

## Seven. FLOSS Beyond Hegemony

In this last chapter, we posit FLOSS as a survival strategy of the postcolonized saVAge. In chapter one we mentioned both these custom-built concepts, ‘postcolonization’ and ‘saVAge’, which we imported from CDC 2000. In the primary sections of this chapter, we compare Marxism with the philosophy of resistance inherent in GPL. In order to do it, we choose some areas like hegemony and discuss the difference of philosophical implications of these two systems. This discussion happens in the light of our discovery in the last chapter about the sustained transformation of all the internal categories of the whole system of state and civil society under the dynamics coming out of GPL. We want to theorize how the very concept of ‘resistance’ undergoes a total transformation between the Marxian Framework and the FLOSS experience under the aegis of GPL. In the last chapter, we mentioned that, the total transformation that happens in the basic categories like value, property and capital in the realm of FLOSS, does not finally remained confined to this realm only. How these transformed categories then spread contagiously through the whole network of capital under capital’s hegemony, and this dispersion is again sustained through the protection of GPL – this we are going to discuss in the later sections.

### 1. Counter-Hegemony, Marx and GPL

We are going to start this section with a quotation from Raymond 2000. We cited this bright book several times in our pages. And we obliquely mentioned about this quotation too – as a serious error of Raymond. We talked about the very parallel nature of the two errors of Antonioni and Raymond. We commented that, Michelangelo Antonioni, the master filmmaker, committed the same error in his film ‘Zabriskie Point’, Antonioni 1970. Antonioni made the same error when trying to understand the late-sixties student movement in America in terms of political thinkers like Marx. We mentioned these two parallel errors in chapter four. The relevant shot from this film, that we discussed, involved the political metaphor of an American spelling of ‘Karl Marx’. There we concluded with the description with the conclusion that, this very metaphor represents an error on part of the filmmaker in reading the history of these times. Whatever may be the amount of Mao, Lenin or Marx in student parlance of this turbulent decade, this counter-culture was something very different from these motifs representing the politics of counter-hegemony. We said, Karl Marx was a wrongly used metaphor in this sequence from ‘Zabriskie Point’.

As the quotation from Raymond 2000 will show, Raymond made a mistake of the very same nature when he tried to understand, in terms of Marx, the ideology of FLOSS as proclaimed by Stallman. Let us remind it once again, this term ‘FLOSS’, Free-Libre-OpenSource-Software, talks about not just ‘Free’ by Stallman, or ‘OpenSource’ by Raymond, but the whole hacking tradition continuing from a time before Unix. Everything that we consider as FLOSS today, obviously except GPL, was always already there in this tradition – the community freedom cooperation all. Maybe the community itself did not know it consciously enough. We called it ‘primitive FLOSS’ in our pages, because it was long before the birth of the term ‘FLOSS’. Now, let us quote the error of Raymond. Let us call this quotation Q1.

His [Stallman’s] behavior and rhetoric half-consciously echoed Karl Marx’s attempts to mobilize the industrial proletariat against the alienation of their work.

This phrase here, ‘behavior and rhetoric’ is not talking about Stallman personally, but about

the GNU and FSF discourse, from where we brought in a lot of elements in chapter five. That Raymond is not talking anything individually about Stallman gets quite evident from the three sentences immediately prior to Q1. Let us quote them too, from Chapter 2, titled ‘Origins and History of the Hackers, 1961-1995’ in Raymond 2000. Let us mention here, ‘RMS’, in the coming quotation, refers to Stallman. Stallman is frequently called RMS in FLOSS talks and documents. Let us call this quotation Q2, though, in the book this comes immediately before Q1.

In 1985, RMS published the GNU Manifesto. In it he consciously created an ideology out of the values of the pre-1980 ARPANET hackers – complete with a novel ethico-political claim, a self-contained and characteristic discourse, and an activist plan for change. RMS aimed to knit the diffuse post-1980 community of hackers into a coherent social machine for achieving a single revolutionary purpose.

Now let us go back to Q1, where Raymond talks about Stallman and Marx – a parallelism between Stallman’s discourse and Marx’s politics. In fact, this quotation is quite a bad statement about Marx’s politics and political economy. But we are not concerned about that here. After all, however bright a mind Raymond is, it is unknown waters for him, and so it is very easily forgivable. But, the point is, the context of ‘half-conscious’, that Raymond mentions in the sentence, is actually true for this sentence itself, self-recursively – we are coming to that. In this section, we are going to discuss, how the ideology put forward by GPL differs, and that too so dramatically, from the discourse of not just Marxism, but, any discourse of *counter-hegemony* in general. And in the next section on ‘*Counter-culture* and GPL’ we will return to this strange recurrence of the same error in Antonioni and Raymond.

Let us now come to Q2. Q2 itself can be called ‘half-conscious’ too, by Raymond’s own tag. Raymond in Q2 selected two motifs, ‘ethico-political claim’, and ‘activist plan for change’. These two motifs are, usually in way of pedestrian discourse, associated with Marxism. In a more theoretical rendition, most probably, these two motifs talk about a ‘revolutionary ideology’ and ‘projection and actualization of a planned future’. Now, the moment these two motifs are discovered in Q2, the immediate next statement in Q1 concludes by bracketing Marxism and Stallman’s manifesto together. This sentence in Q1 is half-conscious in the sense that, firstly, Marxism is not what Raymond claims to be, and secondly, in no way Stallman’s discourse is Marxism. Actually it is extremely different from Marxism, the difference being exactly of the same order as the one between Market Ideology and Communist Politics. We are going to demonstrate that through this section. First let us delve deeper into those two motifs, ‘ethico-political claim’, and ‘activist plan for change’. Maybe the statement about Marxism is bad, but it was written by one of the brightest minds that computing has produced till date. And obviously, there is more significance to these two motifs than what apparently strikes our mind.

In chapter one, we discussed about postmodern postcolonial political economy, and introduced some concepts like *hegemony*, *counter-hegemony* and *synthetic hegemony*. As we said, *hegemony* is the process by which the consciousness of the ruling class becomes the consciousness of the ruled class. Capital being the ruler in market society, it is the

hegemony of capital that makes the working mass think through the thought-models of the ruling capitalist class. Hegemony is a part of the whole process through which the emerging embryonic capitalism, in the pursuit of becoming a fully-grown capitalism, causes the elimination of all precapitalist social cultural elements. Though, obviously, this is a version of hegemony operating in the simplest form of Hegelian dialectics. This is called *simple hegemony*. Then comes the concept of *complex hegemony*. Complex hegemony talks about a situation where, the thesis of emerging capitalism, for its own benefit, does not any more converge on annihilating feudalism. The ruling class has learned from experience that the social dynamism created in the process of annihilation is not very good for its own health. And so, it prefers to create a midway surrogate solution, that works through a friendship between thesis and antithesis, capitalism and feudalism. Chatterjee 1986 in particular, and also Chatterjee 1988 1989, and some others from Subaltern Studies, Guha 1989, or Guha 1982-90, have discussed about complex hegemony.

And as we defined, *synthetic hegemony* is a *hegemony* that grows in an overdetermined way, within a discursive space that is always already marked by overdetermination among categories like *thesis* and *antithesis*, in every layer of their development. Synthetic hegemony is formulated in a postmodern postcolonial way. In this era of postmodern postcolonial political economy, there is no question of annihilation any more. In a synthetic hegemony, the thesis of *modernism* and the antithesis of *tradition* are always already overdetermining each other. But this overdetermination is not symmetric, tradition does not overdetermine modernism the way modernism overdetermines tradition. As we said in chapter one, there are definite asymmetries within the ways of overdetermination between the West and the East. Overdetermination signals an equality between entities, none having the pride of place of being causally prior. But, this is an overdetermination with a power-hierarchy inscribed in it. This is overdetermination but not quite. We called it mimicry of overdetermination. Through this mimicry of overdetermination, in the form of *modernism*, the hegemony of capital makes itself all-pervading and all-powerful throughout the globe – and comes the global hegemony capital. We borrow this new concept of *synthetic hegemony* from CDC 2000, as we mentioned.

Let us remember our discussion in chapter one. Synthetic hegemony operates on a synthetic space, where no one-way causality operates any more. It is a postmodern postcolonial discursive space, that operates on a multiple-way causality of overdetermination, where thesis and antithesis mutually constitute and determine one another. And hence, the altered thesis and antithesis pave the ground for an altered synthesis. This is a simplified version of *synthetic hegemony*, but it will suffice for us. In the same way, *counter-hegemony* is the process of resisting the hegemony of the ruling class by projecting an alternative whole in face of the whole of the capitalist society. Like a communist party does it: it projects and plans for a new society, a new social whole, where socialism will operate, as an alternative to the whole of capitalist society. And through all its programs, movements, operations, a communist party prepares to overthrow this ruling hegemony and replace it with the alternative rule of socialism. This process of projecting, planning and preparing for an alternative system by countering this capitalist hegemony is called *counter-hegemony*. The aim is to replace the hegemony of capitalist class with a hegemony of working class.

In a synthetic space, with overdetermination operating within all the categories, *synthetic hegemony* operates through layers, all of which are defined in terms of overdetermined categories. And so, *counter-hegemony* in a synthetic space is nothing but the traditional concept of *counter-hegemony* but defined in terms of overdetermined categories. Let us remember what we said in chapter one about overdetermination. In a single oversimplified statement, *overdetermination* is a mutual and multiple way causality, that replaces the essentialist one way and linear causality in determining the relation between two entities. In a traditional linear cause-effect mesh, *cause* is prior and *effect* is subsequent, and *effect* flows from *cause*. This is exactly the way we saw everything else to follow from *essence*, the primal cause, in Hegelian logic, in the last chapter. *Overdetermination* replaces this one-way causality with a mutual and multiple way causality between entities, where every entity is constituted and determined by every other entity. There are more details here, but, for now, it is sufficient. Now scan the concepts of *hegemony* and *counter-hegemony*, to understand the statement of Raymond better, and obviously much more beyond him.

Metaphorically speaking, when lord squeezes out consent from slave, by beating him and beating him again, lord's rule is working through *coercion*. And when lord's opinions are reproduced adequately by the fourth estate, and slave, by way of reading newspapers and the Net, assimilates it enough, and starts voicing lord's opinions, the rule is working through *persuasion*. *Coercion* and *persuasion* are two methods of manufacturing slave's consent. And *hegemony* operates in the second case, when persuasion works. If slave fears lord, that is not hegemony. Hegemony resides in slave's writing songs in tribute to lord, when slave starts believing lord's opinions as his own. There are debates about the presence of *hegemony* in different social systems in history, or in capitalism alone. Without going into those debates, it can be said that, in capitalism we see *hegemony* in a very fully formed and developed state. In times after Antonio Gramsci, discussions on *hegemony* abound in the theoretical disciplines, particularly in the field of postmodern postcolonial political economy. Antonio Gramsci is a kind of a theoretical political mind that can hardly be contemplated without referring to his political actions. "Prison Notebooks", Gramsci 1971, is a good starting point.

Without going into the details of the process of building hegemony, it can be said that *hegemony* is no vulnerability or impotence on part of slave. Slave cannot help it. He is taught to think like that. He thinks in the way lord wants him to think, when the principle of *persuasion* is working robustly enough. The categories and logic of lord's culture becomes enmeshed with the categories and logic of slave's cultural domain. It becomes impossible for slave to look outside the prevailing frame of reference. This frame of reference is taken for granted, socially ethically. The other name of this frame of reference becomes the "commonsense way of looking at things". Anything outside this frame of reference built by the rules of capital, working globally, does not exist anymore for slave. He thinks the very way the mechanisms of market want him to think. This is hegemony. Against this category of *hegemony* comes *counter-hegemony*.

Counter-hegemony wants to look outside this frame of reference. And wants to restructure this reality according to the rules that counter-hegemony considers to be operating outside this frame of reference, in the objective material world. These qualifiers, *objective* and *material*, are important – we can remember the stress of Marxism on its 'materialist' point

of departure in contrast to the ‘idealism’ of Hegel. Marxism considers this so-called objective and material reality as *the* reality, and wants to posit and establish this version of reality over all other alternative versions. So, *counter-hegemony* resides in the process of creation of another alternative cultural field with its symbols, categories and logic. So, counter-hegemony is an elaborate and detailed structure that makes perfect sense within this domain, however removed it maybe from the “commonsense” way of thinking things. Even when using the same symbols and categories from lord’s realm are imported and used, they all undergo a mutation – they do no more carry the exact same sense in this alternative realm, what they did before the import.

So, *counter-hegemony* operates through an alternative cultural space that is counter to the ruling one, the lord’s one. This aspect of counter-hegemony, in terms of cultural symbols and tendencies, we have already mentioned in chapter four, and we will return to it in the next section. Now let us focus on the presence or absence of a teleology for any activity that is representative of *counter-hegemony*. Is there any ultimate purpose or design in all those activities? In case of the Marxist or communist genre of revolutionary politics, counter-hegemony is always already marked by a teleology. We have very well-structured formulations of counter-hegemony in the works of Marxists like Vladimir Ilyich Lenin or Mao Zedong too. There, exactly like the works of Marx, we get the positing of a *counter-reality*, from where originate all the all the alternative symbols and tendencies. And they purport to actualize the *embryo* of *counter-reality* growing simultaneously within and outside the prevailing reality. It is growing *within*, in the sense that, the same reality principle carries both the capitalist reality and the embryonic socialist reality simultaneously together. And it is growing *outside* this reality, in the sense that, in terms of the cultural codes and symbols and tendencies, it can look and go outside the the frame of reference structured by *hegemony*.

Let us quote a sentence from Marx. In 1876, in Chapter 31 of “Capital Volume I”, Marx 1976, Karl Marx wrote this sentence, one of the most frequently quoted ones in Marxist literature. Here we quote it from the New Left Review edition of Capital Volume I published by Penguin. This sentence is a bit different in the online edition available at <http://marxists.org>, without the phrase “which is”. They mean the same thing though.

Force is the midwife of every old society which is pregnant with a new one.

There are lots and lots of variations on the basic theme of this sentence. And in a way, it is a quite representative statement about *counter-hegemony* in Marxism or Communism. It directly talks about the thing that Raymond calls as ‘activist plan for change’, the projected *counter-reality* that any genre of Marxist revolutionary politics strives to achieve. This ‘activist plan for change’ plans to change the prevailing state of things, in most cases capitalism, and wants to replace it with, usually, socialism. And the ‘ethico-political claim’ remains implicit in *ideology*, the apparatus through which the revolutionary activist goes beyond the frame of reference fixed by prevailing capitalism and reaches into the practice of the embryo of *counter-reality*, such that the revolutionary politics can exert a push or ‘force’, as Marx calls it. This leads to the birth of the ‘new society’ that has grown inside the womb of the ‘old society’. And thus comes *revolution*, that is nothing but a *forceful birth* of this ‘new society’.

In 1878, Frederick Engels wrote in “Anti-Dühring”, Engels 1947, about this ‘force’ mentioned by Marx. Here Engels is criticizing Dühring who does not like this very idea of ‘force’. The name of concerned Chapter is ‘The Theory of Force’.

To Herr Dühring force is the absolute evil ... That force, however, plays yet another role in history, a revolutionary role; that, in the words of Marx, it is the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one, that it is the instrument with the aid of which social movement forces its way through and shatters the dead, fossilised political forms – of this there is not a word in Herr Dühring. ... And this parson’s mode of thought – dull, insipid and impotent – presumes to impose itself on the most revolutionary party that history has known!

In Lenin’s writings there are a lot of references to this basic theme, and he picks up this very particular discussion of Engels in his ‘Political Struggle and Political Chicanery’, Lenin 1964, a text written in 1902. And of course, Lenin endorses this “force” view. But one of the strongest and most “forceful” versions of this “force as midwife” theme comes in Mao Zedong’s ‘Problems of War and Strategy’, Zedong 1967, written in 1938.

Every Communist must grasp the truth, "Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun."

So, 1867, 1878, 1902, 1938: communism always talks about *counter-hegemony*, that believes in actualizing a counter-reality against the reality of capital and market, and this actualization happens through an application of force, that is called ‘revolution’. And so, this can never ever have anything in common with GPL and FLOSS that goes counter to any hegemony, hegemony of capitalism, or counter-hegemony of socialism. That does not mean it jettisons any resistance towards the rule of capital and market. GPL uses the brilliant ploy of ‘copyleft’ and ‘derivative’ aspect, to throw the very rules of capital and market into an endless self-recursive loop, that goes on devouring the very body of capital and market from within, and regenerates itself as an entirely new species. We will come back to that later, but here we have something more to tell about the Marxist Politics, before we realize fully well, how wrong is the comment of Raymond about the ideology of Stallman and GNU.

## 2. GPL and Some More of Marx

Now, let us familiarize ourselves with the categories of *right* and *property* in Marxian political economy. In the earlier chapter we saw, what kind of a rigmarole GPL pushes these categories into, and that too so endlessly. Now let us compare it with the state of these categories in terms of a revolutionary politics of the Marxist genre. Let us take the example, when a revolutionary politics wants to replace ‘capitalism’ with ‘socialism’. As we have known in the Marxist theories, and witnessed it in the experiences of socialism in different countries, socialism does not tweak the categories like ‘property’. Socialism transforms the ownership or property-right on a particular kind of property – the property that is used in production process, as *means of production*. So, in terms of the categories that we used in chapter five, unlike GPL politics, father is not inherently transformed in socialism, just becomes father<sup>1</sup>. In socialism, the ownership of capital changes. So capital

becomes capital/ owned by father/. We called this property as property/ in chapter five. But, first let us define these terms in the light of Marxist literature before we proceed more.

Marxism understands a society primarily in terms of the categories of *productive force* and *production relation*. The category of *productive force* means the totality of all kinds of labor, exerted individually or collectively, and all means of production like machine, factory or land, and all things that get used in production, like raw materials. The category of *production relation* refers to basic objective core of human interaction, on which is built the whole structure of all kinds human relations – social, familial, emotional or anything. This raw and objective core of human relation is, by definition, in Marxian political economy, independent of all human consciousness, and they are fixed by the rules of production – who are getting involved in production and in what ways, and in what ways are they mutually interacting. And *production relation* is primarily determined by the ownership of *means of production*. By virtue of this ownership on means of production, the owners produce, create and appropriate *surplus value*. Surplus Value is the excess value of what came out of production over what was used in production, as we remember from chapter one. This is the *economic* aspect of production, from where comes the concept of *production relation*: deciding who produces surplus value and who takes it away. Over this are built all other kinds of social relations, including political and cultural ones, as Marxist political economy believes.

As Historical Materialism, or the Marxist study of hitherto existing human societies, proposes, society or civilization is always evolving. And there is a linear time path of growth of *productive force*, in the sense that it is always increasing. But, for the time being, the category of *production relation* prevailing in a society is given. And hence, the whole structure of social, cultural, political relations built on the basis of *production relation* is given too. And a time comes when these two categories that define a particular society, *productive force* and *production relation*, become non-compliant with each other. That means, the growth of *productive force* cannot be contained within the given *production relation*. And hence, these two collide, and a new kind of *production relation* is born. Around it are born social, cultural and political relations of the new order. Historical materialism calls it *mode of production*, that signifies a particular kind of society with its specific form of *productive force* and *production relation*. As historical materialism says, the society that we see, particularly in the Western part of the globe, came through quite a few major instances of *mode of production*. They are, *Primitive Communism*, *Slavery*, *Feudalism*, *Capitalism*, and, for a few of them, *Socialism* too. Obviously all the modes do not exactly apply even to all the geographies of Western hemisphere, let alone the others parts of the planet.

Marxism, the theoretical backbone of revolutionary struggles striving towards counter-hegemony, was born during the times, when at least in the Western world, feudal mode of production was on the wane or decay, and the emerging and prevailing mode of production was capitalism. In capitalist mode of production, *means of production* has a specific form, namely ‘capital’, and the owners of *means of production* are ‘capitalist’. And *production relation* primarily involves two counterpoints, *capitalist* and *laborer*. These two are examples of the Marxian category of *class*. And as Marxism believes, the whole fabric of social, cultural and political relations develop around the primary core of *class struggle*,

defined within the space of *production relation* between these two classes, capitalist and laborer. This category of *class struggle* emanates from the basic fact of *exploitation*, imbibed within *production relation*.

The production relation in capitalist mode of production goes such a way that, *capitalist* controls the process of production and distribution of surplus value. And through this control, *capitalist* appropriates surplus value, though the objective origin of *surplus* value resides in *laborer*. And *laborer* is allowed to enjoy just a subsistence, so that it can go on giving labor. This whole mechanism of *production relation* is legitimized and justified by state, with all its components operating on market principles. And apparently, this is a justified system, because the whole thing goes on through market contracts of transaction. Through these contracts, *capitalist* purchases labor-power from *laborer*, just like all other commodities in the market. And apparently, *capitalist* gives laborer his due in the form of wage. Wage is the price of labor-power determined by the market. So, everything happens on the plane of *contract*, on the plane of contractual market transactions. We know, this plane is held aloft by judiciary, police, military and all other components of state. We have already discussed a lot about this *contractual equality* among citizens. Hegel celebrated this *contractual equality*, as we mentioned before.

Then came Marx who discovered and demonstrated the implicit inequality in this apparent equality. As Marx showed, the liberty and equality to take or break the contract on part of laborer becomes a liberty to get hired and fired. And the liberty on part of capitalist becomes a liberty to maximize his profit. Obviously, these two are very unequal state of things in real terms. In order to remain alive, the contract becomes imperative for laborer, and he has to remain within the contract. This enables capitalist and the machine of *production relation* going on exploiting the labor of laborer, that is paying him much less than what his labor has produced. There are millions of details attached to every step of this whole logic, but this is sufficient for us now to go into the discussion of Marxism with respect to the theoretical construct and political project of GPL.

Let us come back to the two motifs identified by Raymond in our quotation Q2, ‘ethico-political claim’ and ‘activist plan for change’. The first motif talks about the whole theory of class struggle, which Marxism believes to be the source of everything else in the social reality. And the second motif talks about *counter-hegemony* of overthrowing the process of exploitation run by capitalism, and replacing it with socialism, where no such exploitation exists any more. There are many intricate details involved here, but the crux of the whole thing is annihilating *exploitation*. And the Marxian *counter-hegemony* wants to achieve it through a change in the ownership of *means of production*. After the revolution, they are no more owned by individual capitalists. And thus the process of *exploitation*, allowing *capitalist* class to create distribute and appropriate surplus value, by taking it away from *laborer*, ceases to exist, changing the very category of *production relation*. The category of *means of production* is now owned by a collective interest represented by state, or any component of the socialist state, be it a laborers’ collective or a body under the supervision of the communist party.

So, the market operation is not questioned in socialism, and not at all the categories that work deep down, like the dialectical mechanism of *right* operating behind every gesture of state. The details of the process of property and state, as Marxism foresees, in case



‘communism’ are different indeed. But, that is, in reality, talking about dreams, about the promised land that nobody has ever seen, and hence it is better to keep it outside the focus of any practical consideration. So this makes a very crucial difference between the Marxist position and the position of GPL. The difference works in two layers.

Layer One. Marxism does not challenge the internal categories, that operate through the rules of property, market and state. As we have already seen, the category of *property* goes through dialectical layers. One of the layers work with the category of *civil society* in the form of *market*. And all the laws of property operate through mechanisms that come together under the institution of *state*. None of these internal categories are challenged by the Marxist theory of resistance. Marxist theory operates through the change in the ownership of the *means of production*. Whereas GPL goes on transforming and tweaking these very innermost categories, and that too in a loop that is ceaseless and endless by definition, throwing the whole mechanism of market and capital into a total regeneration and reconstruction from within.

Layer Two. We have already shown that Marxism is a practice in *counter-hegemony*, positing father<sup>/</sup> in place of father. And as we have seen in Layer One, none of them, father<sup>/</sup> or father, does challenge the very core of dialectical layers that work into their very existence. This was done by GPL, and that too without a *counter-hegemony*, without ever challenging the rules of market and capital, or the institution they reside in, that is, state. On the contrary, GPL works by and through this very apparatus of state. In every iteration of the unending loop, GPL on one hand, and laws of state, market and capital on the other hand, mutually corroborate each other to carry on this reconstruction of *means of production*. This we have shown in details in the last chapter. We demonstrated there GPL’s process of changing the institution of market, capital and state from within. And thus, by changing father into a ~~father~~ without projecting a surrogate Father<sup>/</sup>, GPL, for the first time in human history, goes beyond the traditional category of *resistance*. GPL becomes a *positively defined resistance*, a resistance from within. All other prior forms of resistance were negative resistance working from outside. If we are working under father, and by our works father is getting transformed into ~~father~~, why should we need anymore a father<sup>/</sup> projected from outside? Let us elaborate this point a bit.

In “Politics of Friendship”, Derrida 1998, Jacques Derrida’s point of take off is the Aristotelian sentence, “Oh my friend, there is no friend.” This sentence is actually quite notorious in the history of sentences with self-recursive loops. A lot of scholars, before and after Derrida, have fallen in its prey, though there is a very strong argument that this sentence does not belong to Aristotle at all. Anyway, that is not the point here. Here we can generate another sentence in its model, “Oh my contender, there is no contender”, spoken by a king, invited to a duel by a contender. This king is the subject of the sentence. The Aristotelian sentence starts generating a series of loops, the most primary of which is the very question about the existence of an audience: if there is no friend indeed, to whom this sentence is addressed to? But, in case of our sentence, there is a very reasonable answer to this question. There is no contender any more, but, it is obvious that there is an audience, in the form of the person who *was* a contender, who invited the king to a duel. But, by inviting the king and being engaged in a duel to the king, he has become a competitor for the post of the king, thus becoming a potential inheritor to the king, and hence, he is no

more a contender to the system of kingdom that makes the king a king. They, the king and the contender, are now both members of an exclusive club – competitors for the throne, potential-kings. They two are now potential-kings. If the contender wins the duel, he becomes an inheritor of the king, and thus, an offspring of the king, in terms of inheritance of the kingdom. And if the contender gets lost, he becomes one of the potential precursors, from whom the king won his kingship, and so the king becomes an inheritor or offspring of the person who was once a contender. Whichever of king and contender may win, there is always the dictum: king is dead, long live the king.

For any model of *counter-hegemony*, this becomes a definitional crisis. The countering category *father'* is defined negatively in terms of father, and hence they become intrinsically linked. In Ramayana, the epic from Indian scriptures, there is a concept parallel to this phenomenon. That is called 'শত্রুরূপে ভজনা' or 'worship in the form of an enemy'. Exactly the same thing we witness to happen in the case of the Marxist *counter-hegemony*. *Father'* becomes intrinsically linked to, and an inheritor to, the rules of market and capital fostered by father. So, in another sense of the term, *father'* is an offspring of father, with a direct lineage relation. And there is always an unforeseen crisis immanent in any *counter-hegemony*. What *father'* is going to do when father is no more there: how he is going to define himself? Father was the point-of-reference, a negatively defined point-of-reference, for *father'*. And now *father'* has lost his point-of-reference: how he will define himself any more? The frame of reference fixed by market and capital was always the frame of reference for *counter-hegemony* too, though negatively. This has always remained the nature of resistance in case of all versions of Marxist *counter-hegemony*, negatively defined with respect to the capitalist reality.

In contrast, GPL, for the first time, shows us a positively defined resistance. It does not project any planned counter-reality, like Marxism does. It goes on strengthening the very institution that breeds capital and market. But by the sleight of hand of the two aspects of 'copyleft' and 'derivative', GPL conjures up an endless loop that renders the very Father as ~~father~~. FLOSS, the embryonic space of ~~father~~ is always already marked by a presence of the very life force of resistance – the liberty, freedom and cooperation of people. The collective that is generated under the scope of ~~father~~ intends to create for the freedom that this collective values so much. In case of GPL, ~~father~~ is always already marked by the presence of FLOSS tradition. And this concept of ~~father~~ is, by definition, plural. GPL defines only one version of ~~father~~, but there is always some space for more. The series of efforts, that we so vividly described through chapter four and five, went into the birth of this ~~father~~, and it was unanticipated in terms of the prevailing reality. And so, there can obviously be more of this kind of possibilities. Till date we have seen only one, but that does not rule out the possibilities of others.

So, now the statement of Eric Raymond in Q1, about Marxism and the efforts of Stallman, from what we started this chapter, is adequately refuted. We have shown how, on so many points, Marxism and GPL are two altogether different kinds of ballgame. And we have also said a few things about a situation, where small individual texts and efforts can generate a customized ~~father~~ of their own – we will come back to it later, in the section on GPL and *counter-culture*. But, before going into that we need to mention just a few more things about the new kind of reality generated by computing and the Internet, the 'Information

Revolution' in one phrase, a situation that was the very bedrock of FLOSS. This situation was simultaneously breeding some new phenomena that were surreptitiously changing the traditional Marxist categories to their degenerative extreme. By discussing this changed reality we can understand the contribution of GPL a bit better vis-a-vis Marxism as a possible form of resistance.

### 3. Marxist Categories and the Age of Information

Software Industry is a kind of an industry, that is never fully understandable with the traditional Marxist categories of political economy. It is one thing that so crucially reflects the changing times. There are lots and lots of books about this Age of Information. One book that observes quite adequately the joint effect of computer science and the Internet together with all the things happening around them is "Death of Distance" by Cairncross, Cairncross 2001. "Democratizing Innovation", Hippel 2005, is another very good book trying to grasp these electronically changing times. All these books talk about the different things happening around us that are quite dramatic in terms of traditional categories. Let us take the case of Software Industry, primarily the sector that directly comes under the purview of GPL.

Software Industry, like any industry, produces commodities for the market. In this case, that commodity is software. And any industry has two major components. One is the site of innovation, or *laboratory*, where the research and development goes on, giving birth to new technologies. And the second one is the site of production, or *factory*, where copies of the prototype produced in laboratory is reproduced in large numbers, working according to the technology discovered in laboratory. In traditional industries, factory, the site of production, is obviously so big, that in comparison to it, laboratory, the site of innovation, hardly deserves mention. Exactly the opposite thing is true for Software Industry. The factory or the site of production is simply nonexistent in the case of Software Industry. And this happens so directly due to the impact of this Information Age generated by computing and the Internet.

The moment a new piece of software is built at the site of innovation, it is simultaneously the prototype and the technology. A piece of software is a machine, that takes some information or data as input, and produces an output, which is again some information. And the very moment the prototype is produced, there can be as many copies as one wants, at zero-cost, zero-distance, zero-time and zero-discrepancy. We have already discussed the zero-discrepancy aspect of digital data in chapter three. In digital copying, a copy is always exactly identical to the original, a phenomenon that cannot be even imagined with any piece of traditional technologies, prior to the digital ones. It is zero-distance, through the network of networks by which all the geographies are now linked to one another. The other name of this *network of networks* is the Internet. It is zero-time, because, Information moves at the speed of light through the Internet, and for non-cosmic distances, the time taken to traverse is virtually zero. It is zero-cost, because, if there is a piece of working computer, this piece of software will run there without a single more buck spent on it. And the point is that, if we consider any traditional industry, it largely means factory or the site of production. And in the site of production, the most important variables are these: cost, distance, time and quality-control.

The scope of this change does not end here. Actually this is the start. The labor process gets entirely changed too. In fact, the total span and depth of the change is too much for a single book, let alone this single section. We only want to mention one or two of these changes in the possibility frontier. They will point to the direction in which major transformations took place, within the very basic categories. And, on these categories a Marxist theory builds itself. Let us take the example of a laborer. For a traditional laborer in a traditional factory, the nature and scope of work of a single laborer is monolithic enough to allow replacement. One laborer can be replaced by another without much ado. This is a major factor in building the class-consciousness. The unity within the working class is predefined by the very condition of being replaceable, the very basic oneness within different laborers. This oneness works as a precondition to this unity, the factor of skill being common and one, for any group of laborers. But now, every laborer in Software Industry is an individual – every one of them has an individual skill, that is personal to him. The possibility of being a better programmer, with less errors or more innovative tricks, is always there. So, potentially all the laborers in Software Industry are no more laborers, but cyber-clerks, clerks of cyber-age, or, at most, for really innovative programmers, cyber-artists. But they are no more laborers, in the traditional sense, without that predefined monolithic oneness. And if the primal unity is not there, it cannot generate a unified category of *class*, at least as easily as it could with a traditional laborer in a traditional industry. This is not the only change. There are myriads of changes like that, but, as we said, that discussion is not relevant for this book. We only wanted to mention the direction, in which the meanings of the traditional categories of Marxist political economy are getting transformed, in this changed reality. This changed reality, as we have seen in the earlier chapters, was the very precondition of the birth and evolution of FLOSS. These were the conditions that made FLOSS happen. And under these very conditions, the traditional categories of traditional Marxist *counter-hegemony* are undergoing very deep internal changes. These two directions, the direction of FLOSS, and the direction of the Marxist categories, are actually reverse. But, to go into that we have to say a few more things about Software Industry.

In this Age of Information, in this changed reality, as we described earlier, Software Industry is getting a pride of place, being the omnipresent industry, in the sense that, there is hardly any area of production or science left out till now, outside the jurisdiction of software. Let us read this omnipresence in terms of the intervention of GPL into the categories of property and state, that we discussed in chapter six. As we have seen through the layers of dialectical development of the categories, the primary categories take part in every new interplay of *unity* and *difference*, and generate a plane of *unity* at a higher level, that then unfolds in the form of many existent-s, at a higher plane of *difference*. So, once the intervention of GPL, into the social ethical judicial categories related to software, takes place, this starts infecting every branch of software development, and thus it fosters into all possible walks of work, wherever any piece of software is in use. Actually this is just a practical elaboration, the real strength of this proliferation is much bigger in scope. It spreads through the very core of social consciousness, that is, the mechanism of *abstract morality*, that we have discussed earlier. The very process of *cognition* of social man, the way he interprets the *social* categories, and posits himself among them, starts transforming. In the FLOSS tradition, new developments are going on at every moment, generating new wealth at every moment. All this wealth comes under GPL, and hence actually it becomes ~~wealth~~. This ~~wealth~~, like any mass of capital, now goes on accumulating, as is the nature of

birth and growth of capital. So, wealth and capital are now no more their old selves. Under the onslaught of continuously accumulating ~~wealth~~, capital is becoming ~~capital~~. So the market too now has no other way to go than getting transformed into ~~market~~. Because, through exchange, every kind of production is related to every other kind of production. Value generated under a transformed property relation in the production of software, or ~~value~~, is now fostering into every other form of production, enabling ~~market~~ to operate, through market exchanges.

In chapter five, we talked about the deliberate inversion of the sense of the word ‘viral’ in context of GPL. While the half-literate people, manufacturing the commodities collectively called media, use the word ‘viral’ in the context of GPL with its usual negative connotation, we are hijacking the word, and deconstructing the very sense, to describe this phenomenon of intervention of GPL into the very judicial ethical social categories, through the omnipresence of software in our reality, in this age of information. The sheer biological strength and violence, and the very élan of the unannounced smoothness, with which the whole operation is executed, deserve nothing less than the qualifier ‘viral’. And, that too with an extremely positive connotation, in terms of any form of resistance to the hegemony of capital and market. In fact the whole process is so massive, that it is more than ‘viral’, it is another remake of the story of ‘body-snatchers’, and that too a remake sans horror, a remake full of *joie-de-vie*, and more importantly full of *freedom*, with the FSF qualifier attached, ‘free as in freedom of speech’. GPL transforms the whole institution of society, civil society and state from within, to such a scale, that it gradually becomes a body with a different soul. And all the time, the changes are accumulating, in every rotation of the self-recursive loop of ~~property~~, through the accumulation of ~~value~~, as we have already mentioned.

And in this situation, in this age of information, the traditional Marxian categories, which, as we have already shown, started vacillating between their prior self and an undefined unknown, now become extremely inadequate to define *counter-hegemony*. Counter-hegemony is always structured with respect to the power structure operating in the institution of state. And now, the category of state itself is in a process of becoming: becoming ~~state~~ under the progressive onslaught of ~~property~~. The Marxist concept of *counter-hegemony* gets undefined, and fails to operate any more, generating some spurious, unscrupulous, and uncertain areas of resistance. The reality is such that it calls for something beyond *counter-hegemony*, something that will run counter to the very concept of hegemony, counter to the hegemony of both father or father<sup>1</sup>. But, the theoretical space of Marxism does not allow such pluralism, being ruled all through by the *essentialism* of *abstract labor*, forgetting altogether the concrete of the labor process. Marxian political economy starts dealing labor and labor process after they have become actualized in the process of exchange, hence, already rendered in the form of abstract labor. The other counterpart of the abstract-concrete dialectics, concrete labor, gets entirely erased and forgotten in Marxism. But the prodigal returns, from beyond this pathos of forgetfulness, in the form of racial movements, woman’s right movements, queer’s right movements, and so on, and ceaselessly go on building a counter-culture. But that is an entirely different story, to be told elsewhere. Let us return to the discussion of FLOSS, which, as we are going to show in the coming pages, generated something of that order, through the sheer strength of *subversion* of the category of *property*, that GPL unfolds. And through this *subversion*,

GPL gets a surrogate fatherhood of all the scattered bastard texts continuously spawned through *counter-culture*. We mentioned some of the links before, we are coming to them, once again, in the next section.

#### 4. Counter-culture and GPL

In the days of my early youth, there were a lot of jokes about Stalin's regime, roaming around. They all had one thing in common, a critique of the oppression, though in quite obtuse and obviously comic proportions. Two of them I can still remember. One was about a parrot, who was taught very strong anti-Stalin slogans on a regular basis by the owner, who, without an easy way out to vent his resistance, took this curious way of registering protests. But the secret police was quite active, and they got the scent. And one day they came to visit, when the owner threw the parrot in the deep freezer. After a few minutes, when the police went away, he took the parrot out in the open, and it shouted "Hail Stalin". The owner just sighed, "See, what Siberia can do in minutes." Another joke was about surgical operations. A doctor went to a Moscow hospital, and saw a very intricate and elaborate heavy-duty skull surgery going on. And when the doctor asked about what the ailment was, the answer came, that they were removing a tonsil. Quite surprised by the elaborateness of the surgery, the doctor asked, then why open the skull, and pat came the reply, "Don't you know it is prohibited to open your mouth?" And the same thing happened in the case of the Romanian communist tyrant Nicolae Ceaușescu. For quite some time, before the overthrow came, and he fled from Bucharest in a chopper, there were a lot of such jokes published in the periodicals of Calcutta. And the connectedness of Romania and West Bengal is in no sense intimate: geographical, historical, political or cultural. Just like the jokes about the Stalin regime, they too had only one thing in common, a caustic critique of the oppression.

In case of the historical evolution of philosophy, literature and art, thus has always been the relation of the comic, the sarcastic, the pungently playful, with the straight discourse of politically correct forms of disciplines. Where the mainstream represented, roughly speaking, the Apollonian thread, the comic and playful always carried a Dionysian diversion. Metaphorically speaking, the story of the owner of the parrot is quite true in terms of power management. When one cannot invert it, one goes on subverting. If there is Power, Resistance *is*. This is bound to happen.

CLR James, the brilliant theoretician and political activist, used a very interesting example in his notes on Hegel, 'Notes on Dialectics, Part II, The Hegelian Logic', James 1980. Incidentally this was the very first text on Hegel that excited me in my youth full of political activism. And it seems, this may be an opportune moment to pay homage to this human being of the first order, who took part in political struggles all through the world, in Caribbeans, Britain and America. At many moments of my personal and political desperation, the works of this man gave me a fresh waft of air from all the seas he traveled. Somewhere I read about the lonely spartan room with a desk, that he lived in. And so many times I imagined, I am talking with him and getting suggestions, in this room. Anyway, let us come back to the example cited by his notes on Hegel.

The moment a drop of ink makes a splotch on the tablecloth, it simultaneously defines two

different areas, one area with the splotch, and the other area without it. One cannot exist without the other. Exactly the same thing is true about the binary of Power and Resistance. Resistance is the other of Power through which Power exists. Now, let us push this example of James a bit further, to allow the full beauty of the situation to come out. The strangeness becomes evident, when we want to define, with exact precision, the geometrical area of the splotch, because there is none. One can try it out: measuring the exact area of a splotch. In plain sight without a microscope, it is hardly possible to fathom the degree of impossibility of this task. Actually there is no exact geometry here, while Hegel wanted to define them in exact precision, as we did see, with the categories of *this* and *that*. And from these areas, undefinable in terms of this binary divide, as we said, comes out the plurality of Resistance: we get Resistance as many resistances. The owner of the parrot had his resistance too, though not in exactly the same way a revolutionary ideology acts it out. It is a resistance of the interim kind, emanating from the space beyond the binary of presence/absence of a splotch.

The comic and sarcastic is one such resistance. The anti-authoritarian playfulness that we reported about “The Unix Programming Environment”, Kernighan and Pike 2001, and many other texts in FLOSS tradition, in chapter four, is another. The common element between all of them, and the whole time and history called *counter-culture*, is the element of *subversion*. The binary of black/white demands Resistance to get employed in *counter-hegemony* of inversion, while all these resistance with a small ‘r’ go on subverting it. This element of subversion was very much there in May 1968, the student movement of Paris, and hence the Communist Party of France had such an uneasy relationship with it that we reported earlier. This subversion was there in the Hippie Movement, the *counter-culture* things, the Flower-Power things, that were raging through America in the very decade of sixties, in which FLOSS was born, though it was much before the birth of the term ‘FLOSS’, as we mentioned. The birth of Unix was not the birth of FLOSS, rather, the coming into being of the OS called Unix was a product of this FLOSS tradition. Then through the years before the birth of GPL, it was going on without a very distinct mooring of its core. Then came GPL: the text was born that could become an envelope, a surrogate father to all the bastard texts carrying the same flag of subversion as a form of resistance. And the project was born, the project that we described in chapter two, the bastard supplements accumulating into the text of GPL, that would then create the reality of FLOSS, the context of reading GPL. But that was yet to come in the period when the *counter-culture* resistances were accumulating through an endless series of supplements. The birth of Linux kernel with GPL was the inception of the process of actualization of the context of FLOSS. And we are living through it, now and here. All these moments the process is going on, ceaselessly and endlessly, getting stronger every passing moment, cumulatively through the ploy called GPL, as we have described before in details.

The resistance imbibed within GPL is not hard to discern. Eric Raymond does it. We have seen. And due to his lack of understanding of the philosophy of Marxism, he assigns the attribute to Marxism. The same error we have seen committed by Michelangelo Antonioni too, in his ascribing something to Marxism when it was not appropriate. The element of resistance in student movement was very correctly pointed out by Antonioni, but again it was a wrong association of attributes. Let us remember the sequence from ‘Zabriskie Point’ that we described in chapter four. One student is captured by the police, and the

officer asks, “Name?”, the student answers, “Karl Marx.” The officer writes the ‘Karl’ part as ‘Carl’. This visual metaphor dramatizes the moment of Americanization of the word, and thus stands for the very cultural distance between the Power and Resistance. But, as we said, this visual metaphor represents an error: how much maybe the prevalence of Mao, Lenin and Marx in the conversation of the students, this counter-culture was something very different from them.

When Antonioni is talking about student movement, actually the whole dimension of Marxist Resistance is playing in his head, just like Raymond. And we have already pointed out the differences between the two forms of resistance, the Marxist Resistance and the GPL resistance. As we have seen, GPL signals a resistance that is plural in nature from the very beginning. Stallman and his comrades in FSF and GNU, who worked towards GPL, had nothing philosophical in their work. It was a hard world of software programming and they were just trying to get ways of coping up with the rules of market and capital, while trying to retain and enjoy the freedom that was always there in the FLOSS tradition before the name ‘FLOSS’ was born. And through these trials and tribunals, GPL was born, that, unknowingly for the creators, was holding a philosophical basis much more rich and poignant in terms of possibilities in the postmodern postcolonial times of ours than any Marxist counter-hegemony could ever achieve.

But there is a very interesting point here. The question is, what is the theoretical coordinate of GPL that we are relating it with all the subversive elements in the decade of sixties, the decade in which the dream died in America? How GPL can give an anchor to all the bastard texts generated through all versions of resistance with a small ‘r’, through the playful anti-authoritarian gestures always implicit in FLOSS tradition, through the student movements in universities, through the hippie movements and flower power? This ability of GPL must be accounted for by something coming from within GPL.

This ability comes from the moment of ‘subversion’ ingrained in the philosophy working within GPL. This element of *subversion* intrinsic to the philosophical mooring of GPL was so massive, the subversion it causes to happen to the empire of capital and market is so inherently derogatory and detrimental to the whole mechanism of state constructed over these rules of capital and market, that something of this scale was never witnessed by the history of social reality. And as we have already said, this is *subversion*, not the intended *inversion* of all counter-hegemony of all genre, and thus it goes beyond *counter-hegemony*. This subversion works across all the layers of dialectical development of civil society, state and consciousness, transforming everything it touches in its way, and so rules out any need of inversion at all. It makes state, society and market bow down to this subversion and makes capital and market allow the very freedom that they wanted to take away and that FLOSS fought for. Let us elaborate this *subversion* inherent in GPL.

We have seen in chapter six, how the very category of *determinate right* moves through successive layers of *unity* and *difference*, towards the construction of the whole elaborate system of state and civil society and all. So, as it goes, the very journey of *being* towards its terminal point in *essence* starts from the very category of *property*. And here comes in GPL. We have already discussed, more than sufficiently, to show, how this very category of *property* starts to vacillate between its *being* and *nothing*, and finally ends up in the category of ~~property~~, something unforeseen in the history of human ethics and morality.



So, this category of ~~property~~ is an endless self-recursive loop of *subversion* of the very category of *property* on which is built the whole mechanism of morality, market and state. And, a subversion more intense in its scale, or more shattering in its impact, can not be imagined. Because it subverts the very basis on which everything is built, everything that is social and moral in the history of human civilization.

So, in contrast to the binary black/white violence of communist *counter-hegemony*, GPL gives birth to an entirely new affect, never experienced before, that we can call as ~~violence~~, something that is infinitely more violent than any violence ever incurred. Where a violence can at most take away blood and life, this just wipes out the very identity and history and future in one go. Now let us come back to the concept of Flower-power, and compare that with the story of the owner of the parrot. As we have already said, the decade of Flower-power was a very active decade. This was the decade, that in the very third year, got the biggest American shock after World War II. That was the assassination of JFK. Then, through the years went on the Anti-War struggle. All this time Anti-Racial Movement and Movements for Human Rights of all orders were gaining momentum. So much it gathered its strength that, two of the biggest representatives of the two most important movements, the Anti-Racial one and the Anti-War one, had to be killed. Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy were both killed in the same year, 1968.

All these movements were nothing but different orders of display of different versions of resistance with a small 'r'. And all these movements were getting displaced by the biggest kind of stupid and horrible violence: all this time Vietnam War was going on. Nam war was a ceaseless display of violence the scale of which could hardly be portrayed even by artists like Stanley Kubrick in 'Full Metal Jacket', Kubrick 1987, or Francis Ford Coppola in 'Apocalypse Now', Coppola 1979. As it goes, the 'rest of the world' does not simply exist for Americans. Even if it is true, Nam war was killing America's own babies too, young men and students were dying everyday in Nam War. And it may be an irony of history that the generation that was dying there in Nam was the very 'baby boom generation', born out of the terror in the aftermath of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This was the time when all lines started in one brand of terror and violence and ended in another.

The man in Stalin's Russia who just had a pet parrot, loved freedom too. He wanted to protest towards oppression too. But he was afraid. So he went into subversion. He taught the parrot abusing Stalin. He himself wanted to do it, and do it in public. But he could not. Violence terrorized him. Exactly the same thing happens with all versions of resistance with a small 'r'. The sixties decade was such that, everyone wanted getting a respite from violence. So came Flower-Power and all. And if you take away violence from resistance, how can it flourish at all other than through subversion? So all these different and plural and concrete versions of subversion were floating around till they got their anchor and father in the envelope of GPL. And, through GPL, then came the actualization of the very FLOSS tradition. And this FLOSS tradition generates the context of reading the text of GPL. The meaning that is now there in GPL is generated through this tradition, fulfilling the project of chapter two, of exemplifying the counter-journey from supplement to text to context.

## 5. SaVAge in a Synthetic Space

As we gave an introduction in chapter one, this category of ‘saVAge’ is a savage and a sage together. SaVAge is a savage by his Third World reality, and is a sage by his self-consciousness. He knows what he is, and what his limitations are. And so he is conscious about the equations of power. He is conscious of the synthetic hegemony ruling the synthetic space of global reality. As we said before, synthetic space differs from simple or complex Space. A *hegemony* defined on a synthetic space is a *synthetic hegemony*. The discursive space of *hegemony* is particularly relevant in case of the rule of capital and market, in the age of capitalism. *Transition Model* is a standard apparatus of political economy, we have used it in this book to understand synthetic hegemony better. The dialectical process of emergence of a hegemony of capital can be elaborated in terms of a transition model. ‘Transition’ usually refers to the process of transformation from feudalism to capitalism, which we have already mentioned in our short and simplified discussion of historical materialism.

In a Simple Space the dialectics of *transition* is quite simple. In the process of *transition*, the emerging embryonic capitalism wants to annihilate feudalism, and finally the society reaches a fully grown developed capitalism. The dialectics of *transition* in terms of *thesis*, *antithesis* and *synthesis* can be listed like this.

*Thesis* – Feudalism.

*Antithesis* – Emerging Embryonic Capitalism

*Synthesis* – Fully Grown Capitalism

This is pure and simple Hegelian dialectics. In simple space, a pure *antithesis* is annihilating a pure *thesis* and creating a pure *synthesis*. This *synthesis* is a higher moment that supersedes both the lower moments of *thesis* and *antithesis*. And as we said, for Hegel, the *universal* is capitalism, the final and terminal moment, the end of history. In this simple space, the proper Hegelian dialectics is working properly. Then comes the concept of complex space. Antonio Gramsci was one of the first few theoreticians who pointed out that simple dialectical development may not actualize properly. If the category of *antithesis*, in the shape of the embryonic capitalism, does not consider the concrete reality to be very friendly for a total metamorphosis into a proper *synthesis*, as expected in simple space, it will not exert itself to a full-scale annihilation of *thesis*, as the logic of simple space predicts. Rather *antithesis* would attempt towards an *as-if synthesis* or *surrogate synthesis*. And this *surrogate synthesis* will actually synthesize a transformed set of *thesis* and *antithesis*, not any more in their earlier shape.

This transformation signals towards a transfiguration of both *thesis* and *antithesis* in a very vital way. In simple space, within the proper grammar of dialectics, *thesis* and *antithesis* are mutually exclusive in a frame of binary enmity. In this changed situation of complex space, for the surrogate *synthesis* to take place, they have to strike out some kind of a mutual friendship. In the Indian experience of *transition*, we have seen this to happen. The very Indian state came into being through the ploy of Indian National Congress, that was actually a platform of friendship between the feudal landlords ruling the rural wealth and the emerging capitalists in the urban and industrial sector. Traditional Marxist positions

relied on the pure form of Hegelian dialectics of simple space. Theories of Gramsci and others brought in a tweak here. Complex space summons some kind of friendship between two binary enemies: *thesis* of feudalism and *antithesis* of emerging capitalism. In this tweaked situation, each of them is allowing some living space to the other, so they are digressing from their traditional enmity of Hegelian dialectics. The details of this process is worked out in details in Chatterjee 1993.

CDC 2000 deployed a new kind of space, a new category, called synthetic space. As we said in chapter one, synthetic space is a category that comes out of an interrogation of the very possibility of this friendship between *thesis* and *antithesis*, feudalism and capitalism, two categories that were hitherto enemies and binary opposites in traditional dialectics. We can ask, how come the friendship can take place at all, if these two are really that kind of binary opposites, that they are believed to be? CDC 2000 brought in theories of Louis Althusser, and dug deeper into the categories, to show that the binary opposites like *tradition* and *modernism*, the opposition in focus in postmodern postcolonial studies, just like that between feudalism and capitalism in transition discourse, is actually residing in a space that is always already marked by overdetermination. Particularly relevant here is Althusser 1969. Also Althusser 1971 and Althusser 1997. In this overdetermined space, each of *thesis* and *antithesis* always already constitutes and determines the other. And so, from before the friendship between feudalism and capitalism as per complex space grows between them, they are always already inscribed with some micro-friendships in-built within themselves. Through layers of overdetermination, we reach at the final category of synthesis of *modernism* and *tradition* in this space – synthetic space. One important point to note here is that, the concept of synthetic hegemony explicitly considers the problem of discursive constitution, unlike the concepts of simple and complex hegemony which conflate the ontological with the epistemological or discursive, as we mentioned in chapter one.

But now another problem shows up. Overdetermination, as we said, does not believe in linear one-way causality from *cause* to *effect*, and every entity is constituted and determined by every other entity. And thus, every entity is both a *cause* and *effect* of every other entity. But that means, the traditional space of cause/effect hierarchy is ruled out. In fact this theme is highlighted in standard postmodern postcolonial studies, like Homi Bhabha, Arjun Appadurai and so on. There this theme of overdetermination is celebrated in the sense that, it signals for them a kind of *end of inequality*. Bhabha 1990 and Bhabha 1994 are quite representative of this kind of reading. For these postcolonial theorists, colonial times meant inequality between the colonizer and the colonized, but, in postcolonial times, the hierarchy ceases to exist, and we all become equal in this overdetermined postcolonial space.

Actually the break between the colonial and postcolonial times is not that dramatic as it seems in the first glance. Through synthetic space operates a continuity of inequality between the colonial and postcolonial times. To demonstrate the inherent inequality in this postcolonial space of overdetermination, we use another concept, ‘mimicry of overdetermination’. With this concept in hand, CDC 2000 proclaimed postcoloniality as a ‘nameless colony’, in the sense that, the inequality continues, though in displaced forms between these two phases. Though, there is a difference too, between these two phases. In

the colonial times the coordinates of a colony was quite definite and given. One could pronounce, without a doubt, which colonized belonged to which colonizer. For some countries it was the British, for some other countries it was the French, and so on. But, in these postcolonial times the whole process of inequality is fostered through nameless lords. This lordship without name marks the phenomenon of ‘nameless colony’ and ‘mimicry of overdetermination’. We are coming to that in a bit. This system of nameless lordship goes on, through a process of displacement of surplus value from the Third World, but in a nameless way, through the MNC-s.

Synthetic space is the collective qualifier for this Third World which does exist no more, by definition. Because, by definition, in these postcolonial times, we are all equal, and hence, there is no First Second or Third in that sense. The continuing inequality is perpetrated in this synthetic space through *mimicry of overdetermination*. This means that, East does not overdetermine West in exactly the same way as West overdetermines East. There is an explicit asymmetry operating here. In an oversimplified way, an example can be cited like this – Western culture reaches East through music videos and the Internet, while Eastern musicians like Ravishankar have to make their presence felt in West in their bodily forms. They *have to*. In fact, how many times an Eastern musician has been to West is an index of his success, as considered by the local market. This kind of measure of success, quite common in East, does actually doubly prove the question of mimicry of overdetermination, the overdetermination that is not quite. *Nameless colonialism* and *mimicry of overdetermination* mark the continuing inequality in the postcolonial postmodern *synthetic space*, and the saVAge resides here. In the face of this nameless global colonization, he has to find a survival strategy. So, through this category of ‘mimicry of overdetermination’ the concept of hegemony once again comes back into this synthetic space, overdetermined in a postmodern way. This is synthetic hegemony.

Let us now situate this saVAge of synthetic space together with FLOSS. This saVAge is self-conscious. And hence he is conscious about the overdetermined inequality ruling the globe, and he is conscious about the limits of his ability too. SaVAge resides beyond the binary divisions of hero and meek. He knows that those binary divisions are forced categorizations, and his existence resides elsewhere, in the interstices of such divisions of forced inclusion/exclusion, as we have discussed in context of the categories of Hegel and Marx. And, by choice, beyond the mythology of hero/meek, he refuses to take up heroism. And so, saVAge wants to go beyond the paradigm of *counter-hegemony* and violence. We experienced 9/11 after CDC 2000 was written. And that actually revitalizes this position. As we experienced, events like 9/11, in a way, actually legitimize even bigger violence like the Iraq war. So, saVAge wants to eke out a space of survival, survival in terms of body and mind, in terms of his postcolonial postmodern phenomenology beyond wars. And at last GPL gives him that opportunity.

## 6. FLOSS Experience and A Book

From around 2000 I got involved in a local Linux organization called GLT, and wrote a book in Bangla on Linux. This book in Bangla, “গ্নু-লিনাক্স: একটি ব্যক্তিগত যাত্রা” or *GNU-Linux: A Personal Journey*, Das 2005, was published in hard copy in 2005, but it was available online from 2003. The same site that holds this web-resource carries a lot about the

organization GLT, *GNU-Linux-Thek*. The last word in this name, ‘thek’, is a colloquial Bangla expression, meaning a ‘ghetto’ or ‘joint’. Both GLT and this book, Das 2005, were parts of the same activism around Linux. I wanted this book, Das 2005, not to be a manual, but a book on history of computing: the evolution of Linux, trying to unfold the dynamics and marvel of a computer user while using Linux. This was actually a practical truth for me as a computer user. For almost a decade before coming to Linux, I was working with a PC, and from quite laborious use of computer, particularly in the field of word-processing, as a writer in both Bangla and English, I had gained my quota of user-efficiency. For that whole decade prior to coming to GNU-Linux, the use was entirely on MS-Windows systems.

The changeover was born out of a series of small-scale calamities called virus-attacks. This kind of calamities is a regular and routine thing for an MS-Windows user. In one case, I overheard one young IT student talking to another, about his very fruitful daily habit of formatting the hard-drive and installing MS-Windows afresh before the start of work, every morning, while all data remain burned on CD-s. And really, this kind of an extreme may not be very far from average MS-Windows experience. But, for me, it was extremely sad, I was writing a long fiction in Bangla, and almost the work of a month was lost. The problem with fictional prose is that, unlike an essay, the moment of writing it once can hardly be reconstructed, and in fact that fiction was never ever finished. And so, when this information seeped in to me, through different sources, that there is no fear of virus attack on a Linux system, it was an welcome relief. For those who are not familiar with the term: a ‘computer virus’ is a malicious program that infects a system and does some harm.

As I was reported at that time, virus attack on a Linux system is not possible. In a sense this is true. Firstly, the viruses that loom there, in the electronic universe, are meant for MS-Windows systems. Secondly, the FLOSS systems are built in such a way that an user without the supervisor access cannot access any system file, and hence the viruses are rendered harmless even if they enter the system. There are many more things here, but, obviously outside the scope of this discussion. So, the next decade, till this date, for me, belonged to Linux. And after coming to Linux, or, as we know it now, FLOSS, the two consecutive decades generating experiences with MS-Windows and FLOSS were so very different for me. The very first thing that touched me on a Linux system was user-participation. This concept of user participation in Linux comes in layers.

Layer 1. *Knowing the System*. Even a whole decade after working in an MS-Windows environment, with all that amount of time and energy spent on it, still, the OS and the PC remained more of a magic to me, and at times extremely bad magic, when one can never know or understand what one has done wrong. This particular part of experience started correcting so rapidly in the next decade of Linux. Continuing the Unix tradition, all the Linux distro-s carry thousands of Manual pages, all at the beck and call of a command called ‘man’. This immense resource of manual pages is also accessible in ‘info’ or other formats too. In terms of documentation, given within any Linux system in forms of manual pages, and How-tos available on the Net, the total available information is literally inhumanly enormous. And this was the first thing that moved me. All this is available for anyone who is interested. All this inhuman and impossible amount of labor, billions of man-hour, spent on all these documentation – if that was not done for money, then what, if not a sense of community – I asked myself. The collection of Linux how-to-s, literally in

thousands, describing the details of how to do something in Linux, is an excellent testimony of community cooperation, stored in documentation. They can be accessed from many websites, like <http://tldp.org/>, the Linux Documentation Project. Here this collection is kept for download, and regularly updated as and when any new how-to is written. Linux manual pages and how-to-s together add up to a repository, that is nothing but a community live in action, through the pages of these texts. And the implicit marvel here is that, while the proprietary software system that I was using in the earlier decade worked more like an alchemy system, where nothing is known, everything is hidden, and learning some new trick was just dumbly memorizing some clicks or keystrokes, never knowing how or why, this new system, with that amount of documentation, was more like an open invitation to know. This gave the feel of alchemy transforming into chemistry.

*Layer 2. Interacting with other users.* This second step comes so naturally in Linux with its literally innumerable number of mailing lists. Some of them are centered around the distros, and some of them are attached with individual pieces of software or groups of software, though they regularly overlap. And some of them are meant for Linux-users in general. In these mailing lists, the users share their experience, expertise and knowledge of the system. Interacting with the other users in the mailing lists starts with reporting a problem and seeking its solution. Then it grows on. A lot of participants in these mailing lists are developers themselves, or very active users knowing a lot about the system. So, these mailing lists become a very good learning ground. In the context of this mailing list cooperation, one of my personal experiences can be reported here, that deeply moved me. Though, as an experience, it is quite commonplace on Linux mailing lists. For about the last four years of this Linux decade, I am using Fedora. I got in a terrible fix with ReiserFS, some filesystem in Linux, and after I reported this to the Fedora Users Mailing List, [fedora-list@redhat.com](mailto:fedora-list@redhat.com), on 11<sup>th</sup> October, 2007, a lot of other users came in. And almost eighteen hours and scores of mails later, all through the night, after hordes of experiments, suggested by the mailing list, as I went on reporting the results, the problem was solved. I reported this whole incident in my blog on 24<sup>th</sup> October, 2007. Rarely I have witnessed another source of learning so unconventional and dynamic, and yet practical.

*Layer 3. Participating and paying back to the community.* This is the last step for a beginner user. The way he was helped through the mailing lists or otherwise, it is time now for him to payback the same way. This cooperative gesture flourishes in many ways. One important route here is reporting the bugs. All the pieces of software that are there in a Linux distro, or any working Linux system, are produced by the FLOSS community, and so it becomes a responsibility of the user to report any problem of use. This works in Linux in such a scale that there are quite a few dedicated websites for reporting, categorizing and processing of the bugs found on Linux software. And also, in many cases, from within the software or the distro itself, or a piece of dedicated software in the distro just for reporting bugs. The participation is not just limited to bug-reporting. The mailing list is always there, where this user can help other ones. Or, he may participate in writing manual pages, or suggest different features for pieces of software. Or, even he can write a whole book, like what happened in my case. This goes on.

Now, all these three layers that we reported here, are interrelated. They happen simultaneously and together. And gradually the user starts customizing his own system

according to his own needs and whims. There is a very interesting statement in Raymond 2004.

But the cost of the mechanism-not-policy approach is that when the user *can* set policy, the user *must* set policy.

This phrase ‘mechanism-not-policy’ refers to X-Windows System in the section ‘What Unix Gets Wrong’ in the first chapter of this book. This describes the approach of X-Windows, that wanted to build the ways an user can use the system, without deciding for him the exact details of the final state. That part was left for the user to decide. Forgetting the technical details, let us concentrate on the proposition of the statement. It says, because the liberty on part of the user *is* there, and so, with this liberty he can customize, actually, in a real system, when he is using the system, he *has* to customize. Giving the liberty of customization to the user means keeping some decision variables undecided and open. And hence, the user has to decide them himself. So, in a way, the participation of the user becomes a must in some cases. This was the traditional approach in the hacker community, continuing into FLOSS. But, in some cases it may become pretty difficult for a not-so-experienced user. Though, in the recent times, some Linux distro-s, like Fedora, Ubuntu, and OpenSuSE, putting a lot of emphasis on non-participating consumer-users in place of the traditional active-users of FLOSS tradition, have created a choice: choosing between a default option, automatically set for the consumer-user by the distro, usually called the ‘default’, and customizing a personal option for the active-user. The liberty of customizing is always there if the user is eager to learn and do it. We will come to this point once again in the next section.

So, these three things, knowing the system, interacting with other users, and participating in the system, come together to prepare the inert user into an active one and generate an entirely new order of experience of computer use. Hippel 2005 has quite a lot of interesting thoughts about user space innovation. This happened exactly this way with me too. I am citing my experiences here, as one of the test-cases that I watched. And obviously, this is the test-case that I watched most intimately.

Something else was here, working in the backdrop, that made my Linux experience seem even more dramatic to my own eyes. That was the political arena in West Bengal for the last three and half decades. Through these decades in West Bengal, a state of India, under the rule of CPIM, a Marxist Communist party, twelve years of which, from ’78 to ’89, I myself was an activist in CPIM, I watched every moment, to the utmost horror of my emotions and philosophy, how community dies. I watched a community degenerating and decaying, all fraternities friendships and cooperation getting betrayed every moment for the sake of money-making and power-hankering of the leaders, mauling the hopes of the poor hapless masses. Against the frustrations of political experience in these decades, this Linux experience was really a marvel to cherish. And as a teacher of an under-graduate college in Calcutta Linux never failed to excite me as an entirely new and novel source of learning. As a part of the whole decaying socioeconomic scenario of West Bengal, the culture and education have gone lower and lower through the decades of Left-rule. And in tandem with it, the faculty of inquisitiveness and search on part of a student has went on corroding: that is the least I can say about this horror show of a political regime. So, after discovering Linux, it seemed to me, maybe this active participation could be one good

way-out: something that will touch my students' hearts, or, maybe brains, and render them golden.

## 7. FLOSS Experience and A Lecture

This exciting experience of FLOSS, that reflected in that Bangla book, Das 2005, did not remain unblemished for long. That came more as a by-product of my taking IT, Information Technology, classes for the students of the college that I work in, S A Jaipuria College, Calcutta, where I am working for around two decades. We are coming to the experiences of those classes in a bit. In September 2005, in a Refresher Course on Behavioral Science organized by Academic Staff College, University of Calcutta, I gave a lecture, titled 'From Tongue to Fingers: Colonizing IT in a Postcolonial World', Das 2005. This lecture talked about the ways in which, mainly through the use of proprietary OS and software, that exclusively depended on GUI, the experience of Computer Science, for a student, undermined the whole rich and creative experience of a CLI. Students of computer, from the very start, start to think, that their only duty was to learn 'where to click' in a mediated GUI interface, already created by some software engineers, who wanted to anticipate all the needs and demands of the user, and created the interface with that anticipation in mind.

The point is, there is no harm in clicking, but there is quite a lot of harm in killing the possibility that someone may want to learn how to interact with the machine much more proactively, in a way that may or may not reside in clicking only. Actually the GUI is translating some basic commands, fed through the clicks, into computer actions. And if someone wants to use these commands directly, and combine and recombine among these commands creatively, that possibility is ruled out from the very start. The themes, that were elaborated in this lecture, included the pain and frustration from the position of a teacher at the state of teaching of computers in our colleges and universities. One of the important motifs elaborated there was the perpetration of a *colonial* mentality. The focus of this lecture was on the *mentality* aspect: how the 'colonial mind', that we discussed in chapter one of this book shows up in the way computers are taught in the colleges of Calcutta.

What is happening in computer education is that, as I experienced it, the students are mugging up some notes on theories, and just learning to click and use the pieces of software. For a consumer user that is quite good and adequate, no doubt. But, in computer education in general, in this part of the globe, the very possibility of an active user is getting assumed away from the very start. The underlying unstated belief is that, these young postcolonial minds are finally meant to be and become consumer users only. If someone wants to learn computer, with the dream of becoming a developer in mind, that possibility is ruled out from the start.

As that lecture wanted to point out, this goes in line with the things happening in the IT market in India. The biggest of the IT farms in India are just local agents of global process of Business-Process-Outsourcing, popularly called BPO. And a lot of them are, in the final sense, glorified Call Centers. Getting a job there, in one such farms, is actually the height of *karma* for a lot of Indian students of computer science. So, what they are doing there, finally, is nothing but using some pieces of software coming from Global MNC-s, and



from time to time giving back reports, generated through use, to these lords in foreign lands. So, from the very start, these Indian bright young minds are not striving to become a developer any more. The limit of their ambition is the profession of a cyber-coolie or cyber-clerk. This *mentality* is so evident there that the analogy with the times of the British rulers is actually inevitable: the very way Indian healthy youths supplied the British demand for coolies. Thomas Babington Macaulay, the British Lord, who was one of the pioneers of Western education in India, in the colonial times, considered that, “a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia”, and wanted European education in India for the sake of creating clerks, that can communicate with both the British lords and the illiterate coolies. The computer education in postcolonial India does nothing but remind us of this. The whole computer education in India, to a large extent, becomes an education of using computers, to serve the purpose of the lords, now nameless though, no more British, as we have already said.

These days, a lot of new recruits, to the big IT farms, come through the so-called ‘campus interviews’. The way this hiring is done, in many of the colleges of computer science, supports this coolie-view quite strongly. In a lot of cases, the students, after a full-fledged course spanning three or four years on different areas of computer science, are just invited by the big employers to a test, where only questions from English Language Efficiency and basic arithmetic are asked. This happens that way because they are never expected to do anything more than that. So, this question comes up quite reasonably, then why go on with so much expenditure of national wealth of a poor economy like us on glorified courses of computer science, and why not just vocational courses, that will prepare a student for working in a call center? This lecture observed sadly, that this was actually a case of colonial mentality, working on both the ends of the market: demand and supply. The system wants it like that and the students become like that: we are coming back to this point in the context of my experience of using FLOSS software while teaching IT in my college.

And then, the lecture proceeded into discussing the FLOSS environment full of FLOSS pieces of software. Any FLOSS distro, that is built with different pieces of FLOSS software, is always already a potential laboratory of computer science, this lecture declared. This is true in the sense that, any student can go on indefinitely using the GUI tools in a consumer-user way, but if someone is inquisitive and exploring enough to want to learn outside the span of the prescribed scope, he can do it. And the source code of the software in the distro can work as a starting point for him – how they are built such that they can do all the work they are doing. And a lot of developer tools are already there in a FLOSS distro, some of which we mentioned earlier in this book.

With all these things in mind, I, as a teacher, went on to try the FLOSS things with the students. The Bangla book I wrote, that we mentioned, was itself a part of this process: trying to help those young people that really want to learn. But the experience was quite of a mixed kind. I tried my hardest to give the students a feel of the *development environment*, by making them familiar to the tools of software development, that are always already there in the FLOSS distro-s. Obviously it was limited by the limited nature of my abilities, I am not a developer myself. In some cases this really led to very fascinating results, the students themselves became quite enthusiastic about the FLOSS environment. But, in most

of the cases, the experiment led to adverse results. Some of the students, who were already quite soaked in in the MS-Windows environment, that in no way encourages the user-space innovation, had already lost the initiative that could be there in them, and they felt intimidated by all those variations and user responsibilities. Anyway, that is not the point here. This is a book about the political economy of FLOSS and not the *colonial mentality* implicit in the process of Indian education.

## 8. Some Unresolved Questions

So, now it became quite of a riddle to me. What all my feelings told me was that, FLOSS is of supreme importance to an underdeveloped economy like us. But the importance that was readily and evidently showing up in FLOSS was in breaking or tweaking a colonial mindset imbibed in the education system, that I had in my focus in that lecture. But, even to my mind, something seemed missing. Just the ability to fulfill this task, alone, cannot simply create so much dynamics that was inherent in FLOSS. And cannot bestow FLOSS with the power to create such a strong community reality. And, even, in my teaching experience, trying to fulfill that task was generating so much of a mixed experience, as we reported. So, I felt, something more should be there. Then, why, or where is the catch? Why it is important? How it could create a community like that when everywhere else we see communities of all orders to wither away? Actually, around two years passed like that. The solution came up all of a sudden, when, just by chance, one sleepless night, I started reading Marx's critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, Marx 1977, once again, almost decades after the student days when I once started reading it, but could never complete. It was only then the mute point struck me. And within a few days, this discovery, that the magic of FLOSS was hidden in GPL, in the subversive tweaking of the categories of property and wealth and state, charmed me in one additional way too. It was a solution to the puzzle of searching for an appropriate example in demonstrating the possibility of a counter-journey to the Derridean journey from context to text to supplement. We have already talked about this discovery in chapter one. Now let us come back to the discussion of all the possible philosophical implications of the philosophical twist inscribed within GPL, all present and future possibilities, hidden in terms of potentiality in this very example of GPL. At last, in the analysis of GPL with philosophy of right, there was a practical exemplification and solution of a decade-old theoretical project, coming back from CDC 2000, as we said in chapter one. But, the very theoretical project of supplement-text-context calls for a plurality. We will go into those theoretical possibilities in the last section. And this FLOSS thing is a way out for saVAge in a very practical way too. It is a new mode of interaction between East and West, a new form of overdetermination. It opens up a *survival strategy* for the postcolonized East. But it needs a saVAge mind to read it: one who thinks overdetermination in terms of mimicry of overdetermination, and does not celebrate postcoloniality as some form of liberated open equality, but a continuity of the colonial inequality in entirely different terms.

## 9. FLOSS as a Survival Strategy of the Postcolonized SaVAge

Let us start with the concept of 'mimicry of overdetermination' operating in this synthetic hegemony of global capital. We have already said that, the so called 'equality' celebrated

by a lot of postcolonial postmodern theoreticians seems quite vague to us. We consider postcoloniality as a continuity of colonial times, though the context of power relations have undergone a total change. And so, the overdetermination, that works in this postmodern decentered synthetic hegemony, is not overdetermination in the true sense. Overdetermination takes away the primal position of cause, and thus wipes off the whole hierarchy between cause and effect. And so, it renders every entity equal in status. We do not think this kind of overdetermination works in the postcolonial reality.

Mimicry of overdetermination is the other name of re-inscribing the inequality once again into the space of interaction between the East and the West. Mimicry of overdetermination, as we introduced the concept in chapter one, means an unequal and asymmetric mode of overdetermination between two entities. This is overdetermination but not quite. This is a situation when the apparent equality in both-way overdetermination breaks down due to some in-built asymmetry in the mode of overdetermination. When, B overdetermines A in not quite the same way as A overdetermines B.

Synthetic hegemony, as we believe, in this electronic age, is always already inscribed with this ‘mimicry of overdetermination’. Nothing proves our point more than capital. Capital, in this electronic age, rules electronically. We should call it networked capital – the Internet in particular, and network in general are so much an integral part of capital these days. And we must keep in mind, capital, even before the onset of this electronic age, was perfectly mobile, while its other, labor, was not. All the immigration laws look after the separation between labor and mobility. Basu 2008 discusses this thing adequately enough. And, in this electronic age this mobility of capital becomes infinitely more dramatic, through networking. When we are talking about networks, we include all kinds of networks. Obviously, the Net, or the *network of networks*, as it is called, is the prime one. And then follows all forms of being connected, the cell-phones, the satellite-phones, the stand-alone LAN and WAN ones: everything. And on the other hand, this same networking has emphasized the lack of mobility of labor in so many ways. In this electronic age labor can be now rendered electronically. The running of the machines, or the running of the electronic machines called ‘stored program’, are done by machines themselves. Human labor is primarily for supervision and gathering and entry of data around the running of machines, or programs. This kind of human labor is ready-made for electronic transfer – this has in fact reemphasized the static dimension of labor in the face of a perfectly mobile capital.

It is capital that creates the networks, and it is thus everywhere, omnipresent and ubiquitous. When a skilled software developer residing in Calcutta works for a firm situated in Boston, maybe by partial or total telecommuting, or electronic transfer of labor, this is a situation when transfer of labor in physical form is no more necessary. Telecommuting is the process of doing labor, when the laborer is in one location, often at home, and is in direct communication with the main office at a different location, through a computer, equipped with communication hardware and software. In the case of total telecommuting, the laborer, though situated in say Calcutta, has to go through routines and schedules, structured according to a different timezone, say, the geography of Boston. All these different forms of outsourcing generate additional profit, because of the wage-differential operating between the two labor markets of Boston and Calcutta. Even when

the laborer is physically transferred to the locations of West, there is and remains wage-differential, that operates mainly according to the color of skin, among different workers working in the same location. Obviously there are many more related aspects here. Anyway, through these electronic modes of transfer of labor, the already mobile capital earns more mobility, as we said, the zero-time zero-cost zero-distance zero-disparity mobility, while labor becomes more static. Capital comes to labor through the networks, and so, labor does not have to move at all. As we said, the relative mobility of labor and capital, that was already skewed, becomes even more lopsided than ever.

The mimicry of overdetermination, that rules this synthetic space, becomes even more forceful through this inset of the electronic age. The very labor market, particularly the elite labor, in an economy like us, becomes redefined as the supply of input to a massive phenomenon of BPO, Business-Process-Outsourcing. And, all related industries start to become different categories and moments of this phenomenon of BPO. This goes on strengthening the very process of mimicry of overdetermination. Labor is kept bounded and immobile, while the instant mobility of capital, ensured through the IT revolution, reaps added profit, through the wage-differential operating in the low wage areas of the third world, where the putting out system is going on. So, the whole IT revolution just contributes in making the synthetic hegemony even stronger. The IT revolution, that started happening in West, now implodes into the very arteries and sub-arteries of an economy like us, where, the height of ambitious dream for a bright student becomes getting a job in a BPO, and serving the electronic processes run by capital by entering data and data.

There is an excellent documentary film, ‘Bombay Calling’ by Ben Addelman and Samir Mallal, Addelman and Mallal 2006. The power of this film resides in depicting how some spurious dreams and ambitions are manufactured, to fuel a spurious ideology fostered by capital. This film, in a sensitive way, depicts the ‘call center’ scenario. Let me cite a few details here from this film. It opens with Epicenter, a state-of-the-art call center in Bombay, as a part of a BPO. Here some young people are engaged in an action, what they call a ‘campaign’, of “taking over BT”, British Telecom. In a very touching way the souls of these young people are reflected in the documentary. One of these people is Nakul, with a mindset representative of his colleagues. Let us quote here, verbatim, a portion of what Nakul said.

Why not be the next USA? Right now everyone is speaking about the USA. All the transactions are made in the USA dollar. I would love to see the day when every transaction is in an Indian rupee. That would be a dream come true.

This is Nakul’s ambition. And capital, for the sake of its job being done, as here with Lalani, the owner of the call-center, goes on fueling this spurious ambition. A whole set of ambitions like that work in creating the fantasy of a war, like the word ‘campaign’. This creates a spurious ideological basis for a fantasy war between India and USA. Actually there is no war. A country of East cannot go into an economic war with a country of West, by just serving its service sector. Economic power becomes economic power through a long term process, manufacturing is one of the primary layers there. Without going through these layers, a war-cry is nothing but a luring gadget to amass all those young people, and that too on a stupid ideological basis. This spurious ideology is carried through just to

serve this synthetic hegemony. And the servants of capital think that they are in war with West. The saddest part is that, as it seemed from the film, quite a lot of our young minds get persuaded by it. And remember, the call center guys are brighter than average young people, earning much higher than an average Indian laborer, however small their wage maybe in comparison to their American counterparts.

So, the hegemony of capital becomes infinitely stronger. And static labor remains helpless in his home or homeland, while capital takes away his labor electronically and instantaneously, squeezing out even more surplus value from it at every moment than in the pre-electronic age. Obviously, computers have contributed in this direction in other ways too. When, the drab monotonous and bodily labor goes progressively more into the custody of computer, rate of value generation of the laborer, working on computer, becomes more intensive. With the same amount of clock-time traverse, the product of labor, in the electronic age, is much more densely loaded with value, increasing the relative surplus value, in terms of value generated by labor. And so, the electronic transfer of labor becomes even more fruitful, every unit of clock-time producing much more value than before the electronic age set in. In face of this hegemony, infinitely more powerful in an electronic age, what an economy like us can do? What should be its survival strategy? This concept of survival strategy becomes immensely important here. An underdeveloped economy like us can do hardly anything more than eking out a survival route. And exactly here, in the form of a survival strategy, FLOSS becomes relevant.

We have already demonstrated, how property and ~~property~~ become two very different flux in this IT age. In the age of capital, every form of human activity, under market exchange, becomes just another form of generation and accumulation of exchange value, creating just another property within the jurisdiction of market. Everything, thus generated through the expenditure of human labor, and hence, is repository of value, comes into capital's flux, and becomes a carrier of the force-field of capital, in the form of another private property generated in the age of capital. This flux goes on and on, and generates hegemony of capital. In our case, this hegemony is synthetic hegemony, marked by mimicry of overdetermination.

Now, as we saw, the brilliant ploy of GPL brought into being another force-field, the flux of ~~property~~. We have discussed how this flux of ~~property~~ involves other categories like ~~value~~, ~~capital~~ and ~~state~~, all generated through the self-recursive ploy of GPL. We are calling it a flux, because, exactly in the way of progress of capital, ~~property~~ too goes on accumulating new ~~property~~ around itself. This generates ~~capital~~, the alternative flux. As we have read all through this book, the tradition of FLOSS is nothing but the story of the birth of this alternative flux of ~~property~~ and accumulation of this ~~property~~ into ~~capital~~. Let us remind this once again, this is very unlike the counter-hegemonic projects of revolutionary politics, that believe in continuing the same flux, with the ownership altered, like property/ belonging to father'. Or, in concrete terms, where the society owns the mass of capital in place of capitalists, as in the project of socialism. Maybe this paves the ground for the degeneration of a process, where in real terms, they become property of the state, and thus property of the communist party, and thus the property of the leaders of the communist party. Even, when, at least in an utopia, this degeneration is not there, this is not an internal change to the category, just a change in ownership. Where the socialist society owns

capital, it becomes capital/ as the property/ of socialist society, and the socialist state becomes father/.

This alternative project of FLOSS is not a counter-hegemony in any sense of the term. It is counter to hegemony of all orders. ~~Property~~ is an alternative to property, not an opposite of it, what property/ is. Revolution is the epitome of war between property and property/. ~~Property~~ is the space where resides another phenomenology of friendship, beyond the prehistory of wars. So, there is no war between property and ~~property~~. These are two force-fields that overlap at some points, and at some other points do not. While the flux of property and capital belongs to competition, the alternative flux of ~~property~~ and ~~capital~~ belongs to cooperation and friendship and a new dimension of community.

Now, what saVAge should do? As we said, saVAge is self-conscious. He knows his ability, and hence, the limits of his ability. Unlike Nakul, he knows he cannot compete with father. He knows, if he goes into a war with father, father wins and he himself gets killed by father. And in the extremely improbable case of his winning the war against father, he himself becomes father, and inheritor of fatherhood. And because he abhors all kinds of violence and war and oppression, he looks away from the very concept of war, and takes up friendship. He joins the alternative flux. He knows, this is the only possible survival strategy in this reality, always already ruled by mimicry of overdetermination.

It is now a responsibility of an economy like us to take up FLOSS and collaborate with all the efforts going on in the FLOSS realm. As we have seen, software industry has already become the spinal cord of the whole global industrial capital, where the central nervous system resides. And hence, only through this alternative flux of cooperation and friendship generated in FLOSS, the saVAge economy of us can gain some power to go into conversations with the hegemony of global industrial capital, negotiating and squeezing out some space more for us, for our survival. This solution may seem meek and timid from the point of view of all revolutionary politics, and meek it is. It is deliberately meek and timid. It hates war. And so it hates both winning and losing a war. Its only focus is on survival. And it knows, like all poor and helpless souls know, all over the world, it is friendship that survives, not heroism.

We have a lot of bright children, who perform quite well in accumulating value for the global capital. If now, with our limited resources, we try to foster the FLOSS tradition into the realm of education of computing, that will bring in brilliant results. As we have seen, with a space always already marked by an emphasis on user-space-innovation and cooperation between all users, these bright minds can learn innovating from the very start. That gives us a beautiful route out and away from the trap of colonial mind with the lack of self-esteem in-built, as we have already discussed. And the bigger and broader perspective of this effort is generating and accumulating this new and alternative kind of fruits of human labor: ~~property~~ and ~~capital~~. We cannot compete and so we must cooperate. The immensely broad spectrum of different kinds of community labor have already accumulated there in the realm of FLOSS. Let us tap it and enhance it.

The story of this survival does not end here only in software industry. As we have said before, while property is singular, ~~property~~ is always already plural in its possibilities. The way GPL decentered and destabilized property from its pride of place through the history

of mankind, there are many such more possibilities, still to be explored and actualized. As we said, the process of resistance inherent in supplements-text-context is inherently plural. GPL is one very big step there, but the process of supplementation has not stopped. It cannot, actually. Synthetic hegemony of global capital is throwing up new ways of repressing the space of cooperation inherent in FLOSS, every moment, every day. And new supplements are accumulating around it. We elaborate the very deep and plural philosophical possibility of this process of supplementation, where differend meets deconstruction, as we said in chapter two.

## 10. The Return of the Concrete

Let us here, in this ending section of this book, cite a parable. Let us talk the Western way, let us talk bible. We know the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-32, when one of the two sons of a father went away, after some dispute about property. At the end of the parable, after the return of the prodigal son, the father rejoiced and killed a fat calf for the celebration. The older son, who remained with the father all this time, unlike the dissenting, digressing and prodigal son, did not like this. And the father said to the older son:

“My son,” the father said, “...we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.”

Let us pave the ground for another parable, where the Concrete returns. We have shown, how the new category of ~~property~~ emerged through the interstices of the categories of Hegel and Marx. We showed, how the essentialism of Hegel and Marx forces some categories into being categorized, through a forced mechanism of inclusion-exclusion. And this creates a mythology of logically consistent robust binary categories, what actually they are not. Their robustness is, in the true sense, an ostentation. Essence is the god in Hegel's system. And this same god goes into a new avatar, abstract labor, in Marx's political economy, as we said. Both these systems being god-believers, they both have to believe in devil too. And thus, the binarism of god and devil continues its domicile in these god-fearing philosophies. Captive to their own categories formulated in a binary way, both these philosophies fail to register anything outside the black-and-white of existence. So many categories are silently put out of their existence by this binarism.

We have already shown, how, Marx's political economy starts from the death of concrete labor, the only relevant thing for him is abstract labor. And from the interstices of this Marxian mythology of abstract labor, comes back the Concrete. This book, reminds us, once again, the other brother is dead, and alive again. He was lost, and found again, once in the story of GPL. But, from there starts the parable: in what other forms the Concrete returns, that is for us to see, as and when the force of human friendship and struggle pushes the usual categories to their extreme, and thus creates the blank space: from where emerge new categories – from where the concrete returns.

Philosophies work with freeze shot of categories, categories in coffins. The significance of these categories in terms of real existence is always in a process of differing from these categories in coffins. And new significance is always coming up there, in the world of real

existence. It is happening in both directions simultaneously, both in terms of hegemony of power and resistance towards this hegemony.

In this book we have dealt in details the history of taking away of basic human freedom and cooperation, operating in the world of hacking, during and after the creation of Unix. But it is not that this colonizing gesture of the hegemony of capital did end there. Later, in terms of our analysis the global imperialism of capital in this electronic age, we discussed a few more elements in this direction. This is going on. Let us take the very recent uproar about ‘cloud-computing’. Obviously it is too technical for the scope of this book. But, let us spend a few words just to understand, in a simple way, what it is. Cloud-computing is a kind of computing, where on demand of applications, the resources and information and other subsidiary software needed for computing are drawn from the Internet, from computers scattered on the Internet, through web-service providers, without depending on the computer it is operating on. One of the simplest examples of *cloud-computing* is Google mail. The role of the computer from where we are using it just ends in accessing the Internet, and nothing more.

It is not appropriate here to go into the details of the dangers inherent in it. But, quite a lot of people are very concerned, and quite reasonably so, about the control getting displaced once again from the realm of user to the realm of big capital. Things like privacy of information, or discretion of user about the software in use, are becoming progressively irrelevant. In fact, maybe, if unbridled, things like this could enable Google to achieve something that even Microsoft could not. And an interesting information for us, in this book, would be that, once again one of the biggest voices of dissent is that same Richard Stallman, the man behind GPL. Obviously we could provide some references here, but, it is better to search it on the Internet. By the time this book gets published, the information horizon will undergo changes. Both the projects of power, and the resistances against them are so alive and vibrant.

And that is the thing we want to stress here. The process of supplementation from where GPL came, is alive. It was alive from long before GPL came, or even computer. It is the history of power and resistances. Remember it, not resistance, but resistances, as we emphasized so many times through this book. And note the point of contention between supporters and opponents of ‘cloud-computing’. That is privacy of information. Obviously it is something that does not come from the realm of Marxism’s abstract labor. But, it is the concrete human being and his concrete labor that is primarily in issue here. In the whole phenomenon of subversion of power, that was behind the history of FLOSS, was another such thing. Primarily it was concrete labor. Maybe it is not very far for this concrete labor issue to flourish into the realm of abstract labor. But, that is not the question, the question is about concrete labor, that was so comfortably exiled from the realm of human thought by Marxism and all. But from where the prodigal returns, and it is celebrated with an exultation and grace, as we saw in FLOSS, and the parable too, when the prodigal returns. Pleasure and Fun that are so integral part of primitive FLOSS and declared FLOSS, talk earnestly about this concrete aspect of human labor.

This parable of the return of concrete, and the philosophy of subversion that we described through this book, have some very specific things to say. Let us, once again, retrace them in short, before we end the book. One of the very important aspects of the space of



phenomenology of friendship elaborated by the logic of GPL is that, in spite of all the nearness, it is a concept intrinsically different from Gandhi's Non-Violence. Gandhi's Non-Violence suffers the same problem of negative definition, with Marxism. Marxism cannot define itself devoid of its other: capital. Exactly the same way Gandhi's Non-Violence starts its journey from violence, and then defines itself negatively with respect to it. I am deliberately resisting myself from going into violence by Gandhi's Non-Violence. But, in the space defined by this phenomenology of friendship, we are talking positively, with a positive definition of this category of friendship. GPL is enhancing the space of friendship and cooperation, by positively contributing in the birth, growth, and sustenance of ~~property~~ and ~~capital~~. As we said, it is an alternative way, and it has no opposition or enmity with the age-old categories of property and capital. The social space of coexistence between these two kinds of categories, as brought into being by FLOSS, is a space of an entirely new kind of lateral relations, we already described. It is a space of overdetermination between enmity and friendship. Obviously many more things can be said about the comparison between the Gandhian position and the position of GPL, but that would be outside the scope of our discussion. We are coming back to this new space of friendship once again. But, before that, we need a few more words about the love-hate between capitalism and Marxism.

In the very first chapter of this book we mentioned about the same structure of 'scientific rationality' shared by both capitalism and Marxism. We do not want to linger that discussion here. But the zone of oneness between these traditionally advertised arch-enemies do not just end here. As we pointed out in so many places of the book, both of them share the same tendency of considering working class as a huge repository of new surplus value. Capitalism considers it that way and enjoys this consideration. And Marxism opposes the action of capitalism on the basis of the same consideration – working class is the source from what comes out new and new abstract labor, generating new surplus, forgetting the concrete aspect. So it does not remain entirely impossible for different forms of friendship to emerge between these two arch-enemies. Remember our example of the king and the contender becoming the members of the same exclusive club, as contenders for the post of king, hegemony in case of capital, counter-hegemony in case of Marxism.

As a critique to the concept of complex hegemony we interrogated the very possibility of friendship at the micro-level between the two opposites of thesis and antithesis in the form of capitalism and feudalism. We said, if their enmity is true, how come the friendship is possible at all. And we solved the problem by the concept of synthetic hegemony defined in a synthetic space, where the thesis of modernism and the antithesis of tradition always already overdetermine each other. In chapter one, we reported my personal pains and the sense of betrayal through the experiences of a communist party acting as a direct agency of big capital in my state of West Bengal, and fulfilling the tasks of an agency with no holds barred. And this is no stand-alone experience. We all know about China, the medieval age labor relations operating there, SEZ or otherwise. At one time we dreamed about Soviet Russia. My days of boyhood and early youth were lit up with the emotions of Lenin and International. It was long before we knew about Stalin and all. Then we dreamed about Chairman Mao in the same way as represented in the film, *Sunrise over Tiananmen Square*, McWilliams and Wang 1998. And the dream died in the same way too.

We have already mentioned the concept of ‘worship in the form of enemy’, lifting the idea from Indian epics, operating within Marxism towards capitalism. In these changing times we are progressively witnessing the ‘worship’ aspect reigning over the ‘enemy’ aspect. Particularly, around the concept of ‘economic development’, Marxism, all through this planet, has contributed hardly anything other than behaving as the most efficient agency of capital, and perpetrating all kinds of repression on people in the name of ‘development’. There are obviously many deep issues involved here, starting from the writings of Marx and Engels – around the concept of the only one route of development through suicide of the earlier forms of society – but, that is outside the scope of our discussion here.

When we are marking this new kind of reality as an overdetermination between capitalism and Marxism, the role of communist parties as agency of capital is not the only element. Capital needs Marxism too, in a very symbiotic way. In the Indian scenario, the extremist Marxist-Leninist-Maoist movements are happening, obviously, in the most poverty-stricken areas of backward rural tribal India. So, obviously, in a sociological way, leftist movements of the extremist nature are actually serving a kind of marker or index of lack of economic development. The way power is handling these extremist movements in these backward areas of India, it seems to a lot of us, power does not really want it to stop. To stop these, they would have tried to find the root cause and solve it. What power is doing is keeping these extremist movements confined in pockets, and controlling them physically, in terms of fire-power. So many times, in my state of West Bengal, we have seen the leftist government using the Maoists, one extremist group, as a villain in a hero-villain kind of feature film. It seems without the Maoists it would become extremely difficult for them to solve the equations: how to mobilize the people in the name of god, if there is no authentic devil?

We have already demonstrated, how the age-old categories of Marxist class analysis start to become irrelevant in this age of electronic hegemony of global capital. What finally remains of the revolutionary nature of Marxism is hardly anything more than a very humane and sensitive face of capital. It is humane in understanding the taking away of the surplus value, but finally it does hardly more than propagating capital in different unforeseen ways. But, that would be another book where we can deal with these things in details. It is very possible that a lot of these problems originate from the very negative definition of Marxism with respect to capitalism. To become the most authentic enemy of capital, finally, Marxism gets existentially connected to capitalism. Without any positive definition, or the positive kind of space of friendship, what GPL provides, Marxism started its journey by throwing away everything touched by capital, but, it becomes a fallacy, because, under the hegemony of capital, capital touches literally *everything*. It throws away everything good and positive in this society too – carried forward by the concrete human history. In this gesture of rejecting everything there in concrete history, Marxism becomes another moment of capitalism. It is a classical case of throwing away the baby with the bath-water.

We mentioned about the forgotten words, hidden behind the ruling hierarchies of meaning. Capital forgot the friendship and cooperation. Marxism forgot it too. It took a GPL to read the forgotten meaning in the discourse of computing, and bring it back in a full and vibrant way. And as we said, both the process of power and resistances are alive. Once these

supplements led to GPL, but things do not stop there. Supplements are accumulating, ceaselessly, without respite. Let us search newer and newer avenues of resistances with a small r. Let us go on reading the concrete history, with eager ears: towards new parables of return of the prodigal.