

Classical Political Economy, Ethics, Metaphysics and ‘Knowledge-Based Economy’ OR Demystifying the Mystified¹ (Some considerations on commodified knowledge and the self)

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I. Introduction

The term Knowledge Economy (KE) or Knowledge Based Economy (KBE) is used in a loose way to refer to the researches, developments and economic activities in Information and Communication Technology. In recent years many other terms have been invented and many others will follow to describe similar developments in other areas of production and consumption. In short, the technological developments centred around information and communication technology towards the end of the 20th century have transformed already significantly the social landscape and reshaped the material basis of society, as Manuel Castells points out.

What I am going to say below is more a description of a framework for a research project on the theory of the self and Knowledge Based Economy (KBE) and some first considerations rather than a draft of a paper. This project is part of a more general and long-term research project on the theory and situation of the self in new and modern times. It has a theoretical and an empirical aspect. The term ‘theory’ in the title of my research project refers to the philosophical and methodological debates since Descartes on the constitution of the self. The term ‘situation’ in the title points to the projected aim which is to examine critically spheres of socialisation in general and in capitalist society in particular. It is a multi-disciplinary project and involves philosophical, social, economic, political and ethical issues.

The debate on KBE has at least three aspects: first, it refers to technology and technological developments, second, it points to science and the history of science and third, it concerns philosophical, social and political aspects. In what follows my focus will be on the last-mentioned aspect of the debate.

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II. The concept of knowledge involves necessarily the concept of subject

The subject of the debate on KBE is knowledge and knowledge involves always the concept of the subject of knowledge, simply, because there cannot be any knowledge without a cognising subject. Despite all the fundamental differences and contradictions between various schools of epistemology, the theory of the self has always been in one way or another a central category. In the Cartesian-Kantian tradition the subject is supposed to be absolute. I think, however, that the subject of knowledge is not absolute, but absolutely necessary. For the sake of brevity let me refer to James Ferrier who invented and introduced the term epistemology into European metaphysics in *Institutes of Metaphysics*. Ferrier says:

The object of knowledge, whatever it may be, is always something more than what is naturally or usually regarded as the object. It always is, and must be, the object with the addition of oneself, - object plus subject, - thing or thought, *mecum*. Self is an integral and essential part of every object of cognition.²

Ferrier defines here any form of epistemological investigation as a form of subject-object relation. The subject is always the self of cognition. From a sociological perspective we may prefer to say that the subject is always society or, if you prefer the plural, the subjects are always human beings. The object may be a natural object or nature in general. It can also be an individual or society in general. But it can also be a theoretical issue like knowledge or truth referring to nature through a number of mediating instances. In short, everything that is examined from a theoretical, theoretical-practical or practical-theoretical point of view may be the object of cognition. Therefore, when we talk about knowledge as in the debate on KBE we necessarily also talk about the subject of knowledge.

Every cognitive situation is an inter-subjective situation of communicative action and involves the natural, social and intellectual world. The best description of a typical cognitive situation I could find is in Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations*. Husserl says:

I perceive the others and as real beings, in changeable, unanimous manifolds of experience, namely, on the one hand, as objects of the world; not merely as natural things (though as to one aspect also this). They are, however, also experienced as psychical acting beings in their natural bodies. Therefore, they are "in" the world as

² Ferrier, J. F., *Institutes of Metaphysics: The Theory of Knowing and Being*, p. 97.

“psychic-physical” objects interwoven with bodies in a peculiar way. On the other hand, I experience them at the same time as subjects for this world, as experiencing this world, and the same world which I, my self, experience, and thereby I experience me, as how I experience them and in this I experience the others.’³

What does this description reveal?

Firstly, we all perceive and cognise ourselves in relation to one another and in relation to the external natural world in its broad sense.

Secondly, we all perceive and cognise ourselves in relation to one another and in relation to our social world.

Thirdly, we perceive and cognise others in relation to one another and in relation to us.

Fourthly, we perceive and cognise ourselves in relation to others and to ourselves. As already Locke pointed out in *Human Understanding* any situation of perception is at the same time self-perception.

I will not be able to examine all these different aspects in relation to KBE. But it is worth highlighting an idea of the complexity of any cognitive situation when we talk about knowledge. What I am going to do below is to look at the concept of the self and relate this then to the concept of knowledge.

III. Peter Drucker’s mystification of the subject

What is the subject and what is the object in the debate on KBE? I would like to work out the situation of the subject of knowledge in KBE by going back to Peter F. Drucker. I take here Drucker as representing the mainstream management theory. He represents a view that describes in a positivist sense the situation of the self and knowledge as they are in a market society.

In *Post-Capitalist Society* Drucker defines the knowledge under consideration in the debate by saying ‘knowledge is being applied to knowledge’. (18) He defines here a subject-object relation. I am not sure whether he does this consciously. But he clearly formulates here a subject-object relation. If we come across such formulations as that of Drucker, we usually incline to think of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* the subject of which is to consider the ‘being as being’, to investigate the first causes and principles, in short, the truth. But this is not what Drucker seems to think of. Drucker does not want to think about thought as thought, being as being, first principles or truth. At least since the 18th century if we think of the subject-object relation we usually think of human beings or society acting upon nature or natural objects by means of

³ Husserl (1992), vol. 8, p.93.

labour. But in Drucker's formulation there are no human beings, there is no society, there is no nature, there is no labour. There is only an impersonal knowledge which is being applied to another impersonal knowledge. Somewhere in his book he says that explicitly. He claims that land, capital and labour are no longer factors of production. (5) In Drucker's formulation there seem to be a third person perspective. This third person, an invisible, an impersonal and therefore mystified subject, applies knowledge to knowledge. The knowledge that is being applied is considered as object. But there is another knowledge that is being applied to. The object is being applied to the object.

If we can decipher Drucker's construction of the subject-object relation we may also be able to work out more accurately the concept of knowledge from a mainstream management theoretician's point of view. This, in turn, would enable us to undertake some critical considerations about this concept. Drucker often speaks of 'knowledge workers'. He defines them at the same time as managers of knowledge and employees in knowledge organisations. 'The leading groups of knowledge society', says Drucker, 'will be "knowledge workers" – knowledge executives who know how to allocate knowledge to productive use – just as the capitalist knew how to allocate capital to productive use; knowledge professionals; knowledge employees.' (7) His definition of knowledge workers as managers might be taken at first sight as referring to the above-mentioned impersonal and mystified subject. But his definition of knowledge workers as employees in knowledge organisations would shift our look to a higher instance, to the employer. But who or what is the knowledge organisation? Drucker sometimes speaks of 'new knowledge' and 'old knowledge'. (169) His concept of new knowledge might be taken as referring to knowledge which is being applied and his concept of old knowledge might be taken as referring to the knowledge which is being applied to. But what is the old and what is the new knowledge? Who is the subject applying the new to old knowledge? But then he says that 'Value is now created by "productivity" and "innovation", both applications of knowledge to work.' (7) Work is in any case a much broader concept than knowledge. How can we get our head round all these, from philosophical point of view, confusing statements?

Drucker seems to describe here between the lines the production process of knowledge from a capitalist's point of view. Therefore, whichever sphere of production of knowledge we look at we find in his description the subject of the production of knowledge described as object and knowledge which is produced object of the object. To make sense of all these we need to refer to Marx. In his definition of capital Marx differentiates between 'constant capital' and 'variable capital'. Constant capital refers to all sorts of the means of production, whereas variable capital points to the labour force. In the production process the means of production do not add

any new value to the product. They are merely used to produce the proposed new product and as such they are merely reproduced in the form of value in the product. In the production process it is the variable labour which adds new value to the product.⁴ Marx calls constant capital sometimes also dead labour and variable capital living labour. Drucker seems to employ this concept of capital of Marx in a positivist sense. His concept of the old knowledge may be taken as referring to dead labour and his concept of the new knowledge as referring to living labour. His hesitation to define a clear subject of the production of knowledge has something to do with his point of view. In Marx's view capitalists are personifications of capital and they regard the production process at the same time as the reproduction process of capital. From the capitalist's point of view the agent of production, the living labour, appears to be an object, because it is regarded as part of capital and capitalists cannot define themselves as the agent of production because they are outside the production as Marx points out in his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* from 1844. But there is another reason why in Drucker's account of the production of knowledge the subject appears to be impersonal. This has to do with his view of knowledge as commodity. But in Drucker's work there is no justification of the definition of knowledge as commodity. He takes it for granted.

IV. The definition of knowledge as commodity

There is a OECD report from 1996 which does not justify knowledge as commodity but it defines what kind of knowledge is liable to commodification. The OECD report differentiates between four types of knowledge. These are 'know-what', 'know-why', 'know-how' and 'know-who'. The concept of know-what points to knowledge about facts like how many people live in Britain, what are the ingredients of a drink or food and historical facts like when was World-War II, how many people were killed during World War I and so on. The OECD report calls this type of knowledge 'information'. It can be broken into bits and sold to experts in different areas. The concept of know-why 'refers to scientific knowledge of the principles and laws of nature. This kind of knowledge underlies technological development and product and process advances in most industries. The production and reproduction of know-why is often organised in specialised organisations, such as research laboratories and universities.' (p. 12) According to the report 'know-what' and 'know-why' are those 'types of knowledge which come closest to being market commodities or economic resources to be fitted into economic production functions. Other types of knowledge – particularly know-how and know-who – are more "*tacit knowledge*" and are more difficult to codify and measure' and therefore to commodify.

⁴ Marx, K., Capital, A Critique of Political Economy, Vol. I, p. 202.

The commodity theory of knowledge seems to have been formulated first by American Pragmatists, especially and more explicitly by Charles Sanders Pierce. I take pragmatism as a form of descriptive and therefore positivist realism as opposed to critical realism. Pierce's description of knowledge as commodity may give us a clearer picture than that of Drucker, for example, and it may, therefore, involve less demystifying work and help us to save time if we rely on Pierce's description. Pierce asserts:

The value of knowledge is, for the purpose of science, in one sense absolute. It is not to be measured, it may be said, in money; in one sense that is true. But knowledge that leads to other knowledge is more valuable in proportion to the trouble it saves in the way of expenditure to get that other knowledge. Having a certain fund of energy, time, money, etc., all of which are merchantable articles to spend upon research, the question is how much is to be allowed to each investigation; and *for us* the value of that investigation is the amount of money it will pay us to spend upon it. *Relatively*, therefore, knowledge, even of a purely scientific kind, has a money value.⁵

Clearly, Pierce defines here knowledge, on the one hand, as a goal in itself, as an absolutely necessary prerequisite to promote scientific development. In that respect knowledge cannot be measured in terms of 'money value'. But, on the other hand, he defines knowledge in terms of 'money value', that is, in terms of commodity which can be bought and sold like anything else. When Pierce says that the 'value of knowledge is, for the purpose of science, in one sense absolute. It is not to be measured, it may be said, in money' he defines knowledge as what political economists call 'use-value'. But when he asserts: 'knowledge, even of a purely scientific kind, has a money value' he defines knowledge as what political economists call 'exchange-value'. And according to political economists this is what commodity consists of, namely of use-value and exchange-value.

Most recently Nicholas Rascher has tried to apply Pierce's theory of knowledge to what he calls 'cognitive economy'. According to Rascher's account knowledge brings benefits and it causes costs. With regard to the benefits of knowledge he differentiates between theoretical or purely cognitive and practical benefit. Like Pierce, he says that the 'theoretical/cognitive benefits of knowledge relate to its satisfaction in and for itself, for understanding is an end unto itself...'. According to Rascher the theoretical/cognitive benefits of knowledge as a goal in itself derive

⁵ Pierce, CH. Sanders, Collected Papers, vol. 1, sec. 1.122 (c. 1896), Cambridge, MA, 1931.

from human nature. ‘To be ignorant of what goes on about us is almost physically painful for us...’ (7) We all require therefore information for ‘cognitive orientation within our environment’ (6) and hence the need for knowledge ‘is as pressing a human need as that for food itself. We are rational animals and must feed our mind even as we must feed our bodies.’ (6) But then Rascher turns to what he calls the ‘economic dimension’ of knowledge. He defines knowledge as ‘*cognitive capital*’ and claims: ‘[k]nowledge (...) is a good of sorts – a commodity on which one can put a price tag and which can be bought and sold much like any other’ commodity. (4-5)

If we have a closer look at Pierce’s and Rascher’s formulations, we may have good reason to doubt the accuracy of their knowledge of political economy. For what Pierce calls ‘money value’ or what Rascher calls ‘price’ refers to the relative market prices of commodities, which may sometimes overlap with exchange-value but is not the same as exchange-value, as political economists long time ago asserted. But it is not from the works of classical economy that they derive their commodity-theories of knowledge but everyday-life observations where almost everything is commodified. But their confusion about the price and exchange-value of commodity is not of crucial importance here. What matters more is that their lack of knowledge of political economy leads them to assume something as natural, which from the political economist’s point of view is anything but natural. It concerns their concept of knowledge as use-value and exchange-value at the same time.

V. The statement of the paradox of values in classical political economy

But what is the use-value and what is the exchange-value of knowledge and how do they relate to one another?

When Pierce and Rascher define knowledge in terms of use-value and exchange-value they formulate here what is now called the ‘paradox of values’. What does the paradox of values mean? It means that there is a mutual negative motion in the relationship between use-value and exchange-value. The formulation of this paradox goes back to Adam Smith. In *Wealth of Nations* Smith differentiates between ‘value in use’ and ‘value in exchange’. The former refers to the utility of an object, whereas the latter points to ‘the power of purchasing other goods’. He observes that ‘The things which have the greatest value in use have frequently little or no value in exchange; and on the contrary, those which have the greatest value in exchange have little or no value in use.’ (WN I, p. 44) In *On the Principles of Political Economy and Taxation* David Ricardo has put the paradox of value at the beginning of political economy and shifted our look closer to the mutual negation process between use-value and exchange-value. He observed that in the exchange of commodities use-value, that is, the quality of a commodity, is taken for granted but it is never

part of the consideration. But neither Ricardo nor Smith analyses this mutual negation process. They merely assert the paradox and investigate the exchange-value.

VI. Marx's analysis of the paradox of values

We owe the thorough analysis of the paradox to the painstaking work of Karl Marx. The best analysis of commodity, which hitherto has been given, is therefore, I think, by Marx. Though he is concerned about material commodities, he analyses the nature of commodity. Therefore, I think his insightful critical analysis may also be applied to the critical analysis of commodity-theory of knowledge. But I think we need to undertake some terminological adaptations.

Marx defines commodity as an object without. In his analysis of commodity, like classical political economists, Marx differentiates between the 'use-value' and the 'exchange-value' of the commodity. The use-value refers to the properties of the object without, which in one way or another satisfy bodily and intellectual needs. Therefore, the 'utility of a thing makes it a use-value.' (44) The discovery of the properties is the work of history and they are limited by the physical properties of the object. In other words, the use-value is an intrinsic value. The appropriation of the properties of the objects is independent of the work required. If they satisfy certain needs human beings put every effort into appropriating them. Use-values realise themselves by consumption and as such they constitute the substance of all wealth – independent of the social form of that wealth.

Terminological adaptation concerns Marx's definition of commodity as an object without. Knowledge refers directly or indirectly to objects without but knowledge itself is a mental object. I do not think, therefore, that in the case of knowledge we can say that its utility makes it use-value. Rather, I prefer to say that truthfulness of knowledge makes it use-value, because knowledge is the aimed result of the cognitive processes of human beings and it can satisfy human needs adequately if it corresponds to the facts within and without and if it is therefore true. By correspondence I do not only mean the description of phenomenological dimensions but also ontological dimensions and intentional aspects. Unlike Aristotle, by truth I do not mean only philosophical or theoretical knowledge but also practical knowledge. And again differing from Aristotle essentially, I regard the appropriation of all sorts of knowledge as forms of praxis.

Marx says that the discovery of the properties of the object is the work of history. In an analogy to this and in agreement with Hegel we can say that the discovery and validity of the truthfulness of knowledge and of the ways in which it may satisfy human needs is the work of history. Similarly, the appropriation of knowledge and the discovery of truth is independent of the work required. In their life human beings are always confronted with questions regarding

their intellectual and social lives. Especially, if these questions are related to the satisfaction of existential needs human beings put enormous effort, energy and time into answering them. Marx says that use-values realise themselves by consumption and as such they constitute the substance of all wealth – independent of the social form of that wealth. Knowledge cannot be said to realise itself by consumption, though people in the cultural industry tend to talk in terms of consumption. I prefer rather to say that knowledge realises itself in two ways. First, by contributing to the enlightenment of people in inter-subjective situations of communicative action and, second, by application to the production of intellectual as well as material goods. Accumulated practical and theoretical knowledge, then, constitutes the intellectual wealth of a given society independent of the social form of that wealth.

But says Marx in capitalist society use-values are also depositories of exchange-values. Exchange-values are not qualitative relations as is the case with use-values but they are quantitative relations. The exchange-value of one sort of use-value expresses the proportion in which a use-value is exchanged with another sort of use-value. Therefore, exchange-values change with time and place. Consequently, exchange-values appear to be absolutely accidental and relative and consequently intrinsic as use-value. But says Marx this is a contradiction in terms. Let us take for example two commodities and suppose that a quantity of wheat is exchanged for x amount of paint and so on. This means that the exchange-value of a commodity must have many relative exchange-values and it must always exchange in an equal proportion. That is to say that commodities must contain something that is not intrinsic and therefore distinguishable from them. Otherwise, they cannot be equated. They must be able to be reduced to a third. This third which is common to all commodities cannot derive from their qualities, that is, from their use-values because one quality is just as good as any other quality. Thus exchange of commodities is a total abstraction of use-value, that is, from qualities. As use-values commodities are different qualities. But as exchange-values they are merely different quantities abstracted from any sort of quality.

What qualifies things as goods or use-value? Their certain properties or qualities. Quantitative aspects concern only the time that was necessary to produce them, which must be taken into account to plan production. But if goods are turned into commodities there comes into play a mutual negation process between qualitative and quantitative dimensions of goods. If they are considered in terms of their qualities their quantitative dimensions must be abstracted from them because as specific goods they are absolutely necessary to satisfy certain human needs. If they are, however, considered in terms of their exchange-values their qualitative dimensions must be abstracted from them because without this abstraction they cannot be equated and

exchanged. It is this mutual negation between use-value and exchange-value that is now called the paradox of values.

Let me bring in a further aspect and then move on to apply our findings to the commodity theory of knowledge.

Marx says that if in the exchange process commodities are reduced to a third, this third can only derive from human labour because commodities are products of human labour. But he goes on and asserts that under the conditions of capitalist society labour has undergone a considerable change as well. The products are products of concrete labour, say, labour of joiner, mason or spinner. But if we abstract from use-value as we do in the exchange of commodities we abstract from geometrical, physical and chemical properties of goods, which make them use-value. We regard them no longer as tables, houses or yarns but products of the same abstract human labour. As a result of this abstraction process there remains only a 'ghostly object'. And if we put out of sight the properties of goods we disregard at the same time the concrete forms of labour. They are then reduced to the same sort of abstract human labour – a ghostly activity.

VII. Marx's analysis of the paradox of values applied to the commodity theory of knowledge

Let us now apply Marx's analysis of commodity to the commodity theory of knowledge. As I said above, all sorts of knowledge, particular and general, practical and theoretical, are productions of concrete human activities. The production of knowledge is a historical as well as a social cooperative process of individuals as well as of society. The fact that we live in a society dominated by the division of labour does not change the nature of knowledge as a social product. But it can only be the product of socially embedded concrete individuals.

Knowledge refers to the concept of truth and truthfulness and these constitute their use-values. But in KBE, knowledge is dealt with as a commodity like any other. In the exchange process of knowledge as commodity, that is, its quality as a particular (practical or theoretical) form of truth must be abstracted from it. In the exchange process what counts is not whether the knowledge in question is true or not, but its exchange-values. In the exchange process the truthfulness of knowledge assumes then the form of an abstract knowledge without any quality, a ghostly mental product. But at least since Aristotle's *Metaphysics* we know that to know whether a knowledge-claim is true, whether it satisfies certain needs it must be considered in its concrete form. I take the concept of concrete in its dialectical sense as comprising the particular as well as the universal, which I gain by a materialist interpretation of Leibniz's theory of monads.

This exchange process of knowledge as commodity is at the same time an abstraction process of concrete labours, from the concrete labour of a philosopher in epistemology, metaphysics, aesthetics and ethics; from the concrete labour of a sociologist, of an empirical researcher, mathematician and so on and so forth. In the exchange process all sorts of concrete knowledge labours are reduced to an abstract human labour without any quality. In the exchange process of knowledge as commodity concrete labours cannot be recognised because they are abstracted from. On the contrary, they must be negated, they must be ignored. Otherwise, knowledge cannot be exchanged as a commodity. It is this view of knowledge as commodity that hinders Drucker in determining the subject of knowledge.

VIII. Commodity theory of knowledge and communication

The problems involved in the commodity theory of knowledge may be clearer if we look at the issues in question from a communication theoretical point of view, which will bring us back closer to the theory of the self. What does the commodification of knowledge and consequently what does the mutual negation process and abstraction process mean to communication?

In the case of knowledge which is the object of commodification in KBE there are at least three aspects of abstraction. The first one is what I have worked out above by referring back to Marx's analysis of commodity. The second one concerns the development of information and communication systems into what some people call 'mass communication'. Raymond Williams criticised this concept of communication as nonsense. The third aspect concerns the mathematical abstraction of knowledge. Husserl referred to this form of abstraction as very problematic because it is accompanied by the loss of the particular, which would undermine any form of communication. I am leaving out the last two aspects of abstraction. Here I am concerned about the mutual abstraction process in the exchange of knowledge as commodity. I will point out just three aspects.

First, as I said above all human relations are in one way or another inter-subjective actions. They are very often spontaneous actions – even the most planned actions involve a lot of spontaneity. And all human relations are always communicative actions. The question about the principle which serves as the basis of human relation has been the subject of a long debate between Adam Smith and David Hume. Hume claimed that it was the principle of utility. Smith, on the contrary, suggested that it was the principle of sympathy. Utility, Smith argued, is an afterthought. It does not take into account the fact that almost all human relations are spontaneous and take place without any regard to utility. The utilitarian concept regards human relations as exchange relations of some kind of quantitative values, which I call in agreement with

Smith 'commercial-exchange relations'. If we rely on the utilitarian concept we must regard others always as some sort of an amount of exchangeable quantitative value. Perceptions are always at the same time self-perceptions. By perceiving others we perceive at the same time ourselves in relation to others. If we perceive others as some kind of exchangeable amount of quantitative value we perceive at the same time ourselves as some sort of exchangeable quantitative value. Commercial exchange-relations mean 'give me that much of that and I will give you that much of this'.

Let us now apply this to the theory of knowledge. From commodity theory of knowledge's point of view everybody is the possessor of a certain amount of quantitative knowledge – theoretical and practical. If we rely on the concept of utility, strictly speaking, we must set a contract before we open our mouth because in every situation of communicative action as soon as we open our mouth we exchange experiences and ideas. Many established jobs and professions in the service sector function in accordance with this principle. If you need a lawyer or a financial adviser, for example, you have to sign a contract and pay a certain amount of money. If you are not able to pay the amount of money required you won't receive the service you seek. It is perhaps because of this that many people break copyrights and intellectual property laws to enjoy the advantages of information and communication technology. But what would happen if we were to apply this principle to inter-subjective situations of communicative action in everyday life? Would there be any communication at all if we observed the utility principle in its strict sense? This consideration was the reason for Smith to reject the utility principle as the basis of human relations. His *Theory of Moral Sentiments* is a unique work on ethics and epistemology and devoted to showing why the principle of utility cannot serve as the basis of human relations.

Second, it is an historical achievement of Hobbes and Smith to have determined human relations in bourgeois society in terms of power relations. In Hobbes' work there is hardly any analysis of the cause or causes why human relations assumed the form of power relations. It was Smith who first endeavoured to analyse the meaning of commercial exchange relations and his conclusion is that commercial exchange relations are mutual power and command relations. If knowledge is commodity like any other thing that is bought and sold then the exchange of knowledge and ideas becomes a mutual power and command relation. But knowledge is supposed to be a need to enlighten our world, to give conscious direction to our life. If people should not be able to pay the amount of money to acquire knowledge then they are excluded from acquiring knowledge and will live in darkness in the middle of the accumulated wealth of knowledge.

Third, let me come back to what Marx says about the abstraction process in exchange relations. As I said above the abstraction of the properties of commodities in the exchange process is also an abstraction of concrete labour of, say, philosophers, political theorists, anthropologists and so on so forth. In relation to communication theory this means that in the exchange process of knowledge as commodity human beings reduce one another to an abstract human being. That is to say that they abstract from all those qualities those which make them individuals. If individuals exchange their theoretical and/or practical knowledge as commodity they negate one another rather than recognise one another as concrete individuals. If they do not recognise one another this means that they do not communicate with one another if they are involved in commercial exchange relations. We may therefore conclude that in our entirely commodified world there is hardly any communication.

IX. Conclusions

In his book *The End of Work*, after having explored the effects of new technologies Jeremy Rifkin comes to the conclusion that new technologies will immensely enhance the productivity of production and under contemporary conditions of production this will add millions and millions to the army of unemployed people. Therefore he sees two alternatives for policy planning and making bodies. They must either built prisons to imprison them or they must subsidise new jobs in the so-called third sector. However, Rifkin's description of the situation implies a more radical solution. In his book *Preparing for the twenty-first century* Paul Michael Kennedy looks at the enhancement of productivity under contemporary conditions in an international context. He concludes that only transnational or multinational monopolies will profit from the enhancement of the productivity of production and underdeveloped countries will remain despite all changes underdeveloped under changed circumstances. But he suggests also that technological developments give us the opportunity to redefine the concept of labour. This means that we have also the opportunity to reconsider essentially the way we live. In her book *Human Condition*, though Hannah Arendt attacks Marx, she nonetheless admits that Marx is the greatest labour theoretician in the history of European philosophy. In the face of new developments in KBE in particular and in all other spheres of production in general and their effects on all spheres of our life, this is how I would like to conclude, we feel the necessity to take the opportunity to redefine the way we work and live. For this Marx may be the best starting point.