

Young Marx on Fetishism, Sexuality, and Religion

Revisiting the Bonn Notebooks

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There is hardly any theme in Karl Marx's theoretical corpus that has garnered as much traction as his theory of fetishism. Ever since Marx introduced the term into his critique of political economy in *Capital*, fetishism became a field of theoretical force, creating its own gravitational center toward which the interest of later generations of historians, social theorists, and political activists has been pulled. While much ink has been spilled on the specific content and theoretical scope of fetishism in *Capital* for over one and a half centuries, young Marx's initial exploration of the term rarely enjoyed critical attention. This is especially true in regard to the period from his early journalism in the *Rheinische Zeitung* (1842–43) to his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*.

Marx's earliest usage of the term *fetish* dates back to 1842, in a polemic against the anti-democratic power division of the Rhenish Province Assembly in Prussia. There, Marx mockingly described the privileges of the noble estates in the assembly, likening their provincial protection to deification. That the entire Rhine province was subordinate to the private interests of the noble estates was, according to Marx, similar to creating "gods for itself, but as soon as they are created, it must, like a fetish worshipper, forget that these gods are its own handiwork."¹

In the same year, Marx was also involved in a quarrel with Karl Hermes, a Roman Catholic cleric and opponent of Young Hegelian politics of philosophy and religion. Hermes had launched a campaign against the public presence of Young Hegelians in German journals, including Marx's *Rheinische Zeitung*. In his response, Marx tore Hermes's attacks to shreds, taking on the latter's arguments one by one, including Hermes's employment of the term "fetishism." Marx argued that Hermes was wrong to believe that "'animal worship' is a higher form of religion than fetishism." In truth, zoolatry would "degrade man below the an-

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imal” and “make the animal man’s god.” “Fetishism,” he added, “is so far from raising man *above* his sensuous desires that, on the contrary, it is ‘the *religion of sensuous desire*.’ Fantasy arising from desire deceives the fetish-worshipper into believing that an ‘inanimate object’ will give up its natural character in order to comply with his desires. Hence the crude desire of the fetish-worshipper *smashes* the fetish when it ceases to be its most obedient servant.”²

Again in 1842, Marx took on a recent policy in Rhineland, which made collecting firewood in local forests an illegal activity. Peasants who were charged with wood theft were “obliged to compensate the forest owner for the lost value at a price estimated by the forester himself.”³ Marx ridiculed the criminalization of peasants’ traditional customary rights to access the local forests in favor of the interests of the private forest owners.

The *savages of Cuba* regarded gold as a *fetish of the Spaniards*. They celebrated a feast in its honor, sang in a circle around it and then threw it into the sea. If the Cuban savages had been present at the sitting of the Rhine Province Assembly, would they not have regarded *wood* as the *Rhinelanders’ fetish*? But a subsequent sitting would have taught them that the worship of animals is connected with this fetishism, and they would have thrown the *hares* into the sea in order to save the *human being*.⁴

In his 1843 critique of G. W. F. Hegel’s philosophy of right, Marx spoke of fetishism when discussing the political backwardness of Germany in comparison to other European nations. Germany may have witnessed a series of theoretical revolutions in its philosophical tradition, but they hardly contributed to the waves of political revolutions and real struggles storming through its French neighbor. Far from enjoying the fruits of the ongoing revolutionary progress in Europe, Germany would first have to go through a period of decadence before entering a stage of political emancipation. This would result, in Marx’s opinion, in a painful historical experience, just “like a fetish-worshipper suffering from the diseases of Christianity.”⁵

Finally, in his 1844 *Manuscripts*, Marx employed the term for the first time in the context of political economy. Building an analogy between theology and economy, Marx likened the Protestant degradation of “Catholic paganism” to the inferior mercantile-monetary system from the perspective of “enlightened political economy.” Completely unaware of the “*subjective essence of private property*” (labor), the proponents of the mercantile system have taken “private property as a purely objective being for man,” hence appearing to later political economists as “*fetish-worshippers*.” Marx believed that “fetishism” applied to the mercantilist view

of private property, as it took wealth to exist “only as an object” and “reduced” it “to a very simple element of nature.”⁶

Elsewhere in the same manuscript, Marx returned to the fetish theme, this time defining it in William Shakespeare’s aesthetic terms (found in *Timon of Athens*), from the perspective of the contemporary political economy:

Those nations which are still dazzled by the sensuous glitter of precious metals and therefore make a fetish of metal money are not yet fully developed money nations. The extent to which the solution of theoretical problems is a function of practice and is mediated through practice, and the extent to which true practice is the condition of a real and positive theory is shown, for example, in the case of *fetish-worship*. The sense perception of a fetish-worshipper is different from that of a Greek because his sensuous existence is different. The abstract hostility between sense and intellect is inevitable so long as the human sense for nature, the human significance of nature and hence the *natural* sense of *man*, has not yet been produced by man’s own labor.⁷

Marx’s initial preoccupation with the fetish theme is well-documented, but the first occasion that drew his attention to fetishism – as well as the early sources that informed his conception of the term – is less noticed in past scholarship.⁸

Young Marx came to delve into fetishism at a time when he was completely foreign to, and unconcerned with, political economy. As a fresh philosophy graduate in 1841, he was asked by the Young Hegelian Bruno Bauer to contribute a chapter to the latter’s volume, *Hegel’s Doctrine of Religion and Art*. Marx began working on his piece as early as December 1841, but then decided to publish it as a stand-alone article in Arnold Ruge’s journal, *Anekdotia*. Calling this text first “Treatise on *Christian Art*,” then “On Religion and Art, with Special Reference to *Christian Art*,” and finally, “the article ‘On Art and Religion,’” Marx spent the first half of 1842 composing this now-lost treatise. In his own words, he was “drawn into all kinds of investigations which will still take a rather long time,” for “the article on religious art...has steadily grown into almost book dimensions.” It was this treatise that prompted young Marx to explore the fetish theme in depth for the first time.⁹

We do not know much as to what Marx may have argued in the treatise, but we do have a rough idea about the scope of his investigations, thanks to the notebooks that he left behind. These notebooks, called the *Bonn Notebooks*, contain a group of excerpts that he had assembled while working on the treatise. The excerpts encompass a wide range of artistic and religious themes, from early Italian Renaissance art to the religious-aesthetic traditions of ancient Greece and Egypt and the religious

and anthropological chronicles of India, Persia, Africa, Siberia, and North America. Within the framework of the treatise, Marx made use of seven sources in total, the last five of which were devoted to fetishism and idolatry: Carl Friedrich von Rumohr's *Italian Investigations*, Johann Jakob Grund's *The Painting of the Greeks*, Charles de Brosses's *On the Worship of Fetish Gods*, Karl August Böttiger's *Ideas on Art-Mythology*, Christoph Meiners's *General Critical History of Religions*, Benjamin Constant's *On Religion*, and Jean Barbeyrac's *Treatise on the Morals of Church Fathers*.¹⁰

While the excerpts are not accompanied by Marx's comments, they provide some clues as to his attentional patterns, signifying what he considered relevant and noteworthy. Marx's excerpts from de Brosses open with the latter's definition of fetish: "objects of worship [of] certain Divinities that the Europeans call *fetishes*, a term coined by our traders in Senegal from the Portuguese word *fetisso*, which means *fairy, enchanted* or *divine thing*, or *giver of oracles*; this from the Latin root *fatum, fanum, fari*."¹¹

De Brosses, in Marx's excerpts, depicted fetish worship as an economy of exchange whereby the worshiper offers gifts or makes sacrifices to the deities in order to achieve desired outcomes. For example, Marx transcribed his claim that a "new Fetish is first overloaded with presents, with a solemn promise to honor it as a cherished patron." The fetish artifact is taken seriously by the worshiper as long as it is believed to embody a cluster of promises that meet the worshiper's expectations. In this vein, the following remark by de Brosses was important to Marx: when the natives of central and western Africa need rain, de Brosses wrote,

They place empty vessels before the altar; if they are at war, they put swords and spears there to ask for victory; if they need meat or fish, they place bones there; in order to obtain palm wine, they leave at the foot of the altar the small knife used to make incisions in the tree; with these marks of respect and confidence they believe that they are sure to obtain what they ask for; but if some misfortune occurs, they attribute it to some just resentment on the part of their Fetish, and all their efforts turn to finding the means to appease it.¹²

De Brosses's catalogue of fetish objects was not limited to inanimate objects. It also included a group of animal species, one of which was significant enough to catch Marx's attention. In this regard, Marx took note of de Brosses's portrayal of the ancient Egyptian sacralization of cats: "If the house were to catch fire, [Egyptians] would hasten especially to save the cats from the blaze; this makes it greatly evident that the worship concerned the animal itself, which was not considered a mere emblem."¹³

Meiners's book on the history of religions was another theoretical resource that Marx thoroughly studied. Heavily influenced by de Brosses's

account of fetishism, Meiners had ambitiously extended de Brosses's catalogue of fetish objects to cover religious sexuality. When taking excerpts from Meiners's book, Marx focused in particular on Meiners's chapter, "History of Phallus and Lingam," which was placed under the general heading, "History of Fetishism." Anticipating Sigmund Freud's account of penis envy, Meiners viewed fetishist phallus cults as a symptom of "impotent men or barren women or prospective spouses [who] have chosen the phallus as their fetish, or sorcerers and priests [who] have recommended the phallus as a fetish to one and to the other." Marx, in his notes, appears to have paid special attention to the phallus fetish in various cultural geographies, from India and Egypt to Greece and medieval Europe. Concerning an Indian phallus rite, for instance, Marx noted Meiners's observation that "Indian brides sacrificed their virginity to feelingless priapism." In the more recent Indian tradition, it was not uncommon to witness Indian kings who were "not allowed to have intercourse with the bride...until she had dedicated her virginity to the deity."¹⁴ The sublimity attached to the fetishized phallus in the Indian rites was important enough to Marx to excerpt the following passage in full:

Married women from the sect of yogi pilgrimaged to a naked gigantic penitent who accepted the worships of the pious under the shade of a tree near Surat [in India]. The priapism of this penitent which seemed to belong more to an ass than to a human being was pierced at the foreskin and tamed, as it were, with a golden ring. The young women fell down in adoration before the mighty priapism, took it devoutly in their hands and kissed it, receiving the blessing of the yogi. The yogis are the most ardent and at the same time the most sacred worshippers of the lingam.

Contrary to the positive attachment to the phallus cult of India, the Romans, Meiner noted, "honored and crowned the ass for protecting [the virgin goddess] Vesta from the violence of priapism." Marx transcribed his claim that medieval Europe was not foreign to this phenomenon of priapism, as "barren women honored a St. Guerlichon [a priapic statue]... in Normandy St. *Giles* and in Anjou a St. *René*.... Even in modern times, the sacred *Cosmo* and *Damiano* were dedicated to Isernia in the Neapolitan phalli and priapii. Priests offered for sale at the holy festival whole baskets full of waxed priapii. The buyers dedicated the priapii to the saint after having kissed it devoutly. This festival was abolished only in 1781."¹⁵

It is quite striking that in this narrative, the phallus object emerges not only as an artifact of worship, but also as a commodity to which religious meanings were attached. Yet it was Constant, rather than Meiners, who discussed fetishistic religion in broader commercial language.

While Marx closely attended to Constant's approach to the Indian lingam cult, Constant's redefinition of fetishism seems to have also been significant for Marx. For example, Marx was drawn to Constant's account of religious sexuality in Indian rites. Constant explained the Indian phallus cult as part and parcel of priestly corruption that aimed to exploit religious sentiments of ordinary believers: the "lingam becomes a sacred object...when a solemn ceremony has confined the god within the newly sculpted idol."¹⁶ It was, according to Constant, "not the religious sentiment that forced...the daughters of India to engage in lascivious dances before the Lingam; it was the priests of this obscene divinity." This priestly exploitation could be found also in "female Babylonians" who "prostitute[d] themselves," or "Syrian women" at the ceremonies of Adonis at Byblos who "offered the sacrifice of their chastity. Peoples subjected to priests passed from abasement to license, and from orgies to despair.... The phallus was planted on sepulchers, and the same phallus was drenched in blood."¹⁷

Marx did not fail to notice that Constant captured the religious motivation behind fetish worship in terms of a "commercial exchange that man establishes...with his god." The fetishist "looks to see if this god has adequately acquitted itself of the engagements he supposedly contracted. And if the balance does not square, the worshipper abandons or punishes the deity, strikes it or breaks it, consigns it to the flames or the deep."

Constant's condemnation of fetishism stemmed from his belief that fetishism "reduced" religion to "commerce" and "profitability." Counterposing "disinterested...sentiment" on one side, and egoistic "interest" on the other, Constant went on to argue that religious adherents move "from one fetish to another, always seeking a more faithful ally, a more powerful protector, a more zealous accomplice.... The fetish is a greedy, egotistical being allied to a human being as egotistical as it is, although weaker. The sacrifices it rewards only refer to it. The duties it imposes consist in victims, in offerings, and in expressions of submission – agreed-upon currency that will be required in the future. It is payment demanded by the fetish for the protection it accords."¹⁸

These interconnections between commerce, religion, and sexuality were also present in Böttiger's historical documentary of religions – another theoretical source of Marx under the influence of de Brosses. One chopped sentence transcribed by Marx mentions the "Gaditanic girls" who worked as female prostitutes in Spain at the time of the Roman kingdom. When excerpting this designation from Böttiger, Marx must have thought of a previous excerpt where Böttiger made a remark on Alexander the Great's directive to reconstruct the Belus Temple in Babylon, a well-known location

for sacred prostitution. Marx also took into account Böttiger's list of examples of sacred prostitution from other geographies. For instance, Marx excerpted Böttiger's depiction of *hieróduloi*, temple slaves who served a "great Asiatic goddess of nature" in the Pontus region near the Black Sea and in Cappadocia of middle Anatolia. In Marx's excerpts, he writes that the *hieróduloi* were involved in "quaestus meretricious [prostitution] and consecrated whore trade."

Marx's excerpts from Barbeyrac do not gravitate towards fetishism and the phallus cult, but revolve around the sexual morality of the early church fathers, which starkly contrasts with what later Christians considered sinful seductions of idolatrous pagans. For example, Marx concentrated on monotheistic ideas of virtue, which discourage believers "from satisfying...the desires of the flesh" and warn against "unlawful marriage." Excerpting a quote from Pseudo-Justin's *De Resurrectione*, Marx singled out the early Christian interpretation of immaculate conception: that a person can come into being "without human intercourse," and that God "overruled the procreation associated with unlawful lust." Contrary to pagan idolatries that occasionally elevated sexual rites as part of their worship practices, early Christians distinguished themselves by keeping their morals away from both procreative and desire-driven sexuality. Regarding this comparison, Marx reproduced a quote from Ambrosius's *Exhortatio virginitatis*, as quoted by Barbeyrac: "When a young girl loses her prime through the consummation of marriage, she loses what is hers when strangers unite with her. The truth, then, is what we are born as, not what we are transformed into...remaining in virginity and in celibacy brings one closer to God."¹⁹

To this end, Marx transcribed Origen of Alexandria's interpretation of the ascetic's own castration "for the sake of the kingdom of heaven." In addition, Marx quoted from Clement of Alexandria's *Stromata*, which pointedly expressed what the early Christians considered to be the sexual and moral degeneracy of polytheistic communities: As "idolatry is the division of God from the one into the many, so fornication is the apostasy from one marriage to many."²⁰

As previously mentioned, the *Bonn Notebooks* do not say much about Marx's own conceptualization of fetishism, but they give an idea as to what Marx found relevant across religious and anthropological contexts. In his writings, young Marx almost invariably employed the term *fetishism* negatively, emphasizing the subordination – either deliberate or involuntary – of the fetishist to the overwhelming power ascribed to the worship object. For young Marx, *fetish* signified the blockage of supersensible human faculties by the dazzling glitter of objects of sensuous desire. By

projecting supernatural qualities into natural entities or inanimate artifacts, the fetishist attempts to establish a relationship of exchange with superior powers, whom he holds accountable for sustaining an economy of gifts and sacrifices. This economic aspect of fetish worship is significant insofar as it indicates that, when introducing the concept of fetishism into political economy for the first time in his 1844 *Manuscripts*, Marx did not solely transfer the term from a religious to a non-religious field. Rather, this points to a homology: while Marx's sources singled out an economy of exchange in fetish practices, he traced a fetishistic, quasi-religious pattern in the political economy of money and private property.²¹

It is telling that in his *Comments on James Mill*, Marx drew on the similarity between money as a medium of exchange and Christ as the mediator between humanity and God. A monetary medium attains power through an exchange relationship, just as Christ attains power over believers and their God. In his comments, Marx writes that this "*mediator* must become a *veritable God*, since the mediator is the *real* power over that with which he mediates me. His cult becomes an end in itself. Separated from this mediator, objects lose their worth. Thus they have value only in so far as they *represent* him, whereas it appeared at first that he had value only to the extent to which *he* represented *them*."²²

Interestingly, Marx returned to the force of the monetary medium in his 1844 *Manuscripts*, reframing its potency through sexual tropes. If money can be used to buy everything and appropriate all objects, it can become seen as "the *object* most worth possessing." As Marx wrote: "Money is the *pimp* between need and object, between life and man's means of life."²³ He then elaborated on the reciprocal relationship between money and its owner:

That which exists for me through the medium of *money*, that which I can pay for, i.e. which money can buy, that *am I*, the possessor of the money. The stronger the power of my money, the stronger am I.... I *am* ugly, but I can buy the *most beautiful* woman. Which means to say that I am not *ugly*, for the effect of *ugliness*, its repelling power, is destroyed by money.... [Money] is the visible divinity.... It is the universal whore, the universal pimp of men and peoples.²⁴

Recall that, in these manuscripts, Marx defined fetish as a material reification of magical qualities into the natural properties of corporeal objects. He came across this sort of phenomenon earlier in his readings, as recorded in the *Bonn Notebooks*. He carefully considered Catholic worship of saintly relics, condemned by Protestants either as fetishism or idolatry; the cult of Indian lingam, Roman Priapus, and the Greek phallus worship, categorized by Meiners, Böttiger, and Constant as fetishism, and by early Christians either as paganism or idolatry.

Significantly, the interconnections between fetishism, sexuality, and religion resurface, if only in passing, in a footnote to *Capital*, volume 1. The reference does not appear in the famed section of the first chapter titled “Fetishism of the Commodity and Its Secret,” where he speaks of the “fantastic form of a relation between things” – a relation that appears both in the world of commodities and the “misty realm of religion,” but in the subsection “Hoarding,” found in chapter 3 (“Money, or the Circulation of Commodities”).²⁵

There, Marx reproduces a short passage from a 1503 letter from Christopher Columbus, in which the latter refers to gold as “a wonderful thing! Its owner is master of all he desires. Gold can even enable souls to enter Paradise.”

The parallel between Columbus’s fascination with this dazzling precious metal and young Marx’s account of the mercantilist fetishization of private property, gold, and money is obvious. Mirroring his earlier views on money as a universal medium, Marx again discusses the convertibility of everything into money: “Everything becomes saleable and purchasable.” He goes on to examine the Catholic fetishization of sacred relics. He observes that these objects lose their power once they become subject to monetary exchange: “Nothing is immune from this alchemy, the bones of the saints cannot withstand it, let alone more delicate *res sacrosanctae, extra commercium hominum* [consecrated objects, beyond human commerce].” In a subsequent footnote, Marx reminds the reader that throughout European history, thieves had robbed monasteries in order to sell their relics, turning religious objects into money. Echoing the *Bonn Notebooks*, he moves on to the subject of the ancient temples, particularly in Greece, which “served as the dwellings of the gods of commodities. They were ‘sacred banks.’ With the Phoenicians, a trading people *par excellence*, money was the transmuted shape of everything. It was, therefore, quite in order that the virgins who at the feast of the goddess of love gave themselves to strangers should offer to the goddess the piece of money they received in payment.”

The subsequent footnote is reserved for a quote from Shakespeare’s *Timon of Athens*, beginning “Gold! yellow, glittering, precious gold!” Once again recalling his 1844 *Manuscripts*, a first-chapter section on fetishism explores the nature of the “fetish character” and the “illusions of the Monetary System”; that is, the misconception of gold and silver not “as a social relation of production, but in the form of natural objects with peculiar social properties.” That this fetishism receives the epithet of “magic of money” in the second chapter brings to mind Marx’s notes on de Brosse regarding the etymological origins of the words *fairy*, *enchanted*, and *divine thing*.²⁶

Young Marx's notes on magic, drawn from excerpts from Böttiger, reveal a nuanced distinction between the magic of money and the magic of religious fetish objects. Fetish and magic, unlike money, do not figure in Böttiger's account as an impersonal universal medium. In fierce religious wars, for instance, one could see that in the "war campaigns of the Persian monarchs, Persian fire worship and magism fought with fire and swords the opposing fetish worship and idolatry," as in the cases of Xerxes in the fifth century BCE (against "the idol in the Belus Temple in Babylon" and "images of gods" in Greek temples) or the Persian kings in the sixth century BCE ("Cambyses against the Egyptian paganism").²⁷

The social and political status of magic and fetishism/idolatry was relative and interchangeable in this context, depending on their native or foreign origins. For example, the "Greek was just as annoyed by the barbaric sounds of the magic formula" of the enemy as by "the deformities of the deities who ruled in that magical realm.... For the Greeks and Romans, this demonic magic game has always been a crime against their fatherland religion or at least an object of contempt." The Romans were hostile to "astrologers and magicians," going so far as to forcefully expel and exile them. The magical powers of foreign fetish/idolatrous objects were not denied by native populations, but they were perceived as a threat to the domestic monopoly on religious beliefs. In *Capital*, the same language of magic stands out in Marx's characterization of "fetishes endowed with a will and a soul of their own," "dazzling to our eyes." One remarkable difference between Marx's early and late conceptions of fetishism is that, while in the earlier period he approached the phenomenon of fetish from the perspective of an external observer, his later writings are those of an internal observer as the fetishization of money emerges within the contemporary mode of capitalist production. In his later works, Marx was concerned not with fetishism as such but with "fetishism peculiar to the capitalist mode of production" as it "arises from the peculiar social character of the labor."²⁸

This brings us to the Latin, rather than the Portuguese, etymological origin of *fetish*: *factitius*, that is, human-made, manufactured, fabricated, the product of a human hand.²⁹ This definition does not appear in Marx's excerpts from de Brosses, but Marx, in both his early and later works, was clearly familiar with it. In the aforementioned 1842 mockery of the Rhine Assembly, Marx drew on the amnesia of fetish worshipers who create gods for themselves, but as soon as they are created, the devotees forget that "these gods are [their] own handiwork." Similarly, in the 1844 *Manuscripts*, he distinguishes the mercantile reduction of property and wealth to the natural properties of material substances (precious metals)

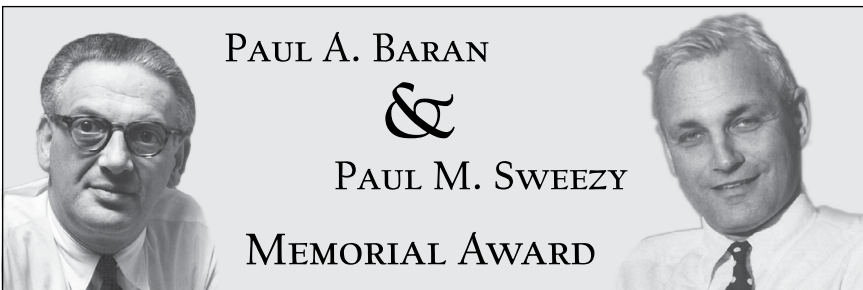
from the later viewpoint of “enlightened political economy.” This was, for Marx, similar to both the Catholic condemnation of polytheistic religions and the Protestant condemnation of Catholic relic worship. Following this line of reasoning, he found it appropriate “to call Adam Smith the Luther of political economy.” The same analogy reappears in *Capital*, in which Marx weaves together the treatment of “pre-bourgeois forms of the social organization of production...by [later] political economy” and the treatment of pre-Christian religions by “the Fathers of the Church.”³⁰

In the case of the early church fathers, Marx’s excerpts in the *Bonn Notebooks* – the Barbeyrac excerpts in particular – reveal that Marx’s repeated references to diachronic downplaying of an earlier period in history, from a later point of view, was partially informed by religious sexuality. While Marx does not explicitly articulate every single aspect of fetishism in his later theorizing, re-reading the sections on fetishism in light of the *Bonn Notebooks* gives a different valence on, and provides new insights into, the theoretical-historical background of his conception of fetishism.

Notes

1. Karl Marx, “Proceedings of the Sixth Rhine Province Assembly: First Article. Debates on Freedom of the Press and Publication of the Proceedings of the Assembly of the Estates,” in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 1, (New York: International Publishers, 1975), 147.
2. Karl Marx, “The Leading Article in No. 179 of the *Kölnische Zeitung*,” in Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 1, 189.
3. Robert Nichols, “Crisis and Kleptocracy,” in Daniel Bensaid, *The Dispossessed: Karl Marx’s Debates on Wood Theft and the Right of the Poor* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2021), xiii–xiv.
4. Karl Marx, “Proceedings of the Sixth Rhine Province Assembly: Third Article Debates on the Law on Thefts of Wood,” in Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 1, 262–63. The first two sentences are taken from Charles de Brosses’s book on fetishism, to which I will turn in a moment.
5. Karl Marx, “A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right: Introduction,” in Karl Marx, *Early Writings* (London: Penguin Books, 1992), 253.
6. Karl Marx, “Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts,” in Marx, *Early Writings*, 341–42, 344.
7. Marx, “Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts,” 364. For a recent analysis of Marx’s usage of the Shakespearean term *glitter* (*Glanz*), see Christian A. Smith, *Shakespeare’s Influence on Karl Marx: The Shakespearean Roots of Marxism* (New York: Routledge, 2022), 39, 160–65.
8. See, by way of comparison, Mikhail Lifshitz, *The Philosophy of Art of Karl Marx* (London: Pluto Press, 1976), 35–39, 58; Margaret A. Rose, *Marx’s Lost Aesthetic: Karl Marx and the Visual Arts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 61–69; Alfonso Maurizio Iacono, *The History and Theory of Fetishism* (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2016), 103–13; Hartmut Böhme, *Fetishism and Culture: A Different Theory of Modernity* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014), 244–48; William Pietz, “The Problem of the Fetish, I,” *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 9 (1985): 5–17; William Pietz, “Fetishism and Materialism: The Limits of Theory in Marx,” in *Fetishism as Cultural Discourse*, ed. Emily Apter and William Pietz (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 119–51; Roland Boer, *Criticism of Earth: On Marx, Engels and Theology* (Leiden: Brill: 2012), 177–84; Rosalind C. Morris, “After de Brosses: Fetishism, Translation, Comparativism, Critique,” in *The Returns of Fetishism: Charles de Brosses and the Afterlives of an Idea*, ed. Rosalind C. Morris and Daniel H. Leonard (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 191–204.
9. Bruno Bauer, “Bruno Bauer an Arnold Ruge. 6. Dezember 1841,” in *Der Redaktionsbriefwechsel der Hallischen, Deutschen und Deutsch-Französischen Jahrbücher (1837–1844). Band 2: Der Briefwechsel um die deutschen Jahrbücher um die deutsch-französischen Jahrbücher (Juli 1841–Januar 1843)*, ed. Martin Hundt, (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), 890; Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 1, 382–89.
10. Karl Marx, “Exzerpte zur Geschichte der Kunst und der Religion (Bonner Hefte),” in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Marx-Engels-Gesamtausgabe (MEGA2)* (Berlin: Dietz, 1976), 293–376.
11. Charles de Brosses, “On the Worship of Fetish Gods; Or, A Parallel of the Ancient Religion of Egypt with the Present Religion of Nigritia,” in *The Returns of Fetishism*, 48; Marx, “Bonner Hefte,” 320.
12. De Brosses, “On the Worship of Fetish Gods,” 48–49; Marx, “Bonner Hefte,” 321.
13. De Brosses, “On the Worship of Fetish Gods,” 70; Marx, “Bonner Hefte,” 323–24.
14. William Pietz writes in a footnote that “for late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century historians of ancient religion including Robert Payne Knight, J.

- A. Dulaure and Meiners, phallicism and fetishism were distinct phenomena." In Meiners's case, Pietz is mistaken, as Meiners categorizes priapism as a form of fetishism. See, by way of comparison, William Pietz, "Fetishism and Materialism," 134, fn. 44; Christoph Meiners, *Allgemeine kritische Geschichte der Religionen. Erster Band* (Hannover: Helwingische Hof-Buchhandlung, 1806), 251-52. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own; Marx, "Bonner Hefte," 336.
15. Marx, "Bonner Hefte," 335-36.
16. Benjamin Constant, *On Religion: Considered in Its Source, Its Forms, and Its Developments*, trans. Peter Paul Seaton Jr. (Carmel, IN: Liberty Fund, 2017), 216; Marx, "Bonner Hefte," 352.
17. Constant, *On Religion*, 50, 375; Marx, "Bonner Hefte," 355.
18. Constant, *On Religion*, 126-27; Marx, "Bonner Hefte," 347-48.
19. Marx, "Bonner Hefte," 330, 334, 369-70, 854-55.
20. Marx, "Bonner Hefte," 374, 861.
21. Here, I am drawing on the conception of homology as depicted in Devin Singh, *Divine Currency: The Theological Power of Money in the West* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018), 17-22; David Hawkes, *Idols of the Marketplace: Idolatry and Commodity Fetishism in English Literature, 1580-1680* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 17, 52.
22. Marx, "Comments on James Mill," in *Early Writings*, 260-61.
23. Marx, "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts," 375.
24. Marx, "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts," 377.
25. Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 (London: Penguin, 1990), 165.
26. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, 176, 187, 229, 320, 330; de Brosses, "On the Worship of Fetish Gods," 48.
27. Marx, "Bonner Hefte," 330.
28. Marx, "Bonner Hefte," 330-31; Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, 165, 187, 1003-46; Iacono, *The History and Theory of Fetishism*, 74.
29. For the etymological origins of fetish and fetishism, see William Pietz, *The Origin of Fetishism: A Contribution to the History of Theory*, PhD diss. (Santa Barbara, CA: University of California, 1988), 49-135.
30. Marx, "Proceedings of the Sixth Rhine Province Assembly," 147; Marx, "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts," 342; Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, 175.



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