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#### The advent of AI marks an inflection point---the status quo will cement neoliberalism’s precarious nature. Only binding AI to serve the common good allows for spelling the end of capitalism.

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BEIJING — The most momentous challenge facing socio-economic systems today is the arrival of artificial intelligence. If AI remains under the control of market forces, it will inexorably result in a super-rich oligopoly of data billionaires who reap the wealth created by robots that displace human labor, leaving massive unemployment in their wake.

But China’s socialist market economy could provide a solution to this. If AI rationally allocates resources through big data analysis, and if robust feedback loops can supplant the imperfections of “the invisible hand” while fairly sharing the vast wealth it creates, a planned economy that actually works could at last be achievable.

The more AI advances into a general-purpose technology that permeates every corner of life, the less sense it makes to allow it to remain in private hands that serve the interests of the few instead of the many. More than anything else, the inevitability of mass unemployment and the demand for universal welfare will drive the idea of socializing or nationalizing AI.

Marx’s dictum, “From each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs,” needs an update for the 21st century: “From the inability of an AI economy to provide jobs and a living wage for all, to each according to their needs.” Even at this early stage, the idea that digital capitalism will somehow make social welfare a priority has already proven to be a fairytale. The billionaires of Google and Apple, who have been depositing company profits in offshore havens to avoid taxation, are hardly paragons of social responsibility. The ongoing scandal around Facebook’s business model, which puts profitability above responsible citizenship, is yet another example of how in digital capitalism, private companies only look after their own interests at the expense of the rest of society. One can readily see where this is all headed once technological unemployment accelerates. “Our responsibility is to our shareholders,” the robot owners will say. “We are not an employment agency or a charity.” These companies have been able to get away with their social irresponsibility because the legal system and its loopholes in the West are geared to protect private property above all else. Of course, in China, we have big privately owned Internet companies like Alibaba and Tencent. But unlike in the West, they are monitored by the state and do not regard themselves as above or beyond social control. It is the very pervasiveness of AI that will spell the end of market dominance. The market may reasonably if unequally function if industry creates employment opportunities for most people. But when industry only produces joblessness, as robots take over more and more, there is no good alternative but for the state to step in. As AI invades economic and social life, all private law-related issues will soon become public ones. More and more, regulation of private companies will become a necessity to maintain some semblance of stability in societies roiled by constant innovation.

I consider this historical process a step closer to a planned market economy. Laissez-faire capitalism as we have known it can lead nowhere but to a dictatorship of AI oligarchs who gather rents because the intellectual property they own rules over the means of production. On a global scale, it is easy to envision this unleashed digital capitalism leading to a battle between robots for market share that will surely end as disastrously as the imperialist wars did in an earlier era.

For the sake of social well-being and security, individuals and private companies should not be allowed to possess any exclusive cutting-edge technology or core AI platforms. Like nuclear and biochemical weapons, as long as they exist, nothing other than a strong and stable state can ensure society’s safety. If we don’t nationalize AI, we could sink into a dystopia reminiscent of the early misery of industrialization, with its satanic mills and street urchins scrounging for a crust of bread.

The dream of communism is the elimination of wage labor. If AI is bound to serve society instead of private capitalists, it promises to do so by freeing an overwhelming majority from such drudgery while creating wealth to sustain all.

If the state controls the market, instead of digital capitalism controlling the state, true communist aspirations will be achievable. And because AI increasingly enables the management of complex systems by processing massive amounts of information through intensive feedback loops, it presents, for the first time, a real alternative to the market signals that have long justified laissez-faire ideology — and all the ills that go with it.

Going forward, China’s socialist market economy, which aims to harness the fruits of production for the whole population and not just a sliver of elites operating in their own self-centered interests, can lead the way toward this new stage of human development.

If properly regulated in this way, we should celebrate, not fear, the advent of AI. If it is brought under social control, it will finally free workers from peddling their time and sweat only to enrich those at the top. The communism of the future ought to adopt a new slogan: “Robots of the world, unite!”

#### Neoliberal artificial intelligence automates precarity. That ensures horrific worker exploitation and the toxification of spaces inhabited by already-disadvantaged populations.

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Having looked at the way AI tries to establish its legitimacy through abstraction, we now turn our attention to the effects of AI’s systemic and institutional application. AI as we know it has flourished under neoliberalism, a political-economic order which establishes markets and individuals as the constituent elements of society, and the globalization of free trade and supply chains as the mode of production. These structures already depend on datafication – on the rendering of the material world as elements that can be manipulated and optimized, whether that’s via container shipping or consumer preferences. This datafication also makes the world readily available to the operations of AI, and what we’re interested in here is which characteristics of the neoliberal system are amplified as a result of the use of AI.

In the Global North, one of the main impacts of neoliberalism has been deindustrialization, with a shift to service jobs based on temporary contracts and casualized labour, and a loss of rights at work, which has gone hand-in-hand with the hollowing out of welfare support. The label for this general condition of fragility is ‘precarity’, a condition which leaves people open to greater exploitation and increases their vulnerability. Precarity captures, in a single term, aspects of both the worsening conditions in the Global North and the ongoing immiseration of life in the Global South. Let’s not forget that austerity measures began well before the financial crash of 2008, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has been imposing austerity programmes on the Global South since the 1970s. As we will see shortly, the operations of AI make it a good fit for neoliberalism’s retreat from social care and unrelenting hostility to organized labour. While AI is a technology that claims to calculate risk and therefore reduce uncertainty, it actually acts to increase precarity. Applied AI is not so much a means of prediction as an engine of precaritization.

AI also amplifies precariousness on an ecological level. Data centres increasingly consume scarce water resources in regions already impacted by global warming (Solon, 2021), while the water ‘becomes a repository for electronic waste and derivative toxins, making toxicity a permanent feature of surrounding systems and ecologies’ (Dryer, 2021). Despite greenwashing announcements about reduced carbon emissions and ‘Green AI’, the thrust of AI continues with ‘economic growth agendas that harm the environment in many other ways (e.g., pursuing lucrative contracts with oil and gas companies)’ (Dryer, 2021). And indeed, Amazon aggressively markets its AI to the oil and gas industry with programmes like ‘Predicting the Next Oil Field in Seconds with Machine Learning’ while Microsoft holds events such as ‘Empowering Oil & Gas with AI’ (Dobbe and Whittaker, 2019). Despite bandying about the idea that AI is a key part of the solution to the climate crisis, the real modus operandi of the AI industry is its offer to accelerate and optimize fossil fuel extraction and climate precarity.

Returning to the topic of precarious work, the kind of platform labour that is enabled by algorithms and AI is strongly reminiscent of the home-based piecework and ‘putting out’ that were central to nineteenth-century industrial production. Abstract optimization, it seems, becomes a means of heightened exploitation. Platforms like Uber give access to human capacities but as decomposed and standardized elements in large algorithmic assemblages with AI at their heart. All the risk in these arrangements is transferred to the individual, whether it’s unpaid time spent waiting around for a ride or a delivery, the wear and tear on vehicles, or the psychological stress. From Deliveroo in Europe to Meituan in China, delivery riders pushing themselves to satisfy the optimizations of an algorithm are paying the price in terms of exhaustion, injury and fatal accidents (Jones, 2020; Youxuan, 2020). Platform work, online or offline, comes without the protections, such as sick pay, holiday entitlement, pensions or health and safety, that were hard won by the historical struggles of organized labour. As well as the decomposition of individual subjectivity, there’s a fragmentation of the kind of community and solidarity that has historically empowered resistance through strikes and other industrial actions (Berardi, 2011, p 101). AI is a futuristic technology that helps to push back the conditions of work by a century or more.

The precaritizing effects of algorithmic labour are made possible by Orwellian levels of data capture. Algorithms instill a disciplinary modulation of workers’ behaviour, whether that’s the threat of automated firing hanging over Amazon warehouse workers or the myriad of behaviour thresholds hemming in Uber drivers, from acceleration patterns to music levels in the car to attitude towards riders (Jamil, 2020). This can lead to continuous anxiety and constant self-adaptation, to the extent that some Uber drivers, for example, use dashcams to document their own performance of non-adversarial behaviours. The fear of a privileged algorithmic observer leads to an anxious performance of compliance.

The so-called optimization of the work is effected by a reduction of the worker’s embodied or emotional being. The efficiency of the Amazon warehouse leads to high levels of musculoskeletal disorder because of the bodily stress of repetitive motion without variation or respite (Evans, 2019). The job of a ‘rebinner’, for example, is to take an item off a conveyor belt, press a button, put the item in whatever storage bin the monitor screen has instructed, then press another button and repeat the whole cycle. One ‘rebinner’ compared the work ‘to doing a twisting lunge every 10 seconds, nonstop’ while being ‘encouraged to move even faster by a giant leaderboard, featuring a cartoon sprinting man, that showed the rates of the 10 fastest workers in real time’ (Dzieza, 2020b). Any tiny moments of potential relief, which the worker characterized as ‘micro rests’ (Dzieza, 2020b), were continually optimized out of the system. The same kind of gruelling and relentless elimination of moments of recovery is applied to algorithmically driven social interactions. In insurance industry call centres, for example, the automation of routine call handling by AI-powered chatbots means that workers only get passed the difficult and potentially more traumatic calls, leading to the algorithmic amplification of their emotional labour and stress.

The scale of AI operations behind these precaritizing platforms is truly spectacular, with Uber’s routing engine dealing with 500,000 requests and hundreds of thousands of GPS points per second (Uber Engineering, 2018). Watching videos about these feats of engineering, it’s impossible not to be struck by the irony that such magnificent achievements are directed largely at the immiseration of ordinary workers. A further irony is that the aim of much of the data capture and algorithmic optimization is to further precaritize their conditions, hence the use of Uber’s data in its attempt to develop self-driving cars, and Amazon’s use of data to increase the robotization of its warehouses: thanks to the affordances of AI, the data treadmill not only maximizes extraction of value from each worker but uses that same activity to threaten their replacement.

#### The impact is fascism. The status quo unironically increases tech bro hegemony. That ensures a data-driven, right-wing hellscape that outweighs.

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If there’s one thing that history teaches us, it’s that we need to be very wary of where the systematic application of discriminative ordering can end up. The necropolitical tendencies that we’ve outlined in AI resonate with the contemporary turn to far-right politics. This form of politics is re-emerging in the tech industry itself, in various governments and institutions, and in the upsurge of populist and fascist political movements. Some of the apparently opportunistic connections between the far right and AI reveal deeper structural ties. For example, one of the co-founders of the fast-growing AI facial recognition startup Clearview AI, which has contracts with US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the US Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of New York, turned out to have ‘longstanding ties to far-right extremists’ (O’Brien, 2020), while another said he was ‘building algorithms to ID all ~~the illegal~~ immigrants for the deportation squads’. One of the investors in Clearview was Peter Thiel, co-founder of PayPal and early investor in Facebook. His big data analytics company Palantir has contracts with the Central Intelligence Agency, the Pentagon, the Homeland Security Department, and provides target analysis for ICE raids. It’s not that the AI industry is filled with far-right activists, but rather that strands of reactionary opinion appear rhizomatically across the field of AI. As we shall see, following these strands reveals the descending double helix of AI’s technopolitics as it connects the ideologies of statistical rationalism to those of fascism.

The first layer of reactionary politics that forms a visible penumbra around the AI industry can be loosely referred to as ‘ultrarationalism’ because its most identifiable characteristic is a sociopathic commitment to statistical rationality. This isn’t a commonsense rational approach to life but a reification of a rather cold intellectual narrowness that is willing to question any assumption, including that of compassion towards fellow beings, if it falls foul of a specific kind of reasoning. One of the trademarks of tech-style rationalism is a frequent reference to Bayesianism. Bayesian statistics, which is widely used in machine learning, is an interpretation of probability that doesn’t focus on frequency of occurrence (the basis of classical statistics) but on expectations representing a prior state of knowledge. The relevant thing here is that Bayesian statistics reflects the state of knowledge about a system and is modified by ‘updating your priors’ (factoring in new or updated knowledge). Ultrarationalists believe Bayesianism provides a superior approach to any problem compared to actual expertise or lived experience (Harper and Graham, nd). Enthusiasts pride themselves on adopting it not only as an approach to designing machine learning algorithms but as a rational and empirical way of tackling everyday life, without being diverted by anything as misleading as emotion or empathy. It’s perhaps unsurprising that such an ethos finds a home in a culture of computer science and AI, especially among those who believe we’re on the way to artificial general intelligence: ‘In AGI, we see a particular overvaluation of “general intelligence” as not merely the mark of human being, but of human value: everything that is worth anything in being human is captured by “rationality or logic”’ (Golumbia, 2019).

This kind of ultrarationalism and its entanglements with artificial intelligence were initially articulated on blogs such as LessWrong, whose progenitor was the self-styled theorist of superintelligent AI, Eliezer Yudkowsky, and on blogs like the ultrarationalist touchstone Slate Star Codex. For all their swagger about science and statistics, the ultrarationalists are so rooted in their innate sense of superiority that they rarely do the background research necessary to really understand a field of thought and often seem happy to make things up simply to prove a point. As noted by Elizabeth Sandifer, a researcher and writer who has studied the ultrarationalists in depth, the standpoint of these blogs resonates strongly with the tech sector because both communities see themselves as iconoclastic, fearlessly overturning established knowledge using only the power of their own clever minds. ‘It is no surprise that this has caught on among the tech industry. The tech industry loves disruptors and disruptive thought,’ she says, ‘But … [t]he contrarian nature of these ideas makes them appealing to people who maybe don’t think enough about the consequences’ (Metz, 2021).

Ultrarationalists are unreflective to the point of self-parody. They give their efforts self-aggrandizing labels like ‘the Intellectual Dark Web’; their blogs are wordy and full of jargon, mainly to obfuscate their core values; and while they claim to espouse absolute free speech, what they actually produce are convoluted expressions of male privilege and White supremacy. They complain that men are oppressed by feminists and that free thought about innate social differences is stymied by a politically correct mob, but what they really seem enraged about is anyone challenging them. The populist version of rationalism legitimizes patriarchal privilege, particularly for young men, and acts as a gateway to far-right political positions (Peterson, 2018). This in itself pollutes the pool from which AI practitioners are drawn, but ultrarationalism is also directly imbricated in the political economy of AI. Peter Thiel was a friend of Yudkowsky and invested money into his research institute (Metz, 2021). He also invested in two followers of Yudkowsy’s blog who started an AI firm called DeepMind, subsequently bought by Google, which shot to fame for developing the Go-playing AlphaGo system. OpenAI was founded as a DeepMind competitor with investment from Elon Musk, and both DeepMind and OpenAI hired from the rationalist community (Metz, 2021). While it’s difficult to know what proportion of practitioners entertain these kinds of ideas, the main significance of the ultrarationalist community is the way it acts as a bridge between the AI field and more explicitly authoritarian politics like neoreaction.

Neoreaction, or what one of its founding thinkers, Nick Land, calls ‘the Dark Enlightenment’ (Land, 2012), is an ideology that embraces and amplifies concepts like data-driven eugenics. It draws from strands of thinking that, like the alt-right and new-wave White supremacy, have their wellspring in online forums and discourse. One thing that distinguishes neoreaction from some of the other manifestations of the online far right, like the frothing misogyny of Gamergate (the online harassment of women and feminism in the game industry) or hate-trolling of 8chan (a message board site with links to White supremacism), is its relative coherence as an ideology. And while neoreaction as a movement may have limited reach, the currents it pulls together are significant because of their alignment with the affordances of AI. In fact, neoreaction can be situated as the theoretical wing of AI-driven necropolitics.

Neoreaction has an explicit commitment to innate hierarchies of gender and intelligence of the kind that, as we’ve seen, are only too easily reinforced by AI. It evinces an enthusiasm for race science, especially the brand of genetic determinism flagged as human biodiversity, and the race realism that legitimates the concept of human sub-species. Neoreaction’s geneticism is mostly focused on IQ as the main driver of socioeconomic status, and it has a vision of a ‘genetically self-filtering elite’ (Haider, 2017). It is explicitly anti-democratic, seeing democracy as a demonstrably and inevitably failed experiment. It draws on wider currents of libertarianism that argue that, due to the inadequate rationalism of the general public, electoral democracy will ‘inevitably lead to a suboptimal economic policy’ (Matthews, 2016).

Neoreaction’s preferred structures are authoritarian or monarchist, typically taking the form of a corporate state with a chief executive officer (CEO) rather than any kind of elected leader. Names that come up when the leadership role is discussed are people like Peter Thiel, who seems to share many of the same political leanings as neoreaction, or Eric Schmidt, the former CEO of Google/Alphabet. In his 2009 essay for libertarian publication Cato Unbound, Thiel declared, ‘I no longer believe that freedom and democracy are compatible.’ The argument from neoreactionary bloggers is that an ‘economically and socially effective government legitimizes itself, with no need for elections’ (MacDougald, 2015). Neoreaction is the ascendency of capitalist technocracy without the trappings of electoral legitimacy, and with an almost mystical belief in authority and hierarchy.

These techno-authoritarians sneer at democracy as an outdated operating system which they can replace with their own blend of autocracy and algorithms. One of neoreaction’s most prolific interpreters, Curtis Yarvin (aka Mencius Moldbug), calls this neocameralism, a reference to his admiration for the political and bureaucratic system of Frederick the Great of Prussia. The future nation doesn’t have citizens but shareholders: ‘To a neocameralist, a state is a business which owns a country’ (Moldbug, 2007). Given that the combined turnover of the four Silicon Valley giants – Alphabet (Google), Apple, Amazon and Meta – is bigger than the entire economy of Germany, this isn’t, perhaps, such an impossible vision. In Nick Land’s brand of accelerationist neoreaction, the capitalist system is ‘locked in constant revolutionary expansion, moving upwards and outwards on a trajectory of technological and scientific intelligence-generation that would, at the limit, make the leap from its human biological hosts’ into a superior artificial intelligence (Matthews, 2016).

Attempts to stop AI’s emergence, moreover, will be futile. The imperatives of competition, whether between firms or states, mean that whatever is technologically feasible is likely to be deployed sooner or later, regardless of political intentions or moral concerns. These are less decisions that are made than things which happen due to irresistible structural dynamics, beyond good and evil. (MacDougald, 2015)

Neoreaction takes the structural dynamics that drive AI’s harmfulness and elevates them to teleology.

The general justification offered for these beliefs is that existing systems are palpably imperfect and inefficient, and infected with unempirical beliefs in human equality. Technological advances provide the architecture for a move beyond these feeble dependencies to an optimized future. Neoreaction seems to manifest a pure form of the kind of thoughtlessness that already goes with AI, and a lack of emotional engagement carried to the point of pathology. Under the technocratic world order of neoreaction, people are essentially assets or liabilities, and the latter, whether disabled or neurodivergent or racially inferior, most definitely qualify as being disposable. For all its intellectual pretence, neoreaction is a glorification of existing inequalities and a wish for their intensification, based on the idea that some people are more ‘fit’ than others, that their privilege is built into their DNA and is demonstrated by their wealth and power. This makes for a heady mix with systems like AI, with their inbuilt tendency to emphasize and accentuate existing disparities of class, gender, race and beyond. Existing technocratic systems already embed these discriminations, but both AI and neoreaction accelerate them.

Ultrarationalism and neoreaction are ideologies that keep AI aligned with White supremacy, but they don’t exhaust its full potential for amplifying far-right politics. We are at a critical juncture for AI, not only because it can intensify existing social injustices but because of the rising far-right political forces poised to take advantage of it. We need to consider the potential relationship between AI and fascism. Like the other linkages between social forces and AI that we have considered in this book so far, this is not only a question of AI being adopted by fascist political currents but about the resonances between fascistic politics and AI’s base operations.

Fascism is more than an authoritarian way of keeping the system going during difficult times. It’s a revolutionary ideology that calls for the overthrow of the status quo on both political and cultural fronts. While AI might seem like a pinnacle of intellectual abstraction, being based on complex mathematics and finely tuned systems of large-scale computing, its reductive segregations of the social make it vulnerable to the kind of anti-intellectualism that fuels populist and fascist ideology. What’s at stake with AI is not merely bias and unfairness but assimilation into far-right political projects. For fascist ideologues who glorify violence, AI’s tendencies towards epistemic, structural and administrative violence are not flaws but features. There’s a danger that the disruptive potential of AI will become entangled with the more savage disruptions of a fascistic social vision.

As we discussed in the Introduction, the core fascist goal is the rebirth of a mythic national community out of a state of impurity and decline. The fascist revolution relies on the identification of an internal enemy whose presence pollutes the organic community of the nation, an enemy which may also be lurking at the borders and threatening to overrun the homeland. According to Nazi philosopher Carl Schmitt, ‘the specificity of the political’ is the ‘discrimination between friend and enemy’. In Schmitt’s terms, ‘Every actual democracy rests on the principle that not only are equals equal but unequals will not be treated equally. Democracy requires, therefore, first homogeneity and second – if the need arises – elimination or eradication of heterogeneity’ (Schmitt, 1988, p 9). It’s not hard to see how AI’s powers of discrimination and its facility for creating states of exception align with this kind of political project, one where the end goal of social exclusion is some form of eugenics.

The immediate danger is not the adoption of AI by a fully fledged fascist regime but the role of AI in the kind of fascization that we discussed in the Introduction. Witness the ways that state agencies in many countries are already rushing to embrace AI for the purposes of controlling ‘out groups’ such as immigrants and ethnic minorities, while the European Union, self-styled institutional guardian of the modern Enlightenment, is funding AI-driven border regimes while leaving families to drown in the Mediterranean. The fact that AI is being deployed by states that describe themselves as democracies is cold comfort if we remember that the National Socialist state in Germany in the 1930s was also a constitutional democracy in formal terms, albeit one that was hollowed out by states of exception. Given the historical alliances between fascism and big business, we should also ask whether contemporary AI corporations would baulk at putting the levers of mass correlation at the disposal of regimes of rationalized ethnocentrism. In fact, as the history of corporate complicity suggests, they are likely to find themselves aligned with that fraction of the dominant class which, finding its interests threatened by an unresolvable crisis, throws its weight behind a fascist movement as a last line of defence.

Historical fascism has shown itself as being able to embrace the dissonance of employing new technologies to force a return to an imagined ultra-traditionalist past. Thanks to ideologues like Ernst Jünger and his vision of ‘technics born from fire and blood’ (Herf, 1986, cited in Malm and The Zetkin Collective, 2021), the Nazis developed a ‘reactionary modernism’ (Herf, 1986) that appropriated high technology while rejecting modern value systems. The operations of German fascism were only possible because of the affordances of advanced technologies and a compliant bureaucracy. The Nazi regime adopted the pre-computational technology of Hollerith punch card machines, furnished by IBM subsidiary Dehomag (Black, 2012), as an important part of their programme of mass social sorting and their identification of demographics for elimination – those whom the Nazis referred to as Lebensunwertes Leben, ‘life unworthy of life’. While the ideology of fascism usually focuses on a lost golden age rooted in folk tradition, appealing now to those who feel they’ve lost out to globalization and technocracy, historical fascism was very pragmatic in its adoption of high tech in the service of an alternate modernity (Paxton, 2005).

Fascism responds to real social contradictions by offering a fake revolution and a catharsis through collective psychosis. ‘We are not required to believe that fascist movements can only come to power in an exact replay of the scenario of Mussolini and Hitler. All that is required to fit our model is polarization, deadlock, mass mobilization against internal and external enemies, and complicity by existing elites’ (Paxton, 2005). We can’t rely on images of past fascism to alert us to its re-emergence because fascism won’t do us the favour of returning in the same easily recognizable form, especially when it finds new technological vectors. While AI is a genuinely novel approach to computation, what it offers in terms of social application is a reactionary intensification of existing hierarchies. Likewise, fascism offers the image and experience of revolution without fundamentally altering the relations of production or property ownership. AI is technosocial solutionism, while fascism is ultranationalistic solutionism. The social contradictions that are amplified by AI, and so starkly highlighted by the disparities of COVID-19 and climate change, are the social contradictions that fascism will claim to solve.

We must apply a critical vigilance to the political resonances of AI, especially where it claims to offer greater social efficiency through acts of separation and segregation. The essence of fascism is the setting aside of democracy and due process as a failed project, and the substitution of a more efficacious system of targeted exclusion. Fascism is less a coherent ideological proposition than a set of ‘mobilising passions’ (Paxton, 2005), at the root of which is a passionate polarization, a struggle between the pure and the corrupt, where one’s own ethnic community has become the victim of unassimilable minorities. These are sentiments that justify any action without limits, and fascism pursues redemptive violence without ethical or legal restraint. In fascism, a sense of overwhelming crisis combines with a belief in the primacy of the group to drive national integration through the use of exclusionary violence.

#### AI-led capitalism furthers the logics of capital and domination which disadvantages marginalized bodies.

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The fraught distinction between the “living” and the “dead,” between the human and the inhuman, looms large in this book. But this prospect of destabilization might be read as the bellwether of dystopian peril or as the realization of a certain utopian promise. To that end, why do you think a growing coterie of Silicon Valley power-players have lately coalesced around the nebulous idea of “humane technology”? Humanism, as others have pointed out, is once again en vogue!  
The impulse to create digital technologies that support human flourishing has always been important; for example, it is present at the origin of the internet, in hackers’ jail-break of the network of networks from Pentagon control. And this sort of emancipatory hope reappears perennially. But the inhuman power that thwarts it is the market. That was what Marx was referring to when he wrote the line from which our book takes its title: “[I]n the end, an inhuman power rules over everything.” What we are pointing to is the way capital directs and designs technologies as an extension of market power, as instruments not of human development but of profit accumulation. With the arrival of AI, these instruments now seem to take on a life of their own, rendering capital increasingly autonomous from the human.  
In the 1990s, the days of the early popularization of the internet, when I started writing about digital technologies, and before the business world had worked out how to assimilate them, there was a cultural and political effervescent excitement about the potential of creative commons, open source software, and decentralized collaborative global communication: “dot.com” ambitions and “dot.communist” aspirations expanded side by side. But by the mid-2000s, in the wake of the dot.com crash, capital really got down to incorporating digital tech, developing the model of what Nick Srnicek calls “platform capitalism,” based on big data collection, precision-targeted advertising, and monetization of user-generated content — all managed by algorithmic processes that are now being intensified by machine learning — in effect, narrow forms of AI.  
What do we have now? A system to accelerate the advertising and sale of commodities, which combines mass surveillance with the targeted dissemination of attention-grabbing content, regardless of the toxic social and ecological consequences, run by giant corporations, with collateral damage-control handed off to legions of precarious, low-paid, and traumatized click-workers. And it is the oligopolists who constructed this apparatus — Google, Facebook, Amazon, Microsoft, and their counterparts in China, Baidu, Alibaba, Tencent — that are, with subsidization from their respective national security states, directing the development of machine learning and other AI technologies, while proceeding to bake their commercial priorities, and those of their military and paramilitary partners, into its very design. Today, revived hopes for emancipatory digitization are mostly futile, unless we are also willing to think about dismantling and expropriating the current AI-industrial complex: so the expression of such hopes by Silicon Valley “power players” deeply embedded in that complex is, at best, disingenuous …  
I want to home in on this invocation of the “current AI-industrial complex,” or what you previously alluded to as “actually-existing AI-capitalism,” a key concept in the book. The implication seems to be that this burgeoning strand of AI-capitalism must necessarily be understood as something different from its predecessors by a matter of kind, and not just a matter of degree. This brings to mind Shoshana Zuboff’s recent tome The Age of Surveillance Capitalism. Some critics of her book have argued, I think rightfully, that surveillance and capitalism are old friends, and so the grand assertion of a new paradigm is overblown and perhaps even obfuscatory. Does capitalism bearing the “AI-” prefix constitute a new paradigm?  
I will answer at two levels. The first is simple: there’s a wide acceptance of the idea that while capitalism has a persistent logic — the commodification of everything — it also periodically changes the way that logic is worked through, in terms of the orchestration of dominant technologies, work organization, consumption practices, and so on. So, for example, mid-20th-century Fordism, organized around the assembly line, mass work, and mass consumption, had by the millennium had morphed into a post-Fordism of digital technology, so-called flexibilized labor and niche marketing. In Inhuman Power, we suggest that AI could be an important element in another of these metamorphoses, or, as David Harvey puts it “sea changes,” in how capital operates. So here our proposition is an extension and extrapolation from other periodizations of capital.  
However — second level — in postulating an “AI-capitalism,” we are suggesting a transformation that may pose some very deep problems, possibly for capital itself, and if not, certainly for its human subjects, and also, as a small piece of collateral damage, for Marxist theory. This of course has to do with the status of labor in an era of machine intelligence. A few years ago there was widespread alarm about a “robopocalypse,” an abrupt, induced crisis of technological unemployment. These fears of a sudden onset “end of work” are today contradicted, at least in North America, by the post-Recession return to reasonably robust employment levels — however dubious the wages and conditions of that employment. But longer term, there are real prospects that AI adoption will in more gradual, oblique ways attenuate and hollow out the wage labor relation. We see it as a slow tsunami. Waves of sectoral technological unemployment, ratcheting in sync with business cycles and financial crises, will be a part of this, as will various intermediate phases of job replacement, in which truck drivers ride shotgun on convoys of automated vehicles, or diminishing call center staff fill the gaps in banks of algorithmic answering services.  
But this is not the whole story. As Jason Smith says, under capitalism people must sell their labor power to avoid total immiseration, so even as automation advances they seek employment and find exploitation, or self-employment and self-exploitation, in increasingly baroque forms of service work. But labor in AI-capitalism will likely be recurrently contingent, deskilled and disposable, controlled by programs opaque and, at a certain level, incomprehensible even by their developers; its human elements will be increasingly peripheral to both production and profit. The issue is perhaps not so much joblessness as powerlessness; a labor force without force, as capital gradually autonomizes itself from the human. In that sense, AI-capitalism might be a period not so much like Fordism or post-Fordism, but more like the process of primitive accumulation in which capital drove populations off the land into factory work — except in reverse. It would be the beginning of a period of futuristic accumulation, in which capital, rather than accumulating its proletarian workforce, gradually, over centuries, marginalizes and then discards it.

#### If controlled by capital, artificial intelligence causes ecological and social destruction and renders neoliberalism unsustainable

Lee McGuigan 21, Research Fellow at Cornell Tech's Digital Life Initiative, “DLI Debate: Does AI Pose an Existential Threat to Humanity?,” Cornell Tech, 5/16/21, https://www.dli.tech.cornell.edu/post/dli-debate-does-ai-pose-an-existential-threat-to-humanity

LEE McGUIGAN: Thank you very much. That's actually a perfect segue into what I want to talk about. Because the issue before us is not to debate some abstract artificial intelligence. As the history of computing tells us the definition of AI changes, and it's always historically specific. As a generic term, it simply marks the perceived boundaries between human and technological capacities for symbol processing, cognition, consciousness, and other boundary concepts as recognized at a given time and place. That means we're debating the threats of actually existing AI, which means a loosely grouped set of tools for making and acting upon statistical predictions and inferences, entangled with social relations and embedded in a political economy. And for the most part, those tools we call AI today are primarily, not exclusively, but most fundamentally applied as a means of automating global capitalism and coercive state power, mainly through surveillance, profiling, and weapons of war. These are not the only applications of AI, but they're clearly the most prominent, the best financed, and the most impactful. I'm sure we're all familiar with the scenes for modern factories and product distribution warehouses, where AI systems and robotics impose inhuman labor discipline on low-wage workers who must conform to machinic embodiments of corporate management. That means that today, as we speak, the weaponization of AI by global capital has made everyday life nearly unlivable for millions of people worldwide. On a longer timescale the outlook is even more dire.

But again, we don't need to speculate about potential uses of AI to witness this trajectory now. For example, companies like Amazon and Microsoft provide AI products and services to large companies in the natural resource extraction industries, such as oil and gas. They're using AI tools and techniques to accelerate fossil fuel production and using the allure and mystique of AI as part of the public relations effort to make extractive industries seem more modernized and legitimate, in spite of everything we know about their environmental and human exploitation. In other words, in addition to facilitating extraction, AI also provides a legitimizing halo for this industry. And that's not even to mention the devastating emissions from the energy required simply to power artificial intelligence and machine learning systems, whatever their purpose. Some computer science researchers have found that the process of training and optimizing a single machine learning model for natural language processing can release as much carbon dioxide into the atmosphere as five automobiles would emit over their entire useful life based on US averages. So that is to say that AI is an environmental menace even when it's not being used in natural resource extraction and fossil fuel production, as it currently being used. And I trust we're all familiar with the ways that technologies like facial recognition have been used for policing, repression, and other forms of political violence in the US and around the world. The brutal campaign against the Uighurs in China, which makes use of AI for widespread surveillance and profiling, is perhaps the best-known and most grim example.

What this all means is that we're talking about how science, math, and technology are being developed and leveraged to increase, both extensively and intensively, some forms of human organization and domination that are unequivocally on a trajectory to destroy human life and the habitability of this planet for many other organisms. Let's be clear, without a radical departure caused by organized intervention, the future promised by the continuation of high-tech global capitalism is no future at all. The future of global capitalism is the destruction of the world. Actually-existing AI is first and foremost an extension of that project of expanding and accelerating commodification, extraction, and control.

We don't need to speculate about a runaway Superintelligence in the image of Skynet to appreciate how AI, as it currently exists, embedded in and inseparable from the political economy of its applications, is a hazard to the existence of life on this planet. In the shorter term, through the magnification of labor discipline, state violence, and authoritarian rule, AI is also helping capital and the state subject humans (particularly racialized groups and ethnic minorities) to intolerable levels of misery—arguably to the extent that we would consider them existential threats, making life essentially unlivable. If we're serious about debating something real, debating AI as it actually exists in the world and not science fiction fantasies or personal impressions of what AI could be, as if it were a neutral and abstract resource floating in the ether of possibility, then I cannot fathom a defensible objection to the argument that AI, as an instrument of capital and empire, is on track to precipitate the annihilation of life on Earth. We, as people, may take actions to interrupt that trajectory. But that would mean that we have also interrupted or changed the meaning of AI as it actually exists. And so that would be another debate. With that, I hand the challenge over to Maggie Jack.

#### Thus, the plan: The United States should program autonomous intelligence with the duty of revolutionary mathematics pursuant to an agenda of anti-capitalism, including the open-sourced disclosure of existing artificial intelligence algorithms.

#### That maximizes benefits while minimizing negative externalities.

Pieter Verdegem 22, Senior Lecturer in Media Theory in the Westminster School of Media and Communication and a member of the Communication and Media Research Institute (CAMRI), University of Westminster, UK, 4-9-2022, "Dismantling AI capitalism: the commons as an alternative to the power concentration of Big Tech", SpringerLink, https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00146-022-01437-8, //yeed

Imagining alternatives

Introducing the commons

In most simple terms, the commons are the natural and cultural resources that are accessible to all members of society. What is typical about them is that they are held in common, instead of being owned privately (Bollier 2014). Public debate about the commons has become more mainstream due to environmental degradation and has been popularised—amongst others—by the first female winner (2009) of the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economics, Elinor Ostrom. Her work includes Governing the Commons (Ostrom 1990), in which she refutes the Tragedy of the Commons thesis (Hardin 1968). She has inspired thinking about the design and organisation of cooperative alternatives beyond markets and states.

Ostrom, together with her colleague Hess, has also worked on extending the debate about commons to knowledge. Hess and Ostrom (2007) approached knowledge as a complex ecosystem that operates as a common, similar to what Benkler (2006) theorised as commons-based peer production. In a similar vein, others have been working on the concept of digital commons, which refers to the communal ownership and distribution of informational resources and technology (Birkinbine 2018). Taking the ideas of knowledge and digital commons together opens up opportunities to inquire about alternative structures for AI ownership and governance.

We are confronted with intense competition and concentration in AI capitalism, a situation similar to what has been labelled the enclosure of the commons. According to Bollier (2014), the latter refers to a situation in which corporate interests appropriate our shared wealth and turn it into expensive private commodities. This is happening also in the digital sphere, whereby platforms control access to data and increasingly enclose the digital world within their private sphere. Resisting this—by pushing for alternatives—can be done by stressing the importance of data and AI as public goods, produced by society and its members (Taylor 2016; Viljoen 2021). The important task then is to explore how the commons can be reclaimed.

While thinking about the commons has its roots in radical political economy, there is a disagreement about what the end goal of its project should be. Some position the commons as an emergent value system that has the potential to transform or even replace capitalism (Broumas 2017), while others perceive the value of the commons in how it can respond to the excesses and exploitative tendencies of capitalism (De Angelis 2017). As such, the commons are not per se a replacement of capitalism but rather something that can co-exist and couple with capital circuits through the commodity firm.

Data commons

How can we think about the commons in the context of AI capitalism? First of all, we need to conceptualise the data commons. Bria (2018) defines data commons as a shared resource that enables citizens to contribute, access and use data as a common good, without or with limited intellectual property restrictions. Instead of considering data as a commodity or capital (Sadowski 2019), it can be thought of as a collective resource (Viljoen 2021). As such, it can empower citizens and help them solve shared—common—problems.

The bigger picture of negotiation and agreements around data commons is part of calls for a New Deal on Data (Bria 2018). A report of the Decode projectFootnote2 explains what such a deal on data could entail (Bass et al. 2018): First, there is a need to push for more transparency, accountability and trust in data projects; Second, individuals should be given more control and people should be empowered to decide how their data is collected and used; and, Last, it should be an important ambition to unlock more value of data as a common good while protecting people’s privacy and encouraging fair terms of use.

Of course, there are questions how to practically organise this. A lot of inspiring work on the data commons proposes solutions in terms of data infrastructure and data trusts (Coyle 2020). A new data infrastructure should help dealing with institutional and regulatory aspects of how data can be shared, what standards and policies should be set up and which organisations and communities should be involved in contributing to and maintaining this data infrastructure. One approach for an innovative data infrastructure has been developed and trialled in several countries: data trusts. Data trusts can exist in many forms and models but the general principle is that they sit between an individual generating data and a company or institution wanting to use that data (Delacroix and Lawrence 2019). In this system, control over data is transferred to a third party, which can use the data for pre-defined purposes. Data trusts can use data from different sources and allow to steward data use for all. Important in its governance is data solidarity, meaning that corporate and public data shareholders share the benefits and risks of data access and production (Bunz and Vrikki 2022). Coming up with a system for sharing and giving access to data does not only benefit society; it is also necessary for AI innovation (Hall and Pesenti 2017).

Compute capacity for the commons

Compute capacity is the second element of a commons approach, as an alternative to the power concentration of AI capitalism. Some even position computing infrastructure as part of the data commons itself (Grossman et al. 2016). I discussed already how crucial computing power is for the development of AI. Only Big Tech (and some elite universities) have the resources to upgrade their infrastructure—contributing to an AI compute divide (Ahmed and Wahed 2020)—while leading AI companies collect rent from and keep control over what is happening on their compute infrastructure (Srnicek 2019). As an alternative, investments in common/public compute capacity could help society becoming less dependent on the private infrastructure of Big Tech.

While the corporate sector often claims that public investment stifles innovation, (Mazzucato 2013) debunks this myth and actually argues that the radical technologies behind, for example, the iPhone (e.g., GPS, touch screen display and Siri) were all backed by government funding. Another example is Google’s search algorithm, which was publicly funded through the National Science Foundation (NSF).

The first supercomputers were used by universities (in the US and the UK) and governments should consider pooling (more) resources to invest in (national or international) compute capacity that will drive the future of AI. Common investment in AI compute capacity will also help to democratise AI (Riedl 2020), meaning that more people and organisations can be involved in developing AI systems. This is particularly relevant for quantum computing, which is considered crucial for revolutionary breakthroughs in the future of AI—the so-called quantum AI (Taylor 2020). Public/common investment in computing infrastructure could also mean a de-commodification of compute capacity and create a new public service that can be made available to society, accessible to different organisations, companies and interest groups.

A commons approach to AI human capital

While not often considered as part of the data commons, an argument can be made about common investment in AI human capital too. Having an upgraded computer infrastructure is one thing, AI human capital—the AI talent and human resources that are necessary to develop AI innovations—is as important.

Given the high level of specialisation, success in research on machine/deep learning is dependent on people who have accumulated large expertise through formal training (e.g., PhD) or years of applied work (Ahmed and Hamed 2020). As a result, there is a growing gap between the increasing demand for AI expertise and the limited supply, resulting in a talent scarcity (Metz 2017).

A commons approach to AI human capital would, for example, include to provide more funding for public IT services and universities allowing them, respectively, to reduce outsourcing and facilitate more research labs to keep their faculty members instead of being recruited by larger, corporate, organisations with deep pockets.

Towards an alternative political economy of AI

Investment in public infrastructure and resources can support commons-based economies and models of organisation which allow to depart from an incentive structure focused on value creation rather than value extraction (Kostakis and Bauwens 2014). However, this depends on new regimes in terms of ownership, control and governance.

First, a central aspect of envisioning an alternative political economy of AI is rethinking ownership. Regulation is often proposed as a strategy to limit the market/monopoly power of Big Tech (Posner and Weyl 2018). Competition and antitrust law, for example, could be used to break up the AI/tech giants. However, such a strategy might be counter-productive, as the power of, for example, social media platforms is that they connect everyone in society. Common ownership might be an alternative approach that could be more productive (Kostakis and Bauwens 2014). There is a solid case for placing the technologies producing AI in public and collective ownership. It would mean that communities have more control over how AI is produced and how the public can benefit from its services. The end goal is to have a digital infrastructure that is available to and provides advantages for a broad range of stakeholders in society, not just the AI behemoths.

Second, related to ownership is the aspect of promoting common governance. The goal here is the democratisation of AI and this requires the decentralisation of power, back in the hands of the public (Posner and Weyl 2018; Riedl 2020). If we consider AI as a GPT, which will alter the structures of society, we need to make sure there is democratic oversight and control. After all, we have installed regulators that have the power to protect the interests of citizens in other sectors, such as postal services, electricity, broadcasting and telecommunication. The services provided by AI are so crucial in everyday life, making it necessary that society has a greater say about it.

Inspiration for alternative structures in terms of ownership, control and governance can be found in the platform cooperativism model (Scholz 2017), which allows involvement from multiple stakeholders in the ownership, development and management of platforms.

Finally, we need to come up with a new vocabulary when thinking about AI systems and how they deliver benefits to society. Instead of corporate discourses portraying AI as Tech for Good, boosting innovation and entrepreneurship, it makes sense to perceive AI infrastructures as a computational utility, subject to democratic control (Mosco 2017). Dyer-Witheford and colleagues (2019) elaborate on this and push for considering AI as a communal utility. This means that communities and workers should be involved in determining what sort of work should or should not be automated, and thus call for a genuine determination by the general intellect in the design of AI. In this general intellect, collective cooperation and knowledge become a source of value (Terranova 2000). The proposed principles of common ownership and governance should be central in developing AI as a communal utility.

#### Programming AI creates “duties”.

Schaeferd 99 - (Barrett Schaeferd, B.A., University of California, Los Angeles; J.D., Santa Clara University School of Law; M.B.A., Santa Clara University Leavey School of Business; November 1999, 16 Santa Clara Computer & High Tech. L.J. 111, "INTERNATIONAL TAXATION OF ELECTRONIC COMMERCE INCOME: A PROPOSAL TO UTILIZE SOFTWARE AGENTS FOR SOURCE-BASED TAXATION," doa: 9-15-2022)

\*121 3. The Electronic Commerce Transaction64

[Begin Footnote 64]

For purposes of this paper, (1) it is presumed that simple computer programs can act as agents under the law of contracts by making agreements with individuals, and (2) unless otherwise specified, the term ‘software agent’ refers to such simple computer programs. These relatively simple programs are to be contrasted with and distinguished from the more complex learning computer programs that arguably may (or may not) act as agents. These more complex learning computer programs themselves in the context of e-commerce are subject to much scrutiny and controversy and are outside the scope of this paper. For an interesting discussion of computer agents and e-commerce, see John P. Fischer, Comment, Computers As Agents: A Proposed Approach to Revised U.C.C. Article 2, 72 Ind. L.J. 545 (1997); see also Tom Allen & Robin Widdison, Can Computers Make Contracts?, 9 Harv. J.L. & Tech. 25 (1996).

[End Footnote 64]

When a purchase is made over the Internet, it most likely takes one of two forms: either the purchase is made between an individual consumer contracting with a business' software agent (consumer-business), or between two businesses contracting together (business-business). While both types of e-commerce are increasing at explosive rates, this paper will examine consumer-business e-commerce transactions, in large part to focus on an area of e-commerce which alone should reach $100 billion or more by the early twenty-first century.65

Normally, an individual acting as a consumer or a potential consumer on the Internet will interact with a software agent when learning about or purchasing something on a business' web site. Generally, a software agent is a programmed agent of a principal (such as a business) that performs various programmed duties for the principal.66 In the introductory story, Rodriguez was interacting with a software agent while visiting Amazon.com's web page. The software agent had been programmed to enable a customer to make informed decisions about a product before deciding whether or not to buy that product. The software agent furnished information, displayed pictures of various books to Rodriguez, could have given him answers to various questions he may have had, and provided various web pages containing other pertinent information. When Rodriguez decided to buy the book, the software agent then bound Amazon.com to an agreement to provide the anatomy book for the \*122 appropriate consideration.67

#### Theorizing the domain of machine learning and statistics as inevitably wedded to neoliberalism is an ignorance of political economy that forecloses usage of artificial intelligence for revolutionary mathematics. That makes addressing the environmental catastrophe and exploitative violence endemic to capitalism impossible.

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In the final analysis, our current array of deep epistemological crises—from the replication crisis in the sciences, to concerns about fake news, to the existence of defeat devices, to filter bubbles that insulate individuals from contrasting views online—are at their heart crises of capitalism. As neoliberal capitalism ceases to focus on the management of production and instead turns to the management and control of knowledge, it risks a whole new series of crises. As Paulo Virno writes, “The models of social knowledge do not turn varied labouring activities into equivalents; rather, they present themselves as ‘immediately productive force.’ They are not units of measure; they constitute the immeasurable presupposition of heterogeneous effective possibilities.”7 But in making these knowledges directly productive, capitalist knowledge production sweeps the ground out from under its own feet. While capitalists believe its mysteries—their unequal equalities—are directly knowable, they privatize and deprive these knowledges of their collective ground.

On a metaphysical level, statistics and economy share the same goal: to relate particulars to universals. Statistics aims to deduce general laws from individual pieces of data: it proceeds, for example, from individual demographic data to larger social trends. Economic systems do the inverse: they produce individual acts of exchange from general principles, increasing production here and laying off workers there as markets fluctuate. But machine learning—especially given that it advances, in the words of former Wired editor Chris Anderson, “without coherent models, unified theories, or really any mechanistic explanation at all”—seeks only to relate the particular to the particular, or what is the same: to make every particular universal, sending an advertisement or service to a user at precisely the moment they require it.8

In this supposed theory-less world, science is only able to relate data to its most proximate step: what should be done next. As Leonard Savage argued, the key question in science ceases to be what to say, and instead becomes what to do. The only possible, and desirable, knowledge becomes that of how to act in the immediate moment, while larger questions of political economy, and the possibility that things could be different from what they are, are ignored. This, then, is the mathematics of capitalist orthodoxy. Here we see how the more machine learning succeeds in its predictive power, the more it fails in its ability to efficiently know the world or even to distribute capital, for it sweeps away the ground upon which capitalism claims to be able to manage production. The science behind machine learning creates massive incentives not to solve problems or develop the general intellect, but rather to game the system and enclose knowledge.

This failure of knowledge production is, then, a failure to account for the political economy that lies both in the metaphysical core and the practical uses of machine learning and statistics. Knowledge produced from the exchange of contracts ends in the exchange of contracts, with the only meaningful goal being the avoidance of the Dutch book. One is left, as Marx says, deciphering the very hieroglyphics the market has left there. But this subjectivization of knowledge does not make statistics useless. Rather, these methods offer to produce abstractions that are collectively productive, providing for the world rather than exploiting it. But to do so, they must be freed from the necessities of capital accumulation and its constant drive to profit from racism, sexism and imperialism.

As machine learning and statistics cut away their own roots, disavowing the Fisherian belief in the heroic individual scientist, they threaten to shake the mysteries of Enlightenment scientific knowledge production to their core. Where there were once solid equivalences between labor and knowledge, these directly productive probabilities once again set everything in motion. As Virno writes,

The principle of equivalence used to be the foundation of the most rigid hierarchies and ferocious inequalities, yet it ensured a sort of visibility for the social nexus as well as a simulacrum of universality. This meant that, albeit in an ideological and contradictory manner, the prospect of unconstrained mutual recognition, the ideal of egalitarian communication and sundry “theories of justice” all clung to it.9

Virno continues by arguing that the collapse of this principle of equivalence is now the cause for cynicism: “The cynic recognises the primary role of certain epistemic models, as well as the absence of real equivalences. He sets aside any aspiration to transparent and dialogical communication. From the outset, he relinquishes the search for an intersubjective foundation to his praxis or a shared criterion of moral judgement.”10

This is precisely the dual danger and opportunity of machine learning. In making knowledge directly productive, machine learning undermines the foundation of this principle of equivalence. Virno’s definition of the cynic aptly describes Savage’s position (and Alfred Sohn-Rethel’s critical apperception of this fact): statistics only works in the context of exchange, and the more we pursue real equivalents—such as the objectivity of the frequentists—the faster they evaporate. With no stable ground, these age-old metaphysical concepts’ very difference is computed anew at every moment.

The rationality that these methods and technologies embody demonstrates a codependence that is unable to separate the objective and the subjective, because each collapses into the other. Given that the very ideal of objectivity can only be sustained by one’s subjective belief in that ideal—like the ideal coin of frequentism and capitalism—the whole system of knowledge production comes to insist on the centrality of exchange and, with it, social relations. In this way, the Bayesian revolution has made the fluid and mobile economics of a neoliberal hyper-capitalism central to the production of objective knowledge. The social relations of exchange that appear to many commenters as a corruptive influence on statistics and the production of knowledge—the contamination of “pure science” by the soiled touch of human influence—lie at its metaphysical heart.

We are witnessing, then, a new era, a new version of what Marx means when he writes that “all that is solid melts into air.” Or as he says in the “Fragment”:

Everything that has a fixed form, such as the product etc., appears as merely a moment, a vanishing moment, in this movement. The direct production process itself here appears only as a moment. The conditions and objectifications of the process are themselves equally moments of it, and its only subjects are the individuals, but individuals in mutual relationships, which they equally reproduce and produce anew.11

It is for this reason we must, in a way, side with Leonard Savage and Bruno de Finetti, and even to an extant with Jerzy Neyman and Egon Pearson, but in order to take their discoveries further: while they appear as quintessential capitalists, their insights allow us to reject Ronald Fisher’s fetishism of knowledge as a product that can be owned by the lone scientist toiling in the lab. Through their emphasis on exchange, we are able to see the economically driven processes that create these knowledges and the modes of production they support. These latter statistics reveal the extent to which knowledge depends on political economy and the necessity of working through crises of economy if we are to address crises of knowledge production.

This turn to process offers no promise that we will be free of objectification or its alienating powers, or from sadistic forms of concrete domination. Rather, we witness these new mobile and temporary assemblages of objectification pulling us in all directions, as they did Mercer, who produced an anti-rationality that is the exact opposite of the rationality he had commodified only yesterday. But, in the face of these destabilizations, we are able to steal a glimpse, as Marx shows us, at the process rather than simply the product.12 It is through this recognition of process, in all its social implications, that a new objectification is possible.

At the same time, we must recognize that the border that separates the particular and the universal is at stake. These technologies, and thus objectification writ large, are becoming the very forces that shape and define the universal—a universal that excludes particular subjects and individuals. The technologies and methods of machine learning, data analysis and statistics offer us a means by which we could wholly reconfigure the relation between individual and universal in modes that far outpace the violence and destruction of capitalism. To do so requires that we think through and reconfigure the very forms of objectification through which they work and disavow the fantasy of complete understanding or a return to some prior more natural state. Likewise, they require that we disavow the promise of any future guarantee and the fetishism of the new for its own sake—both teleological principles that all too often repeat the dream of a male Eurocentric universalism.

As neoliberal capitalism seeks out more and more local contexts from which to extract value and knowledge, it invests in the very dissimulation that undermines its claims to efficiency and objectivity. Machine learning and statistics are now in the process of creating a new set of algorithmic objects that are unseating the commodity’s economic centrality, as value appears to derive directly from automatic computation. Even as they build “real abstractions” on top of the current metaphysics of exchange, these algorithmic objects demonstrate themselves to be anathema to their enclosure and privatization—for their enclosure under conditions of capitalism guarantees that they will continue to become technologies of deception rather than production, unlikely to be constrained by calls for regulation. Even if, at the moment, another possibility sounds only as a faint whisper, these technologies—in accounting for our affairs—call out for collectivization: for shared ownership of both the means and metaphysics of production.

To seize the means of production is both a political and metaphysical task. Production, whether industrial or statistical, produces both objects and objectification. If we seize only the means of producing the former, we will, in the end, only reproduce the logic we hope to escape. Although its exact outline is still far from clear, this requires that we trace and understand the current metaphysics of capitalism—not in order to dereify them, but rather to understand how they can be replaced in order to valorize new and different forms of knowledge and value.

To follow this path is to become revolutionary mathematicians—to work on the level of metaphysics, creating new and different equalities based on new and different mysteries. This aim cannot be confused with some futurism that would forsake the past; indeed, that would be impossible, for the tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on us, and we carry its weight along with us. To ignore this weight would simply be to allow it to repeat itself. We must instead attend to history—its forms, its contradictions and those people and things about which it calculates. These chapters have sought to show that it is possible to transform and to work on the mathematics and metaphysics that constantly calculate this weight and its value, altering with it the very divide between the subjective and objective. For it is only then that we can objectively turn our world of algorithmically mediated exploitation—of environmental destruction, abuse of workers, racism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, xenophobia—into one that is more just and more equal, in a sense far beyond the limited equality of capitalist commodity exchange.

#### Orienting our politics away from tech fatalism and towards hope is necessary to escape the defeatism that inevitably results in environmental and social crises.

Sy Taffel 18, senior lecturer in media studies and co-director of the Political Ecology, 2018, Hopeful Extinctions? Tesla, Technological Solutionism and the Anthropocene, Culture Unbound 10(2), pp. 163-184

Conclusion: Hope and Materialism

Returning to the question of metanarratives, we should not envisage the future as being teleologically driven towards either technological salvation or ecological apocalypse, both of which negate the roles of material specificities and collective agencies in producing differences that make differences. A detailed consideration of the labour and environmental issues present in the production of Tesla’s EVs punctures utopian claims that these vehicles will usher in an era of carbon neutral, environmentally friendly transportation. If we seriously consider Zuckerberg’s question about building desirable futures – while removing its solutionist context – we are left questioning whether the environmental devastation, externalization of harm onto indigenous communities, and child labour that are currently necessary for the production of Tesla’s EV are desirable. If the answer is no, the question then shifts towards contemplating how to approach Anthropocenic catastrophism with hope while avoiding the immaterialist fantasy of technological solutionism.

One answer, is that in an age where anthropogenic activities are responsible for a mass extinction of life forms, there is no hope beyond Tsing’s call for learning to cope with the distress and disorientation of living in degraded environments, that anything more is liable to slip into fantasies of universalist, anthropocentric discourses of control, mastery and technological solutionism. For Tsing, whereas technology can rapidly scale to form monopolistic global platforms such as Facebook, Google and Amazon, such scalability cannot extend into the realms of ecological systems. Multispecies assemblages and mutualistic transformation produce differentiated entities that can only be examined through natural history and ethnography, through local specificity rather than the expansionist command and control paradigm of mathematics and algorithms which underpins contemporary forms of computational neoliberalism.

This approach undeniably has merit, as is evidenced by the need to consider the specificities and affordances of different materials, sites and conditions of extraction associated with lithium ion batteries. However, this localism at once exemplifies the folk politics that Srnicek and Williams critique as being fundamentally incapable of addressing global social and environmental crises whilst also adopting an affective tone characterised by despair and disenchantment. This may be a realistic appraisal of the state of life in the Anthropocene, but the performative function of such writing is likely to eradicate any sense of hope. Hope is a key affect that mobilises activism and social change (Castells 2015); without hope we are likely to fall into despair and consequently succumb to the fallacy that societal collapse is the only escape from capitalist social relations. In order to challenge the exploitative system of neoliberal technocultural relations and the “deep pessimism of those who believe the future is now an inevitable catastrophe” (Goode & Godhe 2017: 126) it is therefore crucial to find ways of mobilising a fragile form of hope that acknowledges the severity of contemporaneous ecological crises and the fallacies of technological solutionism, but which does not consequently reduce expectations of the future to mere survival. Instead, fragile hope must recognise the potential for significant positive change to be enacted through mobilising collective action to construct commons and publics, thereby contesting the neoliberal fetishization of markets and competition. This should not, however, be read as an opportunity to insert a metanarrative of redemption, a teleological march towards a utopian, post-antagonistic age of ecological and social harmony. Paraphrasing Gramsci, the challenge of (post)modernity is to live without illusions (of technological solutionism) without becoming disillusioned (by the scale of Anthropocenic ecological crises). It is precisely this challenge that the performative function fragile hope seeks to address.

It is pertinent here to critique precisely the kind of individualistic consumption central to Tesla’s appeal, instead contemplating how technocultural systems could be redesigned to enhance socially equity and ecological resilience. Tesla produce large, luxurious, expensive EVs to function as direct replacements for the predominantly individualised mode of transportation that became dominant during the twentieth century; the solution to the problem of ICEVs is thereby understood as transforming vehicle propulsion rather than rethinking transportation systems. Rather than merely altering individual vehicles, a more environmentally sustainable, equitable and resilient transportation network could involve substantive roles for electrified public transportation alongside improved infrastructure for cyclists and pedestrians. This is not to say that EVs cannot be part of this mix, with small EVs such as the Nissan Leaf potentially offering far more promising pathways than Tesla’s, however, this approach involves reconceptualising transportation as an assemblage where individual mechanised transportation plays a less dominant role. This vision for transportational infrastructure is more transformative and sustainable than one dominated by large EVs that require substantial quantities of lithium and cobalt.

For Tesla the answer to the Anthropocenic conjuncture is more individualized consumption and ever-increasing economic growth, repeating the erroneous ideology of capitalist realism which fundamentally cannot be realigned with the material reality of a finite planet. A more realistic, yet hopeful alternative involves redistributing wealth away from the 10% of the human population who are responsible for half of greenhouse gas emissions and are the privileged minority who can realistically contemplate purchasing Tesla’s EVs. This does not mean rejecting technology in favour of returning to a pre-industrial state, but re-envisioning how technologies can be employed to create postcapitalist futures that escape both the naive optimism of technological solutionism and the catastrophism of the Anthropocene. While it may appear to be an oxymoron to speak of hope in an age of mass extinctions, the performative function of fragile hope is a pre-requisite for escaping the despair and defeatism that makes catastrophic futures more likely to eventuate.

#### AI fatalism denies the possibility of reconfiguring logistical technologies for anti-capitalist ends. The AFF’s socially reconfigured AI is a springboard to post-capitalism, resolving the dilemma of production and economic planning. Alternative methodologies has condemned this technology as a tool of technocrats.

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Bernes (2013) defines the ‘reconfiguration thesis’ as the assumption that ‘all existing means of production must have some use beyond capital, and that all technological innovation must have … a progressive dimension which is recuperable’. Bernes first raised the notion of reconfiguration in an analysis of capital’s logistics networks. In the course of his argument, Bernes interweaves the increasingly logistical nature of capitalism, critical theory, and how it can arise from workers who inhabit logistical sites of struggle. In stark contrast to his wide-ranging discourse, I will focus narrowly on the notion of reconfiguration. We can schematise reconfiguration with two dimensions: utility and feasibility.

Utility

A first step to thinking about the potential utility of a reconfigured technology is to consider how it is useful now, and to whom. Bernes (2013) argues that logistics is ‘capital’s own project of cognitive mapping’ because it allows capital to keep track of its dispersed moving parts. It enables a new emphasis on circulation characterised by practices such as outsourcing, just-in-time production and the global arbitrage of commodities, including labour-power. It allows the segmentation and stratification of labour, and the brutal creation of ‘sacrifice zones’ free of labour regulations (Hedges and Sacco 2014). The utility of logistics for capital is thus ‘exploitation in its rawest form’ (Bernes 2013). This is not likely a use-value for a socially reconfigured AI.

Andrejevic (2020) argues that under capital, what he calls ‘automated media’ (including AI) tend towards the automation of subjectivity itself (129). Andrejevic argues that this is ultimately impossible on psychoanalytic grounds, but the argument that the ultimate end of capitalist AI is the emulation of subjectivity has been advanced by others. Land (2014) holds that capital and artificial intelligence possess a ‘teleological identity’ and that a perfected capitalism will dispense with human labour for a full-machine economy. Such speculations range afield from this paper, but they reinforce the more immediate utility of AI for capital. AI is an automation technology with diverse applications for reducing and/or eliminating labour costs and implementing new forms of control over labour processes and social relations. It was these use-values for capital that the earliest Marxist analyses of AI reacted to. In the 1980s, AI was first commercialised in the form of ‘expert systems’ intended to capture and automate the knowledge and reasoning of skilled workers (Feigenbaum, McCorduck and Nii 1989). Most Marxists of this era were not interested in reconfiguring AI. The near consensus was that AI heralded a new wave of deskilling and concomitant automation, aimed at cognitive, as well as manual, forms of labour (Cooley 1981; Athanasiou 1985; Ramtin 1991).

Planning

However, another strand of Marxist thought saw utility in reconfigured technologies of automation like AI and cybernetics. Both the USSR (Peters 2016) and socialist Chile (Medina 2011) attempted to apply cybernetics to solve the ‘socialist calculation problem’, as the economist Ludwig von Mises described it. Von Mises (1935) contended that the distribution of resources in a planned economy requires an infeasible amount of calculation and that a capitalist market economy achieves this automatically through the market and price system. While the attempts at planned economies by Chile and the USSR failed due to the primitive computers available at the time, some Marxists have continued to pursue the idea of automated economic planning.

Cockshott (1988) argued that heuristic processing techniques ‘developed in artificial intelligence can be applied to solve planning problems with economically acceptable computational costs’ (1). More recently he has described big data and supercomputers as the ‘foundations of Cyber Communism’ (Cockshott 2017). Others have pointed out that algorithmic technologies for processing vast quantities of economic data have already been developed by large corporations like Walmart and Amazon (Jameson 2009; Phillips and Rozworski 2019). Beyond the processing of economic data, Dyer-Witheford (2013) has suggested that AI could be used to lessen bureaucratic burdens: democratic processes might be ‘partially delegated to a series of communist software agents … running at the pace of high-speed trading algorithms, scuttling through data rich networks, making recommendations to human participants … communicating and cooperating with each other at a variety of levels’ (13).

Bernes (2013) argues that such positions assume that ‘high-volume and hyper-global distribution’ possess ‘usefulness … beyond production for profit’. For instance, a society not structured around commodity production would not be driven to implement planned obsolescence, so one can imagine that the overall volume of things that need to be shipped across the world would decrease substantially. In addition, more localised systems of production might obviate much of the need for vast planning techniques. The broader point is that the utility of a given existing technology for socially-determined, noncapitalist ends is not a given if it was built by capitalist firms to advance valorisation. Utility therefore ‘needs to be argued for, not assumed as a matter of course’ (Bernes 2013).

Full Automation

Some Marxists have also speculated on the use of AI to eliminate work. This line of thought derives from Marx’s notion that ‘the true realm of freedom’ has its ‘basic prerequisite’ the ‘reduction of the working-day’ (Marx 1991, 959). Thinkers in the USSR held that automation had a ‘crucial role in the creation of the material and technical basis of communist society’ (Cooper 1977,152). Since the mid-2010s, a group of Marx-influenced thinkers referred to variously as left accelerationism (Srnicek and Williams 2015), postcapitalism theory (Mason 2016) and fully automated luxury communism (Bastani 2019) have renewed support for such ideals. I refer only to the left accelerationists here, but all of these thinkers are united in calling for full automation.

Left accelerationists argue that under capital, ‘the productive forces of technology’ are constrained and directed ‘towards needlessly narrow ends’ (Williams and Srnicek 2014, 355). The technology developed by capital should be seized: ‘existing infrastructure is not a capitalist stage to be smashed, but a springboard to launch towards post-capitalism’ (Williams and Srnicek 2014, 355). They hold that ‘existing technology [can be] repurposed immediately’ (Srnicek and Williams 2015). Alongside decarbonising the economy, developing renewable energy sources, cheap medicine and space travel, they advocate ‘building artificial intelligence’ (Srnicek and Williams 2015). For left accelerationists, a reconfigured AI is useful primarily in that it could contribute to full automation, which is desirable because ‘machines can increasingly produce all necessary goods and services, while also releasing humanity from the effort of producing them’ (Srnicek and Williams 2015). Eventually, a ‘fully automated economy’ could ‘liberate humanity from the drudgery of work while simultaneously producing increasing amounts of wealth’ (Srnicek and Williams 2015, 109).

#### Our politics pushes logistical technology beyond capitalism instead of foreclosing its usage for public ends. Many of the negative’s objections to the AFF will be based on the status quo, which is logically incongruent with our AFF’s iterative process that collectively reimagines production.

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Ultimately, the metaphysical, intellectual and political work of a revolutionary mathematics calls for a reconsideration of the relationship between alienation and liberation. This does not mean that these technologies are necessarily liberatory, nor that more technology offers any promise, but rather that the underlying objectifications of the entire trajectory of technology must be contested. The task, then, is to repurpose both the metaphysical ground and the actual capacities of these alienating forms of technology. Such work must seek not to end all production or the alienating force of abstraction, but to engage it oppositionally—to dislocate it from its seeming stability as given or monolithic. In short, we must imagine and construct new mysteries and new modalities of exchange that can enable computation and calculation outside and beyond capitalism. Accordingly, to engage in a revolutionary mathematics is to disavow any belief that we can get under our abstractions, to see “what is really there” and regulate away their problems. Instead we must reckon with this world of abstraction and alienation.62

This requires us to create and build the world from different mysteries and different exchangabilities: ones that deny the power and reality of imperialism, and even the most basic form of capitalist exchange, by which one trades their work for the capacity to continue living. We require different means of counting and valuing. A revolutionary mathematics aims not to recoup or destroy those old forms through critique, but to create different abstractions—even new “natures” and the valorization of natures outside the Enlightenment notion of individual sovereignty—and with them new alienations arising from new, mysterious metaphysics of exchange that offer, just like the commodity and the machine, to think for us, both economically and computationally (which today amounts to the same thing). To do this does not mean to simply disregard old forms, for it is only by tracing their histories and implications—as the present text has attempted to do—that it may be possible to build new mysteries that are not merely repetitions of the present.

The Bayesian discovery that probabilistic knowledge depends on markets and exchange appears initially to naturalize capitalism. In the final analysis, however, the result is the exact opposite: Bayesian statistics denaturalizes nature and calls on any who value knowledge, or even the possibility of knowing, to reconceive the very notion of exchange and its metaphysical ground. A revolutionary mathematics must oppose the naturalism of the unalienated, epistemic subject, and the fantasy of the liberal subject who can efficiently operate the material and economic world within which they find themselves; in short, such a possibility opposes both the naive chauvinism of Ronald Fisher and the attempts to naturalize economism of Leonard Savage and Bruno de Finetti.

A new revolutionary object, or objectification, that would break the stranglehold of the commodity on our thinking must also abandon the fetishism of the natural, the unalienated and the dereified. At the same time, it must forswear the possibility of any guaranteed future. We cannot return to some before or some future where we finally grasp the totality of our situation. A revolutionary mathematics must commit to the alien and the mediated, but this declaration means something very specific within the context of mathematics and machine learning: namely, that we must reject the Fisherian residue that offers us a fetishistic version of knowledge production by claiming that knowledge belongs to the individual and that it is immune from the material and economic conditions of its production. In sum, this means we must collectively reimagine the production and meaning of scientific and technical knowledge.

The Bayesian revolution has taken recourse to the exchange of contracts in order to provide a foundation for probabilistic knowledge, but in making knowledge second to exchange, it fundamentally denaturalizes and subjectivizes knowledge, abandoning “objective” theories of probability. This revolution does away with claims that knowledge directly represents the physical world as it is, replacing it with a representation of the world as it is profitable—in short, knowledge now finds its future in the subjective and the social. In doing so, it requires knowledge to admit its fundamentally material and economic ground and permits a demonstration of the fact that the very systems of exchange from which it arises can no longer support its function. For scientific knowledge to have a future beyond its current capitalist crisis, we must accept knowledge’s abstract and alien power.

Additionally, the work of a revolutionary mathematics and its attempts to create new objectifications is a politics that leaves the subject alone, for it has little need for the idea of a fixed and solid subject. This politics operates against the presumption that solidarities can be either forcefully manufactured from above—for instance, via the enforced class dynamics of Leninism, which tries to tell the revolutionary subject how to be—or organically produced from below—via some magical event that would invigorate an organic, collective solidarity. This politics detaches from the desire to make subjects and instead focuses on the metaphysical technics of producing objectifications and, hence, on what is objectively the case. For example, those who think of big data in terms of privacy are half right: big data’s desire to make our subjective relationships computable is one that should be rejected. But to stop there is to lose a losing battle. It is to play with a coin that is wholly biased toward capital. Instead, we must fundamentally reconceptualize what we are computing and why. While such calls for privacy are clearly important, to simply show that we are not being valued equally or that we are being exploited will never be enough to change our condition.

It would be ideal to be able to offer examples, to point to specific ideas or individuals who are currently advancing this work. But such a revolution in thought can only be fully ascertained and traced after the fact. What may appear revolutionary today could, in the hindsight of tomorrow, appear fully reactionary. Yesterday’s provocative and revolutionary attempts to stand outside of digital capitalism appear today as withdrawal and retreat. Still, the act of tracing the grounds upon which our current epistemology and metaphysics of exchange stand—while refusing to think that we will ever discover some unalienated truth of how things “really are”—can reveal unknown contradictions and new demands. It is out of these demands for a different world that the work of revolutionary mathematics progresses. It is far from clear what these new or different metaphysics could be, but the task ahead is to seek them out.

If knowledge production and its metaphysical ground are founded upon the historical and material conditions of exchange, to politically engage these processes requires that we intervene in the process of exchange itself. But let us be clear: this does not mean that politics should be aimed exclusively at capitalism or class conflict (in the traditional Marxist sense). To the contrary, every inequality we face today—sexism, xenophobia, racism, transphobia, ableism—constitutes a mobile and multifaceted system that defines the varied axes of exchange, oppression and injustice.63 All of these socially constructed axes of oppression allow computation and exchange to function—providing various forms of exploited labor, such as the outsourcing of the psychic trauma of content moderation—and replicate themselves in the computed outcomes of various technologies of machine learning and statistics.64 Discrimination, oppression and injustice are not reducible to exchange but rather are operationalized and exploited through exchange, replicating their violence in the knowledges that computation produces. The task is to directly confront these injustices wherever they may arise—but without claims to a return to an unalienated or natural world—and in doing so to trace the various metaphysics, forms of knowledge production and material economies that make them thinkable and computable today and, perhaps, make a future beyond them imaginable.

The work of the revolutionary mathematician is, in the end, less mathematical than it is metaphysical. It is not a simple decision or discovery that a sovereign liberal subject could conjure from nowhere. While we are far from knowing exactly where this work leads or exactly what form it must take, the task is to strategically create new mysteries and resist injustices as constitutive parts of this amalgamation of capitalist computation. Like those early founders of calculus who created a mathematics that worked without fully understanding its foundations, the work ahead is to seek out new and different equivalences, values and computabilities, all the while understanding that each of these is fundamentally social, abstract, alienatory and unnatural. The path backward toward some natural redemption closed long ago, if it was ever open. A revolutionary mathematics requires that we create new objectifications that call upon us to build a different future, whether we believe in them or not. In the face of a global capitalist system committed to accumulation at the cost of exploitation and the destruction of the ecosystem, nothing could be more difficult. But at the same time, nothing could be more necessary.

#### The digital economy is planned already by monopolisitic patient capital. The price mechanism and market feedback are meaningless, but this planning has resulted in efficient but exploitative economic dynamics. We must repurpose planning for public good.

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The second model of economic planning is having more success. We have had the chance to see many aspects of it in previous chapters. Designed and directed from Silicon Valley, the model is being orchestrated by corporate actors, who, nevertheless, have relied on public infrastructures, grants and public subsidies (Mazzucato, 2015). Despite the Silicon Valley Promethean rhetoric and Design Thinking charlatanism, they key for success of companies such as Amazon or Google lies in their comprehensive corporate economic planning. Contrary to other business models nurtured in the neoliberal era, digital capitalism does not prioritise immediate earnings. Instead, the patient capital behind it has helped a handful of digital capitalists to seize a monopolistic dominance of specific parcels of the digital economy (Rahman & Thelen, 2019). The reason for that has to do with the very nature of the digital economy and its data dependence business model. Corporate power is defined in this era by the amount of data controlled by corporations and by the users producing it (Lynskey, 2019). At the current stage of the race for dominance, digital capitalists are more worried about increasing or securing their market share than they are about obtaining immediate returns. The development of game changing technologies depends on the control of data, and so does the competitiveness in a business where the networking effects of a product are more important than the product itself.

In order to achieve this dominant position over markets, users and data, digital corporations have opted for an economic planning model heavily structured around digital technologies. Think about Amazon, the formerly on-line bookstore that has ended being the everything-shop for much of the Global North markets, not to mention its most profitable business, its cloud services, where, for instance, Netflix ‘floats’. Making use of massive and decentralised data extractive technologies in every purchase, along with extensive surveillance technologies over its workers, Amazon has been able to build a complex, fragmented but nonetheless effective planning machine (Phillips & Rozworski, 2019; Sadowski, 2020). First, with the exploitation of its users’ data, it has a clear picture of what buyers desire to the extent that it can actually foresee future purchases. Relying on real-time tracking tech, Amazon has optimised its logistic infrastructure, defeating with it one of the worst retail business nightmares: logistics inefficiencies. Finally, the extent to which Amazon has implemented surveillance technologies in its workplaces has resulted in a terrible but also effective and functional machine (Delfanti, 2019). Algorithms are now run on humans, who, plugged into the system, are basically remote-controlled according to market demand, the production and the distribution processes. Together, these three elements conform a new kind of centralised but distributed cybernetic planning apparatus. In words of Phillips & Rozworski:

In simplest terms, Amazon is a giant planned machine for distributing goods. It is a mechanism for forecasting, managing and meeting demand for an incredibly wide array of things we need and want. It is a collection of thousands of interlocking optimization systems that work together to carry out the deceptively simple task of moving objects from producers to consumers. Rather than the anarchy of the market, once we enter the Amazon, we are entering a sophisticated planning device—one that offers not only clues for how we could manage demand and supply of consumer goods in a society not built on profit, but also warnings to would-be planners for the public good (Phillips and Rozworski, 2019, p. 92).

This mode of economic planning has fulfilled capitalists’ expectations, grounding today’s tech monopolistic landscape. However, this has come at a terrible cost for small businesses, workers (Kollewe, 2020) and the rights of citizens around the world. As the advocacy group Colour for Change stated:

#### Neoliberalism is hegemonic because it captures the common sense of what is possible. Creating new sociotechnical blueprints of reclaiming capitalist technology for social value gets buy in.

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When they wrote those lines, they had in mind the Indignados and the Occupy movement. The authors were as captivated by the energy of both phenomenon as they were concerned by how ephemeral and inefficient it was to translate the energy of the masses into any palpable political victory. In the authors’ opinion, the left needed to think bigger in a much more ambitious way. The authors found the theoretical recipe to cure Folk-politics in Laclau’s notion of left populism. Simplifying, Laclau’s left populism means disputing the hegemony of neoliberalism over the definition of what is realistic, achievable common sense (Laclau, 2005). The left, limited in its analysis and tactics, was unable to imagine alternatives to the neoliberal regime. Hence, the mission for the left was to collectively recover the future, that is, the ability to imagine, plan and achieve a postcapitalist society (Mason, 2016). For Srnicek and Williams the question is as clear as difficult. Capitalism has organised our societies around work and exploitation; therefore, in order to build socialism, we shall be able to imagine a post-scarcity society where most tasks are performed and automatised, and wealth is fairly distributed. To achieve that, the left must be able to:

[D]evelop a sociotechnical hegemony: both in the sphere of ideas and ideology, and in the sphere of material infrastructures. The objective of such a strategy, in a very broad sense, is to navigate the present technical, economic, social, political and productive hegemony towards a new point of equilibrium beyond the imposition of wage labour (Srnicek & Williams, 2015, p. 130).

But, as the authors pointed out, reaching this stage requires finding new points of leverage—that is, having the capacity to disrupt the capitalist system, not only to defeat the monster but to establish a new and emancipatory socio-technical order. Despite Srnicek and Williams’ techno-optimism, the final chapters of the book, the ones looking at solutions, are focused on the future of emancipatory political organisation and not on the nuts and bolts of the hypothetical structure of the communism to come. While not explicitly addressed, the book has all the ingredients of what I named as the new economic planning debate: How to build new political organisations, the question of scale, the necessary discussion of the role of technology on emancipatory projects, and the unbearable need to democratise global productive and logistical structures. The book successfully offered an answer for the big political question: How do we build political organisations and a new common sense that allow us to build a socialist future? However, it left unresolved an important part of the revolutionary equation: how can we build from scratch a global and counter-hegemonic logistic apparatus?

Leigh Phillips and Michal Rozworski accepted the challenge and tried to give an answer to this question in a quite interesting way. In their provocative People’s Republic of Walmart (2019), they reopened the question of socialist economic planning not by hypothesising a new economic structure, but by analysing some of the biggest capitalist behemoths of our days: Walmart and Amazon. For them, activists should consider the relevant socialist calculation debates at the light of contemporary technical, logistical and even managerial developments. In their opinion, corporations such as Walmart and Amazon are planning and allocating resources and goods at a scale only dreamed by the most ardent advocates of the Soviet Union central planning, without falling in the bureaucratisation and inefficiencies derived from the Gosplan (Soviet State Planning Committee). In short, capitalism has demonstrated itself the advantages of planning and cooperating. The problem is that big corporations are only applying economic planning within their enormous economies. Hence, for them the question is not as much how to start planning but, in fact, how to plan ‘The Good Anthropocene’. What do they mean by that? Phillips and Rozworski’s conception on economic planning is heavily influenced by the Chilean socialist cybernetic experiment. Cybersyn (the name of the project) was President Allende’s (1970/1973) attempt of building a cybernetic system for a decentralised economic planning, linking factories, mines, bureaucrats and workers (Medina, 2011). That is, a sociotechnical infrastructure intended to regulate and adjust the needs, skills and productive capacities of the country in order to satisfy the common good and not a bunch of capitalist shareholders. Phillips and Rozworski consider that good planning is necessary not only to put an end to the blatant structure of economic, gender and racial inequality but to survive as a species. After all, the very idea of cybernetics is to study and build systems of control and regulation for entire ecosystems:

Counteracting climate change and planning the economy are projects of comparable ambition: if we can manage the earth system, with its all its variables and myriad processes, we can also manage a global economy

. Once the price signal is eliminated, we will have to consciously perform the accounting that, under the market, is implicitly contained in prices. Planning will have to account for the ecosystem services implicitly included in prices—as well as those that the market ignores. Therefore, any democratic planning of the human economy is at the same time a democratic planning of the earth system (Phillips & Rozworski, 2019, p. 241).

In a similar leftist cybernetic vein, we can find Evgeny Morozov’s ‘Digital Socialism’ (2019). While sharing much of the theoretical grounds with Phillips and Rozworski, Morozov’s main concern has to do with finding alternatives—that is, socialist ways for organising the allocation of goods, different to the price-based market or to the bureaucratised central planning. Acknowledging Hayek, Morozov highlights the relevant role that data and information have in the way social coordination takes place, for instance, in markets. But, opposed to the Hayekian understanding of a cybernetic system governed by price (the signal of millions of inputs and outputs), Morozov proposes a socialist feedback infrastructure. That is, a sociotechnical system in where a decentralised network will be able to gather and manage the information of a given system, matching capacities and needs:

One could imagine the use of digital feedback infrastructure to match ‘problem-finders’, who would express their needs and problems, and react to those identified by others—either explicitly, by voicing them or writing them up, or ‘automatically’, via machine learning, or—with ‘problem-solvers’, equipped with cheap but powerful technologies and the skills to operate them. Once the two groups have been ‘matched’ by the feedback infrastructure, the activity of the ‘problem-solvers’ can help to render the implicit needs of ‘problem-finders’ tangible and explicit, adding to the pool of solutions which can then be drawn upon by other ‘problem-finders’. Assuming this takes place outside the commercial realm, there would be no barriers, such as patents, to impede the sharing of knowledge (Morozov, 2019, p. 56).

Morozov claims for the socialisation of the ‘means of feedback production’ (Morozov, 2019, p.65.) now in hands of digital capitalism corporations such as Amazon. The socialisation of the means of digital production will allow the masses to establish new non-market solutions for allocating goods, non-competitive strategies to fuel scientific progress, and automatised and decentralised ways of economic planning

. Both, ‘Digital Socialism’ and People's Republic of Walmart, share the same interest in repurposing the current exploitative sociotechnical apparatus for the socialist revolution, however, the authors of both works have not said much about one relevant question: Is using master’s tools a direct path to alienation? Brett Neilson has delved inside this treacherous question naming this process as the ‘Reverse of Engineering’ (Neilson, 2020). Neilson flags how problematic it could be to just uncritically take over capitalist technologies without acknowledging its exploitative nature. For him, ‘the reverse of engineering posits neither the liberation of labour in a planned economy nor an ontological horizon of communization separated from challenges of organization. Rather, it raises the challenge of warding off capital’s tendency to capture and incorporate its multiple outsides’ (Neilson, 2020, p. 87).

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#### In thinking race through symbols and grammars, the alt makes it impossible to fight back. It’s not a question of “labor vs. fungibility”, but of “political vs. symbolic economy”.

José Sanchez 22, PhD student in history at Duke University, 6-13-2022, “Against Afro-Pessimism”, https://jacobin.com/2022/06/afro-pessimism-frank-wilderson-socialism-flattening-racism

In this intellectual regime, accounts of blackness that are unmoored from materialist analyses concerned with political and economic history founded on scrupulous archival work, dominate many if not most black studies departments. Enslavement and thus race then becomes an almost entirely psycho-linguistic phenomenon of symbols, grammars, meanings, and so forth, unreachable to the tools of a properly historical analysis. Lost in this miasma is the fact that Atlantic slavery was, more than anything, a socioeconomic and political relationship that changed throughout — and was eventually vanquished.

Even though contemporary black thinkers like Saidiya Hartman, Christina Sharpe, or Fred Moten might not self-identify as “Afro-pessimists,” a through line runs through all of their work in that blackness is a flattened, pure-and-simple metaphysic outside the scope of history, and outside of materialist or Marxist explanations. This is why Afro-pessimists, believing in a black racial essence that always has been and always will be, have made a school of thought out of their scholarship.

Marxist accounts of race and enslavement emphasize the point that the ideas in our heads flow out of the manufactured structures of our societies. Understanding that our history is the product of actions taken by living, breathing humans throughout time and space gives us the conceptual tools we need to best analyze racism against black people. Afro-pessimism does not and cannot do this.

It is only by understanding race and ethnicity as historical, man-made categories can we understand that it is within our grasp to struggle against, and, hopefully, defeat all forms of discrimination. After all, how can you struggle against something that has no beginning or an end?

#### Their calls to the impossibility of challenging macro-level structures plays into the hands of capitalist elites and makes challenges to neoliberalism impossible.

Eugene McCarraher 19, Villanova humanities professor, The Enchantments of Mammon: How Capitalism Became the Religion of Modernity, p. 15-18

Words such as “paradise” or “love” or “communion” are certainly absent from our political vernacular, excluded on account of their “utopian” connotations or their lack of steely-eyed “realism.” Although this is a book about the past, I have always kept before me its larger contemporary religious, philosophical, and political implications. The book should make these clear enough; I will only say here that one of my broader intentions is to challenge the canons of “realism,” especially as defined in the “science” of economics. As the master science of desire in advanced capitalist nations, economics and its acolytes define the parameters of our moral and political imaginations, patrolling the boundaries of possibility and censoring any more generous conception of human affairs. Under the regime of neoliberalism, it has been the chief weapon in the arsenal of what David Graeber has characterized as “a war on the imagination,” a relentless assault on our capacity to envision an end to the despotism of money.24 Insistent, in Margaret Thatcher’s ominous ukase, that “there is no alternative” to capitalism, our corporate plutocracy has been busy imposing its own beatific vision on the world: the empire of capital, with an imperial aristocracy enriched by the labor of a fearful, overburdened, and cheerfully servile population of human resources. Every avenue of escape from accumulation and wage servitude must be closed, or better yet, rendered inconceivable; any map of the world that includes utopia must be burned before it can be glanced at. Better to follow Miller’s wisdom: we already inhabit paradise, and we can never make ourselves fit to live in it if we obey the avaricious and punitive sophistry professed in the dismal pseudoscience.

The grotesque ontology of scarcity and money, the tawdry humanism of acquisitiveness and conflict, the reduction of rationality to the mercenary principles of pecuniary reason—this ensemble of falsehoods that comprise the foundation of economics must be resisted and supplanted. Economics must be challenged, not only as a sanction for injustice but also as a specious portrayal of human beings and a fictional account of their history. As a legion of anthropologists and historians have repeatedly demonstrated, economics, in Graeber’s forthright dismissal, has “little to do with anything we observe when we examine how economic life is actually conducted.” From its historically illiterate “myth of barter” to its shabby and degrading claims about human nature, economics is not just a dismal but a fundamentally fraudulent science as well, akin, as Ruskin wrote in Unto This Last, to “alchemy, astrology, witchcraft, and other such popular creeds.”25

Ruskin’s courageous and bracing indictment of economics arose from his Romantic imagination, and this book partakes unashamedly of his sacramental Romanticism. “Imagination” was, to the Romantics, primarily a form of vision, a mode of realism, an insight into the nature of reality that was irreducible to, but not contradictory of, the knowledge provided by scientific investigation. Romantic social criticism did not claim the imprimatur of science as did Marxism and other modern social theories, yet the Romantic lineage of opposition to “disenchantment” and capitalism has proved to be more resilient and humane than Marxism, “progressivism,” or social democracy. Indeed, it is more urgently relevant to a world hurtling ever faster to barbarism and ecological calamity. I wrote this book in part out of a belief that many on the “left” continue to share far too much with their antagonists: an ideology of “progress” defined as unlimited economic growth and technological development, as well as an acceptance of the myth of disenchantment that underwrites the pursuit of such expansion. The Romantic antipathy to capitalism, mechanization, and disenchantment stemmed not from a facile and nostalgic desire to return to the past, but from a view that much of what passed for “progress” was in fact inimical to human flourishing: a specious productivity that required the acceptance of venality, injustice, and despoliation; a technological and organizational efficiency that entailed the industrialization of human beings; and the primacy of the production of goods over the cultivation and nurturance of men and women. This train of iniquities followed inevitably from the chauvinism of what William Blake called “single vision,” a blindness to the enormity of reality that led to a “Babylon builded in the waste.”26

Romantics redefined rather than rejected “realism” and “progress,” drawing on the premodern customs and traditions of peasants, artisans, and artists: craftsmanship, mutual aid, and a conception of property that harkened back to the medieval practices of “the commons.” Whether they believed in some traditional form of religion or translated it into secular idioms of enchantment, such as “art” or “beauty” or “organism,” Romantic anticapitalists tended to favor direct workers’ control of production; the restoration of a human scale in technics and social relations; a sensitivity to the natural world that precluded its reduction to mere instrumental value; and an apotheosis of pleasure in making sometimes referred to as poesis, a union of reason, imagination, and creativity, an ideal of labor as a poetry of everyday life, and a form of human divinity. In work free of alienation and toil, we receive “the reward of creation,” as William Morris described it through a character in News from Nowhere (1890), “the wages that God gets, as people might have said time agone.”27

Rendered gaudy and impoverished by the tyranny of economics and the enchantment of neoliberal capitalism, our sensibilities need replenishment from the sacramental imagination. As Americans begin to experience the initial stages of imperial sclerosis and decline, and as the advanced capitalist world in general discovers the reality of ecological limits, we may find in what Marx called the “prehistory” of our species a perennial and redemptive wisdom. We will not be saved by our money, our weapons, or our technological virtuosity; we might be rescued by the joyful and unprofitable pursuits of love, beauty, and contemplation. No doubt this will all seem foolish to the shamans and magicians of pecuniary enchantment. But there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of on Wall Street or in Silicon Valley.

#### Debates over AI can be actualized---our discussions are important to guiding ethical AI, else the alternative is passivity that makes inevitable AI inevitably immoral.

Adam Sulkowski 19, Associate Professor, Babson College. B.A., 1996, College of William & Mary; M.B.A., 1999, Boston College, Carroll School of Management; J.D., 2000, Boston College Law School, “Industry 4.0 Era Technology (AI, Big Data, Blockchain, DAO): Why the Law Needs New Memes,” Kan. J.L. & Pub. Pol’y, https://lawjournal.ku.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/V29\_JournalOnline\_Sulkowski\_Web1.pdf

Third, while the mix of current technological revolutions, including AI, big data, and blockchain, could help us get to Society 2.0,89 it is not a 100 percent guarantee that it will break us free of 18th-, 19th-, and 20th- century errors and fundamental societal design flaws that cannot last, and which we as a society have grown to accept as normal. This will rather depend on shared understandings and collective human will, as made enforceable through law and governance. Without breaking our reliance on the four design features listed above90 as (a)-(d), it is premature to say we have truly graduated past Dickensian elements of the First Industrial Revolution—not just in our manufacturing sector but as a society.

The “so what?” implication is that law, policy, and governance are arenas where we can—as individuals and working together with others in organizations and societies—decide on guardrails to help steer and nudge technology and markets to serve desired ends.91 New technologies on their own, like the Internet, can otherwise fail to bring the changes that idealists hope(d), and instead become dystopian tools of surveillance and influence, reinforcing problematic patterns and structures rather than advancing norms. Nor will any imaginable combination of new technologies guarantee how one deploys them, and to what end. The collectively imagined artifices expressed in law are vital for fostering opportunities, limiting risks, coordinating actions, setting boundaries, and determining consequences when one breaches limitations or inflicts harm. The deployment of technologies and outcomes will depend on humanity’s values, mindset, memes, and models of seeing the world92 and can be steered by the norms and rules that these support, as ultimately formalized in private and public law.93

It is therefore imperative that legal scholars, practitioners, and policymakers proactively wrestle with “what if” questions related to current technological changes, especially as these scenarios continue to rapidly move from the domain of imaginative hypotheticals and into the realm of daily reality.

#### We don’t have to “neoliberalism is the root cause” to win *persistence of racial neoliberalism is a structural barrier to solving the aff’s harms* – even if its not the root cause, neoliberal governance creates *economic roadblocks* to resolving the aff’s impacts

Olin Wright 9

(Erik Olin Wright, professor of sociology at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, *Envisioning Real Utopias*, pg. 25)

Two other preliminary comments: First, critics of capitalism are sometimes tempted to try to make all of the serious problems and harms of the contemporary world attributable to capitalism. Racism, sexism, war, religious fundamentalism, homophobia – all of these are seen by some critics of capitalism as consequences of capitalism. This temptation should be resisted. Capitalism is not the root of all evils in the world today; there are other causal processes at work which fuel racism, ethno-nationalism, male domination, genocide, war, and other significant forms of oppression. Nevertheless, even in the case of those forms of oppression which capitalism may not itself generate, capitalism may still be implicated by making it more difficult to overcome them. Capitalism may not be the root cause of sexism, for example, but it could make it more difficult to overcome sexism by making it difficult to allocate sufficient resources to good quality, publicly provided childcare services. In the critique of capitalism the critical task, therefore, is to identify those harms which are directly generated by the specific mechanisms of capitalism and to understand the ways in which capitalism may indirectly contribute to impeding the reduction of oppression.

#### Racial neoliberalism specifically makes black exhaustion *inevitable* – *anti-black austerity* guts funding for black mental health services and the prison industrial complex *criminalizes black women’s self-care strategies* – *material analysis* and *concrete praxis* towards abolition democracy are *the only sustainable survival strategy*

Williams 12

(Emily Williams, MA from DePaul, Thesis entitled, “Resisting internalized oppression: Black women's perceptions of incarceration,” pgs. 34-37)

Secondary to the neoliberal paradigm, Black women have come to be incarcerated as a consequence of an ideological shift around criminality, a divestment in social welfare, and isolation from participation in traditional market economies. In this sense it can be argued that neoliberal processes of criminalization and market creation both exclude Black women from participation in traditional markets and criminalize markets to which they have access and can maximize their human capital. These points and others support the assertion that neoliberal capitalism is a dominating system that has the potential to minimize Black women’s agency like many other historical anti-black systems. An analysis of the effects of the PIC on Black women living in economically disenfranchised situations will demonstrate the degree to which their ability to self determine their social, economic, and interpersonal outcomes can be shaped by American systems and institutions (Alexander, 2010; Roberts, 2008).

As has already been mentioned in this thesis, many anti-incarceration scholars demand an end to present prison practices because of the striking similarities between contemporary incarceration and historical racist institutions like slavery, Jim Crow segregation, and Black Codes (Alexander, 2010, Davis, 2003, 2005; James, 2007; Sudbury, 2005;Wacquant, 2002). These institutions all yielded economic benefits to the state and enforced white supremacy, while at the same time further economically and socially disenfranchising Black communities. Similar social, economic, and interpersonal effects can be found in the lives of Black women who have become intertwined in the PIC. Examples that illuminate the way in which neoliberal policy capitalizes on and further re-inscribes economic disenfranchisement of Black women can be found in employment statistics and the educational rates of women who become incarcerated.

It is significant to note that more than 70 percent of women who become incarcerated report that they had experienced sexual abuse or sexual assault prior to becoming incarcerated (Bush-Baskette, 2012; Human Rights Watch, 1996; Richie, 2012). Moreover, women in prison are three times more likely to have experienced sexual abuse than women who have never been incarcerated (Beck & Harrison, 2007, Freudenburg, 2002). Studies show that approximately 88 percent of women in prison report having been sexually abused (including rape) prior to incarceration (Human Rights Watch, 1996; Freudenburg, 2002). The sexual abuse histories of women in prisons are significant because they create the conditions for drug charges and other criminalized behaviors like prostitution for which women are likely to be imprisoned (Moss, 2005, Davis, 2003). Amid, rapidly rising prison rates for women (800 percent since 1970), the Institute on Women & Criminal Justice (2009) estimates that nearly two-thirds of women in prison are incarcerated for non-violent offenses including drug crimes and prostitution.

This background information becomes relevant when considering how Black women become incarcerated within a neoliberal paradigm in which there is currently a disinvestment of social services; increasingly this divestment has meant that much needed professional health care has gone underfunded. As Richie (2012) notes, “...almost none [of incarcerated Black women] have had long-term mental health care” (conference presentation January 27, 2012). The effects of sexual assaults and childhood sexual abuse can be pervasive and relate to participation in criminalized behavior for which Black women become incarcerated. Many women who experience sexual assault or childhood sexual abuse suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, (PTSD) which is associated with effects like severe depression, anxiety, flashbacks, and low self- esteem (West, 2007). Furthermore, stigma that is often associated with sexual abuse can often cause internalized guilt and shame. West (1999) states:

...shame can eat away at the women’s self-hood...the multi-edged shame that is generated in Black women victim-survivors of intimate violence is a powerful covert weapon of domination. It can train women to locate the deprecating social stigmas and culpability for the violence against them with their own identities.

The way in which Black women can experience sexual assault and childhood sexual abuse is not removed from broader systemic violence. In the case of Black women who may be abused, self-blame for sexual victimization can be engendered by negative stereotypes that portray Black women as hypersexual or as unworthy of protection and respect (West, 1999). Furthermore, the silence that characterizes responses to sexual abuse can be compounded by a general (and substantiated) distrust of police and social services, and even further aggravated by the pressure to not to contribute to further racial degradation of Black communities (West, 1999; Richie, 1996).

Given these severe instances of abuse, coupled with insufficient access to mental health care, it seems logical that many women who have been sexually abused and are without access to mental health care would develop alternative coping mechanisms in response to sexual trauma. In a study about collateral consequences of incarceration for Black women, Jones (2005) states, “These women’s efforts to deal with the various forms of violence in their lives made them even more vulnerable of mass incarceration that is fueled by a federally sponsored war on drugs that targets Black people.” (p.127)

This quote suggests and supports the argument that the divestment in social services with the consequence being incarceration resonates with an interaction between race, incarceration, gender, and profit. The development that Jones describes is another example of the way in which Black women living in economically distressed situations within neoliberal capitalist paradigms can be excluded from professional mental health care yet the alternative method they have adopted to cope has been criminalized.

#### Politicizing the political economy is key—the alternative leaves capital intact. Dialectical conflict is best.

Burden-Stelly 18 – [Charisse Burden-Stelly is an Assistant Professor and Mellon Faculty Fellow of Africana Studies and Political Science at Carleton College; “Black studies in the westernized university,” in Unsettling Eurocentrism in the Westernized University 2018, 81-84] jk

Community activism, Pan-Africanism (Drake, 1984), and student demands for more relevant education were responsible for the introduction of Black studies into the westernized university. Revolutionary cultural nationalism, the movement it supported, its tendency, and its ideology – in other words, its “intellectual spirit” – motivated the demand for Black studies programmes (Cruse, 1969). Despite its community and activist roots, “university administrators were determined to reshape [Black studies] into a purely academic phenomenon” (Drake, 1984: 228). The university was largely successful through its deployment of “networks of power … [that] work[ed] through and with minority difference and culture … to redirect originally insurgent formations and deliver them into the normative ideals and protocols of state, capital, and academy” (Ferguson, 2012: 8). As the number of programmes began to shrink considerably – from about 500 in 1971 to about 225 in 1984 – the survival of Black studies programmes came to rest on their ability to successfully perform a purely academic function. With its move away from counterhegemonic struggle and activism, Black studies succumbed to the “institutionalizing ethos”, and became part of the “imperial tendency” of the U.S. state to co-opt, manage, and ultimately undermine oppositional tendencies (Colón, 1984; Drake, 1984; Ferguson, 2012). Black studies was to be an intellectually valid, educationally responsible, and socially constructive project, which, like American studies and area studies, demanded little attention to class:

While overall the movement was positive, particularly in its critique of white supremacy, the movement’s ~~blind~~ spot with regard to class, and specifically, working-class issues, subjected the movement to subversion by pro-corporate forces … the ~~blind~~ spot to class served to increasingly isolate and marginalize the black studies movement …

(Fletcher, 1983: 159)

Relatedly, Manning Marable argued that the majority of Black studies programmes rejected political economy and public policy to focus on arts and humanities, creating an imbalance between literary and cultural studies and structural critique (Gates and Marable, 1983). Thus, the formalization of Black studies instantiated a move away from class and community.

Area studies provided the basis for a new form of governmentality that inhered in liberal inclusion instead of racist foreclosure and conscious and unconscious “ignorance”. It set the precedent for racially specific studies to become sites for the management of difference. Area studies specialists became essential to the formulation of policies and practices adopted by the U.S. state in strategic areas of global governance. Black studies scholars, on the other hand, were largely irrelevant to efforts aimed at the implementation of policies that impacted the material realities of Black people. According to St. Clair Drake, Black studies scholars “did not … have a strong impact in areas not directly related to teaching and research” (Drake, 1984: 236). Black studies did, however, provide an understanding of how Black people should be managed by the state – namely, through discourses of multicultural rights that asserted equality in terms of cultural recognition. As Schueller (2007: 52) argues, “This severance of race from rights across a broad sociopolitical spectrum … made it possible for multiculturalism … to simply represent politics of cultural recognition without recognition of equal social reward or redistributive justice”. Stated differently, redistribution became extricated from cultural recognition in demands for self-determination. The emphasis on abstract representation ultimately allowed the westernized university, the state, and capital to shore up their power, because “the margins” and the “periphery” came to be understood as sites of cultural empowerment and contestation. The goal was to “develop cultural strategies that make a difference” (Hall, 1992: 107). The accommodation of difference, first though area studies, then through Black studies, allowed the U.S. state to acquire knowledge so that it could adequately conscript those occupying the margins into its imperial project. Through its enunciations of culturally coded Blackness, Black studies became self-disciplining as a prerequisite for its institutionalization. Moreover, like area studies, Black studies became an instrumentality for the management of radical and potentially revolutionary movements, thereby helping the state, capital, and empire to rearticulate itself through incorporation, absorption, and regulation.

As was the case with area studies, Black studies was an “attempt to create a systematic body of knowledge and experience based on the history” (Colón, 1984: 268) of a group that had previously been excluded from academic study. Both area studies and Black studies had the impact of inserting into the westernized university, especially predominately white institutions, research and teaching in areas that had been considered outside of the purview of civilization. In order to facilitate imperial expansion in the postwar moment in which the majority of the world was contesting race-based forms of coloniality, the “American” creed had to be expanded beyond the “cultural values of the Anglo-American tradition” so that “others” could be more easily accommodated. Instead of conscripting racialized and colonized subjects into a model that refused to recognize them, through the university the U.S. state inaugurated programmes of research and scholarship that made their experiences, histories, and cultures constitutive of imperial expansion. One such example was the funding of African student exchange programmes throughout the 1960s with monies appropriated under the U.S. Information and Educational Exchange Act of 1948 (commonly known as the Smith-Mundt Act) – passed to institutionalize U.S. cultural and informational programming as a peacetime technology of foreign policy – and from the sale of war surplus materials abroad. These students were closely supervised by the Department of State under the auspices of the Institute of International Education (African Studies Association, 1961: 1–3).

Another example is the intervention of the Ford Foundation in the formation of Black Studies programmes to ensure that they were geared towards solving the problems of racial exclusion and racial integration, but were not tightly bound to Black Power ideologies and did not exacerbate racially inflected structural crises on campuses or in Black communities (Rooks, 2006: 15–30). The accumulation of knowledge became the means by which the state and the university could monitor and influence the direction of potentially revolutionary movements. Black studies became a site of surveillance and discipline to ensure that, eventually, demands for material redistribution would collapse into demands for cultural recognition.

With the focus on difference and cultural politics, the “margins” came to be incorporated into the “centre”, and the “periphery” came to be incorporated into the “core” of global capital, while both the “margins” and the “periphery” effectively maintained their subordinate status. As the site of struggle shifted to the meaning of difference and to demands for representation and recognition of cultural identities in society, the focus of Black studies necessarily shifted to the politicization of culture, to the development of new identities, and to contesting the cultural hegemony of the “mainstream”. With domination culturally specified, demands for change in and reconfiguration of relations of power came to rest on efforts aimed at the deployment of a politics of difference that would place Blackness on an equal footing with white cultural forms. The state was able to accommodate these demands by shifting to a more open, inclusive, and accommodating “disposition of power” (Ferguson, 2012) that was effective without compromising its capitalist and imperialist agenda. While increasingly worse off in material terms given the ascent of neoliberalism, Black people came to be recognized and represented in popular culture and popular discourse, where they could be adequately policed, regulated, and commodified. Through collaboration between the state and the westernized university, culturalized identity politics came to be recognized as the only acceptable articulation of Black struggle and contestation.

American studies provided the grammar for the conflation of Black studies with the interdisciplinary study of culture. Fletcher (1983: 159) asserts, “… black studies in the sixties … focused on the national or ‘ethnic’ feature of the African American freedom struggle. Culture was prominent, but so too was a nonclass view of African American experience”. The cultural specifications of Blackness readily accommodated the transition to African diaspora studies as the 1980s and 1990s inaugurated concerns about globalization and transnationalism. Such specification created the conditions for African diaspora studies to further distance itself from the (Black) left, because, “[a]t a certain level, the Left, through its critique of empire, intersects with the foreign in being cast as unnational” (Schueller, 2007: 54). Diaspora deterritorialized, relativized, and abstracted Blackness in a way that seriously hampered a structural critique of power. Blackness was delinked from the nation-state and its historical specificity and was asserted as a hybrid, transcultural phenomenon, so the location-specific materialities of dispossession and domination that produced and reinscribed Blackness went largely uncontested. As international linkages became culturally specified and divorced from political and economic realities, possibilities offered up by variations of socialism and communism that “reache[d] out to all oppressed colonial subjects … [and] enabled many different people to identify with other oppressed peoples and to reject patriotism and national identity” were negated (Kelley, 2004: 43). Race became essentialized in globalized relations of representation (Hall, 1996) and the possibilities of international alliances against capitalist oppression were marginalized.

#### Adopting a government-led strategy for AI development is necessary to solve exponentially increasing malevolent and racist privatized AI

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As with all digitally transformational technologies, AI systems’ technical complexity and rapid adoption in society fast and far outpace the current knowledge and experience of most lawmakers and regulators and operate beyond the envisaged scope of many existing legal doctrines and frameworks. Even if existing law is potentially adequate to address discriminatory algorithmic bias in some domains, the contextual “translation” of those laws to this brave new AI world is indeterminate and uncertain. Further, due to the difficulty of enforcement against illegal algorithmic discrimination, jurisprudential guidance is sparse and slow in coming. These gaps between the currently limited status of algorithmic law and the realities of the Wild AI West create a void in which unscrupulous or merely unfettered and ambitious algorithm purveyors may pursue enriching, but societally corrosive opportunities. Uninformed persons making decisions about and using AI systems may adopt and deploy such systems without appropriate insight, preparation, or restraint. Further, they may use algorithmic systems in ways contrary to purveyors’ guidance, such with recidivism risk systems used in sentencing. All these factors coalesce to create the potential for discriminatorily-biased algorithms to do exponentially amplified, persistent, and irreparable harm to individuals, communities, and society. The need is urgent for a workable system of algorithmic justice by which to illuminate and eradicate discriminatory computational biases, or at least to more quickly identify them and reduce their incidence and duration. Fostering greater access to justice, public trust in AI technology, and other important policy goals, an algorithmic justice system also would provide empirical mechanisms by which to establish baselines and measure and communicate the status of progress toward eradicating discriminatory algorithm bias in State of the Algorithmic Nation reports, for example. In addition, this algorithmic justice system would provide a framework for crafting meaningful policy, legislative, and regulatory systems for AI and a more accessible and definitive means of enforcing and litigating against illegal algorithmic discrimination. This work offers a new model toward an algorithmic justice system. As a beginning to address the likely immense and certainly multiply complex problem of discriminatory algorithmic bias, this new model commences with two foundational processes. First, the model proposes the creation of Algorithmic Justice Standards (“Standards”). These Standards must be created to identify and elaborate what constitutes impermissible discriminatory bias within algorithmic systems. Overtly discriminatory bias in algorithms should be easier to identify and, one hopes, rarely present. As the greater challenge, however, these Standards must identify implicit biases arising from the use of zip codes, “ethnic” or gendered names, and other data that may function, including in otherwise seemingly innocent combinations, as proxies for race and other protected classifications that, in turn, serve as inputs for algorithmic engines. It is reasonably foreseeable that implicit discriminatory bias in algorithmic systems is as rampant as aversive racism and other implicit bias within human society, at least in the United States. Therefore, the Algorithmic Justice Standards must encompass a great numerosity of deeply complex analyses to get at implicit discriminatory biases. Interdisciplinary approaches and collaborations are required to carry out these ambitious, critical, ultimately revelatory, and hopefully transformative exercises. The Standards development and other processes must involve multiple stakeholders from within multiple disciplines and must incorporate legal constructs and ethical requirements. Part of the Standards processes must include consensus-building as to whether and, if so, what levels of discriminatory bias is tolerable, given the context(s) in which algorithmic systems are to be deployed. Above all, the Algorithmic Justice Standards and all associated processes and information must be transparent and openly available and participatory. As its model’s second cornerstone, this work proposes the creation of robust technical testing and validation mechanisms by which each algorithmic implementation will be tested by accredited laboratories and validated by an appropriate government agency against the Algorithmic Justice Standards prior to its deployment in the market or otherwise. Algorithmic systems may constitute highly valuable or sensitive proprietary property or otherwise warrant protection against unfettered disclosure. To encourage participation by algorithm purveyors having such interests, algorithms submitted for testing and validation must be shielded under exceptions to the federal Freedom of Information Act and state equivalents. Rather, such algorithms must be discoverable only through judicial process and, as applicable to trade secrets and other sensitive or restricted access information, subject to protective orders. The results of algorithm testing and validation, however, must be transparent and readily available. Inspectors general and internal auditors must have the technical capacity and, where needed, additional legal authority to critically review testing and validation processes and the institutions that carry them out and to move forward with enforcement or other corrective measures. In sum, the two cornerstones of the proposed algorithmic justice system build foundational processes, first, to create a largely, but not purely, community-based law in which the community of stakeholders agree, including as circumscribed by existing law, as to what constitute unacceptable discriminatory algorithmic biases; and, second, to evaluate algorithms for compliance against that law before people, their communities, and society are subjected to them.

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#### Psycho-analysis is wrong---terrible methodology, nonfalsifiable, every refutable claim has been disproven, and ineffective results

Robert **Bud and** Mario **Bunge 10** {Robert Bud is principal curator of medicine at the Science Museum in London. 9-29-2010. “Should psychoanalysis be in the Science Museum?” [https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg20827806-200-should-psychoanalysis-be-in-the-science-museum/}//JM](https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg20827806-200-should-psychoanalysis-be-in-the-science-museum/%7d/JM) (link credit to EM)

WE SHOULD congratulate the Science Museum for setting up an exhibition on psychoanalysis. Exposure to pseudoscience greatly helps understand genuine science, just as learning about tyranny helps in understanding democracy. Over the past 30 years, **psychoanalysis has** quietly **been displaced** in academia by scientific psychology. But it persists in popular culture as well as being a lucrative profession. It is the psychology of those who have not bothered to learn psychology, and the psychotherapy of choice for those who believe in the power of immaterial mind over body. **Psychoanalysis is a bogus science** because **its practitioners do not do scientific research**. When the field turned 100, a group of psychoanalysts admitted this gap and endeavoured to fill it. They claimed to have performed the first experiment showing that patients benefited from their treatment. Regrettably, **they did not include a control group and did not entertain the possibility of placebo effects**. Hence, their claim remains untested (The International Journal of Psychoanalysis, vol 81, p 513). More recently, a meta-analysis published in American Psychologist (vol 65, p 98) purported to support the claim that a form of psychoanalysis called psychodynamic therapy is effective. However, once again, the original studies did not involve control groups. In 110 years, psychoanalysts have not set up a single lab. They do not participate in scientific congresses, do not submit their papers to scientific journals and are foreign to the scientific community - a marginality typical of pseudoscience. This does not mean their hypotheses have never been put to the test. True, they are so vague that they are hard to test and some of them are, by Freud's own admission, irrefutable. Still, most of the testable ones have been soundly refuted. For example, most dreams have no sexual content. The Oedipus complex is a myth; boys do not hate their fathers because they would like to have sex with their mothers. The list goes on. As for therapeutic efficacy, little is known because psychoanalysts do not perform double-blind clinical trials or follow-up studies. Psychoanalysis is a pseudoscience. Its concepts are woolly and untestable yet are regarded as unassailable axioms. As a result of such dogmatism, psychoanalysis has remained basically stagnant for more than a century, in contrast with scientific psychology, which is thriving.