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VALUE VS. MEASURE. SOCIAL REPRODUCTION AND THE CRITICS OF POLITICAL AND ECOLOGICAL ECONOMY¹

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Abstract

Assuming the activities of reproduction as the paradigm of the present times allows to recognize and reconfigure the problematic and conflictual field to be addressed. Reproduction has been the blind spot of the economic and political tradition of Western modernity, and it is on this blind spot that capitalism's grip is being reconstituted, between domination and exploitation. Feminist thought has developed well-tested tools to grasp the way in which ethics and economics interact in the constitution of the criteria of valorization and devaluation, which distinguish, select and organize activities – from naturalization, which makes them invisible and unspeakable, to valorization, which places them in a circuit that is both hierarchical and quantitative.

Keywords

Feminism; critics of political economy; domination; exploitation.

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Resumen

Asumir las actividades de reproducción como el paradigma de los tiempos actuales permite reconocer y reconfigurar el campo problemático y conflictivo a abordar. La reproducción ha sido el punto ciego de la tradición económica y política de la modernidad occidental, y es sobre este punto ciego que se reconstituye el dominio del capitalismo, entre la dominación y la explotación. El pensamiento feminista ha desarrollado herramientas bien probadas para captar el modo en que la ética y la economía interactúan en la constitución de los criterios de valorización y desvalorización, que distinguen, seleccionan y organizan las actividades -desde la naturalización, que las hace invisibles e indecibles, hasta la valorización, que las sitúa en un circuito a la vez jerárquico y cuantitativo.

Palabras clave

Feminismo, crítica de la economía política, dominación, explotación.

Re-reading the present: reproduction as paradigm

Assuming the activities of reproduction as the paradigm of the present times allows to recognize and reconfigure the problematic and conflictual field to be addressed. Reproduction has been the blind spot of the economic and political tradition of Western modernity, and it is on this blind spot that capitalism's grip is being reconstituted, between domination and exploitation. In this context, feminist thought has well-tested tools to develop a conflict within the transformations of the present (Giardini & Simone, 2017).

Firstly, the reproductive paradigm shows how obsolete the categories are that have regulated human life in northern societies, as established since the 19th century – nature-culture, domestic activities-labor, private-public, ethical-political, economic-social, inclusion-exclusion. In fact, reproduction identifies, beyond the distinction between biological and social reproduction, the cycle of activities that bring the human being into the world and put her back into the market, physical and mental generation and regeneration in its primary relational dimension, between family and society, between individual and collective conduct, between necessary and irreducible activities and relationships.

Secondly, reproduction as a paradigm allows to grasp the implications of the end of the social organization that supported critical analyses on issues such as wage, living and productive time, need and consumption, public and private virtues. On the one hand, the critical paradigm of ‘commodification’-value understood as monetary value attributed to an exchange and extended to relationships that were previously non-monetary - proves insufficient to describe contemporary transformations: the (non)attribution of value is not limited to monetary measure, price or wage, but implies a wide range of communication and techniques of the self that shape our very perception of what is worthy; the reproductive paradigm thus requires a new theory of value, one that is able to describe both the effects of domination, which distribute the worthy and unworthy, the deserving and undeserving, and the translation of social activities into prices and wages. On the other hand, it is necessary to redefine the concept of ‘care’ - initially used in feminist approaches as a critical alternative to the patriarchal order - extending it beyond the sole ethical dimension of relations, in order to grasp the way in which ethics and economics interact in the constitution of the criteria of valorization and devaluation, which distinguish, select and organize activities; from naturalization, which makes them invisible and unspeakable, to valorization, which places them in a circuit that is both hierarchical and quantitative.

In contrast to the opposing genealogies of the linguistic turn and the naturalization of the economy and society, taking up the centrality of reproductive activities opens up a range of possibilities for the analysis of contemporary societies: beginning with the tertiarization of the economies and forms of production in post-industrial societies, without thereby assuming the ‘immaterial becoming’ of labor, which fails to capture the materiality of tasks performed by sexualized and racialized subjects, as well as the extension of such tasks to each and every one. The aim is to grasp not the static nature of value, its incommensurability in quantitative terms or its definitive exclusion from the realm of exchange, but rather the dynamics according to which value is attributed, at the intersection of what is still presented separately in terms of either social and political recognition or direct and indirect redistribution.

Domination and exploitation

In the perspective of reproduction, we may speak of the end of the opposition between Marxist or materialist feminisms and the feminism of the symbolic that charac-

terized the last decades of the 20th century. In fact, between the 1970s and the early 1980s, there was a decisive split between feminisms that adopted the category of exploitation in order to make visible the specific female position in production (Del Re et al., 1979) and those that instead prioritized relations of domination, which were established and reproduced by discursive orders, by the “symbolic order”, identifying the social position of ‘woman’ and determining her own self-perception (Libreria delle donne di Milano, 1986). What is interesting about this dual genealogy in an analysis of the present is the reunification of the pair domination-exploitation.

On the side of feminist analyses centered on exploitation, we find the notion of reproduction which, naming the activities carried out by women, should be grasped both in their specificity – thus as an exploitation that is exercised beyond the visible and measurable (Fortunati, 1985), and in their internal articulations – as domestic labor, that is, elementary labor that guarantees survival; as unskilled work, which remains the most monetizable and quantifiable and whose circular repetition can be compressed by technological progress; as labor for the reproduction of the species, of the individuals who bring the workforce onto the market, i.e. as the necessary labor which is carried out before, after, and above all alongside the productive capacity of goods; finally, as care, as a complex of activities for the reproduction of psychic and social relations (Del Re, 2012).

On the side of feminisms that focus on relations of domination - and on practices of liberation - sexuality, organization and the division of social tasks and productive activities appear as configurations that place women in a condition that is no longer circumscribed to social disadvantage, but rather to a form of more or less accentuated inclusion/exclusion; it is rather a condition derived from and functional *within* a controlled and organized framework that selects needs and desires – lives are thus not simply excluded from representation, but more subtly identified with a series of functional positions. However, this position retains an ambivalence: it provides for inclusion as far as it is controllable and exclusion insofar as it does not conform to the dominant symbolic order; moreover, such exclusion entails assimilation to nature as a non-human or non-political pole, which cannot therefore be subjected to further codification. In the 1980s, a decisive subordination of production relations to power-knowledge relations was achieved: exclusion proved to be composite and the general outcome of a number of strategies and tactics of power. The realm of conflict shifted since, “the master-slave dialectic concerns groups of men: it does not provide for the liberation of women” (Rivolta femminile, 1971, p. 10). The double reference to subjectivation and patriarchy identifies

the field of social and discursive dynamics as the area in which domination and the affirmation of new subjectivities and relations open up, one into the other, leaving the question of exploitation and production in the background.

The emergence and prominence of the latter perspective, in the last decades of the 20th century, can be placed, albeit in its specificity, in the framework of the revision of the relations between the economic-productive structure and the superstructure of social organization through the redefinition of the labor-power exposed to exploitation processes, which unfold and are articulate in the analyses at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries. If, on the one hand, an isomorphism is proposed between “non-linguistic labor” and “linguistic labor”, with the intention of recording the overlap between the sphere of modes of production and the sphere of production relations (Rossi Landi, 1973); on the other hand, in an almost specular way, a semiotization of the economic dimension is carried out, in order to record its discursive effects, more specifically the effects no longer and only of alienation but of the very constitution of subjects through language (cf. Baudrillard, 1972; Spivak, 1985; Derrida, 1993), relying on the centrality that in that time psychoanalysis attributing to the linguistic constitution of the subject (cf. Goux, 1973; Lyotard, 1974).

While for this latter perspective we can speak of a *subjectification of social production*, that is, the resolution of the tension between production and society in the direction of a pre-eminence of the subjective moment, for another approach, the Foucauldian one, we may speak of a *social reduction of the productive relations*. Indeed, from the early 1970s, Foucault began to definitely abandon the category of exploitation in favor of that of domination, that is, to abandon an analyses centered on productive positions in favor of an analysis that focuses on the power relations which allow the reproduction of social organization and partitions. However, in those same years, an opposite trend emerged, the vector of reduction applying to social relations that are then understood as economic relations, more precisely as commercial relations. In the foreground there is no longer society, but the rational individual who aims at maximizing his own profit, through cost-benefit calculations as well as through the establishment of relations in the form of contracts. In fact, this paradigm makes use not so much and not only of new *conceptions* of society, but above all of the emerging *descriptions* of the individual, particularly with regard to his mental and cognitive operations (cf. Caruso, 2012). The paradigm shift has a multidimensional scope: it reintroduces the natural dimension, that is, it naturalizes the description of society, or rather of the social actor, whose behavior can be described by observing

his fixed traits; it introduces, through reference to the acquisitions of new empirical sciences, such as neuroscience, the criterion of objectivity, assuming the priority of observable and quantifiable data; it redefines the economic sphere as a closed system of formalizable and calculable variables (Gallino, 2011) and extends the quantitative approach to the analysis and governance of society (Supiot, 2015). The return of a description of human nature, which makes claims to objectivity, shows how the latter are not only normative – the claim to objectivity being the basis for the selection of discourses that are legitimate because they are descriptive, and discourses that are illegitimate because they are interpretative – but strictly ‘anthropogenetic’. That is, these tools, rather than describing, construct the subjects and the phenomena being examined (Lazzarato, 2011). Furthermore, the hegemony of the neoclassical approach in economics – which is based on the interplay between individual utilities and their possible mathematization – develops in directions that, precisely because they contradict the claim of formalization, further extend the field concerned by the dual enterprise of quantification and domination: on the one hand, the mathematical model assumed is not that of the constants in a closed system, but that of the probabilistic calculation that creates the conditions of a predictive claim and therefore of control over the temporal dimension itself (Gallino, 2011, pp. 85-106), while, on the other hand, the historical phase of the financialization of the economy leads to culturalize, when not to semiotize, economic exchange (Marazzi, 2002), introducing into the economic sphere lemmas belonging to the ethical sphere, from trust to reputation.

Since the second half of the 20th century, it has therefore been possible to identify a progressive awareness of the extent to which the separation between social relations and relations of production has been exposed to analytical and political entropy. Indicative of this awareness is the desire for a recomposition between analyses and policies of recognition, based on an idea of justice grounded in the cultural and social dynamics that legitimize collective identities, and analyses policies of redistribution, based on the idea of justice that refers to the dynamics of exploitation (Fraser & Honneth, 2001). Moreover, with reference to the analysis of the “new way of the world”, of a new logic being deployed (Dardot & Laval, 2009), which is exercised in the formerly distinct spheres of the economic, the social, the political and the ethical, the Foucauldian approach to biopolitical relations is increasingly reoriented towards the productive dimension, to the point of updating the definition of subjectivation in terms of production (Virno, 2000; Macherey, 2013).

Quantities of domination and hierarchies of exploitation

The 21st century begins with a renewed crisis of legitimacy of institutions – starting with the decline of state agency as the first and last link in the duty-rights circuit that identifies the plexus of citizenship; a crisis that entails a further dislocation of the interactions between domination and exploitation. In the phase of crisis and consequent emergencies, the enterprise becomes that of a repeated disintegration of the social matrix and matter of subjectivation. Culture, origins, histories, biographies, everything that renders us not individuals but trans-individual forces, exceeding a presumed private sphere, is too much. The void left by the destruction of a common and shared dimension does not, however, leave unanswered the need to establish new articulations between entities and subjects; the answer to this need, which rapidly becomes hegemonic, is mathematical and quantitative. Against the proliferation of the idiosyncratic and undecidable *doxa*, commonality and sharing are replaced by objectivity, which claims it is possible to reduce human life to a series of quantities that can be ordered because they are comparable. The governance of conduct takes place according to a renewed principle of measurability, which lies between quantification and standardization: it is a matter of “new accounting” (Dardot & Laval, 2009), or rather the aspiration to gain new human fields for measurement. The criteria offered by formal quantitative indicators, protocols and procedures thus respond to the crisis of exchange operators between different cultures, in the era of often forced integration that goes by the name of globalization; between actors in international law, through the attribution of different degrees of reliability by rating agencies; between different education systems, with the construction of homogeneously measurable geopolitical regions, such as the European Higher Education Area; between the state and its citizens, in the market transformation of the 20th century criteria of the fundamental rights; between different areas of common life, such as school and university, society, the market, work; in the relations between bodies, needs and desires. This is how the model of Western liberal democracy works; the standards and statistical indicators of international rankings; the reduction of exchange to a mere monetary relation and to the negotiation between individuals on the basis of cost-benefit calculations; the idea of justice as a sphere guaranteed by standardized procedures and the reduction of time to production time; knowledge assessed according to its capacity to form skills, functional competencies; the reduction of the psyche to empirically observable cognitive activities and the standardized classification of pathologies on a global scale.

Recalling the great season of criticism of the neutrality and ultimacy of facts, the pervasive use of mathematical-quantitative criteria may appear as ideological blindness: these criteria are indicated as objective, when instead they should be seen as conveying a series of partial and specific interests. Why is this critical stance not taking shape today as it did in the past? Complexity that can no longer be understood and practiced becomes fragmentation: quantification provides criteria for evaluating, judging, deciding, and orienting oneself. Wherever culture, tradition, mentality, divisions in the attribution of work roles and values, social habits and rituals cease to provide *schemes of practical intelligibility*, classifications intervene, constructing groups, ascribing characteristics to them, placing them in relation to the functions they are supposed to perform, to the point of delineating their value, in a double move of identification and comparison (old/young; poor/rich; deserving/not deserving...). This order is organized by the overlapping and interaction between the descriptive-quantitative-objective and the judging-assessing-recognizing levels; it has to be understood in the strictest sense as a hierarchy – a sacred order (*ieros*) that as such cannot be further questioned on the human side, it is authoritative and legitimizing: those who deserve are those who have credit, the others being in debt. While determining and distributing a scale of values, this order does not proceed according to the simple alternative of inclusion and exclusion: on the *internal* side, those who have credit are naturally, factually and objectively part of it, but are obliged to renew that inclusion through a continuous performance of capacities; at the lower end of the scale, on the side that constantly evokes the *external* for those who are included, a regime of selection applies, which determines the codifiability or invisibility of activities and relationships and which requires the prior demonstration of being worthy of formalization. Exploitation, strengthened by its interaction with the social and discursive processes of domination, is thus placed as much in the iterative processes through which one is and remains part of this order as on the side of subjectification, in the very field where ownership and access to the visible are constituted.

The value of reproduction beyond nature and society

In the face of this new interaction between domination and exploitation, the reproductive paradigm proves to be particularly effective in showing how the boundary between human production and reproduction is a mobile boundary that, from time to time, redefines activities, relations and subjects as qualified and therefore valued, as

necessary for survival, or as unqualified and therefore invisible. This paradigm allows to identify the quantitative and symbolic effects of the interactions between the economic and the political, which from time to time establish the price, the cost, the reputation, the utility – by degrees and according to the partition between visible and invisible– of subjects and activities.

Exploitation and domination thus interact in the valorization process, which is constituted through equivalences that are not only of a *quantitative* type – segments (of time) of production/money units – but also of a *codifying* type, that is, through the statistical and juridical constitution of commensurable units. This is the transformation with respect to previous analyses that are rather centered on the effects of domination through the order of discourse, the symbolic. In other words, the issue of valorization and exploitation of labor is taken up again and presented through a redefinition of the general equivalence and therefore of the exchange value which, where it can no longer be based on the mere calculation of the temporal units of work performed, is exercised through *measurability*: power and economics contribute in different ways to the same endeavor of constituting sources of profit, respectively through codification and quantification.

This assumption also operates at the level of value definition. Unlike those conceptions that intend value as being alternatively an objective element, incorporated in the object of exchange, or a subjective one, conceived rather from the actors of the exchange (Orléan, 2015); but also unlike those who incorporate collective forces and beliefs as constitutive elements of value (Lordon, 2010); and finally, unlike those who speak of the definitive crisis of the Marxian law of value (Vercellone, 2009), the reproductive paradigm makes it possible to capture both the emergence of values that involve the ethical, social and economic spheres at the same time, even when one wants to consider the latter as a strictly quantitative science, and the dynamism of the processes of valorization, devaluation and expulsion from the field of the valorizable, following the shifts of the *line of value*.

In this perspective, together with the deflagration of the partitions between social and economic, the reproductive paradigm also allows to grasp the dislocation of the partitions between society and nature. At present, the latter term – thanks to an updated feminist diagnoses of ‘naturalization’ as a technique of domination (Guillaumin, 1992)– appears in fact as an operator that organizes, connects, and separates different and multiple realities (Barca, 2020). Processes such as the ageing of the population in northern societies – and, more dramatic ones, such as the pandemic – have led to

the identification of activities previously assigned to the ethical-familial and therefore pre-political sphere as necessary; these activities, although promoted to necessary work, are however hybrid, because they maintain the mark of naturalness and therefore call for a limited recognition in legal and economic terms. The inclusion into the sphere of codified and quantified activities, precisely because it is conditioned, marked by naturalness, in fact shows its incommensurable character with respect to quantification in terms of money, an aspect that leads to a twofold movement: on the one hand the redefinition of what is meant as simple labor – through the expulsion of an immense amount of activities, as they are no longer considered necessary and therefore are no longer to be recognized in legal and economic terms (as significantly expressed by the lemma “family welfare”)– and on the other the redefinition of necessary labor, which results in the identification of the necessary population and the correlated expulsion of the supernumerary population (migrant and supernumerary can become synonyms). In this case, nature and society are rearticulated in biopolitical terms, i.e. in terms of selective treatment, legitimization, or delegitimization, of specific populations and the activities necessary for their reproduction; in the more specific terms of naturalization, as a technique of domination, of inclusion and exclusion of what a society recognizes as necessary for itself; and, finally, in terms of the institution of a sphere that, precisely because it is not codified or quantified, lends itself to unconditional and unlimited exploitation. In the latter case, the naturalization of human capacities – which modifies the notion of labor-power by including what is described as generically attributed to the human species, in a socio-historical succession that has passed from reproductive activities that were once attributed to women to cognitive and relational activities – is exercised in the identification of what is designated as simple labor and in the act that confines these activities to the sphere of that which is non-waged and therefore available to “extraction” (Gago & Mezzadra, 2015).

The notion of extractivism (Zibechi, 2011) is particularly effective in showing the different intersections between what was previously ascribed to the distinct sides of nature and production. Reviewing the Marxian theses on the relationship between value and nature that underline the dependence of the latter on human productive capacities – whereby nature enters the value circuit only through the intervention and transformation operated by production – in the light of the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, where ‘nature’ is presented not as a separate dimension but rather as a term that also refers to the conception of the human as a species characterized by dispositions and needs; naturalization identifies symbolic processes of decoding and expulsion from

the sphere of measurability of entities, relations and activities, which determine their availability for intensive exploitation, as well as the establishment of new instruments to reopen their codification and quantification.

In this perspective, the avoidance of the mediation of productive activities takes on a new and different meaning: the human being is ascribed respectively to the sphere of the species, when its productive and value-generating capacities extend to include the very vital functions, starting with the capacity for communication and ending with those regulating physiological reproduction, as well as to the sphere of natural resources, that is, the resources that receive value only by virtue of the treatment they are subjected to, according to the new analogy between the extraction of raw materials and data mining. Here, the line of value moves on two fronts: on the one hand, the unconditional extension of valorization, and on the other, the opening of new processes of abstraction and thus the establishment of new criteria of measurability. Similarly, non-human nature appears both as a matter of intensified exploitation, which today no longer takes place only 'before' production – as favorable environmental conditions – but also 'after' – as a repository for the expulsion of its waste (Armiero, 2021) – ; and as an exterior that lends itself to the double operation of codification and quantification. Under the various headings of the green economy, of the new indicators that no longer aim at the GDP only but also at the social wealth, of the evaluation and monetization of cultural and natural assets – and more recently of the Ecosystem accounting adopted by the United Nations Statistical Commission – the extra-human extension of abstraction is exercised, reconfiguring the concept of nature as “abstract social nature” (Moore, 2016), thus preparing it for entry into the circuit of valorization and exploitation. A cogent example is the transnational policies that tackle the climate crisis through the financialization of pollution, i.e., the possibility of monetizing CO₂ emission rates and introducing them into the exchange value circuit. Also in this case, economics and law proceed in the same enterprise of establishing new general equivalents – new legal measures in the environmental field establish the carbon credit as a criterion for measuring emissions, allowing its quantification, exchange value and financial value (Felli, 2014).

Building conflict between value and measure

Faced with the metamorphosis of productive activities, the feminist contribution, which focuses on the complex statute of reproductive activities, allows to grasp those

activities that are introduced into the circuit of valorization, also when they are not formulated in terms of labor power, and thus allows to grasp the emergence of new forms of general equivalence, at the intersection of the juridical and the economic, between domination and exploitation. The question of valorization is reformulated with a new focus on the conditions in which it is instituted, that is, it is presented as a problem of value *formation*, which appears as dependent on dimensions, activities and interactions that are preliminary and not reducible to the sphere of production alone, that is, social, anthropological, and extra-anthropological dimensions that make possible the very constitution of a question of value. Valorization thus appears as a dynamic field, which does not oppose emancipation from labor conditions and liberation from the structures of domination, but on the contrary grasps their interaction: it is through the relational and linguistic subjective consciousness-raising that it is possible to grasp the conditions of exploitation; and at the same time, it is only on condition of putting the material conditions of life into words that analysis acquires a transformative potential.

On the side of the most recent feminist elaborations, economy, ecology, and politics are treated as terms, disciplinary fields, orders of discourse that surreptitiously separate beings and activities. In fact, neo-materialist feminisms present economy not as a separate field of the sciences of quantity, but as constituted at the same time by biological and social relations, thus restoring it to a political and relational dimension in which language plays a constitutive function, through the primary act of naming and negotiating the meaning of needs (Massey, 1999; Gibson-Graham, 2006). In other ways, the distinction between human and non-human is abandoned as it prevents us from taking into account the connections that constitute the very conditions of living and block perception, imagination and even language from finding ways out of the present. The very term 'nature' – which the economy places on the side of the resources available for production and consumption and which ecology considers a separate issue – in such feminist perspectives unfolds in a constellation of problems and conflicts: it is the invisible and indeterminately available matrix into which subaltern bodies fall over and over again; it is the dimension that unites the plundering of the earth and violence against women for indigenous feminisms; it is the continuum of living capacity that connects biological materials processed in laboratories for the medical and technological market to bodies that are human and to their power, captured or re-appropriated; it is the fabric of kinship between species, between different subjects, which takes over from the canonical configuration of the family and allows us to imagine other relationships, other

societies, other exchanges, other metabolisms (Giardini, Pierallini & Tomasello, 2020; Fragnito & Tola, 2022).

Following this approach, a further field of exploration and conceptual invention emerges. If measurability – which is the effect of codification and quantification and at the same time a guarantee and promise of control, as a general equivalent and calculable prediction – dominates the mentality of the present in the various spheres of associated living and relations – legal, economic, symbolic, political-administrative, scientific– this does not mean that we must consider the notion of measure unusable, where it expresses the human and more than human need for articulation, differentiation and orientation. By freeing it from its a posteriori established origin – in particular, the Aristotelian conception that views justice as a question of arithmetical and geometrical relations, between equality and distribution – measure reappears as a relational scheme of practical intelligibility; less a parameter to which living beings have to be reduced and more a corporeal scheme that orients us in movement and space.

In the civilizations that preceded Greco-Roman classicism, measure was anything but a lemma of scientific-objective or mathematical-quantitative knowledge; it was a term of associated life and its regulatory dimension. The root *med-* refers to the activities conducted by magistrates (*medices*), whose judgment was presented as an indication of behavior aimed at healing. On the other hand, the root recurs in the Greek *medomai* to indicate both the spatial dimension of setting the table, of preparing, and the temporal dimension of having plans, of plotting, of architecting, which can be found in the character of Medea. A further declination can be found in the verbal form *meditor*, which refers to reflection, therefore to an activity of thought, also preliminary – setting the table, arranging – and which is conducted, however, in the manner of exercise, of thought accompanying practice. Finally, the reflexive form of these verbs places the subject of the action not as an external instance but as involved in the activity itself. A further indication of the immanence of measure comes from the analysis of the term *Themis* – the goddess in charge of the unwritten laws evoked by Antigone – in the plural form *themistes*, which are presented as indications, prescriptions to be followed. And again, the root of the term refers to a more ancient *-rt*, from which derive *ars*, *artus*, *ritus*, *itineris*, which in turn belongs to the same sphere as the root *-dha*, from which derive Dharma and Tao. The measure therefore reveals as an index of practiced relations (*ars*), in their composition (*artus*), in their temporal (*ritus*) and spatial (*itineris*) articulation (Benveniste, 1969).

In a counter-history of measure, reference to Simone Weil, who makes it a major issue in her reflections, is compulsory. Through a peculiar reading of Platonic and

Greek texts, and in a constant reference to mathematics, measure emerges in opposition to the prevailing measurability: “money, machinism, algebra: the three monsters of present-day civilization” (Weil, 1982, I, p. 141). This very brief formulation reflects a conception that is very distant from measurability in all its functions: of general equivalence, of monopoly of judgement and decision, of control through predictive calculation. As proof that it is not a question of measurability, Weil reiterates several times and with different accents how measure does not have to do with a static equilibrium but is characterized by tension: it is “everything that tears” (IV, p. 406). Where measure loses its function of connector, which makes different parts of life practicable and intelligible, measurability takes over, which, through money and algebra, levels, removes intensity, derealizes; connection, being prejudiced, already imagined, foreseen, consumed before it even takes place, makes “good boring and evil romantic” (I, p. 395). Therefore, in Weil we find elements for a materialistic conception of measure that, by placing itself on the very ground of the exercise of the line of value, reopens the possibility of conflictual alternatives. In fact, measure indicates how, once placed in relation, the parts thus rearranged increase or decrease their degree of reality. Moreover, it is impossible for the making of measure to offer itself to the transparency of will and idea, it can only come about through experience, exercise, and experimentation: it is an incommensurable relation, a *ratio* without reason, a case of the *logoi alogoi* with which the Pythagoreans indicated real and yet irrational proportions (II, p. 32). It is no coincidence that Weil counts justice among these relations that know no equivalence.

Faced with the effects of the moving line of value, which operates between expulsion, unlimited availability, and the recodification of new fields of quantification, measure presents alternative perspectives. A first move concerns the decolonization from the idea, the principle – through which violence on bodies and minds is exercised – that measurability is a matter of interchangeability, of the attribution of objective values that cannot be further questioned, from the fiction that in measurability there is an exchange and a translation that leaves nothing out. Secondly, the regulatory-immanent dimension returns measure as an operator of practical intelligibility that responds to the need for differentiation and articulation and that emerges from the materiality of bodies, contexts, and practices, thus opening up the question of its self-determination. This material dimension makes it legitimate, authoritative, only as far as it is exercised by the subjects who refer to it, who make use of it; the co-implication of what is judged, and the act of judging is therefore an ineliminable condition. In addition, as a material principle

of the relationship, this measure is not calculable, since it is not consigned either to the preliminary mastery of a formal legality or to the decision as an external instance; rather, it necessarily foresees something that constantly exceeds it, an opacity that cannot be assimilated, neither by the ways of the intellect nor by those of the will: equivalence is replaced by the idea and practice of translation. Finally, it leads to the assumption that there is neither certainty nor guarantee that the establishment of a relationship is devoted to equilibrium; the relationship involves the unexpected, the irreducibility, a tension, if not a laceration, and therefore requires constant work against diminution and towards increasing reality; the effort of living, which constitutes its intensity, and to which politics must pay the price at the cost of endlessly reiterating its own “constitutive incapacity to understand violence” (Loraux, 2005, p. 51).

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