

Intellectual Work and Capitalist Development

Origins and Context of Manfredo Tafuri's Critique of Architectural Ideology

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Abstract

"Intellectual work and capitalist development" is a long article published in 1970 by Manfredo Tafuri. It does not exactly contain references to architecture and is, rather a dense reflection of a philosophical character on the nature of intellectual work as such, seen within the conditions established by the system of capitalist production. Tafuri's contribution coincided with the second year of his position at the University Institute of Architecture of Venice (IUAV) and it was expected that his reflections would define the focus of its recently founded Institute of History. In addition to analyzing the political context in which it was written, this article intends to recover Tafuri's concept of intellectual work as a great force in his argument, and as the reason for his radical criticism of architectural ideology.

In 1970, Manfredo Tafuri published a long article titled "Lavoro Intellettuale e Sviluppo Capitalistico" ("Intellectual Work and Capitalist Development") in the journal *Contropiano*⁽¹⁾. The article followed the publication of the more famous "Per una Critica dell'Ideologia Architettonica" ("For a Critique of Architectural Ideology") published in the same journal in 1969⁽²⁾. Remarkably, "Intellectual Work and Capitalist Development" contains no reference to architecture proper. Rather the article

is a dense reflection on the nature of intellectual work itself as seen within the conditions established by the capitalist system of production. If "For a Critique of Architectural Ideology" had a large critical reception at the time of its publication, "Intellectual work and capitalist development" remained in its shadow. By re-approaching Tafuri's critique through his arguments about intellectual work it is possible to suggest that the critique was not only directed towards architecture and its project, but also concerned with the theme of "intellectual work," and with culture in general. For this reason, at this critical moment, it is worth the attempt to recuperate the concept of intellectual work in Tafuri's critique as a major force of his argument, and as the reason for the radicality of his critique to architectural ideology⁽³⁾.

Through his intense activity of historicizing most everything, Manfredo Tafuri was the first intellectual in the field of architectural history and criticism to understand that for intellectuals it was no longer possible to address the issue of social and cultural changes provoked by capitalist development from an outside perspective. Indeed, for Tafuri there was no outside position within capitalist development, since the totality of such development was constituted by the reality of "waged labor," which also incorporated the role of intellectual. Consequently, he understood that a

critique of capitalism could no longer be produced from an external point but only from one within (and by this he meant from the categories and forms through which intellectuals were – consciously or unconsciously – culturally mediating the effects of continued capitalist production, or participating in its reification). For Tafuri and for those who influenced his critique, this new condition meant that any critical and political discourse needed first of all to be addressed toward intellectuals as workers, rather than addressed to "others" (workers), contradicting the notion that the social and political mandate given to the intellectual could be taken for granted.

To properly understand this shift, Tafuri's critique must be placed within the original context in which it was formulated – that is, the debate that took place in Italy in the 1960s on intellectual work per se in relationship to its implied political mandate. This critique also follows the development of a post-Marxist critique of reification.

Reformism and Its Critique

Between the 1950s and the 1960s Italy went through an intense process of modernization that changed the political, social, and cultural geography of the country. What was happening in the US in the 1930s occurred in the northern part of Italy in the 1960s: the beginning of a Fordist-Taylorist organization of work (and industrial production). This meant the shift from

a backyard capitalism based primarily on accumulation to a capitalism based on the politics of “waged labor,” technological innovation, and the organization of production in the form of the reorganization of the entire spectrum of social relationships. For this reason, many intellectuals in the early 1960s started to understand capitalism not simply as an unjust process of circulation and distribution, but as Mario Tronti would call it “The Plan of Capital” (a term appropriated by Tafuri explicitly in *Architecture and Utopia*): a new cycle in which the organic link between capitalism and the postwar welfare state was the new form of capitalist domination⁽⁴⁾. The most important political effect of this new cycle was the establishment of the first center-left government in Italy in 1963, in which the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) took active part. The involvement of the left in the government of a country that was part of the Atlantic Pact was seen by many intellectuals and political activists of the left as the sign of capitalism’s development: that it could incorporate as a new social interface the very forces that had opposed it.

In the second half of the 1950s, following the USSR’s 1956 invasion of Hungary and the process of de-Stalinization, the Italian Socialist Party started to gradually withdraw from its historical alliance with the Communist Party and simultaneously intensified its political relationship with the Christian Democrats. At the basis of this political shift was the socialists’ belief in the reformability of capitalism toward a rational and socially sustainable form of economy. According to the

Italian Socialists, rationally planned capitalist production could have been used as means for social justice if reformed at the level of workers’ welfare. The concept of economic planning was, for the socialists, the rational and fair management of industrial production through a vast and comprehensive organization of a welfare program. Addressing the notion of class-conflict, the socialist began to oppose the idea of reform of the production system in the form of a scientific management of productive forces. This position led many socialist politicians and intellectuals to embrace what would become one of Italy’s main political themes of the 1960s: reformism. As this ideology was adopted by progressive politics, and by the State, simultaneously it became a fundamental pole of attraction for virtuous intellectuals. To modernize became an imperative for many leftist politicians and intellectuals, but also a diffuse mentality that involved many sectors of cultural production. Within the wave of the euphorically rationalist ethos provoked by reformism, that strong interest gathered around issues such as new regional planning, the legacy of social-democratic urbanism, and the role of design in all aspects of everyday life. The cultural prototype of the new wave of socialist reformism was the affirmation of Adriano Olivetti’s “Comunità,” an attempt to transform a factory into a cultural campus that elevated production as the possibility of a socially sustainable and culturally articulated community. Olivetti involved not just managers, but artists, designers, and writers in the work at his plant⁽⁵⁾. The intent of Olivetti was to demonstrate

on the one hand the intrinsically rational nature of production and on the other the possibility of a new social humanism based on industrial development⁽⁶⁾.

The new wave of class conflict that took place in Italy in the 1960s started precisely from the criticism of the reformist ideology that accepted and even idealized production as a scientific and thus reformable configuration of development. Reformism was thus attacked as the new political and cultural form of capitalist power over society, as capitalism’s most advanced form of ideology.

The principal opposition to the reformist ideology of industrial production came from a group of leftist militants affiliated with the journal *Quaderni Rossi* and who later were called “the Operaists.”⁽⁷⁾ One of the main theses of this group, as it was first formulated by one of its leaders, the socialist activist and translator of Marx Raniero Panzieri, was that the workers should not only demand the social reform of the modes of production but claim political power over them. This kind of workers’ power was theorized by Panzieri in a fundamental essay that can be seen as the very beginning of Italian autonomous Marxism, as “workers’ control” (*controllo operaio*)⁽⁸⁾. For the Operaist workers’ control was the struggle against the very essence of production: work, its organization, its plans, and its leaps forward in terms of technological innovation. This meant that the critique of capitalism was to be directed not only at means of circulation and consumption but most of all at methods of production itself, at what Panzieri called the “machines,”

the techno-social apparatus required to extrapolate surplus value from the whole of social relationships⁽⁹⁾. On the one hand, this critique was premised on a direct reading of Marx, especially the Marx of the fourth section of the first book of *Capital* where the founder of modern communism describes the several passages in the history of industrial production, and of the *Grundrisse*; and on the other, it was based on a renewed use of the critique of ideology, which was aimed against all those institutions that were preserving the reality of production as an essential form of capitalist sovereignty, such as the State and the unions and also culture *per se*⁽¹⁰⁾. It was precisely the critique of “culture,” and especially of progressive leftist culture seen as ideological mediation at the service of capitalism’s reformist strategy, that became a fundamental asset of the critique of ideology practiced by the Operaists. A critique of ideology, on the one hand, advocated a resistance to reformism, especially the one incarnated by progressive forms of culture, and on the other, attempted to rethink the function of intellectuals within the framework of class struggle (those very agents engaged in the critique).

The Mandate of Intellectuals

The effects of capitalist development on cultural production led many Italian intellectuals to question their political mandate and rethink the role of the intellectual in a capitalist context. It is not by coincidence that in this period a strong interest in the literary format of the “critical essay” appeared. The social and cultural changes provoked by the rapid modernization of the

country aroused suspicion of traditional literary and artistic forms in which the mediating role of the author was not questioned. For this reason, the use of the “critical essay” format is strategic – it is the most legitimate form of cultural production, because of its explicit self-referentiality as a critical form. The Italian translation of the writings of two quintessential critical essayists, Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno, in the 1950s contributed to the interest in the literary form⁽¹¹⁾. For Adorno, the critical essay was the truly heretic and anti-institutional form of mediating the concept of public truth. As he wrote in “The Essay as Form,” the essay is the most radical dialectical form because of its explicitly mediated character. By making explicit its artificial construction, its self-reflexive editorial nature acts from within the reified sphere of cultural production in which culture is administrated as an industry⁽¹²⁾. For this reason, the essay, embodying the most artificially constructed and mediated form of writing, has the inherent possibility to become the ultimate form of criticism. According to Adorno, the function of the critical essay, by virtue of its format, enabled a theoretical interrogation of the way culture itself was produced and reified. For a philosopher, an artist, a filmmaker, a writer, or a scientist, adopting the form of the critical essay challenges intellectual work by transgressing the way culture was managed as a system of production in terms of its specializations⁽¹³⁾. It is interesting to note that from the beginning of his career, Tafuri, more than any other architectural historian before him, embraced the form of the

essay within this tradition leading back to perhaps Montaigne. Already from his early essays and articles, Tafuri always problematized his critical perspective making the essay not only a discourse on a particular object, but also on the “reflexive” subject itself, on the “author as producer” to use Benjamin’s words. This self-interrogative (performative) literary art form in which the work is critical not through its message, but through its medium and its construction, was Tafuri’s preferred methodology for levelling a fundamental critique of the architectural culture of the time, one which was more anxious to deliver statements than to assess its own instrumentality and/or absorption by capital. But before we arrive at this specific critique, it is important to mention an intellectual that would have a great influence of Tafuri’s critique of ideology.

Between the 1950’s and the 1960’s the intellectual that more than other in Italy invested in the essay as the most radical form of critique of intellectual work within a capitalist society was Franco Fortini. A poet and prominent communist intellectual, and for a short period close to the Operaists, Fortini published his most important book, *Verifica dei Poteri* (*Verification of the Powers*), an anthology of essays, in 1965⁽¹⁴⁾. It is interesting to note that this book was on several occasions mentioned by Tafuri as a fundamental reading of his intellectual formation⁽¹⁵⁾. The theme of the book was the relationship between culture, intellectual work, and capitalist development. Fortini analyzed this relationship by questioning what he defined as the

problem of the “intellectual’s mandate” (*mandato degli intellettuali*); that is, how the role of intellectual work was determined by the class conflict within capitalist development. According to Fortini, within advanced capitalism, the mandate of (communist) intellectuals could no longer be defined by the theme of anti-fascism. In other words, the critical function of intellectuals could not be justified by a critique of the direct repression of freedom. The intellectual’s role no longer involved advancing the problem of freedom of speech, but rather now addressed the problem of intellectual freedom as a new ideological form within the reality of capitalist development.

The most famous essay in the anthology titled “Astuti come Colombe” (“Cunning as Doves”) focused on the critique of cultural ideology as the latter was produced by progressive culture⁽¹⁶⁾. It is important to consider this article because its main thesis not only condensed the Italian debate about the role of intellectual work within capitalist development but it also provided Tafuri the critical blueprint for his critique of architectural ideology. “Astuti come Colombe” was originally published in 1962 in the cultural journal *Il Menabò* directed by the writers Italo Calvino and Elio Vittorini, and ran in an issue devoted to the theme of culture and industrial work. In the same issue there were essays written by Calvino and Umberto Eco, among others. For these leftists and “progressive” intellectuals, the factory became the new cultural epicenter of literary and artistic experimental practices. This new sensibility that mixed socialist

reformism and artistic experimentation gave impetus to the avant-garde revival in Italy of which Eco’s Gruppo 63 became the most important manifestation. Avant-garde techniques such as collage, estrangement, and technological experimentation became the devices through which the members of Gruppo 63 attempted to sublimate the effects of the industrialization on social relationships. Fortini directed his critique at this ideological use of cultural experimentation in order to mediate (and mystify) the effects of production both on society and especially intellectual work. The two poles that defined Fortini’s critique comprised on the one hand an analysis of the political economy of intellectual work, and on the other, an analysis of its aesthetic manifestation. Political economy was used by Fortini as a tool to describe the way capitalist affirmation within society manifested itself through its systematic cultural self-deception. This self-deception was according to Fortini achieved often by capitalism’s instrumentalization of progressive and socially committed culture. The use of the aesthetic was a way to trust artworks not only as author’s products but also as artefacts that revealed in their concreteness of object the sensual features of capitalist integration. Drawing on political economy and aesthetics, Fortini constructed a critique that was neither aimed at a rational reform of capitalist development, nor at a romantic resistance the effects to such development. The main objective of Fortini’s critique was to demonstrate how capitalist development was the source of a number of ideological manifestations that not so much

represented bourgeois power, but rather satisfied the good conscience of progressive intellectuals. Facing such extreme level of cultural mystification in which modernization was reformism and reformism was the new progressive face of capitalist domination, Fortini’s conception of being critical involved becoming “cunning as doves and innocent as foxes”: meaning to constantly adjust the terms of criticism to the standard of the cunning of capitalist ideology and to not surrender to the easy narcissism of good intentions typical of reformist approaches. Moreover, for Fortini it was precisely a critical analysis of the seemingly most genuine attempts of social reform advanced by leftist movements and institutions that often revealed the true features of capitalist domination.

Tafuri’s critique of ideology took form from these premises. Before it would be applied to intellectual work in general, Tafuri’s critique, as it was formulated in his 1968 book “Teorie e storia dell’architettura,” focused on the way “theories” of architecture attempted to render the idea of modernity in terms of progress⁽¹⁷⁾. His critique consisted in showing how such historical perspective was achieved by systematically masking the very cause of such progress, meaning the continuous state of cultural crisis provoked by the development of the modern culture. Tafuri first applied the critique of ideology to those traditions within historiography that have deliberately attempted to reassure modern and contemporary architects regarding about the reformist origins of their historical mandate. Tafuri especially referred to what he defined

as “Operative History,” a kind of history written with the specific and ideological goal to legitimize the tradition of modern architecture⁽¹⁸⁾. Among the protagonists of operative history, Tafuri placed almost all the major historians of modern architecture such as Nikolaus Pevsner, Sigfried Giedion, and Bruno Zevi. If we place Tafuri’s criticism within the context of the critique of reformism as this critique was elaborated by Panzieri and Fortini, it appears clear that the object of his critique was not so much (or not only) the historical deformations made by these historians in order to fit architectural history into modern architects agendas. What Tafuri really criticized was the ideology of reformism implicit in operative history, its pretension to solve the contradictions left open by the past toward a coherent agenda for the future. By instrumentalizing history as a source of legitimacy, operative history was not only reconfiguring the past to suit present conditions, but also separated historical developments from their related contradictions and crises. By editing out these contradictions, operative history had helped to render as almost natural the political forces that have shaped historical processes. Though initially Tafuri’s critique of operative history was not a class-critique, it was the radical anti-reformism emerging from his book *Theories and History* that led Operaists intellectuals such as Alberto Asor Rosa and Massimo Cacciari to invite Tafuri to contribute to their journal *Contropiano*. Tafuri’s contribution coincided with the second year of his tenure at the IUAV (Istituto Universitario di Architettura di Venezia), and his contribution to

the journal was expected to define the approach of his newly founded Istituto di Storia and the possibility of the anti-reformist critique of ideology within the discipline of architecture and urban planning.

Intellectual Work and Capitalist Development

The Marxist journal *Contropiano*, published between 1968 and 1971, was conceived by its editors as the follow up of the Operaist journal *Classe Operaia*. However, in comparison to the earlier journal, *Contropiano* was more essayistic and less devoted to direct political intervention. The journal sought to construct a working-class culture engaging with the most advanced themes of struggle, such as the critique of socialist reformism. According to the editors of the journal (among them, but only for the first issues, was Antonio Negri), the most advanced level of class struggle was precisely what they called the “cunning of ideology” meaning the subtle and self-deceptive cultural means through which capitalism insinuated itself into the institutions of the working-class movement⁽¹⁹⁾. Yet this radical critique of ideology was intended to be not an end in itself but the premise to the political counter-plan – the *Contropiano* – to the plan of the capital. Subsequently, the editors proposed a valid counter-plan would consist in the working-class appropriation of the most advanced bourgeois culture within modernity, especially the bourgeois intellectual tradition that Cacciari defined as “negative thought.”⁽²⁰⁾ For Cacciari, the tradition of negative thought consisted in a line that ran through the work of

thinkers such as Friedrich Nietzsche and Max Weber. According to Cacciari, these thinkers showed how bourgeois mentality had already accepted the unresolvable value crisis brought on by the development of modernity (and capitalism), and made of such acceptance not a passive position but an effective will to power over capitalist development itself. For the editors of *Contropiano* what was to be done was a reinvention of such a form of power – the negative thought – as working-class political culture. This inevitably meant an extreme critique of leftist culture itself and especially of how leftist progressive resistance to and reform of capitalism have inevitably fallen into the hands of the capitalists as the most effective weapons of dominance over the working class⁽²¹⁾. It is precisely within this context that Tafuri constructed his critique of architectural ideology. If Fortini showed Tafuri how to resist the temptation of reformism, the editorial project of *Contropiano* provided the Roman historian the terms in which anti-reformism could be translated back into working-class critique. Within this context, “For a Critique of Architectural Ideology” was written by Tafuri with the aim of tracing the ideological connotations of the origin of modern architecture. According to Tafuri, modern architecture and especially its avant-garde moments could have been described as ideological prefigurations of the upcoming effects of capitalist development. In so doing, modernist architectural culture had a precise role in naturalizing these effects and making them socially and culturally acceptable⁽²²⁾.

The more architectural culture raised the bar of radical experimentation, the more of its cultural attributes it provided to the following cycle of capitalist development. This is the vicious circle. And yet once a cycle of experimentation was surpassed by a newer cycle of development, then its architectural and urban products were left behind as “form without utopia,” meaning a form devoid of any reformist urgency. This was particularly true in “technological” advances in materials and systems, the engine driving Fordism, but also what later became an excuse for innovation. It was in this latter stage that, according to Tafuri, architecture was simply a useless object for capitalist development, and not even its “utopian” ideological weapon. The conclusion that Tafuri drew from his analysis was that in terms of class struggle it was useless to work on newer projects and plans. What was needed was instead to radically re-think the role of the architect and the planner as intellectual worker. This meant to shift the critique of ideology from the level of the architectural and urban project, to the form of intellectual work itself. The essay “Intellectual Work and Capitalist Development” published a few months after “For a Critique of Architectural Ideology” attempted to expand the critique of ideology at this level of analysis. In this article, Tafuri argued that in order to go beyond the ideological understanding of intellectual work, it was necessary to define the link between the cycles of capitalist development, the economic reorganization that each cycle imposed upon the division of labour, and the ideological mediations produced by

intellectuals. According to Tafuri the most crucial mediation produced by intellectuals in the first half of the 20th century was to elaborate the acceptance by the established middle class – the so-called bourgeoisie – of the fundamentally irrational form of capitalist development. If socialism and reformism obstinately maintained the intrinsic rationality of capitalism (once under the governance of progressive politics), the most advanced bourgeois theorists such as John Maynard Keynes understood that the only way to govern capitalism was to make productive its fundamental irrationality. This potentially productive irrationality was the working class’ rebellious initiative that by constantly threatening capitalism, it forced capitalism to adapt and adjust its terms of organization. Facing such a dynamic process and after the great crisis of 1929, capitalists understood that economic development was not only a matter of scientific management, but also of political initiative, that is, the will to power over development itself. For Tafuri, intellectuals such as Max Weber, Keynes, and Peter Schumpeter understood that will to power over capitalist development engaged the positive side of capitalism (economic development) together with the negative side (class struggle), by accepting the negative force not as a collateral effect of development but as its most powerful trigger. For Tafuri, this productive way of dealing with crisis was the most remarkable achievement of bourgeois thought because it was based not any longer on idealism, but on the principle of crisis used as a dynamic means for development and power. Following

Cacciari’s model of negative thought, Tafuri identified Weber’s value crisis as the core of modern politics and the most effective answer to the consequences of capitalist development. Through the example of Weber, Tafuri claimed that within the permanent cultural and political instability provoked by capitalism, intellectual work could only survive by rejecting any a priori (and thus ideological) position and accept the radical de-sacralization of its status and means of production. It is for this reason that those in the field of architecture who read Tafuri outside of the specific cultural and political project in which he formulated his critique of ideology in turn concluded that Tafuri’s analysis could only lead to a “death of architecture.” By re-contextualizing Tafuri’s critique (and by understanding it was carried out within a project where the possible relationships between cultural disciplines and class struggle were at stake, not the architectural discipline itself), it is possible to understand how the conclusion that architectural critics reached about Tafuri’s critical project was wrong (or at least premature). Actually, the passionate precision within which Tafuri attempted to come to terms with the problem of intellectual work within capitalist development showed that the task for intellectuals, and for “architects as intellectual workers” was very clear. According to him, what was needed was to seriously (re)historicize the processes and forms through which the content of intellectual work was always structurally linked with the conditions posed by the evolution of possible political economies. It is precisely for this reason that Tafuri (as Fortini) saw

*in the activity of historical inquiry (what the avant-gardes always rejected as precondition of their projects) the most powerful tool of questioning and interrogating the effects of capitalist development on intellectual agency. To historicize intellectual mentalities meant that the political site of struggle was the intellectual work itself in the terms of its qualifications, its ways of being specialized and the way, at every cycle of production, capitalism always defined a new mandate for the social role of intellectuals. For Tafuri such analysis, before leading to any action, was supposed to provide a non-ideological form of understanding the possibilities for (intellectual) action. In this sense it is interesting to note how today, Tafuri's reflections come unexpectedly (and paradoxically) very close to, on the one hand, the neo-liberal slogans such as "creative work" and "creative class," and, on the other, to the post-Operaist discussions about cognitive work as the center of post-Fordist modes of production. But while these positions have completely accepted the productive status of knowledge, Tafuri focused attention on the pressure points in intellectual culture within capitalist development. This problematization was so radical that we might conclude that the true aim of Tafuri's critique was not so much that of the will to power, in the traditional form of party politics (which, in the end, remained the goal of the editors of *Contropiano*), but more a will to understand, a will to deeply disentangle the historical processes through which intellectual subjectivity was made. But the will to understand was also used by Tafuri as the antidote against the architect's and*

the critic's narcissism of good intentions, (and here it would be interesting to rethink Tafuri's critique vis-à-vis the emerging contemporary bottom-up reformer – the social activist, who in fighting the world never questions the mandate of his/her struggle). Above all, this will to understand, which Tafuri never expected to be satisfied, was only used as a trigger for his research, and it was implicitly aimed at what Fortini would have called the recuperation of the totality of intellect, or, in other words, the possibility of transgressing the disciplinary specializations and expertise imposed by the political economy of neo-capitalist work and production. Tafuri demonstrated this transgression not in direct statements about interdisciplinarity or transdisciplinarity (two forms of intellectual work that Tafuri would have seen as the most advanced forms of ideological mystification within which capitalism administers cultural production) but by the wide spectrum of his analyses that combined politics, aesthetics, political economy, and architecture into one critical project aimed at defining the totality of his beruf as intellectual.

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NOTES

- (1) Manfredo Tafuri, "Lavoro intellettuale e sviluppo capitalistico," *Contropiano* 2/70 (1970): 241–281. The first part of the article was published as the third chapter of *Progetto e Utopia* under the title "Ideologia e Utopia." The change of title has perhaps contributed to the overshadowing of the theme of intellectual work in Tafuri's historical project. See Manfredo Tafuri, *Progetto e Utopia* (Bari: Laterza, 1973), 49–72; *Architecture and Utopia: Avant-garde and Capitalist Development*, trans. Barbara Luigia LaPenta (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1976).
- (2) Manfredo Tafuri, "Per una Critica dell'ideologia architettonica," *Contropiano* 1 (1969): 31–79; trans. as "Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology," in K. Michael Hays, ed., *Architecture Theory Since 1968* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998), 6–35. As is well known, this article was developed as the book *Progetto e Utopia*.
- (3) For a critical account of Tafuri's intellectual formation, a fundamental reading is Giorgio Ciucci, "The Formative Years," *Casabella* 619/620 (1994): 12–25.
- (4) "Il piano del capitale" was the title of a fundamental essay by Mario Tronti published in 1962, in the journal *Quaderni Rossi*. In this essay, the Roman philosopher who would have a strong influence on Tafuri's political analysis of architectural and urban history attempted to analyze capitalist domination as a vast, integral, almost bio-political project that extended political sovereignty to all aspects of human labour. See Mario Tronti, "Il piano del capitale," *Quaderni Rossi* 3 (1962): 45–71.
- (5) The Olivetti plant was located at Ivrea, Piedmont, where Olivetti promoted a campus in which the main facilities were designed by Italian modernist architects. The project was pursued as an attempt to reform industrial life toward a communitarian spirit, and for this reason it attracted many leftist progressive intellectuals that were hired by Olivetti as "cultural" producers. For a study on the Olivetti town in Ivrea, see Patrizia Bonifazio, *Olivetti Costruisci: Architettura Moderna a Ivrea* (Milan: Skira Editore, 2006).
- (6) Michelangelo Antonioni's great trilogy – *L'Avventura* (1959), *La Notte* (1960), and *Deserto Rosso* (1964) – is one example of a cinematic deconstruction of these premises.
- (7) For an overview on the early Operaismo, and especially on its most influential figures – Panzieri and Mario Tronti – see my *The Project of Autonomy: Politics and Architecture Within and Against Capitalism* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008).
- (8) Raniero Panzieri, Lucio Libertini, "Sette tesi sul controllo operaio," in *Mondo Operaio* (February 1958), republished in *Mondo Operaio: Rassegna Mensile di Politica, Economia e Cultura, Antologia 1952–1964* (Firenze: Luciano Landi, 1965), 880–903.
- (9) Raniero Panzieri, "Sull'uso delle macchine nel Neocapitalismo," *Quaderni Rossi* 1 (1961): 53–72.
- (10) For an overview on the development of Operaismo and after, see Stephen Wright, *Storming Heaven: Class Composition in Italia Autonomist Marxism* (Pluto Press: London, 2003).
- (11) Both Adorno's and Benjamin's writings were introduced to the Italian audience by essayist and political activist Renato Solmi who introduced and translated Theodor Adorno's *Minima Moralia*, and Benjamin's writings collected in the anthology *Angelus Novus*. Solmi's literary work had a profound influence on Italian culture, not only because he introduced the topics and idea of the Frankfurt School, but especially for his own specific intellectual commitment toward editorial work as the most crucial point of contact between political agency and cultural production. See Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1951); *Minima Moralia: Meditazioni della Vita Offesa*, trans. Renato Solmi (Turin: Einaudi, 1954); Walter Benjamin, *Angelus Novus*, trans. Renato Solmi (Turin: Einaudi, 1962). See also Renato Solmi, *Autobiografia Documentaria: Scritti 1950–2004* (Macerata: Verbarium Quodlibet, 2007).
- (12) Theodor W. Adorno, *Il saggio come forma*, in *Note per la letteratura 1943–1961*, vol. 1, ed. E. De Angelis, trans. A. Ferioli, E. De Angelis, G. Manzoni (Turin: Einaudi, 1979). See Theodor W. Adorno, "The Essay as Form," *Notes to Literature*, vol. 1, trans. Sherry Weber Nicholsen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991). "Der Essay als Form," first published in *Noten zur Literatur I* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1958) and later in *Gesammelte Schriften* 11 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974), was written between 1954 and 1958.
- (13) One of the most critical assessments of intellectual work during this period was Luciano Bianciardi's *La Vita Agra* (*The Bitter Life*), an autobiographical novel in which Bianciardi, the translator of American authors such as John Steinbeck, William Faulkner, and Henry Miller, narrated the vicissitudes of a young intellectual during the economic boom of the early 1960s. Bianciardi, who worked for the Italian leftist publisher Feltrinelli and was fired for scarce productivity, later became a crucial figure for the theorists of cognitive labour, such as Paolo Virno, who have described Bianciardi's novel as one of the first profound analyses of the implications of cultural industry and of cognitive labour. In a revealing passage of the novel, quoted by Virno, Bianciardi reflects on the difficulty of measuring the productive output of intellectual work. "There is an easy measuring stick for the worker and for the peasant, one which is quantitative: does the factory produce so many pieces per hour, does the farm yield a profit? In our professions it is different, there are no quantitative measuring sticks. How does one measure the skill of a priest, or of a journalist, or of someone in public relations? These people neither produce from scratch, nor transform. They are neither primary nor secondary. Tertiary is what they are and what's more, I would dare say [...] even four times removed. They are neither instruments of production, nor drive belts of transmission. They are a
- lubricant, at the most pure Vaseline. How can one evaluate a priest, a journalist, a public relations person? How can one calculate the amount of faith, of purchasing desire, of likeability that these people have managed to muster up?" See Luciano Bianciardi, *Il Lavoro Culturale* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1957); Paolo Virno, *The Grammar of the Multitude: For an Analysis of the Forms of Contemporary Life* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2004), 57.
- (14) Franco Fortini, *Verifica dei Poteri* (Turin: Einaudi, 1965).
- (15) See Françoise Very in conversation with Manfredo Tafuri, in *Casabella* 619–620 (1994): 36. Even in the early 1990s, during his very last seminars that I had the opportunity to attend, Tafuri mentioned Fortini's book as a very important event in the definition of his critical approach to history. It is important to note that at that time Tafuri was very reluctant to talk about his early work and earlier references, and yet he would still encourage students to read Fortini's "Astuti come Colombe."
- (16) Franco Fortini, "Astuti come Colombe," in *Verifica dei Poteri*, 68–88.
- (17) Manfredo Tafuri, *Teorie e storia dell'architettura* (Bari: Laterza, 1968).
- (18) *Ibid.*, 161–94.
- (19) Most expressly, as today, in the production of a rampant consumerist economy.
- (20) Massimo Cacciari, "Sulla genesi del pensiero negativo," *Contropiano* 1 (1969): 131–201.
- (21) This negative tradition is in many ways related to the middle passage through nihilism prophesized by Nietzsche en route to a transvaluation of values. But it is also notably negative, and requires its own eventual negation.
- (22) It is never clear if these "avant-garde" movements are simply appropriated or in fact presage another maneuver by capital on its path of further appropriation and subjugation. In terms of technological avant-gardes, it is always a case of the latter. In terms of forms of subjectivization it is not so clear.