Research Square

Preprints are preliminary reports that have not undergone peer review.
They should not be considered conclusive, used to inform clinical practice,
or referenced by the media as validated information.

Value as semiotic representation or abstract wealth? Revisiting Turner's Marxist theory

Ignacio S. Marmolejo

isandovaa@uc.cl

Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile

Research Article

Keywords: Terence Turner, value, wealth, ritual labor, Mebêngôkre

Posted Date: September 28th, 2026

DOI: https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-10822941/v1

License: This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.
Read Full License

Additional Declarations: No competing interests reported.

Abstract

This article revisits Terence Turner's Marxist theory of value to interrogate the relationship between anthropological value theory and Marx's critique of political economy. Turner's influence extends through the Chicago School of value theory, although his work has generally been situated within the Marxist tradition. His theory conceptualizes value as a transcultural category that illuminates the sociocultural systems of representation through which groups organize material and social production as a totality, linking social motivation, social and material production, praxis, and semiotic mediation. The article argues that this formulation misreads Marx by treating value as a framework of valuation rather than as a specific form of wealth—abstract wealth: the historically specific objectification of alienated labor in social forms capable of commanding human activity *in potentia*. This problem becomes visible in an epistemological tension within Turner's analysis of the Mebêngôkre (Kayapó), particularly in his undertheorization of ritual labor and his treatment of beauty and valuables (*nêkrêjx*) as representations of value. I propose instead that ritual constitutes the closest equivalent of capitalist productive labor, creating *nêkrêjx* as a sociocultural form of abstract wealth. Beauty is thus closer to a bourgeois category than to value as conceptualized in *Capital*. Accordingly, a transcultural comparison inspired by Marx should examine the institutional arrangements through which abstract labor and wealth emerge, as well as the entanglement of the processes through which concrete and abstract wealth are produced and realized.

Introduction

Value has emerged as one of the concepts around which anthropologists have converged because of its potential as a conceptual tool for understanding social motivation that provides a framework for comparing different sociocultural groups (Pedersen 2008; Steinert 2023; Otto 2024). Concepts such as value, social value, and values make it possible to foreground the shared ways in which human groups understand social reality and how these understandings shape action; despite certain resignation of the always increasing number of anthropological theories of value (Otto & Willerslev 2013: 4; Angosto-Ferrández & Henning 2016: 11).

One of the central problems raised by value concerns how "economic" value—whether understood as value, exchange value, money, or prices—relates to social, political, ethical, aesthetic, or other forms of value. Researchers have pursued a theoretical architecture that unites both definitions, because it would supposedly allow for an integrative view of different aspects of a social process o totality (Robbins & Sommerschuh, 2016; Kalb 2025, 78) and an understanding of deeper ethical and ontological commitments (Souleles, Archer & Thaning, 2023). In fact, as Graeber (2001, 1–2) notes, it seems impossible to ignore how these two aspects of society are mutually implicated.

In this regard, responses appear to take three main forms in anthropology. The first, usually idealist or constructivist in character, argues that value and values are manifestations of social orientations through which people locate worth, the Good, significance, desirability, or motivation according to a set

of criteria for classification or exchange (for example, Appadurai 1986; Dumont 2013; Guyer 2004; Kluckhohn 1951; Kockelman 2010; Lambek 2015; Robbins 2007, 2013; Sahlins 1976). Within a society or ethnographic context, these values usually manifest in different arenas or logics. Accordingly, researchers have focused on processes of internal structuring within and across domains, practices of evaluation and exchange, and problems of commensurability and incommensurability.

The second approach, usually associated with Marxist anthropology, posits an opposition between value and values. The former denotes the general capitalist logic of valorization, typically understood through processes of surplus-value appropriation, profit-making, accumulation, and labor discipline. The latter encompasses forms of use value, relational and ethical concerns, and abstract normative commitments among living labor and communities confronting the law of value (Angosto-Ferrández 2022; Collins 2017; Kalb 2022, 2024; Narotzky 2012; Narotzky and Besnier 2014; Smith 2022; Weiss 2011, 2015). Rather than treating these forms of value as relatively equivalent logics, one of which is "economic," researchers working within this framework primarily examine how value and profit become entangled in complex ways with social reproduction and class struggle. This group thereby establishes a relation of subordination between the global drive toward valorization and people's ideals, preferences, desires, and attachments.

The third approach, the "Chicago School" (Graeber 2013, 223; Robbins and Sommerschuh 2016, 4), frames the problem differently, proposing that the concept of value should draw on and extend Marx's original ideas through a Dumontian or Maussian lense. Social values are forms of representation of human activity, or labor, that particular sociocultural groups adopt to organize social production and define value relations among different kinds of people, actions, and objects—that is, to compare, rank, or determine the presence or absence of a particular quality. Beyond "economic" value, other paramount values organize social life and constitute systems of representation grounded in social labor. These systems render visible both the efforts through which value is produced and the social motivations that direct people's attention toward particular, socially defined goals. The central research question, then, is what is at stake for a group and how these forms of value materialize in social and material forms through the social organization of labor and through struggles and competition over value.

There is some consensus that Terence S. Turner was among the first to articulate this idea: social value as a relatively shared and stable form of social motivation and valuation within a social group. Explicitly drawing on Marxism, Turner argued that value could be deployed to understand how other sociocultural groups represent social labor and its different expressions. Turner's work has been influential primarily through David Graeber (2001, 2007, 2013), who acknowledges his debt to Turner's ideas (along with Nancy Munn (1992)), while also directly shaping the work of authors such as Jane Fajans (1997), Steven Sangren (2001), and Fred Myers (2007). More recently, other authors have noted Turner's or Graeber's influence on contemporary thinking about value and the relation between value and values (for example, DuBois & Salas, 2021; Lammer & Thiemann, 2024; Field 2023). Here, it is important to note that, while Marxist anthropologists have questioned David Graeber's "Marxist credentials," Turner has emerged

largely unscathed as a representative of the Marxist tradition (Angosto-Ferrández 2016: 12–15; Kalb 2024: 7–12).

The argument I advance in this paper is that Turner misunderstands a fundamental dimension of Marx's late work and consequently misrepresents the concept of value as Marx develops it in *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (2010 [1864–1894]). Value is not, in the first instance, a theory of how people assess their world or compare entities for exchange, even when these practices are considered as they pertain to social production or capitalist social relations. Rather, Marx develops a theory of "abstract wealth" as part of his critique: a theory of the production of a specific class of objects—commodities and money—and of the contradictory totality within which these objects can exist and exercise causal powers as media for representing a particular measure of social labor. As nexuses of social relations, these objects, in turn, enable specific forms of class struggle and exploitation.

The particularity of these social objects lies in their capacity to mobilize further human activity by representing congealed human labor as an abstract potentiality, rather than simply being objects created or used in accordance with particular desires or use values. These objects must acquire material form through some kind of mediation, but this mediation is not a semiotic representation of labor. Rather, they possess a *phantom-like objectivity* insofar as they function as nexuses of capitalist social relations embedded in capitalist institutions: private ownership of the means of production, wage labor, abstract labor, the separation of producers from the means of production, coercion in labor markets, and the generalized exchange of commodities and money. Commodities produced for sale and money thereby become abstract wealth: objects capable of attracting and anchoring social motivations through their capacity to mobilize action in multiple potential directions.

If value provides an anchor point for transcultural comparison, the analytical effort should focus on understanding the materialization of culturally specific forms of abstract wealth rather than on what people consider good, necessary, or desirable. Their production would involve specific forms of labor, processes through which labor is abstracted, and social relations that confer upon these forms of wealth their distinctive spectral objectivity.

To develop this critique, I reconstruct Turner's theoretical ideas in the first section of the article. Turner grounds his approach in a naturalistic and slightly optimistic conception of labor paired with a semiotic reading of value: the expectation that the process of production generates a system of representation for valuable things or substances that are tangible and largely accessible to sociocultural consciousness, manifesting as symbols or notions that condense valuation. This allows him to encourage the search for social equivalents of value in non-capitalist societies.

In the following section, I examine the effects of Turner's approach on his analysis of the Mebêngôkre (Kayapó) of Amazonia, among whom the social values of power and beauty organize material and social production. To illustrate my argument, I draw on the historical development of Turner's own arguments to identify an epistemological tension within his analysis. The centrality he gives to value as a concept connecting a naturalistic conception of human labor with a semiotic narrowing of value leads him to

neglect Mebêngôkre ritual work by treating it primarily as realization and to undertheorize Mebêngôkre valuables (*nêkrêjx*) by conceptualizing them as tokens or symbols of value.

The final section brings recent interpretations of beauty and ritual labor among the Mebêngôkre into dialogue with contemporary readings of Marx's *Capital*. Here, I focus on the tension between the production of the social world through relations, persons, and concrete or material wealth, on the one hand, and the specific production of abstract wealth that subsumes these forms, on the other. From a Marxist perspective, a theory of value concerns neither every interpretive framework nor every practice of valuation, but rather the objectification of human activity in forms endowed with capable of laying claim to human labor without predetermining the concrete form that labor will take. I therefore argue that any transcultural comparative inquiry grounded in Marx's concept of value should begin by think about the production of concrete and abstract wealth as sociomaterial processes.

Turner's theory of value: sociomaterial production and semiotic representation

Despite its influence, Turner's theoretical work is known for its lack of systematization. This is evident in the absence of a comprehensive bibliography and in the circulation of unpublished manuscripts and monographs (Graeber 2017). One way to reconstruct his value theory is to examine his early articles and manuscripts that directly address the problem of value between 1979 and 1984, together with his more recent article "Marxian Value Theory" (Turner 2008).

Turner's core argument is that the concept of value can be extended to non-capitalist societies. For him, "Socio-cultural systems are accordingly understood as the means by which peoples define the values that orient their own acts, realize these values in concrete terms through concerted social action, and distribute and accumulate the value thus produced among themselves." (Turner 1979c: 19). Thus, the way a social group defines its central values reveals three fundamental aspects of its social reproduction: how the group coordinates its activity as an organized totality of productive potential, the consolidation of a system that enable contrastive relationships between the elements produced by labor within this totality and cultural systematization of values as the goals of productive activity (Turner 1979c). Following Elson's "value theory of labor", socio-cultural systems organize material and social production by representing it in the form of comparable units of productive labor and socially defined units of production time or productive cycles to achieve its goals (Turner 1984b: 6–7). By organizing human activity in labor-time, these units coagulate into complex and dialectical social wholes. Social values, then, enable value relations —or valuation comparison— between different activities, attributes, goods, and persons that ground social consciousness and praxis via motivation (Turner 1984b: 6; 2008: 51 – 2).

Production should not be understood solely as material production. Turner advances an expanded conception of production that includes social production, encompassing the creation of human beings as social actors, social groupings, and a wider range of social relationships inspired by Marx & Engels'

The German Ideology (2010 [1932]), thereby blurring the distinction between reproduction and production in the conventional sense (Turner 1979c: 24–6; Turner 1984a: 11–12; Turner 2008: 44). Within this conception, needs drive the productive process insofar as each sociocultural system defines what counts as productive, orienting concrete (need-satisfying) labor toward culturally defined ends, whose satisfaction is realized after production in a different social domain of circulation or consumption (Turner 2008: 45). Production therefore operates as a transcultural analytical category: it appears everywhere as the labor that creates societies, particularly through material subsistence and the production of primary social relationships.

A key proposition in Turner's argument is that "Value, in sum, is a *special form of representation*, which requires a medium of representation" (2008: 50; emphasis added). Social values therefore take form through symbolic media that need not be strictly quantified, yet allow degrees of acquisition, transaction, manipulation, and accumulation (1979b: 26). This interface between totality and social consciousness allows Turner to formulate value as a theory of praxis and social struggle, in which "the structure of society becomes symbolically refracted as value" (Turner 1984b: 32). Members of a sociocultural system are aware of these media and of the social values they embody; these values motivate social action as well as specific forms of domination and exploitation.

Turner elaborated his theory of value along his intensive and long-termed ethnographic work among the Kayapó -Mebêngôkre (identify as Kayapó by Turner), mainly in the villages of Gorotire and Kapot. The Mebêngôkre are a Northern Gê people who inhabit a large area of the middle Xingu valley, Central Brasil. The Mebêngôkre villages share an identical origin, language, and a set of common sociocultural characteristics, which has allowed anthropologists to identify cultural affinities among these groups, including the Xikrin (Gordon 2006; Vidal 1981). Despite a long history of political relations and warfare, each village considers itself a relatively autonomous political unit.

According to Turner (1979a, 1979b, 1984c), Mebêngôkre social structure is defined at its base by the domestic household, which consists of consanguineally related women with their husbands, their unmarried sons, and their married daughters with their husbands and children. However, this unit operates under the control of a higher-level structure, the matriuxorilocal extended family (or segmentary unit), in which the wife's parents exercise authority over the daughter's husband, who is expected to move into the household of the woman he marries. This relationship allows the former to command a surplus product derived from the direct production of the new conjugal family. In parallel, women's biological reproductive role and productive capacities fall under the authority of their husbands. Men's houses and women's houses complete the social structure, grouping adults by gender, as higher encompassing structures that held together the village.

Two central values characterize Mebêngôkre social life: "power" and "beauty." Power expresses attributes associated with relatively senior statuses within household or communal group structures and is often linked to the more hierarchical logic of households and houses. This value reflects the process of social production, whose basic unit is the matriuxorilocal extended family, which exploits the labor of

the domestic households of daughters and sons-in-law. According to Turner, the mobilization of power enables this form of exploitation, as parents-in-law appropriate this labor for the reproduction of their own domestic unit and of the reproduction of the larger matriuxorilocal extended family. Power also manifests as a general capacity for command and leadership in less structured relationships across the multiple structures within the village. Some degree of deference and respect is expected from subordinates, involving the idea of respect or shame (*pia'am*).

In contrast, beauty (*mêtch*) is associated with the ceremonial giving of names and other "valuables," or nekretx, such as public modes of performances, honorary transmittable names, songs, ritual prerogatives, ceremonial masks and animal costumes (Turner 1984c: 9; also, 2009b: 156; 2011: 112). Mebêngôkre acknowledge ritual rights to perform ceremonial dancing, oratory, keening, and chiefly chanting as making people beautiful (Turner 1984b: 27). Moreover, like other Amazonian groups, the Mebêngôkre possess elaborate systems for representing and regulating the acquisition of socially prescribed forms and qualities of personal identity, including codes of bodily decoration, systems of naming, and the inheritance of ritual rights and ornaments (Turner 2012 [1980]: 1995). All these notions relate to a sense of harmony, completeness, and integration. Turner clearly states that —except for the "respectful" deference of the son-in-law toward his wife's parents— these values are realized at the level of communal organization, including ritual activity (Turner 1984b: 28 – 9).

Some epistemological precautions are needed at this point. The model that Turner developed does not seek to describe all aspects of Mebêngôkre social life. Turner remains fully aware that the model is analytical; accordingly, it highlights the key relations that explain structural reproduction and crisis within the group. Moreover, Turner (1988) makes clear that beauty and power as social values were more prominent before "intensive contact" with Brazilian society, which has prompted transformations since the 1970s. In later work, however, he also suggests that these social values interact with processes of capitalist valorization in structured ways that go beyond their mere subsumption under the latter logic (Turner 2009b).

Turner's epistemological tension

Despite addressing "ritual organization," Turner's analysis appears to offer an incomplete account of ritual practices among the Mebêngôkre. Although logically coherent, his interpretation displays an unresolved tension in its treatment of ritual, whose ethnographic significance called for a more prominent analytical role. This tension is visible in shifts across Turner's subtle changes of emphasis and description, culminating in his deeper engagement with both during his final years.

Mebêngôkre groups have a strong ritual organization and perform a variety of rituals with different ends, each with specific chants and dances (Verswijver 1989). Anthropologists have emphasized the time, labor, and social relevance that the Mebêngôkre dedicate to these rituals (Bamberger 1974; Fisher 2003; Posey 1982; see also Turner 1984c: 25). Most members of the community participate as part of the ritual congregation, transcending segmentary groups and houses.

One ritual has become particularly well known: the transmission of “Great Names.” It enables the transfer of names regarded as *nekrêtch* from senior mentors to their junior protégés, together with associated ritual prerogatives and privileges, according to a complex set of rules (Verswijver 1982: 307). Fisher (2003, 118) provides a concise summary: “most transmission is from relations closely associated with the recipient’s parents, that is, *ingêt* (MF, FF, MB, MBS) or *kwatyi* (MM, FM, FZ) to *tabdjwy`* (CS, ZS – for males; CD, BD – for females), but parents themselves are forbidden to pass their own names to their offspring.”

The ritual proceedings involve, first, a preparatory phase comprising the recruitment of classificatory parents, intensified production (gardening, hunting, and ornament-making), and prolonged rehearsals during which songs are collectively learned and participants are materially sustained through food provisioning. Second, a rehearsal and congregation phase consolidates the participants as a ritual body through repeated singing, movement into central spaces, and mounting social pressure to provide adequate sponsorship. Third, the climactic phase consists of dancing, feasting, and the authoritative pronouncement of names by the mentor. Finally, a post-climactic evaluative phase assesses the performance through its affective outcomes—happiness and harmony—which determine the ritual’s success or failure and the legitimacy of the transmitted names.

For this reason, one of the most confounding aspects of Turner’s work is his reluctance to discuss in depth the role in value production and realization that these transmission rituals play. In works prior to 1985, ritual appears with ambiguous importance in the analysis of the total sociocultural system; it is mentioned primarily to support the idea of the social value of beauty. In these early formulations, its role remains largely reduced to a “bridging function” (Turner 1984c: 29): (1) the arena where semiotic tokens of social value circulate, expressed in hierarchically differentiated forms—mainly chants and names “realized” in the public arena; (2) the idea of assertive expressiveness as the ultimate value of the Mebêngôkre which combine power and beauty in the oratory chants of chiefs; and (3) ritual organization as “unity” and “integration” to counterbalance asymmetries between older and younger generations, the “particular interests” of moieties and individual extended families, and to function as ideological justification for exploitation. Works such as The Social Skin (2012 [1980]) recognize the importance of beauty for social identity and for constructing social relations and a sense of personhood, yet ritual activity is not treated as central to social production.

The problem of social consciousness and ritual would become more pronounced in the 1990s (Turner 1991b, 1993, 1995b), culminating in three influential papers that rework ideas about ritual organization (Turner 1996, 2002, 2003). Here Turner re-elaborates the bridging thesis as the pivoting thesis (Turner 2002: 297). Rather than framing ritual a sociological function of generating solidarity through ideological force, he envisions ritual as a particular form of social consciousness underscored by a sense of “productive activity.” Thus, notions such as ritual as “collective acts of socialization of these “wild” names and valuables” (1991a: 41), having “magical social power” (1996: 43) and being “fetishized production” (2002: 293) gain prominence. Similarly, the *nekrêtch* are described as “repositories of social forces of integration and renewal” (Turner 1993: 11).

The notion of productive power derives from Mebêngôkre efforts to appropriate external or alien powers for social production. They seek beyond society the power to create or transform the order of social relations itself, since, without such power, they can only reproduce established forms and practices (Turner 1996: 43). Ordinary and non-ritual social activity can only replicate these forms; by contrast, nonhuman and extrasocial forces can create new ones. Ritual activity provides access to these forces, thereby precipitating the transformation of social forms of existence (Turner 2002: 289–290). Turner describes this process as the principle of co-opting "natural" forces and channeling them into social form (Turner 2012 [1980]: 490).

The dual character of nature in Mebêngôkre cosmology is consistent with this need to appropriate external power. Turner describes this cosmology as a spatiotemporal cosmogram embodied in the circular village (2002: 282). The central plaza represents social creation through ritual and is surrounded by extended-family houses, transitional zones, and the forest. This cosmological scheme encodes hierarchical relations, particularly the encompassment of biological reproduction within broader social processes organized through ritual. Nature appears as both the outside and the underside of social life, providing the energy and patterns necessary for reproduction but remaining unable to transform existing forms or create new ones by itself (Turner 2009: 164). The Mebêngôkre are part of nature—and thus possess their own patterns of reproduction—but can access transformative power only through ritual means.

The pivoting thesis reincorporates more structuralist elements, yet the overall argument anchors the interpretation in a Marxist reading, insofar as this quasi-productive endeavor still is alienated and "working in an inversed manner" (Turner 2002: 296), since it misrepresents the powers of transformation of social relations as belonging to external agents rather than to the Mebêngôkre themselves. Elsewhere Turner continues to argue that ritual activity ultimately reinforces the encompassment and expropriation of the productive powers and products of women and elementary families at the lower level (2003: 24–25).

Finally, articles published from the late 2000s onward deepen and specify the role of ritual in the Mebêngôkre appropriation of external powers, seeking to clarify what is at stake in ritual activity (Turner 2009a, 2009b, 2017a, 2017b). Rather than reaffirming the quasi-productive character of ritual activity, Turner returns to an earlier argument advanced in "We Are Parrots, Twins Are Birds" (1991). There, he presents Mebêngôkre ritual as a particular form of performance that stages metaphorical and metonymic relations in ways that are meaningful to the assembled community. Ritual allows the Mebêngôkre to access the power of cultural creativity attributed to macaws (*araras*).

The pivotal argument thus becomes the dramatization thesis: ritual activity and performance enable the reenactment of myths. Turner contends: "Ceremonial performance implicitly involves a shift of subjective perspective from the everyday perspective of contemporary humans in secular social contexts to the perspectives of monstrous quasi-human, quasi-animal beings, such as those of the mythical past, in order to reenact the drama of the creation of fully human society and personal

identities, such as their own" (Turner 2017: 202). However, this is not a passive process, since "The Kayapo [Mebêngôkre], at any rate, are *fully conscious* of constructing themselves and their society through their ritual dramas of socialization" (Turner 2017: 203; emphasis added).

The movement from bridging to pivoting and finally to dramatization mirrors the trajectory of beauty as a social value. Similarly, the notion of beauty undergoes a progression parallel to that of ritual activity. In Turner's early work, beauty appears as "the lesser partner" of power from the ordinary standpoint, reduced to a form of expression based on names and chants. Beauty is realized as a form of social prestige, or even adornment, whose function is primarily to distinguish the beautiful person and reaffirm their social power as a member of the elder generation (Turner 2003: 13).

Later works emphasize beauty and power as equals from a cosmological standpoint, where beauty organizes and motivates individual growth and the community as active forms of production. Beauty is crucial for understanding the Mebêngôkre's main productive aim: fully socialized adults embedded in multiple and harmonious relationships.

In this final phase, however, Turner appears to treat beauty ambivalently. On the one hand, beauty emerges as a fundamental cosmological principle, and the opposition between beautiful and common people cannot be reduced to differences in social prestige. Although beauty expresses the epitome of sociality and social life, it also figures in *Aybanh* trance, during which the Mebêngôkre experience the separation of the person's spiritual form, or socialized subjectivity, from the animal substratum of human bodiliness (Turner 2017a: 152–153). This process leads the person into a berserker state that grants him "the power to escape from and transform the identities, relations, and mores of ordinary social life" (Turner 2017a: 157). On the other hand, beauty appears as socially given. It operates primarily through the reproduction of the cosmos, but it is difficult to see how it informs the appraisal of valuables or competition over them, since their pursuit generates no significant economic or social consequences and the cosmos is already largely organized according to the principle of beauty.

In fact, Turner claims that the principal proto-class antagonism occurs among kin and explicitly denies that the distinction has major political or economic ramifications (Turner 1979: 34; 1991: 41; 2017a: 164–165). He characterizes the Mebêngôkre as having a proto-class system in which individuals regularly move from a "class" position of exploited workers to one of exploiting indirect producers, based on age-set differentiation (Turner 1984, 2003). The perpetual movement from subordinate juniors to dominant seniors, occupying positions that allow them to appropriate nonmaterial forms of surplus generated in the social production of people, constitutes a revolving hierarchy (Turner 2003: 20). In contrast, the value of beauty, channeled through cosmological materialization retains relevance as a force of integration by difference, despite its unequal distribution.

Despite this movement toward more complex elaborations of ritual organization and beauty, Turner ends one of his later essays by acknowledging a central paradox that he seems unable to resolve: "Why do they [the Mebêngôkre] do so to reenact the drama of their own transformation and that of society as a whole from raw natural content to a self-cooking social form?" (Turner 2017b: 203). For Turner, rituals

constitute a recreation or drama that people intentionally perform, using phrases such as “own will,” “own control,” and “consciously choose” (2017b: 203–204), while dramatizing the external source of that power. Ritual thus becomes a representation that makes little sense within his interpretation, since it is merely the staging or realization of a “value” that people know they themselves produce. Although what is enacted demonstrates a recognition of collective human power (as the village is beautiful), its translation into an external entity remains difficult to account for.

Can Marx’s capital tell us something new about labor and ritual among the Mebêngôkre?

The productive dimension of ritual among the Mebêngôkre could be resolved by developing a clearer reading of Marx’s understanding of labor and value in Marx’s magnus opus. As discussed, Turner’s approach to value assumes that it is a special form of representation (Turner 2008: 51) of a specific type of human activity, namely useful labor, insofar as it responds to material and reproductive social needs. For him, value is a neutral representation that renders tangible a division of labor oriented toward relatively coherent supreme values that are functional to social reproduction. Accordingly, value takes the form of sociocultural representations that allow one to trace how such values mediate the social organization of labor and the realization of the products created. These values make it possible to understand the kinds of valuations—classification, comparison, ranking, hierarchies or exchanges based on these value assessments—and the motivations attached to those things, qualities, or relations considered valuable (Turner 2008: 51).

In contrast, the notion of value in Capital begins with measurement, but it dialectically entails the construction of the object and of the form in which it will be measured (Bidet 2007: 12). The process of valorization creates value as a form of abstract wealth, capable of enabling power through and over specific relations or institutional arrangement, in this case capitalist relations, by means of its expression in money (Postone 1992: 154). Although value for Marx is definitively phantasmagorical and volatile, it remains objective and non-metaphysical (Fine and Saad-Filho 2016: 35).

Taking the three volumes of Capital, Marx construct value as substance, measurement, and relation. As substance it is homogeneous purposeful expenditure of human energy or abstract labor, which is transformed as such under capitalist relation that seek to utilize it to create commodities, but more important value and profit. Hence, as measurement, it is average socially necessary labor-time; and as relation it is the capitalist process of valorization that grounds the ontological possibility of such substance and measurement. Further, value in movement takes the form of capital and money, in its ideal form, is the expression of value as socially necessary labor-time.

This distinction clarifies a series of problems in the working notion employed by Turner. Productive labor in Capital does not aim to reproduce society but instead constitutes an exertion of force, or a purposeful expenditure of human energy, that creates value as a form of abstract wealth and renders commodities commensurable for exchange (Bidet 2007). The space Marx devotes in Capital to disentangling abstract

from concrete labor reflects the epistemological effort required to distinguish a dual process that occurs synchronically: the primary process of value creation, accumulation, and expenditure as abstract wealth, which becomes an end in itself, and the secondary process of commodity production in the form of goods or services, which indirectly and mostly irrationally enables social reproduction while underutilizing the productive capacities of human society (Harvey 2017: 20–21).

Turner argues that abstract labor "permutes" concrete labor, negating the actual expenditure of human creative powers and leaving only representation and quantitative commensurability (Turner 1984a: 15). On this basis, he presents value as a universal category for identifying systems that represent culturally determined forms of useful labor (Turner 2008: 52). By contrast, Marx presents value as the product of social relations that emerge when abstract labor governs and shapes concrete labor without causing it to disappear (Kalb 2024). As Callinicos (2014: 169) emphasizes, any material form that appears as an autonomous power is a *nexus of social relations*. *Capital* underscores the strangeness of value relations through terms such as ghostly, fantastic, imaginary, and supernatural, while presenting the objectivity of value as a purely social form of existence detached from the physical properties of commodities. Commodity production therefore generates two forms of wealth: concrete wealth, embodied in commodities possessing use value, and abstract wealth, congealed as value in commodities and realized through their potential exchange for money.

The preceding argument opens onto a second point: value is already a form of alienated labor (Harvey 2010: 250; Postone 1992) and entails a relational compulsion to submit to the demands of production (Bidet 2007). Value actualizes abstract labor by extracting it from direct producers within an asymmetrical relation, even though may appear to involve merely the measurement of useful concrete labor. Production entails valorization as a process of wealth creation; activities are not first organized and distributed in neutral or functional terms and only subsequently measured through value or money. Rather, value shapes the productive process itself, orienting it toward the capture of as much congealed abstract labor as possible. Thus, value is an immanent category that expresses how capitalists must engage with human creative powers in practice and render them tangible as abstract wealth, which they then appropriate and distribute among themselves as a class.

Here, I intend to show that value is an abstract form of wealth that is causally efficacious because it condenses a complex field of action enabled by capitalist social relations and encoded in each commodity as one component of the total production of a given cycle. Every commodity tells us: "This object or activity was produced by someone in particular to meet a specific need (concrete labor → use value → heterogeneous needs), but it also contains generic valuable human effort that may potentially satisfy a desire; society should therefore recognize it as valuable to a particular degree in abstract." Value becomes this abstract potentiality, which requires expression in money. Value and money, however, are not identical. Money becomes the transformed expression of value: a means of assessing and measuring this potentiality while preserving it in an abstract form, so long as the fundamental capitalist social relations continue to be reproduced.

The alienation of labor implies that production is actively governed by those who determine what counts as productive or unproductive (Fine and Saad-Filho 2016: 42), rather than constituting a spontaneous process through which needs are defined within a sociocultural system, as assumed by accounts that treat social reproduction as grounded in cultural consensus or a naturalistic basis. Production unfolds through a dialectical tension between concrete use values and the needs associated with culturally embedded social reproduction, on the one hand, and the process of valorization itself, on the other (Bidet 2007: 111–112; Callinicos 2014: 186). The capitalist valorization process provides external incentives to recognize the use value of commodities but remains oriented toward the production and realization of value through expanded reproduction and self-valorization (Saad-Filho 2002). An activity or object counts as productive insofar as it produces value under the specific conditions of the labor process that enable commodity production and the realization of value in money (Fine and Saad-Filho 2008).

Value is an immanent category of the valorization process, yet it does not necessarily appear as such in consciousness. As money emerges as the expression of commensurability among commodities, prices —especially prices of production—become the dominant measure of worth, displacing value as its immediate form. Through intra-capitalist competition, differences in rates of profit among branches lead capitalists to reallocate investment, thereby obscuring their understanding of the underlying process (Saad-Filho 2002: 90). Capitalists perceive themselves as producers and agents of exchange, and the relevant question becomes how much profit they obtain relative to the capital advanced, rather than how much value they produce or how much surplus value they appropriate (Postone 1992: 136; Saad-Filho 2002: 40). Value thus loses its immediate role in the phenomenological orientation of exchange while remaining its regulative principle, leaving profit and the rate of profit as the mechanisms that orient practical consciousness (Bidet 2007: 199–202).

The epistemological tension revealed by ritual and beauty shows that labor is not merely a matter of material production, whether narrowly defined or understood in an expanded sense. Labor is a concrete form of human activity that is content-intentional, in the sense that the worker intends to do something with or to something, according to social organization and structured around different types of units. Drawing on Marx's account, labor must, in some form, be performed for others and in response to their demands, whether through products or performances able to be evaluated. These others, often in charge of productive arrangement, may capture concrete labor through the provision of goods, services, or the maintenance of relationships, while also creating a certain form of abstract wealth into a specific medium and units of account that can constitute representation of the totality of the specific labor performed. Concrete and abstract labor usually involves some degree of exertion because it is performed for others.

Therefore, ritual work among Mebêngôkre is not dramatization, nor realization, but the closest of what this group enact as productive labor in as understood in *Capital*, even if it is not fully material goods. In terms of wealth creation, Mebêngôkre social reproduction depends on the dual process of social production and realization. In the first process, production actively orient toward the construction of persons in such a way that they become individuals uniquely embedded in social relations, a process

Turner called objectification (Turner 2009b: 158, see also “differentiation” in Gordon 2006, 2010, 2014). Different kinship and ritual practices generate forms of personhood understood as composites, resulting from the constitutive, generative, and socializing contributions of a variety of human and nonhuman entities (Santos-Graneros 2012).

In contrast, ritual work also makes *nêkrêjx*, which Lea has described as wealth rather than valuables (1992: 129) and Turner passingly acknowledge as such (1984a: 349; 1991a: 40; 2012: 497). Gordon has argued *nêkrêjx* require ritual confirmation (*confirmação ritual*) (2006: 326, 383), which entails the remaking and reinfusion of these tokens. As ritual work often requires powers external to Mebêngôkre people, this energy becomes productive: ritual experts mediate this process, deploying their prerogative to capture and integrate such forms of wealth into the community or into individuals. Cohn (2025) and Gordon (2016) draw attention to how notions of culture and knowledge (*kukradjà*) are connected to the possibility of ownership, ritual prerogatives, and the capacity to remake the Mebêngôkre as a totality and individual composited persons guided by “beauty.”

Gordon (2006: 401) and Fisher (2003: 126) also suggest that Mebêngôkre enact a dual process of production: everyday production and ritual production. Each production demands different kinds of human activity in accordance with two processes of transformation: care and sustenance of everyday life and more radical processes of enticing, capturing or channeling external nonhuman powers via ritual. Thus, ritual work is far from being the domain of realization in a public arena, as Turner suggested. Moreover, kinship demands clearly demarcated surplus labor (are not necessarily surplus *value*), appropriated through the threat of divorce, control of kinship relationship and custom (conceptually rendered as “control of women”) (Turner 1979a; Cf. Vidal 1981; Lea 1994), but does not constitute exploitation in the sense of creating and appropriated abstract wealth.

The ontological duality of labor is the first aspect obscured by Turner’s conception of value as semiotic representation. The Mebêngôkre see *nêkrêjx* as beautiful because they have the “potency” to continue reproducing cosmological schemes—including the broader process of objectification or differentiation—rather than simply being objects of prestige or desire. The Mebêngôkre sociocultural system articulates human and nonhuman generative powers for social reproduction, with each displaying its own form of intentionality. The cosmological scheme renders different kinds of labor commensurable through a hierarchy of significance while reinforcing the qualitative differences among labor activities.

Beauty is less a “social value” than a property of objects directly associated with more fully constituted persons—those who have achieved integrity through the integration of different compossible aspects, thereby reflecting cosmological harmony. Moreover, beauty stands opposed not only to *kakrit* (commonness) but also to *akle*, a form of raw power that is asocial and unbound and must be captured and domesticated to transform social relations (Turner 1991: 46; 2017a; see also Gordon 2006: 222–228). Finally, tokens of beauty—songs, names, ornaments, and other prerogatives—function as repositories of power (Gordon 2009). Yet these tokens are not merely products or reflections of beauty; they also contribute to its attainment. A beautiful person is thus not only more attuned to cosmological

harmony but also more *potent* by virtue of attributes such as age, personal qualities, social relationships, and personalized tokens.

In other words, nêkrêjx constitute wealth not only because other people want and value them according to shared interpretative schemes of prestige or conspicuous consumption, but because they carry a *phantasmatic objective potency* within this specific sociocultural arrangement. Indeed, Gordon (2016) and Lea (1995) emphasize that the restriction of circulation increases the beauty of tokens, thereby creating incentives to monopolize such media and units. Another way of shoring up the monopoly over nêkrêjx as wealth, which is also consistent with Mebêngôkre notions of personhood, is their specific accumulation in persons: most of these tokens can only be claimed through processes that subjectivize them (Gordon, 2009, Turner 2009b).

Marx's concept of value refers to human energy expended in labor and captured as abstract wealth. For the comparison to hold, some form of "energy" must likewise be capable of being captured and deployed. The closest parallel I could identify in Turner's work is his concept of "*demiurgic force*," an "energy inherent in these processes comprise a generic notion of power possessed in varying measure by all beings" (2017: 168, also Turner 2012 [1980]: 503), which orients the life process of most beings that employ it. Fisher (2001) has also noted that the Mebêngôkre recognize ˜ı' as a universal vitality, moving through a chain of consumption and its circulation is mediated by socially orchestrated activity.

In contrast, power appears as a residual category that attempts to capture otherwise heterogeneous social interactions: for example, powerful people are those who command within the communal sphere, a wife's parents exercise power over their son-in-law, and younger generations show deference to elder leaders. Thus, in contrast to beauty, power mostly captures phenomena associated with the potency embodied in beauty, the deployment of valuables, or political influence within Mebêngôkre villages, echoing a passage from one of Turner's reports (1987: 42). Significantly, Graeber admits the absence of a unified Mebêngôkre word for power (2001: 73), and Turner's ethnographic descriptions variously characterize this phenomenon in terms of prestige or authority (1978: 275), preeminence (2002: 279), hegemony (1987: 45) and dominance (1984b: 358) besides power.

This discussion suggests that what Turner conceived as "social values" are closer to bourgeois economic categories (for example, cost price, profit, rate of profit, capital advanced, and returns): ways in which a class of non-direct producers—more precisely, those not compelled by custom or force to work in general—imagine and materialize the processes of energy expenditure and distribution, including the creation of concrete and abstract wealth. Beauty, in this sense, expresses the order and harmony of the village, a generalized representation that renders different forms of labor commensurable. Yet beauty does not transform the world; it is not the substance (energy or force) of labor. Rather, this demiurgic energy is what actors seek to capture and deploy (Posey 1982: 93). Its operation is already underway and requires moments of reanimation during significant and ritually indexed social transformations.

Dual production can also illuminate "class struggle" among the Mebêngôkre. Inequalities may emerge at two interrelated levels: the distribution of material or concrete wealth, which conditions everyday living

arrangements, and the distribution of abstract wealth, which metabolizes and captures the open-ended potential of human and nonhuman activity. These two processes become intertwined. Domestic labor produces only use values: there is no surplus of goods, but only a “small surplus of people” available for appropriation. Meanwhile, Mebêngôkre elders appropriate labor in the form of energy incorporated into tokens and persons through ritual, even as practices of concrete wealth distribution remain common within the group (Gordon 2006; Fisher 2009). This energy can subsequently be deployed to consolidate their monopolization of ritual prerogatives and participation in political life. Lea and Gordon emphasize the political and economic consequences of the beautiful/common hierarchy, which points toward a relation more closely resembling exploitation than Turner’s interpretation acknowledges. For Gordon, what is at stake is control over signs of relations with alterity: the mechanisms through which beauty and Mebêngôkre social production are enacted (Gordon 2006: 350).

A key aspect of the ritual of name transference is that the community gathers as celebrants without compulsion and motivated by both food and *esprit de corps* (Fisher 2003: 120). Those who organize the ritual endeavor seek to produce the object, which is ultimately attributed to those who perform the dances and songs, while others attend freely and consciously (Turner 1991: 39–41). Dancers might complain if the compensation is insufficient and stop dancing (Lea 1992: 134). While the community participates as an audience or provides the labor that sustains the dancers through cooking or hunting, only the beautiful, who possess ritual powers, are attributed the capacity to transfer tokens and entice nonhuman powers. Ritual work erases the broader human origin of the *nêkrêjx* and obscures the contribution of everyday production that provides its “raw material”—people. The beautiful appear able to claim the powers of creation, thereby partially appropriating that power to themselves as mediators.

If exploitation is taking place, it is in some respects inverted relative to capitalist formations. Capitalists recognize that workers—and only workers—possess generative powers that are rendered commensurable as abstract labor, which they must appropriate through free exchange while performing the “sleight of hand” between wages and productive contribution. Among the Mebêngôkre, by contrast, people appear to accept that true generative power comes only from external sources, while internal sources constitute extensions of the energy of the cosmos. Internal hegemonic groups (“The beautiful ones”) can therefore monopolize access to such power, although village fission provides a means of breaking that monopoly.

This arrangement does not mean that, in everyday life, people do not experience fatigue or exertion. Zanotti describes how “a naming ceremony was *a lot of work*, and Koko and her husband were obligated to give the dancers food and drink during the course of the night” (2016: 90; emphasis added), while gardens can also involve hard work (*âpeii tycht*) among the Mebêngôkre (2016: 132). Rather, violence, the appropriation of labor, and burdensome labor conditions are not exclusively related to the appropriation of surplus abstract wealth in the form of beautiful nêkrêjx.

In summary, Mebêngôkre production unfolds through the duality of production, realization, and appropriation. Ideologically, this becomes possible through the premise that the cosmos is productive,

allowing ritual production to subsume everyday production. Nêkrêjx, as abstract wealth produced through ritual work, has the capacity to command social relations and can be partially accumulated and transferred. This production does not necessarily favor social reproduction; instead, it engenders practices that seem aimed at appropriating and accumulating one form of wealth over another, as well documented among the Mebêngôkre (Verswijver 1992; Gordon 2006; Lea 1995). It may orient actors toward alternative means through which to acquire *nêkrêjx*, such as shamanic excursions for great names, house-transmitted patrimony, or genealogical tracing to recover names and ritual prerogatives. Other practices oriented toward material wealth include warfare raids, exchange with Brazilian society, and factionalism, which also require processes of ritual incorporation, showing the prevalence of ritual production and abstract wealth.

Conclusion

Understanding other sociocultural systems whose reproduction is precarious and interrelated with capitalism requires complicating the relation between conscious valuation and what is evaluated if one seeks inspiration in Marx's theory of value. If value is understood not merely as a semiotic representation or measurement of labor but as a form of abstract wealth—nexus or representation of social relations—it becomes possible to clarify beauty and ritual organization, issues that constituted the epistemological tension in Turner's account of the Mebêngôkre.

Marx's Capital might illuminate other sociocultural arrangements organized around transforming kinds of labor into specific forms of abstract wealth through the intentional deployment of human energy via labor. Each society organizes social labor differently, yet where abstract wealth seems to take on a "structurally emergent" life of its own (Bhaskar 1982), it articulates production in two circuit: concrete or material wealth and social relations, on the one hand, and abstract wealth itself, on the other. We must note, however, that the specific practices that enable the abstraction of labor and wealth, as well as the causal powers granted to specific media of representation, probably differ across sociocultural arrangements.

Turner's uncertainty is understandable. Bidet suggests that Marx confronts a contradiction in his own work when discussing value beyond capitalist arrangements. On the one hand, Capital presents a conception of value as an immanent category through which the capitalist class produces wealth and captures human energy in the form of already alienated labor. Meanwhile, the Critique of the Gotha Programme (2010 [1891]) frames value as the only metric capable of organizing society and labor, since it establishes a basis for making different individual contributions comparable and for exchanges of "equal value," supported by "the idea of a rational general distribution of labour-time" (Bidet 2007: 286). Bidet argues that "In short, Marx presents two discourses on value. That of *Capital*, a scientific discourse, which explains the motive forces and contradictions of a society. And that of the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, which prescribes an organizational principle that is both technical and ethical. Marx does not clearly establish the relationship between these two discourses." (Bidet 2007: 67). With this latter point, the French philosopher suggests that Marx enables a slippage from conceptualizing the value

form as a specific form of abstract labor to treating value as a general premise for understanding or organizing concrete social labor everywhere.

A return to Marx from an anthropological perspective would examine the institutional arrangements that enable the emergence of sociocultural forms of abstract wealth, which appear to capture specific human deployments of energy (abstract labor) to create something that expresses potentiality and compels further human activity. If we seek to compare capitalist society with other societies, or even with subordinate institutional arrangements under global capitalism, the question is less about what people find good, useful, desirable or worthy in broad terms—whether in relation to their own productive actions or otherwise—and more about when something is created with a phantasmagorical objectivity capable of compelling others to act within social relationship, even when they do not believe in or actively support particular social arrangements or local wealth categories. While abstract wealth attracts forms of evaluation and social motivation, these social processes are not necessarily coextensive with the discussed processes.

A theory of abstract wealth allows us to reframe the relationship between value and the plurality of values. As Marxist anthropologists have insisted (Angosto-Ferrández and Henning 2016; Kalb 2024), value is not merely a matter of economic or market criteria understood as one set of ideational criteria among others. It is a particular form of social relation that seeks to subsume other social relations by capturing human energy in an open-ended medium. Through this process, value constitutes its other, “use value,” and enters into a complex relationship with the ways in which people attempt to render their desires, needs, motivations, evaluations, and other dimensions of social life commensurable (or incommensurable) with hegemonic “economic” categories and the demands of valorization, while continuing to reproduce their social worlds. Herein lies the most significant shortcoming of Turner’s theory: he does not recognize that the struggle over value implies that value has already won.

Declarations

Author Contribution

The author drafted the manuscript and critically revised it for intellectual content, approved the final version for publication, and agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

References

1. Angosto-Ferrández, Luis, F. 2022. The child everyone has inside: Anthropology and the labor theory of value. *Dialectical Anthropology* 46(1):1–16. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10624-022-09649-6
2. Angosto-Ferrández, Luis, and Fernando. 2016. The value of everything and the price of nothingness. In *Anthropologies of value: Cultures of accumulation across the Global North and South, ed. Luis Fernando Angosto-Ferrández and Geir Henning Presterudstuen*, 1–28. London: Pluto.

3. Appadurai, Arjun. 1986. Introduction: Commodities and the politics of value. In *The social life of things: Commodities in cultural perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai. 3–63. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
4. Bamberger, Joan. 1974. Naming and the transmission of status in a Central Brazilian society. *Ethnology* 13(4):363–378. https://doi.org/10.2307/3773052
5. Callinicos, Alex. 2014. *Deciphering Capital: Marx's Capital and its destiny*. London: Bookmarks.
6. Cohn, Clarice. 2025. Xikrin children and the Bacajá River: Knowledge and knowing from others. *Social Anthropology/Anthropologie Sociale* 33(1):87–101. https://doi.org/10.3167/saas.2025.330106
7. Collins, Jane L. 2016. Expanding the labor theory of value. *Dialectical Anthropology* 40(2):103–123. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10624-016-9418-5
8. DuBois, Lindsay, Daniel Salas. 2021. Value and politics: Introduction to the special issue. *Dialectical Anthropology* 45(1):3–7. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10624-021-09622-9
9. Dumont, Louis. 2013. On value: The Radcliffe-Brown Lecture in Social Anthropology, 1980. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 3(1): 287–315. https://doi.org/10.14318/hau3.1.028
10. Fajans, Jane. 1997. *They make themselves: Work and play among the Baining of Papua New Guinea*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
11. Field, Sean. 2023. Value as ethics: Climate change, crisis, and the struggle for the future. *Economic Anthropology* 10(2):177–185. https://doi.org/10.1002/sea2.12286
12. Fine, Ben. 2016. and Alfredo Saad-Filho. *Marx's Capital*. 6th edition. London: Pluto Press.
13. Fisher, William H. 2001. Age-based genders among the Kayapo. In *Gender in Amazonia and Melanesia: An exploration of the comparative method*, ed. Thomas A. Gregor, and Donald F. Tuzin. 115–140. Berkeley: University of California Press.
14. Fisher, William H. 2003. Name rituals and acts of feeling among the Kayapó (Mebengokre). *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 9(1):117–135. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9655.t01-2-00007
15. Fisher, William H. 2009. *Rain forest exchanges: Industry and community on an Amazonian frontier*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution.
16. Gordon, Cesar. 2006. *Economia selvagem: Ritual e mercadoria entre os índios Xikrin-Mebêngôkre*. São Paulo: Editora UNESP, Instituto Socioambiental, Núcleo de Transformações Indígenas.
17. Gordon, Cesar. 2009. *O valor da beleza: Reflexões sobre uma economia estética entre os Xikrin (Mebengokre-Kayapo)*. Série Antropologia 424. Brasília: Universidade de Brasília, Departamento de Antropologia.
18. Gordon, Cesar. 2010. The objects of the Whites: Commodities and consumerism among the Xikrin-Kayapó (Mebengokre) of Amazonia. *Tipití: Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America* 8(2). https://doi.org/10.70845/2572-3626.1119
19. Gordon, Cesar. 2016. Ownership and well-being among the Mebêngôkre-Xikrin: Differentiation and ritual crisis. In *Ownership and nurture: Studies in native Amazonian property relations*, ed. Marc

Brightman, Carlos Fausto, and Vanessa Elisa Grotti. New York: Berghahn Books.

20. Gordon, Cesar. 2017. An ongoing conversation: Terry Turner and the Kayapo-Mebêngôkre. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 7(2):83–86. https://doi.org/10.14318/hau7.2.012
21. Graeber, David. 2001. *Toward an anthropological theory of value: The false coin of our own dreams*. New York: Palgrave.
22. Graeber, David. 2007. *Possibilities: Essays on hierarchy, rebellion, and desire*. Oakland: AK.
23. Graeber, David. 2013. It is value that brings universes into being. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 3(2):219–243. https://doi.org/10.14318/hau3.2.012
24. Graeber, David. 2017. At long last. In *The fire of the jaguar*, by Terence S. Turner, ed. Jane Fajans, xix–xl. Chicago: HAU Books.
25. Guyer, Jane I. 2004. *Marginal gains: Monetary transactions in Atlantic Africa*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
26. Harvey, David. 2010. *A companion to Marx's Capital*. London: Verso.
27. Harvey, David. 2018. *Marx, capital and the madness of economic reason*. New York: Oxford University Press.
28. Kalb, Don. 2022. Between the labor theory of value and the value theory of labor: A program note. In *The Routledge handbook of the anthropology of labor, ed. Sharryn Kasmir and Lesley Gill*, London: Routledge.
29. Kalb, Don. 2024. Introduction. Value at the end of the cycle: On frontlines and regimes. In *Insidious capital*, ed. Don Kalb. New York: Berghahn Books. https://doi.org/10.3167/9781805391555
30. Kluckhohn, Clyde. 1951. Values and value-orientations in the theory of action: An exploration in definition and classification. In *Toward a general theory of action*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press: ed. Talcott Parsons and Edward A. Shils.
31. Kockelman, Paul. 2010. Value is life under an interpretation. *Anthropological Theory* 10(1–2):149–162. https://doi.org/10.1177/1463499610365381
32. Lambek, Michael. 2015. *The ethical condition: Essays on action, person, and value*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226292380.001.0001
33. Lammer, Christof, André, and Thiemann. 2024. Introduction: Infrastructuring value. *Ethnos* 89(2):195–218. https://doi.org/10.1080/00141844.2023.2180063
34. Lea, Vanessa. 1992. Mẽbengokre (Kayapó) onomastics: A facet of houses as total social facts in Central Brazil. *Man* 27(1):129–153.
35. Lea, Vanessa. 1994. Gênero feminino Mebengokre (Kayapó): Desvelando representações desgastadas. *Cadernos Pagu* 3:85–115.
36. Lea, Vanessa. 2005. The great name confirmation ceremonies of the Mebéngokre of Central Brazil and the fabrication of beautiful people. *Estudios Latinoamericanos* 25:89–101. https://doi.org/10.36447/Estudios2005.v25.art4

37. Marx, Karl Frederick Engels. 2010. [1932]. *The German Ideology*. In *Marx & Engels Collected Works*, vol. 5 London: Lawrence & Wishart.
38. Marx, Karl. 2010. [1867–1894]. In *Capital: A critique of political economy, vol. I-III. Marx & Engels Collected Works*, 35–37. London: Lawrence & Wishart.
39. Marx, Karl. 2010. [1891]. In *Critique of the Gotha Programme. Marx & Engels Collected Works*, vol. 24 London: Lawrence & Wishart.
40. Munn, Nancy D. 1992. *The fame of Gawa: A symbolic study of value transformation in a Massim (Papua New Guinea) society*. Durham: Duke University Press.
41. Myers, Fred R. 2007. *Pintupi country, Pintupi self: Sentiment, place, and politics among Western Desert Aborigines*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
42. Narotzky, Susana, Niko Besnier. 2014. Crisis, value, and hope: Rethinking the economy. *Current Anthropology* 55(S9):S4–S16. https://doi.org/10.1086/676327
43. Narotzky, Susana. 2012. Alternatives to expanded accumulation and the anthropological imagination: Turning necessity into a challenge to capitalism? In *Confronting capital: Critique and engagement in anthropology*, ed. Pauline Gardiner Barber, Belinda Leach, and Winnie Lem, 239–252. London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203106327
44. Otto, Ton. 2024. Anthropological perspectives on value and valuation. In *The Routledge international handbook of valuation and society*, ed. Anne Krüger, Thorsten Peetz, and Hilmar Schaefer. 22–33. London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003229353-4
45. Pedersen, David. 2008. Introduction: Toward a value theory of anthropology. *Anthropological Theory* 8(1):5–8. https://doi.org/10.1177/1463499607087491
46. Posey, Darrell A. 1982. Time, space, and the interface of divergent cultures: The Kayapó Indians of the Amazon face the future. *Revista de Antropologia* 25:89–104.
47. Postone, Moishe. 1992. *Time, labor, and social domination: A reinterpretation of Marx's critical theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
48. Robbins, Joel. 2007. Between reproduction and freedom: Morality, value, and radical cultural change. *Ethnos* 72(3):293–314. https://doi.org/10.1080/00141840701576919
49. Robbins, Joel. 2013. Monism, pluralism, and the structure of value relations: A Dumontian contribution to the contemporary study of value. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 3(1):99–115. https://doi.org/10.14318/hau3.1.008
50. Robbins, Joel, Julian Sommerschuh., and Values. 2016. *Cambridge Encyclopedia of Anthropology* https://doi.org/10.29164/16values.
51. Saad-Filho, Alfredo. 2002. *The value of Marx: Political economy for contemporary capitalism*. London: Routledge.
52. Saad-Filho, Alfredo, Ben Fine. 2008. Production vs. realisation in Marx's theory of value: A reply to Kincaid. *Historical Materialism* 16(4):167–180. https://doi.org/10.1163/156920608X357774
53. Sahlins, Marshall David. 1976. *Culture and practical reason*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

54. Sangren, P., and Steven. 2001. *Chinese sociologics: An anthropological account of the role of alienation in social reproduction*. London: Athlone.
55. Santos-Granero, Fernando. 2012. Beinghood and people-making in Native Amazonia: A constructional approach with a perspectival coda. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 2(1):181–211. https://doi.org/10.14318/hau2.1.010
56. Smith, Gavin. 2022. Social reproduction and the heterogeneity of the population as labour. In *The Routledge handbook of the anthropology of labor*, ed. Sharryn Kasmir, and Lesley Gill. 68–80. London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003158448
57. Souleles, Daniel, Matthew Scott, Archer, and Thaning Morten Sørensen. 2023. Introduction to special issue: Value, values, and anthropology. *Economic Anthropology* 10(2):162–168. https://doi.org/10.1002/sea2.12285
58. Steinert, Steffen. 2023. *Interdisciplinary value theory*. Cham: Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-10733-7
59. Turner, Terence S. 1978. The Kayapo of Central Brazil. In *Face values: Some anthropological themes*, ed. Anne Sutherland. London: BBC.
60. Turner, Terence S. 1979a. The Ge and Bororo societies as dialectical systems: A general model. In *Dialectical societies: The Gê and Bororo of Central Brazil*, ed. David Maybury-Lewis. 147–178. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
61. Turner, Terence S. 1979b. Kinship, household, and community structure among the Kayapo. In *Dialectical societies: The Gê and Bororo of Central Brazil*, ed. David Maybury-Lewis. 179–217. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
62. Turner, Terence S. 1979c. Anthropology and the politics of Indigenous peoples' struggles. *The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology* 5(1):1–43.
63. Turner, Terence S. 1984a. Dual opposition, hierarchy and value: Moiety structure and symbolic polarity in Central Brazil and elsewhere. In *Différences, valeurs, hiérarchie: Textes offerts à Louis Dumont*, ed. Jean-Claude Galey. 335–370. Paris: Éditions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales.
64. Turner, Terence S. 1984b. *Value, production and exploitation in simple non-capitalist societies*. Volume I: Introduction which Marx for anthropology? Unpublished manuscript.
65. Turner, Terence S. 1984c. *Value, production and exploitation in simple non-capitalist societies.* Volume II: Production, structure and value in Kayapo Society. Unpublished manuscript.
66. Turner, Terence S. 1987. *The Kayapo of Southeastern Para*. São Paulo: CEDI.
67. Turner, Terence S. 1988. History, myth, and social consciousness among the Kayapó of Central Brazil. In *Rethinking history and myth: Indigenous South American perspectives on the past*, ed. Jonathan D. Hill. 195–213. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
68. Turner, Terence S. 1991a. *The Mebengokre Kayapo: History and social change from autonomous communities to inter-ethnic coexistence*. São Paulo: CEDI.

69. Turner, Terence S. 1991b. We are parrots, twins are birds: Play of tropes as operational structure. In *Beyond metaphor: The theory of tropes in anthropology*, ed. James W. Fernandez. 121–158. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
70. Turner, Terence S. 1993. From cosmology to ideology: Resistance, adaptation and social consciousness among the Kayapo. In *Cosmology, values, and inter-ethnic contact in South America*, ed. Terence S. Turner. 1–13. Bennington, VT: Bennington College.
71. Turner, Terence S. 1995a. Neoliberal ecopolitics and Indigenous peoples: The Kayapo, the Rainforest Harvest, and The Body Shop. *Yale F&ES Bulletin* 98:113–127.
72. Turner, Terence S. 1995b. Social body and embodied subject: Bodiliness, subjectivity, and sociality among the Kayapo. *Cultural Anthropology* 10(2):143–170. https://doi.org/10.1525/can.1995.10.2.02a00010
73. Turner, Terence S. 1996. Social complexity and recursive hierarchy in Indigenous South American societies. *Journal of the Steward Anthropological Society* 24(1–2):37–59.
74. Turner, Terence S. 2002. The sacred as alienated social consciousness: Ritual and cosmology among the Kayapo. In *Native religions and cultures of Central and South America*, ed. Lawrence E. Sullivan. 278–298. New York: Continuum.
75. Turner, Terence S. 2003. The beautiful and the common: Inequalities of value and revolving hierarchy among the Kayapó. *Tipití: Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America* 1(1):1–26.
76. Turner, Terence S. 2008. Marxian value theory: An anthropological perspective. *Anthropological Theory* 8(1):43–56. https://doi.org/10.1177/1463499607087494
77. Turner, Terence S. 2009a. The crisis of late structuralism: Perspectivism and animism: Rethinking culture, nature, spirit, and bodiliness. *Tipití: Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America* 7(1):3–42.
78. Turner, Terence S. 2009b. Valuables, value and commodities among the Kayapo of Central Brazil. In *The occult life of things: Native Amazonian theories of materiality and personhood*, ed. Fernando Santos-Granero. 152–169. Tucson: University of Arizona.
79. Turner, Terence S. 2011. Bodiliness: The body beyond the body: Social, material and spiritual dimensions of bodiliness. In *A companion to the anthropology of the body and embodiment*, ed. Frances E. Mascia-Lees. 102–118. Chichester: Wiley. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444340488.ch6
80. Turner, Terence S. 2012. [1980]. The social skin. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 2(2):486–504. https://doi.org/10.14318/hau2.2.026
81. Turner, Terence S. 2017a. Beauty and the beast: The fearful symmetry of the jaguar and other natural beings in Kayapo ritual and myth (the 2011 R. R. Marett Lecture). In *The fire of the jaguar*, ed. Jane Fajans. 149–172. Chicago: HAU Books.
82. Turner, Terence S. 2017b. Cosmology, objectification, and animism in Indigenous Amazonia. In *The fire of the jaguar*, ed. Jane Fajans. 173–204. Chicago: HAU Books.

83. Verswijver, Gustaaf. 1983. Cycles in Kaiapo naming practices. *Communication & Cognition* 16(3):301–323.
84. Verswijver, Gustaaf. 1989. *Brésil Central: Chants et Danses Des Indiens Kayapó*. Geneva: VDE-Gallo.
85. Verswijver, Gustaaf. 1992. *The club-fighters of the Amazon: Warfare among the Kayapo Indians of Central Brazil*. Ghent: Rijksuniversiteit Gent.
86. Vidal, Lux. 1977. *Morte e vida de uma sociedade indígena brasileira*. São Paulo: Editora Hucitec.
87. Vidal, Lux. 1981. Contribution to the concept of person and self in Lowland South American societies: Body painting among the Kayapo-Xikrin. *Dispositio* 6(17–18):169–181.
88. Weiss, Hadas. 2011. On value and values in a West Bank settlement. *American Ethnologist* 38(1):36–46. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1425.2010.01290.x
89. Weiss, Hadas. 2015. Capitalist normativity: Value and values. *Anthropological Theory* 15(2):239–253. https://doi.org/10.1177/1463499614560353
90. Zanotti, Laura. 2016. *Radical territories in the Brazilian Amazon: The Kayapó's fight for just livelihoods*. Tucson: University of Arizona.