

Between Trauma and Transformation: Plasticity and the Dynamics of the Class Relation

by Daniel Fraser

Abstract

This project seeks to demonstrate the efficacy of plasticity for understanding the capital-labour relation. Attesting to the relevance of Malabou's plastic materialism in understanding the function of form in the dynamics of capitalist social relations, the research develops its own account of plasticity through its conceptual application providing an interpretation of form's activity that can be mobilised in political territory more radical than the conclusions drawn in Malabou's work. This plastic reading is structured by three encounters which shape the role of form in Marx's texts: at the systemic level with critique and dialectics; as well as the biogenico-historical economy of subjectivity, and finally the destructive futurity of revolution. After outlining the dynamic structure of the class relation and the concept of plasticity as it is conceived by Malabou, the research begins with a close analysis of form in Marx's texts, and the motive elements of mediation and dialectics, establishing a current of explosive critique in the Marxian elaboration of form and a plastic transformative capacity inscribed in Marx's dialectical movement. The subsequent exploration of subjectivity draws this analysis into Marx's anthropological account of being, examining the biological and historical economy through which subjectivation occurs in capital. Utilising the movement of plasticity it demonstrates that the plastic subject of capital is the capital-labour relation itself: the continually reformed basic social relation of struggle by which capital is constituted. The truly plastic nature of capital thereby requires a transformative rupture.