

# Values Beyond Value? Is Anything Beyond the Logic of Capital

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# Three Temporalities

1. Present – ‘one market under god’- Mr homoeconomicus. (capital subjectivities)
2. Past- respectability (ESRC projects FCG, RtRTV, SPVS) – defending symbolic de-valuation puts limits on economic realization.
3. Future – ESRC professorial fellowship: creating value from values (prosperity theology; Facebook), what happens?

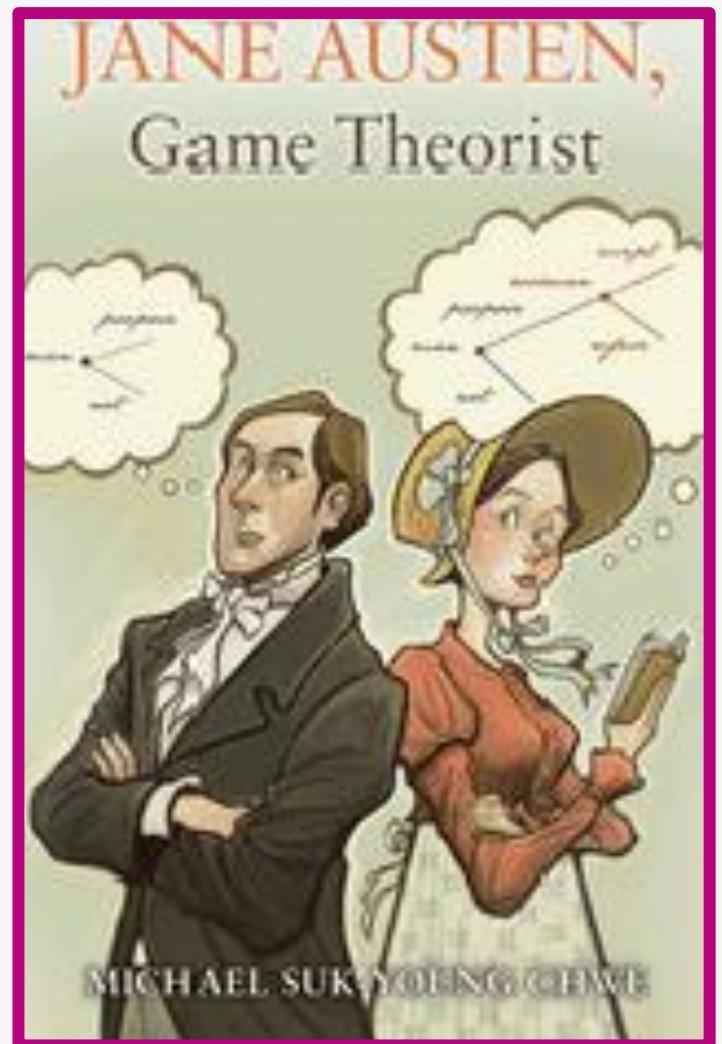
New theories NOT MINE – assume logic of capital internalized

# Structure of Paper

1. The history of language of values/s – domain distinctions
2. Equivalent persons/subjects of value?
3. The where and what of value; value as a sweaty concept
4. Incursions and of capital logic, critique
5. Ethical practice and affective attachments

# The Language of Value and Values: Domain Distinctions

- Slippery: duality, dialogic, recursive
- Property and selfhood connected through propriety
- Dewey: multiple meanings: praise, prize, price
- Economy – imagined entity – became governed by a specific rationality (Poovey)
- Domain separation via rationality – signal constitutive limits: political economy & romance (via the novel).
- Calculation is contagious.



# Equivalent Persons/Subjects of Value

1. Civilized v primitive (buy and exchange things, people, objects) v sentimental attachments to objects
2. Social contract based on possessive individualism: those who *cannot* imagine themselves as property in exchange
3. The mass defined against those who could have an interiority thus could be rational and reflexive
4. the 'fit and proper' person as law was one who could buy others (Lascelles – slave owner)
5. These are all symbolic *constitutive limit* makers – defined through their absence and opposition.

# The Where and What of Value; Value as a Sweaty Concept

- Begin in 1740 Locke
- Taken by Smith (into classic PE, RA, Mr. H) and Marx in different directions
- For Marx labour is fundamental. The capital/labour relationships is the basis of all social relations
- *'Value is not a thing, a physiological quantum of input but a social relation'*
- Labour is not a property of the self but an action
- Worker forced (by law/survival), have to sell labour to live
- The great myth of Liberalism is that all people are free to exchange (the myth of equivalence- capital logic assumes that all things have equivalence and can be exchanged)
- As labour is converted into value the worker becomes a commodity: 'the most wretched'
- Via the commodity fetish all labour is hidden and the exchange value of commodities (objects, persons, things) becomes *the* social relation
- Labour symbolically devalued whilst also *the* source of value
- The structure of feeling is alienation

# Recap

- We have seen where and how value was located, initially discursively and then institutionalized through monetary transactions via a method of calculation, and legal definitions of property and personhood, in the public sphere.
- The subject that both shaped and was a product of this process was Mr homoeconomicus, the rational, masculine, white and bourgeois subject.
- All that he was *not* was allocated to the sphere of values and associated with women, the primitive, the improper, those with affective and sentimental dispositions, in need of civilisation.
- Underpinning this allocation was the fetishizing of labour, fundamental to the accrual of capital in formal terms of exchange, but hidden.
- Those located within the sphere of values- with only their labour to sell, are the constitutive limit. They are precisely what the proper subject is not.

# Incursions and Residues

- Big data, capitalizes affects, sentiments, influence, political dissatisfaction (new productive entities (Lury and Moor), generates productive entities that trap us in numbers, calculation and targets (Lury and Gerlitz), refigures publics and ethics (Ruppert and Savage)
- But/Also...limits
- Caring: a state responsibility, a partially privatized industry. Capital clever as it makes state pay for repro of the workforce and distribute companies as source of profit. Zero hours poor conditions for labour.
- The caring economy in the UK is dependent upon 6 million unpaid carers, estimated value of their labour = £119bn (NHS only £98bn) (Buckner and Yeandle 2011).
- Some flipping (eg Southern Cross by private equity in 2011 collapse with £230m debt) but in recent report of the 4,872 private firms 1,449 rated as financially vulnerable and 700 as zombie companies with debts of £217m: Company Watch 2013).
- Problem for capital; it is a regulated market! Limits on logic
- But just lets also think about the unpaid labour – it is difficult to divorce caring for and caring about

# Domestic Labour and Childcare

- Childcare and domestic labour is another less than straightforward issue: with domestic labour becoming the fastest growing sector of the monetized European economy (see [www.global-labour.org](http://www.global-labour.org)). And a significant proportion of a nations' GDP.
- A range of state policies to cut welfare to force women into the labour market
- Yet the symbolic representation of the 'good mother' (or the proper parent) is a powerful defence against exploitation. Moral values challenge extraction of value.
- However, some mothers have no 'choice': the exchange value of working class (often migrant/global) domestic labour is built into the extra surplus value that can be extracted from the labour of middle class women.
- The MC family bears the costs of its own reproduction, with different points in a value/values chain.

# Bio-Capital

- As Shulamith Firestone, predicted reproduction would become commodified, and what others have noted is how capital creeps into areas previously considered to be the property of the individual eg DNA, stem cells, IVF
- Nobel prize-winning economist Gary Becker legitimates the logic of capital through the figures of Mr and Mrs Heteroeconomicus- who analyze time spent on child care, marriage and divorce through CB and RA maximization.
- Libertarian Judge Richard Posner (*An Economic Analysis of Law*) to explore a free market in babies, as unrestricted choice about what to trade represents individual freedom, extending the logic of one pound=one vote.
- But cannot completely encroach; moral limits, legal limits

# Monetising Impropriety and Suffering

- We can see the extension of the logic of capital through reality TV (a political economy developed from deregulation)
- Sensation required to attracts viewers for advertisers, funding.
- Unpaid participants, low cost temporary staff and lots of editing.
- Participants invited to perform their impropriety.
- Large source of profit for the successful companies (eg RDF)
- Eva Illouz 'Oprah Winfrey: the Glamour of Misery: suffering as a new form of 'emotional capitalism')
- Jerry Springer abjection (the spectacularly visual constitutive limit to proper personhood)
- Yet in spite of this 'new' market our research revealed that our audience was fickle, caught up in its own value struggles and focused on how *values* were promoted and judged (see *Reacting to Reality TV*)

# Multicultural Profit Plus

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- Capital has condensed marginalised culture/identity into a commodity
- New sources of value, accompanied by new forms of control (eg punitive treatment of 2011 rioters).
- Ironically developed cartoon characterizations of young Black men which could be used by young British black men to defend their symbolic value on the street.
- The mutated representation of the hyper-sexual, dangerous male repeated the legitimating discourse from slavery and gained valence. It was performative, bringing into effect that which it caricatured.
- It even generated a feminist response about the symbolic value of women (Skeggs, 1994).
- Challenges our understandings of recognition politics (being visible and claims recognised by the state depends on the attribution of person value)
- There are a lot of complications in the value chain.

# Academic Performance Measurements

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- We are currently measured by: AR Index, Audience Factor, Article Influence Author Superiority Index, Eigenfactor 5-year Impact Factor, ERA - A\*/A/B/C, G-index, H-index, SJRIndicator, SNIP and Rank normalised Impact Factor.
- Two main companies offer multidisciplinary, products: Web of Science (Thomson Reuters), which holds 11,500 journals and Scopus (Elsevier) with 16,500 journals.
- Other services include: GoogleScholar (+ Publish or Perish), PubMed Central, CrossRef, RePEc/CitEc. (Thanks to Robert Rojek, Sage)
- Yet education is not capital, it distributes labour, although now is subject to increasing marketisation.
- But do we accept this logic of capital? Or do we have other values that cannot be captured, that sustain us? protect us as the marketization of HE occurs?

(See **Burrows, R.** 2012 'Living with the h-index? Metric assemblages in the contemporary academy', *The Sociological Review* 60(2): 355-372.)

# Selling our Selves

- According to Tom Peters, a ‘new economy guru’ who became famous in 1997 for promoting personal branding: “We are CEOs of our own companies: Me, Inc. To be in business today, our most important job is head-marketer for the brand called You.”
- As self-branding extended through the guise of ‘self-help’ it became a huge industry, where people are asked to relate to themselves as a commodity that can be exchanged.
- From considered sociological research Paul du Gay (1996) has shown how ‘the entrepreneurial self’ is a prerequisite for digital jobs, where the labourer takes responsibility for training themselves in order to enter the relationship of exploitation.
- Tiziana Terranova has also detailed how the digital industry relies upon a huge amount of unpaid labour, temporary contracts and high burn out.

# Commodity as Logic?

- The genius of the capital logic (ripening self exploitation; reliance on unpaid labour; self-training; self-maintenance) can be persuasive.
- From the critiques of the Frankfurt school (Lukas, Marcuse, Adorno and Horkheimer), to the more banal reductionist versions of how commodities shape identities through a conflation of subjectivity with commodity purchase and use.
- Marilyn Strathern (1992a), however fires a warning. She criticizes Appadurai as a vivid example of this commodity logic who argues that the social life of any 'thing' [can] be defined as...its exchangeability (past, present or future) for 'some other thing' (1986: 13).
- For Strathern this reductionism ignores the relations that enable exchange to occur in the first place.
- And as Raymond Williams (1973), drawing on Gramsci notes, there are always temporal lags and emergent and residual forms that escape the dynamic of capital.
- Also, what happened to labour in many of these analyses?

# Beyond? Turn to Values

- Values as sedimented valuations that have become attitudes or dispositions which we come to regard as justified (Sayer 2011)
- Values located in representation and practice via the dominant narratives that shape our life and are institutionalized (eg heteronormativity, romance, marriage, maternity, paternity).
- Symbolic value allocated to values (good/bad person) by historical legitimation of power/social contract.
- If we work with the idea that value and values are produced through relationships (of different kinds) we need to be able to identify different value practices.
- We need a composite picture of how a person is distributed in circuits of value (such as economic, symbolic, cultural), and can access and express values.

# Ethical Practice and Affective Attachments

- How do we flourish if all our actions are produced through capital imperatives and we become an element of calculative exchange.
- If every action was a transaction of exchange nothing could work, not even capitalism.
- Caring, selflessness, anti-cruelty, anti-greed, anti-instrumentalism, against injustice – were all values practiced and expressed by our research participants (Skeggs, B. and Loveday, V. 2012 'Struggles for Value: Value Practices, Injustice, Judgment, Affect and the Idea of Class', *British Journal of Sociology* 63(3): 472-490)
- Concern for others, affection, sharing and mutuality, a practice evident even in big data, in open source software development.
- Charity (Sanghara) and altruism (Graeber), selflessness and gratuitous behaviour generate a regime of 'peace and love' (Boltanski), pedagogy of support via piety (Maddoo).
- Kathleen Stewart notes how a whole community forms itself through 'just-talk', talk of fairness and kindness that glues people together and is based on values of care rather than exchange
- To name but a few..... What really matters to us is other people
- Need instead a theory of 'person value'

# Conclusion

- There are many areas that cannot be completely colonized by capital, calculation and cruel conservatism.
- Lots of protests against capital's logic; there are values beyond value
- Economist admit mistakes (austerity policy based on a spreadsheet error!), or include fragility (Taleb) & the irrational (Shillers 'Irrational Exuberance'), now using neuroeconomics to prove altruism!

AND...

- We may be disenchanted, alienated and experience anomie, but we also experience joy (Spinoza), wonder (Dalston and Park), or love. Affective moments that enable us to resist the logic and its disenchantments, dissembling our assemblages and setting us in the directions of that which has not yet been captured (D & G TP)
- A sociological duty to resist the logic and legitimate. Must look beyond.