

The Sciences of the Spirit

*A*lthough the Israeli academic system has been entirely Americanized, most universities in Israel still separate their faculty in the humanities from the social sciences and all are called “the faculty for the sciences of the spirit.” The Hebrew University, established in 1925, followed the German academic model and adopted a literal translation of the German term *Geisteswissenschaften*, which has been naturalized and never questioned since. The distinction between spirit and nature seems a self-evident principle of the academic division of labor, and *Geist*, while its connotation does differ from that of “man” or “the human” of the humanities or human sciences, designates, much like them, a certain assemblage of “soft sciences”: history, archaeology, languages and literatures, culture, Jewish studies, and philosophy.

This is a loose association of disciplines; at any moment in time since its inception in the mid-nineteenth century in Germany, its consistency has reflected contingent and changing conditions, a parochial politics of knowledge and constraints on its organization that has had little to do with the division of subject matter itself. Psychology, human geography,

cognitive sciences, political theory, and history of art: depending on changing historical and cultural circumstances, each of these disciplines has been placed within and outside the scope of academic *spirit*. Unlike the implied anthropocentrism of the humanities and the occasional problematization of the concept of *man* placed at their center, there has been very little discussion of the essence or boundaries of *spirit*, not even as a concept that marks a division between academic faculties. In Germany, from Wilhelm Dilthey (1989) to Hans-Georg Gadamer (1975) to the present, the justification for separating the *Geisteswissenschaften* from the rest of the sciences has had less to do with the essence or substance (or nature) of *Geist* than with the proper method(s) for studying what the nineteenth century, following Hegel, saw as spirit's manifestations: in texts, works of arts, and rituals. The separation has therefore been related to questions of interpretation and understanding (*verstehen*). The latter have been opposed, even *avant la lettre*, to the so-called nomothetic approach of the natural sciences, notwithstanding their division into deductive and inductive, mathematical and empirical sciences.¹

Because they fell short of the standards of science declared by the philosophers and ideologues of the natural sciences, according to a conception of science that became hegemonic in the mid-nineteenth century, these branches of knowledge needed an alternative justification. With or without method, however, interpretation has never produced such a justification and certainly not a stable distinction that coincides with the actual boundaries of the faculty itself. Structuralist linguists and archaeologists, political economists and logicians provide obvious examples of this incongruity.

It was probably a matter of sheer coincidence rather than a result of reflection on the nature, essence, or structure of spirit as a realm of study that this loose cluster of disciplines came to be associated with *Geist* and not with history, culture, or the sign, for example. The coincidence concerns the German translation in 1863 of the sixth book of John Stuart Mill's *System of Logic* (1843), a treatise that was arguably the most definitive statement regarding the organization of knowledge in the mid-nineteenth century. The sixth book was dedicated to "The Logic of the Moral Sciences." The term goes back to the seventeenth century and means a cluster of sciences concerned with the mores of humans that once included economy and law, politics, psychology, philosophy, and history.² The term was common in the nineteenth century, and Mill's use of it was natural. Also common was his view that the moral sciences were in "a backward state [that] can only be remedied by applying to them the methods of the Physical Sciences, duly extended and generalized" (833). For reasons internal to the German philosophical

milieu at the time, Jacob Schiel, the German translator of Mill's book, could not use *Moralität* or *Wirklichkeit* for "moral" and preferred something more comprehensive and more object-like. *Geist* was a good solution. This was when *Geisteswissenschaften* became a name for an academic faculty, which for a while lent the moral sciences an integrity they were starting to lose in England. When the *System of Logic* appeared in its entirety in German in 1884, the British moral sciences were already scattered, and their moral component was split between a certain branch of philosophy, namely ethics, which gave up knowledge of the human world for its proper moral judgment, and the social sciences, which claimed to study the world of mores and values from an allegedly value-free position, purporting to bracket the moral judgment of the phenomena they studied. Soon, what remained of the moral sciences in England was nothing but a famous philosophers' club at Cambridge University, the birthplace of analytic philosophy at the turn of the twentieth century. And analytic philosophy, it is well known, dries any spiritual matter back to its bones.

These brief, fragmentary historical remarks may call for a more proper look at the genealogy of *Geisteswissenschaften* (something I have not been able to find), but they should equally make one suspicious of any attempt to go beyond genealogy to conceptualize *spirit* as a general principle of division of academic or scientific labor. The interest in conceptualizing *Geisteswissenschaften* does not come from the inner development of this loosely demarcated realm of academic activity; it is, rather, a response to recent systematic attacks by market and state forces of all sorts on the sciences of the spirit in Israel, on the humanities in the English-speaking world, especially in England, on *les sciences humaines* in France, and on their equivalents elsewhere. This relatively new situation introduces a new principle and justification of the division of academic labor, which may give us a clue regarding the spiritual element in the sciences of the spirit and their associates, the humanities and the *sciences humaines*. Under attack recently are the branches of academic knowledge that, beyond a certain level of general education, are considered to be a waste of time.³ To put it simply and briefly, the sciences of the spirit are those in which the expenditure of time and other resources make possible an activity that produces nothing of (exchange) value.

Indeed, the various objections to public spending that supports the *Geisteswissenschaften*/humanities come down to the claim that these sciences produce nothing of real value. Accordingly, defense of the humanities is often devised as an attempt to demonstrate the exchange value that they

nevertheless produce. The claim is often made, in addition, that they should be pursued as a luxury by the rich who can afford them, not unlike other commodities whose real function is that of “conspicuous consumption” in Thorstein Veblen’s sense, an occasion for exhibiting one’s ability to waste time and wealth. This kind of objection can appear plausible at all only because scholarly and intellectual activity has been narrowed down to the production of knowledge and knowledge has been conceived as a series of products, like any other, whose production should be examined according to its productivity, the general law of all production. According to this law, time spent or lost in production is the basic commensurable element that defines any activity as labor, allowing the integration of labor in the value of the product while abstracting it from any particular product and kind of activity involved. And the university is not to be exempted.

From this economistic point of view, the differences within the humanities and *Geisteswissenschaften*, and more significantly among the various traditions of learning, are of little importance. The demand for proven, quantifiable, and measurable productivity affects all disciplines; it has had negative effects not only in the humanities but also on the more theoretical and product-free branches of knowledge in the social and natural sciences. And while the scientificity of the sciences of the spirit may still be questioned from time to time, this is no longer the main objection to their validity or the main way to lump them together. These branches of knowledge are usually criticized not for their speculative truth claims or the dubious methods mobilized to justify such claims; they are criticized because nothing of value can be derived from their truth claims, where *value* means some form of exchange value.

Academic institutions have responded to the economization of knowledge by identifying a series of quantifiable products and setting standards for their production in ways that have transformed the university as a public institution. Some products are specific to the field of production, that is, academic knowledge: numbers of publications, citations, the rating of journals, and so on; other products have exchange value in the general market (e.g., patents, copyrights, graduates’ average income, etc.) or are the value exchanged itself, that is, money generated through scholarly activity in the form of grant applications and scholarships. A new industry of rating has emerged and flourished, and for many academics, its findings as well as its very existence have become part of nature, like the weather or the stock market, an eventful force for which one must prepare and with which there is no point in arguing.

The economistic logic that might make some sense in disciplines where knowledge produces usable objects, techniques, and procedures has been imposed on the university as a whole—with different degrees of severity in different academic cultures, but with little exception. This has had destructive effects on branches of knowledge whose products can be consumed without being used and used without being wearied, and whose objective existence, usually in the form of texts, is rather indifferent to its material embodiments (whether in books, journals, digital files, etc.). And this is where resistance to the economization of the university has been most persistent. Disciplines clustered under the rubric of the humanities have been the most resistant to and the latest to adopt the new rules of the game, but pockets of resistance can be found in the social and natural sciences as well. These branches of knowledge, where resistance to the economistic genre and logic persists, are, properly speaking, the sciences of the spirit. We find here, for the first time, a meaningful use of the term *spirit*. From the economistic point of view, it designates what seems superfluous, residual, or luxurious; at the same time, from the point of view of the resisting community, it seems worth the effort, the time, and the resources.

Resistance to the logic of capital, here as elsewhere, is a reason for a growing economic pressure. What makes capital allergic to the sciences of the spirit is not their subject matter but rather the way men and women of spirit spend their time. The allergy is a reaction to scholars' attitude and relation to their objects, to the form of their activity, not to the objects with which they are concerned. This activity involves a labor of the mind detached from any necessity, in which the product cannot be dissociated from the process and cannot be imagined or modeled beforehand; the product's value cannot be estimated in advance, and often not in retrospect. The relevance of good teaching to students' careers has no fixed standards and cannot be measured (although there have been countless attempts at doing so); the use value of the texts produced through this activity has little to do with the exchange value of the books and journals in which they appear; and quantifiable data regarding where and how much one publishes usually reflect the status of academic producers as wage laborers, while their success in securing grants for their research reflects their position as competing entrepreneurs in the fundraising market.

Much of this could also be said about researchers in the natural or exact sciences. And indeed, the allergy of the market to academic unproductivity has hit many academic departments outside the humanities. There is, however, a difference in the degree of tolerance exerted in different

branches of science with respect to activities deemed a sheer waste of time, and in many branches there is an expectation that the said activities will eventually be beneficial and profitable. The sciences of the spirit, strictly speaking, are those in which no such benefits and profits are expected and the very terms according to which benefits and profit can be measured are often at stake. No profit is necessarily promised, not even in the long run, except for the spiritual activity itself, that which comes with the performance itself—of thinking, learning, playing with concepts and arguments, insights and understanding. The practical and political implications of the reading and writing that may motivate, or follow from and be implied within, this activity are not external to it and can hardly be considered as products. In the realm of the spirit, therefore, teaching, lecturing, and to a certain extent even writing, when it is meant to be shared with others, would be better conceived as actions, in Hannah Arendt's sense of this term. They are performed in the public space that the university still provides or shelters, or are at least distributed as texts among readers who share this space, and they are performed for their own sake, as ends in themselves, or for the sake of something like truth, understanding, meaning, or beauty whose value is not derived from its possible merit as a means for something beyond itself.

But this description is not entirely accurate, and from the economic point of view the situation is worse still. In an age when so many performances, especially in the realm of sports and entertainment, are merely opportunities and mechanisms for branding products and adding to their exchange value, the performances of study, research, and writing within the sciences of the spirit have the inverse effect: while a major sporting event or the performance of a rock star are typically expected to create an explosion of exchange value (which money can measure), a successful performance in the sciences of the spirit creates an implosion of such exchange value. The outcome of a typically successful performance of this kind is often an increase in the symbolic value attached to texts and works of art, without any increase in their exchange value. These human artifacts become invaluable objects, "cultural treasures" that many admire and revere. Many, therefore, start or go back to study. Hence, long after the production of these artifacts comes to an end, they still consume ever more time, attention, and intellectual labor. Sometimes such labor and attention even generate whole new fields of study; new academic positions are created and more staff is hired to make possible the research and writing about documents, books, and other pieces of culture from which no one can really profit. Thus, the sciences of

the spirit actually create black holes of exchange value; they attract time and labor power, which are invested without any observable returns.

This story of allergy, rejection, oppression, and resistance is a relatively new phenomenon, and it unfolds differently in different countries and academic institutions. The sciences of the spirit, since their academic institutionalization and at least until the 1970s (and in Israel well into the 1990s), have offered a kind of exchange that has served well to provide them with a shelter. They have offered the nation-state the main building blocks of its ideology: national archives and national narratives, cultural heritage, a stock of traditions, and a treasure of literary works, along with knowledge of various kinds relating to colonized territories, their geography, languages, and culture, and the means of justification for national and colonial enterprises. The role of the *Geisteswissenschaften* in the cultivation of the nation cannot be overestimated. In fact, any proper genealogy of those sciences would have to make clear the links between their academic institutionalization and their nationalization.

Before the rise of the nation-state and its national ideology, other forms of exchange prevailed between patrons and scholars working under their auspices in fields that we may identify today, retrospectively and anachronistically, with the spirit. Ancient philosophy promised good or better life to those who philosophized; medieval theology promised proximity to God or better chances of salvation, as well as symbolic capital to enhance one's upward movement in the church's hierarchy; and seventeenth- and eighteenth-century philosophers and moral scientists offered a variety of services to princes and their emerging modern states. Today, we feel the forces of the market so strongly and so directly because the symbolic exchange through which the workers of the spirit were formerly able to secure the patronage of the rich and powerful no longer function; none of the services or gains they offered—from the good life of individuals to the well-being of the nation—is needed or taken seriously, unless it is framed in quantified and marketable terms of efficiency and productivity.

This is certainly true of the nation-state, the main patron of the work of the spirit in academic life in Europe since the end of the eighteenth century. With the rise of a neoliberal political economy and the economization of everything in a civil society that has been governmentalized and shaped by a state transformed to fit the logic of financial capitalism, and by the free reign of big corporations in the spaces the state has abandoned, the ideological service that the sciences of the spirit can provide for both the state and society has become much less pertinent. Because the role of the state as

a caring provider has shrunk in every sphere, including higher education, the sciences of the spirit today find themselves in direct confrontation with market forces; the clash between a spirit embodied in the endless production of texts and the flesh of accumulated labor stocked up and abstracted as capital has become inevitable.

Spirit is the element that survives after that abstracted flesh is subtracted. The sciences of the spirit are those in which this surviving element finds shelter, sometimes even thrives, while being preserved and transmitted. This element is a residue, it is what is left from the quest of truth and knowledge after the subtraction of any material or symbolic gains or any exchangeable value; it is what must be considered a waste in terms of this or that exchange system. Spirit has always been an effect of subtraction. Or better, subtraction has been the most general principle of that thing called *spirit*. The word itself, both *spirit* and *Geist*, goes back to the Hebrew *ruah* (רוח), whose first recorded occurrence in the second verse of the Bible is associated with God: “[A]nd the Spirit [*ruah*] of God moved upon the face of the waters” (Genesis 1:2). This *spirit* probably first meant—literally and materially—some kind of moving air, wind, or breath, the least physical of perceivable entities; the word was a synonym of *neshama* (נשמה), literally *breath*, which was the sign of life and vitality in living creatures, and also that which one takes away when one kills. The Septuagint correctly translates both words (רוח and נשמה) into Greek as πνεῦμα (*pneuma*).

But when Martin Luther and the translators of the King James Version converted these Hebrew and Greek words into their vernaculars, they already had in mind the Pauline transformation of the Septuagint’s *penuma*, one that ignored—or subtracted—the bodily (physical-biological) aspect altogether and placed the notion in sharp opposition to the “flesh.” Flesh in its turn came to mean the body in opposition to spirit. Paul emphasized and inverted the effect of subtraction implied in the way the term was used in the Hebrew Bible. Take, for example, the expression *ruah haiim*, the breath of life, which is mentioned three times in the Noah story. God foretells Noah that he is going “to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life” and orders him to build the ark and bring there “two and two of all flesh, wherein is the breath of life” (Genesis 6:17, 7:15). This breath (*ruah*, translated as “spirit” in Genesis 1:2) is the nonbodily vital element that resides in the body and renders it alive. When this element is subtracted, the body dies. For Paul, however, the spirit appears only once the flesh—associated with, encapsulated in, and implied by the law—is subtracted: “But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that

we serve in the new way of the Spirit (*pneumatos*) and not in the old way of the written code” (Romans 7:6). Note, however, that in both cases spirit itself, whether a subtracted element or the effect of subtraction, may also be understood as a supplement: that which is added to a person or body from elsewhere, given to that person as a gift of grace that cannot be ascribed to anything properly belonging to him or her.

If we keep in mind both subtraction and supplement, we will not mistake spirit for mind, let alone for a Hegelian totality becoming self-conscious. *Spirit* in this sense should be imagined as something closer to a ghost, which is the literal appearance of the body’s subtraction, or to an aura, which is the literal appearance of a ghost-like supplement. This is the case of the spiritual element that resides in the sciences. Coming back to the academic realm, we may think about the first clustering of *Geisteswissenschaften* in the nineteenth century as an attempt to bring together those sciences that lack scientificity or proper method—the sciences from which the flesh and bones of science have been subtracted. In the same vein, we may think about our contemporary sciences of the spirit as the nonproductive residue that resides in the activity that produces knowledge. But whereas nonscientific sciences in the German or the Israeli *Geisteswissenschaften* could still claim their role as guardians and reproducers of cherished traditions, be they national, Christian, Jewish, European, or any other, our contemporary sciences of the spirit, economized as they are, have nothing to resort to. Their attempts to find justification in economic terms (e.g., “corporate executives want employees with verbal and written communication skills [who] understand ethical decision-making [and are] creative and innovative” [Marcus 2013]), while often plausible, can justify little beyond the level of undergraduate college education. Whatever exceeds a general capacity to write eloquently, think critically, and grasp situations from multiple perspectives can be justified only by insisting on the intrinsic value of matters of the spirit. Beyond a certain level of instrumentalization, commodification of their activity, the workers of the spirit must confess their interest in spirit—or truth or understanding—for its own sake and admit their resistance to the rule of the market.

A certain activity concerned with truth and understanding has been declared a waste of time by the hegemonic economic discourse. Under the reign of this discourse, this activity is deemed worthy of public support and resources only when some exception has been made. Like the exception declared by a sovereign, this activity can now be abandoned and forsaken, or be pardoned and allowed to survive. The very existence of this

activity is a matter of grace; meanwhile, hampering its living conditions, shrinking its resources, even its very extinction, become acceptable. Provosts and deans who make such policies enjoy impunity while those who opt for grace and pardon might be reprimanded by their boards. When the law of the market (every investment must be done for profit and everything must be measureable according to its possible profitability) is suspended and an exception has been made, a certain excess of spending time is allowed, a residual element of an activity paid beyond its economic worth, an intangible that cannot be put back into circulation. This element is the subtraction of the flesh in its economistic form, the supplement for exchange value, or what remains after all this value has been subtracted.

This spiritual residue is intangible precisely because and to the extent that it is taken out of circulation, and in this sense it assumes the inverse form of those intangible products (in the forms of stocks and bonds and their “derivatives,” “futures,” and “options”) that in the last two decades have led to an exponential expansion of financial markets. According to the logic that makes possible this expansion, the demand to liquidate intangibles and take them out of circulation must be postponed for as long as possible, if not forever. Large sums of money should not be extracted from the market but simply transferred from one virtual “security” to another. Many of these intangibles commodify the chances that distinct events will take place in the future and thus encapsulate time—not of human activity but entirely external to it, from the market’s own cycles to natural disasters, turning time into a series of fungibles. There is only one event that all the new instruments on the financial market cannot manipulate into a fungible: the event in which multiple demands for the immediate cashing of stocks, bonds, and their derivatives would surpass the flexibility of the market and cause its crash, turning all those intangibles of which its flows consist into in-fungibles. The possibility of this event is a ghost looming behind the global financial market; it is the dark side of everything bought and sold there. It is a ghost because it should not be allowed to materialize, and yet it cannot be made to disappear altogether because, ultimately, the ability to cash one’s bonds, stocks, or their derivatives and use one’s cash to buy tangible goods is supposedly secured by the very nature of the trading activity. For the market of intangibles, when that ghost is incarnated as spirit in the flesh, the meaning is death.

From this point of view, the form of worthless activity performed by the sciences of the spirit may be even worse than a waste of time and resources or the worshiping of the intangible element in tangible artifacts.

It is, rather, a concrete sign announcing the possibility of the coming of that ghostly event that looms behind the market and threatens to crush it. The sciences of the spirit, properly so called, have the power of a gospel that has already been heard without having been properly addressed.

Dealing as we are with ghosts and the spirit, we should not be surprised to find this theological thread, and we should hold it and follow it one step further. The work of the spirit produces objects that all too often call for more work of the spirit. Just as in the economy of sainthood the aura of saints is projected onto their belongings, their clothes or books or place of residence, so is the excess of spiritual activity projected onto the object of study, endowing it with its special aura. This aura is socially constructed and maintained no less than the aura of the irreproducible work of art discovered by Walter Benjamin (or invented by him; see Azoulay). But just as in the case of the work of art, in the case of the spiritual object, too, the constructedness of its excessive value does not take anything from its exceptional status—as long as the social-cultural mechanisms invested in its construction are at work in a space provided by this or that patron. Obviously, torn pieces of paper and rotten artifacts stored in some archive may not have the same aura as a famous work of art or even a famous archived object like, for example, a Dead Sea scroll or the Rosetta stone. But the principle is the same: historical research takes over these pieces of paper, papyrus, or stone and endows them with their aura, which may then be reflected in and upon the archive where they are stored or the place from which they were excavated. The aura of spirit does not reside in the sanctified artifacts, texts, or locations; rather, it owes its appearance and existence to a persistent interest in the meaning of the objects or the truth revealed through them. Such interest tends to present itself as incommensurate with pragmatic interests of any kind, living apart of any exchange system. The justifications for such intense will to truth and meaning may vary and may be articulated in aesthetic, existential, or moral terms; but these justifications concern specific invaluable objects and not the very possibility of a will to truth and meaning that transcends any exchange value, which an interest in these objects presupposes.

The profession of truth regarding this object and the confession of faith in the excessive value that resides in pursuing this truth cannot be separated. The will to truth and meaning at stake here announces itself as irreducible to what is beneficial, useful, or enjoyable; that is, it would not be satisfied with explanations, arguments, and reasons whose value is derived from their possible use for some goal other than knowledge and

understanding. More specifically, the will at stake here refuses to submit the pursuit of knowledge and meaning to the logic of capital (or of the state or the nation or the church, for that matter) or to any dictate, which at this very moment appears to come from the outside. The separation of knowledge and understanding from their possible usage is neither given nor easy to establish, but it is precisely when alien interests are suspected that such separation is called for. This is the moment when the flesh is subtracted and the spirit emerges as the excess or supplement that remains.

Following Carl Schmitt, Giorgio Agamben has shown how the exception demarcates the realm of the law and makes possible the distinction between inside and outside, which applies to everything except for that very exception and the position from which it has been declared (Agamben, esp. 15–48). In the same way we may observe how the subtraction that defines or creates the excessive element demarcates an economy of exchange that applies to everything except that excess and the position from which it has been declared. Agamben has also shown that the sovereign who declares the exception constitutes himself as an exception and as such may change positions with the one who has been excluded from the system of law. Both have lost the protection of the system that excluded them and, surviving their deaths, live lives that are “incompatible” with the world from which they have been excluded (101–5). But this also means that the excluded may appear as occupying a sovereign position—the sovereignty of the partisan and the rebel, for example. This is the predicament of the workers of the spirit who exempt themselves from the reign of profitable production, persisting in their excessive activity, struggling to hold back the forces that suppress them, that shrink or obliterate their capacity to carry out their activity, and that strive to reintegrate them within an economy of profitable production.

This resistance comes at a cost, and at the extreme there appears subtraction in its pure form. The spiritual aura is accompanied by an ethos of sacrifice, *fidelis ad mortem*. Within the logic of capital, at least, martyrdom cannot be excluded, but it cannot be recognized as sacrifice either. In this sense, the worker of the spirit resembles *homo sacer* not only because his activity has been declared an exception and has been forsaken but also because his sacrifice cannot be recognized. Whereas faith, state, friendship, or family may represent something “higher” or “larger” than one’s own self and life, for which sacrifice can be demanded and accepted, capitalism precludes the very possibility of sacrifice, that is, of a loss that is not articulated in terms of investment for the sake of later benefits. Losses may be incurred, of course, but they are not taken voluntarily unless they

can be considered necessary for avoiding even larger losses. Other than that, the expenditure of time and resources for the sake of something that a priori is not meant to accrue (exchange) value is already meaningless. Therefore, from the point of view of the market economy the only question is who incurs these losses—taxpayers duped to believe in spiritual matters, rich donors who have fallen in love with art or wisdom, or the workers of the spirit themselves. The precariousness of the latter and the futility of their struggle seem obvious and inevitable, given these choices, the rule of the market, and the perpetual crisis of the economy.

And yet, from spirit's point of view, this is precisely what a sacrifice means: something given or yielded with no expectation of return, up to and including the giving of one's own life. For Agamben, the question of sacrifice is decided at the moment of sovereign decision; *homo sacer*, created through the sovereign's decision on the exception, is the one "who may be killed and yet not sacrificed" (8). But at the moment of resistance, when sovereignty itself is at stake, there is no neutral position from which to decide whether incurred losses come down to a meaningless waste or are elevated as a sacrifice for a meaningful cause. Such an interpretation can be proposed only once one has taken a position within or outside of the hegemonic discourse, within or outside the discourse of the spirit that opposes it. From Socrates through Galileo to the dissidents of modern times, a series of mythological figures marks this extreme form of waste, which the traditions that narrate their stories brand as sacrifice. These cases of martyrdom should not be confused with the essence of the labor of spirit, its telos, or its principle of organization; the point is rather that the a priori exclusion of sacrifice, of expenditure of time and resources that will never be paid back, is the degree zero of spiritual work. This a priori exclusion is where spirit ends, like an extinguished flame. The element of spirit in the sciences appears when the imminent possibility of sacrifice is not excluded a priori, which is also the moment that the indefinite length of time spent already or is about to be spent in thinking, research, and writing is considered in terms of its use value only, while truth, beauty, and understanding are consumed without being used and used regardless of their exchange value (if they have any).

By definition, because we have defined spirit as that element to which capital is allergic, the threshold of spiritual work is also the moment in which a logic other than that of market capitalism is acknowledged and respected. Since market capitalism seeks to be all encompassing, leaving nothing outside its system, the insistence on this otherness can rightly be

conceived as a moment of transcendence. We can describe this moment only through a kind of negative theology. Spirit asserts the in-fungible in the same way that negative theology asserts the unsayable. Like transcendence, which is unsayable and may be expressed only through a series of negations of the categories ascribed to it, whatever lies outside the logic of capital is recognized simply by the fact that it has been taken out of circulation and does not assume an exchange value. Nothing in what we have said so far allows us to add anything informative about the objects, themes, methods, or kinds of questions typical of the science of the spirit, and probably these change anyway across disciplines, historical periods, and cultural contexts. We may affirm, however, a certain affinity, in fact a solidarity, that the workers of the spirit have with other workers who resist the logic of capital in whatever field. This is solidarity because these workers are not concerned primarily with truth and understanding, but rather with well-being, or justice, or friendship, and hence they do not belong to the realm of the sciences. But they do belong to the realm of spirit, and much may be learned from their traditions of struggle, community building, and comradeship.

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Notes

- 1 This opposition has not changed with the recent growing interest in questions of computation and digitization, which are employed as devices for mapping and reconstructing genealogies, lineages, and structures, not for the derivation of laws. See, for example, Unsworth.
- 2 For Mill, the moral sciences included psychology, ethology, the social sciences, political ethology, and history.
- 3 Cohen and Marcus are two of many that came up in a recent Google search for “humanities under attack.”

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