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## Introduction to Part II

MARLENE KIENBERGER AND BRUNO PACE

In a dialectical dance between the reproduction of an established order and a counter-acting resistance, what survives over time? This part of the volume has assembled what we could regard as ‘materialisms of transmission’, that is to say, a milieu-mediated connection between evolution and education. The texts in this part approach these questions from different angles and consider them in their diversity: three (Pascal Sévérac, Marlon Miguel, Bernardo Bianchi) investigate what a materialist approach to education could look like; the other two (Elena Vogman, Catherine Perret) present a transdisciplinary perspective on the evolution of languages, gestures, movements, and social norms in relation to tools, labour, and economic organization. All of the authors show an interest in unconventional paths in the history of philosophy, pedagogy, linguistics, or anthropology.

**Vogman** dives into multiple aspects of Nikolai Marr’s theory of language. Marr developed a paleontological and archaeological view on history as a non-linear process, and Vogman shows that his views were pretty much aligned with Walter Benjamin’s critique of historicism as teleological and a-processual. Marr, whose theories were banned by Stalin himself in the 1950s, sought the origin of languages in a materialist foundation — namely, in the gesture, which he connected to the use of tools and economic organization. He depicts different gestures in different societies that survive throughout time as remnants

of the past, and thereby proposes the anachronistic coexistence of material traces from different historical stages and temporalities.

Against the backdrop of rising nationalisms, Marr insisted on a materialist constitution of languages — perceiving them as a class phenomenon and a fundamental element of class struggle — and his theory negates any reconstruction of linguistic families that is based on race. Vogman shows that Marr's paleontological linguistics, which in his time was condemned for being fictional and unscientific, can nowadays be read as a political genealogy of languages as well as a fruitful contribution to linguistics, which he accused of disregarding the languages of oppressed people. Vogman depicts Marr as a multidisciplinary intellectual and the inventor of his own syncretic version of historical materialism.

**Perret** analyses the multiple relationships between tools, hands, the mouth, gestures, and speech, as well as their roles in human evolution. Tools are considered as extensions of our bodies, whereas hands are seen as the intersection between gesture and speech. The human technical milieu and its constitutive gestures survive over time and is mediated by producing bodies. Perret, who draws upon Marcel Mauss and André Leroi-Gourhan, emphasizes that a few collective human characteristics, e.g. social norms, were able to become emancipated from the biological and started undergoing an evolutionary process in their own right. At the same time, they are inscribed into biological bodies and ultimately shape emotions, movements, and bodily rhythms. Using the foundations of Leroi-Gourhan's anthropology, she re-evaluates the critique of contemporary capitalism, which continuously forces us to reduce our understanding of social bonds to the 'hallucinatory power of value'. By identifying the materialities of social bonds which are not reducible to the logic of value, she resists the 'gregarization' — meaning the turning into a herd behaviour — of society that is induced by the exploitation of the technical in favour of economic interests.

Perret's kinaesthetic materiality of social bonds — which can be described as the sensitivity towards movements and gestures that are needed for cooperative production — is not too far from the materiality of the 'social glue' needed to build a collective which is presented by **Miguel**. Miguel discusses the situation of Anton Semyonovich Makar-

enko, the well-known Soviet educator who formulated an anti-theory of education based on one sole guiding principle: 'the creation of a real collectivity'. In the Gorky colony where he lived and collectively organized a society with delinquent children in miserable conditions, Makarenko focused on the formation of a sensibility that goes beyond the individual perspective. He believed that the educator must immanently learn from the situation, take the unique circumstances into account, and rearrange them so that the collective educates itself. In theoretical terms, Miguel shows the connection between Makarenko's educational practice and Karl Marx's 'Theses on Feuerbach': Humans are, at the same time, products and producers of their own circumstances.

This recursive loop can also be found in **Bianchi's** text about emancipation and the question of a materialist education. He argues that education should not be conceived as an activity that seeks to explain the human reality from the outside. In this way, Bianchi dissolves the traditional subject-object dichotomy as well as stadialist and hierarchical conceptions of the relationship between knowledge and politics. His materialist gesture, therefore, consists in neutralizing the principle of the ignorance of the masses by redefining the relationship between politics, knowledge, and education. By drawing on Étienne Balibar's 'materialism without matter' and his theory of transindividuality, Bianchi proposes the idea of a recursive loop between individuation and individualization, as well as between knowledge (and education) and political agency.

While Bianchi's analysis of a materialist education centres on Marx and Balibar, **Sévérac** focuses on a Spinozist education based on reason and knowledge that aims at a transformation of the affective sensibility of the body. In his text, he delineates a Spinozist 'physics of thought' as it is applied to a moral education. He emphasizes the transformation that takes place in the child's body that is being educated. Sévérac sketches out an education which is opposed to the traditional, moral education, and highlights how it must cultivate an ability to 'speak out', a 'moral force' and 'love for freedom', which can enable the educated to resist any tyrannical abuse of power.

The texts in this part raise and seek to answer important questions at the intersection of materialism, education, evolution, and politics.

How difficult is it to question what seems unquestionable because of established traditions? How can a thinker resist a tradition and thereby transform its body of knowledge? To what extent does the scope of materialist thought undergo a transformation when an author redefines what the questions and foundations could be and when they elaborate new ways of considering different materialities? What survives when the necessity of these questions and foundations are challenged, and an author suggests that they are contingent on the circumstances they are inscribed within?

May the following texts continue raising questions that transmit and transform the materialist trends.

| Marlene Kienberger and Bruno Pace, 'Introduction to Part II', in *Materialism and Politics*, ed. by Bernardo Bianchi, Emilie Filion-Donato, Marlon Miguel, and Ayşe Yuva, *Cultural Inquiry*, 20 (Berlin: ICI Berlin Press, 2021), pp. 109–12 <[https://doi.org/10.37050/ci-20\\_002](https://doi.org/10.37050/ci-20_002)>

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