

The Main Ideas of [Andre Gorz](#), 1923-2007



In 1980 A. Gorz has come out with the book “Farewell to the Working Class”, in which he pointed out that modern changes in science and technology demote the proletariat, i.e. the industrial workers, from the role of the main revolutionary subject.

The theme is continued in his 2004 book “Immaterial: Knowledge, Value and Capital”.



In it Gorz asserts that knowledge has become the principal productive force. However, he fails to define that category, i.e. to answer the question “What is knowledge?” We only get a distinction between “dead knowledge”, by which he understands machines, apparatuses, etc. and “living knowledge”, which is skills embodied in human beings.

Gorz notes that knowledge is the growing component in production of value. Thus, all almost all modern products and services have a lot of knowledge input - either in the form of machines and equipment necessary for their production, or in the form of special methods

and approaches, which make a job done, which only very knowledgeable people possess (picture below: industrial, transitional, and post-industrial production processes).



Индустриализм

Переходная фаза

Постиндустриализм

An increase in the share of “constant capital” (machines, equipment) over “variable capital” (the labor power) is an evident tendency of industrial production, noted by Marx. Gorz has widened the concept of “constant capital” to “knowledge”, and hence speaks about both material and immaterial production, based on the advanced knowledge.

Let's notice that with transition from the industrial to the post-industrial society, it is not simply the technique of production, the methods of production that change, but it is what is produced (and not simply how it is produced). If the main product of the old epoch has been machines and gadgets, which save our time, make us stronger, provide entertainment, the main product of the new epoch are the people themselves, the information and knowledge.

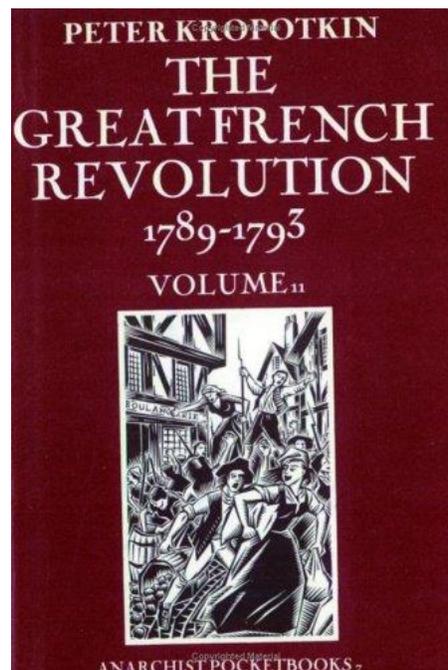
Gorz makes a claim that knowledge is replacing abstract labor time, as the measure of value in things. However, he fails to back this claim with statistics and facts.

Knowledge economy is the crisis of capitalism, says Gorz, as “knowledge” cannot be properly evaluated in money terms. It seems its value is arbitrary, and can be either very high - as for example the value of paintings of Van Gogh in modernity, or the value of knowledge can be very low, or in fact zero, as when an important invention becomes the possession of everybody, for example a vaccine, or a sheet music.



The philosopher says that people with knowledge have replaced proletariat as the new revolutionary class. Specifically, he refers to: 1) college graduates who don't want to sacrifice everything for their career, those who prefer to take lower-paying jobs, or no jobs at all, for the sake of personal fulfillment. 2) He also refers to "freelancers" who don't work full-time because they have grown tired of running after the clients and being "in the market", i.e. these are people who don't fit in the world capitalist system. One example of this we see in the 1985 movie "[Brasil](#)".

Revolutions, says Gorz, are the amalgam of the most oppressed with those who are the most conscious about the nature of the oppression. In this he has a point, as the French revolution of XVIII century, according to Kropotkin, was an amalgam of the rebellious peasants, and the middle classes standing in opposition to the feudal regime, "the Enlightenment".



It follows, from what was said about the importance of knowledge, that the nature of a modern revolutionary organization is mostly knowledge accumulation, organization and dissemination, while "propaganda" and military action play secondary roles.