

Money as Money: Suzanne de Brunhoff's Marxist Monetary Theory*

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Abstract: This article proposes the necessity to return to Suzanne de Brunhoff's Marxist monetary theory in order to conceptualise the relationship between production and social reproduction within financialised capitalist social relations. De Brunhoff maintains a commitment to understanding «money as money» or money as an independent variable, with a focus on a monetary theory of credit. By representing un-valorised value, credit money cannot simply be understood as representative of reified forms of value and therefore corresponding subjection to the form cannot be interpreted from the point of view of the fetish character only. In this way, money is a form that, although is immanent to capital, is at the same time other to capital. With focus on an intervention de Brunhoff made within the pages of the «workerist» journal «Primo Maggio», this article will go on to deploy de Brunhoff's reading of money as a way to understand the interplay between two readings of money that continue divide the field of Marxian thought into Marxism and post-Marxism: money as command over exploited labour or «money as capital», *versus* commodification of social life under the commodity-money-capital relation. What this article will show is that it is de Brunhoff's focus on «money as money» that offers us a unique position from which to account for concerns propagated between these two sides and in doing so gives us a unique entry point into understanding the internal complexities of the capital relation in the present.

Keywords: Money; Value Form; Financialization; Suzanne de Brunhoff; «Primo Maggio».

1. Introduction

The monetary economy, through functioning as the medium of circulation of capital, offers a privileged vantage point to understand how banking capital and interest-bearing capital are implicated in both the realm of production and the social reproduction of societies. This article addresses this claim with focus on the work of Suzanne de Brunhoff, a central figure behind the French Marxist Monetary School, whose foundational work *Marx on Money* offers a novel account of the role money takes across

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* This article is followed by a postscript by Étienne Balibar.

Marx's three volumes of *Capital*. This article proposes the necessity to return to de Brunhoff's monetary theory not only due to her original contribution to bringing about clarity to our understanding of the role of money in Marx, but because her analysis is an indispensable contribution to our ability to make out the inner workings of capital today where markets are overdetermined by financialization.

For de Brunhoff «money» is the key conceptual tool that allows us to understand the relationship between lived experience in capitalist societies and the structural mechanisms that reproduce the accumulation of capital, especially in their financialised forms. De Brunhoff's analysis can be broadly understood as based on a grounding of money in commodity money (and therefore abstract labour), combined with a focus on credit money's deviation from the commodity rooted in a monetary theory of credit. By grounding money in commodity money, de Brunhoff understands the money form as a distinct formal manifestation of value within the value form relation that consists of money, commodities and capital. Within this set of relations, money's formal character allows different commodity forms to be put into relationship with one another and for value to pass between the forms in order to reproduce the conditions of production and accumulate more value (her reading is a capital logic reading). At the same time, de Brunhoff insists on money's simultaneous deviation from the commodity claiming that as a general equivalent, money is an independent variable within the value form. According to de Brunhoff, this independence is rooted in money's threefold character as at once a measure of value, a medium of circulation and a general equivalent; three characteristics that together produce money as a distinct social form, or «money as money». Significantly, this framework works to reflect how we might understand the relationship between credit money and accumulation (that is always based on dispossession). The conceptualization of this connection between credit money and accumulation is behind de Brunhoff's claim to the necessity to understand «money as money». While money is commodity when money acts as commodity and money is capital when money acts as capital, money's independence is secured in its role as credit. Credit money is a form that finances production and takes place before valorization and in this way circulates as un-valorised value (value form that is “not yet” value form) and therefore money must also be understood as existing as a form in and of itself. As de Brunhoff claims,

The Marxist theory of money interests us primarily because of its integration

with the theory of the capitalist form of production. Since money is part of the machinery of capitalism, its role is determined by its function within the entire pattern of capitalist economic relations. According to Marx money is 'a social relation of production'; therefore, under capitalism, it is part of the capitalist system of relations of production. But it participates in them in its special fashion, by existing in the form of money, and the monetary problem consists precisely in knowing the meaning of this strange existence as money, inseparable but distinct from the other relations characteristic of capitalism. (de Brunhoff 2015, 19)

De Brunhoff's charge is that money cannot be reduced to any other variable within the capitalist system, and therefore needs to be theorised from the point of view of its specificity as an independent variable.

De Brunhoff's intervention, that bases itself on a reading of Marx to the letter, is crucial as Marxism is notorious for when theorising money not agreeing on how we might understand money's role¹. The multiple takes on money within Marxist literature can largely be attributed to the fact that the role of money has received relatively little attention². Money is often taken for granted as an archaic or trans-historical form with its history in pre-capitalist market economies that have been appropriated for capitalist purposes, while commodity receives disproportionate attention as constitutive of the dynamic of a capitalist mode of production. However, this focus on commodity without attention to its co-dependence on money, which derives from a similar "realist"³ bias in classical and neo-classical

1 For a more detailed account of this claim, see Moseley ed. (2005).

2 As pointed to by Bellofiore in his essay *Comment Devenir Marxien? L'Heritage de Suzanne de Brunhoff*, a contribution to the recent collection dedicated to de Brunhoff's work *Penser la monnaie et la finance avec Marx: Autour de Suzanne de Brunhoff* (2018, 32), prior to the publication of *Marx on Money* in 1967, there are very few accounts of the role money plays in Marx. There is an account of money in Hilferding's *Financial Capital*, however his account falls into error according to de Brunhoff due to his acceptance of the only partial account of money found in Chapter 3 of Part 1 of *Capital, Volume I*. Therefore, his analysis lacks an exposition of the way in which money works in relation to the whole, leading to a gross misunderstanding of money's role. Additionally, Rosa Luxemburg develops an analysis of money based on the claim that the accumulation of capital is not a product of the production of an increased number of commodities, but rather is a product of the conversion of commodities into money capital, or the accumulation of profit as «money profit». This premise allows her to make the point that the accumulation of profit as money is not only the aim of the individual capitalist (a point argued by Proudhon), but rather is the aim of the capitalist mode of production as a whole. In this way she looks to the money form as a way to bring insight into the workings of the capitalist mode of production in totality. However, this is not considered to be a serious study of monetary theory from de Brunhoff's point of view.

3 Marx's critique pointed out that the commodity is not what it seems on the surface and had thus far been interpreted based on what amounts to a "realist" reading that accepts things as they are immediately presented historically (what Marx so often refers to as an

economic theory, makes it difficult for us to understand the role of credit and finance as these formations are developments of the money form as a general form set apart from the commodity form. Significantly, the money form when acting as credit money is not valorised value and therefore cannot be understood as a reified form in any simple way. This difficulty within the literature is representative of the predominant focus on *Capital, Volume I* where we find a strong address of commodity fetishism. In *Volume I* the analysis of money focuses on money as having its roots in the commodity and as such acting as a formal expression of value. The vast amount of literature that addresses *Volume I* only has therefore produced a narrow focus that has led Marxian thought to be generally quite blind to the role money plays as a variable to reproduce capitalist social relations. This is because the money form cannot be understood without a reading that spans across all three volumes where money's role is conceived as a medium of circulation that facilitates the schemes of reproduction in *Volume II*, and how money's role is developed as a medium for debt and finance in *Volume III*; two points of focus that are not exclusively based on an analysis of the commodity. As de Brunhoff emphasises, while money has its genesis in the commodity, it is also necessarily independent from the commodity and therefore produces different formal results such as credit-money and «fictitious capital» that have come to «evade the conditions of the circulation of capital» (de Brunhoff 2015, 94) and therefore commodity circulation and production. Following de Brunhoff, this article interprets the presentation of money in *Capital Volume I* with attention to how Marx's elaborations in *Volume I* work in conjunction with *Volume II* and *III*.

De Brunhoff can be found at the center of debates around the social implications of the «monetary crisis»⁴ of 1974 where the dollar as «currency of currency» was put into question not very long after the 1971 suspension of the convertibility of the dollar into gold.

This suspension of convertibility was combined with universally adopted «state-credit monetary systems» where money and monetary policy had «become an important terrain of class struggle» (de Brunhoff and Foley 2007, 203). These historical changes facilitated unhinged financial growth, leading to profound changes in labour relations and the distribution of wealth that continue to determine debates surrounding how to the-

interpretation internal to bourgeois economics). The lack of similar critical emphasis on the money form within Marxian literature has led to money being taken for granted on a «realist» basis, or uncritically, within the Marxian tradition itself.

⁴ For de Brunhoff the term «monetary crisis» is in reference to two phenomena: an accelerated rise in prices or inflation (a result of the corrosion of currencies), and the weakening of the dollar in exchange markets. See de Brunhoff (1975-1976).

orise financial capital in the present. Intervening primarily in Keynesian discussions and strongly standing up for a Marxian economic program, de Brunhoff never separated her theoretical developments from her focus on practical social change. De Brunhoff's commitment to developing a theory with the purpose of fostering practical social effects is evident when we look to the intervention de Brunhoff made within the pages of the workerist journal «Primo Maggio», which triggered a debate between herself and Lapo Berti, who was a representative of a research program on money initiated by members of the journal's collective⁵. This article aims to highlight the significance of this debate and in doing so construct a focus on the further potential for direct political intervention stemming from de Brunhoff's monetary theory. This novel intervention on the part of de Brunhoff in «Primo Maggio» represents an interaction that reflects a bifurcation in Marxist theory between two sides which were at the time almost completely disconnected. It is meaningful to reflect on this debate in the present as the theoretical presuppositions that were being worked out still mark competing perspectives between Marxist and post-Marxist theory today. This divide is largely based on a distinction between two different readings of the role of money; money as understood to exert command over exploited labour or «money as capital», *versus* commodification of social life under the commodity-money-capital relation; two theoretical presuppositions continue to divide the field. What this article will show is that it is de Brunhoff's focus on «money as money» that offers us a unique position from which to account for concerns propagated between these two sides and in doing so gives us a unique entry point into understanding the internal complexities of the capital relation in the present.

Ultimately, this article will provide an account of de Brunhoff's monetary theory with emphasis on arguing for a need to ground our analysis of capitalist social relations in our understanding of money as an independent variable. It is this emphasis on «money as money» that will prove necessary if we are to gain any insight into the dominance of finance and what this dominance means for production and social reproduction. What follows is that de Brunhoff's monetary theory offers the insight needed for the corresponding possibility of constructing a foundation for thinking of life as existing otherwise; the *raison d'être* that de Brunhoff never lost sight of in her life or in her work.

⁵ Core members of the working group included Lapo Berti, Marcello Messori, Franco Gori, Mario Zanzani, Christian Marazzi, Andrea Battinelli and Sergio Bologna. See Bologna (2014, 132).

2. The Genesis of Money

In *Marx on Money* (*La monnaie chez Marx*, originally published in 1967), de Brunhoff begins an analysis of the role of money in Marx's *Capital* from the point of view of a general theory of money or «money as money». De Brunhoff argues for a theory of money that understands money as a product of capitalist relations albeit a product that contains its own independence. To think this, we have to understand money as both a product of, and at the same time separate from, capital relations. As de Brunhoff claims, if money is not understood in its generality as a form that functions separately from the capitalist mode of production, «one becomes unable to see how the general laws of monetary circulation [... apply also to a ...] capitalist form of production where there is a special monetary circulation, that of credit» (de Brunhoff 1995, 20). From de Brunhoff's perspective, money is considered to have its own «monetary relationship», that is separate from the capitalist relation of production (as an antagonism of capital and labour). In this dynamic, money is but one form that is used to represent value and circulate value, among other forms. Therefore, money is a form of the phenomenal manifestation (*Erscheinung*) of value (value achieves validity in the form of money), and the very mechanism by which capital is circulated and valorised, but is not constitutive of capital itself, playing a purely formal role upholding capitalist relations. Money is a bearer of value in circulation turning into capital at the point of valorisation. Although capital might present itself as money, when it appears as money it is no longer money qua money, but money capital. Money is therefore understood by de Brunhoff as an abstraction separate from capital, yet becomes capital when put under certain relations. Importantly, this does not mean that money is for de Brunhoff somehow tied to the pre-capitalist use of money. This is because money in the context of capital relations finds its genesis in the commodity and is therefore not dependant on the priority of pre-capitalist economies. In this way, money reflects a dynamic that functionally doubly separates money from a realist concept of «history». In the capitalist mode of production money derives its history from an abstract form immanent to capital and as such money is endogenous to capital. Money under capital is a derivative of the commodity and as a result functions to produce different social relationships than pre-capitalist relations, playing a different social role with a distinct economic status. Therefore, in Marx, the genesis of money is not historical, but rather conceptual; money emerges as «the expression of value contained in the value-relation of commodities from its simplest, almost imperceptible outline to the dazzling

money-form» (Marx 1990, 139). This simple form of value referred to here is the commodity expressing value by way of another commodity.

This role of money is a result of its appropriation from being a thing of economic use value to standing in as *the form under which value becomes exchange value*. Money is able to do this through its distinct role as the universal exchange value; value can be exchanged only when value is formalised under a universal measure that can then account for differences in value. As Moseley states, «in order for each commodity to be exchangeable with all other commodities, the value of each commodity must be comparable with the value of all other commodities in some objective, socially recognizable form» (Moseley 2016, 3). However, the measure of value is but one function of money that is entirely dependent on money's other function: circulation. As a medium of circulation money provides the role of the «means for realizing *social relations* [through not only acting as] a means to set into motion the productive process» (Graziani 1997, 27), but also through financing production and connecting the different moments and actors within the production process. For example, as noted by Graziani, since wages are paid with money, it is necessary for money to initiate production; a process that concludes itself through the sale of commodities that then retroactively fund the financing of the wages only after the money that financed production has changed forms. Hence within the production process money must consistently be converted into other value forms through circulation. Money then ultimately functions as the connecting agent behind social relations as a «medium of circulation». What de Brunhoff emphasises is that the circulation of money facilitates the reproduction of capital, *making the reproduction of capital a system of monetary reproduction*, as money both opens and closes the cycle. To do this money must exist as a form that bases itself on a combination of functions (medium of circulation, measure of value, instrument of hoarding) that together produce its autonomous nature. This gives money its own temporality set apart from the temporalities that make up other social forms. Only through existing with its own temporality can money connect the different temporalities internal to the social practices of production and social reproduction through its circulating function in facilitating the passage of value between the different forms. It is on this basis that de Brunhoff describes the money form as an «immanent externality» from the capitalist form, distinguishing between the relation of circulation and the relation of production (de Brunhoff 1976, 120-121). De Brunhoff's use of the term «immanent externality» refers to how money as form is not simply either internal or external to the capitalist production and reproducti-

on process. This is because in order to reproduce the basic capital relation, money cannot be reducible to an expression of the capital relation. This makes money form a form that is *other than* the capitalist relation of production, or a «non-capitalist» form within capitalism. What de Brunhoff has in mind is an insistence on that, *the institution that reproduces capital must supplement capital's own logic.*

Circulation occurs both positively as in the case of exchange, and negatively in the case of hoarding, where money stands still or is preserved in large sums in its own simple form, ultimately functioning to preserve or uphold money in its role as a general equivalent by acting as a reserve. While hoarding is theorised by de Brunhoff as a third function of money, this is a misunderstanding of circulation as only playing a positive role. Rather circulation can function in both positive and negative ways. Not circulating money, in the case of hoarding, is nonetheless an act of circulation albeit through negation. Therefore, hoarding is negative circulation. Hoarding is necessary for the preservation of money as a form of «general equivalent» and formally accounts for any such case where there is a demand for money in the form of «hard cash»⁶. Hoarding upholds the rules of simple circulation (and therefore sustains its function as universal equivalent) through «absorption and preserving the difference between the total money supply and money in circulation» (de Brunhoff 1995, 48)⁷. In doing so it provides the monetary basis for credit and international transactions. Therefore, hoarding becomes implicated in the development of money from a mere universal equivalent and medium of exchange as extracted from abstract labour, to the role of money as credit-money; a form of money that is both a product of the production process and independent from production, determining the financing of changes in the production process.

Not only is circulation necessary for the realization of social relations, it is also constitutive of the nature of money, as to formally adopt its role as a measure of value, money must go through the process of circulation. Therefore, we find that these two functions are mutually constitutive. This formal mutual constitution is something that occurs by way of money effectively becoming valorised (i.e. adds surplus value to its sum and by

6 De Brunhoff uses the term «hard cash» to describe what is commonly referred to as «liquidity». This is because the term liquidity is a Keynesian term that represents a character of money linked to demand and investment not compatible with Marx's analysis of hoarding. See de Brunhoff and Foley (2007).

7 De Brunhoff does not refer to hoarding as negative circulation. However, she emphasises the need to include hoarding as a necessary positive structural role played by money, and not merely something that leads to crisis through causing inflation.

doing so takes on its social form) and therefore is a result of the product of commodity circulation. Hence, «that money is a commodity is therefore only a discovery for those who proceed from its finished shape in order to analyse it afterwards» (Marx 1990, 184). Like Spinoza's one substance that must contain two attributes (thought and extension) in order to be one, for money to act as one in the form of the general equivalent it must both function as the measure of value and the medium of circulation (an attribute defined by its motion).

3. Money as Social Form

Marx begins *Capital, Volume I* with a commentary that develops the function of commodities under capitalist relations. Here, the «commodity» is developed as a general social form and therefore, a relational category. The development of what is understood as commodities and that of money precedes any mention of capital (capital is not discussed until the fourth chapter), indicating the basic function of the two forms in the development of Marx's argument. However, the extent to which we find a logical and historical development beginning with these concepts (leading to the concept of «capital»), «must be understood as being retrospectively apparent rather than immanently necessary» (Postone 1993, 127). To clarify, this sequence is not intended by Marx to be historical, but rather relational, as this mode of development is only possible when already within the capitalist social formation and therefore is not historically constitutive of capitalist relations.

The development of money emerges only after Marx's initial discussion of the commodity as constituted by both a use-value and a value (with the phenomenal form of an exchange-value). The double nature of value indicates that every useful thing in a capitalist society can be perceived from the point of view of either quality or quantity. Within each point of view there are again many more properties, as things can be useful in various ways. It is according to Marx, the work of history to find the «manifold» uses of these things, or extract from the manifold what things come to be used as. The use of the word manifold in Marx's initial description of the commodity in the first page of *Capital* is significant, as in its Kantian use, the manifold refers to the pre-synthetical givenness of everything that is then represented through abstraction in order to produce knowledge of something. Hegel saw in Kant that the manifold entailed an act of subsumption since for Kant particulars needed to be brought under categories. Marx's materialism

reverses this mechanism by showing that the manifold, rather than being negated by the act of subsumption, is latently available to the work of history. When applying his observation to objects, the object of commodity (its use-value) is the externality of the manifold that subsumes a greater “given”, that could be accessed in different ways depending on historical circumstances. For Marx things (use values) have an “intrinsic virtue”, and what becomes externalised or imposed, is the work of history. Therefore, Marx is philosophically anticipating the development of commodity as a form that is constituted by external, relational concepts, as the work of a spontaneous historical development that bears the many properties of each point of view (quality and quantity); securing the point made by Postone, that there is no historical development of one form bringing about another but rather forms that are mutually constitutive and driven by historical specificity to make certain qualities present and others latent. This appropriation of the manifold internalised in the commodity character as applied to the uses of things or their use-value (as the work of history), is immediately also applied by Marx to the «socially recognised standards of measurement for the quantities of these useful objects» (Marx 1990, 125); suggesting that the conceptual abstraction «exchange-value» is a manifestation of the conceptual subsumption of the manifold latent in the commodity. Hence the commodity contains within it a manifold that is susceptible to historical determination; its nature will change based on historical circumstances, different attributes will be externalised under different conditions.

The exchange-value is a relation that changes with time and place and therefore appears as a semblance (*Schein*) which is relative and therefore constitutive of the thing the value represents. However, the exchange-value is determined by a common element between commodities and therefore is a product of value-as-form. Since a given commodity will differ from another given commodity in its use-value, the common element must be given by way of its quantity and hence the «exchange relation of commodities is characterised precisely by its abstraction from their use-values» (Marx 1990, 127). Once we have conceptually disregarded the use-value of a commodity, what we are left with is only the property of the commodity as being a product of labour. According to Marx, commodities are

Merely congealed quantities of homogenous human labour, i.e. of human labour-power expended without regard to the form of the expenditure. All these things now tell us is that human labour-power has been expended to produce them, human labour is accumulated in them. As crystals of this social substance, which is common to them all, they are values, commodity values. (Marx 1990, 128).

It is from this point that Marx derives that generalised social labour is the common factor in the exchange relation. This common factor, generalised social labour, is value (both value-as-content and value-as-form), and only becomes presented as exchange-value in its phenomenal form of manifestation of value⁸. Marx goes on to explain the nature of value independent of this form of appearance in its phenomenal form, in order to develop the measure of value as an exchange-value. The measure of value is developed «by the means of the quantity of the value-forming substance», the labour contained in the article. This quantity is measure by its duration, and the labour-time is itself measured on the particular scale of hours, days etc» (Marx 1990, 129).

Therefore, the measure of value is based on the quantity of the labour itself, deriving its meaning from labour time.

Value's magnitude is determined by the socially necessary labour time for the production of the said commodity. Therefore, the objective character of exchange-value is an expression of a homogenous social substance: abstract labour. The objective character of value is purely social in character, a character that is manifested only within a social relation between one commodity and another commodity where the substance of value is abstract labour and the measure of its magnitude, exchange-value, is labour-time. What then is the form that «stamps the value as exchange-value»⁹ (Marx 1970, 131), and therefore as a common value form? The missing link in this exposition so far is the money form.

As we have seen, money first appears in *Capital, Volume I* as the form of appearance (appearing as a semblance) of abstract labour;

Because the abstract labour which Marx assumed to determine the value of commodities is not directly observable or recognizable as such, this abstract labour must acquire an objective 'form of appearance' which renders the values of all commodities observable and mutually comparable. This necessity of a common unified form of appearance of the abstract labour contained in commodities ultimately leads to the conclusion that this form of appearance must be money. Money is not an inessential illustration for labour-time. Money is the necessary form of appearance of labour-times. (Moseley 2015, 3)

8 This reading of the term «presentation (*Darstellung*)» is derived from Bellofiore's account in *Marx After Hegel: Capital as Totality and the Centrality of Production* (2016, 56).

9 This phrase is taken from Marx's *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* where Marx began to elaborate his ideas on money. These basic ideas on money developed in the *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* where significantly developed in *Capital, Volume I* based on conceptual changes tied to a renewed emphasis on language and therefore this text is not a primary conceptual resource for our understanding of money here. See de Brunhoff and Foley (2007).

If money is the necessary form of appearance of labour-time, then money is a temporalised form constituted by the durational time of circulation. Further, money as the form of appearance of labour time is the form of appearance of the value hidden in the commodity. The value relation appears as a social relation between one commodity and another commodity (based on their mutual hidden substance of value: labour). Yet, in order to establish commodity circulation, one commodity must be set apart from the function of being a relative form of value, as in the case of the commodity, in order to be an equivalent form of value. In this way, money takes on a form that is not reducible to a commodity form. Opposed, yet inseparable, their respective value determinations are relative as «there exists neither value, nor magnitude of value anywhere except in its expression by means of the exchange relation» (Marx 1990, 153).

In their emergence, both money and commodity rely on the money commodity (gold) for their mutually constituting structural relations. However, money, while finding its genesis in commodity, develops into a general form that is both a bearer of the universal measure of value and the form under which value can circulate from one form to another. What de Brunhoff emphasises in her monetary theory is that in this way money becomes a general form set apart from the commodity form (de Brunhoff 2015). Therefore, money is constructed by Marx as a necessary component of the structural composition of the value form as derived from the measure of labour time¹⁰ and the constitution of the commodity based on its fetish character as both use-value and exchange-value. These elements «commodity» and «money» are mutually constituting within the logical self-development of value, where money plays a necessary role as both a general equivalent of value and the medium of circulation of value. Money does this by mediating the change in forms of value through the application of measure that applies equivalences between things that are different, and therefore allows value to change forms from labour to commodity to capital. Money establishes its role based on its participation as a commodity that has at once a use-value and an exchange-value, measuring exchange by implementing a standard of price that is based on the measure of its own equivalence to the price of a commodity (while currencies have a price in their exchangeability between one another, money qua money has no price, another attribute differentiating it from the commodity form).

¹⁰ While value as content is measured by labour time, value as form is measured by money producing a monetary expression of labour time. The measurement occurs in exchange, something ideally anticipated within the production process (Bellofiore 2005, 133).

Money, a form of value without a price of its own, functions to determine the price of commodities due to its nature as being inversely proportional to all other commodities. As a form that functions to present value, money is the necessary mediator and relational mutually constitutive form that facilitates the possibility for the commodity to come into being as a commodity. Money is able to provide the commodity with its measure and its formal exchangeability, only because it is itself a commodity in its conceptualised material form (gold). This universal equivalent form, the gold as commodity, becomes money through social custom. It became universal and therefore transformed into the money form, only as it gained a monopoly as the presentation of value as content (*Darstellung*) of commodities (Marx 1990, 163). As de Brunhoff shows «gold is able to play the role of money in relation to other commodities because it has already played the role of commodity in relation to them» (de Brunhoff 2015, 23). And therefore, the historical reason for metal to function as money is logically subordinate to its theoretical reason as operating as at once a commodity and not a commodity (de Brunhoff 2015, 23). At the same time money develops as a money commodity, money must also be something different from all other commodities, something set apart. The general equivalent must at once remain a commodity to the extent that it “acts as if” it is a commodity relationally, while differing from all other commodities since, although it has value, it has no price. Like Fichte’s «I = I plus non-I», the general equivalent contains its own opposite. As de Brunhoff emphasises «without this, every commodity would be money and all money a simple commodity, so that there would be neither money nor commodity production in which private exchange presupposed private production» (de Brunhoff 2015, 23). Due to this role money plays in the development and intelligibility of value where money applies a measure of value to commodities in which a price is derived, and since money has no price of its own, we find that money is at once the most basic and abstract form of value.

De Brunhoff’s work on money reflects the way in which the commodity does not exist without the mutual constitution of money as the form that is taken on by abstract labour. Therefore, for de Brunhoff, as in Marx, money is the form that facilitates the capitalist mode of production due to its role in the extraction of surplus-value from living labour. The production of surplus-value or, «the increment of money that emerges at the end of the circuit of capital» is the very purpose of capitalist production (Moseley 2016, 9). However, de Brunhoff at the same time emphasises the need for an internally differentiated understanding of money’s role as not being a strictly capitalist form (although immanently capitalist). According to de

Brunhoff, what is side tracked in a purely value form reading (that focuses on money's fetish character), is the implication that due to the structure of the value form, money is a mechanism at the heart of capital relations with social, economic and political consequences that *exceed* money as a mere phenomenal appearance of value, especially in its more developed forms within the credit system. The emphasis on money as a phenomenal appearance of value (and the resulting centrality of commodity exchange) forces to the periphery the mediations that structure the analysis of value form. These mediations include the social, economic and political implications of historically specific forms of capital accumulation that are formative of the role of the state, wage relations, social reproduction, technological change, and the mode of labour (paid and unpaid).

4. Money as Capital

The first article representing the general position developed by the «Primo Maggio» working group on money was presented by Lapo Berti. Berti's article, *Denaro come Capitale*, («Money as Capital») appeared in issue 3-4 of «Primo Maggio» in 1974. One of the very few texts published as a result of the working groups efforts, the article aimed to understand the role money plays within the production process as a mechanism working to subordinate labour through a reading of «money as capital» (Wright 2014, 381). Relying on the premise that the crisis in monetary mechanisms on the global scale were «precisely a crisis of the functioning capitalist command on the basis of hitherto given relations of force», according to Berti, the fall in the dollar (at the heart of the monetary crisis of 1974) is a direct product of class conflict and therefore the crisis of the hegemony of American capital¹¹. For the working group this meant that central aspects of Marx's reading of money could no longer apply to this context.

At a 1975 conference organised by the working group titled «The Marxist discourse on money in light of the monetary crisis» (Berti *et al.* 2016, 22) a rare dialogue was triggered between the working group and de Brunhoff. In her insistence to maintain a commitment to both «money as money» and money as value form, de Brunhoff presented a paper that was

11 An argument that ignores the fact that however dominant the role of US capital, there is not one currency, nor is there one Central Bank. This point ignores the fact that on the one hand there are commercial strategies that could produce a devaluation of the dollar to increase and preserve the competitiveness of products from the United States within the world market, and on the other hand there are strategies that could keep the value of the dollar high with the purpose of exporting capital through investing abroad.

staunchly critical of the theoretical presupposition of «money as capital» in Berti's presentation of the working groups efforts. It is de Brunhoff's conviction that the point of view of «money as capital» is based on a method that through reintegration of concepts used in bourgeois political economy, fails to have a critical stance that is able to grasp the complex multifaceted nature of money in capitalist societies. In doing so she believed this undermined the legitimacy of the implications drawn from Berti's reading such as an understanding of money as an instrument of command over labour. De Brunhoff's presentation was published in issue 6 of «Primo Maggio» (de Brunhoff 1975, 47-51), and was accompanied by a response from Berti (1975, 39-45).

In reaction to the suspension of the convertibility of the dollar into gold in 1971, monetary economics had largely developed based on the rejection of the relationship developed by Marx between the money form and the extraction of surplus value from labour (de Brunhoff and Foley 2007, 202). This is precisely the line Berti *et al.* had followed; the final 1971 replacement of the gold standard by state debt¹², serving as both a national unit of account and means of circulation, means that there is no longer a commodity produced by labour time functioning as the link between labour and the accumulation of value. With this in mind, Berti claimed the category «commodity money»

No longer correspond[ed] immediately to the actual capitalist reality [because after 1971] the creation of money, with all the consequences that this process entails in terms of the distribution of income and the economy's equilibrium, is now a process that depends, in a theoretically unlimited measure, upon the decisions of the central bank. (Berti 1974, 5)

In contrast, for de Brunhoff, because the role of money as commodity put into place a historical social form, the elimination of the convertibility of currencies, and therefore money, into gold (be this its 1933 variation or that of the subsequent international monetary regulations of Bretton Woods from 1944-1971) does not change the formal dynamics of the form of money as commodity. Since money's origins are in gold as a standard, this brings into being its formal structure that nonetheless continues to define

12 The gold standard has been in decline since 1933 when gold had been greatly devalued from one-twentieth of an ounce of gold (the conversion rate of the US dollar to gold from 1791-1933) to one thirty-fifth of an ounce of gold. Since 1933, gold had been increasingly demonetised and replaced by state debt in both international and domestic contexts, something that was imposed further by international policy through the Bretton Woods agreement in 1944. See de Brunhoff and Foley (2007).

money, regardless of whether we continue to use the gold standard from which the form originated.

What de Brunhoff claims we miss when theorizing money as capital are the inner workings of the social conditions that allow a use-value to become money based on Marx's project to show how commodity production is based on the retroactive social validation of abstract labour contained in the commodity. This immediately private labour is validated as social *ex post* in universal exchange, or the final exchange on the commodity market, providing commodity with its social character through the final monetary validation. Generalised social labour only becomes so when the commodity is sold and thus is given a price that *ex post* represents (*Darstellung*) an amount of money. It is this universality (homogenous social labour) imposed retrospectively onto the commodity that makes it exchangeable with money, since money represents the general equivalent, or the expression of the relative value that expresses all other values. And therefore by abandoning the role of surplus-value in his understanding of money, Berti also abandons a critical reading of political economy where money as general equivalent is a formal expression of social relations in the abstract.

De Brunhoff locates four key conceptual problems behind Berti's reading. Firstly, she locates that because Berti's analysis lacks an understanding of «money as money», his analysis of money as capital reduces money to a relation of a production, ignoring its role as an independent variable. Secondly, by placing money at the starting point of his analysis in capitalist financing, Berti condemns «money» to be no longer a critical category. When money is placed as a starting point it becomes taken for granted as providing the ground for economics without thought to its contradictory role within the context of a larger whole; this leads to the negation of its history as a commodity form and its function as a medium of circulation and measure of value. Thirdly, Berti approaches the gold standard from the point of view of Keynes who in 1923 claimed gold was a barbaric relic. This led to the abandoning of the difference between Marx's conception of gold as a universal currency and the gold standard. From the point of view of the gold standard proposition, money is understood as a currency that is regulated by the central bank that controls and regulates how much is being circulated based on the conditions of the world market. This simplistic formula used in the Keynesian tradition places a disproportionate emphasis on the power of the Central Bank. This leads to a Keynesian understanding of inflation, where the degradation of the value of a currency is seen as directly related to an increase in government spending that then results in the "vicious cycle" of higher prices combined with the

increase of wages. This orientation, abandons a Marxist analysis of production and circulation. From Marx's point of view, the increase of value of a currency rather needs to be read through circulation of value as social form combined with the understanding that wages and prices are not mutually constitutive since the labour power of the unemployed (industrial reserve army) function to keep wages down. Ultimately, Berti in borrowing from Keynes, masks capital as a social relation. Finally, de Brunhoff shows that there are certain points that Berti's conception does not enable us to deduce including the artificial assurance of the realization of surplus value, rising unemployment and the vanishing of class struggle at certain points in the capitalist cycle. According to Berti, within the world market, money as credit acts as capital in that it controls or exerts "command" over labour. However, Berti can only establish this direct link between credit and class struggle through relying on a conception of the dollar crisis that excludes the relations of production. Further, the exclusion of production from the equation does not allow us to explain the money form of capital, a form of capital that allows for the purchase of labour power (a relation of class) as distinct from credit money, a form that is not based on labour but on a relation to the central bank; a distinction regarding the essence of the the forms. According to de Brunhoff, if we identify credit as money capital we lose the distinction between money, credit and money capital that are central to understanding the circulation of capital and therefore the specificity of the labour relation and the mode of social reproduction within the larger dynamic of circulation. To ignore these formal distinctions is to also ignore Marx's critique more generally and to rely on the use of concepts of «money» used in the tradition of classical economics that, due to their lack of criticality, don't allow us to see the nature of the social relationships in which the forms are mediating. What de Brunhoff significantly calls for is a reevaluation of the working groups conclusions in light of an account of the inclusion of production combined with a critical application of economic categories.

De Brunhoff was nonetheless heavily influenced by the working group's focus on the management of money by the bank and the state, something that she had neglected in her book *Marx on Money*. Her later book *The State, Capital and Economic Policy* (originally published in French in 1976) was heavily informed by her engagement with the working group especially the working group's conviction that «the crisis of the international monetary system cannot be understood without a strong institutional and political component being incorporated into Marx's analysis of objective laws» (Lucarelli 2013). As a result, this debate provided an un-

expected underlying link between these two seemingly discrete traditions of Western Marxism leaving us with helpful tools for finding a way into understanding these still largely unresolved questions as they apply to our current context. Importantly, what both the «Primo Maggio» group and de Brunhoff understood was that in order to make sense of the intensified role of the credit system in the context of the suspension of the dollars convertibility in 1971 and corresponding increased circulation of financialised forms of money, our analysis needs to look at the ways in which production and consumption are financed and determined on an institutional basis that is not strictly capitalist¹³. De Brunhoff's conceptualization of «money as money» reflects this dynamic in its very form since money acts as money qua money, and not as commodity or capital during certain moments within the process of circulation. What is so powerful about de Brunhoff's standpoint is her insistence on the logic of capital as the overarching foundation for this analysis, based on a close commitment to Marx's presentation of money across all three volumes of *Capital*.

De Brunhoff's monetary theory therefore provides the conceptual tools to analyze not only the role of banking capital and interest bearing capital from the point of view of the money form, but how these forms and institutions are implicated in both the realm of production and the social reproduction of societies as these forms and institutions base themselves on social relationships that are not strictly determined by the fetish character of the value form; a mode of analysis that requires us to understand money as a distinct form that is both separate from and immanent to capital. A

13 The Italian «theory of monetary circuit» (TMC), also reflects this contextual and theoretical convergence, where a theory of value is developed without commodity money. Figures associated with this reading include Augusto Graziani (1997 and 2003) and Riccardo Bellofiore (2005 and 2016). In solidarity with the work of Marcello Messori of the «Primo Maggio» working group on money, Bellofiore who also worked with the group, developed a reinterpretation of capital that retains the capital-labour relation while also claiming money is not a commodity. This is developed on the basis of an interpretation of socialisation (*vergesellschaftung*) in Marx where Bellofiore claims there are three different concepts of socialisation formed in relation to capital's valorization: 1) *ex post*: the socialisation that occurs on the commodity market at the point of the final exchange or the final monetary validation, 2) «immediate socialisation» occurring with the immediate production process and 3) *ex ante*: the monetary validation that initially takes place through the banking system at the point of sale and purchase of labour power. The third form of socialisation, added by Bellofiore, is based on what he calls «anti-validation» and functions to integrate the role of the bank as financing production, into the dynamics of valorization. To do this, bank financing has to be understood not only as based on socialization of abstract labour, but on the basis of a different concept of «socialisation» than that of *ex post* and «immediate socialisation». This third form of socialisation is on the basis of a monetary theory of value without money as a commodity. See Bellofiore (2005, 131 and 2016).

significant aspect of de Brunhoff's work that requires further attention is her emphasis on the role of non-capitalist institutions as necessary for the reproduction of both social life (through the wage relation and *de facto* the reproduction of life qua life of members of society) and the reproduction of money as a general equivalent; two sides effectively reproduced formally through the movement of money's circulation. As de Brunhoff has emphasised, it is at the point of analysis of credit money where non-capitalist institutions intervene due to the very formal dynamic of the value form. Because credit money is advanced before final realization of capital, credit money is not valorised value and therefore is not dictated by the autonomy of the value form. Outside of capital, but immanent to it, according to de Brunhoff, «non-capitalist» institutions are structurally implicated at the level of credit and finance (State, Central Banks, Financial institutions) on the very basis of Marx's formal account of value. It is only through a reading of capital committed to understanding «money as money» that we are able to locate within Marx's account of social form the internal complexity of subjection to capitalist social relations that are not determined by the fetish character only.

To conclude, the legacy of de Brunhoff's Marxist monetary theory has meaningful implications for our analysis of how to interpret the nature of capital today especially in its financialised forms. This is why this article argues for the need to ground our analysis of capital in a commitment to reading «money as money». In the context of heavily financialised markets structuring social life today, this mode of inquiry is indispensable as more and more subjection becomes determined by the circulation of credit money, and not money that is formally valorised. Therefore, although it is necessary to account for these non-capitalist forms of subjection to be understood as rooted in the fetish character of the capital relation (as is the case in de Brunhoff's account of money as immanent exteriority), to understand the ways in which social life is subjected to capital today we need to pay more attention to the interplay between capitalist and non-capitalist forms and institutions. Suzanne de Brunhoff's Marxist Monetary Theory, as influenced by her encounter with the journal «Primo Maggio», therefore offers to us invaluable insight into any attempt to understand current power relations from a Marxian perspective; a mode of analysis that is especially useful for any attempt to address the possibility of a counter subject to capital.

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