

INVITED PAPER

Webfare: humanity's greatest asset

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“Man’s needs have become human needs, and the other person, as a person, has become one of man’s needs” Marx rightly said. However, he mistakenly thought that these values were mystified by the bourgeois society bent on production and acquisition. Indeed, the communist revolution, with the sole exception of China today, does not seem to have taken any significant step towards reintegrating human values. Instead, the great technological and social transformation that has been unfolding for the past few years, involving the increasing production of documents relating not only to our thoughts, but to our deeds and lives, has made it possible to transform simple living into not only a political but also an economic source of value. This is an entirely new resource, which has arisen thanks to the fact that the Internet is about recording rather than communication. This is the salient characteristic of the digital over the analogue world: in the latter, information is communicated and can subsequently be recorded (which, however, almost never happens). In

the digital world, on the other hand, the recording of action precedes and makes information and communication possible, which produces an unprecedented growth in the archive of human activity.

This creates a capital that consists of the recording of all human life forms. This new and unforeseen capital is the capital of the 21st century, not financial capital. And since we do not like the word ‘capital’, because we associate it with the vicissitudes of a peculiar form of capitalism, which privileged the individual and saw wealth as a reward and a sign of divine favour, I’ll call it “humanity’s greatest asset”. This is an asset whose worth grows bigger the more people share it, and which rewards not asceticism, hard work and selfishness, in a game where there are necessarily only a few winners, but need, desire, curiosity – all that brings people to the Web. Humanity’s greatest asset thus creates a wealth that comes from everyone and must return to everyone in terms of culture, and, to those in need (for example, the many who are losing their jobs due to automation but still produce value on the Web), in terms of support for growth.

If it is disputable, to say the least, that “where the danger is, also grows the saving power”, as Hölderlin wrote (we have countless testimonies of dangers without salvation), in this specific situation one could say that this is indeed the case. The shrinking number

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of jobs caused by increasing automation, the dystopia of a humanity left destitute and frightened, feeling like it's left behind of the course of the world, the far-from-dystopian experience of a humanity that can only see itself as a victim of a biopolitical tyranny, and not as an active subject of history – all these things call for a change of pace. In order to interrupt a downward spiral leading to a competition between losers (between the disgruntled classes of the West and the alternative mythologies of Eurasia and Islam), what we need is a Webfare system able to socialise, even for the West, the enormous value that humanity produces on the Web, not only through a taxation of platforms, but above all through an alternative capitalisation.

This is the point. In order to reduce the gap between those who have too much and those who have too little (they have more than they used to, although this, as is natural and right, is no consolation), it is not enough to tax the platforms fairly. We need to devise a strategy for the alternative capitalisation of the data produced by humanity, creating intermediate bodies that (armed with the European law that allows it) demand their members' data from the platforms, valorising and reselling them (thus generating a market). They can thus redistribute value not just for the benefit of their members, but in support of the enormous part of humanity that has no money but produces data. Let me try to outline the theoretical horizon and the technological resources of this collective asset.

1. From the tyranny of nature to the tyranny of merit

Nature is not democratic: humans are born ugly or beautiful, stupid, or intelligent. The assertion that humans are all equal is infinitely less credible than the assertion that beavers are all equal, and only someone dangerously prone to confusing being with ought could have argued that humans are born equal and that what makes them different is society. Note that the same thinker has also argued that humans are born free and yet are everywhere in chains, an argument in which the confusion between fact and law is, if anything, even more acute. Society, far more than the greed of the few, is born out of the desire to make up for differences in nature, and partly succeeds in doing so; unfortunately, in this attempt, it brings about an even greater injustice – that between having and not having.

Ever since agriculture took hold in the “fertile crescent”, humanity has distinguished between the privileged, who have access to education and goods that are passed down through generations, and the others, those who have nothing. This is one of the most odious, unjust and seemingly insuperable distinctions that characterise the human condition, which so far has only found partial remedies (e.g. the fact that the number of illiterate people is rapidly decreasing). Sometimes,

though, the cure is worse than the disease, replacing the inequitable division of wealth with an implacably equal division of poverty, which is the glaring result of 20th century communism. This is no longer the case with 21st century communism, whose problem is not poverty (China is developing at a dizzying rate) but freedom (platforms are nationalised, and used as merciless control instruments).

The traditional answer to social injustice is naturalisation: the claim that genders, races, or castes are not a social construct but a natural one, if not the result of a divine design. No one would accept this solution anymore; or, rather, no one would accept it formally and in principle. Our everyday lives, however, are filled with cases of dominance or subalternity: no one is truly surprised by the existence, in the global south as well as in our own backyard, of those who, so to speak, are called “dispossessed”. And if we accept *de facto* what we reject *de iure*, it is because the law has not yet managed to correct the fact. Philosophers, of course, have come up with a wealth of metaphysical systems of morals and theories of justice that, by their mere evidence or sublime eloquence, with the goodwill of their readers, are supposed to change the world order. Lacking the material resources to feed their ideas, however, they have merely confirmed Talleyrand's saying that it is good to cling to principles, since sooner or later they collapse, leaving our hands free.

Revolutionary movements certainly tried to remedy the naturalisation of injustice, but often the cure turned out to be worse than the disease. In his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Edmund Burke observed that the French Revolution had devised many bizarre reasons to justify the holding of sovereign power, including the so-called “general will” (what could that be? Probably a close relative of the “common sense of decency”). Such views made one regret the traditional English justification for ruling by birthright. Now, this may seem to be a reactionary tirade, and it is; yet half a century later and from an entirely different source, Honoré de Balzac's *Le Curé de village*, we read pages and pages of criticism of the technocracy of the Ecole Polytechnique. Balzac described it as a factory of resentful people lacking social solidarity, convinced that they owed everything to their own merit and hard work, who consequently thought that everyone else was less worthy and deserved their own misfortune.

Fast-forward another hundred years and we come to 1958, the year of publication of *The Rise of the Meritocracy* by the English sociologist and politician Michael Dunlop Young. Despite its title, this is a Swiftian satire of meritocracy, rightly accused of arousing a number of negative feelings: selfishness and condescension in those who believe to be deserving because they have done well thanks to their own efforts; resentment in those who, despite their efforts, have not had the success they hoped for; and frustration and social hatred in most, who are forced to watch this

noble competition from afar, from a life of manual labour. The outcome is this: while members of the subaltern classes traditionally had a thousand ways to justify their condition (bad luck, inherent social inequity, lack of education...), meritocracy subjects them to an infallible judgement: the subaltern classes deserve to be so. By proposing a formal equality that is not accompanied by any substantial equality (it is obvious, in particular, that the educational career of the son of a Peer of England, or even simply of a clerk, has an almost unbridgeable initial advantage compared to a child of immigrants), meritocracy becomes a vehicle for the worst of injustices, confirming that the road to hell is paved with good intentions.

Half a century later, we come to the present day, after Brexit in England, the Trump presidency in the United States, the announced abolition of poverty in Italy, the widespread proliferation of anti-vax positions (both as a full-fledged movement and in the armed wing of Doubt and Precaution, an oxymoronic attempt to provide a scientific version of alchemy and astrology), the electoral clash between Marine Le Pen and Macron in France and the military clash between Putin and the rest of the world in Ukraine. This climate is usually analysed as an inexplicable regurgitation of populism, but it is actually a reaction to what philosopher Michael J. Sandel has stigmatised as the *Tyranny of Merit*. One can say many things about the current Prince of Wales, but one cannot deny that he is painfully aware of the merely hereditary nature of his privilege. This has often not been the case with American democratic presidents and British Labour leaders in recent decades, from Clinton (Bill and Hillary) to Blair up to Obama. These are all clever rulers inclined to surround themselves with technocrats and PhD holders (only Merkel beat them, with seven ministers out of thirteen with a doctorate, though one of them was accused of plagiarism in his thesis), and prone to preaching to their nations that the system works well – so much so that they are in government.

It is not surprising that, as soon as they have the chance, the nations in question vote against them, especially if (as the British recklessly did with Brexit and Renzi with the constitutional reform) they hold a referendum. It would be strange the other way around. What would we say about a Pope who said he rose to that position through hard work and merit? It is much better to invoke the Holy Spirit: no one gets offended, and above all one does not expose oneself to the obvious argument that even in the most meritocratic of careers, money, family and fortune matter, and that, since no one can choose their parents, there is no merit in being born handsome, intelligent, with a quick wit or good business sense. And what about others? It should be noted that the scarcity of resources and lack of social recognition does not only affect the occupational sphere, but people's entire lives. Rousseau claimed that morality is the sublime science of simple souls, but the

saying that Schopenhauer approvingly attributed to an Englishman he knew appears much more truthful: "I am not rich enough to afford a conscience". This seeming *boutade*, this ostentation of cynicism, encapsulates social progress as such: the goal to enable the whole of humanity to afford a conscience, providing it with not just formal, but substantial rights.

To do so, one must abandon the illusion that man is born free and yet for some reason ends up in chains, or that man is born good and ends up, again inexplicably, implicated in an ethnic cleansing operation. We are not born full of goodness and altruism, and it may well be that we never find ourselves in the material and cultural conditions to exercise these virtues. Therefore, it is on these conditions that one must focus first. For the human animal, like any other animal, is not naturally good or bad, and in this respect is no different from any other animal; however, unlike any other animal (being the only one that can be educated), it must be put in the conditions to be able to afford a conscience, and only then can it decide whether to be good or bad. These conditions are not heaven-sent, but depend on the distribution of value. Contrary to the claims of those nostalgic for fireflies or the frugality of hunter-gatherers, poverty does not generate virtue, but oppression and war. And only economic, social and technological growth can guarantee the conditions we need for human flourishing.

2. From production to consumption

Now, this growth is already happening: it is simply a matter of intercepting it, socialising it, and humanising it. In the last few years, in fact, a situation has arisen that can mitigate the tyranny of merit, not because humans have become better, but because machines have become more efficient. The world has changed thanks to increased automation, as artificial intelligence records human life forms to enable machines to act as if they had a soul. It's almost hard to believe that thirty years ago one had to own a television, a radio or a newspaper to express one's ideas, be they good or bad. But this is only the most obvious, almost blatant aspect of the digital revolution. The essential point is rather this: the real revolution brought about by the Web is not the possibility of expressing one's ideas, whether right or wrong (therefore, by simple statistical law, mostly wrong), but rather the fact that while we express them, or even simply while we are reading, buying a ticket, scrolling through posts, walking, searching for a restaurant or a hotel, using the navigator for directions, etc., these acts – which unlike our ideas are all true – are recorded. And once they are recorded, they can be compared with the acts of millions of other humans, describing not the insincere ideas of what we think or believe, but the true facts of the things we do.

Thus, the Web is interesting precisely because it records instead of merely communicating or informing, and this recording is the basis of the production of algorithms and archives. On the one hand, these allow for the automation of production through the mimesis of human life forms recorded on the Web, as well as the refinement of distribution through the analytical knowledge of our needs and behaviour. On the other hand, they enable the profiling of social reality by recognising the correlations between consumption, political inclinations, predilections and predispositions of various kinds which, mind you, do not concern individuals, cognitively uninteresting, but ideal types. It's all about recording the human comedy, or more precisely the human drama (δρᾶμα i.e., "action"): indeed, what is recorded are precisely actions, not necessarily tragic but often comical and usually anodyne – ordering a taxi, booking a room, shopping online, and so on. Hence the evidence that is beginning to shine through this umpteenth technological revelation: useless as appendages of spades, lathes, and typewriters, humans are irreplaceable as appendages of knives and forks, cinemas, concerts, novels, and of course many other less commendable, but exclusively human, entertainments. Acknowledging this fact and drawing the logical consequences for the benefit of the few has been the great merit of commercial platforms; it is now up to us to draw the ethical consequences for the benefit of the many.

The first point to make, which is of capital importance, is that the enormous wealth of the Web is the result of the mobilisation of humanity. This is an unforeseen situation. Ninety years ago, Keynes prophesied that automation would make it enough to work fifteen hours a week, and that we had to think about how to occupy that enormous amount of free time. That prophecy was fulfilled in a peculiar way, because many people do not work at all, since automation has taken away their jobs, but are still busy for fifteen hours *a day*, tapping away on their computer or smartphone, producing value. A possible mindfulness exercise proposed by our smartwatch might sound like this: where does our feeling of hyper-occupation come from when we are not at work or even if we are unemployed? Probably from the fact that we are always otherwise occupied, mostly teaching machines about humanity. We are not idle, it just seems that way. Instead, our fingers keep swiping and tapping, we read, write, consult, click, like and comment. In fact, we are active online: we are not merely exploited deposits, but the bearers of acts, preferences, needs and desires. Hence the solution to the mystery of our business: of course we are tired, it would be odd if we weren't, yet we do not toil and we most certainly are not alienated, because there is not a moment in our connected lives when we are not mobilised and stimulated.

The machines that are stealing our jobs rely precisely on that "being human" that for Keynes was the other

side of labour: the time of life as empty and unproductive, to be occupied as best we can to avoid the brutalisation of a humanity freed from fields and workshops. But, as we have seen, today our time is not empty, it is full. Suffice it to say that boredom has disappeared: and of course, humans complain about this too, see Pamela Paul's *100 Things We've Lost to the Internet* – after all, Dostoevsky confessed he missed his days in Siberia. Granted, the disappearance of boredom generates value but does not solve our problems, because just as there were once many ways to be bored, there are now countless ways not to be. Discipline at work and in the military was a relatively simple, though very tiring, way of not getting bored. Refraining from posting nonsense, not eating too much, exercising, and behaving decently with others are things that require enormous discipline; therefore, we have quite a lot to do to occupy the time freed up by automation. But first we must answer the question: who is paying for all this? What benign deity lets us have our Pilates class when we are unemployed? Who supports our consumption?

The answer is: consumption itself. There is a point we must consider in order to open our eyes about the present. The moment consumption is recorded, it is capitalised and becomes a potential source of value: this is the epochal transformation that can comfort us as we look to the future. And perhaps this can also shed light, retrospectively, on the prejudices we fell victim to even in the recent past. The criticism of consumerism has in fact blinded us to the nobility and humanity of consumption (i.e., of need), which is what characterises us as organisms embedded in a techno-social context – the context that makes us human. So, if we think about it carefully, every criticism of consumption is made in the name of another kind of consumption, considered (rightly or wrongly) more appropriate: don't stuff yourself with crisps, burn calories; don't numb yourself on Netflix, read Goethe or the Gospel... The fact that acts of consumption often take place in solemn rites (dinners after coronations, consumption of bread and wine during mass) shows that tradition sees much further and deeper than a conformist outlook. The first gesture of a newborn human is the consumption of milk, just as the last gesture of Christ on the Cross was the consumption of the Roman legionaries' drink of water and vinegar, the *posca*. I quote from John 19:30: "When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost." *Consummatum est*: Christ died while consuming, or rather, when he finished consuming, he died. As long as there is life there is consumption, that is, satisfaction of needs and metamorphosis of matter into spirit. Hegel observed this when he described the digestive process as a spiritualisation, through which matter is transformed into energy. In our case, and this is the cornerstone of my proposal, recorded consumption is transformed into value, alleviating the tyranny of merit.

3. From ability to need

“Full of merit, but poetically, man dwells on this earth”, Hölderlin famously wrote, but it is not at all clear what he meant by “poetically”. I doubt that he meant, literally, a reference to “making things” (ποίησις), because there is nothing particularly noble about beating on the anvil with a hammer. Or rather, such an activity is only worthwhile for a human if a machine cannot do it: as soon as it becomes automatable it becomes unworthy of a human, who becomes a sort of prosthesis of the anvil and the hammer, called upon to give them physical energy, rhythm and precision. The age of *homo faber* is only one epoch of humankind, which was preceded by the hunter-gatherers (who, by the way, have never entirely disappeared) and which, sooner rather than later, is destined to come to an end. When it does so no one will miss it, even though all modern thinking, born at the time of industry, has perpetuated an identification between humanity and production that proves to be particularly inadequate for understanding the present. One may recall that according to the Gospel of John “in the beginning was the Word”, while for Goethe, at the dawn of the industrial revolution, “in the beginning was the deed”. Well, it is worth noting today that “in the end there is consumption”, because without consumption no production, be it of junk food or lofty doctrines, makes sense.

Let us consider three points. First, what makes automation possible? As we have seen, the recording of human life forms on the web. Machines must behave like humans, and to do so they must tap into the great catalogue of humanity that is the Internet. Second, what is the one thing that cannot be automated? Consumption, which for hundreds of thousands of years would vanish into thin air, whereas now it is recorded and offers access, in addition to automation, to the inestimable economic benefits of profiling, which for the first time in the history of the world make a planned economy actually possible. A final question: what drives this huge system? Automation? Obviously not: machines alone are pointless, as their value derives from a human's appreciation and need. Rather, the alpha and the omega of automation (today) and the economy (always) is consumption – i.e., humanity.

Machines exist only as a function of humans, their needs, their mortality, and this applies primarily to the universal machine called artificial intelligence. The transition from production to consumption ensured by automation thus entails an axiological shift that gives a peculiar role to needs. Needs, in fact, insofar as they cannot be automated and insofar as they guarantee automation and define its purposes, constitute the only truly essential fact on which to build a policy aimed at the acquisition of substantial and not merely formal rights. This is because, while we are all different in ability, we are all equal in need, which is the one place

where nature is democratic – in every other respect, as I mentioned at the beginning, it is shockingly meritocratic.

It is hard to overstate this transformation. The principle “from each according to his ability, to each according to his need” (enunciated in the Acts of the Apostles, taken up by Marx, and curiously thought by many Americans to be written into the US constitution), in a society focused on production, will always tip the scales in favour of ability, and needs will be taken care of, at best, by charitable agencies. It is precisely the ancient democratic nature of consumption, i.e. of need, combined with modern productivity, that has brought about an epochal change in the way we look at the world. As long as abilities have been distinct from needs, the latter have always taken second place. But in a world where production is increasingly automated, needs, which cannot be automated and which constitute the ultimate goal of production, become decisive – indeed, they are the only thing that matters. Thus, at a time when the Web seems to be interested not in what we do as bearers of intelligence and skills, but in what, rightly or wrongly, we desire, focusing on needs is no longer a wish, but the most fundamental economic law.

That's the big news: *for the first time in the history of the world we have an apparatus that systematically and programmatically values humans not for their merits but for their needs*. This was already the case with the market: it doesn't matter who buys my products, if a genius or a cretin, so long as they buy it. But the Web enforces this principle not at the end of the process, but from the beginning. For the Internet, and for its goals of automation and profiling, it is necessary to intercept not creativity or strength, not beauty or intelligence, not virtue or wisdom (that is, what makes humans different), but the common thread that makes us the same, even before death: need, or more precisely imbecility, the constitutive lack that determines our recourse to technology. It is therefore a matter of recognising the value that humans produce on the Web, which would not exist without their needs. And this gives humans incalculable power in the face of technology, and its current manifestation, called the Internet. But we need to understand this, we need to open our eyes and abandon the idea that the only way to qualify as political subjects is to be victims, because victimhood is just resignation: you don't help migrants or delivery riders by pitying them, but by creating a different world.

4. From Calvinist capital to Catholic capital

Hölderlin's verse on merits is even more emphatic than that on the coincidence of danger and salvation; or at least it is exaggerated, since both merits and poems are scarce. There is only one place in the world where this principle applies, and fortunately this place is just a

click away. On the Internet, in fact, one produces the same value by learning Sanskrit, counting one's steps, looking up a recipe, buying a ticket, watching a football match or a porn film... The result is always incalculable value. This value, however, does not consist in the financial wealth of human beings (it only speaks of the difference between having and not having, and can be so aleatory as to be informatively uninteresting). Likewise, it does not consist in the labour force that humanity can provide, and which fortunately appears less and less necessary thanks to the growth of automation. Contrary to what was thought a couple of decades ago, it is also not a collective intelligence (collective intelligence, unlike mass imbecility, does not exist; and the Web is largely the realm of fake news).

Rather, this new capital generates a different commonwealth from the one envisaged by Hobbes: it's a wealth that does not differentiate between rich and poor, beautiful or ugly, intelligent or stupid, because even those who have no money, and to crown their misfortune are also ugly, wicked and stupid, generate (provided they are connected) a wealth of data. And their data is more valuable (because it is more representative of the average) than that produced by the richest, most beautiful, virtuous and smartest being on earth. It is important understand this, in order to avoid projecting onto this human capital the false views of web-apocalyptic, who see it either as the continuation of previous forms of capitalisation (as such necessarily linked to the exploitation of the many and the presumed merit of the few), or as an instrument of totalitarian control, or, again, as the dangerous utopia of a world fuelled by the rarest and most unreliable of human endowments – intelligence. Let us therefore consider the characteristics of this capital.

It is *ontologically new*, because acts that have characterised the human life form (walking, watching, consuming, liking, fearing) for millions of years, and which have hitherto left no or very few traces, usually only in solemn circumstances, are now being recorded and transformed into documents. This is both a qualitative and a quantitative change: the anthropic mass has never been as high as it is today (a circumstance that potentially turns what is to all intents and purposes the root cause of the environmental crisis into a possible resource), and all these life forms are now recorded, whereas previously they would have left no trace, or, to be poetic, they would be lost in time, like tears in rain. These are acts of which we are rarely aware - who has ever paid attention to when and where one Googled a restaurant? These are acts we often have no memory of – during a phone call I may cough three times and may well not notice. Or else, these are acts that we know we perform but are careful not to quantify - who, before the Internet, would have ever counted their steps? In very many cases, we would never have recorded such acts without the Web – think of

measuring our biorhythms. Recognising this capital is much more epoch-making than the discovery of a new continent or a space conquest: it is an increase of the objects and meanings that make up our world.

It is *technologically renewable*, because digital documents and data, just like ideas, can be shared. This is the basis of a great political and economic resource. In a classical economy, if I, a producer, demand the return of what I have produced, I can only do so through a revolution, and the result is usually the replacement of private industries with bad socialised ones. But in a digital economy, if I, a data-producer, ask for my data back from a platform, I do not harm the platform's economy, and I come into possession of a good that, combined with that of other humans, will allow me to create value to be redistributed with humanistic aims, achieving the main ethical goal of philosophers and all humans of goodwill, but through an *increase* in economic resources.

It is *epistemologically rich* because it constitutes the largest repository of human life forms that has ever existed and which, if interpreted with appropriate machines and ideas, can give us far greater knowledge about the human world than we have about the natural world, yielding enormous advantages. In fact, contrary to what the obscurantists who, as in the Matrix, claim that ignorance is a bliss, humanity and knowledge go hand in hand, and we are all the more human the more we feed on the tree of knowledge. In this way, we witness what would once have been called an “epistemological divide”. The classical opposition between nature as the realm of necessity and society as the realm of freedom must be turned on its head: the more we deepen our knowledge of nature, the more it manifests chaotic and unpredictable phenomena; the more we learn about human behaviour through the data generated by our behaviour, the more unsurprising and uniform these behaviours turn out to be. And if quantum physics describes nature as a largely random field, big data transforms humanity into a domain as predictable as the phases of the moon.

It is *teleologically, i.e. ethically, fair*, because, as I said, instead of being a sign of the individual's divine election, as in the Calvinist genesis of bourgeois capital, this capital is catholic in the etymological sense of the word, because it is universal, and is worth more the more it is shared among all humans, regardless of wealth, intelligence, race or faith. This generates a valorisation system that does not privilege the individual and labour, but collectivity and consumption, with what some may be inclined to see as a repressive desublimation, because they do not realise that this is an enormous new possibility. Hence a completely new purpose for philosophical and social reflection: to design a capitalisation system operated by humanistic platforms that is alternative and non-competitive with respect to liberalist platforms, which for their part have had the undisputed merit of having

intercepted this new source of value. In other words, if the revolutionary drive comes from capital, being revolutionary does not mean fighting against capital, but imagining alternative capitalisation processes.

5. From Welfare to Webfare

What processes am I talking about? I will try to describe them. The logic of this alternative capitalisation rests on a simple consideration. Data, just like ideas, can be shared and reused as much as one wants, and demanding data from commercial platforms does not mean demanding that they stop using it – far from it. Besides being impossible, depriving platforms of data would be unfair, because in order for that data to even exist, platforms have invested in research and development, as well as having understood their value before we did. A different path has to be followed: once we have rendered unto Google the things that are Google's, the same data that Google and other platforms capitalise on for liberal purposes can be capitalised on for humanistic purposes. This is a much more robust course of action than tax devolution systems, which merely address a percentage of an existing value. In this case, a whole new value is introduced.

These intimately political acts do not need any formal political support. Rather, politics may be directed towards taxing platforms (both liberal and, albeit to a lesser extent, civic), as well as compensating for the imbalances that will naturally arise from the choices of intermediaries and intermediary structures. Conversely, in a Webfare system, those who have no money but produce data would not receive subsidies, charity, or a citizenship income, but would be paid for the work they do as data producers. In this way, the redistribution of value would be democratic, returning the profits of humanistic platforms to those in need. The latter, instead of taking revenge on the elites, exasperated by the latter's arrogant belief in their own merit, would thus be able to appreciate the practical advantage of the fusion of technology and humanism for social purposes. That is, they would actually be able to take advantage of the social lift which, to be such, must help not those who can climb ladders quickly while counting the calories they burned, but those who cannot.

In order to achieve this, it is necessary to find intermediary agencies that can combine platform data with their own specific databases. For example, one could enable a healthcare company to capitalise on its customer data by aggregating it with customers' social data, with respect to which it would act as an intermediary with Internet platforms. The healthcare company would thus obtain much more meaningful correlations that would be transferable to pharmaceutical and biomedical companies, to whom today they are generally given away; this, in turn,

would make healthcare spending sustainable for our increasingly elderly population. To make another example, one could transform a bank into an intermediary institution that is also active in the field of digital capital, to be reinvested locally and for humanitarian purposes. Or else, one could correlate the structured data of a library or university with data on user and student behaviour in order to optimise services. The point is to not only redistribute to humanity the capital it produces, but to enrich and enhance this capital, not by just doing what commercial platforms do, but by doing more and better than them.

Here is a great new opportunity. Welfare as Keynes envisioned it required making choices: for example, between social security and health care. The former was rightly favoured, but this weakened the latter. Webfare starts from a completely different premise: instead of drawing its resources from existing value, which is something given, like a blanket that is either too short or too narrow, we can make use of an entirely new capital. This is what the social, economic and philosophical imagination will have to concentrate on in the years to come, mobilising, together with the intermediate bodies, researchers and universities to support those intermediaries in the elaboration of capitalisation criteria – something of which, fortunately, neither Silicon Valley nor Shanghai own the exclusive right.