked the wind out of me right away, of course, but still I could have given you more of a reaction. Now, after having reread it several times, I know that it is the greatest book of our times. It gives one the impression that everything that counts one way or another – Blanchot, Bataille, *Aside from B. and the M. too* – leads straight to it, insidiously: but there it is – it's been said, and indeed it's so great a book that everything else falls back and only counts half as much anymore. That was precisely what we should've been thinking about: desire, value, and simulacrum – the triangle that dominates us, and, starting so many centuries ago, has constituted us throughout our history. Those who said it then and say it now, Freud-and-Marx, tried desperately for it: now we can laugh about it, and we know why.

If it weren't for you, Pierre, all we'd be able to do is say we're against those truths that Sade had pointed out once upon a time, truths no one but you has ever really gotten around – nobody, in fact, has ever even come close. You said it, and our fate vanished into thin air.

What you have done for us all, Pierre, is truly beyond all thanks and recognition.

Endlessly yours,

Michel Foucault

Many anathemas have been flung against the ravages of industrial civilization since the middle of the nineteenth century in the name of emotional Life.

Imputing to the means of industrial production a pernicious effect on affect, i.e., on emotions, means acknowledging that it has considerable moral power, in order to denounce its demoralizing influence. Where does that power come from?

It comes from the fact that the mere act of fabricating objects puts their purpose into question: how does the use of useful objects differ from the use of art objects, which are “useless” for any actual subsistence purposes?

Nobody would ever confuse a tool with a simulacrum, unless it is as a simulacrum that an object has its necessary use.

Useful Goods are originally inseparable from *usage in a customary sense*: a custom exists as a series of goods (natural or cultivated) having an unchangeable meaning because of the use we make of them. So one's own body, because of the way it presents itself to other bodies, is a useful good whose character varies between alienable or inalienable according to the meaning that custom gives it (In this sense it is like a pledge or voucher, as if *worth* something that cannot be exchanged).

The manufactured object, as opposed to (natural) useful goods, though it may still hold some habitual meaning (for instance depending on how metals are used, which can have emblematic meaning), loses its character as its manufacturing becomes more complex and diversified. The act of manufacturing, which becomes more diversified as it progressively gains complexity, replaces the use of goods (natural or cultural) with the efficient utilization of objects. Since manufacturable efficiency wins out on the profit level, the use of natural or cultural goods, which defines those goods according to an interpretation to do with their customary usage, is seen as *sterile*; use, that is, enjoyment, is sterile – since the actual goods are considered unproductive in the manufacturable efficiency circuit. *And so the use of another person's body, in the slave traffic, came to be seen as unproductive.* In the industrial era, utensil manufacturing definitively broke with the world of sterile usage to set up the world of manufacturable efficiency, relative to which every natural or cultural good – both human bodies and the earth itself – is appraisable in turn.

Nevertheless, the manufacture of tools itself also undergoes a sort of intermittent sterility; all the more since the accelerated pace of manufacturing must continually prevent inefficiency in its products; there is only one recourse against that: waste. As a prerequisite for efficiency, experimentation implies waste due to errors. Experimenting to discover what may be manufacturable in order to create a profitable operation essentially means eliminating any risk of the sterility of the product, at the price of wasted materials and human effort (the manufacturing costs).

If wasteful experimentation is a prerequisite for efficiency, and since experimentation is a universally adopted behavior for all goods and objects – aiming to benefit from them – then what kind of experimentation takes place with regard to goods which always presuppose an *unchangeable* kind of usage, such as the fantasies that bring up voluptuous emotions, that terrain par excellence of wasteful experimentation? The experimentation expressed in the efficient manufacture of simulacra.

The intelligible act of manufacturing carries within it a differential aptitude for representation, which gives rise to its own crisis: either it only wastes so as to express itself through the act of building, destroying, and rebuilding indefinitely, or it *only* builds so as to *express itself through waste*. How can the world of tools avoid falling into the simulation of a fantasy? Manufacturing a utensil object (for instance, an *orbital bomb*) only differs from manufacturing a simulacrum (for example the Callipygian Venus) by their contrary pretexts of wasteful experimentation; to wit: the orbital nuke has no other *use* except to *distress* the world of sterile usages. However, the Callipygian Venus is just the laughing face of the bomb, which turns utility into derision.

The utensil superstition gravitates around this absurdity: that a tool is not a tool unless it's a simulacrum. It is obliged to prove the contrary, even if it means maintaining its position on top of the world of sterile uses by efficiently signalling its own destruction.

Though the gods were the first promoters of the manufacture of objects, by which means manufacturers were to justify their continued subsistence, starting from the time that the manufacture of idols began to be considered useless, there began a long era of ignorance about the specific commodity character of the instinctual life in individuals, that is, a lack of knowledge about the different forms that pathological utility can take. This is where the modern notion of the "priceless" nature of art – of "pure art" in particular – comes from, which comes down to denying that pathos can be priced, insofar as instinctive pathos is a source of "free" creation. It is in the domain, furthermore, which is supposedly the most exempt from pathos - that of the economic application of science - that pathos has made its most astute invention, astute because it is usually not considered pathological: the industrial system.

Don't economic standards form in turn a substructure of affect, not the ultimate infrastructure? And if indeed there were an ultimate infrastructure to it, would it be comprised of the *behavior of emotions and instincts*? If we say yes, that means that economic norms are, like the arts or the moral or religious institutions, or like all the forms of knowledge, *one mode of the expression and representation of instinctive forces*. The way they express themselves, both in the economy and finally in our industrial world, is subject to the way they have been handled by the economy of the reigning institutions. *That this preliminary and ultimate infrastructure is more and more determined by its own reactions to the previously existing substructures is unquestionably true, but the forces at play continue the struggle among*

infrastructures into the substructures. So, though these forces initially express themselves in a specific manner according to economic standards, they themselves create their own repression, as well as the means of smashing that repression, which they experience to different degrees: and this goes on as long as does the battle among the instincts, which is waged within a given organism for and against the formation of the organism as their agent, for and against psychic and bodily unity. Indeed, that is where the first “production” and “consumption” schemes come into being, the first signs of compensation and haggling.

The first instinctual repression forms the *organic and psychic unity of the agent*, a repression which, starting from said agent, enforces *a constraint that the agent continues to undergo during the battle waged by the instincts against the constraints that constituted that unity*. This repression and that combat, of course, extend outward into the external world whenever the agent’s individual unity is integrated and thus defined by a hierarchy of needs: *the hierarchy of needs is the economic form of repression that the existing institutions impose by and through the agent’s consciousness on the imponderable forces of his psychic life*. Thanks to his acquired organic and moral unity, the individual, in his own surroundings, can only formulate his instinctual life by means of a set of suitable material and moral needs; it is not for him to affirm himself by the movements of his emotional life, but rather, as the bearer of his own unity, to affirm himself by his aptitude to possess goods external to himself; by preserving them, producing them, giving of them for consumption by others, and by receiving them, as long as they are objects and not living units, unless in conditions where *it is considered “legitimate” to possess living beings as simple objects*.

“There are needs, such as sexual needs, whose satisfaction we cannot say implies economic activity as such... we will never be able to exhaustively enumerate the needs of men...” (Raymond Aron, *Eighteen Lessons about Industrial Society*, Gallimard.)

How can the voluptuous emotion be reduced to a commodified object and, in our times of fanatical industrialization, become an economic factor? To understand this we must consider for a moment what it is we mean by the terms “sexuality” and “eroticism.” Then perhaps the forms of the voluptuous emotion will reveal their simultaneously secret and tragic connection to the anthropomorphic phenomenon of economy and exchange.

Since Sade (and thus long before Freud), what have we discerned in the description of perversion, i.e., the voluptuous emotion taking something

apparently incongruous as its object? The behavior analyzed by Sade, from what he calls the simple passions to the complicated passions - which are called perversions - is merely *the first reaction to pure animality, and so is a primary interpretative manifestation of the instincts themselves, suitable for breaking down specifically what is meant by the term sexuality in general, whether on the one hand the voluptuous emotion preceding the act of procreation, or on the other the specific instinct of procreation itself, two propensities which when merged give rise to the unity of an individual apt to reproduce*, and the prolonged separation of which, in spite of an individual's organic fulfillment, challenges his own life function. So the term "perversion" only refers to the fixation of the voluptuous emotion in a state preceding the act of procreation, while Sade's terms, simple passions combining into complicated passions, designate the various tricks by which the primordial voluptuous emotion, in its interpretative capacity, comes to select new objects of sensation from among various organic functions to replace just *the procreative function, and thus to hold the latter in a suspended state indefinitely*. What are these substitutions, these tricks, if not *deductions from the instinct to propagate the species?* The instinctive force thus *deducted* forms the *raw material for a fantasy that the emotions interpret*; and the fantasy here *plays the role of the manufactured object*. The use of a *fantasy* by an instinctive force *puts its price on the emotion which is bound up with this customary usage, and the use of the fantasy eliciting the emotion is intended, in the act of perversion, precisely to be non-exchangeable*. Here is where we see the primary value-appraisal of an emotion experienced: *an instinct*, which we call *perverted* because it refuses the *gregarious culmination of individual unity* and refuses the procreative function of the individual, *offers itself in all its intensity as the non-exchangeable, that is, that which falls outside of the realm of prices*. And though the unity of an individual may be complete physiologically, in his bodily appearance, it is in a way exchanged for the *fantasy*, by which he is now exclusively under constraint.

There is no economy of voluptuous pleasure that could profit from industrial means – as the moralists claim, as they denounce it ipso facto to the institutional watchdogs. On the contrary, just the opposite is the case: it is industry that profits off what is unfortunately called eroticism as an economically variable norm. But in the spheres of print, advertising, and cinematic production, that is, of suggestion, it isn't quite effected by the kind of dedicated exploitation that the industry would be capable of carrying out if the means of production were in the hands of those who these "products" directly concern. Not that the propaganda or advertising (of high fashion or cosmetic products) expresses this. Such an economy still remains latent and perhaps will not manage to come fully into its own while the industrial

system is still unable to predict the conditions of enjoyment on any level other than the domestic, inside of a body of laws based on the family unit. And yet, with all the means and resources that constitute it, industry signifies an already complete break with the spirit of such laws, a long-ago completed upheaval of the customs and habits that the institutions still pretend to preserve.

Industry uses as the fundamental principle behind all its initiatives the idea that all human phenomena, like all natural phenomena, may be treated as *exploitable material*, and thus *may be subjected* to the fluctuations of *value*, but also to all the *random chance involved in human experience*. So the same goes for the simultaneously spiritual and animal character of the voluptuous emotion, considered on the basis of its *power of suggestion*.

In the world of artisanal industry, representations of the voluptuous emotion were communicated – as was all knowledge – through instruments of suggestion, such as paintings, books, theater; and it was only by means of labor supplied with the use of these instruments that the *emotion* being suggested could circulate *as a rare object*. There still, value – defined according to classical economy’s hierarchy of needs– arose from the unique character of the *prestige obtained by an instrument of suggestion*, not by the emotion one might feel from it: this is because the *simulacrum* was still part of the world of “ideas,” and thus of culture; the *suggestion in itself* still *cost* more than the sensation one might feel from contact with the suggested object.

Starting with the industrial system, which on the basis of mass consumption even standardizes the *mechanized instruments of suggestion* as well as those of knowledge in general, communication loses its price by changing its nature and its intent, and the suggestion provided by stereotypes becomes more and more free in its effects, insofar as the prototype itself remains outside of the realm of prices. The reversal is total: the sensation *that can be felt* is worth more than its suggested image. However, the resulting tension creates a massive exploitable terrain at the same time as the stereotyping of suggestion allows industry to *intercept individual fantasies in their genesis to redirect them to its own ends*, to turn them away and disperse them, so as make them profitable for the institutions.

We might almost look like we’re making a purely analogical relationship here between the “economy” of emotions and the economy of needs, defined by exchange. That would lead nowhere, unless we start from the perspective of *objects* and *needs*, examining the struggle of the emotions against *their inadequate formulation*, *materially* restructured to where they become merely

a demand for goods, which only respond to that demand by antagonizing it further.

Consider in this restructuring process first the function of *numbers*, upon which depends the price of these goods and the means of acquiring them, goods which in themselves are inadequate.

Then consider *the customary usage of those goods, which in turn has an effect on emotions.*

Thirdly, consider the more or less conscious *differentiation* between the *possession*, the *customary usage*, and the value or non-value of these *goods*, according to which they either represent emotional states or not, in provoking new ones, by which the primary, emotional demand is provisionally overcome, or rather is accentuated, by a *fundamental discordance*.

A sort of intimidation and blackmail arises immediately between the necessity of subsistence and the manner of enjoyment, once subsistence is ensured.

This intimidation, to various degrees, contributes to forming the emotional demand on the level of individual needs: such or such a group of individuals submit to the standards of exchange, and thus agree to define themselves morally and socially according to a category of needs which expresses the way that this group, by virtue of its mode of subsistence, intends to enjoy the corresponding goods.

First of all, from the economy's perspective, what is called erotic enjoyment cannot be treated the same as if it were just the enjoyment of one more good among other goods: it is only to the extent that it relates to an object, that is, a living object (a body), that the enjoyment of that object as a possessable thing is or can be considered as the enjoyment of a good – a useful object. Which Sade's writing expresses in a very simple and very ambiguous way: *the right to property on enjoyment.*

In the *hierarchy of needs*, erotic enjoyment is bound up with sexual "need": that is, with the inalienable *need for a home*, the basis of that primary need called the domestic need. It's not a matter of *erotic* enjoyment per se, which is reduced to the rank of a mere *vice* among all the other vices, only understood as a "demand" giving rise to general prosperity when "refusal to invest" is being denounced as giving rise to public misery.

Starting in the last century, erotic enjoyment has come to be seen as the most vital human need. And so “utopian socialism” decided to extend the “*communization*” of all goods to the living objects of voluptuous desire.

Fourier’s project, which had for a long while been buried, is now reemerging, in the form of diligent exegeses made in a context totally different than the one in which it was born. The empirical attempts it gave rise to more than a century ago, particularly in the United States, never went beyond the improvisational initiatives of a few generous and enthusiastic individuals, and had no chance of developing or lasting. Things are quite different today, where industrial conditions alone have managed to disrupt the old classes and proliferate new ones out of them, while in general the experimental thinking and meaning of the last generations has brought much larger groups to approach similar projects, where either they will rid themselves once and for all of the notion of utopia, or, much to the contrary, where they will recover the idea of *that which is nowhere to be found* by identifying themselves with that *nowhere* and extending it everywhere, as the sole reality, by their *active presence*.

The phalansterian communization by which passional exchanges are to redistribute society into classes of affinities – in keeping with the law of Attraction – transforms the very nature of work itself. Fourier here preemptively denounces the false notion of “recreation,” carefully organized for the variously “working” classes. In order that the communization not only of the means of production but of individuals as well can suppress the punitive character of labor, the production of objects, even utensil objects, must be done not in accordance with *industrially determined need*, but always with *passional* aspirations: work must take place in the euphoria of imagination, as the spontaneous and creative activity of man. Since it emulates various groups, various classes of ages and affinities, various “hordes,” all activity would be organized like a ritual game, *the very spectacle of which, by the staging of exchanges between affinity groups, must ensure the balance and aptitude of each and of all, like a vast, contemplative, spectacular recapitulation of the range and variations of instinctive life*. From that arose a complicated and subtle combination of polygamy and polyandry, in what was called the “harmonian” social principle.

We must first remark that the premise of “*freeness*” (blossoming out from communization into the free play of passions) here seems to emerge abstractly from a vital element of the voluptuous emotion: the aggressive element, which demands and presupposes resistance – implicit in creative work and in emotional profit – i.e., that which remains *irreversible* in the

absence of play. Not only did Fourier not ignore this, his whole invention consisted in wanting to satisfy the aggressive propensities, voluptuous aggressiveness in particular, through a playful organization of passional situations which in themselves are not so playful. How could such an arrangement fill the role of the provocation and challenge that make it so the voluptuous emotion in its very genesis is *in no way free of charge*, but presupposes appraisal, value, and escalating bids – and thus *a price to be paid*? One might say that aggressiveness comprises the very substance of the game being played. But by elaborating the various drives in the form of activities that remain merely their simulacra, said play aims to capture and thus channel the outcomes of the perverse basis implicit in the voluptuous emotion. Either this play empties of its content that which it had intended to make blossom, or it only manages to make it blossom as a playful activity by *leaving that very basis intact*. In order for there to be a simulacrum, there must be an irreversible basis for it, since that reality is inseparable from the fantasy controlling the reality of a perverse behavior. Sade says that the fantasy, acting within the organism and its reflexes, remains ineradicable; Fourier contests this: the fantasy can be reproduced as a simulacrum.

The simulacrum in this sense is not however a kind of catharsis - which is only a redirection of forces - because it reproduces the reality of the fantasy in the realm of play, by *staging* the aggressive reality. Fourier is betting not so much on freedom as on the liberatory creation of a reality: the game. Sade was not aiming at the creation of a perversion-compatible object, to be made into a game, because perversion is itself a game, a kind of play with the indomitable force of the norms. That's why the destruction of its object is inseparable from the perverse emotion: the death instinct and the life function cannot be dissociated from one another. Fourier championed the malleability, the plasticity of human drives: they were only "life" drives or "death" drives relative to how immutable, or how mutated, the fantasy was. And Fourier in turn never ceased to affirm that the lived events of resistance, aggressiveness, in short, of violence, formed the driving force of the game. And if that game is indeed a simulacrum, how could it fail to diminish the lived event of violence, as soon as said violence furnishes substance to the simulacrum? Sade, without coming to a final conclusion, would object once more: in order that only the singularity of a mania or a perversion can be expressed, an agent is necessary. But in order for said agent to *observe the rules* of your "game," how would he "seriously" simulate what he feels except, no better or otherwise, than by simulating his own fantasy, which makes him the maniac or pervert? Seriousness here does not reside in the frenzy with which this agent clings to his driving fantasy, but in the irreducible force with which the drives hold the agent in his fantasy, manifesting themselves by

devouring him. If this seriousness were not present, there would not be any real voluptuous pleasure either, and it's only ever really felt if it is considered serious, in order that it can be light and frivolous compared to the rest of existence, having first "paid the price of seriousness."

Now what seems to be a determinant aspect of Fourier's quite singular construction is that at the time when he designed his project, the virtue of the game was still wholly conditioned by a particular social context where the rules of play were to remove perversion itself from any elucidating displays. It was to Fourier's glory that he expressed and denounced this cover-up, starting with the economic standards themselves. Precisely where that cover-up had been safely underway.

However, the game play of our contemporary industrial world, which goes so far as to exploit every display, including displays of the perverse element, obliges us to rethink the phalansterian utopia starting from entirely new data. Its project is only "utopian" in proportion to the resistance that the bourgeois industrial world, with its greed, brings to bear against Fourier's lucid prophecies. But there might be something truly *radical* that otherwise explains that resistance, something other than simple greed.

Fourier perfectly grasped what the *deliberate gesture of selling oneself* signifies in the erotic imagination: the impact of it, socially considered sinful and heinous, was repugnant to him, because said gesture leaves deep wounds, since in "civilization," i.e., in the industrial mechanism, the *meaning of the game* does not guarantee the *playful reversibility* of its gestures, as would have been the rule in *Harmony*. Sade's anti-utopian project, in what it reveals *economically*, insofar as perversion itself gives rise to value – helps one understand more clearly the meaning of Fourier's playful freeness.

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Prior to the harmonian utopia, and as its preemptive refutation, Sade - in the name of the universal nature of the voluptuous sensation, and as a premise arising from his integral atheism – developed a kind of communization where the physical and moral property/propriety of persons was violated. Since the moral God, guarantor of the self-identical, responsible self, had disappeared, each person belonged to everyone, and everyone belonged to each, as *goods*. But with Sade, what Fourier saw as a *free/unpriceable* moral expropriation of persons, in keeping with the differential law of affinities became a principle of universal prostitution: that each person male and female was called upon to

sell themselves, or were offered for *purchase*. In order that each person, male or female, would be saleable, each person had to keep their moral propriety, which constituted the individual's value when on sale: slaves are not inert objects with no self-love, but living beings, reduced to objects whose attraction consists in their being humiliated or able to be humiliated (deliberately or otherwise), in their dignity, integrity, and aptitude to possess their own good, to possess themselves; the Sadist erotic emotion comes from the breaking of that integrity, that prostitution, whether voluntary or forced. A prostitution whose "quality" comes from the bidding-up of the price that its subjects put on themselves in proportion to their moral degradation; the more they are "corrupted," the more their price goes up – such as happens with the character of Juliette. Thus the voluptuous sensation is intensified immediately: and that intensification is no longer free of charge, but is due to the very fact that the objects from which this sensation flows now consider themselves saleable. Now, this venality, according to the sadist interpretation – is based on the fact that these beings can never communicate amongst themselves except as trafficable objects. This is why, before considering the role of the numeraire in this dilemma, we should take a moment to analyze what compensates for this incommunicability within the utensil object manufacturing world. Because the act of manufacturing has to do with the way that human beings behave, not only towards all goods as manufacturable, but also towards their own bodies and the bodies of others, as instrumentalizable. What inclinations would benefit from it, as the demand side? What would the supply side be?

Looking at industry, with its innumerable techniques and technologies, would lead one to believe that manufacturing instrumental, factory made, utensil objects is its way of neutralizing its instinctual drives. But with its own standards it gives rise, on the contrary, to a fantasy representation of its forces, and this gives rise to a double perspective.

The manufacture of more and more complex utensil objects requires that two or three abilities be exercised together, as determined by some ordinary operation, and separates the perceptible from its bodily agent; not only do the "eyes that don't see" and "ears that don't hear" surpass limited manual exercise in terms of contact, but furthermore indeed, the *instrument* they comprise *projects itself into the objects to be produced* as the set of differentiated physical and mental functions to which the objects concerned respond.

The operation of instruments first appears as a departure from regions where manual activity, still more or less guided by dreamlike powers, had captured

those powers and exorcised them in some way into its products. With that abandonment, as the instrument liberates the hand, the eye, and the ear, it simultaneously liberates said powers, which, apparently no longer what they were to the bodily agent, become all the more surely the powers of utensil perversion, and of perversion pure and simple, since there is now an extra-bodily agent that operates at their service: the instrument itself, which brings to light the object previously determined and dearticulated by its representation so as to be rearticulated instrumentally. Because of this, as the materialized abstraction of apprehension itself, but also as the “mentalization” of bodily contact, the instrument is the immediate agent of the fantasy. The primary aspect, but also the primary consequence of this strict relationship between industrial behavior and the fantastical behavior of perversion: *the object explains itself only in terms of instrumental contact*. Just as the perverse fantasy comes into being as a useful object for the voluptuous emotion by breaking down the organic functions, and, by redistributing them incongruously, provides *more persistent enjoyment than a “healthy” sensitivity ever could*, the instrument is *familiar in a different way with its object and its effects, and more so*, than a hand could be, because it was designed with specific reference to exploitable or manufacturable objects, and – whether inanimate or living – is only ever defined with reference to its exploitation or to what it can manufacture.

The instrument is thus as inseparable from the object that it presupposes, manufactures and exploits, as perversion is from the fantasy it engenders. Both act as constraints upon the usage of their products. Whoever wants the object wants the instrument. Which is why – and this is second aspect of the strict relationship between the instrumental behavior and the perverse behavior – operational repetition is common to them both. The constraint drives the repetition. Perversion’s repetition is executed through the fantasy of a vital function, which, being unintelligible, acts as a constraint; it is unintelligible because it’s isolated from the organically intelligible whole. Though the operation that an instrument effectuates, limited because it is only functional, immediately appears absurd as soon as it is used in a manner contrary to its intended purpose, all instruments in themselves externalize a fantasy. This alone prevents them from appearing to have a still-variable degree of usefulness or uselessness, all the more since they endlessly produce the same object or the same effect – even though the object would be unrealizable or its effect ignored without them. Thus the instrument must impose the usage made of the object, or the effect that it provides, so as to justify its costly maintenance. Which brings us to a second perspective on the industrial intervention in the domain of fantastical representation, to wit: that of quality and quantity, both as regards the act of production and as regards

the product itself.

One needs only look at the way that industry, by these same technical procedures, not only can but necessarily must favor and thus develop a kind of automatism (inherent in tangible reality) intended to make any tenderness in the reactions to the use of objects stop up the enjoyment, and thus the effectiveness of the object, so that profit is only to be had by waste, since quality is then only part of those objects relative to what such objects can provide; and thus also relative to the *time* of enjoyment. Much to the contrary, their quantity is the guarantee of the quality of the *moment* of enjoyment procured; and thus the act itself of producing the objects takes precedence over the product; the more the (productive) act is perfected, the less the sample produced matters. The *quality of the act* ruins its product because of its capacity to produce it in quantity. And this is what Sade demonstrates, at the level of instinctive life itself, revealing the other side of the industrial commodification of the voluptuous emotion under “mass” relations of production.

For Sade’s characters, it is sometimes the *quality* of it being the *same victim*, upon which the acts of his or her executioner are practiced in diverse ways, that wins out over the concept of the act; and other times it is the fact of it being the *same, repeated act* which, indifferently inflicted on a *quantity of victims*, affirms the *quality* of the act.

And so there appears first of all a reversal in the relationship between the sensation and its object: in the first case, the object is the source of the sensation; it is the object that by its irreplaceable character directs behavior towards it, giving rise to the various attempts to possess it; it keeps its intrinsic value, in spite of its *apparent destruction*, and still goes beyond the *usage* to which it appears to lend itself.

In the second case, the object is only a pretext for the emotion, and for the act that expresses that emotion through contact with the object, as indifferently as with a mere thing. In order that the emotion of the destructive act, which is always the same, can be reiterated, the *usage of the act*, felt as a source of emotion, *takes precedence over the object*, in which the emotion cannot be exhausted.

And so, thanks to sadist intuition, there appeared in the realm of emotionality what was to become the principle of our modern economy in its industrial form: the principle of excessive production, requiring excessive consumption – produce destructible objects, and accustom consumers to not even knowing

what a durable object is. Using a particular method to manufacture and produce objects in series, then, here corresponds to the quality of an act inflicted indifferently on a quantity of victims. Conversely, experimenting with various methods of manufacturing in order to impose a given quality on a product which is the same as the others so as to increase its character of rareness corresponds to a diversity of acts inflicted on the same victim, to take possession of whatever it is about them that is rare or makes them unique in their own way. The absurdity of an analogy like this shows the reversal that instinctive forces undergo in the realm of the economic expression of needs and of the manufactured objects corresponding to them. The relationship between emotion, provided either by the act or by the living object, and production proper, remains perfectly imperceptible owing to these being two spheres of human behavior that appear so incompatible in light of the conditions that determine said behavior. The reason for this is that in the economic order, labor capacity is precisely contrary to emotional life in general, and to the voluptuous emotion in particular. How can an act expressing an emotion be considered equivalent to effort exercised on living or inanimate material? Though said act is expressed through a group of gestures forming a deliberate activity, it is only ever just a staging of said emotion. What more likely comparison for the usage of manufactured objects besides the kind of horrible treatment people inflict on living beings?

Such questions are only inconceivable in the economic domain as long as one ignores the fact that, just like labor, emotion itself “produces” as well, that the voluptuous emotion “manufactures” an image, not of the living being that serves as its object, but of one aspect of that being, so that the emotion can treat it solely as an object, i.e., as the fantasy through which the emotion is developed and grows; but this manufacture as such still seems to be just an analogical term, because it is in no way separable from the emotion, which is the flipside of the effort made.

Now, what forms this indissoluble whole in the instinctive sphere – voluptuous emotion, propagation instinct, fantasy – can only be broken down on the level of conscious behavior as a set of factors with corresponding equivalents in the mercantile sphere: producer, consumer, manufactured object.

In both spheres, the same usage phenomenon prevails.

From the perspective of instinctual impulse, the producer and consumer are merged.

From the economic perspective, one or several producers are met with one or several categories of consumer, determining the mass production or multiplication of one and the same object.

In the sphere of instinctual impulse, either the multiplication of the emotion takes place on its own in contact with the same object (the fantasy) via its intensity, or the same emotion is sustained by contact with various fantasies.

In the economic perspective, the conditions of manufacturing (effort, labor) tend to make the manufactured object and its consumption *mark a point of no return vis-à-vis the production of the fantasy* (i.e. when once again effort, on the basis of “need,” is applied in resistance to pure emotion – thus carrying out the voluptuous consumption of the object it constructs). This point of no return – no return to the world of instinctual impulse - marks the passage into the economic perspective of utensil tool production.

It is the slowly won victory of the propagation instinct over voluptuous emotion, and, in general, over primordial perversion.

However, the price of this victory over the propagation instinct, that is, effort defeating emotion, is in fact the revenge of perversion: the disproportion between the effort and its product; the disparity between the demand and its object - not just the unbalance between supply and demand – and the disappearance of individual unity, replaced by conglomerations of hypertrophied needs as circumstances dictate.

The industrial phenomenon is thus the inverse perversion of the instinct to preserve and propagate the species; in it, the sterile enjoyment of emotion at last finds its most deceptive and most effective equivalent. Consenting to subsist by one’s labor, thus to buying back one’s original passivity, establishes the notion of needs and their variable hierarchy, pursuant to which the propagation instinct can prevail over its own freeness; its arbitrary repetition becomes a necessary repetition, since it provides its human specimens with a pretext for resisting the sterile prolongation of the voluptuous emotion.

First the earth; then the instruments; the objects, and then at last mere symbols representing the objects, and finally even the interposition between beings and their desires of symbols seen as being worth those desires and their objects as appraisable resources: these all have been like deductions taken from perversion by the specific instinct in order to structure them as needs, starting with specimens, examples of the species. And these examples only verify their exemplary nature in their own unity by affirming that they

have these needs. But because the needs they affirm that they have only take shape in the objects they manufacture, and because these objects distance them further and further from what they wanted in the first place and in the end, is why they never affirm themselves except by infinitely dividing within themselves the instinctive force that would carry them back to the passivity of the voluptuous sensation.

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Let us consider the possible relationship between the perverse elaboration of a fantasy on the one hand and the manufacturing of a useful object on the other.

The two processes diverge, insofar as the fantasy, a product of instinctive impulse, signals a threat to the individual unit, while the manufactured object presupposes the stability of the individual: the fantasy tends to make itself a lasting one at the expense of the individual unit, while the manufactured object must serve that unit; its manufacture and usage imply exteriority, as well as delimitation, relative to what surrounds it, and thus also relative to other units.

But for its part, the fantasy presupposes the *usage* of a particular thing; its elaboration is bound up with an accustomed usage of some kind of enjoyment or suffering: what the individual *uses*, in the fantasy, is a signifier for a *constraint*, because of its unity. Thus the elaboration of the fantasy also gives rise to a state of *continual compensation*: thus of *exchanges*. But in order for an exchange to take place, there must be an *equivalent* - i.e., something that is worth something else, both in the sphere of the fantasy, elaborated at the expense of the individual unit, and on the individual level, in the external sphere - for the manufactured object.

In the instinctive state, the search for an equivalent for the fantasy corresponds to its constraint; the organic unit that undergoes it as irresistible enjoyment tends to pay for it, because it is accountable for this sterile obsession in light of the specific solidarity among the units. All equivalents, as regards the organic unity of the individual, thus represent a double sanction: that of the *internal constraint* and the *external self-affirmation*, from which arises a dilemma -- *either enjoy without affirming yourself, or affirm yourself without enjoying merely so as to subsist*.

To account for both the one sanction and the other is only possible by forming

an *equivalent* no longer for the internal constraint, but for its *renunciation*. The equivalent for this renunciation is the foundation for the conditions of labor and the specific act of manufacturing.

Although according to Keynes' definition the "*disutility*" of labor is (subjectively speaking) the aptitude to hinder a "need," even if only "the taste for doing nothing," what is concealed in that one word is all the tension between sterile enjoyment and the decision to manufacture objects.

The idea of *disutility* (and here we overturn the Keynesian sense, as given by the eminent commentator M. de Largentaye¹) accounts for how much *intelligibility* there is in the act of manufacturing objects specifically intended for a particular use, and how much the "fantastic" constraint is originally *unintelligible*. By the equivalent that it expresses, the act of manufacturing, i.e., of satisfying one or several needs and thus admitting a specific usage but *one with no relation to what is being given up*, takes place proportionally to the obsessional antagonism: the "taste for doing nothing," in the economic sense, or the desire for another activity which would allow one to be given value due to some ability or other, suitable for elaborating emotional propensities – such would be, implicitly (according to Keynes) the meaning of the wages given or denied to the worker; but such would also be the meaning of the purchase of a product, to a consumer that consents to using it pursuant to the product's limits.

Though there does reign a state of continual compensation, and exchanges among the instinctual forces that subsist at the expense of the organic unit, these exchanges do not take place without leaving traces, which are like "notations" for what has been deducted, exchanged: the fantasy is accountable to the organism, just as the enjoyment or suffering experienced are accountable to the fantasy that brings them to the individual. This is the "debt balance" for the individual unit.

How can this notation be rediscovered in the manufacture of useful objects, and is it only conceivable that the individual unit of the producer is limited (as an economic subject) to affirming itself, both to itself and to other units, recognizable only by those units' ability to manufacture them and for using them up?

By the customary usage it prescribes, the manufactured object is already the

¹ Jean de Largentaye was the translator of Keynes' *General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money* into French.

variable sign of a propensity, which exists to different degrees among some who manufacture it, and absolutely does not exist among others who manufacture it, indifferent to its usage, or among those who would use it up for lack of a need, of which they are unaware in the absence of an object that would reveal it to them. Doubtless there will thus be an appearance of equality or an accidental equality, or, almost always, a fundamental inequality of propensities, both in usage and manufacturing. Would this be the “free play of passions”? But it still means thinking within a circuit where all the games are won by the statistics or the circumstances, not by the players. And indeed, as regards the economic subject as an individual *unit* (unaware of what it “wants” or what it is “capable of”!), the fundamental inequality of propensities, not only towards other units, but above all *within the unit itself*, demands that a compensatory signifier intervene in the apparent decision to manufacture things for some particular use. However, the only interest of the industrial system is to have the producer or the consumer spontaneously appear as an *aspect of themselves*, by borrowing from a particular *form* of manufacturing or consumption the very form of their own subsistence and mode of existence as “individual units.” The pure truism that this comes down to does not appear to advance our argument much, no more than it would to remark that “it couldn’t be otherwise,” since the object he manufactures and consumes not only defines the economic subject, but ensures his moral and material unity. But it is in these kinds of truisms that the primary motive behind the search for an equivalent is hidden; the unit of the economic subject can only remain an effectively productive unit *if it is made to accommodate its supposed propensities to their continual hijacking/redirection*. But that this *hijacking would take place through* the ever-so crucially legitimate *act* of manufacturing useful objects – that’s too absurd a concept for the unit to stop and take notice: how could it refuse this manufacturing, since after all, that is its due and proper place? The subject unit cannot escape this immediately obvious fact, since it just doesn’t see that it itself is a fiction created out of a necessity which is as uncontrollable as it is deliberately constructed.

That the category of “useful object” thus immediately replaces any other use that his passional aptitudes might dictate, that on the other hand those aptitudes would blossom out into various manufacturable objects if only the economic subject would stop behaving like a “unit” and take his own “deconstruction” and only reconstruct himself according to *every passion’s aptitude to fabricate its object*: this he can’t comprehend, all the less because he only ever interprets such aptitudes from the point of view of an “individual unit,” as mere would-be propensities, which regardless are pre-determined by the circumstances according to which “needs” are calculated.

Could the manufacturing of utensil objects (which gives our world its physiognomy) merely be an indication that the economic subject, starting from his individual unity, from his aptitude to produce and reproduce himself, seeks to declare his renunciation of that state, for lack of an equivalent to his instinctive state (such as artistic simulacra), by an equivalent other than wages, in favor of his own subsistence? Does he manufacture only to subsist? Or indeed, does the *renounced* instinctive impulse, or the aptitude to express that impulse, require that the value of the *loss*, suffered for the intended usage of those utilitarian objects, be expressed in the *act of fabricating* those objects?

As regards manufacturable efficiency relations, beyond discriminating between sterile and productive use, the utensil perspective has no interest in resolving a fabrication's obsessive constraints on its use. Nevertheless, the manufacturer of simulacra – of sterile usage – subsists still in the world of utensils. Not only does he distribute his own fantasies through the products he invents by the artifice of his intellect, but he drives a hard bargain for what he distributes, just like any manufacturer of utensils, instruments, and usable objects, charging to cover all the costs of his act of distributing it; even if he has to starve to death in poverty, he intends to enrich his knowledge by the sensations he thus procures. Producers of whatever kinds of tools, workers in general, do not distribute anything – except their need for other objects, based on existing objects: i.e., the perfected usage of an object that always prescribes and limits that exclusive usage.

Of course, no disclosure or distribution of a fantasy could or should come out of the act of manufacturing things that are intended for an indispensable use, there's no question about that! So, in whatever imaginative way the advancements of science may be applied to it, it is pure insanity to try to find even the slightest correlation or analogy between the act of manufacturing a utensil and the act of spreading around some kind of fantasy with the use of a simulacrum.

Since the utensil world can't compensate for the inversion of the instinctual impulsive state into the activity of manufacturing just by means of symbols, *because such activity already serves as a compensation*, only artistic simulacra are supposed to be able to *settle the account* for this inversion, and because it is a simulation, a sham, its products are supposed to be considered as useful objects. But instinctive impulses make no such distinction between two categories of instruments, between the "noble" simulacrum and the "ignoble" utensil, even when the emotions are served as much by the latter as by pure

intellectual operations. But if the artistic simulacrum really conveys the urgency of the instinctual impulses, and by the genius of the artist becomes simply a utensil for use by the emotions, is it just a coincidence that the utensils thus become simulacra themselves? The instinctual impulses make use indifferently of anything that is a proper utensil for their purposes; so, to discern what they simulate, one must simply consider the category into which the objects at hand fall. To wit, said tools, which by nature are the furthest thing from simulacra, insofar as their prescribed usage is rigorously restrained so as to make them efficient (since they circumscribe an operation with irreversible effects, which, whatever the ramifications may be, are themselves not simulated), will for precisely that reason be *simulacra of non-simulation*, and thus *of the established facts*, by means of which one can deduct that part of passionate life which had been thus misappropriated for the manufacture of useful objects. Now, if the art-simulacrum is a *utensil of the passions*, its simulation must likewise be an *efficient operation*; if it were just a *simulated simulacrum*, it would be ineffective, since its effect consists precisely in being constantly reversible in its operation and in being of such breadth and variety of usage as passionate life.

In art-products, emotion finds a way to express its fantasy; in utensils that *refuse to express* it, emotion acts under cover of the utility of some thing that emotion has nothing to do with.

Instinctual impulse acts nowhere but in *the relationship of a human being with whatever he manufactures or does not manufacture*; he thus relies on the object at hand to decide what is the most urgent. What is urgent (such as subsistence) must be taken seriously, and cannot be simulated in the same way as the urgency of *what has no urgency about it* is simulated.

If utensil objects were only to guarantee their *non-simulation* by themselves, there would be no urgency of emotion, and no utensil-usage urgency either. Utensil urgency is proportional to emotional urgency. And because emotionality is only deferrable by utensils whose urgency cannot be simulated, this is why emotional urgency finds in the utensil only a simulacrum of its deferment.

To defer voluptuous pleasure is to rely on the future, guaranteed by the manufacture of usable objects. However, the instinctual impulses know no limit to urgency other than their own, and voluptuous pleasure as such comes off as being just as immediate as it is latent and unpredictable. Although from the utensil-usage perspective, *voluptuous pleasure is not an urgent matter*, it is on the other hand *urgent that it be simulated* by some means so that what is

really *serious*, since it is unquestionably urgent, *can be not simulated*.

Thus the voluptuous impulse, not only does not suppress the simulation-operation carried out in the realm of utensils, it requires it the more as its urgency is disputed: it simply reverses the factors, and takes the simulacra all the way to where hard necessity reigns.

Impulsive fantasy - simulacrum; non-simulatable subsistence – utensil manufacturing: two circuits that merge in the individual unit, but which that unit can never break; all it can do is to perpetually defer the urgency of the one circuit or the other.

From this fact alone arises the question of an equivalent: to simulate (by applying effort) the deferment of what is not urgent, but yet remains immediate (the voluptuous emotion), means simulating an urgency which is in itself non-simulatable. Voluptuous pleasure remains just as non-simulatable as subsistence – depending on whether the one is considered more urgent than the other. Deciding for the one against the other makes for an irreversible event, like when relying on manufacture, which can only be reversed by destruction.

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Nothing in instinctual life seems to be *for free*, properly speaking. As soon as an interpretation directs its very process (the struggle of the emotions to hold their own against the propagation instinct), appraisal, and thus *price*, intercede; but the one that pays the cost in the end, the one that will pay one way or the other, is the agent, comprising the *place* where the struggle is waged, where a possible or unattainable compromise is trafficked and negotiated – the *body itself*.

Here we see the beginnings of a primary dilemma: either *internal perversion* – the *dissolution* of the unit; or the internal affirmation of the unit – *external perversion*.

Whoever refuses to pay the price for the voluptuous emotion, and demands *that the propagation instinct come for free*, thus demanding his own *unity for free*, will have to pay *one hundredfold* for that freeness in *the external perversion of the conditions in which the individual unit is to affirm itself*.

The day when human beings overcome, and thus subdue *external* perversion,

i.e., the monstrous hypertrophy of “needs,” and assent instead to their *internal* perversion, i.e., to the dissolution of their fictional unity, a compatibility will form between desire and the production of its objects in an economy rationally organized around human instinctual impulse; and thus the *freeness of effort* will respond to the *price of the irrational*. Sade’s lesson might demonstrate that there is a deep reality hidden in Fourier’s utopia. But until then, it is in industry’s best interest for Fourier’s utopia to remain a utopia, and for Sade’s perversion to remain the driving force behind the industrial monstrosity.

Freeness and Price

Freeness (apparently) means enjoying what falls outside of the realm of prices or granting enjoyment without compensation:

1) An absolute owner would never think to exchange what belongs to him (and which draws its unappraisable price from the fact of that possession) so as to claim anything in return, whatever it may be.

Who is this absolute owner? The “divinity,” or “inexhaustible life” (given to each person in a measure specific to them) — image of the “all-giving sun.”

2) But as for that which is given to all and to each, if everyone and anyone could get it, immediately, and without at first any difference or distinction, then it not only has no more price, but is given and exchanged freely; such is the physiological nature of the act of procreation and of the sensations experienced prior to its accomplishment (voluptuous pleasure).

3) “Life,” which is outside the realm of price, which has no price freely given to it, which is received, undergone – has no price in and of itself. And without voluptuous pleasure it is valueless. But voluptuous pleasure, and the ability to experience it, is given freely to each in turn: it is outside the realm of price as well.

Now, each person only receives pursuant to their capacity for receiving (first restriction); everything that he has received constitutes what he is – thus he is only worth so much as he could give – beyond what he is; this is why no one could tolerate receiving *more* than he is capable of giving – or else he will end up belonging to whoever he continues ceaselessly to receive from.

4) He who gives more than he has, *in order to be worth more than he is* (i.e., more than he had received in the first place) intends to increase; so, what

would increase someone beyond what he already is, and how could he increase his share so that he might be capable, beyond his capacity to receive, of giving more than he had received?

If he gives, he increases; but how can he grow by giving instead of diminishing? He gives so as to not receive, and because he is capable of doing so, he increases. How could that increase his value, and what makes him capable of that? He is only worth anything in the eyes of those who, being *no more* than what they have received, are worth less than him. Thus the price he acquires, relative to those who receive without being able to give, is expressed by the right to *take back even more* than what had been given.

If there were no *powerlessness to give*, in spite of the capacity to receive, there *wouldn't be that increase of he who gives and does not receive* either. He who gives and does not receive takes possession, every time, of he who, having *received in order to be*, cannot give; the latter is wholly given over in advance to a power that increases instead of diminishing by giving without receiving, and thus can *take back more* than it had given.

In the world of industrial manufacturing, what's attractive is no longer what appears naturally to be for free, but the price put on what is naturally for free; a voluptuous emotion (non-communicated or incommunicable) is first of all indifferent, and *has no value*, in the sense that *each person* can experience it freely. Now, as soon as someone, while still able to experience it, cannot procure the means of immediately doing so, it becomes *less indifferent* and begins to gain value. If it is unique in its way – and if only a limited number of individuals will be able to experience it in its uniqueness – then either it is not appraisable at all, or the desire to experience it will ensure it the highest possible price. Such is the commodification of the voluptuous emotion. However, to think that this operation is merely a sordid deed done purely out of the profit motive is precisely to be blind to the nature of the voluptuous emotion.

Turning upside down the proverb of the backstage dressing room cited by Stendhal: "*Those who can't find a way to give themselves freely find a way to sell themselves*," Nietzsche writes: "*No one wants her for free, so she has to sell herself!*" and thus expresses the very process of the voluptuous emotion itself. Is this to say now that industrial exploitation is a response to enjoyment's implicit strategy?

The most general sign of equivalence still remains currency in the domain of exchange, serving a function analogous to that of words in the domain of

communication. The (economic) intelligibility of a useful object on the commodity plane, by virtue of monetary syntax, guarantees the same fraudulent operation, relative to needs and their objects, as the intelligibility of language does relative to instinctual life. The exception is that the intelligibility of usage is concretely circumscribed by the differences among individual units, who, by usage, express themselves in their manner of existing either voluntarily or involuntarily. The limit of intelligibility is what is unexchangeable, according to its degree of idiosyncrasy, that is, the obscure propensity that comes across unwittingly in the words used and in the supposed compatibility between objects and needs. All that can compensate for the useful object, irreducible to any other kind of usage, in this universal case, is the creation of an equivalent – and that is the role of currency.

Excursus

But to properly understand what it is that currency can act as an equivalent for, without ever actually merging with the specific thing whose value it indicates – we need to go back again to Sade.

Abolishing property ownership over one's own body and over the body of others is an operation inherent in the pervert's imagination; he inhabits the bodies of others as if they were his own, and thus attributes his own to others. This means that his own body itself comes back to him as a domain of fantasy; thus it becomes merely the equivalent of the fantasy - it is its simulacrum.

Between the fantasy and its commodity appraisal, the numeraire, symbolizing the unappraisable value of the fantasy, is an integral part of the representative mode of perversion. The perverted fantasy is in itself unintelligible and unexchangeable; so the numeraire, by its abstract nature, thus serves as its universally intelligible equivalent. A distinction must be made here on the one hand between the fantasy function of money – i.e., the act of purchase or sale – as a numeraire, externalizing and developing the perversity of the various partners; and on the other hand the *mediating function of money* between the world of anomalies and the closed world of institutional standards.

Money, that equivalent of rare riches, that symbol of effort and struggle in the institutional sense, must symbolize the redirection of those riches to the benefit of the perverse fantasy: though the fantasy demands an expenditure *determined relative to the numeraire*, the numeraire expresses an equivalence to the fantasy, thus concretized as whatever riches the purchasing power of the numeraire may represent. And so just as many efforts and struggles are

frustrated outside of it; money, the equivalent of riches, thus signifies the destruction of those riches, *while retaining their value*: just like language, the signifier of what exists (as meaningful), becomes, in Sadist style, the signifier of what doesn't exist, i.e., simply the possible (meaningless according to institutional standards of language). Money, while representing and guaranteeing that which exists, becomes all the more a signifier for *what does not exist* - i.e., for the fantasy - as, in the world of integral monstrosity, the transgression of norms presents itself as the progressive conquest of the non-existent: that is, of the possible.

The act of transgressing existing norms in the name of a still non-existent possibility suggested by the fantasy is eminently represented by the very nature of the numeraire: i.e., the freedom to choose or refuse such-and-such a good from among all the others that exist. This possibility of selection or rejection challenges the value of what actually exists in favor of what does not exist. What *does not exist* according to the language of norms - the negative expression of abnormalities - expresses itself positively by the *numeraire that has not been expended, and has thus been refused to that which actually exists*. With the numeraire, the closed world of perversion sanctions *incommunicability itself among beings*; this is the only intelligible way in which the world of abnormalities reacts positively to the world of norms. To make itself understandable to the institutional world, integral monstrosity borrows its abstract symbolism of exchangeable goods. And what this means is that there is only one authentic kind of universal communication: *the exchange of bodies through the secret language of bodily symbolism*. The argument [made by Sade] goes, in a way, as follows: the institutions claim to protect the individual liberty and thus the integrity of persons, by replacing the exchange of bodies with the exchange of goods, pursuant to the ambiguous dealings and neutral symbolism of the numeraire; but underneath the pretense of circulating riches, the numeraire only deafly ensures the exchange of bodies, in the name of and in the interest of the institutions. The rejection of integral monstrosity by the institutions is *organized as de facto material and moral prostitution*. And the whole aim of the secret societies imagined by Sade was to render manifest this paradox: there is *either communication of beings by the exchange of their bodies, or prostitution under the symbolism of the numeraire*.

Those trying to climb into a position in integral monstrosity can only affirm themselves to the outside world morally in terms of logical language, and materially in terms of the numeraire. Morally, they act as the accomplices of normal beings; materially, they recruit their victims for their experimentation by offering a full price, which beats the price paid by the institutions, which

pay only enough for mere subsistence, below “normalcy.”

In the closed world of integral monstrosity, *the fantasy, itself unappraisable, incomprehensible, useless, and arbitrary, as soon as it advances to the status of bodily prestige, sets itself up as a rarity*: and here already we see the beginnings of the modern commodification of the voluptuous emotion, the only difference being that industrial exploitation is capable of standardizing suggestion at a low price, and thus putting the living object of emotion outside of the world of prices, whereas in Sade’s time, a time which was still that of industrial manufacturing, *the suggestion of an emotion and its living object were connected together*. In the closed circuit of Sadist monstrosity, the living simulacrum of the fantasy is outside of the world of prices; the statutes of the Society of the Friends of Crime stipulate that it would only accept as members “only persons whose income is at least twenty five thousand livres, since the annual dues will come to ten thousand francs per person.” Aside from this condition, there was no discrimination permitted, regarding neither rank nor origin. On the contrary, “twenty artists or persons of letters will be admitted to the Society for a modest fee of one thousand livres per year. The Society, as a patron of the arts, is happy to make a special exception for them; it only regrets that its means do not permit it to welcome, at this reduced price, a far greater number of these persons, to whom it wishes to accord all respect.”

In the end it’s the man of letters (Sade) who constitutes the substance of the society he imagines: the Society of the Friends of Crime is above all the society of his own readers, so, as Sade envisions it, the society is a space where minds gather, a secret society grounded only on a spiritual level. But this spiritual level comes from the fabrication of simulacra; and a fabricator of simulacra depends on there being a clientele with a demand; the presence of artists or writers in the *Society of the Friends of Crime* indicates the creator’s relations within the society in general, and such relations are strictly linked to the problem of the production of goods and their value in the economic circuit, in particular the manufacture of objects concerning psychic life, which is in itself unappraisable; the more the customers’ own fantasy feels urgent, the more the matching simulacrum for sale will go up in price. According to Sade, the *Society of the Friends of Crime* exploits the simulacrum-makers shamefully: it claims to “honor” their inventions, but says it’s incapable of remunerating them equitably. And such disproportionate relations are part of the very nature of the enterprise: the more the fantasy requires simulacra, the better the latter acts on and reacts to the fantasy, and the more it develops it, the more the fantasy is bidded up in price – and takes on all the serious nature of all things requiring expenditure.

Now, just a representation of venality becomes an increase in the assessed value of the fantasy: it's not poverty that pushes people to sell themselves; on the contrary it is their own abundant wealth that forces them to. And so in *The New Justine*, *Nouvelle Justine*, Verneuil notices an anatomical particularity of Ms. d'Esterval's, ensuring her lewd proclivities, which in his eyes is priceless – but he does not want to give himself over to that bright new experience unless his partner accepts to be remunerated: an objectifying act of pricing which causes her to have an immediate orgasm.² The numeraire here serves an obvious function of *transubstantiation* – with no other utility beyond serving that function: a purely game-related operation. So Juliette variously appraises the value of her body's charms: she is not, or is no longer a professional concubine, but a well-behaved woman; she is the widow (deliberately) of the Count of Lorsange, and thus a risk-taker, having been morally corrupted – and all that figures in to the subtle nature of the fantasy Juliette lends herself to concretizing. And nevertheless the fortune she had accumulated in this way throws Juliette into an endlessly repeated expropriation of her body; she can never fulfill the fantasy, and her only satisfaction is that she never helped relieve human poverty by a penny. And that is because Juliette herself represents human poverty. How can an unappraisable fantasy be appraised relative to a numeraire? Where does its numeraire value come from if not the simultaneous privation that it implies?

The supreme heights of *appraisal*: the equivalent of the fantasy (the sum paid) represents not only the emotion itself, but also the *exclusion* of millions of human lives. And from the herd-instinct perspective, this scandal drives up the value even more.

So money spent in this way means: *exclusive voluptuousness = famine = annihilation* = supreme value of the fantasy. One might well say: the more *that money represents millions of mouths*, the more it confirms *the value of the expropriated body*: the more *that body itself represents the value of millions of human lives*; i.e. *a fantasy – a whole population*. If this misappropriation, this redirection, did not exist, if these *miserias* had no standard *weight* to represent them, this *pricing would immediately become meaningless*. So there must on the one hand be a positive meaning to money as representing an equivalent of innumerable human lives; on the other hand it must also have a

² Klossowski refers to the following exchange: “Devil, what a clitoris!” exclaims Verneuil to Dorotheé d'Esterval; “You are more man than woman, I have no illusions in that regard; you don't need to hide anything” (454). Dorotheé consequently plays the role of the man in the ensuing orgy.

negative meaning, to the extent that it arbitrarily compensates the *meaninglessness* of a fantasy: and this allocation of money is arbitrary in itself, because the value of money is itself arbitrary: *it is itself no more than a fantasy that responds to a fantasy.*

So now the precarious situation of the artist or writer - i.e., the simulacra-maker - in the Society of the Friends of Crime is absolutely clear and comprehensible: in it, the simulacra-maker serves as the intermediary between two different worlds of value-appraisal. On the one hand he represents the intrinsic value of the simulacrum manufactured according to institutional standards - those of sublimation. On the other, he serves to increase the fantasy's value in keeping with the obsessive urgency of perversion. Either way, the simulacra-maker is honored for his spiritual detachment and practically treated as a supplier. Such was Sade's personal situation on the day after the Revolution. One cannot serve two masters. But on both sides it was really the same master hiding in guise of the institutions, but which showed its true face in the Society of the Friends of Crime. And that master is once again the same integral monstrosity: the *numeraire*, that shameful symbol of its own wealth, becomes the symbol of its glory in the Society of the Friends of Crime. It is by the *numeraire expended for the fantasy* that the underground society Sade imagined held hostage the world of institutional sublimations. Suppress the numeraire, and there will be universal communication among beings. By this challenge, Sade proves precisely that the notion of value and price are part of the very foundations of the voluptuous emotion, and that nothing is more contrary to enjoyment than having it for free.

Living Currency

Let's imagine for a moment an apparently impossible regression: to an industrial era where producers have the means of demanding objects of sensation as payment from consumers. These objects are living beings.

This kind of bartering would make producers and consumers into collections of "persons," supposedly intended for pleasure, emotions, and sensation. How can a human "person" serve the function of currency? How could producers, instead of "paying for" women, ever get paid "in women"? How would businessmen and industrialists pay their engineers and workers, then? "In women." And who would maintain this living currency? Other women. Which also presupposes the inverse: women working professional jobs would be paid "in guys." And who would maintain, i.e., sustain this masculine currency? Those with feminine currency at their disposal. What we are

talking about here already exists, in fact. Because though it doesn't need to make such a trade literally, all of modern industry is grounded in a kind of trade that is mediated by the symbol of inert currency, thus neutralizing the nature of the objects exchanged, i.e., it hinges on the simulacrum of that trade – a simulacrum contained in the workforce resources themselves, and thus in a kind of living currency, which, though not openly declared as such, already exists.

If a perfected production of instruments of production ends up reducing the size of the workforce needed, if the time saved by producing time saved pays off as more time available for sensation, for competitions of pleasure (Fourier) — sensation itself could still not be had for free. But the simulacrum of exchange (created by the money system first and then by the conditions of industrial society) would have it that time saved be used only for other production.

To abolish wages paid in cash to instead pay workers in living objects of sensation wouldn't be practical unless the living object itself was first appraised in terms of the labor furnished to produce it, if its subsistence is already taken care of; if the living object or objects is figured into the accounting, its possession would be purely symbolic and therefore convertible to cash/marketable. In order for an object of sensation to be worth a quantity of labor, this (living) object would have to previously constitute a value that was equal to if not greater than that of the product of such labor. There is no common measure between the sensation that the living object would be susceptible to procuring by itself, and a quantity of labor supplied equivalent to whatever resources are needed for the eventual maintenance of that object of sensation. What relationship can there be between the value of a tool or a parcel of land, appraised on the basis of their probable yield, and the price put on the existence of a living being, the source of a rare emotion? None, it's just that the fortuity (and thus the rarity) of a living object that can be a source of emotion is worth more than it would cost to sustain it. A tool has a certain return; a living object provides a certain emotion. The tool's value should compensate for the cost of its maintenance; the value of a living object source of emotion is arbitrarily set, so its maintenance costs can never be deduced from that value.

Let no one object here that this means reducing the living object, source of emotion, to the level of livestock, a stud farm; or assimilating it to a work of art, or simply even to a diamond. We are dealing here with an emotion, which is sufficient unto itself, inseparable from the fortuitous and useless existence of the object which is here "convertible/marketable," and thus arbitrarily

appraised.

If it were possible for a living object, source of a rare emotion, to be able to exist exclusively as currency, a certain psychic state would have to have been universally attained; such a state would be expressed as unquestioned practices and customs. Does this mean that in order for this to happen there would have to be as much of a quantity of living objects as inert money in circulation? Doubtless not, if such custom meant the very disappearance of the practice of money. But even as a market existing parallel to that of inert currency, living currency on the contrary would be capable of taking over the role of the gold standard, were it to be rooted in habits, and instituted within economic norms. Except that this custom would deeply change exchanges and their meanings. No exchange of rare inert objects could ever make such a change to them; works of art, for instance. But a living object, the source of voluptuous sensations, would either become currency and abolish the neutralizing functions of money, or be the basis of exchange value, based on the emotion provided.

Gold, with its arbitrary value, with the uselessness proper to it, which in some way is the metaphor for all emotions procured from wealth – because of its universal rule, is as inhuman as it is practical. Value standards based on quantities of labor, apparently more “legitimate” from the economy’s point of view, still have a punitive character to them. The living object source of emotion, from the point of view of exchange, is worth its maintenance cost. The burdens or sacrifices that its obsessed owner inflicts upon himself in sustaining it represent the price of this rare and useless object. No figures can set that price, only demand. But even before considering the living object as an exchangeable good, we must examine it as currency.

If as a living being it must constitute the equivalent of some amount of wages - while barter in kind *prima facie* suspends the possibility of buying inferior but indispensable goods – it must also be fixed as a standard, a numeraire. But then the disproportion in kind appears all the greater between a quantity of labor considered as a value standard, and a living object as currency, in the context of the conditions of modern economy.

If a particular instrument or tool represents an amount of capital invested in it, then in a domain supposedly outside of commerce, all the more so would an object of sensation, i.e., a human creature representing a possible source of emotion, in which possible eventuality it might be made the object of an investment. On the commercial level, it’s not the creature itself that is concerned, but rather the emotion it provokes in its possible consumer. As an

illustration to make clear what this is about, we can use the false and banal example of a movie star: a movie star is only a factor of production. When the newspapers define as numeraires the qualities of someone like Sharon Tate shown the day after her tragic end, or the various expenditures or maintenance costs of any other woman they have on display, it is industrialism itself that's expressing in numbers, i.e., quantifying, the source of emotion as a certain amount of profitability or some certain maintenance costs, which can only happen because these ladies are not designated as "living currency" but are treated as industrial slaves. And because of this they are no longer considered actresses, great risk-takers, or even simply as prestigious persons either. If one were to appraise what we are referring to here as industrial slaves, not as capital, but as living currency (apart from all the various other drawbacks that this kind of construct would have), they would take on at the same time the quality of a symbol of value, while themselves integrally constituting value, i.e., the quality of a good that corresponds to an "immediate" satisfaction, no longer of a need, but of primordial perversion.

"Living currency," the industrial slave is simultaneously a symbol worth riches, and those riches themselves. As a symbol they may be exchanged for all kinds of other material wealth, and as wealth they nevertheless exclude any other demands, except the demand that they represent the satisfaction of. But satisfaction itself, properly speaking, is also excluded by its very quality as a symbol. This is how living currency is essentially different from the status of industrial slave (famous figures, stars, advertising models, stewardesses, etc.). The latter couldn't claim to be a symbol so long as they differ between what they accept to receive, in inert currency, and what they are worth in their own eyes.

However, this explicit difference, which here as elsewhere is related to morality, only hides a fundamental misunderstanding: and indeed, no one would dream of defining this category of "productive people" as "slaves" – however little the term slave may express besides the supply, or at least the *availability*, to a particular demand, underlying the demand for *limited* needs. Isolated from the living object which is the source thereof, emotion, having become a "factor of production," ends up dispersed into multiple manufactured objects, which, by the limited needs that they define, deflect the inexpressible demand: and it is thus rendered pathetic relative to all the "seriousness" of the conditions of labor. Thus the industrial slave is *available*, no different from any other human resources, because far from setting itself up as a symbol, as a currency, it must depend "honestly" on inert currency. And the term slave is specifically excessive, inappropriate, and insulting when

they're free to accept their wage or not. Human dignity is preserved, and money keeps all its value. That is to say, the possible choice implied in the abstract numeraire function means that no value-appraisal can ever detract from a person's integrity, since it is only applied to the output of their productive capacities, in such a way as to only pertain "impartially" and only ensure neutrality of objects. But it's a vicious circle, because from the industrial perspective, the integrity of a person absolutely does not exist except in and by their productive yield, appraisable as currency.

As soon as the bodily presence of the industrial slave is absolutely included in figuring the appraisable yield of what he or she can produce (their physiognomy being inseparable from their work), it is specious to draw a distinction between a person and their activity. Bodily presence is already a commodity, independent of and *over and above* the commodity itself that such presence contributes to producing. And now, industrial slaves must either establish a strict relationship between their bodily presence and the money it brings in, or replace the function of money, and be money themselves: simultaneously the equivalent of wealth, and wealth itself.