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Intellectuals today are at an impasse. It's actually not as epochal as it sounds. By intellectuals, I mean anybody who uses their brain, and by impasse, I don't so much refer to a abyssal cliff edge as a foggy swamp, with no indications as to which direction might lead to solid ground.

So really what I mean to say is that all of us thinking humans are a bit confused about the way that we think. The terrible worm that is the cause of our thoughtful thixotropy? Nothing more dreadful than so-called "intellectual property".

Different people think different things about intellectual property. Some think that it is a part of the author: a strange part-object commodity send out into the world like so many prodigal children. Other people think that it is like free beer, available to any who can guzzle; and some more nuanced analyses conclude that intellectual property is more like free speech, and therefore within one's rights to use as one likes long as it doesn't hurt anyone.

And no doubt, there are some people who don't care one way or the other.

But they should: the difficulty, like so many difficulties that engender two irreconcilable opposites, is caught up in its own definition of terms. What is intellectual property? Who is the intellectual? And what is property really, anyway? All these concepts are most often diagnosed, diagrammed, or dictated ad hoc, benefiting whomever is making the argument. Those who would not care one way or another about file sharing, Digital Rights Management (DRM), or copyright law are caught up in the dilemma regardless. This argument, the issue of what "intellectual property" is and how it should be produced, exchanged, distributed, and valued, cuts to the very root of what any sort of property is--and more crucially, it speaks to exactly what one with an "intellect" might or might not be.

So please excuse the philosophical conceptualization, the long-winded exegesis, and the Marx-leaning vocabulary for one minute, and explore with me. If you consider yourself a creative person in any way, shape or form, even if only to be able to work, form individual opinions, or relate to others who do (depending on what your current riding definition of "humanity" might be), take a minute to open the mind a bit, and think about common things that we do daily as humans, such as "think", "work", "exchange", "consume", and "value", in a new way. You might find that you had more capacity than you thought, not only to make and create, but also to value and use. Exploring the limits of our capacity to make, use, and value is precisely what a publishing entity like Brute Press (and *The Brutalitarian*) are all about.

Without dancing around the issue any further, I believe that the problem begins in our conception of what "work" really is. Work is the action by which we change an object's relations to the larger realm of natural reality, and ourselves. Any time anything is made, built, modified, moved, or destroyed, some sort of work is required to make the object's nature shift. Easy enough, right?

But, the problem develops that "work" is not just an abstract philosophical category of action; it is something that we each do every day. It is individual; it hugely involves the combination of our bodies, our psyches, and our egos; and we have never known human life without the capacity, if not the necessity, for doing work. In short: work is

hard; and although it may please the philosophers to debate it until time eternal, I still have to wake up when my alarm rings, and go some place and do it all damn day.

Since we spend so much time doing work, we never really get a chance to think about what it is. Although often times it is composed of the most dreary, mundane routine that we might possibly imagine, work is often very complex. We are lucky (in some ways) that our brains have programmed themselves to be good at learning routine, and learning in general. We can study a problem, try a solution, find a better one, and then practice that solution until for all the work our brain has to do, it might never have been a problem to begin with. Then our minds may wander into the land of sleepless day dreams....

It almost seems as if there are two different classes of work, or two different practices of work. There is thought-work, which is creative and full of problem-solving heft and deep discursive diagnostics. Then there is body-work; almost reflex in nature, it requires of the mind to train the hands in a particular task, and with practice, allows the mind to go on about other things while the body works almost of its own accord.

Depending on example, one might see these two classes of work as collaborating in various degrees. Lifting weights (or lumber, or stone) doesn't require much thought-work at the outset; that is, except for the mental acuity that it takes to train one's body into a muscle-bound crane without breaking it. Alternatively, writing does not ask much of the body during its constant access of the creative facilities, except of course for maintaining a posture that does not leave one crippled, and attaining decent handwriting or typing speed. Some jobs are thought not to require much of either class. With modern technology, one person is able to run a large portion of a production line without much help or training. However, it should be remembered that building and maintaining the machinery is truly an impressive feat of labor in both classes, mental and muscle. That one might sit and press a button requires a division of labor that delivers skills in each appropriate class at the appropriate time--to say nothing of the thought and bodily fortitude it takes to sit and press one button for hours on end without messing up the timing.

But technology certainly is a complication; despite the new objects that we are able to bring into worldly existence, it has magnified the creation of new avenues for production, creating new manner work tasks and making time-honored work traditions superfluous.

Perhaps the most easily recognized tendency is what is called "mass production". If one invests time and effort to learn some skills of mechanics and physics, it is easy to take part in the massive proliferation of tools, many of which allow us to produce objects in quantity that we could never have imagined. More objects than we could ever use, even. This mass of objects, combined with division of labor, and some properties of ownership loosely called "capitalism", give us the variety of complex exchanges of objects that we call markets.

But more recently than mass production, there has been an advance that is primed to change our world even more than "capitalism". It is digital production. Using electricity, infinitesimally small conductors, and new symbolic languages, the philosophical ramifications of which make my head spin, we have created a new sort of objects. These digital objects do not take up space in the same sense as our other objects--wherein an object's force in reality is roughly equivalent to the amount of physical space it absorbs. Now, objects with a very large objective force in reality can be compressed into space that we cannot experience; for all intents and purposes these digital objects are in a new dimension, a dimension of limitless contents.

Building on the advances of mass production, digital production requires an initial investment of body-work to build the machinery to access the digital dimension, and then this investment is paid back in quantity. Through mass production, it is now possible for many people to access this digital dimension, where all kinds of different productions are now underway.

There is something unique about the digital dimension, and it has something to do with the way that it is contained within a very small space. Because digital objects require such little space, there are relatively no constraints on prototyping. One can feel free to create all kinds of things in this digital space, delete them effortlessly, and try again. The only limiting factor is time. Perhaps it is this shrinking of the spatial requirements for creation, or maybe it is because objects more or less free from spatial requirements stimulate the imagination, but regardless, the digital dimension is one where creativity, that is, thought-work, is allowed to thrive.

This is a completely new, radical, shift of... but wait a minute, this isn't new. We've always had limitless space to

prototype one's thought-work; in the mind. True, it is not in reality in the same sense that brick and mortar are, or wrought iron, or automobiles. But all thought-work began in a electrical-and-conductor contained, limited spatial dimension. Most of what has changed is the technology that allows us to share and distribute it.

Back when we were only programming in the internet of the mind, sharing was difficult. There was speaking and acting, but this suffered from many difficulties in language compatibility, let alone operating system. Other than that, you had to "print" everything out, either in writing or some other body-worked material form. And let's not even get started on saving and deleting.

But now we have simplified this by creating machines that excel in categorizing and generalizing our thought-work into exchangeable forms, and can do a lot of the body-work of remembering and translating for us. (Gray matter still burns calories!) This leaves us to focus on the creativity, while making the material exchange ready is relegated to a tiny bit of body-work.

This analysis, while kind of cutesy with its terms, "thought-work", and "body-work", is actually important because I believe it let's us think about the actual amount of work that goes into creating objects in this time of digital production. And why is it important to think about the amount of work that goes into producing objects? Because this is a major factor in how we *value* objects.

Value, value, value... wherefore art thou value? What's in a value? That which we value by by its means would be just as prized... or would it? Perhaps not. If Romeo was not a Montague, and Juliet not a Capulet, then they might have loved but they would not have been star-crossed. There would be no tragedy; there would be only the meaningless void of countless instances of human coitus. Same thing for objects. If objects were only objects, and were prized only by their uses, then they would be flat, dull, and meaningless. But in the fair marketplace, where we set our scene, all objects alike in dignity have their name that allows them to play into tragedies of exchange with other objects. This name, that guides their misadventure, (both of ancient grudge and new mutiny) is called "value".

Metaphor, begone. It actually somewhat misrepresents the issue; by exchanging an item for another we still use the item, so the value gained by use or by exchange is both the value of the item in its use. The use of its use, if you will. The fact that the value of an item via exchange is largely determined by its beholders, either kin or enemy, only shows that to use an item by exchanging it, you require more than one person. Pretty straight forward: I can't trade something to myself.

But that means, conversely, that the value that an item has via its own use is also related to more just itself and its user. We know that objects do not exist spontaneously where we need them and when we need them. They must be harvested, collected, manufactured, and/or distributed. This factors in the value of their use intimately. The journey of material into an object, to the user, and the end consumption of that object are all interconnected, in the same way that an object changing hands through the market is also connected to all the steps of its transit.

Value is not just how useful an item is, or for what it can be traded. It is all the possible things that one can do with an object, arranged in its own market net, and how what one does with the object changes the possible things that can be done with it. When one uses an object (for consumption or for trade) it tugs certain strings of that net, and accumulates that tension to a value.

By way of example: I have a new piece of art. I like the art very much, but sitting on the ground is not the best way to look at it. I decide to hang it on the wall for better viewing, so that I can enjoy it that much more. But I need a nail. A nail costs money, but I have no better idea of how to hang the art. So I buy the nail. Now I need a hammer to put the nail in the wall. Hammer's are pretty expensive. I look around for something else to use. My computer is pretty heavy, and I could probably wield it enough to bash the nail. But I would risk breaking the computer, and the computer would be more expensive to replace than to buy a hammer. That hammer is looking like a pretty good deal, until I look out the window, and remember my house is built on a pile of granite stones. Those are perfect! I go outside and select a rock. It's a bit awkward to grasp, and I smash my thumb once in hitting the nail into the wall. I almost decide to chuck the rock out of anger, and go buy the hammer anyway. I could probably use a hammer for other projects. But, on seeing the nail halfway into the drywall, and a heavy stone right there, I decide just to get it done with, and carefully hit in the nail. My new art looks lovely.

Look at all those valuations! I valued and revalued the art, the nail, a hammer, my computer, and a rock, and maybe, if you want to count it, my thumb as well. Depending on what I used them for, where they were, how I could acquire them, and what options and ideas I had on the manner of their use, their relative value shifted dynamically.

Taking all these casual decisions and appropriations under consideration is how we value certain things in a market (the semi-technical, semi-common term for these nets of value). This is pretty easy, we do it all the time without realizing it. Take the piece of art: if I bought it, how did I decide whether or not it was worth it? I must have judged, in a spontaneous, individual analysis of the network of value, whether I liked it enough to spend money on it versus other things, whether I could expect the exchange value to appreciate in the future or whether I even wanted to factor my potential future in art dealing, where the art would hang to best get use out of it, and so on. A psychological market within one's head engenders the entire market.

Now: you had to expect that this psychological market of valuation would change, considering the new conceptualization of work that I described earlier. You didn't expect it? Does my network of text have no narrative flow whatsoever?

Understanding work as a combination of thought-work and body-work connects with value in many ways. In the most complicated sense, valuation is an aspect of thought-work that accompanies the body-work through any use or exchange insofar as that use or exchange is work. Actually, that's not that complicated. Thought-work, or the creative process of deciding how to go about any task, is part of all tasks, and this includes consuming and exchanging as much as it does producing or modifying. It's all part of the same net. I had to think of using the stone as a hammer, and upon doing so, that changed how much I valued the hammer. I also consider the best way to increase the my valuation of the art, and I decided to hang it rather than resell it. The differentiation of thought-work from body-work helps us understand that decision-making and creative input are just as important to the chain of valuation as the body-work that actually brings the object into existence. It also helps us connect the links of the chain by showing that every person who interacts with the object is part worker, and part of its value. I didn't make the stone, but because I used it, I made it into a hammer.

So that's the complicated part. What is the easy part? The easy part is that the differentiation allows us not only to better understand our own psychological marketplace of value determination, it allows us to better understand that technology is not really important to valuation at all. Therefore, technological replication is not stealing, because it is not stealing value.

The easy part! Easy answers are typically lies, and mine is no exception. Technology is important to valuation, but it's role is minor. It is the tool, though a powerful tool indeed. My rock, that I used to hammer a nail, does not make the art more valuable outside of the fact that it enabled me to do the work. The work, as I value it, increases the value of the art. Little work, big reward: value. The internet is no different. If one uses a computer to make music, one values the music based on what it is to the beholder in relation to the work. The fact that it was a computer and not a guitar is most irrelevant.

This is true even in huge, dimensional-scale advances in technology. As we already discussed, digital production allows objects to be produced with a relative lack of body-work altogether, and near to no thought-work. One can make one million copies of a file as easily as making two. This has benefits and consequences. The benefit is that your supply is near infinite. The consequence is if your business is making money providing objects in short supply to feed the demand, and the supply all of a sudden constant and unlimited, you no longer have a business. And this is where the thought-work is separated from the body-work. The shift to digital production has lain bare some facts that were hidden from our daily sight, and accordingly, from our valuation of the objects involved. The mp3 provided a digital format that anyone (those who are not included in this "anyone" are relevant for their own reasons in other arguments) could make and reproduce. This did not mean that anyone could write music to which anyone wanted to listen. The musicians continued to make music, much as before. What changed were the people who mass produced the technology that allowed this music to be distributed. The mp3 changed the

distributors from "record labels" to "anyone with a computer and internet access". The thought-work of creating the music still took place, as well as the thought-work that valued the music as something to be consumed. What was eliminated was the body-work necessary to distribute the object, the music, from the creator to the consumer. And as it turned out, the people who had previously had control of that distribution (in the form of the body-work) really didn't like losing that opportunity to make money. They decided that to stop this loss of value based upon their means of production, they would produce something new; they invented something called "intellectual property".

Intellectual property is a catch-all term for laws and values that have been tied together in a loose package in the attempt to coerce people into ignoring the effects of technology, or somehow find a way to put limits on that technology. It is designed to seize the thought-work that we value within certain non-physical objects, and link that value to the permanency of ownership of *particular* objects in the physical world. Intellectual property attempts to turn ideas into acres; it tries to turn back the evolution-clock of production all the way back to feudalism. Technology has advanced to the point where thought-work can simultaneously release its own products into the market without need for spatial, physical existence, and eliminate most of the body-work that had been previously required to distribute and produce *anything*. Digital production is a breakthrough of productive relations on the level of the evolution of a species into conscious thought, and certain owners of distribution network would pretend that it is not, just to save their own profits. Another metaphor: imagine a salesperson supporting slavery simply because s/he makes a good living selling the chains. Mass production rose to such heights and achieved such monumental capitalism because it controls material. By arranging the flows of material, from material to objects, from objects to people via people, vast feedback loops of value were designed. These loops support the increase of material, mass production, which is not evil in and of itself. But we are now in a time when digital production is advancing at a rapid pace. Many mass production systems are learning to adjust, as markets will, by either finding new products or finding ways to distribute along with and in conjunction with digital products. This is where new value will develop; where thought-worker can design systems to increase the flow of value between the media of mass-objects and digital objects. This is where value lies: not in the object itself via "born-in" propriety, but through the exchanges and productions that create signified value for all who touch them. The value of thought-work, if allowed to show itself, will always be realized and rewarded. But those who try to implant empty value where it does not exist will find themselves clinging to a ghost.

But where does this leave our poor musician, besides overwhelmed with the fury of an indignant rant? How can the careful thought-work of the musicians efforts be properly rewarded by the consumer? S/he used to receive a check every now and again from the music distributor, but now that money goes to legal fees, hopelessly fighting against the future. If the musician believes that his/her thought-work was locked into the recording, and the only means of ownership for the artist lay in owning every technological iteration of that recording, then the musician is as out of luck as the distributor. But if the musician realizes that now, with only a minuscule investment in technology, s/he is now his/her own recording studio, producer, marketing team, distributor and manager, then now all the profits can directly reward those who do the actual thought-work! We see this happening everywhere. Once one goes out and begins to negotiate the avenues of distribution in the digital dimension, one finds there are near limitless ways of not only making profit, but of increasing value in ways that never could have been imagined in mass production. Buying an album can now not only mean owning a hard copy for playback; it can also mean access to other information that fans would find valuable, being added to communities and distribution lists for dedication to new material releases, it can mean free publicity, the value of which might never be calculated in terms for resale. This also allows new products that by the very fact that they are given away "for free", they achieve value that a "cost" product never would have achieved.

Everybody has to eat: this is part of the endless cycle of work and production, the bodily aspect of which will never completely disappear. (To lose those lovely, luscious surplus values associated with body-work would be a form of asceticism that I would never freely choose!) And just as strangely, it seems that everyone must create, and seek to value creations. Shifting relationships between the dynamicisms of body- and thought-work mean that our understanding of value is now changing, and along with it, the ways in which we plan for future productions and

consumptions. While doing the thought-work of your own productions, take care to include some thought-work for value among the new facts of our technology; you may realize that there is value waiting to be released where you never noticed it before. We should seek out value rather than create it where it does not naturally exist. By doing so, we will follow these lines of valuation where they lead, and better let thought-work achieve its potential. The value of this work, properly thought of, distributed, and consumed, will come back to reward the work and those value it.