### The Bo Gerard Comedy Magic Show

#### Everything about communication has already been said. So called experts have overproliferated information to the point where evidence and communication have become immersed in their own spectacle. Communication is a system of infinite autoreferentiality, where speakers no longer make contact, but only exchange sound bites. The role of the ballot is to endorse the best communication scholarship.

Baudrillard 09 [, Jean (The Bae) “The Vanishing Point of Communication” in Jean Baudrillard: Fatal Theories, Edited by David B. Clarke, Marcus A. Doel, William Merrin and Richard G. Smith This text is based on a transcript of a lecture delivered in English by Jean Baudrillard to the Department of Social Sciences, Loughborough University, UK, New York:Routledge, pg. 15-23]

**Everything about communication seems to have been said, but actually nothing has been**. Almost nothing except the stereotypes or the technological fantasies of the experts in the matter. Something really theoretical is lacking. Let us refer to what happened in the theoretical field of production: whereas the classical economists spoke of a natural philosophy of wealth and exchange, Marx came along and spoke of production, of productivity and mode of production – it was a theoretical revolution. The same later with the theory of consumption: whereas the ideologists of consumption spoke of human needs and pure commodities, we began to speak of consumption as a structural and differential logic of signs. This was something radically different, and initiated a totally new analysis. And now with the sphere of communication: **we only hear about information, message, interaction and so on.** But what is the real meaning, the real finality of all that? At this moment we don’t have the key. **We didn’t get the equivalent of the theoretical leap forward in the field of production and consumption, the radical viewpoint which would change the very terms of the problem, allowing us to speak of communication and information in terms other than those of evidence and apologia.** If it is so difficult to abstract the logic of communication from its apologia, then this is because **communication and information are** first of all **involved in their own operation, invested in their own effects, immersed in their own** spectacle. **So it is difficult to extract their reality from their simulation. The whole complex has succeeded today as a dominant system of values, and as a collective operational network at the same time**. But the point is: **are we really communicating or isn’t it rather the problem of our whole society expanding, transcending, exhausting itself in the fiction of communication?** Other generations grew up with the myth of production. Saint-Simonian and proto-capitalistic utopias marked out a radiant future for the human race according to this prospective conception. And a sort of political and economical mysticism continues to push us towards maximal production with the prospect [la perspective] of maximal wealth and social comfort – however cruelly smashed by the world crisis of 1929 and the latent crisis in all industrial countries ever since. Now we know that an excess of production may be obnoxious and fatal. Even consumption may reverse its finality. Ever-growing consumption of therapies and healthcare for example may turn out to be a catastrophe for social security and for our health itself.2 The consumption of cultural goods, or of sexual pleasure, or of any commodity considered as a quantitative function, reveals itself to be an absurdity. The same paradoxical consequence is true for communication and information. **We are at the critical limit where all effects can be reversed and communication vanishes into an excess of communication. All functions of transparency and fluidity in social relations end in a useless complexity and a collective suffocation. This vanishing point is not a prediction, it is a pure presumption, but a logical one, or rather a tautological one – describing communication and information as a great tautological operation, as a great self-fulfilling prophecy**. First of all: **it isn’t true that** men **[people] have always communicated since they first spoke to each other and lived in society. It is not even true that there have been ‘messages’ and information ever since** men **[people] were connected by language. This anthropological extrapolation**, which tends to extend the principle of communication back through the ages and to give it an aboriginal status, is entirely misleading. It **occults the very moment when communication began, in the technical sense of the word** (communication is a technology), **when we began to be involved and engaged in a collective need for communication.** **It occults the specificity of communication as a modern invention, as a new mode of production** and circulation of speech, **connected to the media and the technology of media.** Conversely: **just as it has not always existed, perhaps also communication will not exist forever; neither is information an extra-temporal notion – maybe both will last as long as the words to speak of them**. The terminological point is crucial. **Things exist only when there is a determination of them, a sign which testifies, a warrant of their meaning and credibility. Whoever had the idea of ‘communicating’ in ancient societies, in tribes, in villages, in families? Neither the word nor the concept existed, the question doesn’t make any sense. People don’t need to communicate, because they just speak to one another. Why communicate when it is so easy to speak to each other?** So, my presupposition is: **just as the failure** [défaillance] **of the real is the basis for the reality principle, so the failure of speech and symbolic exchange is the basis for the principle of communication**. So the basic status, the basic definition of communication is negative. It is just like what Apollinaire says of time: if you are talking about it, it is because it doesn’t exist any more … **When we speak of communication, it is because there is no communication any more.** The social body is no longer conductive, relations are no longer regulated by informal consensus, the communion of meaning [le sens] is lost. **That is why we must produce a formal apparatus, a collective artefact, a huge network of information that assumes the circulation of meaning.** A new specific function is born, reflected in a code, in numerous institutions, and then all at once emerge the techniques of communication, and then the sciences of communication, all the sophistries, all the casuistries, all the social and political complexity of communication. **The simplest exchanges must transit through multiple codes and feedback, which change their sense.** Everything becomes a ‘message’ (according to McLuhan,3 this pompous and ridiculous term sounds like ‘massage’, like manipulation). **With the message, language becomes a pure ‘medium’ of communication**, according to the structuralist and functionalist analysis. **Emitter, receiver, code, context, contact, message: language is altered in its substance by this system of formalization, it is reduced to a one-dimensional function, according to the one-dimensional process of life. What was an act has become an operation. Speech was an act, communication is an operation, and along with it goes the operation of social life. Language is a form, but communication is a performance. Then it [that] becomes more and more efficient** [performant], **easier and easier, faster and faster, but at the same time the system becomes heavier and heavier, more and more institutionalized, less and less conductive**. (The very term ‘communication’ has a bureaucratic heaviness, it has all the beauty of a prosthetic mechanism.) We must never forget this when confronting the structure of communication: its very essence is non-communication. Its horizon is negative, and this has consequences for the future of all human relations. **Communication became this strange structure where things (and beings) do not touch each other, but exchange their kinetic, caloric, erotic and informational energy through contiguity, just like molecules**. Through contiguity, but without contact, always being at a distance from each other. **Take highway cloverleaves. Nothing is more beautiful than two roads crossing each other, but it is dangerous as an accident risk – so is the crossing of glances or the exchange of words, human words, as a seduction risk. So we invented traffic infrastructures where cars can move without crossing each other, we invented structures of relations where humans can communicate without passing each other, without touching each other, without looking at each other. We are all commuters, and the condition for the fluidity of information, for the fluidity of transit, will be the abduction of all senses, of looking, of touching, of smelling, of all the potential violence of exchange.** It is the same with our mediatized and computerized human relations. We interact without touching each other, interlocute without speaking to each other, interface without seeing each other. Here is something really bizarre. The strangeness of a blank attraction, of a blank interaction, the inseparability of particles at distances of light-years. They talk about this a lot in physics. It seems that our social structure too is oriented towards this model, in a form of electronic solidarity. Just by chance we are discovering this in physics at the very moment when we are having the same experience in everyday life. **Permeability to all images, to all messages, to all networks – submission to the virality of signs, to the epidemics of value, to the multiplicity of codes – tactility, digitality, contact, contiguity, contagion, irradiation and chain reaction: what gets lost in this new ritual of transparency and interaction is both the singularity of the self, and the singularity of the other.** That is, the irreducibility of the subject, and the irreducibility of the object. **Interaction, communication describe the vanishing point of the subject**, of its secret, of its desire, of its Unheimlichkeit (strangeness to itself). **But it is the vanishing point of [and] the other as well, of transfer and challenge; of strangeness and seduction – all the fascination of alterity, of the external quality of the other, all dual and dialectical forms of relationship get lost, for all these forms presuppose distance, contradiction, tension or intensity, quite the contrary of the superficial fluidity of the electronic screen of communication.** Another point is the question of time, of the suspension of time as well as the suspending of words, or of activity. In an interactive field there is no place for silence, for idleness, for absence. There is no stasis, no vacation, no rest – only metastasis along the networks, ramifications of time and space. No dead time, no distraction, no dreamtime: time is no longer your enemy, nor your luxury (you cannot spend it uselessly). It is not your master or your slave: it is your partner, and it resolves itself without past or future, in exhausting instantaneity. For it must be instantaneous in order to work. And images and messages must follow one another, without discontinuity. No break, no syncope, no silence. A text may be silent, it may absorb or produce silence in its words – images, at least media-images, cannot. Silence on television is a scandal. That is why these lapses or silences on the screen are so significant, significant of nothing maybe, except the rupture of communication, but precisely this suspense is delightful, inasmuch as it makes obvious that all these non-stop images, this intensive information, is nothing but an artificial scenario, a pure fiction that protects us from the void – the void of the screen, of course, but also the void of our mental screen. The scene of a man sitting and staring at his empty television screen, on a strike day, will be one of the most beautiful and impressive anthropological images of the end of the twentieth century**.** In the interactive social life, it is prohibited to disconnect yourself; prohibited even on your deathbed to disconnect the tubes and wires. The scandal is not so much the offence against life (nobody cares) as the attack on the network, on medicine and the technological apparatus of survival, which must first take care of its own survival. The principle of communication implies the absolute moral obligation not so much to be involved as to remain connected. This constitutes of course a possibility of being alienated by the whole system of interconnection, of being controlled even in your private life. But much more alienating, much more destabilizing is the reciprocal control given to you over the external world. The first danger is well known as the Big Brother story – the common fear of total control. But the second is more sophisticated and perverse. By using all the available screens and videos and telematic possibilities (including sex [l’amour] by telephone), it makes the external world superfluous, it makes all human presence, physical or linguistic, superfluous. All-out communication accentuates the involution into a micro-universe, with no reason to escape any more. A carceral niche with video walls. The fact that someone knew everything about you was frightening. But today, the best way of neutralizing, of cancellating someone is not to know everything about him, it is to give him the means of knowing everything about everything – and especially about himself. You no longer neutralize him by repression and control, you neutralize him through information and communication. You paralyse him much better by excess than by deprivation of information, since you enchain him to the pure obligation of being more and more connected to himself, more and more closely connected to the screen, in restless circularity and autoreferentiality, as an integrated network. At this point, the question of liberty doesn’t make sense any more. Our sovereignty is diffracted along the technical and mental lines of parasitic ramifications. For this process happens not only externally, in the operational network of institutions and programmes, but also internally, in the labyrinth of our brain and our body. To put it another way: the exoteric complex of communication, this huge apparatus deployed on the surface of our societies, goes along with an esoteric complex that rules the intimacy of each individual. **Through this complex, through all techniques of introspection**, through psychology, biology and medicine, man **has learned to communicate with [itself]** himself, to deal with himself as a partner, to interface with himself. He **passed from the stage of passion and destiny to the stage of calculating and negotiating [its]** his **own life, dealing with all the information about it, just like the way a computer operates.**

#### The university is head management in this reduction of life to a precoded process. Academia is a machine that produces meaning in excess, always already separating the real from the symbolic and constituting students as distinct identities. This process of communication and learning fosters regimes of social death centered around managing the symbolic exchange.

Occupied UC Berkeley 09 ["The Necrosocial." Anti-Capital Projects. N.p., 9 Nov. 2009. Web. 05 Dec. 2016.]

**Being president of the University** of California **is like being manager of a cemetery: there are many people under you, but no one is listening**. UC President Mark Yudof Capital is dead labor which, vampire-like, lives only by sucking living labor. Karl Marx Politics is death that lives a human life. Achille Mbembe Yes, very much a cemetery. Only here there are no dirges, no prayers, only the repeated testing of our threshold for anxiety, humiliation, and debt. **The classroom just like the workplace just like the university just like the state just like the economy manages our social death, translating what we once knew** from high school, from work, from our family life **into academic parlance, into acceptable forms of social conflict.** **Who knew that behind** so much **civic life** (electoral campaigns, student body representatives, bureaucratic administrators, public relations officials, Peace and Conflict Studies, ad nauseam) **was so much social death?** What postures we maintain to claim representation, what limits we assume, what desires we dismiss? **And in this moment of crisis they ask us to twist ourselves in a way that they can hear**. **Petitions** to Sacramento, **phone calls** to Congressmen—**even the chancellor patronizingly congratulates our** September 24th **student strike, shaping the meaning and the force** of the movement as a movement against the policies of Sacramento. **He expands his institutional authority to encompass the movement**. **When students begin to hold libraries over night**, beginning to take our first baby step as an autonomous movement **he reins us in by serendipitously announcing library money.** He manages movement, he kills movement by funneling it into the electoral process. **He manages our social death.** He looks forward to these battles on his terrain, to eulogize a proposition, to win this or that—he and his look forward to exhausting us. **He and his look forward to a reproduction of the logic of representative governance, the release valve of the university plunges us into an abyss where ideas** are wisps of ether—**that is, meaning is ripped from action**. **Let’s talk about the fight endlessly, but always only in their managed form**: to perpetually deliberate, the endless fleshing-out-of—**when we push the boundaries of this form they are quick to reconfigure themselves to contain us**: the chancellor’s congratulations, the reopening of the libraries, the managed general assembly—**there is no fight against the administration here, only its own extension.** **Each day passes in this way**, the administration on the look out to shape student discourse—it happens without pause, **we don’t notice nor do we care to. It becomes banal, thoughtless. So much so that we see we are accumulating days: one semester, two, how close to being this or that,** how far? This accumulation is our shared history. **This accumulation**—every once in a while interrupted, violated by a riot, a wild protest, unforgettable fucking, the overwhelming joy of love, life shattering heartbreak—**is** a muted, but desirous life. **A dead but restless and desirous life.** **The university steals and homogenizes our time** yes, **our bank accounts also,** but it also steals **and homogenizes meaning**. **As much as capital is invested in building** a killing apparatus abroad, **an incarceration apparatus** in California, **it is equally invested here in an apparatus for managing social death**. Social death is, of course, simply the power source, the generator, of civic life with its talk of reform, responsibility, unity. **A ‘life,’ then, which serves merely as the public relations mechanism for death: its garrulous slogans of freedom and democracy designed to obscure the shit and decay in which our feet are planted**. Yes, **the university is a** graveyard, but it is also a factory: a **factory of meaning which produces civic life and at the same time produces social death**. A factory which produces the illusion **that meaning and reality can be separated; which everywhere reproduces the empty reactionary behavior of students based on the values of life (identity), liberty (electoral politics), and happiness (private property).** Everywhere the same whimsical ideas of the future. Everywhere democracy. Everywhere discourse to shape our desires and distress in a way acceptable to the electoral state, discourse designed to make our very moments here together into a set of legible and fruitless demands. Totally managed death. A machine for administering death, for the proliferation of technologies of death. As elsewhere, things rule. Dead objects rule. In this sense, it matters little what face one puts on the university—whether Yudof or some other lackey. These are merely the personifications of the rule of the dead, the pools of investments, the buildings, the flows of materials into and out of the physical space of the university—each one the product of some exploitation—which seek to absorb more of our work, more tuition, more energy. The university is a machine which wants to grow, to accumulate, to expand, to absorb more and more of the living into its peculiar and perverse machinery: high-tech research centers, new stadiums and office complexes. And at this critical juncture the only way it can continue to grow is by more intense exploitation, higher tuition, austerity measures for the departments that fail to pass the test of ‘relevancy.’ But the ‘irrelevant’ departments also have their place. **With** their **‘pure’ motives of knowledge for its own sake, they perpetuate** the blind inertia of **meaning** ostensibly **detached from its** social **context**. As the university cultivates its cozy relationship with capital, war and power, these discourses and research programs play their own role, co-opting and containing radical potential**. And so we attend lecture[s] after lecture about how ‘discourse’ produces ‘subjects,’ ignoring the most obvious fact that we ourselves are produced by this discourse about discourse which leaves us believing that it is only words which matter, words about words which matter. The university gladly permits the precautionary lectures on** biopower; on **the production of race and gender; on the reification and the fetishization of commodities. A taste of the poison serves well to inoculate us against any confrontational radicalism. And all the while power weaves the invisible nets which contain and neutralize all thought and action, that bind revolution inside books, lecture halls. There is no need to speak truth to power when power already speaks the truth.** The university is a graveyard– así es. The graveyard of liberal good intentions, of meritocracy, opportunity, equality, democracy. Here the tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. We graft our flesh, our labor, our debt to the skeletons of this or that social cliché. In seminars and lectures and essays, we pay tribute to the university’s ghosts, the ghosts of all those it has excluded—the immiserated, the incarcerated, the just-plain-fucked. They are summoned forth and banished by a few well-meaning phrases and research programs, given their book titles, their citations. This is our gothic—we are so morbidly aware, we are so practiced at stomaching horror that the horror is thoughtless. In this graveyard our actions will never touch, will never become the conduits of a movement, if we remain permanently barricaded within prescribed identity categories—our force will be dependent on the limited spaces of recognition built between us. Here we are at odds with one another socially, each of us: students, faculty, staff, homebums, activists, police, chancellors, administrators, bureaucrats, investors, politicians, faculty/ staff/ homebums/ activists/ police/ chancellors/ administrators/ bureaucrats/ investors/ politicians-to-be. That is, **we are students, or students of color, or queer students of color, or faculty, or Philosophy Faculty, or Gender and Women Studies faculty, or we are custodians, or we are shift leaders—each with our own office, place, time, and given meaning. We form** teams, clubs, fraternities, majors, departments, schools, **unions, ideologies, identities, and subcultures—and thankfully each group gets its own designated burial plot. Who doesn’t participate in this graveyard? In the university we prostrate ourselves before a value of separation, which in reality translates to a value of domination**. We spend money and energy trying to convince ourselves we’re brighter than everyone else. Somehow, we think, we possess some trait that means we deserve more than everyone else. **We have measured ourselves and we have measured others. It should never feel terrible ordering others around, right? It should never feel terrible to diagnose people as an expert, manage them as a bureaucrat, test them as a professor, extract value from their capital as a businessman. It should feel good, gratifying, completing. It is our private wet dream for the future; everywhere, in everyone this same dream of domination. After all, we are intelligent, studious, young. We worked hard to be here, we deserve this. We are convinced, owned, broken. We know their values better than they do: life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness. This triumvirate of sacred values are ours of course, and in this moment of practiced theater—the fight between the university and its own students—we have used their words on their stages: Save public education! When those values are violated by the very institutions which are created to protect them, the veneer fades, the tired set collapses: and we call it injustice, we get indignant. We demand justice from them, for them to adhere to their values. What many have learned again and again is that these institutions don’t care for those values, not at all, not for all.** **And we are only beginning to understand that those values are not even our own.** The values create popular images and ideals (healthcare, democracy, equality, happiness, individuality, pulling yourself up by your bootstraps, public education) while they mean in practice the selling of commodified identities, the state’s monopoly on violence, the expansion of markets and capital accumulation, the rule of property, the rule of exclusions based on race, gender, class, and domination and humiliation in general. They sell the practice through the image. We’re taught we’ll live the images once we accept the practice. In this crisis the Chancellors and Presidents, the Regents and the British Petroleums, the politicians and the managers, they all intend to be true to their values and capitalize on the university economically and socially—which is to say, nothing has changed, it is only an escalation, a provocation. Their most recent attempt to reorganize wealth and capital is called a crisis so that we are more willing to accept their new terms as well as what was always dead in the university, to see just how dead we are willing to play, how non-existent, how compliant, how desirous. Every institution has of course our best interest in mind, so much so that we’re willing to pay, to enter debt contracts, to strike a submissive pose in the classroom, in the lab, in the seminar, in the dorm, and eventually or simultaneously in the workplace to pay back those debts. Each bulging institutional value longing to become more than its sentiment through us, each of our empty gestures of feigned-anxiety to appear under pressure, or of cool-ambivalence to appear accustomed to horror, every moment of student life, is the management of our consent to social death.

#### Capitalism expanded out of the factory and into our minds through a process of simulation. The system no longer demands goods and labor but rather demands demand itself. The desire for knowledge and learning drives a system that over-produces meaning and content thereby destroying the student as subject.

Anarchist News 10 [anonymous graduate student in philosophy, “The University, Social Death and the Inside Joke,” [Anarchist](http://anarchistnews.org/content/university-social-death-and-inside-joke) News. N.p., 18 Feb. 2010]

**"For a long time, capital had only to produce goods; consumption ran by itself."[**19] Baudrillard explains two years later, in In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities, that "**today it is necessary to produce consumers, to produce demand, and this production is infinitely more costly than that of goods**."[20] Furthermore, one used to be able to simply produce meaning, as psychic lubricant for political economy. Now, meaning is everywhere, one must generate a demand for meaning. "In the university," write the Berkeley students, "we prostrate ourselves before a value of separation, which in reality translates to a value of domination."[21] **The search for enlightenment becomes a mere continuation of the adolescent search for identity; "we spend money and energy trying to convince ourselves we're brighter than everyone else."**[22] **The institutional apparatuses of our society develop new ways for us to express, and consequently desire, forms of identification**; social networking sites, blogs, speed dating, reality television, multimedia messaging. **Our very sociality**, our propensity to engage in group behavior and develop fashions, **provides for the obsolescence of everything**, including ourselves. For this reason, the construction of the social becomes a profit making venture. Advertising, the production of consumption and of the desire for recognition, provides a mechanism for facilitating the monetization of everything. **Our entire interpersonal relationships**, whether we are viewing someone's social networking page, or simply admiring their clothes, **becomes a means for facilitating desire** (as well as conceptions of Foucaultian power). The sphere of politics is simply compromised; "**Everywhere discourse to shape our desires and distress in a way acceptable to the electoral state, discourse designed to make our very moments here together into a set of legible and fruitless demands."**[23] **The youthful desire channeled into the Obama movement broke all prior records; everywhere students rushed around,** registering voters and handing out stickers. **Yet the enthusiastic search for participation hides an anxiety on the part of the system. For, while the mass media would have us believe in a frenzied endorsement of democracy, more people didn't vote than voted for Obama. "Everywhere the masses are encouraged to speak**", writes Baudrillard in his 1978 critique of the social, "**they are urged to live socially, electorally, organizationally, sexually, in participation, in festival, in free speech, etc."[**24] Yet this simply serves to show a huge potential weakness of a system increasingly focused on the exploitation of affective capacity: "**nothing shows more dramatically**," Baudrillard writes, "**that the only genuine problem today is the silence of the mass, the silence of the silent majority**."[25] It is almost as if the expansion of the concept of the social factory, the conception of late Fordism proposed by Mario Tronti and Rancio Panzieri in which capitalism expands out of the factory to encompass all of human existence, is undergoing a mutation following the transition to a postFordist, connective economy. Giles Deleuze began to elucidate this shift: “Capitalism in its present form is essentially dispersive, with factories giving way to businesses. Family, school, army, and factory are no longer so many analogous but different sites converging in an owner, whether the state or some private power, but transmutable or transformable coded configurations of a single business where the only people left are administrators.” [26] In other words, the centralization of production, both spatially and temporally, is rapidly becoming unnecessary given the proliferation of communicative technologies on the one hand, and the semiotic and affective nature of modern capitalist accumulation on the other. Production, as previously noted, has been automated and exiled to the periphery. Yet other process integral to the maintenance of the capitalist economy in its current, hypermediated form have replaced it. As Baudrillard notes in his earlier text, Symbolic Exchange and Death, "the factory, as the model of socialization through capital, has not disappeared today but, in line with the general strategy, has been replaced by the entire city as the space of the code." [27] Baudrillard’s political economy thrives not on busy machinery and assembly lines, but rather the billboards and shopping centers of the contemporary urban environment. What is important in this new factory [is] the production and reproduction of workers, of consumption, even of desire. For this reason, his critique is more radical than even that of Deleuze, who sees desire as a potential means to force an exit from the domination of the economic, not something created to facilitate consumption. In Baudrillard, the city is a semiotic factory; it constitutes “the ghetto of television and advertising, the ghetto of consumers and the consumed, of readers read in advance, encoded decoders of every message, those circulating in, and circulated by, the subway, leisuretime entertainers and the entertained, etc.”[28] What matters is not the physical economy of the urban environment; rather what matters is that a space is constructed in which the normativity of our modern world is omnipotent. The theory of the social factory held that society would gradually be reengineered, due to a totalization of the human resources philosophy of Taylorism, to make it conducive to economic production and capitalist accumulation. Yet what is occurring appears to be the inverse of this; the factory and economic production is gradually being reformed so as to make it conducive to the reproduction of social relations.Yet neither the factory, with its connotations of labor and class struggle, nor Baudrillard’s city, with its proliferation of random signs and fundamental reality, provide a perfect vehicle for this recombination. “**The university is a machine**” the Berkeley kids remind us from behind their fortifications. **It “wants to grow, to accumulate, to expand, to absorb more and more of the living into its peculiar and perverse machinery**: hightech research centers, new stadiums and office complexes.”[29**] It is not limited by design to produce material goods (as a factory is), nor is it defined by those who inhabit it (as a city is). The function of the university was once to produce meaning, to explain and interpret the world.** “**Today, everything has changed,”** Baudrillard writes; “**no longer is meaning in short supply, it is produced everywhere, in ever increasing quantities – it is demand which is weakening.”[**30] **Yet the University has accommodated its new function well; to provide a space for the dissemination and valorization of this purpose. “It is the production of the demand for meaning which has become crucial for the system,”** the philosopher explains. **“Without this demand for, without this susceptibility to, without this minimal participation in meaning, power is nothing but an empty simulacrum and an isolated effect of perspective.”** [31] One recalls the AntiCapital Project’s assertion that students “spend money and energy trying to convince ourselves we’re brighter than everyone else.”[32] In doing so, they reinforce the hegemony of objective knowledge and all that comes from it. From literature and the humanities, one derives mediated social relations. From mathematics and science, one gets destructive forms of economics and rationality. Most threatening are the social sciences, which reinforce the tyranny of politics; the study, creation and segregation, of ‘the other’. “We are convinced, owned and broken,” say the kids in Berkeley. “We know their values better than they do…”[33] **We are not just given meaning, we are taught to seek, even demand it. Existential crises once posed a threat to the system. Now, it could not live without them.** Obsolescence provides the dynamo for fashion, for the rapid degradation of relationships, the jumps between jobs and homes. **We consume more; what was cool five minutes ago now isn’t.** We form loose relationships with friends and lovers, based not on any mutual desire but on shared enjoyment of mediated entertainment. **We don’t communicate, but we like the same movies or clubs**. We somehow ended up fighting for precarious existence, for the right to work a series of entrylevel jobs with no benefits and sublet an equally banal series of apartments or homes. Maybe we’ll eventually meet one of our neighbors. Maybe we’ll someday receive a pension. Even as students, we begin to feel the pain of precarity: “the university steals and homogenizes our time yes, our bank accounts also, but it also steals and homogenizes meaning.”[34] The University is becoming universalized, because “every moment of student life is the management of our consent to social death.”[35] As Baudrillard writes, “it can no longer be said that the social is dying, since it is already the accumulation of death.”[36] Elsewhere, he tells us that “the social exists to take care of the useless consumption of remainders so that individuals can be assigned to the useful management of their lives.”[37] The University is the ideal social environment, a space for adolescents to encounter each other and develop a passion for knowledge. Yet it also serves as a space for the proliferation of values and meanings, for the facilitation of semiotic consumption that Baudrillard views as being so important to the perpetuation of postmodern capitalism**.** A city is relatively concentrated space, allowing for bombardment by advertising, culture, media and structured normalcy. Yet it pales in comparison to the intense concentration of bodies facilitated in a University setting. The intense consumption of media and literature, social interactions and entertainment that students undergo means that meaning can easily be diffused. The Berkeley radicals claim the values distributed by their university: “create popular images and ideals while they mean in practice the selling of commodified identities, the state’s monopoly on violence, the expansion of markets and capital accumulation, the rule of property, the rule of exclusions based on race, gender, class and domination and humiliation in general.”[38] **The University is also the perfect focal point for an economy based on simulation. There, we are taught to question everything; this allows for the constant entropy and reabsorption of signs, ideal for living in** what Autonomist theorist Franco Berardi calls ‘**semiocapitalism**’. In Symbolic Exchange and Death, Baudrillard tells us that **our new economy "conforms to the global usage we have of the surrounding world of reading and selective decoding we live less as users than as readers and selectors, reading cells.”**[39] Yet he adds that “by the same token you are yourself constantly selected and tested by the medium itself.” **The subject of the hyperreal economy is increasingly analogous to the student; constantly undergoing evaluation, constantly producing and reproducing value**. Berardi explains in his work Precarious Rhapsody that “**the worker does not exist any more as a person. He is just the interchangeable producer of microfragments of recombinant semiosis which enters into the continuous flux of the network.”**[40] A precarious worker may have several jobs in a day. They may be paid by performance, graded like a student might be. Increasingly, a society dependent on affective labor is turning every job interview into an audition, an evaluation not just of the education and experience, but also of the social capital of the candidate. Many in the field of cultural studies have commented on the increasing dependence of corporations on the internet, on social networking sites and viral marketing. Others have talked of participatory management schemes, of the conflation between work and play, or on the growing importance of fan and venture labor. Yet a vital conclusion remains to be drawn, in that all these modulations are analogous to emulating ‘the poverty of student life’. Baudrillard tells us that **“**the school no longer exists because every strand of social process is shot through with discipline and pedagogical training.” [41]Modern capitalist enterprise seeks to reappropriate the University as the new model of the semiotic economy. To chart all the processes of indoctrination and exploitation taking place in the modern University would be a mammoth undertaking; Beyond Zombie Politics makes a positive attempt before concluding that “the UC has actively aided and at times even instigated in bringing about social, economic and ecological transformations that far from improving life for the majority, have actually made life more difficult and uncertain. The unsustainableness of the UC isn’t an unfortunate and correctable set of shortcomings, no, it is the UC’s single most important contribution to the world.”[42]

#### The search for information and knowledge is futile. This will to transparency imposes the global way of war on the level of representation. This produces constant implosive violence as we attempt to impose our conceptions of meaning onto the world. This is what allows things like alternative facts to be treated as reality.

Artrip and Debrix 14 [Ryan E. and Francois, “The Digital Fog of War: Baudrillard and the Violence of Representation,” Volume 11, Number 2 May. 2014]

The story that needs to be told is thus not about the undoubtedly deplorable “truth” or fact of explosive and warlike violence, but about a violence of another sort. In the radical digital transparency of the global scene, we (members of the demos) often have full or direct exposure to explosivity, as we saw above with the image of terror. But what still needs to be thought and problematized is implosivityor what may be called implosive violence. Implosive violence is a violence for which we do not, and perhaps will never, have much of a language (Rancière, 2007: 123). Although, not having a language for it or, rather, as we saw above, seeking to find a language to talk about it and, perhaps, to make sense of it is still sought after. This is, perhaps, what digital pictures of war/terror violence seek to capture or want to force through. Implosive violence, often digitally rendered these days, is in close contact with media technologies and representational devices and techniques because it seeks representation and meaning. This is why implosive violence insists on calling in wars (against terror, for example) and on mobilizing war machines (against terrorist others, against vague enemy figures), but wars and war machines that no longer have—to the extent that they ever had—a clearly identifiable object and subject, or a clear mission/purpose. As such, this implosive violence and its wars (the new Western/global way of war, perhaps) must remain uncertain, unclear, foggy, inwardly driven, representational, and indeed virulent. They must remain uncertain and confused even as they are digitally operative and desperately capture events/images to give the impression that meanings/significations can and will be found. Yet, as we saw above, it is not meanings exactly that must be found, but information and the endless guarantee of its immediate circulation. As information occupies the empty place of meaning, certainty, or truth, images must be instantaneously turned into appearances that search for meanings that will never be discovered because, instead, a proliferation of information-worthy facts and beliefs will take over (perhaps this is what US fake pundit and comedian Stephen Colbert famously referred to as “truthiness”). Or, as Baudrillard puts it, “free from its former enemies, humanity now has to create enemies from within, which in fact produces a wide variety of inhuman metastases” (Baudrillard, 2003). Thus, this implosive violence is destined to be a global violence since it "is the product of a system that tracks down any form of negativity and singularity, including of course death as the ultimate form of singularity. […] It is a violence that, in a sense, puts an end to violence itself and strives to establish a world where anything related to the natural must disappear  […] Better than a global violence, we should call it a global virulence. This form of violence is indeed viral. It moves by contagion, produces by chain reaction, and little by little it destroys our immune systems and our capacities to resist" (2003; our italics).

#### Semiocapitalism sustains itself through these forms of transparent communication, consuming its own content to survive. The information, or content, of the system is irrelevant and constantly being produced and consumed, altered indefinitely through the production of value. Societies attempts at resistance or revolution through speech are consumed by the system and spit back at us in a cycle that ensures our commitment to the system, insofar as we are committed to changing the system.

Baudrillard 2K [, Jean (The Bae) Simulacra and Simulation, available online: /http://www.egs.edu/faculty/jean-baudrillard/articles/simulacra-and-simulations-viii-the-implosion-of-meaning-in-the-media/]

**We live in a world where there is more and more information, and less and less meaning**. Consider three hypotheses. Either information produces meaning (a negentropic factor), but cannot make up for the brutal loss of signification in every domain. **Despite efforts to reinject message and content, meaning is lost and devoured faster than it can be reinjected.** In this case, one must appeal to a base productivity to replace failing media. **This is the whole ideology of free speech,** of media broken down into innumerable individual cells of transmission, that is, into "antimedia" (pirate radio, etc.). Or **information** has nothing to do with signification. It **is** something else, an operational model of another order, **outside meaning and of the circulation of meaning** strictly speaking. This is Shannon's hypothesis: a sphere of information that is purely functional, a technical medium that does not imply any finality of meaning, and thus should also not be implicated in a value judgment. **A kind of code, like the genetic code: it is what it is, it functions as it does, meaning is something else that in a sense comes after the fact**, as it does for Monod in Chance and Necessity. In this case, there would simply be no significant relation between the inflation of information and the deflation of meaning. Or, very much on the contrary, there is a rigorous and necessary correlation between the two, to the extent that **information is directly destructive of meaning and signification**, or that it neutralizes them. **The loss of meaning is directly linked to the dissolving, dissuasive action of information**, the media, and the mass media. The third hypothesis is the most interesting but flies in the face of every commonly held opinion. Everywhere socialization is measured by the exposure to media messages. Whoever is underexposed to the media is desocialized or virtually asocial. **Everywhere information is thought to produce an accelerated circulation of meaning, a plus value of meaning homologous to the economic one that results from the accelerated rotation of capital. Information is thought to create communication, and even if the waste is enormous, a general consensus would have it that nevertheless, as a whole, there be an excess of meaning, which is redistributed in all the interstices of the social - just as consensus would have it that material production, despite its dysfunctions and irrationalities, opens onto an excess of wealth and social purpose**. We are all complicitous in this myth. It is the alpha and omega of our modernity, without which the credibility of our social organization would collapse. Well, the fact is that it is collapsing, and for this very reason: **because where we think that information produces meaning, the opposite occurs. Information devours its own content. It devours communication and the social.** And for two reasons. 1. **Rather than creating communication, it exhausts itself in the act of staging communication. Rather than producing meaning, it exhausts itself in the staging of meaning**. A gigantic process of simulation that is veryfamiliar. **The nondirective interview, speech, listeners who call in, participation at every level, blackmail through speech: "You are concerned, you are the event, etc." More and more information is invaded by this kind of phantom content, this homeopathic grafting, this awakening dream of communication. A circular arrangement through which one stages the desire of the audience, the antitheater of communication, which, as one knows, is never anything but the recycling in the negative of the traditional institution, the integrated circuit of the negative.** Immense energies are deployed to hold this simulacrum at bay, to avoid the brutal desimulation that would confront us in the face of the obvious reality of a radical loss of meaning. It is useless to ask if it is the loss of communication that produces this escalation in the simulacrum, or whether it is the simulacrum that is there first for dissuasive ends, to short-circuit in advance any possibility of communication (precession of the model that calls an end to the real). Useless to ask which is the first term, there is none, it is a circular process - that of simulation, that of the hyperreal. The hyperreality of communication and of meaning. More real than the real, that is how the real is abolished. Thus not only communication but the social functions in a closed circuit, as a lure - to which the force of myth is attached. Belief, faith in information attach themselves to this tautological proof that the system gives of itself by doubling the signs of an unlocatable reality. But one can believe that this belief is as ambiguous as that which was attached to myths in ancient societies. One both believes and doesn't. One does not ask oneself, "I know very well, but still." A sort of inverse simulation in the masses, in each one of us, corresponds to this simulation of meaning and of communication in which this system encloses us. To this tautology of the system the masses respond with ambivalence, to deterrence they respond with disaffection, or with an always enigmatic belief. Myth exists, but one must guard against thinking that people believe in it: this is the trap of critical thinking that can only be exercised if it presupposes the naivete and stupidity of the masses. 2. Behind this exacerbated mise-en-scène of communication, the mass media, the pressure of information pursues an irresistible destructuration of the social. Thus information dissolves meaning and dissolves the social, in a sort of nebulous state dedicated not to a surplus of innovation, but, on the contrary, to total entropy.\*1 Thus the media are producers not of socialization, but of exactly the opposite, of the implosion of the social in the masses. And this is only the macroscopic extension of the implosion of meaning at the microscopic level of the sign. This implosion should be analyzed according to McLuhan's formula, **the medium is the message, the consequences of which have yet to be exhausted. That means that all contents of meaning are absorbed in the only dominant form of the medium. Only the medium can make an event - whatever the contents, whether they are conformist or subversive.** A serious problem for all counterinformation, pirate radios, antimedia, etc. But there is something even more serious, which McLuhan himself did not see. Because **beyond this neutralization of all content, one could still expect to manipulate the medium in its form and to transform the real by using the impact of the medium as form. If all the content is wiped out, there is perhaps still a subversive, revolutionary use value of the medium as such.** That is - and this is where McLuhan's formula leads, **pushed to its limit - there is not only an implosion of the message in the medium, there is,** in the same movement, **the implosion of the medium itself in the real, the implosion of the medium and of the real in a sort of hyperreal nebula, in which even the definition and distinct action of the medium can no longer be determined**. Even the "traditional" status of the media themselves, characteristic of modernity, is put in question. McLuhan's formula, **the medium is the message**, which is the key formula of the era of simulation (the medium is the message - the sender is the receiver - the circularity of all poles - the end of panoptic and perspectival space - such is the alpha and omega of our modernity), this very formula **must be imagined at its limit where, after all the contents and messages have been volatilized in the medium, it is the medium itself that is volatilized as such**. Fundamentally, it is still the message that lends credibility to the medium, that gives the medium its determined, distinct status as the intermediary of communication. **Without a message, the medium also falls into the indefinite state characteristic of all our great systems of judgment and value**. A single model, whose efficacy is immediate, simultaneously generates the message, the medium, and the "real." Finally, the medium is the message not only signifies the end of the message, but also the end of the medium. **There are no more media in the literal sense of the word** (I'm speaking particularly of electronic mass media) - **that is,** **of a mediating power between one reality and another, between one state of the real and another. Neither in content, nor in form**. Strictly, this is what implosion signifies. The absorption of one pole into another, the short-circuiting between poles of every differential system of meaning, the erasure of distinct terms and oppositions, including that of the medium and of the real - thus the impossibility of any mediation, of any dialectical intervention between the two or from one to the other. Circularity of all media effects. Hence the impossibility of meaning in the literal sense of a unilateral vector that goes from one pole to another. **One must envisage this critical but original situation at its very limit: it is the only one left us. It is useless to dream of revolution through content, useless to dream of a revelation through form, because the medium and the real are now in a single nebula whose truth is indecipherable**. The fact of of **this implosion** contents, of the absorption of meaning, of the evanescence of the medium itself, of the reabsorption of every dialectic of communication in a total circularity of the model, of the implosion **of the social in the masses, may seem catastrophic and desperate.** But this is only the case in light of the idealism that dominates our whole view of information. We all live by a passionate idealism of meaning and of communication, by an idealism of communication through meaning, and, from this perspective, it is truly the catastrophe of meaning that lies in wait for us. But one must realize that "catastrophe" has this "catastrophic" meaning of end and annihilation only in relation to a linear vision of accumulation, of productive finality, imposed on us by the system. Etymologically, the term itself only signifies the curvature, the winding down to the bottom of a cycle that leads to what one could call the "horizon of the event," to an impassable horizon of meaning: beyond that nothing takes place that has meaning for us - but it suffices to get out of this ultimatum of meaning in order for the catastrophe itself to no longer seem like a final and nihilistic day of reckoning, such as it functions in our contemporary imaginary. Beyond meaning, there is the fascination that results from the neutralization and the implosion of meaning. Beyond the horizon of the social, there are the masses, which result from the neutralization and the implosion of the social. What is essential today is to evaluate this double challenge the challenge of the masses to meaning and their silence (which is not at all a passive resistance) - the challenge to meaning that comes from the media and its fascination. All the marginal, alternative efforts to revive meaning are secondary in relation to that challenge. Evidently, there is a paradox in this inextricable conjunction of the masses and the media: do the media neutralize meaning and produce unformed [informe] or informed [informée] masses, or is it the masses who victoriously resist the media by directing or absorbing all the messages that the media produce without responding to them? Sometime ago, in "Requiem for the Media," I analyzed and condemned the media as the institution of an irreversible model of communication without a response. But today? This absence of a response can no longer be understood at all as a strategy of power, but as a counterstrategy of the masses themselves when they encounter power. What then? Are the mass media on the side of power in the manipulation of the masses, or are they on the side of the masses in the liquidation of meaning, in the violence perpetrated on meaning, and in fascination? Is it the media that induce fascination in the masses, or is it the masses who direct the media into the spectacle? Mogadishu-Stammheim: the media make themselves into the vehicle of the moral condemnation of terrorism and of the exploitation of fear for political ends, but simultaneously, in the most complete ambiguity, they propagate the brutal charm of the terrorist act, they are themselves terrorists, insofar as they themselves march to the tune of seduction (cf. Umberto Eco on this eternal moral dilemma: how can one not speak of terrorism, how can one find a good use of the media - there is none). The media carry meaning and countermeaning, they manipulate in all directions at once, nothing can control this process, they are the vehicle for the simulation internal to the system and the simulation that destroys the system, according to an absolutely Mobian and circular logic - and it is exactly like this. **There is no alternative to this, no logical resolution. Only a logical exacerbation and a catastrophic resolution.** With one caution. **We are face to face with this system in a double situation and insoluble double bind - exactly like children faced with the demands of the adult world. Children are simultaneously required to constitute themselves as autonomous subjects,** responsible, free and conscious, **and to constitute themselves as submissive, inert, obedient, conforming objects.** The child resists on all levels, and to a contradictory demand he responds with a double strategy. To the demand of being an object, he opposes all the practices of disobedience, of revolt, of emancipation; in short, a total claim to subjecthood. To the demand of being a subject he opposes, just as obstinately and efficaciously, an object's resistance, that is to say, exactly the opposite: childishness, hyperconformism, total dependence, passivity, idiocy. Neither strategy has more objective value than the other. The subject-resistance is today unilaterally valorized and viewed as positive - just as in the political sphere only the practices of freedom, emancipation, expression, and the constitution of a political subject are seen as valuable and subversive. But this is to ignore the equal, and without a doubt superior, impact of all the object practices, of the renunciation of the subject position and of meaning - precisely the practices of the masses - that we bury under the derisory terms of alienation and passivity. The liberating practices respond to one of the aspects of the system, to the constant ultimatum we are given to constitute ourselves as pure objects, but they do not respond at all to the other demand, that of constituting ourselves as subjects, of liberating ourselves, expressing ourselves at whatever cost, of voting, producing, deciding, speaking, participating, playing the game - a form of blackmail and ultimatum just as serious as the other, even more serious today. To a system whose argument is oppression and repression, the strategic resistance is the liberating claim of subjecthood. But **this strategy is more reflective of the earlier phase of the system, and even if we are still confronted with it, it is no longer the strategic terrain: the current argument of the system is to maximize speech, the maximum production of meaning. Thus the strategic resistance is that of the refusal of meaning and of the spoken word - or of the hyperconformist simulation of the very mechanisms of the system, which is a form of refusal and of non-reception. It is the strategy of the masses: it is equivalent to returning to the system its own logic by doubling it, to reflecting meaning, like a mirror, without absorbing it. This strategy** (if one can still speak of strategy) **prevails** today, **because it was ushered in by that phase of the system which prevails**. To choose the wrong strategy is a serious matter. **All the movements that only play on liberation, emancipation, on the resurrection of a subject of history, of the group, of the word based on "consciousness raising," indeed a "raising of the unconscious" of subjects and of the masses, do not see that they are going in the direction of the system, whose imperative today is precisely the overproduction and regeneration of meaning and of speech.**

#### Thus we affirm that Resolved: Public colleges and universities in the United States ought not restrict any constitutionally protected speech. Our affirmation is a push from inside the university to accelerate the speech created and protected by the system to its end point-an acceleration of the self-cannibalizing nature of information and communication. Through the 1AC’s act of mirroring the system back at itself, the system attempts to consume our gift, only to find that it has finally begun the process of consuming itself.

Baudrillard 94 [J. "The spiraling cadaver." Simulacra and simulation (1994): 149-154.]

**The university is in ruins**: nonfunctional in the social arenas of the market and employment, **lacking cultural substance or** an end purpose of **knowledge**. Strictly speaking, there is no longer even any **power**: it **is also in ruins**. Whence the impossibility of the return of the fires of 1968: of the return of putting in question knowledge versus power itself - the explosive contradiction of knowledge and power (or the revelation of their collusion, which comes to the same thing) in the university, and, at the same time, through symbolic (rather than political) contagion in the whole institutional and social order. Why sociologists? marked this shift: the impasse of knowledge, the vertigo of nonknowledge (that is to say at once the absurdity and the impossibility of accumulating value in the order of knowledge) turns like an absolute weapon against power itself, in order to dismantle it according to the same vertiginous scenario of dispossession. This is the May 1968 effect. Today it cannot be achieved since power itself, after knowledge, has taken off, has become ungraspable - has dispossessed itself. In a now uncertain institution, without knowledge content, without a power structure (except for an archaic feudalism that turns a simulacrum of a machine whose destiny escapes it and whose survival is as artificial as that of barracks and theaters), offensive irruption is impossible. **Only what precipitates rotting**, **by accentuating the parodic**, **simulacral side of dying games of knowledge and power**, **has meaning**. **A strike has exactly the opposite effect**. **It regenerates the ideal of a possible university**: **the fiction of an ascension on everyone's part to a culture that is unlocatable, and that no longer has meaning**. **This ideal is substituted for the operation of the university as** its critical alternative, as **its therapy**. **This fiction still dreams of a permanency and democracy of knowledge**. Besides, everywhere today the Left plays this role: **it is the justice of the Left that reinjects an idea of justice**, **the necessity of logic and social morals into a rotten apparatus that is coming undone**, which is losing all conscience of its legitimacy and renounces functioning almost of its own volition. **It is the Left that secrets and desperately reproduces power**, **because it wants power**, **and** therefore **the Left believes in it and revives it precisely where the system puts an end to it**. The system puts an end one by one to all its axioms, to all its institutions, and realizes one by one all the objectives of **the historical and revolutionary Left** that sees **itself constrained to revive the wheels of capital in order to lay seige to them** one day: from private property to the small business, from the army to national grandeur, from puritan morality to petit bourgeois culture, justice at the university - **everything that is disappearing**, **that the system itself**, in its atrocity, certainly, but also in its irreversible impulse, **has liquidated**, **must be conserved**. Whence the paradoxical but necessary inversion of all the terms of political analysis. **Power** (or what takes its place) **no longer believes in the university**. It knows fundamentally that it is only a zone for the shelter and surveillance of a whole class of a certain age, it therefore has only to select - **it will find its elite elsewhere**, or **by other means**. Diplomas are worthless: why would it refuse to award them, in any case it is ready to award them to everybody; **why this provocative politics**, if not in order to crystallize energies on a fictive stake (selection, work, diplomas, etc.), **on an already dead and rotting referential?** By rotting, the university can still do a lot of damage (rotting is a symbolic mechanism not political but symbolic, therefore subversive for us). But for this to be the case **it is necessary to start with this very rotting, and not to dream of resurrection**. **It is necessary to transform this rotting into a violent process, into violent death,** through **mockery and defiance,** **through** a multiplied **simulation that would offer the ritual of the death of the university as a model of decomposition to the whole of society**, **a contagious model of the disaffection of a whole social structure**, where death would finally make its ravages, which the strike tries desperately to avert, **in complicity with the system**, but succeeds, on top of it all, **only in transforming the university into a slow death**, **a delay that is not even the possible site of a subversion**, **of an offensive reversion**. That is what the events of May 1968 produced. At a less advanced point in the process of the liquefaction of **the university** and of culture, **the students**, far from **wish**ing **to** save the furniture **(revive the lost object**, in an ideal mode), **retorted by confronting power with the challenge of the total**, **immediate death of the institution**, the challenge of a deterritorialization even more intense than the one that came from the system, and **by summoning power to respond to this total derailment of the institution of knowledge**, to this total lack of a need to gather in a given place, **this death desired in the end** - **not the crisis of the university**, **that is not a challenge**, on the contrary, it **is the game of the system, but the death of the university** - to that challenge, power has not been able to respond, except by its own dissolution in return (only for a moment maybe, but we saw it). The barricades of 10 May seemed defensive and to be defending a territory: the Latin Quarter, old boutique. But this is not true: behind this facade, it was the dead university, the dead culture whose challenge they were launching at power, and their own eventual death at the same time - a transformation into immediate sacrifice, which was only the long-term operation of the system itself: the liquidation of culture and of knowledge. They were not there to save the Sorbonne, but to brandish its cadaver in the face of the others, just as black people in Watts and in Detroit brandished the ruins of their neighborhoods to which they had themselves set fire. **What can one brandish today? No longer even the ruins of knowledge, of culture - the ruins themselves are defunct**. We know it, we have mourned Nanterre for seven years. 1968 is dead, repeatable only as a phantasm of mourning. **What would be the equivalent in symbolic violence (**that is to say beyond the political) **would be the same operation that caused nonknowledge, the rotting of knowledge to come up against power - no longer discovering this fabulous energy on the same level at all, but on the superior spiral: causing nonpower, the rotting of power to come up** against - against what precisely? There lies the problem. It is perhaps insoluble. Power is being lost, power has been lost. All around us there are nothing but dummies of power, but the mechanical illusion of power still rules the social order, behind which grows the absent, illegible, terror of control, the terror of a definitive code, of which we are the minuscule terminals. **Attacking representation no longer has much meaning either. One senses quite clearly**, for the same reason, **that all student conflicts** (as is the case, more broadly, on the level of global society) **around the representation, the delegation of power are no longer anything but phantom vicissitudes that yet still manage, out of despair, to occupy the forefront of the stage.** Through I don't know what Mobius effect, representation itself has also turned in on itself, and the whole logical universe of the political is dissolved at the same time, ceding its place to a transfinite universe of simulation, where from the beginning no one is represented nor representative of anything any more, where all that is accumulated is deaccumulated at the same time, where even the axiological, directive, and salvageable phantasm of power has disappeared. A universe that is still incomprehensible, unrecognizable, to us, a universe with a malefic curve that our mental coordinates, which are orthogonal and prepared for the infinite linearity of criticism and history, violently resist. **Yet it is there that one must fight**, if even fighting has any meaning anymore. **We are simulators, we are simulacra** (not in the classical sense of "appearance"), **we are concave mirrors radiated by the social, a radiation without a light source, power without origin, without distance, and it is in this tactical universe of the simulacrum that one will need to fight** - without hope, hope is a weak value, but in defiance and fascination. Because one must not refuse the intense fascination that emanates from this liquefaction of all power, of all axes of value, of all axiology, politics included. **This spectacle, which is at once that of the death throes and the apogee of capital**, surpasses by far that of the commodity described by the situationists. This spectacle **is our essential force**. We are no longer in a relation toward capital of uncertain or victorious forces, but in a political one, that is the phantasm of revolution. **We are in a relation of defiance, of seduction, and of death toward this universe that is no longer one, precisely because all axiality that escapes it. The challenge capital directs at us in its delirium - liquidating without shame the law of profit, surplus value, productive finalities, structures of power, and finding at the end of its process the profound immorality (but also the seduction) of primitive rituals of destruction, this very challenge must be raised to a**n insanely **higher level**. Capital, like value, is irresponsible, irreversible, ineluctable. Only to value is capital capable of offering a fantastic spectacle of its decomposition - only the phantom of value still floats over the desert of the classical structures of capital, just as the phantom of religion floats over a world now long desacralized, just as the phantom of knowledge floats over the university. It is up to us to again become the nomads of this desert, but disengaged from the mechanical illusion of value. We will live in this world, which for us has all the disquieting strangeness of the desert and of the simulacrum, with all the veracity of living phantoms, of wandering and simulating animals that capital, that the death of capital has made of us - because the desert of cities is equal to the desert of sand - the jungle of signs is equal to that of the forests - the vertigo of simulacra is equal to that of nature - only the vertiginous seduction of a dying system remains, in which work buries work, in which value buries value - leaving a virgin, sacred space without pathways, continuous as Bataille wished it, where only the wind lifts the sand, where only the wind watches over the sand. What can one make of all this in the political order? Very little. But **we** also **have to fight against the profound fascination exerted on us by the death throes of capital, against the staging by capital of its own death, when we are really the ones in our final hours. To leave it the initiative of its own death, is to leave it all the privileges of revolution. Surrounded by the simulacrum of value and by the phantom of capital and of power, we are much more disarmed and impotent than when surrounded by the law of value and of the commodity, since the system has revealed itself capable of integrating its own death and since we are relieved of the responsibility for this death, and thus of the stake of our own life. This supreme ruse of the system, that of the simulacrum of its death, through which it maintains us in life by having liquidated through absorption all possible negativity, only a superior ruse can stop.** Challenge or imaginary science, only a pataphysics of simulacra can can remove us from the system's strategy of simulation and the impasse of death in which it imprisons us.

#### And, proliferating constitutionally protected speech is key-we feed the language of the state back at itself. The marketplace of ideas relies on a notion of efficient communication and an easy trade of information. This transference of data and value constitutes our political identity which in turn constitutes the political.

Whittington 05 [Keith E. "A Note on Commercial Speech in the Era of Late Capitalism." The Good Society 14.1 (2005): 40-43.]

**The metaphor of the marketplace of ideas fits this functionalist understanding of free speech. With its economic referent, it suggests a group of producers and consumers with exogenous preferences. The producers of ideas pump out speech in the hopes of winning market share, and the consumers gobble up those ideas that happen to match up with their preexisting preferences** (the relevant preferences may not directly be for the idea itself but for something else that the idea might relate to – we have a preference for wealth and we are in the market for a good idea as to how to produce it). **The success of ideas in the marketplace depends on the ingenuity of the producers and the distribution of preferences among consumers.** Sellers of socialism may not get very far in the American marketplace, but Horatio Alger stories can be blockbusters. In the competition among ideas in the marketplace, the good ideas will hopefully over time squeeze out the bad ideas. **From a constitutional perspective, the goal is to regulate this marketplace so that it might [to] be as free and as efficient as possible**, for example by preventing artificial barriers to entry. The Court has been increasingly sympathetic to the protection of commercial speech beyond its utility in informing citizens on matters relating to public policy. The interests of consumers in receiving information on matters relating to their economic decisions has itself been recognized as relevant to the interpretation and application of the free speech clause.8 Such an expansion of the protections of commercial speech, however, may be subject to limitation in extending beyond the central constitutional commitments to political speech. It also fails to recognize that **advertising, the primary form of commercial speech, “is no longer built around the idea of informing or promoting in the ordinary sense, but is increasingly geared to manipulating desires and tastes through images that may or may not have anything to do with the product to be sold.”**9 I want to suggest that commercial speech (among others) should not be conceptualized as sharply distinct from political speech.10 **While commercial speech may primarily serve the interests of economic producers and consumers seeking to make efficient transactions in the marketplace, it can also perform a political function that would entitle it to full First Amendment protection.** In making this move, I want **to shift** metaphors from **the “marketplace of ideas” to the “republic of signs**.”11 The point of the metaphorical shift is to recognize a different function of political speech. The marketplace of ideas metaphor emphasizes the ways in which speech informs citizens as to how best to exercise their preferences through voting. As the economic model of democracy would emphasize, in order for democracy to be effective, voters need information about the candidates, their issue positions, and the relationship between those issue positions and outcomes that voters care about.12 A free-speech regime is concerned with preventing obstructions to that flow of information so that voters might make well-informed vote choices and electoral mechanisms might effectively aggregate social preferences. **The republic of signs** metaphor, by contrast, **emphasizes that “the force of a political idea lies in its capacity to transcend thought and make itself part of everyday life in the material world.”13 Ideas are not only consumed by individuals seeking to act on their preferences. Ideas also help constitute individuals and their preferences.** They are politically significant not only to the extent that they can inform citizens, but also to the extent that they can construct and mobilize citizens.14 This process is evident within the realm of obvious political expression. A great deal of political activity is **first and foremost concerned with constructing political identity**. One aspect of the rise of republican historiography of the revolutionary and founding era is its new emphasis on the interpenetration of community and individual, of the need to define community and to constitute individuals with the traits appropriate to that community.15 The first task of the revolutionary generation was to construct an American identity that could justify separation from the British Empire and convert treason into patriotism. Having successfully separated from Britain, the Americans had to construct themselves as republican citizens and abandon their previous identity as imperial subjects while cultivating the individual character traits necessary to the maintenance of a republic. In the nineteenth-century heyday of political parties, the construction of partisan identity in the electorate was a critical task. In contrast to the Progressive reformers of the early twentieth century, such as the League of Women Voters, which preferred to reduce politics to the rational exchange of information relevant to vote choice, party builders of the nineteenth century understood popular politics as being centrally concerned with the creation of affective ties between the political parties and portions of the electorate.16 Party success depended on preventing voters from identifying themselves as “independents” carefully weighing the competing slates and platforms offered by party elites, but instead on leading voters to identify themselves as Republicans, Whigs, or Democrats who would mobilize behind favored party banners. While American parties often benefited from and encouraged the formation of ethnic and racial identities or even economic identities which could be incorporated within the party coalition, the formation of class identity was in greater conflict with preestablished partisan divisions.17 Nonetheless, while labor demonstrations and picketing may convey useful information about matters of public policy to voters, these activities more directly attempt to build worker solidarity and class identity. Constituting the identity of workers as workers has significant potential implications for the success of the labor movement vis-à-vis employers, but also has significant implications for future political action. The greater political dimension of such speech may not be in the information it provides to the general public that the Court noted in Thornhill, but in the constitutive effects on the political identity of workers. As Marx noted, the class struggle is first a struggle to constitute the classes and bring them into self-consciousness. The constitution of the worker was the paradigmatic political effort of industrial capitalism. The era of late capitalism, however, is the era of the “postindustrial society . . . consumer society, media society, information society, electronic society.” 18 It is centrally concerned with the production and consumption of sign systems.19 **The identity being constituted and performed is defined less by work than by consumption**. Notably, advertising, the paradigmatic **commercial speech, in the era of late capitalism is less about conveying information about prices than it is with constructing a brand image that can in turn be appropriated by the consumer. Identity**, including political identity**, is formed through the pastiche of “commercial speech.”** To some analysts, **this process is relentlessly topdown, as the consumer is helplessly molded by** Madison Avenue **imagery**. More plausibly, individuals are active participants in the process, drawing upon the detritus of commercial culture to recreate themselves. Political identity coheres with the notion that “the personal is the political.” Explicit political action rests on the base of political identity, which is itself not a pre-social given but the result of ongoing social processes. In the era of late capitalism, commercial speech is an essential component of those social processes that help constitute political identity. As such, the social value of commercial speech lies not merely in its utility in conveying information that facilitates efficient economic exchanges but also in providing the raw materials upon which modern political culture is built. Consequently, commercial speech should be regarded as on par with other forms of speech as politically relevant.20 Moreover, it is precisely the forms of commercial speech that are most feared by political authorities that should, in this light, be protected. The brand imaging of consumer goods is not about market efficiencies, but rather about personal identity and desire.21 Indeed, it is precisely because of the capacity of, for example, cigarette and alcohol advertising to help constitute personal identity that it is feared, regulated, and prohibited. Joe Camel and the Marlboro Man are deserving of constitutional protection precisely because they function in the cultural rather than the purely economic realm. This might also suggest that the “lesser” should not be included in the “greater” when it comes to commercial regulation.22 Though the state may have the authority to prohibit entirely certain commercial products and activities (e.g., gambling, narcotics, tobacco), it should not be understood to have an equal authority to prohibit the cultural production related to that activity. Commercial speech for illicit products may have the potential for the greatest identity forming effects, and individuals should be no more denied the cultural signs of such activity than they should be denied the political rhetoric advocating the legalization of such activity. Having an independent cultural logic beyond simply matching consumers and producers, the protection of commercial speech should not hinge on the state sanction of the underlying commercial activity.

#### Any meaningful challenge to the system must mimic the current forms of expression in order to accelerate them to the point of their own vacuity. The 1AC catches the university in a symbolic trap of its own making by using its self-referencing systems of meaning to expose its autoreferentiality.

Pawlett 14 [, Pawlett (senior lecturer in media, communications, and cultural studies at the University of Wolverhampton, UK) "Society At War With Itself," International Journal of Baudrillard Studies, Volume 11, Number 2 (May, 2014)]

**It all depends on the ground we choose to fight on … most often … we choose to fight on ground where we are beaten before we begin** (Baudrillard 2001: 119). This paper examines Baudrillard’s assertion, made in later works including Impossible Exchange (2001), The Intelligence of Evil (2005) and Pyres of Autumn(2006), that individuals, society and indeed the global system, are internally and irreconcilably divided, that modernity is ‘at odds with itself’ (Baudrillard 2006: 1). In his view **dissent, rejection and insurrection emerge from within, not from external challenges such as alternative ideologies or competing worldviews, but from within bodies, within borders, inside programmes**. For Baudrillard much of the **violence, hatred and discomfort** visible around the globe **can be understood as a latent but fundamental ‘silent insurrection’ against the global** integrating **system and its many pressures, demands and humiliations** (2001: 106). **This** is an endogenic or intra-genic **rejection**, it **emanates from within the system, from within individuals, even from within language, electronic systems and bodily cells, erupting as abreaction, metastasis and sudden reversal**.[2](http://www2.ubishops.ca/baudrillardstudies/vol-11_2/v11-2-pawlett.html#ft-endnote2) For Baudrillard then, despite the many simulations of external threat and enmity – radical Islam currently being the best example – the most dangerous threat lies within: ‘society faces a far harder test than any external threat: that of its own absence, its loss of reality’ (2006: 1). The global order, conventionally labelled “capitalist”, is neutralising its values and structures, its ideologies disappear, its principles are sacrificed. Even the sense of “reality” produced by the abstract sign and by simulation models begin to disappear (2005: 67-73; 2009: 10-15). The goal is ‘integral reality’, a limitless operational project geared towards the total transcription of the world into virtuality: ‘everything is realised and technically materialised without reference to any principle or final purpose’ (2005: 18). Yet there is an internal war or “backlash” taking place between integralist violence which seeks ultimate control by eliminating all otherness, and duality. **Duality**, for Baudrillard, **is “indestructible” and is manifest as the inevitable or destined re-emergence of otherness: of death, Evil, ambivalence, the ghosts of symbolic exchange, the accursed share within the system. The integrating system then suffers a ‘dissent working away at it from inside. It is the global violence immanent in the world-system itself which, from within, sets the purest form of symbolic challenge against it’** (2005: 22). This is a war or conflict that does not end, the outcome of which cannot be predicted or programmed. It is a war that is quite different from the disappearance of war into simulated non-events, such as occurred with the Gulf wars (Baudrillard 1995). Indeed, Baudrillard suggests, the deterrence of world wars, and of nuclear wars, does not result in peace, but in a viral proliferation of conflicts, a fractalisation of war and conflict into everyday, local, and ubiquitous terror (1993b: 27). This paper will examine Baudrillard’s position on internal rejection through two closely related themes: complicity and duality. Complicity, and the closely related term collusion, are themselves dual in Baudrillard’s sense. That is, complicity or collusion express an internal division or ‘duality’ which is not a simple opposition of terms. As is so often the case, Baudrillard’s position builds on his much earlier studies: Requiem For the Media (orig. 1972, in Baudrillard 1981: 164-184) had already argued that **the dominance of the abstract sign and of simulation models meant that any critique of the system made through the channels of semiotic abstraction were automatically re-absorbed into the system. Any meaningful challenge must invent its own, alternative medium – such as the silk-screen printings, hand-painted notices and graffiti of May 1968 – or it will lapse into an ineffectual complicity with the system it seeks to challenge** (Baudrillard 1981: 176). In his later work, Baudrillard’s emphasis on duality and complicity is extended much further, taking on global, anthropological and even cosmological dimensions, and increasingly complicity and collusion are seen as dual, as encompassing both acceptance and a subtle defiance. This paper examines the dual nature of complicity and collusion. It considers the influence of La Boetie’s notorious Essay on Voluntary Servitude on Baudrillard, seeking to draw out what is distinctive in Baudrillard’s position. The second section turns to the notion of duality, examining Good and Evil and Baudrillard’s assertion that attempts to eliminate duality merely revive or re-active it. Complicity implies a complexity of relations, and, specifically, the condition of being an accomplice to those in power. To be an accomplice is to assist in the committing of a crime. If the crime is murder, the term accomplice implies one who plans, reflects, calculates – but does not strike the lethal blow. The crime which is of particular interest to Baudrillard is, of course, the perfect crime: the elimination of otherness, of ambivalence, of duality, even of “reality” and of the abstract representational sign which enables a sense of “reality” (Baudrillard 1996). The global, integral, carnivalising and cannibalising system, which might loosely still be called capitalist, is at war against radical otherness or duality; yet, for Baudrillard, as duality lies at its heart, locked within its foundations, it is indestructible and emerges through attempts to eliminate it. If the system has been largely successful at eliminating external threats, it finds itself in an even worse situation: it is at war with itself**.** II. Complicity Complicity is a particularly slippery term. In the 1980s Baudrillard’s thought, mistakenly assumed to be “Postmodernist”, was argued to be complicit with capitalism, largely because it questioned the ability of dominant strands of Marxism and feminism to significantly challenge the capitalist system (Callinicos 1989; Norris 1992). At the same time, Baudrillard was alleging that the work of supposedly radical theorists such as Deleuze and Guattari (1984 orig. 1972) and Lyotard (1993 orig. 1974) was, with their emphasis on desire as productive and liberatory force, complicit with the mechanisms of advanced consumer capitalism (Baudrillard 1987: 17-20). So which branch of contemporary theory is most complicit with capitalism? Liberals, humanists and environmentalists who see their clothes stolen by mainstream politicians? Marxists and Communists who by refusing to update their thinking provide a slow moving target for right-wing snipers? Post- Modernists and Post-Structuralists who attack Enlightenment thought but refuse to speak of the human subject and so have “thrown the baby out with the bath water”? Network and complexity theory which flattens all phenomena and experience to a position on a grid, producing a very complex simplification? The list could go on but it is a question that cannot be answered because **all critical theories are complicit with the system they critique. They fight on a terrain already demarcated by their opponents, a terrain on which they are beaten before they begin, one where the most compelling argument can always be dismissed as doom-mongering or irresponsible intellectualism. This includes Baudrillard’s own critical thinking, as he readily acknowledges** (Baudrillard 2009a: 39). Further, and even more damaging to the project of critique, **in a hegemonic or integral order the system solicits critique and it criticises itself, so displacing and making redundant the laborious attempts at academic critique.** The latter continue, even proliferate, but with decreasing impact. So, what does Baudrillard mean by complicity with the global order? Baudrillard’s concern is primarily with complicity at the level of the form of the (capitalist) system, not at the level of belief, consent or allegiance to particular contents of capitalist life (consumer products, plurality of ‘lifestyles’, a degree of ‘tolerance’ etc.). Complicity is often seen, by critics of capitalism, as acceptance of consumerism and its myriad choices and lifestyles, but this is a reductive level of analysis from Baudrillard’s perspective. By complicity or collusion Baudrillard means, on the one hand, the very widespread willingness to surrender or give up beliefs, passions and “symbolic defences” (2010: 24), and on the other – as the dual form – an equally widespread ability to find a space of defiance through the play of complicity, collusion, hyperconformity and indifference (1983: 41-8). That is, while many of us (in the relatively affluent West) share in the profanating, denigrating and “carnivalising” of all values, embracing indifference, shrugging “whatever”, we do so with very little commitment to the system, rejoicing inwardly when it suffers reversals: we operate in a dual mode. While such attitudes of indifference may seem to accept that there is no meaningful alternative to capitalism: an attitude that has been called ‘capitalist nihilism’ (Davis in Milbank and Zizek, 2009) and ‘capitalist realism’ (Fisher 2008), Baudrillard’s notions of “integral reality”, duality and complicity may have significant advantages over those approaches. **Unlike thinkers who remain anchored to critical thinking defined by determinate negation, Baudrillard’s approach emphasises ambivalence, reversal and both personal and collective modes of rejection more subtle than those envisioned by the increasingly exhausted mechanisms of critique. The critique of consumer capitalism** – the consumption of junk food, junk entertainment and junk information – **is now integral to the system; the critique of finance capitalism** – banker’s bonuses, corporate tax avoidance **– is integral to the system, yet it fails to bring about meaningful or determinate social transformation.** Indeed, **such critiques may do no more than provide the system with a fleeting sense of “reality” – real issues, real problems to deal with – around which the system can reproduce its simulacra, perhaps to reassure us that “something is being done”, “measures are being put into place” etc.** “Reality” cannot be dialectically negated by critical concepts when both ‘reality’ and the critical concept disappear together, their fates clearly tied to each other (Baudrillard 2009b: 10-12).