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#### Modern governance is constituted through the necropolitical maintenance of the sacrifice zone. The cost of progress is always dispossession, which necessitates drafting people into the zone of non-being to preserve violent structures. You must refuse the sacrifice zone at all costs because logics of exchange rhetorically maintain the sacrifice zone and sanitize eugenics.

Professor Adebisi ’19 [Foluke Ifejola; December 17; Associate Professor at the Law School, University of Bristol whose scholarship focuses on decolonial thought in legal education; Foluke Africa, “Why I Say ‘Decolonisation is Impossible,’” https://folukeafrica.com/why-i-say-decolonisation-is-impossible/]

The epistemic world is predicated on two major lies. The first lie is that a majority of the people of the world and thus their knowledges and histories are inferior to the rest of the world. The second lie, allied to the first, is that humanity and specifically the supposedly superior portion of humanity is more important than everything else on this planet. The earth we walk on, the air we breathe, the seas, oceans, mountains, birds, animals, fishes, insects. And so I suggest again, maybe a little more strongly, that post-truth is not a recent arrival, but it is exceeding its original territory. Nevertheless, the disappearance of shared objective standards of truth, did not begin with the last shower of rain, but has always been washed away in bodies of water with forgotten names and forgotten histories and a million bodies hidden under them.

Decolonisation and Truth

Decolonisation is often perceived as a means to uncover these histories, but one of the pitfalls of its praxis in higher education is a fundamental misconception of what it requires, both in theory and in practice. It is often confused with any social justice endeavour, or as someone said to me recently, with ‘just being nice to people.’ The four main things decolonisation is confused with are, representation, inclusion, diversity and equality. If you have practiced and/or theorised in these areas, it quickly becomes clear that without critical thought, representation can become toxic and tokenistic, people could be included into spaces that are not safe for them, spaces historically and repeatedly designed to harm and exclude them. Diversity is a fact of life that cannot be promoted without explaining why it has been demoted. General statements of equality often ignore the process of othering and set an unequal normative standard of equality. In all of these schemes we focus on what we are fighting for, rather than what we are fighting against. All our lofty sounding words and good intentions pave the way to hell for groups who are almost routinely left out of our institutions. Notwithstanding that this hell we have paved the way for may be inside or outside of said institutions. The way is paved. The hell exists.

Decolonisation, I suggest, is something conceptually different. Tshepo Madlingozi, says decolonisation is always a disruptive phenomenon, Frantz Fanon calls it a violent process. Tuck and Yang describe decolonisation as nothing else but an undoing of colonisation. Joel Modiri in the video below defines it thus, ‘Decolonisation is an insatiable reparatory demand, an insurrectionary utterance, that always exceeds the temporality and scene of its enunciation. It entails nothing less than an endless fracturing of the world colonialism created.’

 ‘…an endless fracturing of the world colonialism created.’ What then is this world that colonialism created? And was this world not done away with at the end of empire? This is where people confuse the passing away of political colonial structures with the permanence of the colonial logics that drove the process and continue to drive and structure our institutions and our world. There are two overarching logics that I refer to here. One is the commodification of space and nature, the other is the commodification of humanity and variably valued labour. Built on these overarching logics is the mostly racial and gendered categorisation and hierarchization of peoples into those who labour and those who benefit from that labour. This system is given legitimisation by drafting people (the wretched/damned of the earth) into what Fanon calls the zone of non-being, according to Grosfoguel, this is below the line of the human. Hickel calls this zone the sacrifice zone. As Achille Mbembe’s work on the practice of necropolitics explains, political power is deployed globally to decide ‘who may live and who must die…’ in service of maintaining the world colonisation created.

Or as George Sefa Dei and Chizoba Imoka describe ‘To colonize … One has to equate the purpose of life to material acquisitions, affirm their personhood only through their ability to dominate/bully others, shrink their mental capacity so as not to respect/understand human diversity and rationalize a wide range of unfettered violence.’

Thus we must never forget that this categorisation of humanity always, always, always serves the purpose of marking for death and marking for life. Marking for visibility and marking for erasure and silence. Dispossession always serves the purpose of accumulation. ‘who may live and who must die…’

Therefore, and I reiterate very strongly, we cannot decolonise while relying on colonial logics of commodification of labour and space. This commodification is everywhere in UK HE. We have REF, TEF, KEF and the NSS. We have a varied assortment of university rankings… they all rely on logics of linking value to productivity, while also ignoring institutional racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia etc. These refusals to see, refusals to change, mean that we have strapped ourselves to a machine designed to destroy us. But we live in hope that before it does, at least it feeds us, sustains us for a while, unlike the poor benighted souls in the sacrifice zone, the wretched and damned of the earth, trampled under the wheels of the machine and then cast into the river with its forgotten names, its waters closing over their heads as they drift off into the silence. We do not remember their names. For most of them we never knew they names, never bothered to say those names. Too difficult to pronounce. Their bodies and their realities were too dissonant and distant, too foreign to fit into the normative frames of disciplines that did not consider the wretched and damned human at the dawn of the discipline’s inception. Now the discipline is complete, the canon closed and all it can do is fire out at a dying world.

#### Generative AI is not a neutral utopia but a chosen exclusion of those arbitrarily deemed unproductive by the societal project by Artificial Intelligentsia to justify the necropolitical desires of social sorting, eugenics, and the fetishization of intelligence.

Professor Benjamin 24[Ruha Benjamin is the Alexander Stewart 1886 Professor of African American Studies at Princeton University, and a founding director of the Ida B. Wells Just Data Lab, 10-18-24, "The New Artificial Intelligentsia," Los Angeles Review of Books, https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/the-new-artificial-intelligentsia/ DOA: 2-3-25] cgc + mac\*\*brackets and ellipses in og\*\* \*\*Nonexplicit mentions of suicide\*\*

IN THE FALL OF 2016, I gave a talk at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton titled “Are Robots Racist?” Headlines such as “Can Computers Be Racist? The Human-Like Bias of Algorithms,” “Artificial Intelligence’s White Guy Problem,” and “Is an Algorithm Any Less Racist Than a Human?” had captured my attention in the months before. What better venue to discuss the growing concerns about emerging technologies, I thought, than an institution established during the early rise of fascism in Europe, which once housed intellectual giants like J. Robert Oppenheimer and Albert Einstein, and prides itself on “protecting and promoting independent inquiry.”

My initial remarks focused on how emerging technologies reflect and reproduce social inequities, using specific examples of what some termed “algorithmic discrimination” and “machine bias.” A lively discussion ensued. The most memorable exchange was with a mathematician who politely acknowledged the importance of the issues I raised but then assured me that “as AI advances, it will eventually show us how to address these problems.” Struck by his earnest faith in technology as a force for good, I wanted to sputter, “But what about those already being harmed by the deployment of experimental AI in healthcare, education, criminal justice, and more—are they expected to wait for a mythical future where sentient systems act as sage stewards of humanity?”

Fast-forward almost 10 years, and we are living in the imagination of AI evangelists racing to build artificial general intelligence (AGI), even as they warn of its potential to destroy us. This gospel of love and fear insists on “aligning” AI with human values to rein in these digital deities. OpenAI, the company behind ChatGPT, echoed the sentiment of my IAS colleague: “We are improving our AI systems’ ability to learn from human feedback and to assist humans at evaluating AI. Our goal is to build a sufficiently aligned AI system that can help us solve\ all other alignment problems.” They envision a time when, eventually, “our AI systems can take over more and more of our alignment work and ultimately conceive, implement, study, and develop better alignment techniques than we have now. They will work together with humans to ensure that their own successors are more aligned with humans.” For many, this is not reassuring.

In March 2023, the Future of Life Institute published an open letter, now signed by over 33,000 researchers, policymakers, CEOs, and professors, calling for a six-month moratorium on AI system training until “we are confident that their effects will be positive and their risks will be manageable.” AI popularizer Eliezer Yudkowsky argued that such a short pause does not match the existential risk posed by continued AI development, warning that “the most likely result of building a superhumanly smart AI, under anything remotely like the current circumstances, is that literally everyone on Earth will die.” In the end, there was no pause, and the race to create AGI charged ahead. Many who raised alarms about a near-future AI superintelligence extinction event got busy raising billions in capital to outpace their competitors. This is not paradoxical so much as profitable. Elon Musk, for example, initially called for a moratorium on developing AGI, only to start a new company pursuing it. OpenAI founder Sam Altman advocated for more government regulation of AGI but then lobbied European lawmakers to minimize AI protections. Janus, the two-faced Roman deity, seems to be their god of choice.

Behind this duplicity lies a familiar calculus: if AI evangelists can convince us that AGI is possible, imminent, and dangerous, we might be compelled to entrust our fate to them. Hype and doom, in other words, are two sides of the same (bit)coin. “AI safety” principles, teams, and initiatives are proliferating in part to hoard power and resources and, ultimately, to engineer the future in their own image. The aim: To lull us into acquiescence so that they can carry on business as usual.

I have analyzed elsewhere the harmful impacts of AI. In the rest of this essay, I focus on AI’s insidious inputs— the eugenic values and logics of those who create these systems, cloaking them in the rhetoric of salvation. Breathless buzzwords like “efficiency,” “novelty,” and “productivity” conceal a self-serving vision: the future imagined by AI evangelists is meant only for a small sliver of humanity. The rest of us will be left clamoring to survive on a boiling planet. Take the autonomous weapons systems raining hell on Palestinians—why else give them saccharine-sounding names like Lavender and the Gospel if not to make these deadly inventions seem benevolent? If we listen carefully to the good word of tech evangelists, we can hear the groans of those buried under the rubble of progress.

Many of the same people behind the technologies wreaking havoc today—workplace algorithms intensifying the pace of work, facial recognition software leading to false arrests, automated triage systems rationing quality healthcare, and “smart” weapons ripping through flesh with a click—also brand themselves as humanity’s saviors. Amazon founder Jeff Bezos pronounced that “it is a golden age. […] We are now solving problems with machine learning and artificial intelligence that were … in the realm of science fiction for the last several decades.” In a 2015 essay for an interfaith magazine, PayPal and surveillance tech firm Palantir Technologies co-founder Peter Thiel argued,

Science and technology are natural allies to this Judeo-Western optimism, especially if we remain open to an eschatological frame in which God works through us in building the kingdom of heaven today, here on Earth—in which the kingdom of heaven is both a future reality and something partially achievable in the present.

Likewise, the home page of Singularity University, a company founded by Ray Kurzweil and Peter Diamandis, affirms the organization’s belief that “technology and entrepreneurship can solve the world’s greatest challenges.” As a group, the artificial intelligentsia promises to guide us into the Future™, positioning themselves as Guardians of the Galaxy, even as they engineer the crises against which we must guard.

In the fall of 2019, I attended a student-organized conference at Princeton called Envision. The guest of honor was the aforementioned Diamandis, who beamed onto the big screen addressing a packed auditorium filled with eager undergrads. His talk was titled “Abundance in the Digital Age,” and he began by running through a list of impending “transformations” across various industries—healthcare, education, finance, real estate, entertainment—that unprecedented technological “convergences” would enable. His excitement was contagious.

But when the Q and A opened, it was clear that not everyone had caught the bug. A student asked about the risks involved in incorporating emerging technologies across all these industries at such a fast pace. Diamandis responded: “So, first of all, I think it’s important to realize that it’s not a choice that we have. […] These technologies are going to be incorporated.” Yet, immediately after this, he celebrated the fact that “we are always looking to digitize, dematerialize, demonetize, and democratize products and services.” Apparently, we have no choice but to opt into this digital democracy. I have learned that a key tenet of the artificial intelligentsia’s gospel is inevitability, their own version of predestination. As philosopher Émile P. Torres observes, one way to understand the worship of AI is as a religion for atheists: “[S]ince God does not exist, why not just create him?” When Diamandis finally addressed the student’s question, he identified the “risks” of a company adopting a technology too early or too late, and “that’s putting aside all the social elements of technological employment and any moral and ethical issues that will pop up.” Here again, the “social elements” are an afterthought, those pesky problems that “pop up” now and again to wreak havoc on people’s lives.

As when, in 2013, venture capitalist turned Michigan governor Rick Snyder adopted a $46 million dollar program called MiDAS (Michigan Integrated Data Automated System) to efficiently identify residents committing insurance fraud. After his administration laid off the majority of state employees who would normally review insurance claims, the state’s new automated system wrongly accused over 20,000 people of fraud. Not only did people lose access to unemployment payments; after heavy fines as high as $100,000 were levied, individuals’ tax refunds and wages were garnished as well. About 11,000 people filed for bankruptcy, some lost their homes, and others disproportionately divorced or died by suicide. These are just a handful of the “social elements” that pop up when automated technologies are hastily integrated into every facet of life.

Whereas the artificial intelligentsia would like us to downplay these risks, we must instead do the opposite: soberly understand how emerging technologies create new social and existential trade-offs. As Jennifer Lord, a civil rights and employment attorney who successfully fought “for seven years to get that money back for those wrongfully accused” Michigan residents, reflected:

I’ve been surprised how little this worries most people. I don’t know if it’s the fact that in Michigan this story was breaking at the same time as the Flint water crisis, so if you’re looking at two debacles, the one with the brown glass of water is very disturbing. MiDAS just didn’t seem to ignite the imagination like I thought it would. The state of Michigan was basically stealing tens of millions of dollars from its citizens!

How to fix it going forward? One idea is having an independent, knowledgeable, and interdisciplinary group vetting technology before any purchase is made. I can only imagine a skilled salesperson selling the [state unemployment] agency on promises of efficiency, cost cutting, and profit increases.

A skilled salesperson like Peter Diamandis, perhaps, or any of the other tech evangelists, who preach inevitability to the next generation: “These technologies are going to be incorporated,” but in a democratic-ish way, so don’t worry.

The first thing I said when I took the Envision podium after Diamandis logged off was to remind those in attendance (and myself) that we do have a choice. Since then, artists, writers, and musicians have stood up to, and in some cases sued, AI companies for stealing creative work to train their models. As an open letter from the Center for Artistic Inquiry and Reporting, published May 2, 2023, explained,

AI-art generators are trained on enormous datasets, containing millions upon millions of copyrighted images, harvested without their creator’s knowledge, let alone compensation or consent. This is effectively the greatest art heist in history. Perpetrated by respectable-seeming corporate entities backed by Silicon Valley venture capital. It’s daylight robbery.

The protests that rocked Hollywood in 2023, led by SAG-AFTRA, also remind us that we have a choice. Union members launched a successful five-month strike, pushing back against the incursion of AI into their industry, their picket signs expressing growing defiance and anger: “AI is not ART,” “Wrote ChatGPT This,” “AI’s Not Taking Your Dumb Notes.” Whereas studio executives have become followers of the new tech gospel, looking to AI to generate scripts, automate acting, cut costs, and push down wages, writers and actors effectively said, “Hell nah! We refuse to be erased.” As Brian Merchant wrote in the Los Angeles Times, “At a moment when the prospect of executives and managers using software automation to undermine work in professions everywhere loomed large, the strike became something of a proxy battle of humans vs. AI.” For many, this is the real existential question—not an AI-generated apocalypse—that directly impacts people’s livelihoods and the stories we tell about our lives: “There was a palpable fear that tech products, built by rich and mostly white startup guys in Silicon Valley[,] would churn out content that would reflect exactly that,” wrote Merchant. And yet, when tech evangelists rattle off the industry-wide transformations of AI, they can’t seem to reckon seriously with the here-and-now risks that drive people to the picket line.

The same hubris that leads tech titans like Mark Zuckerberg, Sam Altman, and Bill Gates to assume that a high IQ grants them the license to build universal systems for all of humanity explains why those presumed to be geniuses believe they can lead us out of the virtual wilderness. Altman declared in 2019: “The most successful people I know believe in themselves almost to the point of delusion.” Maria Klawe, a board member of Microsoft from 2009 to 2015, says that Gates acted like “the usual rules of behaviour don’t apply to him” and that he was the “smartest person in the room.” The dominating personalities of arrogant “nerds” in the industry suggests that being uncool in youth—being removed from a sense of community, perhaps—fuels the desire to predict, surveil, and control society. As Altman puts it, “A big secret is that you can bend the world to your will a surprising percentage of the time.” Worshipping one’s own intelligence, it seems, leads to a dangerous desire to bring the rest of humanity to its knees.

The point here is that the artificial intelligentsia is dragging us into an archaic future where intelligence is quantified, fixed, and ranked, and smartness is fetishized. We would do well to remember that IQ is, above all, a eugenic concept, concocted to sort winners from losers and to justify the rules of the game. Eugenics … in the 21st century … among those who fancy themselves futurists?

Lest we forget, eugenics was originally a philosophy and movement popularized by social progressives. Many prominent eugenicists saw themselves as caretakers of humanity, working to ensure human flourishing by cultivating good genes (e.g., Better Baby Contests) and rooting out bad ones (e.g., sterilization). They were, among others, inventors like Alexander Graham Bell, scientists like Nobel Prize winner Francis Crick, politicians like Teddy Roosevelt, beloved writers like Helen Keller and H. G. Wells, and far too many university presidents and professors to name. In fact, Harry Chandler, publisher of the Los Angeles Times from 1917 to 1944, helped popularize eugenics and advocate for sterilization to address social problems. Their main think tank, the Human Betterment Foundation, was headquartered in Southern California, not Alabama or Mississippi. In today’s parlance, the foundation was a policy “influencer” helping to spread the eugenics gospel, forging “links between major players in the private sector and state officials who carried out the work.”

Take the great Irish playwright, activist, and winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature, George Bernard Shaw, who described Jews as “the real enemy, the invader from the East, the ruffian, the oriental parasite,” arguing that “the only fundamental and possible socialism is the socialisation of the selective breeding of man,” and who mused that “the overthrow of the aristocrat has created the necessity for the Superman.” Or consider the outspoken advocate of women’s reproductive rights (and H. G. Wells’s mistress) Margaret Sanger, who claimed in 1921 that “the most urgent problem today is how to limit and discourage the over-fertility of the mentally and physically defective.” If eugenicists of the past understood their work as progressive, then self-proclaimed futurists selling us fantasies of artificial intelligence are the harbingers of a new eugenics.

Just as in the past, the Eugenics 2.0 of the tech evangelists is swaddled in the language of betterment, but they seek more than human betterment. In fact, their worldview is perhaps best understood as pro-extinctionist in that, as Torres argues, these far-futurists are enthusiastic about “legacy humans” giving way to a smarter, stronger, more enhanced species of posthumans. The artificial intelligentsia promise to guide us into this future where we shed our mortal meat suits, floating into a blissful digital reality, merging with technology (the “singularity”) and/or transcending it (transhumanism). They advocate relying on science and reason, a rationalism often narrowly construed as quantitative reasoning, if we are to create lasting and meaningful good in the world (effective altruism).

Whereas hard-liners prioritize far-future survival (longtermism) over pesky short-term concerns like poverty, pandemics, and genocides, William MacAskill, a co-founder of effective altruism and philosopher in Oxford University’s Global Priorities Institute, suggests, in his 2022 book What We Owe the Future, that “we can positively steer the future while improving the present, too.” That said, in his 2020 book The Precipice: Existential Risk and the Future of Humanity, Oxford philosopher Toby Ord, MacAskill’s fellow originator of the effective altruism movement, argues that,

because […] almost all of humanity’s life lies in the future, almost everything of value lies in the future as well […] To risk destroying this future, for the sake of some advantage limited only to the present, seems to me profoundly parochial and dangerously short-sighted. […] [I]t privileges a tiny minority of humans over the overwhelming majority yet to be born; it privileges this particular century over the millions, or maybe billions, yet to come.

But, speaking of tiny minorities, those represented by “we” in these foundational texts are building a movement defined by a familiar mix of hubris and saviorism. While encouraging more people to consider how our present-day actions impact the future is a worthy pursuit with roots in many Indigenous traditions, tech evangelists are drawing upon these philosophies to wrap their self-interest in the cloak of humanistic concern

What exactly makes this bundle of beliefs—transhumanism, extropianism (boundless expansion and evolution), singularitarianism, modern cosmism (transhumanism with a focus on colonizing other planets), rationalism, effective altruism, and longtermism—specifically eugenic? According to Torres and his co-author, computer scientist Timnit Gebru (who coined the acronym TESCREAL to describe this set of ideologies), they “are inspired by utopian ideals similar to the visions of first-wave eugenicists […] and see AGI as integral to the realization of these visions. Meanwhile, the race to build AGI is proliferating products that harm the very same groups that were harmed by first-wave eugenicists.” Gebru and Torres explain that the discriminatory attitudes of past eugenicists (racism, xenophobia, classism, ableism, and sexism) remain widespread within the AGI movement, resulting in systems that harm marginalized groups and centralize power under the guise of “safety” and “benefiting humanity.”

Still from “Superintelligence: Science or Fiction? | Elon Musk & Other Great Minds,” Future of Life Institute.

In a statement many will recognize as racially charged and class-coded, Nick Bostrom, former head of Oxford’s Future of Humanity Institute and author of the New York Times bestseller Superintelligence: Paths, Dangers, Strategies (2014), links high fertility with low IQ, claiming that there is “a negative correlation in some places between intellectual achievement and fertility. If such selection were to operate over a long period of time, we might evolve into a less brainy but more fertile species.” In January 2023, he addressed racist remarks he made on a LISTSERV in the 1990s. Again, the controversy highlights a larger issue within the artificial intelligentsia: a focus on wealthy, predominantly white, male innovators as trustees of the future. Whether or not one believes Bostrom’s defense or cares about his past judgments, the reality remains that those shaping the “future of humanity” come from a narrow segment of society. Their views—be they racist, utopian, or both—are currently overdetermining our shared trajectory. As writer Leighton Woodhouse described effective altruism,

[It] is ultimately rooted in saviorism. It’s a top-down view of social change, appropriate for those who are accustomed to recreating the world in their own image from the perches of their high-status professions. It encourages high-net-worth individuals to use their wealth to impose their moral convictions upon the world, whether the world likes it or not.

Remember, it’s not a choice that we have.

What strikes me most about today’s eugenicist vision is the perverse calculus that values the “high IQ, high-achieving” artificial intelligentsia over those most affected by current multicrises because the former are cast as the deliverers of humanity’s digital redemption. Longtermist Nick Beckstead argued, in his 2013 PhD dissertation, that the survival of those who are “more innovative” should take priority:

Saving lives in poor countries may have significantly smaller ripple effects than saving and improving lives in rich countries. Why? Richer countries have substantially more innovation, and their workers are much more economically productive. By ordinary standards—at least by ordinary enlightened humanitarian standards—saving and improving lives in rich countries is about equally as important as saving and improving lives in poor countries, provided lives are improved by roughly comparable amounts. But it now seems more plausible to me that saving a life in a rich country is substantially more important than saving a life in a poor country, other things being equal.

At every turn in the rhetoric of the artificial intelligentsia, we hear echoes of a eugenic calculus: the weak must be sacrificed for the strong to survive.

The fetishization of intelligence is another key tenet of this redemptionist narrative. Eliezer Yudkowsky said the quiet part out loud in a 2008 blog post titled “Competent Elites”: “One of the major surprises I received when I moved out of childhood into the real world, was the degree to which the world is stratified by genuine competence.” He goes on to recount an experience at “a gathering of the mid-level power elite” in which his self-imagined elevated status was not so remarkable: “This was the point at which I realized that my child prodigy license had officially completely expired.” He describes his surprise that the venture capitalists and “CEO[s] of something” with whom he was mingling were not just “fools in business suits.” Instead, “these people of the Power Elite were visibly much smarter than average mortals. In conversation they spoke quickly, sensibly, and by and large intelligently. When talk turned to deep and difficult topics, they understood faster, made fewer mistakes, were readier to adopt others’ suggestions.” He comes to a similar conclusion after attending a meeting at the Singularity Summit: “The major names in an academic field, at least the ones that I run into, often do seem a lot smarter than the average scientist.” Throughout, we find Yudkowsky assessing people’s “auras” as more or less formidable—from “average mortals” to “world-class smart” to those who “sparkle with extra life force.” It’s an Ode to Meritocracy: stature reflects inherent capacity. He acknowledges his reader’s likely discomfort with such assessments, returning in the end to AI as the solution: “It’s easier for me to talk about such things, because, rightly or wrongly, I imagine that I can imagine technologies of an order that could bridge even that gap.” Ah, there it is. The purpose of AI is to allow average mortals to truly sparkle!

AI evangelists also perpetuate a eugenic worldview in more insidious ways, particularly by downplaying the costs of economic and technological “progress” to the planet and its people. In this new era, survival is linked to superintelligence, the domain of those who “use advanced technologies to radically enhance themselves, thus creating a superior race of ‘posthumans.’” For those like Bostrom, humanity as we now know it—flesh-and-blood Homo sapiens—is old school. In Superintelligence, Bostrom envisions genetic selection for traits like “intelligence, health, hardiness, and appearance” becoming normalized such that “nations would face the prospect of becoming cognitive backwaters and losing out in economic, scientific, military, and prestige contests with competitors that embrace the new human enhancement technologies.” These evangelists also envision digital descendants in the deep future who will (or should) be granted the same moral standing as you and me. “[I]f the machines have conscious minds,” Bostrom suggests, then “the welfare of the working machine minds could even appear to be the most important aspect of the outcome, since they may be numerically dominant.”

From this perspective, humanlike digital beings could, in principle, live far richer and more varied lives than biological humans. According to Bostrom,

what hangs in the balance is at least 10,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 human lives (though the true number is probably larger). If we represent all the happiness experienced during one entire such life with a single teardrop of joy, then the happiness of these souls could fill and refill the earth’s oceans every second, and keep doing so for a hundred billion billion millennia. It is really important that we make sure these truly are tears of joy.

Alas, from the point of view of the artificial intelligentsia, the long-term potential of these imaginary future beings takes precedence over alleviating present-day human suffering—“feel-good projects” like eliminating poverty, addressing climate change, and preventing wars.

It’s imperative that we refute the fantasies of posthuman proselytizers like Bostrom, and of Silicon Valley elites who share his views. Many of them concur with Sam Bankman-Fried that the best thing they can do for society is to “get filthy rich, for charity’s sake.” Bankman-Fried started out touting lofty goals, signing Bill Gates’s Giving Pledge to donate the majority of one’s wealth to philanthropy. Soon after graduating with a BA in physics from MIT in 2014, he started working at Jane Street Capital, a proprietary trading firm, and then the Centre for Effective Altruism before getting into crypto. Three years later, he founded Alameda Research, a cryptocurrency trading firm, and in 2019 launched another cryptocurrency exchange, FTX, which quickly became one of the largest crypto companies globally. But by 2022, FTX had filed for bankruptcy; the company collapsed after losing investors billions of dollars. In the end, Bankman-Fried was arrested and extradited from the Bahamas, convicted of fraud and conspiracy, and sentenced to 25 years in prison. For all the talk of altruism and doing good, he ended up illegally using customers’ funds to cover his own expenses, including “purchasing luxury properties in the Caribbean, alleged bribes to Chinese officials and private planes.”

Perhaps most revealing is the statement made by the fraudster’s defense attorney, Marc Mukasey: “Sam was not a ruthless financial serial killer who set out every morning to hurt people […] Sam Bankman-Fried doesn’t make decisions with malice in his heart. He makes decisions with math in his head.” Yes, and that’s the problem. The artificial intelligentsia is trying to engineer a world predicated on the inherent morality (or at least neutrality) of math. But as Aubrey Clayton wrote earlier in this series, the eugenics movement deeply influenced the birth and development of statistics and significance testing. Turning to quantitative reasoning is laced with danger. Torres explains that EA, longtermism, and the TESCREAL movement more generally reduce ethics to a branch of economics. It is all about expected value calculations and number-crunching. When you include hypothetical future digital people in one’s EV calculations, then the far future wins every time.

But what explains the affinity between tech elites and eugenics? For starters, the artificial intelligentsia’s intense focus on optimization and enhancement spills over from engineering digital tools to the engineering of life itself. If, historically, eugenics sought to “improve” the human population through reproductive control, those with limitless resources today are desperate to cheat death by investing in technologies that help them “evolve” past this mortal frame. The faulty conflation of humans with computers is part of the problem. If brains are computers, then it is no wonder that those who are masters of silicon also fancy themselves masters of humanity. According to MacAskill, “Some entrepreneurs hope to abandon meat-based bodies altogether and live on in digital form through computer emulation of their brains,” including Sam Altman, who is a customer of Nectome, a start-up that “preserves brains with the hope that future generations will scan and upload them.” The stated aim of Neuralink, the biotechnology company founded by Musk, is to create a brain-computer interface “to restore autonomy to those with unmet medical needs,” like spinal cord injuries, but also to “unlock human potential tomorrow.” As many have observed, the company’s ultimate focus is not therapy but enhancement, brain-computer connections that are “superhuman.” Hubris disguised as beneficence, a feature of the old eugenics, is resurrected in the language of improvement, enhancement, upgrade. (But, as I have argued elsewhere, this zealous desire to transcend humanity ignores the fact that we have not all had a chance to be fully human.)

Whereas eugenics is often associated with government attempts to control and coerce human reproduction, today’s tech elite exhibit similar anxieties about falling birth rates among “high IQ” populations. Elon Musk’s 12 children and counting, and Sam Altman’s investment in reproductive technology start-ups focused on IVF and genetic screening, aim to populate the planet with genetically superior offspring. At an August 2019 conference about artificial intelligence, Musk said: “Assuming there is a benevolent future with AI, I think the biggest problem the world will face in 20 years is population collapse.” “Population collapse due to low birth rates is a much bigger risk to civilization than global warming,” he tweeted in 2022. Peter Thiel adds, “I think there is something very odd about a world in which people are not reproducing themselves. […] It’s probably somehow entangled with the stagnation, the decline […] the sense of pessimism around the future.” And although he says there is “no magic-bullet solution,” among his investments in fertility and women’s health, Thiel provided $3.2 million seed funding for a startup called 28, “which tracks users’ menstrual cycles and gives them tips on diet and exercise—all while encouraging them not to use birth control.”

As Emily R. Klancher Merchant pointed out in this publication, the symbiosis between the tech industry and the pronatalist movement worried about falling birth rates among the “high achieving” reflects a eugenic mindset. She began her essay with venture capitalists turned pronatalist advocates Malcolm and Simone Collins and their aim “to save humanity by having as many babies as possible.” Unlike their Christian counterparts, the Collinses put their faith in data and science and are “focused on producing the maximum number of heirs—not to inherit assets, but genes, outlook and worldview.” When asked how their data-driven pronatalism differs from eugenics, Malcolm Collins insisted it’s a new approach because it’s not state-sponsored selective breeding but parental choice. This laissez-faire approach, however, ignores the unequal value of choices. After all, the birth rate is not dropping for everyone. The worry is that more affluent populations—and their coveted genes and corresponding worldviews—are somehow in danger.

Thiel is also doing his part for the cause by trying to extend his own life and funding a version of the Olympics called the Enhanced Games in which participants are allowed to take FDA-approved performance enhancement drugs and use prosthetic technologies. The Olympics on steroids, literally. Until recently, Thiel’s public support for Donald Trump made him stand out in Silicon Valley, but his biographer Max Chafkin warns that he is not an outlier and that his worldview borders on fascism: “[T]he idea that companies should basically be able to do whatever they want, that democracy isn’t the most important value, these things are reflected in the decisions and actions that many Silicon Valley companies are making.” In recent months, Silicon Valley supporters of Trump’s presidency have grown more visible—in June, his campaign held a fundraiser at venture capitalist David Sacks’s San Francisco mansion that raised $12 ssmillion.

Ultimately, it’s not enough to refute eugenic ideologies. Eugenic infrastructures—systems designed to sacrifice the lives and habitats of the global majority to ensure the flourishing of the oligarchic minority—need to be dismantled as well. This includes addressing the laborers performing digital ghost work that makes AI appear magical—click workers in Kenya and content moderators in the Philippines—and recognizing the ecological and human costs of producing sleek new devices. Every day, we wake up to headlines announcing the insatiable appetite of data centers powering large language models and AI applications—“Why AI Is So Thirsty: Data Centers Use Massive Amounts of Water,” “States Rethink Data Centers as ‘Electricity Hogs’ Strain the Grid,” “Data Centers Are Draining Resources in Water-Stressed Communities.” In May 2024, Google’s emissions jumped “nearly 50 [percent] over five years as AI use surge[d],” though the company’s annual Environmental Report emphasized how “scaling AI” is crucial for climate action. Similarly, in Microsoft’s 2023 Annual Report, CEO Satya Nadella said he believes “AI can be a powerful accelerant in addressing the climate crisis.” Bill Gates has also argued that AI will propel climate solutions, eventually outweighing the massive energy costs of data centers. Speaking to an audience in London this year, he “urged environmentalists and governments to ‘not go overboard’ on concerns about the huge amounts of power required to run new generative AI systems.” But a month earlier, “Microsoft admitted that its greenhouse gas emissions had risen by almost a third since 2020, in large part due to the construction of data centres.

This faith-based futurism employs a eugenics calculus, asking us to prioritize hypothetical benefits over current costs to people and the planet. As Journalist Karen Hao noted after visiting a Microsoft data center in Arizona, “With more than 8,000 data centers whirring all around the world and venting heat, and many more on their way, that optimism may come off as nothing more than faith: Technology has gotten us into this predicament; perhaps technology will get us out of it.” This is the gospel of AI evangelism: trust us, because you have no choice.

But we do have a choice. There is no reason to trust that tech elites have any wisdom to offer when it comes to effective altruism or alleviating human suffering. Billionaires building bunkers to survive an AI apocalypse, attempting to “disrupt death” through cryopreservation, and scouting the planet for the best locations to create “pop-up cities” and “network states” are not reliable stewards of the collective good. Those most impacted by “algorithms of oppression,” “automat[ed] inequality,” “weapons of math destruction,” “artificial unintelligence,” “algorithmic coloniality,” and “technologies of violence” have greater insight into human flourishing because their lives depend on it.

In June 2024, I joined hundreds of organizers, academics, advocates, and workers in Chicago for the Take Back Tech conference, organized by Mijente and Media Justice. We strategized about how to reclaim technology for the collective good, addressing issues ranging from the use of AI in the genocide of Palestinians to the development of autonomous technology infrastructures that support grassroots movements. The goal was to contest the eugenic legacies coded into our digital world and cultivate legacies of solidarity by learning from past generations and preparing for future ones.

During my remarks on the last day, I expressed my exasperation with AI—how even in resisting the techno status quo, artificial intelligence dominates the conversation (and resources). The only AI I want to discuss is ancestral intelligence—the insights, experiences, and wisdom that grow under the rubble of progress. I’m fed up with the narrow conception of intelligence shaping our systems and societies. We need more investment in the knowledge coming from organizations and initiatives like Allied Media Projects, Athena, Data For Black Lives, Our Data Bodies, May First Movement Technology, No Tech For Apartheid, 7amleh, Algorithmic Justice League, and Data Workers’ Inquiry. We must urgently listen and learn from those whose labor and lands are indispensable yet treated as disposable.

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Cover of “The Congolese Fight for Their Own Wealth” report.

On my way back from Chicago, I started reading a groundbreaking report, “The Congolese Fight for Their Own Wealth,” released in June 2024. It reminds us that, while cobalt, lithium, and coltan are essential to the Fourth Industrial Revolution, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) supplies most of these minerals. In 2022, the DRC’s exports were worth $25 billion, with untapped reserves worth $24 trillion. Yet Congolese workers live on less than $2.15 a day due to the “pillaging of the land and its resources for profit at any cost” by multinational companies like Glencore, in collaboration with corrupt oligarchies and militia groups.

This is a eugenic infrastructure that exposes the Congolese people to backbreaking work and the toxic particles that go into our iPhones and other technologies. The report notes that in 2014, UNICEF estimated that “forty thousand of these artisanal miners are children as young as eight years old, though figures from the Congolese government and mining companies suggest that this dramatically underrepresents reality.” The tech industry’s wealth is subsidized by the suppressed wages of workers in the DRC. The warped fantasies of some, in other words, continue to rely on the nightmarish labor of others.

As Amos Hochstein, Joe Biden’s senior adviser for energy and investment, put it, “An electric vehicle is essentially a battery, and what’s in the battery is Africa.” Even our efforts to create “greener” technologies are predicated on the pillaging of African resources and the immiseration of African labor. To counter such eugenic infrastructures, we must heed the calls of those on the front lines, like the Congolese youth who insist that “Congo is not for sale” and call for “collective intelligence in order to respond to the challenges that face us with clear ideas”—stewarding and demilitarizing the land, reinvesting wealth in local industries, rebuilding the social contract, and demanding just governance.

At the very least, we should recognize the hollow ethical commitments of the artificial intelligentsia and the deceitful machinations of those who fancy themselves to be humanity’s stewards. The choice is not between effective and ineffective altruism but between solidarity and indifference toward those whom long-term planners would abandon.

To move forward, we need to reckon with what I have called ustopia. Whereas utopias are the stuff of dreams and dystopias the stuff of nightmares, ustopias are what we create together when we are wide awake. It is not enough to refute the legacies of eugenics animating the faux futures of the artificial intelligentsia; we must also take it upon ourselves to inaugurate legacies of solidarity that reflect our intrinsic interdependence as a people and a planet. To riff on the late great Octavia E. Butler, whose prescient 1993 novel Parable of the Sower begins in summer 2024—it may be the end of the world, but there are other worlds.

#### The alternative is an orientation towards disability justice. Grassroots battles are efficacious in the face of perpetual war AND debility, which makes voting NEG a prerequisite to any ethical policy option.

Scholar Pitters 22, writer, scholar, and advocate for decolonization and abolition. (Destiny, 9-7-2022, “Disability and war,” Briarpatch, https://briarpatchmagazine.com/articles/view/disability-and-war)

In the face of this, the disability justice movement in the Global North must work to oppose war, militarism, imperial violence, and debilitation. Puar gives the example of the Abolition and Disability Justice Collective which, she says, “recognizes the connected carceral infrastructures, that settler colonialism here supports settler colonialism there.” In 2021, as Israeli airstrikes landed in the Gaza Strip, the group released a statement of solidarity with Palestine, writing that “Israeli settler colonization is a disability justice issue that underscores the urgency of abolition and its internationalist dimensions.”

We have been taught to see war as a conflict that comes to a head through physical, chemical, or nuclear altercation in a country far away. In actuality, we are part of the constant cycle of war and militarism – be it police brutality, colonial occupation, or military expansion under the guise of “humanitarian intervention.” This is what some scholars have called “perpetual war”: the constant growth of military powers, meant to sustain endless fights against nebulous enemies such as “terrorism.”

“One of the things that the War on Terror has really shown us is that war doesn’t ever need to end – it’s actually something that’s sustainable, and it’s profitable,” Puar tells me. “War isn’t a simple relationship between one side and the other, but a multiplayer, proxied [event] that has numerous economic and ideological and political relations embedded in it. […] What it means to focus on maiming along with killing means actually to understand war differently, in some sense – because it’s a kind of ongoing bodily assault.”

Resisting war, militarism, imperial violence and debilitation must begin at the grassroots level. Here, many disability justice, anti-war, and penal abolitionist organizers are already fighting against the military-industrial complex and advocating for peace and community-based safety. Supporters of disability justice displace the need for police and military by practising unarmed civilian protection, from Minnesota to South Sudan; campaigning to defund, demilitarize, and abolish the police; protesting against weapons deals and manufacturers; calling for reinvestments in social services and health care; and advocating for returns to Indigenous models of justice, among other things.

In Puar’s words, it is a fantasy “that resistance can be located, stripped, and emptied,” whether from the land or the body. The world that disability justice advocates aim to create centers co-operation, community, and the dignity of those most marginalized – a world that cannot be achieved through the endlessly violent cycle of war.

#### Prioritize epistemic orientations that refuse debate as a space of militarized education and productivity. That orientation is key to producing subjects that challenge ableism and eugenic violence.

Professor Castrodale ’15 [Mark; 2015; Ph.D., professor of social sciences at the University of Sheffield; Gendered Militarism in Canada, “A Critical Discussion on Disabled Subjects Examining Ableist and Militarist Discourses in Education,” Ch. 5 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/289253007\_A\_critical\_discussion\_on\_disabled\_subjects\_Examining\_ableist\_and\_militarist\_discourses\_in\_education]

Drawing on the works of Foucault (1984, 1994, 1995, 2003), one sees that gendered and disabled bodies are constituted discursively through webs of knowledge-power relations, and subjects may also work to constitute themselves. Examination of the intersection of gender and disability may shed new light on the ways in which bodies are constituted in various educational sites in potentially disempowering and empowering ways. In Discipline and Punish Foucault (1995) discusses disciplinary tactics and the “ vast science of war ” (p. 168) that applies to “ the general foundation of all military practice, from the control and exercise of individual bodies to the use of forces specific to the most complex multiplicities ” (p. 167).. Military knowledges represent a body of knowledge of how to know, move, coerce, discipline, and govern people (Foucault, 1995). Foucault demonstrates military knowledge as a foundation of tactics, procedures, manoeuvres, exercises , and functions, which may be used to regulate and shape entire societies, thereby extending into educational realms.

According to Foucault (1995), discipline entails a series of calculated measures, methods , and techniques aimed at observing, knowing, ranking, and rendering bodies useful and docile. For Foucault , a disciplined docile body may be corrected, controlled, and regulated as an “ object and target of power, ” where in every society individuals are subjected to “constraints, prohibitions, or obligations” (p. 136). Discipline increases the forces of the body in terms of socio-economic utility and decreases forces of resistance to encourage obedience (Foucault, 1995). All bodies may be enhanced. The perfect body, in military terms, is mouldable, moveable, and trainable (Foucault, 1995).

Militarization entails seeking advantages, advancing a position, finding tactical opportunities, and developing new technologies. Coordinating bodies that are unpredictable and unruly becomes troublesome. Militaries have been interested and invested in bodies, in making bodies perform certain spatio-temporally coordinated tasks (Foucault, 1995). For militaristic purposes bodies are trained, observed, organized, located, fixed, coordinated together or independently, and moved in rhythmic timings and particular places. Foucault describes this ideal soldier as a male

who could be recognized from afar; he bore certain signs: the natural signs of his strength and his courage, the marks, too, of his pride; his body was the blazon of his strength and valour...the soldier has become something that can be made; out of a formless clay, an inapt body, the machine required can be constructed; posture is gradually corrected; a calculated constraint runs slowly through each part of the body, mastering it, making it pliable, ready at all times, turning silently into the automatism of habit. (p. 135)

Soldiers’ bodies thus represent mouldable bodies that can be trained in the service of their country; they are oxymoronically disposable and indispensable citizens (see Taber, Chapter 4 of this volume, for a discussion of the latter).

Disabled bodies are often characterized as deviant, labelled and sorted according to biomedical , psychological disciplinary fields of knowledges (Murray, 2007), understood as imperfect, faulty, fat, weak, penetrable, and leaky (Shildrick, 1997). The disabled body is seen as deficient, abnormal, and in need of fixing. Disability is associated with dependence, and the disabled body often represents an “entity to be conquered” (Batts & Andrews, 2011, p. 558). Urla and Terry (1995) assert that “scientific and popular modes of representing bodies are never innocent but always tie bodies to larger systems of knowledge production and, indeed, to social and material inequality ” (p. 3).

Unpacking the constitution of all bodies entails critically thinking about the biomedical gaze (Foucault, 2003), dividing practices, hierarchical rankings, and normalizing judgments (Foucault, 1995), the materiality of bodies (Butler, 1993), the carnal politics of embodiment, and theorizing relating to the intersection of disability, gender, sexuality, race, and class. According to Goodley (2011), “a body or mind that is disabled is also one that is raced, gendered, trans/nationally sited, aged, sexualised and classed” (p. 33). Seeking to improve bodies deemed to be weak and fragile, military operations have developed bio-robotic, technological inventions such as the exoskeleton , which may enhance balance, speed , agility, and efficiency of movement and increase load -carrying capacity (Bogue, 2009). Not only do these technologies support direct military objectives, but they extend into the civilian arena, improving and rehabilitating disabled bodies often to move further and function faster in accordance with able-bodied norms. All bodies may be blended with bio- medical , militarized technologies to render them more useful and productive.

CDS offers avenues to critically examine military technologies in relation to how they shape the mattering of bodies. Technologies relating to augmentation and enhancement are of particular military interest. The ways in which bodies are moulded to fit and function with new technologies create hybrid bodies and perhaps new cyborg-body identities (Harraway, 1991). As an example, the prosthetic limbs of the model and athlete Aimee Mullins are imbued with aesthetic form and function. Thompson (2004) comments on how she “counters the insistent narrative that one must overcome impairment rather than incorporating it into one’s life and self, even perhaps as a benefit.…Mullins uses her conformity with beauty standards to assert her disability’s violation of those very standards. As legless and beautiful, she is an embodied paradox, asserting an inherently disruptive potential” (p. 97).

Thus, socio-cultural standards of beauty and ability are tied to norms of gendered performativity, connected in a nexus of function and form, aesthetic norms and norms surrounding movement, and ability in various spaces and contexts. To transgress these norms is to violate the “ideal” of “able-bodied” and the “ways of being, or moving, that…approximate more closely to the bodily actions and practices of ‘able-bodied’ people” (Price & Shildrick, 2002, p. 67).

As militarized technologies, ideals, standards, and values enter educational realms and inform pedagogical practices, it is essential to critically evaluate new educational technologies, examining how they relate to the ways in which teachers and learners are constituted. Such technologies may reflect normalized, gendered, and able-bodied ideals and reinforce dominant ways of thinking and being in the world. For Falk (2008), all pedagogies may represent military pedagogies because education is a strategic weapon that shapes individuals’ subjectivities as nation-states vie for power. As such, “education doesn’t win hearts and minds. Education makes them” (p. 2).

#### The role of the judge is to interrupt debates disabling environment, refuse the inevitable 2AC call to normativity, AND sever the distinction between structure and procedure.

Professor Castrodale ’18 [Mark Anthony; 2018; Ph.D., professor of social sciences at the University of Sheffield; Manifestor for the Future of Critical Disability Studies, “Disabling militarism: Theorising anti-militarism, dis/ability and dis/placement,” p. 66-68 https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781351053341-7/disabling-militarism-mark-anthony-castrodale]

Disability represents a discursive-matter of interest well situated in the military-industrial-academia nexus. Critical disability and Mad studies scholars often examine disability as the social oppression of impaired persons where there is no single way of knowing or understanding disability (Taylor, 2004) nor madness (see LeFrançois, Menzies, and Reaume, 2013). These fields represent areas that root disablement not in individuals but in disabling environments and socio-political-economic structures (Castrodale, 2015). Similarly, Mad studies centres its discussions on the examination of psy-violence, the oppression of consumers, survivors, ex-patients (c/s/x), and how sanism negatively impacts the lives of Mad/crazy people (Beresford and Russo, 2016; Costa, 2014; LeFrançois, Menzies, and Reaume, 2013; Reville and Church, 2012; Russo and Beresford, 2015). Mad studies and self-identifying Mad subjects are reclaiming the term mad from its pejorative roots (Costa, 2014).

Dis/abled subjectivities are mediated by socio-spatialities (Lefebvre, 1991; Soja, 2010) and alienated through unequal geographies (Soja, 2010). As Soja (ibid., p. 105) states, ‘space is filled with politics and privileges … justice and injustice, oppressive power and the possibility for emancipation’. A radical rethinking of socio-spatial-temporal norms requires an intersectional focus, a sustained look at power-knowledge embodiment-materiality and space (Foucault, 1984). Within the military–industrial–academic nexus, how do Mad and dis/abled subjects matter, that is, how do they materialise and have meaning (see Butler, 1993)?

Fitting is contingent and contextual – people fit in accordance with socio-spatial-temporal norms. We are enmeshed in our geographies. For Garland-Thomson (2011, p. 592), therefore:

The concept of misfit emphasizes the particularity of varying lived embodiments and avoids a theoretical generic disabled body that can dematerialize if social and architectural barriers no longer disabled it … the concept of misfitting as a shifting spatial and perpetually temporal relationship confers agency and value on disabled subjects at risk of social devaluation by highlighting adapt-ability, resourcefulness, and subjugated knowledge as potential effects of misfitting.

Mis/fitting attends to ‘how the particularities of embodiment interact with the environment in its broadest sense, to include both its spatial and temporal aspects’ (Garland-Thomson, 2011, p. 591). Mad and dis/abled subjects are thereby intelligibly–materially understood as mis/fitting subjects in relation to ableist/sanist socio-spatial-temporal ideals.

Fit is relevant when unpacking able-sane socio-spatial privilege. ‘Finding one’s fit entails negotiating spatial-temporal norms, rethinking the material-embodiment-space nexus, and unpacking institutional power-knowledge webs enabling and constraining different spaces, embodiments, and fits’ (Castrodale, 2015, p. 374). This troubles how our contingent fleshiness becomes measured in relation to the Western dominant normate aesthetics of a man who is white, able-bodied, athletic, thin, and proportioned (Garland-Thomson, 1997). ‘Environmental fit makes nondisabled people less aware of their own embodied privilege’ (Hamraie, 2013, np). Able-bodied sane normative privilege is thus a reduction/absence of mis/fitting socio-spatial violent friction that wears on bodies and minds. Ableist/sanist friction productively works to grind misfitting people into a conformist sane, abled-bodied shape.

As an example of new fitting military–civilian technologies, a prosthetics limb may have a range of motion beyond that of congenital limbs. As Cohen (2012) attests, ‘prosthetic incorporations call attention to the limits and boundaries of our bodies and the broader contexts to which they are connected’. Prosthetic advances expose our human parts as lacking, as less capable and hardy than our potential cyborg futurities (Haraway, 1991). As technologies of fit, prosthetics have socio-cultural significance, lubricating the body-function-spatiality-context mismatch, easing the body–space fit (see also Garland-Thomson, 2011). Prosthetics may also be transgressive.

Militarised spatio-temporal regimes materially shape dis/abled subjects’ embodied materiality and play a constitutive role in discursively mediating who fits, and who is deemed to embody all that is unfit (ibid.). Fitness relates to a biomedical gaze, regimes of truths, observations, calculations and exercises (Foucault, 2006). As Goodley and Runswick-Cole (2016, p. 6) attest, ‘Dis/ability usefully disarms, disrupts and disturbs normative, taken-for-granted, deeply societally engrained assumptions about what it means to be human …’. Our conceptions of a hyper-masculine, able-bodied, strong, fit, autonomous soldier rest on the uber-able soldier subject. Discourses of fitness pervade militaristic ideology. Those devalued and deemed unfit are in need of exercise regimes and training to adjust their deficient selves. ‘Not all bodies are granted the status of persons (let alone of human)’ (Goodley and Runswick-Cole, 2016, p. 7). Ideals of hyper-masculine able-bodied soldiers are cast as brave warriors, as opposed to frail feminised disabled subjects (Castrodale, 2015). Constitutions of devalued humans are evoked as a rationale as to why they rightfully may be harmed or perish.

Garland-Thomson’s (2011) concept of mis/fitting is useful as an explanatory theory of how Mad and disabled subjects experience socio-spatial alienation, violence and injustice. Spaces may be purposefully designed to exclude misfitting persons, whose conducts are misaligned with dominant socio-spatial norms, from actively participating in certain environments (Hamraie, 2013). Within such a socio-spatial dialectic (Lefebvre, 1991), our subjectivities are mediated by space and we (re)act back to agentically craft spaces.

#### Debates over an impossible future instill false hope AND encourage further imagination that expunges the disabled subject out of time.

Scientist Wälivaara ’18 [Josefine; 2018; Ph.D. in Culture and Media Studies and Staff Scientist at the Department of Historical, Philosophical, and Religious Studies, Umea University; Culture Unbound, “Marginalized Bodies of Imagined Futurescapes: Ableism and Heteronormativity in Science Fiction,” p. 237-240 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328622729\_Marginalized\_Bodies\_of\_Imagined\_Futurescapes\_Ableism\_and\_Heteronormativity\_in\_Science\_Fiction\_Munch's\_Painting\_Painting\_Reproductions\_on\_Display]

Disability on the contrary has as of yet seldom been included in the notion of social equality as a way to emphasize progressive future societies. This notion of progression has an impact on the way disability has become related to the future. From the perspective of crip temporalities, Kafer writes, “disability is seen as the sign of no future, or at least of no good future” and adds that it is assumed, “that we all agree […] that we all desire the same futures” (Kafer 2013: 3). Kafer argues that the disabled body has come to signify not having a future or that the future has failed. Due to the prevalence of the medical model of disability, a future in which disability is not eradicated is inevitably a failed future:

Disability is cast as a problematic characteristic inherent in particular bodies and minds. Solving the problem of disability, then, means correcting, normalizing, or eliminating the pathological individual, rendering a medical approach to disability the only appropriate approach. The future of disability is understood more in terms of medical research, individual treatments, and familial assistance than increased social supports or widespread social change. (Kafer 2013: 5)

This prevalence of the medical paradigm in stories as well as in society offers insight into how the future of disability is viewed by contemporary society. Kafer’s assertion about the future discourse of disability based on medical and individual definitions is highly viable in science fiction narratives. Consider for example the prevalence of cure narratives in science fiction (cf. Allen 2013). Science fiction (and science) continues to explore technological possibilities based on this medical model of disability:

With the recent cracking of genetic coding, opening up the possibility of genetic manipulation, a future where medical technology and genetic engineering will have advanced to the point where bodies can be genetically manipulated before birth, or treated and cured so as to make ‘disability’ obsolete, it is not beyond the realm of possibility. In this ‘medical model’, disability becomes non-existent. (Cheu 2002: 198)

The future is extrapolated based on ableist assumptions about the connection between health, progression, and disability. Moreover, the ideal future from that perspective is undoubtedly a future where disability has been eradicated. For fiction narratives dealing with the future, this medical progression or regression has come to symbolize utopian/dystopian futures. As Fiona Kumari Campbell argues, “for disability, utopianism is a conflicted zone – there is no future existence, disability dreaming is expunged and the utopian drive is a device for promise (of curability), hence, extinction of the impairment state” (Campbell 2012: 223).

As a narrative mechanism, the inclusion of disability in imagined futures often aims to emphasize “bad” futures. For example, one of the most obvious inferences to disability in The Handmaid’s Tale is used to narratively underline decadence and corruption. In the scene in which Offered is taken to Jezebel’s, a brothel to which influential men travel for sex with women forced into prostitution, the setting is introduced to us through Offered’s gaze. She sees naked women, women dressed-up in various costumes and lingerie, men together with several women at the same time, people drinking and smoking, a sight in stark contrast to Offered’s present existence as a handmaid. Moreover, she sees a man and a woman in an elevator, as the man passionately sucks on the woman’s amputated arm. In this instance, disability is positioned to further symbolize the decadent space of Jezebel.

There are, however, examples in which the medical model of disability is in negotiation with ideas of progression in terms of social equality. Star Trek’s utopian vision of the future has been criticized for not including people with disabilities in any significant way (Kanar 2000). However, Star Trek: Discovery, has not only included a same-sex couple, but also characters with disabilities. While at the time of writing this only one season of Star Trek: Discovery is available, there are some indications that the creators want to problematize some previously taken-for-granted notions of the future of disability. So finally, one can say, disability is beginning to be included in the notion of the progressive future of Star Trek in which a variety of bodies, genders, and ethnicities are welcome. First of all, a crewmember of the Discovery is in passing shown in a wheelchair (“Magic to Make the Sanest Man Go Mad” 2017). The character is used to praise the sacrifices made by crewmembers in the ongoing war, i.e. the injuries acquired in battle are visualized by a crewmember in a wheelchair and partly adhere to a taken-for-granted ableist notion of loss and sacrifice. But, to see a character in Starfleet uniform who is not able-bodied is still an important step towards including a variety of bodies not as a sign of a failed future, but of a future of inclusiveness and equality. However, the character only appears briefly on screen.

In addition, the Captain of the U.S.S Discovery, Captain Lorca (Jason Isaacs), is introduced as having suffered an eye injury in battle, and, though he has the medical and technological possibility to simply “have it fixed,” he has refused to do so. This refusal to make surgical corrections to his eyes can first be interpreted as an unwillingness to be “cured” and thus, choosing to live with a visual impairment. However, it is revealed later on in season one that Lorca in fact originates from a mirror universe, a parallel universe in which every human has this condition, a sensitivity to light. Is Lorca then to be considered a character with a disability only due to disabling circumstances in the prime universe, or is the visual impairments of the entire evil Terran Empire of the mirror universe to be read as a metaphor for their inability to see and value non-human species? This only difference between the prime universe (aka. the good guys) and mirror universe (aka. the bad guys) can thus instead be understood as utilizing bodily differences and disabilities as signs of character flaws rather than as portrayals of experiences of disability (cf. Bérubé 2005).

In the light of the discussion about disability and futurity I argue that the lack of homo/bisexual characters in early science fiction narratives also can be ascribed to the pathologization of homosexuality in a time in which medical discourses surrounding non-heterosexual sexualities dominated. It would then make sense that many stories would have done away with both disability and homosexuality in their imagined futurescapes based on the notion of an evolved progressive society.

Moreover, the changes in how homosexuality has come to be understood and defined over the course of 50 years have definitely affected the types of stories that have been told, what types of futures have been imagined, and what value and meaning have been ascribed to the presence of homo/bisexuality in imaginary futures. Likewise for disability, changes in how disability is understood and defined will affect portrayals and ascribed meanings in future settings. The shift from a purely medical understanding of disability to social, relational, and political frameworks has taken place later in time for disability than for homosexuality, and these efforts have not yet come to bear much fruit in fiction.

I have also argued that the kind of futures we imagine is bound to the way we understand the present. In this context, imaginations of the future are also political. For example, questioning the political aspects of disability according to Kafer, “requires a recognition of the central role that ideas about disability and ability play in contemporary culture, particularly in imagined and projected futures” (Kafer 2013: 10). The same goes for sexuality. Allen, likewise, identifies ways contemporary society thinks about disability as the area to be scrutinized.

## 2NC

### Framework---2NC

#### 3. GATEKEEPING---plan focus creates an artificial binary between ‘genuine knowledge’ and ‘unproductive criticism,’ naturalizing epistemic oppression.

Professor Yancy ’22 [George and Christine Wiesler; October 11; Samuel Candler Dobbs professor of philosophy at Emory University and a Montgomery fellow at Dartmouth College; Assistant Professor in the Department of Philosophy at the California State Polytechnic University, Pomona; Truthout, “The ‘Problem’ Isn’t Disabled Bodies — It’s the Violent Structure of Our Society,” https://truthout.org/articles/the-problem-isnt-disabled-bodies-its-the-violent-structure-of-our-society]

My sense is that people generally think about disability as consisting of a physical or cognitive “deficit.” This raises all sorts of questions related to, for example, “epistemic oppression” — a form of oppression that occurs when people in positions of power assert that those who are disabled will only benefit from the people they deem as having epistemological expertise and as possessing “genuine” knowledge (very often those who are deemed “able-bodied”). And while it is important not to conflate the dynamics of epistemic oppression within the context of anti-Black racism, I think that it is important that we challenge the differential ways in which knowledge possession is assumed to be devoid vis-à-vis those who are disabled. Could you elaborate on how you understand epistemological oppression within the context of disability studies, and discuss how you conceptualize disabled knowers and the richness and complexity of their knowledge, and how their knowledge can transform epistemic forms of arrogance and hegemony?

There is a long history of disabled people being denied epistemic authority in regard to our own bodyminds and experiences. (I use Margaret Price’s term “bodymind” to emphasize the inextricability of the body and mind and the fact that many impairments are not readily apparent.) The Disability Rights Movement’s slogan “Nothing About Us without Us” is, in part, a challenge to epistemic oppression — which entails the assumption that disabled people are unable to make contributions to shared knowledge, as well as ways in which the disabled people’s knowledge claims are actively undermined. In spite of good intentions, nondisabled “experts” on disability have sometimes made the lives of their patients or students worse by privileging normalization. In other words, health care professionals and educators attempted to get their patients/students to look and function as closely to a mythical “normal” bodymind as possible (e.g., prohibiting D/deaf children from using sign language or forcing children with polio to walk rather than using a wheelchair). There is still an overemphasis on cure rather than helping people to figure out how to live with impairments and chronic illnesses.

Disabled people and our allies continue to demand epistemic justice. I would suggest that a central assumption of disability studies is that disabled people are capable of living worthwhile lives and that we have important contributions to make — including epistemic ones. Unfortunately, these assumptions still seem to go against the grain, and this is readily apparent within philosophy.

When I first read philosophy containing false assertions about the lives of disabled people, I thought that this should be easy to fix. Philosophers are concerned with truth and engaging in just epistemic practices, right? I thought that this lack of knowledge could be corrected through engagement with empirical research and testimonies of disabled people. However, it turns out that the problem is much deeper and more difficult to address. Certain bioethicists, in particular, are so sure that they know about the lives of disabled people that they dismiss any claims that challenge the views they hold, sometimes paying lip service to the positions of disability theorists/activists, but then going on to contradict them. The epistemic arrogance is truly astounding. I now believe that epistemic humility is a necessary condition for the knowledge of disabled people to make any difference in the beliefs of nondisabled knowers such as these bioethicists. Encountering the richness and complexity of this knowledge is not enough; having an openness to being wrong (i.e., demonstrating epistemic humility) and valuing the knowledge of disabled people are both necessary.

#### 4. ENTELECHY---refuse [xx]’s framing of debate as a game. It inflicts ableist violence, by normalizing extremism in the pursuit of a mere ballot, an independent reason to reject.

Professor McVey ’23 [Alex and Matthew Gerber; 2023; Assistant Professor in critical-cultural communication at Kansas State University; Associate Professor in argumentation at Baylor University; Speaker & Gavel, “At the Intersection of Ableism, Entelechy, and Policy Debate,” vol. 59 https://cornerstone.lib.mnsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1281&context=speaker-gavel]

Western culture's broader obsession with entelechy, the drive to perfection, is deeply interwoven with the rhetorical norms of ableism, or the privileging of the perspectives and needs of able-bodied subjects over and against those of disabled people. Normalization is a rhetorical practice that defines human bodies through a telos of accomplishment, achievement, and success, with disabled bodies situated as the perverse underside of human capacity and ability. In this section, we read Burkean theory through the lens of disability studies to theorize entelechy as a rhetorical vehicle for the normalization of ableist practices under the ideological guise of the natural and inevitable force of competition and perfection. We show how entelechialism defines the ideological territory of debate, even as current practitioners may seek to redefine debate beyond its entelechial ends.

According to Burke, entelechy is a uniquely human tendency. Burke characterized humans as not only “separated from his natural condition by instruments of his own making” (symbol systems), but also as being “rotten with perfection” (Burke, 1963-1964, p.507). Burke argued that “there is a principal of perfection implicit in the nature of symbol systems; and in keeping with his nature as a symbol-using animal, man is moved by this principle” (Burke, 1963- 1964, p.508). The continual striving for perfection, the pursuit of the continued clarification and elevation of our terministic screens and symbols into final fruition, thus informs the definition of entelechy. Rowland and Jones (2001) refer to this as “terministic compulsion” or the tendency to “take one’s terminology to the end of the symbolic line” (p.57). Burke, drawing on Aristotle, posited that anything which comes into existence tends to symbolically move toward its entelechial end, and that “this state of completion is its full actuality” (Burke, 1969, p.261). For Burke, the “finishedness” of a thing, helps to classify and create symbolic order according to the states of perfection or final form that make up the essence of that thing (Burke, 1950, p.14). Jan Hovden (2006) argued that for Burke, “entelechy is the force of symbol systems to compel their adherents to see them to completion, and he believes that this compulsion contains within it numerous dangers” (p.507). The authors are in solidarity with Hovden’s characterization of Burke’s concept of entelechy. We also agree with Rowland and Jones, who argued that entelechy is a slippery rhetorical construct, and one that is often difficult to apply because humans do not always engage in extreme entelechy (2001, p.57). Indeed, entelechial compulsion undergirds the normalization of extremism in the name of human perfection. In a case study about the discursive structure of video games, Soukup (2007) deployed Burke’s concept of perfection to describe the “entelechial motivational system” which appeared in most popular video games with “remarkable uniformity” (p.159). This motivational system, which encourages the “finishing” of the game, and the pursuit of one’s personal competitive objectives to completion is not unlike the entelechial nature of policy debate. Using entelechy as a critical tool helps us to name discourses which promote a “dangerous mix of competition, conquest, hierarchy, and aggressive domination” (Soukup, 2007, p.159).

Humans often stretch their symbol systems to extremist ends that go beyond mere fulfillment and completion. Indeed, entelechy “results from our ability to use symbols to envision the extreme ends of behavior” (Hubbard, 1998, p.360). In his essay on entelechy and the rhetoric of religious cults, Stan Lindsay argued that Burke “implicitly recognizes the possibility of this extremist type of entelechy- what might be called psychotic entelechy” (Burke, 1968, p.180; Lindsay, 1999, p.270). For Lindsay, the characteristics of “psychotic entelechy” entail a proclivity by some to be “so desirous of fulfilling or bringing to perfection the implications of their terminologies that they engage in very hazardous or damaging actions” (1999, p.272). In tracing the rhetoric of cult leader David Koresh, Lindsay found that the dangerous part of his discourse was not that he was necessarily irrational, but rather that his symbol system was “super rational” (at least as it appeared to the members of his community) and that he had carried his “meaning to the extreme” (p.279). By advocating for the ultimate finishedness of the biblical prophecies which were foretold in his preaching, Koresh “laid out his own telos” and was thus compelled to “literally live out the entelechy” (Lindsay, 1999, p.277). Another potentially minacious aspect of extreme entelechialism is its potential to obfuscate alternative outcomes and the discursive means by which to reach them. As Bryan Hubbard (1998) postulated in his study of the entelechial aspects of the deliberation surrounding the development and ultimate detonation of the nuclear bomb in the 1940s, “entelechy prevents the exploration of alternatives and informed discussion by maintaining a steady course for the decision.” (p.360). The relentless pursuit of entelechial perfection produces narrowed, constrained futures and potentialities.

The normalization of perfection and competition functions as a pervasive constraint against the agency and positionality of disabled persons in policy debate. As Timothy Dolmage argues, ableism is a rhetorical phenomenon, operating on the level of deeply inscribed, everyday discourse and vernacular, and predicated on the “mythical able-bodied norm” (2014, p.22). For Dolmage, the rhetorical construction of normalcy, and the ways in which it controls and inscribes bodies, is coupled with the cultural valorization of able-bodiedness; making disability “abject, invisible, disposable, less than human, while able-bodiedness is at once ideal, normal, and the mean or default” (2014, p.22). Communities reproduce ableism in subtle and insidious ways. Norms are transmitted to subsequent generations not as intentional modes of exclusion but as solidified expectations regarding bodily competence and ability. As James Cherney argues, “the ways of interpreting disability and assumptions about bodies that produce ableism are learned” and are handed down by “the previous generation” (2011, para. 2). We argue that the inherited ideologies and taken-for-granted assumptions of debate may perpetuate harmful assumptions about disability, even as programs actively fight to pursue new motivations and justifications for debate. Likewise, toward the end of identifying rhetorical practices that undergird these tendencies, especially in the case of extreme examples, Cherney’s approach to ableism aids in understanding the historical origins of long-ingrained assumptions about disability in an argument community.

Fortunately, the negative outcomes associated with entelechial extremism are not inevitable. Burke’s notions of the tragic and comic frames provide guidance here. For Burke, “the tragic frame is marked by individuals committed to pushing their ideas to a rotten end” and by “the tragic tendency to push toward perfection regardless of the consequences” (Renegar & Dionisopoulos, 2011, p.325). On the other hand, the comic perspective proceeds from the assumption of human fallibility, inherent imperfection, and flaw. The purpose of the comic frame is to generate self-reflection and the creation of “argumentative space in the middle ground between opposites, recognizing that an absolutist frame is too rigid to allow for cooperative societal action” (Madsen, 1993, np). The comic perspective allows for humans to see through the narrow confines of their own terministic screens and to ostensibly help “those who possess these screens from being compelled to take them to their entelechial ends” (Hovden, 2006, p.507). Burke’s comic frame is also useful as a method by which critics and members of a community might offer “minor repairs” to the current system without throwing out an entire institution (Toker, 2002). As Hovden put it, the comic frame “allows for the challenging of pieties without causing the destruction of the order itself” (2006, p.507). Along similar lines, Travis Cram argued that the comic perspective functions to “rein in the dangers of tragic thinking by correcting rather than banishing antagonists and emphasizing inclusion within a community” (2017, p.80). Cram’s postulation is helpful here, in that the authors do not seek to “exile” those coaches and debaters who exhibit extreme entelechialism in debate; but nor do we seek to gloss over the glaring problem of ableism in the name of community harmony. Rather, we view our arguments here as part of an ongoing, long-term project designed to amend the activity in ways that render it more accessible to all. In the conclusion, we point to nascent practices and discursive interventions that seek to subvert the ingrained entelechial norms of policy debate, diverting the compulsion towards perfection into the comic possibilities of imperfection.

The Entelechial Tendencies of Policy Debate

This section examines the entelechial tendencies of policy debate, and how these tendencies reproduce ableist norms and practices within the activity. In particular, we name three rhetorical norms of entelechy that have, over time, come to define modern policy debate: Competition, Speed, and Rhetorical Ability. Our argument in this section is not that all policy debaters, programs, or coaches actively participate in the construction and maintenance of these ideologies. We name these forces entelechial tendencies to emphasize the way that these ideological norms have influenced the history of policy debate, not to state that these drives function as universal or unquestioned commands mindlessly repeated by policy debate automatons. We recognize that policy debate has created space for divergent voices and motivations that challenge many of the taken-for-granted assumptions of policy debate. We will revisit some of the challenges that have emerged to the entelechial forces of policy debate in the next section of the essay. Nevertheless, we hope the examples gathered here, collected from both published and public records of policy debate, as well as decades of personal experience from the authors as policy debate coaches, point towards pervasive norms that continue to shape how debaters perceive themselves and their communities. This critique emerges out of a practice of self-reflexivity, seeking to understand the way our own coaching and debating experiences reflect, are shaped by, and participate in norms of ableist exclusion. Our argument is not that the whole of the debate community is engaged in win-at-all-costs extreme entelechy; or that every debater strives with fury to cram as many words-per-minute into every speech in a debate. Instead, we argue that under entelechial systems, the extreme becomes normalized, so even extreme examples of entelechial ideology become regularized guideposts for judging the performances of bodies in debate, with devastating effects for those whose bodies cannot meet the ideals of exceptional debate performance.

Entelechy of Competition

Policy debate has always been competitive in nature. As William Keith argued in his Keynote Address to the National Developmental Debate Conference at Wake Forest in 2009, “NDT-style debate is intensely focused on competition, almost, one might say, in a warlike way” (2010). Debaters compete in front of trained judges who render a win or loss at the conclusion of the round. The competitive nature of policy debate creates a rhetorical situation in which winning functions as the ultimate entelechial end of participation. This all-in commitment to competitive success and victory is evidence, in and of itself, of the ways in which entelechy discursively operates. This argument is not novel; significant existing scholarship in debate laments the rise of competition as the overarching telos of debate competition (Mitchell et al 2010). Much of the focus in existing critique of debate’s competitive drive focuses on the ways that competition functions to insulate debate from public audiences, blunting the impact of debate as an activity aimed at civic participation and diminishing the possible value of debate for watchful institutional audiences. As Mitchell et al argue, “Once an enterprise born from the difficulties of engagement with public audiences, academic debate became estranged from its audience-centered origins during the mid-twentieth century. The rise of tournament competition as an organizing telos augured debate’s ascetic turn, characterized by heightened specialization, intensified insularity, and fetishization of technique” (2010, 107). While we agree generally that the competitive telos of debate makes it inaccessible for broader public audiences, we believe that these criticisms themselves ignore the differential inaccessibility of debate’s competitive practices. Centering disability in our examination of policy debate’s exclusionary practices allows us to see how debate’s competitive drive does not just isolate the activity from broader, dominant publics, but also how it performs a doubled exclusion of those disabled bodies and voices who are always/already excluded from the public itself.

The institutional practices and symbol systems that point participants toward “winning ways” are at the root of ableism in policy debate, and the exclusion of disabled students and coaches from the activity. While there are many examples which support our argument, we will focus primarily on two: first, the entelechial commitment to attaining victory at all costs, and to accumulating wins in debate; and second, the rapid rate of delivery (or “spreading”) which has emerged as an extreme entelechial speech code that has become both a requirement for success and a tool of exclusion, particularly for students and coaches with intellectual disabilities. Policy debate is a competitive game, and the game model of debate has pervaded the judging and coaching culture of the activity since its inception. The late Tuna Snider (1984) argued that the game approach to judging a debate (and ultimately rendering either a win or a loss) was the “silent”/default decision-making paradigm for most judges (p.19). The competitive gaming model of judging continues to be the overwhelming prevailing approach (Gerber & Nagel, 2017, p.45). Even critiques of the gaming model of debate concede that at root, “debaters are in fact, contestants involved in a competition and not agents of a government agency in an effort to simulate plan adoption” (Warner, 2003, p.65). According to Maxwell Schnurer, “in the 1980s debaters used gaming to defend speaking quickly in debates” (2003, p.46). While an examination of the notion of debate as a game is not the focus of the present essay, it is worth noting that that the game metaphor “crowds out other ways of viewing debate”, and this fact may warrant separate interrogation into its effects and impacts on the activity (Kaylor, 2015, p.33).

From the moment they are introduced to the policy debate game, some novice students are subject to both the entelechial aspirations of their coaches, and to their own human desire to maximize personal potential (measured, of course, by the number of times they defeat their opponents). They are exhaustively trained in the strategic trappings of winning; out-smarting and out-talking one’s opponent and gaining a victory, one granted by an expertly trained judge who has been long-immersed in the arcane and recondite symbolic structures of the activity. The continued development of novice debaters (who inevitably flounder and stumble in their initial forays) into something approaching a competent competitor (one who wins regularly), requires even deeper immersion into the rules, speech techniques, and strategy of debate. Thus, through the machinations of entelechy, the novice debater can engage in “the process of changing from what something is into what something should become” (Lindsay, 1999, p.270). While entelechialism is a uniquely human tendency, and is thus endemic to most competitive games, it is particularly pronounced and obvious as it appears in some segments of policy debate, an activity that along with its university sponsors and private donors, has nurtured an “unacceptable preoccupation with competition” (Hlavacik, Lain, Ivanovic, & Ontiveros-Kersch, 2016, p.395). The implication of this entelechial obsession is that many debaters either self-select out of the activity when the true nature of what it means to succeed becomes apparent, or they continue to participate in a system in which perpetual disappointment ensues because of an inability to reach the idealized norms of bodily performance. This is particularly true of debaters with disabilities.

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Other examples of the entelechial nature of winning in policy debate abound. Take for instance the narrative history of policy debate, which is saturated with legendary stories of students or coaches who engage in herculean feats of self-deprivation and sacrifice: coaches staying up all night to research, cut evidence, and strategize to outsmart and defeat one’s opponent in elimination rounds; students staying up all week before a big tournament to get a competitive edge and notch another win over a rival team; graduate assistant coaches who skip the readings for the Master’s seminar, but who instead spend their finite time researching esoteric topics with sometimes little bearing on their chosen course of study. In the experience of the authors, while that research may be enjoyable (because of the promise of the thrill of victory), it is often not particularly contributory to academic success, and often trades off with other projects or life priorities. These are the mythic heroes of contemporary intercollegiate policy debate, placed on a pedestal because they are/were willing to sacrifice their mental and physical well-being in order to get the “W.” Tragically, and throughout the history of policy debate, too many coaches and competitors have “died for the cause” from “too much stress over wins and losses, the bottom line” (Gerber, 2009, p.90). A renewed commitment to selfregulation, indeed self-preservation in policy debate could be actualized if extreme entelechial tendencies were held in check and generationally filtered out of debate pedagogy. After all, according to the “The Speech” by the late Scott Deatherage (the winningest coach in the history of NDT debate) preparing for debate competition must begin “when the topic is released [in July] until the final debate is concluded [in April] and continues at all points in between” (Snider, 2011, np). Later in “The Speech” Deatherage famously laid out his opinion on the proper way to conduct a winning cross-examination. “Don’t ask, argue!” he implored, and then he repeated that phrase several times. “Don’t ask, argue!”. For Deatherage (and for generations of his former students and coaches), the cross-examination was wasted if one simply asked questions for clarification, or for the organizational sake of one’s flowsheet, or for a deeper understanding of an opponent’s position, simply for the sake of understanding. Rather, the cross-examination period should optimally be used strategically to set up one’s own arguments and to expose and exploit weaknesses in the arguments of the adversaries. Like “spreading,” the “proper” way to conduct a winning cross-examination (by foregrounding one’s own arguments rather than by asking questions for true clarification or understanding) is a speech code, circulated through policy debate’s past and present. This speech code, this “best practice” of cross-examination, sacrifices understanding and clarity for a competitive advantage; it enshrines misunderstanding, opacity, and deception; it foregrounds winning over the edification of the parties involved; and it is entelechial insofar as it unreflexively carries out a dangerous symbolic practice to its extreme. This speech code is also ableist in that it complicates the in-round experience for students, coaches, or judges who have intellectual disabilities. This speech code encourages debaters with disabilities to actively avoid asking the very types of questions that might make their experience in policy debate more navigable. The drive for entelechial perfection comes to define how the policy debate community advocates for the value of debate to stakeholders within colleges and high schools that fund and resource policy debate programs. Many studies have pointed to the positive impact of policy debate competition on student academic achievement, the development of critical thinking skills, higher rates of civic engagement, and matriculation to college or higher education (Colbert, 1995; Kennedy, 2007; Breger, 1998; Lee, 1998). However, the measurement of those achievements is most often based on “win/loss records, speaker points, or placement in a given tournament” (Stone-Watt, 2012, p.81). While there should be multiple metrics by which universities assess and track student outcomes related to their participation in policy debate (Partlow-LeFevre, 2012), the reality is that most debate coaches feel that they are “rewarded more by their university for focusing on competitive success” rather than for foregrounding those aforementioned ancillary pedagogical advantages (Hlavacik, Lain, Ivanovic, & OntiverosKersch, 2016, p.394). Many universities that field debate programs expect wins, because those are measurable metrics, and because defeating opponents is a point of pride to be celebrated. Thus, it is notoriously hard for coaches to generate publicity for teams that don’t advance beyond the preliminary rounds. Coaches often struggle to explain the NDT first-round at large process to administrators who fail to see why being ranked 16th in the country is even noteworthy. Universities also find themselves caught up in entelechy as they assess and represent the quality of their institution to educational accrediting organizations. They must be able to portray the debate program, for example, as being successful (and blossoming toward perfection), and the easiest way to do that is to point to wins, particularly over peer institutions or ivy league schools who also support policy debate programs. Entelechy of Speed One of the most emblematic characteristics of policy debate is the discursive practice known as “spreading”: a speech code that is inculcated in college debaters (and also in high school and middle school students) who are taught that “speed kills” and that overwhelming one’s opponent with a blizzard of arguments, evidence, and debate theory is one of the keys to winning. Thinking and talking faster than one’s opponents opens new doors to the entelechial pinnacle of debate victory. University hosted summer debate camps, including the ones we have hosted and taught at, spend hours teaching debaters how to keep up with the norms of hightempo bodily debate performance that participants may expect to see at the highest echelons of debate competition. Even as many debaters have questioned what gets called the “flogo-centric” paradigm of debate practice, the normalized way of teaching policy debate holds that dropped arguments are assumed to be true arguments, thus creating added incentive to speak and deliver arguments quickly, in hopes that opponents will “drop” or concede arguments and lose the debate. Training one’s body to speak, think, and write at greater speeds than one’s opponent normalizes bodily perfection and a drive towards competition as the paradigm of what constitutes desirable debate practice. Even the so-called critical styles of debate (an ideological alternative to the expectation of strict fidelity to policy content in debate) often retain the same sound and rapid delivery mechanisms. Indeed, to the “uninitiated observer, this type of critical debate would not sound much different from traditional policy debate” (Solt, 2004, p.52). Often, even debaters who make the aforementioned in-round arguments about disability adhere to the discursive practice of spreading. One need not look far for an example of how these speech codes are weaponized against students with disabilities. In a recent article published in the Rostrum (the official publication of the National Speech and Debate Association, and one read by thousands of high school speech and debate instructors), the two authors (both attorneys specializing in the Americans with Disabilities Act) made it clear that any debate competitor with a fine-motor impairment who requests that their opponent slow down (not spread) so that they can “keep up while flowing” is not seeking a legitimate, protected accommodation, but is rather seeking a competitive advantage, which would be unfair to the debater who has mastered the art of speaking quickly and wants to overwhelm their opponent with speed (Mayes & Zirkel, 2018, p.42). This amounts to institutionally sanctioned discrimination against students with auditory processing disorders or fine-motor impairment who wish to compete in the policy debate activity. Those types of disabilities are common in people with dyslexia, autism spectrum disorders, Tourette’s Syndrome, or other learning disabilities, and in people who simply process information at a slower pace than their neuro-typical peers. A more recent article from the Rostrum focused on ways that the debate community could be more inclusive for people with visible/physical disabilities, but stopped short of offering solutions to the intractable problem of the ongoing exclusion of those with intellectual disabilities (Freeman & Pizzo, 2020, p.20). We argue that debaters with so-called “invisible” disabilities are more acutely impacted by extreme entelechialism in policy debate, and this article attempts to engage in the hard work needed to generate solutions to the dilemma. In the 1990s and 2000s, the practice of debaters simply saying “more evidence” during a speech, rather than labelling and briefly explaining what their evidence says by way of a “tagline”, became common. This practice, akin to simply “piling on” one’s opponent with an ever-growing mountain of evidence, is yet another example of entelechy in which the content of the argument or evidence is not as important as the creation of more ink on a judge’s flowsheet. Indeed, “policy debate has developed its own shorthand jargon and even a specialized method of notetaking (called “flowing”) to accommodate and account for the rapid delivery” employed in most policy debate rounds (Gerber, 2009, p.82). Thus, the mere suggestion of “more evidence” creates a corresponding visual marker on a judge’s flowsheet which denotes the symbolic presence of an argument which even without explanation, is often deemed to be true if not directly addressed. The extreme entelechial end of this speech code would envision a judge’s flow to be covered with these symbolic notations of evidence, preferably on both the front and back sides of the legal-size flow paper, thus “burying” the opposing team and “crushing them” under the weight of multiple unaddressed (thus True) arguments or pieces of evidence. Entelechy of Argumentative Ability The privileging of extreme bodily performance as the desired norm of argumentative ability functions as a pervasive mode of exclusion for those bodies that fail to meet these standards of normalization. Our argument is not that judges and coaches actively and consciously exclude those who cannot or will not participate in speed, but rather that the norm of bodily and cognitive competence comes to define our expectations regarding proper debate performance. In the opening sequence of her article about ableism in the field of communication studies, Vanessa Beasley (2021) argued that rhetoricians, and particularly former policy debaters who continue to populate the ranks of the communication discipline, not only “want to win” (p.291), but are also at least subconsciously excluding disabled voices from the realm of deliberation because “we do not expect them to win” (p.293). Students with intellectual disabilities are often not recruited into the activity or encouraged to try policy debate in the first place, because of the presumption that they might “not be able to follow (as in cognitively track) the logic of rules or arguments in a manner that would enable them to participate” (Beasley, 2021, p.300). The prevailing model of policy debate as a competitive game is exclusionary of students and coaches with disabilities because the members of the policy debate community have themselves “made a priori decisions that people with disabilities will almost always lose” (Beasley, 2021, p.294). While the sole focus of Beasley’s article is not policy debate, the authors are in solidarity with her extended opening examples about the activity, as they resonate deeply with our own personal experiences both in the academy and in debate. The entelechial drive toward winning is also self-perpetuating in that students who demonstrate the bodily and intellectual competencies of winning debaters often may receive more attention, more coaching, and more academic benefit from the activity because they are perceived, consciously or subconsciously, as winners. In this framework students with intellectual disabilities may face invisible or de facto external barriers, or may even not seek inclusion in the first place, given the tendency for norms of bodily and cognitive excellence to be highlighted as exemplars of proper policy debate performance. Similarly, the other trappings of winning and entelechialism discussed previously are equally ableist and exclusive. Many people disabled or not, are not capable of the super-human feats of mental and physical stamina required for success in policy debate. That said, the kind of sustained, up-all-night, prepping at all times, approach to policy debate will, by definition, be tougher (or impossible) for people with intellectual disabilities when compared with their neuro-typical peers. The benefits associated with participation are celebrated to justify funding for policy debate programs, but the purported academic, civic, and social profit of participation is often reserved for able-bodied students who can compete and win. Those with intellectual disabilities are confronted with structural obstacles to their very participation in the activity (not to mention the barriers they face with regard to actual competitive success or winning policy debates regularly). Policy debate describes itself as an activity committed to emancipation, equality, and the creation of an accessible, supportive discursive space for people with disabilities. Yet, speech codes like “spreading,” a discursive practice that is emblematic of the policy debate activity, have frequently been employed to deter participation or to “exclude traditionally disenfranchised voices” based on (dis)ability, race, and location (Nelson & Miller, 2016, p.5; Ryan & Sovacool, 2006, p.48-49; Pack-Jordan & Jordan, 2018). Simply put, “the speed and complex jargon in debate continues to become increasingly- dare I say- exclusive” (Ferguson, 2016, p.8). Comic Frame Correctives This article has attempted to draw readers attention toward damaging entelechial tendencies in the policy debate activity, proclivities which function to suppress meaningful participation for students and coaches with intellectual disabilities. Here, we utilize Burke’s theories of the comic frame to interrogate alternatives to the entelechial and ableist discourse patterns that undergird policy debate. As mentioned previously, Burke’s comic frame of acceptance allows for members of a discourse community to dig up, analyze, and reform their own harmful rhetorical practices. By proceeding from the assumption of human imperfection, inadequacy, and proneness to error, the comic frame “can serve as a vehicle for selfexamination” and create cognizance of “the possibility that unexamined routine habits and trends could lead to a disastrous future” (Renegar & Dionisopoulos, 2011, p.325). By examining the harmful and exclusionary discursive habits of the policy debate community, one can also begin to envision correctives to that behavior and alternatives to the ableist underpinnings of the activity. The comic perspective thus acts as a tempering check on human entelechial tendencies. Community Self-regulation Eliminating ableism in policy debate will not be a simple fix, but within a comic framework those repairs do not seem as daunting and unattainable. Toward that end, we offer a few suggestions as starting points for further deliberation. Initially, and simply put, policy debate and its constituents must make a determined effort to hold their own extreme entelechial tendencies in check. Instead of “pushing their ideas toward a rotten end” and striving to transform debaters who experience disability into perfect debating machines, the comic frame of acceptance allows us to accept those people for who they are, and to meet them where they are in terms of coaching and instruction (Renegar & Dionisopoulos, 2011, p.325). Not all students will be able to experience policy debate in the same way, and the one-size-fits-all approach to teaching, judging, and competing in policy debate must give way to a more diverse, hypersubjective, localized method by which each student can approach the activity on their own terms. There are several encouraging developments on this front, such as the Healthy Debater Initiative, as well as other self-regulatory movements in the community such as the move to six preliminary rounds at most major tournaments (instead of the standard eight). The majority of the community has decided that the loss of data points from those two missing prelim rounds did not outweigh the benefits of ending the day early, and building in more time to relax after rounds, or sleep just a little later in the morning. Thus, inroads can be cut into the entelechial tendencies of policy debate. While this may seem like an insignificant example, it proves that the humans who inhabit the debate space can mutually agree to dull the sharp edges that characterize the entelechial tendencies of the activity; the rottenness that co-mingles with the pursuit of competitive perfection. The authors also argue that the COVID-19 protocols instituted by the NDT and CEDA, and the high degree of community compliance with those rules, demonstrates the ability of the community to acknowledge and step back from, its own entelechial practices. In 2021, the national championship tournaments achieved nearly universal adherence to in-person masking mandates, no small feat given that wearing a facemask likely compelled debaters to slow down a little, enunciate more clearly, and breathe differently as compared to speaking without a mask. At once, this small change both protected people with compromised immune systems (people whose bodies were different than the discursively constructed able-bodied norm), but also helped to demonstrate that at least in some cases, the dominant speech code could be deviated from without catastrophic results. This is not to equate the dangers of spreading with the dangers of the pandemic, or to debate the scientific merits of masking; rather, we simply argue that when the policy debate community is in peril (and we believe it is, for a number of reasons that are beyond the scope of this essay), it has shown an ability to self-regulate in ways that are beneficial and healthy. These changes are helpful for students and coaches who do not, or cannot, meet the standard assumptions and expectations about bodily and cognitive performance that are baked into contemporary policy debate. Additionally, in order to cut into the entelechial ways in which debate is evaluated by administrators and decisionmakers who are in control of resource allocation, the community must change how it frames and represents the activity. Success in policy debate should be presented based on individual student development, and on the extra education that participation in debate affords competitors. Speaker awards and win-loss percentages are important, but they should be framed as a secondary metric when advocating for one’s program. Most colleges and universities are ostensibly deeply concerned with and committed to undergraduate research, and yet “debaters have been doing ‘undergraduate research’ for years, but our programs are rarely (if ever) mentioned when university administrators start talking about undergraduate research initiatives” (Morello, 1997, para.8). If participation in policy debate was more often lauded as a boon to undergraduate research and the enrichment of student knowledge, rather than being tied to success in tournament competition, it could undermine the forces of entelechy which coproduce both ableism in debate and in the evaluation of debate programs by administrators. Policy debate has grappled with “public relations” problems since its inception, but those issues become more acute when the problem is “in-house” at one’s own college or university. A shift in the metrics of evaluation and representation from one of quantitative success (accumulation of wins and awards) to one at least partially based on individual student edification is needed, although the authors recognize from our own experience that this may be a difficult task. That said, once again Burke’s notion of the comic frame provides critics with the “adventurous equipment” needed to upend standards of judgement which rest solely on “the somewhat empty accumulation of facts” (Burke, 1984, p.170-171). Changes in Policy Debate Adjudication We have argued that the dominant speech-code in policy debate, “spreading,” is ableist and exclusionary at multiple levels. A comic frame of acceptance helps us to envision ways to renew or at least revise those discursive speech practices as “entrenched conventions that might be redefined, reimagined, or transcended. (Renegar & Dionisopoulos, 2011, p.326)”. In other words, the comic frame provides argument communities with a tool for self-reflection; a path to admitting that the current approach, to judging, for example, is missing the mark. Specifically, a comic frame allows us to envision new modes of judging and evaluating policy debates which both captures and co-opts the tremendous influence judges hold over the symbolic structures and practices of the activity (Rowland & Deatherage, 1998). The delivery and speaking practices that judges choose to reward with higher speaker points is one area where it may be possible to harness the entelechial drive toward winning and mobilize it against itself. If judges began rewarding a style of delivery which was slower and less reliant on debate jargon, those students and coaches who were interested in winning would most certainly adapt their approach, creating new entry points for previously excluded students (Rowland & Deatherage, 1988, 248-249). Additionally, judges have the authority to enforce requested accommodations like asking for one’s opponent to slow down, or even requesting additional prep time. Judges should continue to use that enforcement power to make changes in the debate space that would improve the experience of debaters with disabilities. It is the judging community in policy debate which holds the power to effectuate changes in discursive practices that have been normalized in the name of competitive success. As Scott Harris argues, unsurprisingly “debaters utilize communication strategies which maximize their individual success” (entelechy), a tendency which foregrounds “information processing over delivery” (which can lead to extreme entelechy, as we have described it here) (1995, p.129). As Rowland confirmed, “we cannot expect debaters to take a long-term perspective on the activity in an environment that is inherently competitive”, meaning that change from within must come from the judges of the activity. This is a project that has been attempted before (and should be revisited and expanded) as a way to increase meaningful participation for black debaters in the activity. Shanara Reid-Brinkley argued that one aspect of the Louisville debate project in the early 1990s was to replace “expert judges with lay judges” as a method to destabilize “common research and speech delivery practices in policy debate”, practices which functioned to exclude black debaters from meaningful participation (2023, p.4-5). We argue that many of those same discursive practices and approaches to judging are also exclusionary to people with disabilities who seek meaningful participation in policy debate, and that changes in how debates are adjudicated may warrant additional scholarly and community investigation. Similarly, Steven Combs (1993) maintained that to square the purported pedagogical benefits of policy debate with the reality of how debate operates in practice, the community ought to reorient itself toward a more “public advocacy perspective” which envisions the use of lay judges instead of highly trained argumentation technocrats who reward and encourage the rapid delivery which pervades policy debate (p. 43). Finally, judges, students and coaches should consider a pause in order to self-examine their own ableist predispositions, and to determine the depth of their “own identities as the smartest people in the room when it comes to understanding how, when, and why some kinds of rhetoric win” (Beasley, 2021, p.297). As Gilbert noted, comic frames of judgement are needed in times of public and community krisis, particularly as they relate to questions regarding which course of action or trajectory that an argument community should pursue (2014, p.275). Changes in Competition

<<PARAGRAPH BREAKS RESUME>>

In line with the comic frame of interpretation, we would be remiss if we did not close with at least a few descriptions of the types of radical new worlds of policy debate that could center disability justice and simultaneously destabilize the entelechy driving policy debate. While the most obvious solution, and the one which extends directly from the line of logic laid out in the article, is to simply remove the wins and losses from the activity, the authors believe that suggestion falls prey to the same critique of entelechialism that we have laid out herein. Totally removing the competitive aspect of the policy debate game would potentially undercut the reason many are attracted to the debate endeavor in the first place, and would risk further closing off the activity at a moment when it can ill afford such a thing. At the same time, a conscious tempering of the drive for competitive success, coupled with a shift toward a model of policy debate which focuses more on the fostering of publicly accessible communication and delivery styles, is not necessarily incommensurate with a drive to increase the number of people and programs who do what we do. Toward this end, Foote (2022) suggested that a shift toward a metric of program evaluation in which civic engagement, and debate as a vehicle for social change, was foregrounded as an alternative to the base accumulation of wins and trophies, might aid in increasing participation and by extension, accessibility. Indeed, within this framework, both neuro-typical and intellectually disabled debaters could find success by harnessing and developing their innate power as advocates.

### AT: Clash---2NC

#### That solves better!

Researcher Bell ’24 [Sarah, Sébastien Jodoin, Tanvir Bush, Liz Crow, Siri Eriksen, Emma Geen, Mary Keogh, and Rebecca Yeo; September 20; Senior Lecturer at the European Centre for Environment and Human Health at the University of Exeter; Associate Professor of Law and Canada Research at McGill University; Research Fellow at Bath Spa University; artist and activist; Norwegian University of Life Science professor of climate change; disability climate activist and consultant; Advocacy Director for CBM Global; Research Fellow at the European Centre for Environment and Human Health at the University of Exeter; International Journal of Disability and Social Justice, “Beyond the Single Story of Climate Vulnerability,” vol. 4]

As noted by feminist disability scholar, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (2002, 20), a body becomes disabled when it is “out of sync” with its physical, social, cultural, and political environments, when it “misfits”. Misfitting occurs “when the environment does not sustain the shape and function of the body that enters it” (Garland-Thomson, 2011, 594). Contrary to stereotypes of disability as weakness, misfitting on a regular basis necessitates adaptability, resourcefulness and creativity in navigating and building relationships within the world. These skills are “often underdeveloped in those whose bodies fit smoothly into the prevailing, sustaining environment” (Garland-Thomson, 2011, 604). Indeed, “anticipatory scheduling” is often practised by disabled people to manage day-to-day uncertainties, of both body and world (Kafer, 2013). Expanding on this work, Arseli Dokumacı (2023, 5) reflects on the artful, micro-acts of survival that are improvised and mastered by disabled people to “bring into being the worlds that are not already available to them” in conditions of constraint or “shrinkage”. Shrinkage can occur in myriad ways; from bodily experiences of pain and body-environment misfits to the debilitation caused by conflict, brutality and the “colonialist, extractivist depletion of the world’s offerings” (2023, 9).

Although integral to adaptive capacity, these skills of anticipation, contingency planning, resourcefulness, ingenuity, and living within limits are still largely overlooked within climate adaptation scholarship, policy and practice. Beyond a “cautionary tale” of environmental harm, the knowledges and experiences of disabled people can inform new strategies for coping with experiences of climate disruption and uncertainty, for reconfiguring a sense of home and curating meaningful lives in seemingly unfamiliar, uncontrollable and fragile landscapes (Watts Belser, 2020). In the words of feminist scholar, Sara Ahmed (2017, 180):

We can value what is deemed broken; we can appreciate those bodies, those things, that are deemed to have bits and pieces missing. Breaking need not be understood only as the loss of the integrity of something, but as the acquisition of something else, whatever that else might be.

### AT: Extinction Outweighs---2NC

#### 4. CALCULATIVE ERASURE---The 1ACs impact frame is a form of utilitarian calculus that determines which lives are worth living, rendering disabled life disposable AND makes extinction inevitable.

Professor Colebrook ’18 [Claire; 2018; Edwin Erle Sparks Professor of English, Philosophy, and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Penn State; After Extinction, “Lives Worth Living: Extinction, Persons, Disability,” p. 152-160 https://dokumen.pub/after-extinction-9781517902896-9781517902889.html]

Even though the specific concepts of extinction and disability are rarely linked explicitly, the two concepts are inextricably intertwined in discussions of what counts as a life worth living. Indeed, the grand Socratic notion that the unexamined life is not worth living is not only normative (which is almost unavoidable) but normalizing: to privilege the life of examination is to open up a history that will generate the individual, reflective, deliberative, and rational subject, but to make a claim about a life not worth living is to hint at the long history that will extinguish, eliminate, harness, and evaluate unworthy lives, and will do so precisely by way of capacity. Outside explicit work on extinction and outside the rich field of disability studies, it is possible to find constant and complex linkages between the question of the worth of life (its capacity or ability) and whether such a life ought to exist. Many such arguments are utilitarian; and while utilitarianism might seem to be but one branch of (analytic) philosophy, part of my argument will be that as a conception of the liberal subject of capacity gains ascendency and takes on increasing value in neoliberal arguments for autonomy, and as the planet faces accelerated and mass extinction, a utilitarian logic becomes increasingly dominant.

Utilitarianism is a motif that will necessarily haunt questions of extinction and capacity: as resources and the capacity to survive become threatened, decisions will need to be made regarding the worth of life. Precisely in this respect, it is utilitarianism that has also articulated the most offensive position on disability. By “offensive,” here, I am not referring to an affect or emotion but rather—as in the manner of a military offensive—to a direct and forthright targeting of what has been set aside as “disabled.” Here it might seem that a utilitarian approach is partial and that there are other ethical paradigms, which of course there are, but I want to argue that the extreme positions that utilitarianism has yielded bring to the fore what is implicit in a broader history of ethics focused on personhood and a life worth living. One of the objections to calculations of utility would be by way of a deeper or inviolable conception of the person, but this too relies on distinguishing between what counts as “utility” and what would warrant a mode of “dignity” beyond calculation. For Nussbaum, the key stakes of justice lie in considering what counts as a dignified life, where dignity includes capacities that extend beyond social utility and mutual advantage. Her claim is that dignity should be the basis for social entitlements and that we attribute dignity not for rational and active powers but for “our” animal fragility: “bodily need, including the need for care, is a feature of our rationality and our sociability; it is one aspect of our dignity, then, rather than something to be contrasted with it.”4 This is perhaps why Nussbaum’s title refers to “species membership,” as though feeling and caring for one’s kind (which would, in part, include nonhuman animals) are not only a recognition of dignity but dignify one’s own life. To suffer, to be fragile, is to possess a life worth living. Here Nussbaum refers to the value and enhancement (beyond strict utility) of caring for others and of having social relationships with those whose capacities are not those of the classic rational individual. Her approach on capacities “includes the advantage of respecting the dignity of people with mental disabilities and developing their human potential, whether or not this potential is socially ‘useful’ in the narrower sense. It includes, as well, the advantage of understanding humanity and its diversity that comes from associating with mentally disabled people on terms of mutual respect and reciprocity.”5

Nussbaum presents her account as a broadening of theories of human justice by way of a more classical conception of the life worth living, one not reduced to narrow notions of mutual advantage. Even though her discourse and disciplinary terrain might appear to be strictly philosophical, the very mode of posing the question of what we owe to a life is really (ultimately) the question that presses itself upon human civilization now, and always. As “we” look to the future and the sixth great extinction event, the question of who and what survives will be imposed upon us. Utilitarian approaches to this question are, as I have already suggested, offensive, but they are because they disclose something offensive—or combative, violent, conquering—in the philosophical tradition of dignified humanity and the life worth living. In this respect, disability is neither a recent nor a local concern: the very formation of the Greek polity is based on the exclusion of those with lesser capacities. Even though, as Lennard Davis has argued, the notion of the “normal” body is very recent and is quite different from earlier cultures’ conception of an ideal body that no actual member of the species achieves, the exclusion of those who do not possess the proper potentiality of political humanity has been at the basis of the history of the Western polity.6 When Nussbaum argues for an expanded sense of capacities, she nevertheless, and necessarily, maintains the question of the life worth living. This classic philosophical question always and necessarily invokes ability, or, more accurately, disability, and this in two respects. Not only are subjects defined by way of powers (of reason, deliberation, and empathy) but those capacities in turn are enabled by a history of technologies and archives on which “able” subjects are increasingly dependent. At the very least, definitions of proper political persons rely on quite specific capacities that, even in expanded scenarios, are not all-inclusive. More importantly, the quite specific concept of the liberal, deliberative, rational, and empathetic subject depends on a history of “enlightenment” that disabled many lives, by way of exclusion, colonialism, resource depletion, or expropriation. In a world where not all lives matter to the same extent, the concept of disability is precisely what enables political inclusion, privilege, and personhood. When Peter Singer argues, in a manner that appears to be exceptional, and exceptionally offensive, that rationality and autonomy (and not species membership) are the capacities that would preclude us from being right in killing another human being, he is taking part in a far broader offensive that is definitive of the philosophical epoch oriented around the question of the life worth living.7 For Singer, what matters when considering a life and its worth is not that life’s capacities but its capacity to suffer; however, this nevertheless raises the worthiness and power of affect. What has proven to be so shocking about Singer’s work is his highlighting of a rationality already at work in claims regarding human dignity: we have already deployed notions of value and worthiness, values that Singer wishes to shift from species membership or supposed rational powers to affective powers. Not only is the question of the life worth living offensive (in its implicit generation of an unworthy life) but the life worth living is—for all its rhetoric of autonomy and power—a life of dependence and incapacity, generated through a history of enlightenment that is a history of appropriation, plundering, brigandry, excessive consumption, and energy profligacy. The Cartesian reflective subject is utterly dependent on networks of labor and technology that bolster his power while remaining outside immediate command; and as the history of enlightenment progresses, so does felicitous incapacity. “We” become more and more powerful by way of networks—the Internet, data, cheap goods, cheap skills—that rely on others’ capacities. Our exceptional political ability as subjects of reason is twinned with intensified incapacity, just as our autonomy is ultimately dependent on a history of ongoing slavery. Could we have the able political subject of deliberation and reason without the planet-destructive history of industrialism and globalism that at once enables and disables what has come to be known as humanity? Could there have been a tradition of “the life worth living” without a global industry that generated unworthy and dis-abled lives? And is not the question of the life worth living, the capable life, intertwined essentially with dependence and incapacity?

What I want to question here is whether such a question can have any coherence at all in an epoch of extinction: to ask about lives worth living is necessarily to be offensive, valuing the worth of some lives over others, and thereby waging violence (however slow) against some forms of life. If, as I would also argue, any epoch of thriving and fecundity takes place at the expense of some lives, then all ages are ages of extinction. What makes our time—the sixth mass extinction—more intense is that questions that have always haunted political personhood are now becoming more explicit. The interrelated problem of capacity and extinction has not only determined the human lives that are deemed to be worth living but has also generated the liberal political person whose autonomy, productivity, super-intelligence, and heightened capacity for urbanity is the Anthropos of the Anthropocene, the “man” whose cost to the planet is too exorbitant to reckon.8 When (today) utilitarian arguments are explicitly offensive, or make the claim that some lives ought not be lived, they reveal the offensive (combative, polemical, violent, barbaric, sacrificial) nature of what has called itself civilization. If this civilization, today, is facing extinction and is therefore pressed—more than ever—to consider ways of “weighing lives,” it may either continue with ever more nuanced and expanded conceptions of the worth of life, or it may regard this question itself as an indictment of the very rationality it seeks to save. Phrased differently, we might say that the problem of disability runs to the very heart of the extinction-logic that enables the political tradition of the person. Both those who assume that the human species—because of certain capacities—has a prima facie right to survive and those who calculate that human life as such is not worth living (for all their seeming extremity) are expressing a broader logic of the proper potentiality of a highly normative conception of human flourishing. As an example of the prima facie “right to humanity,” I would cite Rebecca Newberger Goldstein’s defense of Wilfrid Sellars and philosophical progress. The rational image we have of ourselves, even when at odds with scientific evidence about the irrational causes of our behavior, will generate an ongoing history of coherence and inclusion, where the rational “we” extends itself to value others:

Gregarious creatures that we are, our framework of making ourselves coherent to ourselves commits us to making ourselves coherent to others. Having reasons means being prepared to share them—though not necessarily with everyone. The progress in our moral reasoning has worked to widen both the kinds of reasons we offer and the group to whom we offer them. There can’t be a widening of the reasons we give in justifying our actions without a corresponding widening of the audience to which we’re prepared to give our reasons. Plato gave arguments for why Greeks, under the pressures of war, couldn’t treat other Greeks in abominable ways, pillaging and razing their cities and taking the vanquished as slaves. But his reasons didn’t, in principle, generalize to non-Greeks, which is tantamount to denying that non-Greeks were owed any reasons. Every increase in our moral coherence—recognizing the rights of the enslaved, the colonialized, the impoverished, the imprisoned, women, children, LGBTs, the handicapped . . .—is simultaneously an expansion of those to whom we are prepared to offer reasons accounting for our behavior. The reasons by which we make our behavior coherent to ourselves changes together with our view of who has reasons coming to them.

And this is progress, progress in increasing our coherence, which is philosophy’s special domain. In the case of manumission, women’s rights, children’s rights, gay rights, criminals’ rights, animal rights, the abolition of cruel and unusual punishment, the conduct of war— in fact, almost every progressive movement one can name—it was reasoned argument that first laid out the incoherence, demonstrating that the same logic underlying reasons to which we were already committed applied in a wider context. The project of rendering ourselves less inconsistent, initiated by the ancient Greeks, has left those ancient Greeks, even the best and brightest of them, far behind, just as our science has left their scientists far behind.

This kind of progress, unlike scientific progress, tends to erase its own tracks as it is integrated into our manifest image and so becomes subsumed in the framework by which we conceive of ourselves.9

For all its manifest worthiness, the notion of a progressive “self-image” that gains in ongoing global coherence, alongside scientific progress, sees its path of self-correction as improving with more and more human life taking part in the journey of development. One could make the rather obvious point that such a notion of “progress” by way of inclusion and ongoing “self-image” precludes other ways of thinking about human and nonhuman life that do not involve self-image (or some shared normative conception of “the human”), but in addition to the colonialist mentality of self-justification, one might ask about the price paid for such a history of philosophical progress. Would not other modes of life—such as those without an overinvestment in “self-image” or “the” human—have generated a quite different history of the planet? Such a question cannot be asked if a certain mode of human reason is an unquestioned good. But just as the inflation of human personhood precludes asking the question of the loss and extinction of other lives with other capacities, certain arguments for the extinction and annihilation of part or all of humanity also assume the value of the person—a single life with its specific coherence, value, and meaning. (Not only is such a notion historically and culturally specific, and tied to a highly normative conception of human self-awareness, it is also this self with an unquestioned right to the “good life” of reflection, reason, and self-determination that has generated the Anthropocene.)

When this prima facie right to life has been questioned, it has, more often than not, been by way of the same norms of capacity, will, autonomy, and personhood that supposedly make life worth living. David Benatar has argued that the human species as such should—after rational consideration—decide that it ought not exist. If we were to calculate the pleasures and pains of human existence, then not only would we decide on nonexistence as the best way to ensure the reduction of suffering, we would also realize that while there is an imperative to eliminate suffering, there is no symmetrical imperative to bring persons into being to generate pleasures or well-being. Benatar does not see a performative contradiction in being a will who decides that it is better not to exist as a willing being; once we come into being, there is a rational reason to persist in our being and live as well as possible, but that does not entail that we should will other lives to come into being. Benatar’s argument is an intensified form of an argument that has profound implications for disability.10 Peter Singer has argued that being human is not sufficient to justify a life worth living and that the calculus of pain, suffering, and living well should prompt us to choose the lives of some animals—who could enjoy lives free of suffering—over the lives of some humans, whose quality of life would not count as living well. It is for this reason that Singer can at once argue that animals ought not be killed for human consumption and that some forms of infanticide are legitimate. For Singer, it is the lack of rationality, autonomy, and a certain appreciation of life (rather than being human) that renders life not worth living:

The fact that a being is a human being, in the sense of a member of the species Homo sapiens, is not relevant to the wrongness of killing it; it is, rather, characteristics like rationality, autonomy, and selfconsciousness that make a difference. Infants lack these characteristics. Killing them, therefore, cannot be equated with killing normal human beings, or any other self-conscious beings.11

Singer expands on this point by considering a specific type of disability and what it precludes:

To have a child with Down syndrome is to have a very different experience from having a normal child. It can still be a warm and loving experience, but we must have lowered expectations of our child’s ability. We cannot expect a child with Down syndrome to play the guitar, to develop an appreciation of science fiction, to learn a foreign language, to chat with us about the latest Woody Allen movie, or to be a respectable athlete, basketballer or tennis player.12

This degree of disability does not necessarily warrant infanticide or abortion, but what does count is development; the more capacity a being develops, the less ethical it is to terminate a life. If parents choose to abort an “abnormal” fetus, then they do so at a stage prior to the development of the capacities that would make killing unethical; the same applies to infanticide. It is not species membership but capacity that counts.

Both Benatar and Singer rely on a strict utilitarianism; species and sentiment aside, one should decide on whether a life is worth living in general, where worthiness can (at the very least) be determined by an absence of suffering. In contrast with arguments that begin from the sanctity of the person, one begins with a calculus: a good life is a free self-determining life. If one accepts the premise of a life worth living, then certain lives become candidates for nonbeing. (For Singer, this is the profoundly disabled, whereas for Benatar, it is humanity as such.) It seems that questions of utility, or of what counts as a life with a sufficient degree of pleasure (or meaningfulness, or autonomy), lead inevitably to questions of human nonbeing: are there some lives that simply should not be? One might respond to this by objecting that the calculus of decision presupposes that which it claims to have justified; the subject who is doing the calculating, who is deciding on what ought to survive and how lives ought to be weighed, is—needless to say—a certain type of subject. This subject has the following capacities: a sense of “a” life, a sense of capacity (with rationality and autonomy being of significant importance), a sense of “humanity” as a global whole of which one is a member, and a manner of looking at life in terms of worthiness. One should not need too much training in anthropology, history, or critical race studies to discern the highly specific nature of these capacities.

This is not just to make a point about the poverty and brutality of Western reason and its normalizing gestures; it is also to say that many of the critiques of that same universal subject—such as those who argue for the worth of other lives, or those who value life as such for whatever reason—nevertheless take part in a rationing of life that is offensive. Here I draw again on the necessarily offensive/combative character of any assessment of the worth of life. Even if the worth of life is defined by less strictly utilitarian categories such as “meaning” or “dignity,” a certain capacity for calculus, for considering something like human life as such, and then the value of “a” life, allows for the claim that certain lives might be justifiably extinguished and enables a life of high capacity (high production, high reason, high technology) that has precipitated the sixth mass extinction.