## 1NC

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#### Blackness exists as a metaaporia that interrogates the cyclical ways violence onto blackness is morphed and ultimately appropriated. The 1AC relies on a redemptive narrative of humanity that is fundamentally inaccessible for blacks. Their project is ultimately meant to hide and recreate moments of black death for the sake of redeeming Human life.

Wilderson 20 [Frank B. Wilderson, professor of Drama and African American studies at the University of California, Irvine, “Afropessimism”, page 13-17, JMH]

For most critical theorists writing after 1968, the word aporia is used to designate a contradiction in a text or theoretical undertaking. For example, Jacques Derrida suggests an aporia indicates “a point of undecidability, which locates the site at which the text most obviously undermines its own rhetorical structure, dismantles, or deconstructs itself.” But when I say that Black people embody a meta-aporia for political thought and action, the addition of the prefix meta- goes beyond what Derrida and the poststructuralists meant—it raises the level of abstraction and, in so doing, raises the stakes. In epistemology, a branch of philosophy concerned with the theory of knowledge, the prefix meta- is used to mean about (its own category). Metadata, for example, are data about data (who has produced them, when, what format the data are in, and so on). In linguistics, a grammar is considered as being expressed in a metalanguage, language operating on a higher level of abstraction to describe properties of the plain language (and not itself). Metadiscussion is a discussion about discussion (not any one particular topic of discussion but discussion itself). In computer science, a theoretical software engineer might be engaged in the pursuit of metaprogramming (i.e., writing programs that manipulate programs). **Afropessimism**, then, **is** less of a theory and more of **a metatheory: a critical project that, by deploying Blackness as a lens of interpretation, interrogates the unspoken, assumptive logic of Marxism, postcolonialism, psychoanalysis, and feminism through rigorous theoretical consideration of their properties and assumptive logic, such as their foundations, methods, form, and utility; and it does so, again, on a higher level of abstraction than the discourse and methods of the theories it interrogates.** Again, Afropessimism is, in the main, more of a metatheory than a theory. **It is pessimistic about the claims theories of liberation make when these theories try to explain Black suffering or when they analogize Black suffering with the suffering of other oppressed beings. It does this by unearthing and exposing the meta-aporias, strewn like land mines in what these theories of so-called universal liberation hold to be true.** If, as Afropessimism argues, Blacks are not Human subjects, but are instead structurally inert props, implements for the execution of White and non-Black fantasies and sadomasochistic pleasures, then this also means that, at a higher level of abstraction, the claims of universal humanity that the above theories all subscribe to are ~~hobbled~~ [constricted] by a meta-aporia: a contradiction that manifests whenever one looks seriously at the structure of Black suffering in comparison to the presumed universal structure of all sentient beings. Again, Black people embody a meta-aporia for political thought and action— Black people are the wrench in the works. Blacks do not function as political subjects; instead, our flesh and energies are instrumentalized for postcolonial, immigrant, feminist, LGBTQ, transgender, and workers’ agendas. These so-called **allies are never authorized by Black agendas predicated on Black ethical dilemmas. A Black radical agenda is terrifying to most people on the Left**—think Bernie Sanders—**because it emanates from a condition of suffering for which there is no imaginable strategy for redress—no narrative of social, political, or national redemption**. This crisis, no, this catastrophe, this realization that I am a sentient being who can’t use words like “being” or “person” to describe myself without the scare quotes and the threat of raised eyebrows from anyone within earshot, was crippling. I was convinced that if a story of Palestinian redemption could be told . . . its denouement would culminate in the return of the land, a spatial, cartographic redemption; and if a story of class redemption could be told . . . its denouement would culminate in the restoration of the working day so that one stopped working when surplus values were relegated to the dustbin of history, a temporal redemption; in other words, since postcolonial and working-class redemption were possible, then there must be a story to be told through which one could redeem the time and place of Black subjugation. I was wrong. **I had not dug deep enough to see that though Blacks suffer the time and space subjugation of cartographic deracination and the hydraulics of the capitalist working day, we also suffer as the hosts of Human parasites, though they themselves might be the hosts of parasitic capital and colonialism**. I had looked to theory (first as a creative writer, and only much later as a critical theorist) to help me find/create the story of Black liberation—Black political redemption. What I found instead was that **redemption, as a narrative mode, was a parasite that fed upon me for its coherence. Everything meaningful in my life had been housed under the umbrellas called “critical theory” and “radical politics.”** The parasites had been capital, colonialism, patriarchy, homophobia. And now it was clear that I had missed the boat. My parasites were Humans, all Humans—the haves as well as the have-nots. If critical theory and radical politics are to rid themselves of the parasitism that they heretofore have had in common with radical and progressive movements on the Left, that is, if we are to engage, rather than disavow, **the difference between Humans who suffer through an “economy of disposability” and Blacks who suffer by way of “social death,” then we must come to grips with how the redemption of the subaltern** (a narrative, for example, of Palestinian plenitude, loss, and restoration) **is made possible by the (re)instantiation of a regime of violence that bars Black people from the narrative of redemption**. This requires (a) an understanding of the difference between loss and absence, and (b) an understanding of how the narrative of subaltern loss stands on the rubble of Black absence. Sameer and I didn’t share a universal, postcolonial grammar of suffering. Sameer’s loss is tangible, land. The paradigm of his dispossession elaborates capitalism and the colony. When it is not tangible it is at least coherent, as in the loss of labor power. But how does one describe the loss that makes the world if all that can be said of loss is locked within the world? **How does one narrate the loss of loss? What is the “difference between . . . something to save . . . [and nothing] to lose”?** Sameer forced me to face the depth of my isolation in ways I had wanted to avoid; a deep pit from which neither postcolonial theory, nor Marxism, nor a gender politics of unflinching feminism could rescue me. Why is anti-Black violence not a form of racist hatred but the genome of Human renewal; a therapeutic balm that the Human race needs to know and heal itself? Why must the world reproduce this violence, this social death, so that social life can regenerate Humans and prevent them from suffering the catastrophe of psychic incoherence— absence? Why must the world find its nourishment in Black flesh?

#### Negativity is the site of creation – the will to affirmation is the endless postponement of the future that simply rearticulates anti-blackness throughout history by being devoid of creative potential

Barber 16 (Daniel Colucciello Barber, researcher at the Humboldt University of Berlin, PhD from Duke University, 2016, “The Creation of Non-Being,” *Rhizomes* Issue 29, footnotes 1, 2, and 7 included in curly braces, modified) ls

[1] Anti-blackness operates axiomatically. This is the case, at least, insofar as we speak of what Frank B. Wilderson, III, has called "the world" (Wilderson 2003: 234).[1] {1. "World" here refers not to reality as such, but more precisely to the paradigmatic operations by which reality is structured, positioned, and rendered sensible. Yet this does not mean that one can directly express or pose reality as distinct from the world, for the world governs the very conditions of possibility for expression or position. Even purportedly universal terms, such as humanity, social life, and—to invoke the concern of this essay—being itself, are operations of the world. The Afro-Pessimist thesis, following Wilderson, is that this world constitutes itself and maintains its coherence, at essence, through anti-blackness: the world has being insofar as blackness does not. Since the grammar of this world, or the logic of the aforementioned operations, is so naturalized—enacted and assumed by/from power—that it generally has no need to appear (much less defend itself), the articulation of reality without the anti-black world must begin as an articulation against this world.} The aim of this essay is to address the consequences of this axiomatic operation for some rather classical terms of reference within continental philosophy, such as being, analogy,[2] communication, possibility, and knowledge. {2. Both the reading of Lazzarato I provide below and my general argument, which revolves around the question of negativity and analogy, are deeply shaped by—and only conceivable thanks to—the writings of Wilderson, whose claim about analogy is summarized in the following remark, made in conversation with Hartman: "In my own work, obviously I'm not saying that in this space of negation, which is blackness, there is no life. We have tremendous life. But this life is not analogous to those touchstones of cohesion that hold civil society together. In fact, the trajectory of our life (within our terrain of civil death) is bound up in claiming—sometimes individually, sometimes collectively—the violence which Fanon writes about in *The Wretched of the Earth*, that trajectory which, as he says, is 'a splinter to the heart of the world' and 'puts the settler out of the picture.' So, it doesn't help us politically or psychologically to try to find ways in which how we live is analogous to how white positionality lives, because, as I think your book suggests, whites gain their coherence by knowing what they are not" (Hartman and Wilderson 2003: 187).} Such terms are the means by which the world claims to grant itself coherence; they form the grammatical ground, the structuring condition, of the world. If the "gratuitous violence" of anti-blackness extends into the very "grammar" of the world (Wilderson 2010: 38, 131),[3] then the aforementioned terms—far from providing retreat into a "metaphysical" domain unaffected by the historical and material—serve as points for the articulation of antagonism toward anti-blackness. In fact, the gratuity of such violence—its irreducibility to purposive meaning—entails a refusal of the coherent ground that these very terms claim to supply. This is to say that being—or the possibility thereof—grounds itself not through its own coherence, but through an enactment of power that is staged by anti-black violence. Power precedes grammatical ground. [2] Maurizio Lazzarato's analysis of contemporary capitalism approaches the anti-blackness analyzed by Wilderson. Lazzarato argues that capitalism is not grounded in any coherent science of economy, but is an enactment of the power to make indebted beings. It is by way of this emphasis on power that he links a purportedly secular capitalism to the theological structure of Christianity—that is, to a being that acts gratuitously, or without ground. Yet Lazzarato, I argue, ultimately wards off an encounter with anti-blackness through reliance on a coherence implicit in "the indebted man" (Lazzarato 2012: 8). I elaborate this argument by drawing on Gilles Deleuze's concept of "difference in itself" (Deleuze 1994: 36-89). This concept, on my reading, ungrounds the purported coherence of being by way of a logically prior differentiality, which is expressed as non-being. Essential to this argument is the task of articulating such non-being without conversion to an affirmation of the world. Non-Being: Deleuze Against Affirmation [3] Deleuze's philosophy has come to be associated with habits of affirmation, where "habits" indicate the practices or operations by which reality is experientially and experimentally enacted.[4] This association could be attributed to Deleuze's invocation of concepts such as the rhizome, which appears to advocate teeming, emergent, multiplicitous movement in excess of all boundaries. In such a landscape of fluidity and flux, Deleuze's notion of creation then becomes associated with the affirmation of alternative possibilities. This association may also be attributed to Deleuze's rigorous refusal of the being of negativity. He contends that negative being plays no role in the determination of reality, that it is in fact an illusion that conceals the force of differential immanence. Given the centrality of this contention, any association of Deleuze's thought with habits of affirmation would have to depend on the following claim: the refusal of negative being entails the refusal of habits of negativity, in favor of habits of affirmation.[5] [4] Yet it is fundamentally mistaken to conflate the refusal of negative being with the refusal of negative habits. The call for habits of affirmation is theoretically illegitimate: if all habits are real, and if reality has no negative being, then all habits—precisely because they are real—do not involve negative being; the reality that is habituated—regardless of whether this habituation is characterized as affirmative or negative—has no negative being. If the call for habits of affirmation is therefore not entailed by Deleuze's refusal of negative being, then from where does this call arise? If habits of affirmation are imperative, then from where does this imperativity draw its mandate? To begin to answer these questions, one must address the ways in which habits of affirmation are *logically consistent*—and ultimately *politically complicit*—with the contemporary conjuncture of capitalism. [5] This conjuncture, which has been variously described in terms of "late capitalism," "postfordism," or "communicative capitalism," is marked by an affirmation of mobility, innovation, fluidity, possibility, and creativity. Deleuze analyzed this conjuncture in terms of control societies, which he distinguished from disciplinary societies. Control establishes domination not by setting up in advance strict boundaries, but rather by a kind of unending encouragement, or motivated permissiveness: control establishes and expands itself by establishing and expanding possibilities of communication. Domination "no longer operate[s] by confining people but through continuous control and instant communication" (Deleuze 1997: 174). Whereas discipline names the prohibition of excessive mobility and innovation, control names the "modulation" of the possibilities implied in such mobility and innovation (Deleuze 1997: 179).[6] [6] With control, domination remains not despite, nor in opposition to, but precisely *as* possibility, which is modulated through a communicability that is ever more fluid and receptive in its listening in order to be ever more innovative in its surveilling.[7] {7. The fundamental insidiousness of control is that it permits and encourages the fluidity, mobility, and possibility implied by the sheer *capacity* to narrate. Communicative capitalism does not work by mandating what can and cannot be narrated, rather it calls for any-narration-whatever, as long as the possibility of narration *is* affirmed.} Following Deleuze's analysis of control, habits of affirmation—of multiplicitous possibilities, or of the possibility of being-otherwise—are not resistant to, but actually constitutive of, control's modulation. Control is marked by "endless postponement" (Deleuze 1997: 179), meaning that the future—as that which breaks with the present—never takes place. The present is extended into the future, and so the future becomes a modulation of the present; an essential incommensurability between present and future remains unthinkable.[8] Given Deleuze's analysis, it is not by accident that he increasingly experimented with habits of negativity. In his last book, *What is Philosophy?* – co-written with Félix Guattari, and published one year after his analysis of control—one can observe, for instance, his attentiveness to "shame" (Deleuze and Guattari 1996: 107), which was motivated by his reading of Primo Levi, or his indication of agreement with the negative dialectic of Theodor Adorno.[9] [7] One finds, in the same book, a polemic against communication and a concomitant positioning of creation as distinct from and incommensurable with the communicative.[10] Simply put, Deleuze's increased attention to control, or communication, directly corresponds to his increased attention to the negative—not as being but as experience and experiment, as habit. Thus it is not only that Deleuze's refusal of negative being cannot be conflated with habits of affirmation, it is also that Deleuze, when attending to control, attempts to articulate habits of *negativity*. *What is Philosophy?* concludes with an articulation of the *No* of chaos, the *non* of thought that enables creation: philosophy must attain "an essential relationship with the No that concerns it"; philosophy does "not need the No as beginning, or as the end in which [it] would be called upon to disappear by being realized, but at every moment of [its] becoming or [its] development" (Deleuze and Guattari 1996: 218). [8] The creation named by Deleuze's philosophy is thus in immanence with the No, and it is this No-creation immanence that begins to articulate antagonism toward communication: "Creating has always been something different from communicating" (Deleuze 1997: 175). This divergence between communication and the No of creation is utter, essential, and irredeemable. There is no possibility of emancipating communication, nor is there any affirmative basis for creation—for the base is communication. There is nothing to affirm, and so creation is immanent with the negativity of the non: "The key thing may be to create vacuoles of noncommunication" (Deleuze 1997: 175). The Reality of Non-Being [9] My argument, drawing on Deleuze, is that the logic of possibility actually serves to modulatively reproduce the anti-black grammar of the world. Creation, defined as a break with the presently given world, is not a possibility. It is rather immanent with an axiomatic No to such possibility, with habits of negativity. [10] This thesis concerns a key problematic that stems from the Afro-Pessimist analysis of anti-blackness: if blackness ~~stands~~ [is] both within the habitus of modernity, as an organizing principle, and without this habitus, as a perpetually banished subjectivity, then the very articulation of blackness would seem to depend on and reproduce such a habitus. In other words, both *being*-within and *being*-without are possibilities governed by modernity's dominative positioning of blackness. The articulation of blackness is in fact bound by this problematic insofar as one remains within the ambit of habits of affirmation. In other words, the presumption of affirmation is co-extensive with the reproduction of the habitus of modernity: that which is presently available for affirmation is already governed by modernity and its articulation of blackness, and so habits of affirmation inevitably participate in and reproduce the double-bind in which modernity positions blackness. [11] Against such reproduction, it is essential to insist on habits of negativity. Such insistence is total: since it is affirmation *as such* that entails participation in the being here indexed by modernity, even a modicum of affirmation mitigates the force enacted by negativity. The power of creation therefore resides entirely and essentially on the side of negativity—and not at all on the side of affirmation. Concomitantly, to invoke such power actually entails an unmitigated refusal of habits of affirmation; affirmation does not name or support, but on the contrary denies, the power of creation. Given the double-bind in which modernity positions blackness, this is to say that the negativity of the non, in virtue of its immanence with a force of creation, indexes blackness as a power of non-being, as that which is without need of—and in fact opposed to—reliance on the affirmative. [12] It remains necessary to outline the articulation of this immanence of creation and non-being—that is, to theoretically express how an unmitigated insistence on habits of negativity can be both a refusal of affirmation and an enactment of power. This warrants a return to Deleuze's thought by way of some questions: How can habits of negativity, articulated via Deleuze's insistence on the non, gain theoretical consistency with his conceptual refusal of negative being? If negative being is refused, then in what sense can there be insistence on the non? [13] Deleuze argues that "being is difference itself. Being is also non-being, but *non-being is not the being of the negative* . . . non-being is Difference" (Deleuze 1994: 76-77). This makes clear that negative being is refused in virtue of *difference*; what is essential is difference in itself. Hence difference is articulated not as the affirmation of affirmative being, nor even as the affirmation of being as such. On the contrary, difference is articulated as "non-being": negative *being* is refused, but it is refused in favor of *non*-being. Difference antecedes both positive being *and* negative being, thereby displacing their dialectical or conflictual relation. In other words, difference is not between opposed beings but in itself, autonomous from and antecedent to every being or thing; difference is real, but precisely as a matter of *non*-being. Its reality is not the being of a thing, it is *no*-thing. [14] Such theorization enables the delinking of creation (as force of non-being, or no-thing) from affirmation (as possibility of being). Difference, or non-being, marks a real force of creation that is without, and incommensurable with, being. In virtue of this unanalogizability of non-being with being, creation is articulated as a force stemming from negativity, and not at all from affirmation: affirmation is said of being and its possibilization, whereas creation is said of non-being. Habits of negativity, which antagonize every (positively or negatively described) being, or being as such, are thus coeval with an insistence on the real force of non-being. [15] This argument can be used to negotiate a tension between the Afro-Pessimist emphasis on irresolvable negativity and the concern of Black Optimism to emphasize a power named by blackness: while the former's emphasis on negativity extends to habits of affirmation as such, this negativity immanently involves—and thus does not abandon—an insistence on the power of creation. Consequently, the Black Op concern to speak of the power of blackness may be satisfied entirely within the space of negativity, or social death, on which Afro-Pessimism insists. Such satisfaction does not then require recourse to qualifications that would mitigate the negativity of this space, On the contrary, power is immanent to a redoubled negativity, or a negativity toward both being and the affirmation of the possibility of being-otherwise. [16] Yet even as Deleuze's philosophical efforts may be deployed by and for the articulation of Afro-Pessimist claims, these claims vertiginously intensify Deleuze's theorization of non-being: Deleuze theorizes non-being in terms of a "vertigo" of immanence (Deleuze and Guattari 1996: 48), yet blackness is the historical, material experience of such vertigo. Drawing on a distinction made by Wilderson, this is to say that for Deleuze non-being is a "subjective vertigo," or a vertigo *into which* Deleuze's thought makes an entrance, while blackness is experienced as "objective vertigo," meaning that vertigo is—historically or materially—*always already* there (Wilderson 2011: 3). Immanence, or the vertigo of non-being, remains an object for the thought of Deleuze; blackness is historically or materially the *objective reality of* non-being—the very reality of the vertigo of immanence. Consequently, to think non-being according to blackness entails the reading of Deleuze's theoretical articulation in terms of the operations by which historical, material power is enacted.

#### Slavery morphs and recodes itself in different ways- it relies on the sadism of liberal progress narratives to perfect itself and maintain “life”. Only the alternative can disrupt this project and render these promises incoherent.

Wilderson 20 [Frank B. Wilderson, professor of Drama and African American studies at the University of California, Irvine, “Afropessimism”, page 94-96, JMH]

Northup’s book implies, without stating directly, why this generalization of sadism—brutality as the constituent element of family bonding—cannot be understood as being triggered by transgressions. It is as ubiquitous as the air he breathes. “It was rarely a day passed without more whippings . . . It is the literal, unvarnished truth, that the crack of the lash and the shrieking of slaves, can be heard from dark till bedtime . . .” Patsey and Solomon, unlike Stella and me, were living in a place and time when civil society and the Human were neither ashamed nor embarrassed by this. A thousand miles upriver and one hundred twenty six years later, Josephine was shocked by this inheritance, but it didn’t take her long to recover, and to claim it. Though the structure of Stella’s “life” (or, better, **the paradigm of social death**, for the quotation marks are essential here) **cannot be reconciled with the** structure of Josephine’s life (or **the paradigm of social life**), there is a connection. But **this connection is parasitic and perverse—regardless of what the socially dead Black person (i.e., Stella and Patsey) or the socially alive Human (i.e., Josephine or Mary Epps) might say about their “relationship.”** It is parasitic because White and non-Black subjectivity cannot be imbued with the capacity for selfknowledge and intersubjective community without anti-Black violence; without, that is, the violence of social death. In other words, **White people and their junior partners need anti-Black violence to know they’re alive.\*** If Hattie McDaniel were to truly die, as Stella proclaimed, it would be tantamount to the death of a parasite’s host. This is what makes social death something more surreal than the end of breath. It is, in the words of David Marriott, a deathliness that saturates life, not an embalming; a resource for Human renewal. **It is perverse for many reasons: one of which is the fact that as civil society matures** (from 1853 to December 1979, when it all went south with Josephine)—and we move historically from the obvious technologies of chattel slavery to universal suffrage, the discourse of human rights, and the concept of universal access to civil society— the anti-Black violence necessary for the elaboration and maintenance of White (and non-Black) subjectivity gets repressed and becomes increasingly unavailable to conscious (as opposed to unconscious) speech. (“I judge people by the quality of their character,” as Dr. King said, “and not the color of their skin”; or the commonly spoken, “At the end of the day, we’re all Americans and we’re in this together”— and other such malarkey of the conscious mind.) But the pageantries of naked and submissive Black flesh, pageantries of bleeding backs and buttocks, whip marks, amputations, and faces closed by horse bits, provide evidence of the role sadism plays in the constitution of White subjectivity, and *12 Years a Slave* makes this visible on the screen, despite its repression in the narrative of both the film and civil society writ large. It is tempting and commonplace to reduce Mary and Edwin Epps’s sadism to individual psychopathology. Or one might think that Edwin Epps is one of a group of exceptionally sadistic people who lived in an exceptionally sadistic time and place. But the film, and to an even greater extent the autobiography, sees (rather than narrates) sadism—the sexual perversion in which gratification is obtained by inflicting physical or mental pain on a love object—not as the individual pathology of a handful of people, but as a generalized condition; generalized in that pleasure, as a constituent element of communal life, cannot be disentangled from anti-Black violence. Conventionally, **the object of sadism can**, tomorrow, **become the subject of sadism**. But the sadism that constitutes the spectacles of *12 Years a Slave*, and which constitutes early nineteenth century society, is not imbued with such reciprocity. The Slaves of social death cannot switch places and make Edwin Epps or his equally cruel wife the love objects of their collective sadism. If they did so in private (if Patsey beat Edwin or Mary in a private bedroom encounter, for example) **it is because such a reversal was occasioned and allowed—in other words, the master used his prerogative and power to play a different game, one in which he suffers because suffering fulfills his fantasy and because, unlike the Slave, his fantasies have “objective value.”** Such role reversals do not imbue the encounter with reciprocity. **The changes that begin to occur after the Civil War and up through the Civil Rights Movement, Black Power, and the American election of a Black president are merely changes in the weather. Despite the fact that the sadism is no longer played out in the open as it was in l840, nothing essential has changed.**

#### Only through embracement of disorder and incoherence via the alternative are we able create revolutionary politics that disrupt the generative mechanism of civil society.

Wilderson 20 [Frank B. Wilderson, professor of Drama and African American studies at the University of California, Irvine, “Afropessimism”, page 249-252, JMH]

Again, though this is a bond between Blacks and Whites (or, more precisely, between Black and non-Blacks), it is produced by a violent intrusion that does not cut both ways. Whereas the phobic bond is an injunction against Black psychic integration and Black filial and affilial relations, it is the lifeblood of White psychic integration and filial (which is to say, domestic) and affilial (or institutional) relations. For whoever says “rape” says Black; whoever says “prison” says Black; and whoever says “AIDS” says Black—the Negro is a phobogenic object: a past without a heritage, the map of gratuitous violence, and a program of complete disorder. If a social movement is to be neither social democratic nor Marxist, in terms of its structure of political desire, then it should grasp the invitation of social death embodied in Black beings. **If we are to be honest with ourselves, we must admit that the “~~Negro~~” “Black” has been inviting Whites, as well as civil society’s junior partners** (for example, Palestinians, Native Americans, Latinx) **to the dance of social death for hundreds of years, but few have wanted to learn the steps.** They have been, and remain today (even in the most anti-racist movements, like anti-colonial insurgency) invested elsewhere. Black liberation, as a prospect, makes radicalism more dangerous to the U.S. and the world. **This is not because it raises the specter of an alternative polity (such as socialism, or community control of existing resources), but because its condition of possibility and gesture of resistance function as a politics of refusal and a refusal to affirm, a program of complete disorder. One must embrace its disorder, its incoherence, and allow oneself to be elaborated by it, if indeed one’s politics are to be underwritten by a revolutionary desire.** What other lines of accountability are there when slaves are in the room? There is nothing foreign, frightening, or even unpracticed about the embrace of disorder and incoherence. The desire to be embraced, and elaborated, by disorder and incoherence is not anathema in and of itself. No one, for example, has ever been known to say, Gee whiz, if only my orgasms would end a little sooner, or maybe not come at all. Few so-called radicals desire to be embraced, and elaborated, by the disorder and incoherence of Blackness—and the state of political movements in the U.S. today is marked by this very Negrophobogenisis: Gee-whiz, if only Black rage could be more coherent, or maybe not come at all. Perhaps there is something more terrifying about the joy of Black than there is in the joy of sex (unless one is talking sex with a Negro). Perhaps coalitions today prefer to remain inorgasmic in the face of civil society—with hegemony as a handy prophylactic, just in case. If, **through this stasis or paralysis, they try to do the work of prison abolition, that work will fail, for it is always work from a position of coherence (such as the worker) on behalf of a position of incoherence of the Black: radical politics morphed into extensions of the master’s prerogative.** In this way, **social formations on the Left remain blind to the contradictions of coalitions between Humans and Slaves. They remain coalitions operating within the logic of civil society and function less as revolutionary promises than as crowding-out scenarios of Black antagonisms, simply feeding Black people’s frustration.** Whereas the positionality of the worker (whether a factory worker demanding a monetary wage, an immigrant, or a white woman demanding a social wage) gestures toward the reconfiguration of civil society, the positionality of the Black subject (whether a prison-slave or a prison-slave-in-waiting) gestures toward the disconfiguration of civil society. From the coherence of civil society, the Black subject beckons with the incoherence of civil war, a war that reclaims Blackness not as a positive value, but as a politically enabling site, to quote Fanon, of “absolute dereliction.” It is a “scandal” that rends civil society asunder. Civil war, then, becomes the unthought, but never forgotten, understudy of hegemony. It is a Black specter waiting in the wings, an endless antagonism that cannot be satisfied (via reform or reparation), but must nonetheless be pursued to the death. But lest we forget, this is not a question of volition. It is not as simple as waking up in the morning and deciding, in one’s conscious mind, to “do the right thing.” **For when we scale up from the terrain of the psyche to the terrain of armed struggle, we may be faced with a situation in which the eradication of the generative mechanism of Black suffering is something that is not in anyone’s interest.** Eradication of the generative mechanisms of Black suffering is not in the interest of Palestinians and Israelis, as my shocking encounter with my friend Sameer, on a placid hillside, suggests; because his anti-Black phobia mobilizes the fantasy of belonging that the Israeli state might otherwise strip him of. For him to secure his status as a relational being (if only in his unconscious), his unconscious must labor to maintain the Black as a genealogical isolate. “The shame and humiliation runs even deeper if the Israeli soldier was an Ethiopian Jew.” The Israelis are killing the Palestinians, literally; but psychic life, Human capacity for relations, is vouchsafed by a libidinal relay between them and their common labor to avoid ~~“niggerization”~~ [~~negroization~~] [racialization] (Fanon). **This relay is the generative mechanism that makes life life. It is also the generative mechanism of Black suffering and isolation. The end of this generative mechanism would mean the end of the world. We would find ourselves peering into the abyss.** This trajectory is too iconoclastic for working-class, post-colonial, and/or radical feminist conceptual frameworks. The Human need to be liberated in the world is not the same as the Black need to be liberated from the world; which is why even their most radical cognitive maps draw borders between the living and the dead. Finally**, if we push this analysis to the wall, it becomes clear that eradication of the generative mechanisms of Black suffering is also not in the interests of Black revolutionaries. For how can we disimbricate Black juridical and political desire from the Black psyche’s desire to destroy the Black imago, a desire that constitutes the psyche?** In short, bonding with Whites and non-Blacks over phobic reactions to the Black imago provides the Black psyche with the only semblance of psychic integration it is likely to have: the need to destroy a Black imago and love a White ideal. “In these circumstances, having a ‘white’ unconscious may be the only way to connect with—or even contain—the overwhelming and irreparable sense of loss. The intruding fantasy offers the medium to connect with the lost internal object, the ego, but there is also no ‘outside’ to this ‘real fantasy’ and the effects of intrusion are irreparable.” This raises the question, who is the speaking subject of Black insurgent testimony; who bears witness when the Black insurgent takes the stand? Who is writing this book?

### 2

#### The aff should be topical. Extra-topicality is a voting issue: the aff can’t garner offense from any source other than the benefits of hypothetical federal government action.

#### ‘United States federal government’ means three branches.

U.S. Legal ’16 [U.S. Legal; 2016; Organization offering legal assistance and attorney access; U.S. Legal, “United States Federal Government Law and Legal Definition,” <https://definitions.uslegal.com/u/united-states-federal-government/>]

The United States Federal Government is established by the US Constitution. The Federal Government shares sovereignty over the United Sates with the individual governments of the States of US. The Federal government has three branches: i) the legislature, which is the US Congress, ii) Executive, comprised of the President and Vice president of the US and iii) Judiciary. The US Constitution prescribes a system of separation of powers and ‘checks and balances’ for the smooth functioning of all the three branches of the Federal Government. The US Constitution limits the powers of the Federal Government to the powers assigned to it; all powers not expressly assigned to the Federal Government are reserved to the States or to the people.

#### ‘Antitrust laws’ are statutes.

Grimes ’20 [Charles W; 2020; editor of this Licensing Update and Law Professor at Ava Maria Law School; Wolters Kluwer, “Licensing Update,” https://www.crowell.com/files/20200401-Licensing-Update-Chapter-13.pdf]

§13.02 ANTITRUST LAW IN THE UNITED STATES

U.S. antitrust law is defined by federal and state statutes, as interpreted by the courts. The core federal statutes are the Sherman Act,1 passed by Congress in 1890, and the Federal Trade Commission2 and Clayton Acts,3 both passed in 1914. The United States Department of Justice (“DOJ”) and the Federal Trade Commission (“FTC” or “Commission”) (together the “agencies”) share enforcement of most areas of federal antitrust law but with some differences in the scope of their authority. The FTC has sole authority to enforce Section 5 of FTC Act, which prohibits (1) unfair methods of competition and (2) unfair or deceptive acts or practices. The FTC almost always pursues claims for anticompetitive conduct as unfair methods of competition and reserves charges of unfair or deceptive acts or practices for consumer protection violations. Though the FTC's authority to challenge unfair methods of competition goes beyond conduct prohibited by the Sherman and Clayton Acts, in practice the FTC brings most unfair methods of competition cases under the same standards that courts apply to Sherman Act claims. The most prominent exception is the invitation to collude offense, which falls outside the scope of the Sherman Act (if the invitation is not accepted, there is no agreement). The FTC challenges invitations to collude as so-called “standalone” violations of Section 5.4 The DOJ has sole authority to pursue criminal violations of the antitrust laws. Most states have their own state antitrust and unfair competition statutes. State law follows federal law to some extent, though as discussed below, may differ from federal law in meaningful ways that vary state to state. State attorneys general and private parties can also typically file suit to enforce both federal and state antitrust law.

#### Their ‘scope’ is defined by government.

Sagers ’15 [Christopher L; 2015; the James A. Thomas Distinguished Professor of Law and Faculty Director of the Cleveland-Marshall Solo Practice Incubator; Handbook on the Scope of Antitrust, “Introduction,” Ch. 1, p. 9]

B. Sources of the Scope of Antitrust Law

The scope of federal antitrust law is governed by three separate authorities: (1) the U.S. Constitution, (2) the language of the antitrust statutes themselves, and (3) the language of other federal statutes and regulations.

#### ‘Prohibitions’ are laws.

Collins ’12 [Collins English Dictionary; carbon dated April 23, 2012; “prohibition,” https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/prohibition]

1. Countable Noun

A prohibition is a law or rule forbidding something.

#### Vote negative:

#### 1. FAIRNESS---post-facto revision of the topic unlimits and produces incentives to avoid due to lack of a stable agent or mechanism. Overstretch makes clash impossible and renders neg ground concessionary. Fairness is a precondition to actualize benefits.

#### 2. ITERATIVE TESTING---research over points of difference enables refinement and sharpens advocacy. Competitive motivations are key.

**Iverson ’9** [Joel; 2009; Associate Professor of Communication at the University of Montana, Ph.D in Communication from Arizona State University Relations at the University of Sydney; Debate Central, “Can Cutting Cards Carve into Our Personal Lives: An Analysis of Debate Research on Personal Advocacy,” https://debate.uvm.edu/dybvigiverson1000.html]

Mitchell (1998) provides a thorough examination of the pedagogical implication for academic debate. Although Mitchell acknowledges that debate provides preparation for participation in democracy, limiting debate to a laboratory where students practice their skill for future participation is criticized. Mitchell contends:

For students and teachers of argumentation, the heightened salience of this question should signal the danger that critical thinking and oral advocacy skills alone may not be sufficient for citizens to assert their voices in public deliberation. (p. 45)

Mitchell contends that the laboratory style setting creates barriers to other spheres, creates a "sense of detachment" and causes debaters to see research from the role of spectators. Mitchell further calls for "argumentative agency [which] involves the capacity to contextualize and employ the skills and strategies of argumentative discourse in fields of social action, especially wider spheres of public deliberation" (p. 45). Although we agree with Mitchell that debate can be an even greater instrument of empowerment for students, we are more interested in examining the impact of the intermediary step of research. In each of Mitchell's examples of debaters finding creative avenues for agency, there had to be a motivation to act. It is our contention that the research conducted for competition is a major catalyst to propel their action, change their opinions, and to provide a greater depth of understanding of the issues involved.

The level of research involved in debate creates an in-depth understanding of issues. The level of research conducted during a year of debate is quite extensive. Goodman (1993) references a Chronicle of Higher Education article that estimated "the level and extent of research required of the average college debater for each topic is equivalent to the amount of research required for a Master's Thesis (cited in Mitchell, 1998, p. 55). With this extensive quantity of research, debaters attain a high level of investigation and (presumably) understanding of a topic. As a result of this level of understanding, debaters become knowledgeable citizens who are further empowered to make informed opinions and energized to take action. Research helps to educate students (and coaches) about the state of the world.

Without the guidance of a debate topic, how many students would do in-depth research on female genital mutilation in Africa, or United Nations sanctions on Iraq? The competitive nature of policy debate provides an impetus for students to research the topics that they are going to debate. This in turn fuels students’ awareness of issues that go beyond their front doors. Advocacy flows from this increased awareness. Reading books and articles about the suffering of people thousands of miles away or right in our own communities drives people to become involved in the community at large.

Research has also focused on how debate prepares us for life in the public sphere. Issues that we discuss in debate have found their way onto the national policy stage, and training in intercollegiate debate makes us good public advocates. The public sphere is the arena in which we all must participate to be active citizens. Even after we leave debate, the skills that we have gained should help us to be better advocates and citizens. Research has looked at how debate impacts education (Matlon and Keele 1984), legal training (Parkinson, Gisler and Pelias 1983, Nobles 19850 and behavioral traits (McGlone 1974, Colbert 1994). These works illustrate the impact that public debate has on students as they prepare to enter the public sphere.

The debaters who take active roles such as protesting sanctions were probably not actively engaged in the issue until their research drew them into the topic. Furthermore, the process of intense research for debate may actually change the positions debaters hold. Since debaters typically enter into a topic with only cursory (if any) knowledge of the issue, the research process provides exposure to issues that were previously unknown. Exposure to the literature on a topic can create, reinforce or alter an individual's opinions. Before learning of the School for the America's, having an opinion of the place is impossible. After hearing about the systematic training of torturers and oppressors in a debate round and reading the research, an opinion of the "school" was developed. In this manner, exposure to debate research as the person finding the evidence, hearing it as the opponent in a debate round (or as judge) acts as an initial spark of awareness on an issue. This process of discovery seems to have a similar impact to watching an investigative news report.

Mitchell claimed that debate could be more than it was traditionally seen as, that it could be a catalyst to empower people to act in the social arena. We surmise that there is a step in between the debate and the action. The intermediary step where people are inspired to agency is based on the research that they do. If students are compelled to act, research is a main factor in compelling them to do so. Even if students are not compelled to take direct action, research still changes opinions and attitudes.

Research often compels students to take action in the social arena. Debate topics guide students in a direction that allows them to explore what is going on in the world. Last year the college policy debate topic was,

Resolved: That the United States Federal Government should adopt a policy of constructive engagement, including the immediate removal of all or nearly all economic sanctions, with the government(s) of one or more of the following nation-states: Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Syria, North Korea.

This topic spurred quite a bit of activism on the college debate circuit. Many students become actively involved in protesting for the removal of sanctions from at least one of the topic countries. The college listserve was used to rally people in support ofvarious movements to remove sanctions on both Iraq and Cuba. These messages were posted after the research on the topic began. While this topic did not lend itself to activism beyond rallying the government, other topics have allowed students to take their beliefs outside of the laboratory and into action.

In addition to creating awareness, the research process can also reinforce or alter opinions. By discovering new information in the research process, people can question their current assumptions and perhaps formulate a more informed opinion. One example comes from a summer debate class for children of Migrant workers in North Dakota (Iverson, 1999). The Junior High aged students chose to debate the adoption of Spanish as an official language in the U.S. Many students expressed their concern that they could not argue effectively against the proposed change because it was a "truism." They were wholly in favor of Spanish as an official language. After researching the topic throughout their six week course, many realized much more was involved in adopting an official language and that they did not "speak 'pure' Spanish or English, but speak a unique dialect and hybrid" (Iverson, p. 3). At the end of the class many students became opposed to adopting Spanish as an official language, but found other ways Spanish should be integrated into American culture. Without research, these students would have maintained their opinions and not enhanced their knowledge of the issue. The students who maintained support of Spanish as an official language were better informed and thus also more capable of articulating support for their beliefs.

The examples of debate and research impacting the opinions and actions of debaters indicate the strong potential for a direct relationship between debate research and personal advocacy. However, the debate community has not created a new sea of activists immersing this planet in waves of protest and political action. The level of influence debater search has on people needs further exploration. Also, the process of research needs to be more fully explored in order to understand if and why researching for the competitive activity of debate generates more interest than research for other purposes such as classroom projects.

Since parliamentary debate does not involve research into a single topic, it can provide an important reference point for examining the impact of research in other forms of debate. Based upon limited conversations with competitors and coaches as well as some direct coaching and judging experience in parliamentary debate, parliamentary forms of debate has not seen an increase in activism on the part of debaters in the United States. Although some coaches require research in order to find examples and to stay updated on current events, the basic principle of this research is to have a commonsense level of understanding(Venette, 1998). As the NPDA website explains, "the reader is encouraged to be well-read in current events, as well as history, philosophy, etc. Remember: the realm of knowledge is that of a 'well-read college student'" (NPDA Homepage,<http://www.bethel.edu/Majors/Communication/npda/faq2.html>). The focus of research is breadth, not depth. In fact, in-depth research into one topic for parliamentary debate would seem to be counterproductive. Every round has a different resolution and for APDA, at least, those resolutions are generally written so they are open to a wide array of case examples, So, developing too narrow of a focus could be competitively fatal. However, research is apparently increasing for parliamentary teams as reports of "stock cases" used by teams for numerous rounds have recently appeared. One coach did state that a perceived "stock case" by one team pushed his debaters to research the topic of AIDS in Africa in order to be equally knowledgeable in that case. Interestingly, the coach also stated that some of their research in preparation for parliamentary debate was affecting the opinions and attitudes of the debaters on the team.

Not all debate research appears to generate personal advocacy and challenge peoples' assumptions. Debaters must switch sides, so they must inevitably debate against various cases. While this may seem to be inconsistent with advocacy, supporting and researching both sides of an argument actually created stronger advocates. Not only did debaters learn both sides of an argument, so that they could defend their positions against attack, they also learned the nuances of each position. Learning and the intricate nature of various policy proposals helps debaters to strengthen their own stance on issues.

### Case

#### Vote neg on presumption, the aff is incoherent at two levels:

#### Internally. The aff uses cost-benefit analysis, does impact calculus, says Buddhism is good because it solves delusion. Proves what they do doesn’t generate a “path that arises from Buddhist ethical interrogation.”

#### Externally. Even if the aff is non-attachment, all the procedures of judging it are antithetical to Buddhist meditation. Refusing to affirm—or to even evaluate the debate—is the only possible way to avoid a link.

**Watts**, dean of the American Academy of Asian Studies and research fellow at Harvard University, **1951**

(Alan, *The Wisdom of Insecurity*, pg 75-6)

The question **“What shall we do about it?”** **is only asked by those who do not understand the problem**. If a problem can be solved at all, to understand it and to know what to do about it are the same thing. On the other hand, doing something about a problem which you do not understand is like trying to clear away darkness by thrusting it aside with your hands. When light is brought, the darkness vanishes at once. This applies particularly to the problem now before us. How are we to heal the split between “I” and “me,” the brain and the body, man and nature, and bring all the vicious circles which it produces to an end? How are we to experience life as something other than a honey trap in which we are the struggling flies? How are we to find security and peace of mind in a world whose very nature is insecurity, impermanence, and unceasing change? All these questions demand a method and a course of action. At the same time, all of them show that the problem has not been understood. We do not need action—yet. We need more light. Light, here, means awareness—to be aware of life, of experience as it is at this moment, **without any judgments or ideas about it**. In other words, you have to see and feel what you are experiencing as it is, and not as it is named. This very simple “opening of the eyes” brings about the most extraordinary transformation of understanding and living, and shows that many of our most baffling problems are pure illusion. This may sound like an over-simplification because most people imagine themselves to be fully enough aware of the present already, but we shall see that this is far from true.1 Because awareness is a view of reality free from ideas and judgments, it is clearly **impossible to define and write down what it reveals**. Anything which can be described is an idea, and I cannot make a positive statement about something—the real world—which is not an idea. I shall therefore have to be content with talking about the false impressions which awareness removes, rather than the truth which it reveals. The latter can only be symbolized with words which mean little or nothing to those without a direct understanding of the truth in question. What is true and positive is too real and too living to be described, and to try to describe it is like putting red paint on a red rose. Therefore most of what follows will have to have a rather negative quality. **The truth is revealed by removing things that stand in its light**, an art not unlike sculpture, in which the artist creates, not by building, but by hacking away.

#### They don’t change economics:

#### No mindset shift.

Russi and Haskell, 15—Senior Lecturer in Sociology, Azim Premji University AND Assistant Professor, Mississippi College School of Law (Luigi and John, “Heterodox Challenges to Consumption-Oriented Models of Legislation,” Unbound: Harvard Journal of the Legal Left, 9:13, 2015, dml)

The difficulty of following these critiques from American Legal Realists and these other heterodox authors to any normative conclusion, however, seems two-fold. On the one hand, to think outside of consumption seems in some ways to border on a theological aspiration, to be ushered into the responsibility of remaking society according to some almost other-worldly dimensions: an economic order that conceives progress beyond growth, a socio-political structure that allows for systemic change without reducing the possibilities of human freedom, the normative agenda to substantiate egalitarian relationships, a global order that preserves the victories of industrial capitalism while simultaneously transcending its costs (ecological, human, etc.). On the other hand, critiques of consumption-led governance seem both anachronistic and violent. They are anachronistic because they either too readily rely on the possibilities of the Enlightenment assumption that there is a clear set of ‘truths’ that once disseminated to the population will enact meaningful change (e.g., if particular industries or products are demonstrated to be unsustainable to the environment, populations will demand alternatives) or they overly invest in the possibility of some benevolent, universalizing spirit that is capable of trumping the politico-economic exigencies of personal well-being (e.g., individuals are naturally willing to collectively do the right thing for the greatest amount of people even at personal cost in a consistent manner). They are violent because in calling for systemic change, such reversals would almost undoubtedly entail significant and most likely intensely hostile opposition from entrenched actors who benefit from the current economic legal arrangements. A liberal mode of economic management (e.g., consumerism) is itself undoubtedly more coercive and violent than its advocates tend to admit (e.g., it is part of the very problems it claims to address), but where the fundamental point of disagreement arises is over the question whether the current trajectory is occasioning a level of lost opportunity costs that warrant the effort and violence most likely necessary to enact an alternative mode of political life. Furthermore, if we accept the proposition of the necessity of coercive change, it still begs the question to what extent its proponents within intellectual circles are really willing to fully participate and accept the potential costs of radical struggle – they may, to put it vulgarly, simply have too much comfort to lose. To what extent, in short, are current left-oriented calls within academia and policy circles merely reflecting the more general postmodern crisis of identity versus the partisan militant residing at any revolutionary core? In giving normative bite to any alternative model, as the American Legal Realist Robert Hale pointed out, it seems undoubtedly the case that any future system would only find new constraints and forms of violence to sustain its cohesiveness.

[T]he systems advocated by professed upholders of laissez-faire are in reality permeated with coercive restrictions of individual freedom, and with restrictions, moreover, out of conformity with any formula of “equal opportunity” or of “preserving the equal rights of others.” Some sort of coercive restriction of individuals, it is believed, is absolutely unavoidable, and cannot be made to conform to any Spenserian formula.161

If fundamental reform to consumer-centric governance is inherently violent – in that it will necessarily create only new winners and losers, and not without potentially violent conflict and disruption – the challenge is therefore not just a question of ethics or political will (e.g., the current distribution of resources is unjust/violent), but the feasibility of re-conceptualizing efficiency, both in terms of strategy and tactics: in other words, upon what standard might we measure progress (or stated differently, what are the lost opportunity costs of continuing on the current trajectory versus an alternative economic model), and how might this be actually accomplished.162 To set out on such a task is exactly the stakes of future progressive scholarship, and upon which we wish to close our study with a brief reflection.

#### Even if there was a mindset shift, voting aff can’t cause it.

Fleming and Banerjee, 16—Professor of Business and Society and Director of the Modular Executive MBA programme AND Professor of Management and Director of the Executive PhD program at Cass Business School, City University London (Peter and Subhabrata Bobby, “When performativity fails: Implications for Critical Management Studies,” human relations, 2016, Vol. 69(2), 257–276, dml)

In their influential analysis of Critical Management Studies (CMS), Fournier and Grey (2000) argue that CMS scholarship is driven by three basic principles: denaturalization, reflectivity and non-performativity. Denaturalization deconstructs the seemingly immutable ‘realities’ and ‘rationalities’ of managerialism while exposing the wealth of alternatives that reside in the shadows of organizational life. Reflectivity challenges the dominance of positivism in the methodologies of mainstream management research, revealing how all social scientific investigation is underpinned by political assumptions. Drawing on Lyotard’s (1984) notion of instrumental performativity, the principle of nonperformativity rejects the means-ends rationality that governs many organizational situations, especially under neoliberal capitalism characterized by a brazen cost-minimization/ profit-maximization logic (Fournier and Grey, 2000).

The principle of non-performativity has recently been questioned in a number of articles published in this journal and elsewhere. These authors suggest that by critically distancing themselves from the concrete activities of managers, researchers may miss opportunities to intervene and make a difference for the better. For example, in their influential article, Spicer et al. (2009: 538) argue that the principle of non-performativity needlessly isolates CMS from organizational practitioners. This in turn fosters a corrosive ‘cynicism and negativism’ whereby scholars ply grand critical theories that have little relevance to everyday organizational challenges. Others similarly maintain that the principle of non-performativity fails to offer ‘practical’ guidelines for managers (King and Learmonth, 2014); misses crucial opportunities to ‘collaborate’ with middle-managers and stubbornly objects to becoming ‘more relevant to practice’ (Wickert and Schaefer, 2014: 7); is elitist in how it ignores practitioner management texts in favour of ‘canonical perspectives’ associated with Marx, Foucault and the Frankfurt School (Hartmann, 2014: 619, also see Clegg et al., 2006).

These scholars recommend a renewed commitment to performativity so that critical knowledge can have an impact on the practices of managers and lead to emancipatory change. Most assertive in this regard are Spicer et al. (2009) and Wickert and Schaefer (2014) and their respective notions of critical performativity and progressive performativity. Both articles draw upon wider philosophical studies of performativity to discern its potential for CMS researchers hoping to make meaningful interventions. In particular, they apply Austin (1963) and Butler’s (1990, 1993) influential insight about the way language creates reality (rather than just describe it). Armed with this insight, it is claimed that CMS researchers can change organizational practice (for the better) by altering how language is used by managers. Modified speech may lead to modified and thus emancipatory behaviour. Such critical performativity ‘involves active and subversive intervention into managerial discourses and practices’ (Spicer et al., 2009: 538). Instead of worrying about emancipation on a grand scale, more modest microemancipatory practices might ‘stimulate the performative effects of language in order to induce incremental, rather than radical, changes in managerial behaviour’ (Wickert and Schaefer, 2014: 1). This means getting closer to managers rather than critiquing them from afar.

We agree that CMS scholars should be reflecting on how their critical findings might translate into concrete change. Otherwise why bother being critical in the first place? Moreover, we applaud recent efforts – including the advocates of critical and progressive performativity – to rethink how CMS research might make a difference to organizational practices. Our motivation for entering this discussion, however, derives from a nagging doubt. We are concerned that the emphasis on discursive performativity as a change mechanism risks presenting an overly optimistic view of (a) the power of language to alter institutionalized organizational practices associated with neoliberal capitalism and (b) the capability of CMS scholars alone to reorder in situ how managers make sense of governing imperatives like profit-maximization, shareholder value, consumer responsiveness and so forth. While there may be situations in which critical and/ or progressive performativity may ‘talk into existence new (counterbalancing) behaviours and practices’ (Wickert and Schaefer, 2014: 3), we also propose that, realistically speaking, such attempts would just as likely fail given the preponderant pressures of economic rationality in many business contexts. Missing in the aforementioned calls for a wider appreciation of (discursive) performativity, therefore, are the strict boundary conditions that Austin (1963) and Butler (1990, 1993, 2010) themselves place around the notion.

Our article contributes to the ongoing discussion about the challenge of making CMS performative by addressing two central questions. First, rather than automatically assume their success, how might discursive performative approaches (such as critical and progressive performativity) fail to enact desired material changes and for what reasons? Answering this question will provide a better understanding of the practical contingencies that can determine whether these new performativities are the best method for endeavouring to influence organizations. Second, in light of the constraints on the performative potential of language, what other possible avenues are available to the CMS community for having an impact (however modest) on organizational practices and routines?

The article is structured in four parts. First, we provide an overview of the founding CMS principle of non-performativity and analyse recent calls for critical research to become more performative, giving particular attention to the two articles that have recently appeared in this journal. Second, we identify the circumstances under which it is more realistic to expect discursive performativity to fail rather than succeed. Corporate Social Responsibility (or CSR) is here highlighted as a failed performative in managerial and mainstream discourses. Third, the article posits alternative methods that the CMS community might use to help make organizations less exploitative and more equitable. Fourth, we conclude by discussing the broader role of critique in management studies at this juncture. Our overall aim is to continue the ongoing dialogue about performativity in the CMS community and hopefully inform new avenues to achieve its stated objectives in business and society.

Critical Management Studies and the question of performativity

We will not provide a detailed overview of CMS as that has been done extensively elsewhere (see e.g. Adler et al., 2007; Alvesson et al., 2009; Banerjee, 2011a; Fournier and Grey, 2000; Spicer et al., 2009). CMS is characterized by a diversity of theoretical and philosophical perspectives. For instance, the 2013 Critical Management Studies conference held in Manchester comprised of 25 streams involving a wide range of topics such as critical perspectives on strategy, globalization, international business, diversity, feminism, race theory, human resource management, marketing, accounting, postcolonialism, sexuality, gender, postmodernism and environmentalism. CMS was established as a division in the Academy of Management in 2008. The domain statement of the CMS division describes its mission:

CMS serves as a forum within the Academy for the expression of views critical of established management practices and the established social order. Our premise is that structural features of contemporary society, such as the profit imperative, patriarchy, racial inequality, and ecological irresponsibility often turn organizations into instruments of domination and exploitation. Driven by a shared desire to change this situation, we aim in our research, teaching, and practice to develop critical interpretations of management and society and to generate radical alternatives. Our critique seeks to connect the practical shortcomings in management and individual managers to the demands of a socially divisive and ecologically destructive system within which managers work. (CMS, 2014)

Thus, CMS challenges the fundamental normative assumption that managerial notions of efficiency are universally desirable, and that pursuing profit motives can only lead to positive outcomes for the workforce and society. Moreover, CMS is driven by the desire (even if it does not always articulate the means) to transform existing power relations in organizations with a view to encouraging less oppressive practices that do not harm social and environmental welfare. As Fournier and Grey (2000: 16) argue, ‘to be engaged in critical management studies means, at the most basic level, to say that something is wrong with management, as a practice and body of knowledge, and that it should be changed’.

Along with de-naturalization and reflexivity, Fournier and Grey (2000) suggest that the principle of non-performativity is crucial to the CMS project: What exactly do Fournier and Grey (2000) mean by non-performativity? Let us imagine a CMS researcher studying changing employment practices in the United Kingdom. S/he gains access to a subsidiary of a multinational enterprise that has started to use zero-hours employment contracts to maximize profits for its parent company. These contracts have been widely condemned as exploitative and unjust since they insist employees always be on call but guarantee zero-hours of paid work (see Guardian, 2013). Our non-performative orientated CMS researcher would not be interested in generating knowledge that enables the efficiency and instrumentalization of this new employment system. Nor would s/he be overly sympathetic to the operational manager’s ‘point of view’ because employees are so obviously disadvantaged and suffering as a result. So what is our CMS scholar seeking to achieve in undertaking this research? Generally speaking, change hopefully. But here is the nub of the problem. How can critical researchers make an effective intervention while tenaciously remaining aloof (both ideologically and practically) of the concrete activities being described? What aspects of performativity, whether critical or progressive, can engage with this clearly exploitative practice to create a fairer outcome? If zero-hours contracts are practices created by the language of neoliberal capitalism, what other utterances have the power and agency to counter these practices?

Towards a performative Critical Management Studies?

Recent commentators have addressed questions like these by suggesting that CMS scholars must stop being so negative about the idea of working with managers to help bring about practical change. In their strident critique of Fournier and Grey (2000), Spicer et al. (2009) maintain that,

. . . a potential consequence of holding strong to the credo of anti-performativity is that CMS withdraws from attempts to engage with practitioners and mainstream management theorists who are at least partially concerned with issues of performativity . . . an anti-performative CMS satisfies itself with attempts to shock the mainstream out of its ideological slumber through intellectually ‘pissing in the street’. (Spicer et al., 2009: 542)

Critical scholars should instead become actively involved with everyday practitioners and engage with the language they use in an attempt to construct new realities and opportunities.

Following Spicer et al. (2009), Wickert and Schaefer (2014: 20) also implore the CMS community to have ‘greater impact on what managers actually do’. They are concerned that critical scholars fail to provide ‘knowledge for dealing with those aspects of managerial life that have been identified as problematic . . . and overlooks potential points of engagement with managers’ (Wickert and Schaefer, 2014: 5). Middle-managers in particular ought to be enlisted by CMS researchers because they are likely to be less aligned with organizational elites and potentially more sympathetic with frustrated subordinates to trigger progressive social change. For this reason too, Hartmann (2014: 626) argues the CMS community could also engage with managerial texts that are often dismissed in favour of critical theory, Marxism and feminism, in an attempt to subvert mainstream approaches and shift the discourse towards more emancipatory objectives instead. At least managerial texts provide a non-alienating ‘vocabulary to think progressively about alternatives without setting itself against the goals of organizations (i.e. it is not directly opposed to performative ends)’.

Critical and progressive performativity

To rectify the pitfalls of non-performativity, Spicer et al. (2009) posit ‘critical performativity’ as a practical alternative for CMS scholars. This model of impact can be achieved through an affirmative stance (getting close to the object of critique to reveal points of revision), an ethic of care (providing space for management’s viewpoint and collaborating with them to achieve emancipatory ends), pragmatism (being realistic about what can be achieved given structural constraints), engaging potentialities (leveraging points of possibility for changing managerial practices in an incremental rather than radical ‘revolutionary’ manner) and asserting a normative orientation (ideals for ‘good’ organizational practice).

Three implications of this approach are noteworthy. First, Spicer et al. (2009) move beyond Fournier and Grey’s (2000) Lyotardian conceptualization of performativity (i.e. input/output maximization) by drawing on other philosophical traditions that highlight how language/speech might count as social action (see Gond and Cabantous [2015] for an extended overview of this literature in the social sciences and philosophy). Austin (1963) and Butler’s (1990, 1993) notion of performative utterances (i.e. words that are also deeds) is considered especially important in this regard. Rather than functioning only as a secondary descriptor, language can also perform reality, as when a judge utters ‘I sentence you to . . .’ CMS researchers might thus create equitable organizational practices by intervening in management discourse and experimenting ‘with metaphors that might be floating around in the organization’ (Spicer et al., 2009: 547). Second, an ethic of affirmation and care implies that CMS ought to listen to management’s side of the story and engage in a ‘loving struggle’ (p. 548) with their language rather than simply criticize: ‘CMS needs to appreciate the contexts and constraints of management . . . from this follows some degree of respect and care’ (Spicer et al., 2009: 545). Third, CMS must be less ‘utopian’ in its emancipatory ambitions. Incremental and piecemeal change is more doable given the economic pressures managers confront in their daily routines and practices.

A similar set of reforms are outlined by Wickert and Schaefer (2014) in their notion of ‘progressive performativity’. The weakness of CMS for them is that it ‘provides only limited guidance on how (counterbalancing) values could be embedded into organizational practices and procedures in collaboration with, rather than in opposition to, managers’ (Wickert and Schaefer, 2014: 7, emphasis in original). They too advance a broader understanding of performativity related to language: ‘The performative element, we suggest, requires researchers to “activate” the language that managers use . . . In that way, CMS scholars may support managers to “talk into existence” new (counterbalancing) behaviours and practices’ (Wickert and Schaefer, 2014: 3). Two elements of progressive performativity follow from this proposition. First, through micro-level engagement CMS researchers can actively ally themselves with selected managers (preferably middlemanagers) to raise awareness and identify alternative speech acts. Second, this may lead to reflexive conscientization, whereby scholars help create discursive spaces ‘in which managers are gently “nudged” to reflect on their actions and the organizational processes to which their actions relate . . . [it seeks to] raise the critical consciousness of managers’ (Wickert and Schaefer, 2014: 3).

This can only be credibly achieved, according to Wickert and Schaefer, if scholars put aside the classical emancipatory ideals of CMS since they discourage micro-collaborations with managers, introduce concepts that alienate practitioners and ultimately make progressive change seemingly impossible. Utopianism, in particular, according to Wickert and Schaefer, introduces ‘complex problems [that] fill people with anxiety and limit their capacity to think and act creatively’ (Wickert and Schaefer, 2014: 14). They recommend non-utopian and ‘small-win’ initiatives instead, ‘moving forward by actively working towards incremental, rather than radical transformation of unfavourable social conditions’ (Wickert and Schaefer, 2014: 9–10).

Limitations of the new performative turn in Critical Management Studies

Space does not permit a full elaboration of the critical and progressive models of performativity being recommended to CMS researchers. But it is no exaggeration to suggest that the argumentation involved presents a rather caricatured image of the CMS community when exhorted to ‘overcome its often hypocritical and unproductive claims that its output has no performative intent whatsoever’ (Spicer et al. 2009: 554). As Alvesson et al. (2009: 10, emphasis in original) argue, non-performativity ‘emphatically does not mean an antagonistic attitude to any type of performing’. CMS only refrains from instrumentally contributing to the mean-ends rationality of corporate managerialism. It is not against all impact, since that would render its criticism something of a self-serving exercise that rightly ought to be admonished. Having said that, advocates of a new performativity do have a good point when they highlight the vagueness and ambiguity around what mechanisms of impact CMS actually does favour. How can the community help make a practical difference to organizational life so that they are less exploitative and more equitable?

Critical and progressive performativity may hold promise in this regard. However, we feel these models of influence carry overtly optimistic assumptions about the power of language to change certain structural realities as well as the capabilities of CMS scholars to perform emancipatory change through discourse and micro-level engagement. There may certainly be some cases where getting close to managers, empathizing with their constraints and manipulating their language may indeed yield the (micro) fulfilment of aspects of the CMS mission. For example, scholars have engaged with managers in developing critical perspectives on leadership (Cunliffe, 2009; Cunliffe and Eriksen, 2011) and promoting reflexivity in managerial practice (Barge, 2004). However, we are concerned that the conceptualizations of performativity proposed lack a realistic appreciation of the accumulated social forces guiding organizational behaviour in these institutionalized contexts, including the profit motive, shareholder value, cost externalization, means-ends efficiency and so forth. While these forces are no doubt social and linguistically constructed too (e.g. see Callon [2010] in relation to the economy), they have also been politically and institutionally embedded over time and cannot simply be talked away. It is these conditions, we argue, that need to be taken into consideration when assessing the impact of CMS scholarship. Without a wider political analysis of organizations, institutions and markets, the capacity to perform economic rationality differently will be limited, which in turn restricts the scope for politics, political subjectivity and dialogue (see Cochoy et al., 2010). Hence, we would expect the mechanisms recommended by critical and progressive performativities to frequently fail rather than succeed.

#### Buddhist economics doesn’t change any delusions—especially given their rejection of consequentialism.

Russi and Haskell, 15—Senior Lecturer in Sociology, Azim Premji University AND Assistant Professor, Mississippi College School of Law (Luigi and John, “Heterodox Challenges to Consumption-Oriented Models of Legislation,” Unbound: Harvard Journal of the Legal Left, 9:13, 2015, dml)

At the same time, if we take Schumacher’s version of Buddhism seriously, what emerges is not something necessarily foreign, or even antithetical, to Western late capitalist ideologies. First, the Buddhist economic critique of consumerism still adopts a ‘rational’ versus ‘irrational’ analysis, which is itself rooted in a quasi-materialist understanding of ‘balance’ and the ‘good life’ and tied closely to ideas of possession. Schumacher’s Buddhism aspires to “obtain” (possession) the “maximum of well-being with the minimum of consumption” (cost-benefit, efficiency analysis) – nothing outlandish to production/service sectors of the global economy (e.g., to offer the highest standard of service or product, itself not defined by use but ‘lifestyle,’ with the minimum amount of resources), nor the standard council of economic/professional self-discipline (e.g., to save rather than spend). Indeed, the emphasis on ‘well-being’ over ‘consumption’ is a staple in middle-to-upper middle class behavior where we see the prioritization of quality over quantity, time and preparation over speed or economic value (e.g., especially in relation to food), and so on. Second, to claim that modern economics posits consumption as the ‘sole end and purpose of all economic activity’ is to perhaps overstate the case. While modern economics is deeply entwined with the necessity of consumption, the market itself constantly justifies the emphasis on the accumulation of commodities in terms beyond mere accumulation: whether ‘lifestyle’ (e.g., to facilitate leisure time), beauty (e.g., products to ‘unleash’ the ‘real you’), or even a more peaceful world (e.g., in the truism that two countries with McDonalds have never gone to war with one another). What is lost in Schumacher’s version of Buddhist economics is specifically the ways in which Buddhism might allow for serious inquiry and contestation over the very idea of how ‘well-being’ itself will be assessed and what are the strategic possibilities to realize such outcomes. At its most powerful, Buddhism points to the deeply ethical, or even political, choices on both an individual and universalized plane that are involved in structuring economic governance, and suggests the potential for a non-hedonistic orientation for understanding the possibilities and goals of politics. It is in this next source of critique, Deep Ecology, that these challenges are more fully approached.

## Block

### Kritik

#### Libidinal economy is true

Chico et al 11 (A Primer on "Libidinal Economy" in Relation to Black Folks. Cosmic Hoboes: An Afropessimist Meditation (No)Space. <https://cosmichoboes.blogspot.com/2011/08/primer-on-libidinal-economy-in-relation.html>)

People who are interested in struggle need to understand the "libidinal economy." Coalition politicos like Al Sharpton like to tell us to put the unique experiences of black folks in the backseat to the interests of poor folks more generally. Such politicians expect us to submerge our interests as black people on the assumption that if poor people in general benefit from a political concession, poor black people will share equally in such benefits. Such politicos will continue to ignore the repeated evidence that a lot of nonblack people hate black people, even if doing so costs them money. If someone tells you that the problems black folks face are really just the problems that poor people face, they are telling you to ignore the libidinal economy. They are telling you that the political economy of capitalism is more important than the libidinal economy of antiblack racism. What is "libidinal economy"? In Red, White, and Black: Cinema and the Structure of U.S. Antagonisms (2010, Duke University Press), black political theorist Frank Wilderson highlights the distinction between political economy and libidinal economy (p. 9): Jared Sexton describes libidinal economy as “the economy, or distribution and arrangement, of desire and identification (their condensation and displacement), and the complex relationship between sexuality and the unconscious.” Needless to say, libidinal economy functions variously across scales and is as “objective” as political economy. Importantly, it is linked not only to forms of attraction, affection and alliance, but also to aggression, destruction, and the violence of lethal consumption. He emphasizes that it is “the whole structure of psychic and emotional life,” something more than, but inclusive of or traversed by, what Gramsci and other marxists call a “structure of feeling”; it is “a dispensation of energies, concerns, points of attention, anxieties, pleasures, appetites, revulsions, and phobias capable of both great mobility and tenacious fixation.” What does all this mean? Let's interpret this elaborate definition and get to how it thinks of "economy." When we think of economy, we usually think of something having to do with money. Wilderson uses the term political economy to refer to economy in the ways that we usually think of it: the ways people exchange materials and decide on how things are valued. Economy doesn't just mean the economy in the sense of the stock market or banks, but also any means of determining whether something is worth doing or possessing based on how much capital and labor power it yields. In struggle, we see over and over that money talks and bullshit walks. Economy has to do with what they value moves people to act. Economies are therefore very important to political action. But can there be an economy that exchanges something other than money or capital? Yes. To understand "economy" as Wilderson and Sexton use it, we have to think of economy in a more general way as things of all kinds that we can trade or save. You can accumulate not only cash or material items, but also fears and desires. Certain people accumulate more fear (the black athlete) and desire (the blonde cheerleader) than others. The term libidinal economy refers to the systems of exchange and valuation for fantasies, desires, fears, aversions, and enjoyment. Economy is about exchange and accumulation. Everyone feels fear and aggression, but where is it directed? The libidinal is about both people's desires, fantasies, and pleasures AND their phobias, fears, and violent consumptions. A libidinal economy has to do with which groups a subject is attracted to, which groups it is willing to form alliances with, and which people it is willing to provide affection to. Where can we see this libidinal economy? How can we illustrate this distinction? The libido is the collection of things like phobias and desires that are unconscious and invisible but that have a visible effect on the world, including the money economy. Some examples: We see libidinal economies at work any time there is a response by state that is out of all proportion to the material effects of any practice they are regulating. The USA incarcerates three million people, despite the fact that doing so has an adverse impact on US financial security. Hence the libidinal economy of the fear of black and brown people (who together comprise the overwhelming majority of inmates) trumps the political economy of the cost-benefit analysis of maintaining prisons. Let's take another example of the powder - versus crack-cocaine distinction, in which the same drug is punished differently at the federal level. Because the two drugs are chemically identical, there shouldn't be any distinction between how their use and sale is punished. In 2010, the law made it so that these two drugs were punished the same, although the Obama administration isn't in any hurry to make the abolition of this distinction retroactive so that the mostly black and brown people who are locked up because of it will get released. But the legal abolition of this distinction is not essential for us to look at. What is essential is why that distinction was made in the first place. Wilderson's work suggests that, for civil society, black people pose a threat that has nothing to do with the chemical content or the social and cultural effects of crack. Simply by being associated with black people, crack is seen as 100 times more threatening than is powder cocaine. The financial and social costs of locking all those black and brown people up and the financial and social costs of allowing all those white people to go free and continue to sell does not really matter to civil society. What the powder- versus crack-cocaine distinction shows is the desire to contain the threat that blackness symbolizes. This is the mark of libidinal economy. Cops, soldiers, firemen are considered sexually desirable because they become the heroes of civil society. The Oscar Grant shooting. Amadou Diallo was a victim of a extreme kind of violence because of the phobias that converged on his body. What is the exchange? Civil society has an anxiety about crime, and crime is always attached to black in urban areas. Police don't have to get a monetary award, but they get the gratitude of civil society. How does this play out in ways that don't have to do strictly with money? The desire for them may not show up in the amount of money they make. Cops get rewarded for their aggression. When the cop slammed dude into the glass at BART. Prison guards, thought of as having the toughest beat on the planet. They get rewarded for being the last line of defense against George Jackson. Oscar Grant was an accumulation of aggression and phobias. Why are the black people in Prince George's County, Maryland, segregated from white people in their same socioeconomic bracket with the same kinds of high-value real estate, and the same kinds of political-economic values? Living around white people has a value that cannot be explained in strictly monetary terms. AFDC benefited mostly white single mothers, and enjoyed a long history of support from 1936-the 1960s. It initially excluded black people. By the 1960s, when black people started getting it, attitudes changed toward it, making it seem like it was undeserved and a drain on national prosperity, and by 1984, when Ronald Reagan referred to "welfare queens in Cadillacs," it was clear that AFDC was "a black thing." In actual statistical terms, it was still used mostly by white women. But once it became associated with poor black women, it was seen as in need of drastic, radical reforms. But is this "libidinal economy" really that important? Frank Wilderson is using the distinction between a money economy and an economy of desire over and over again throughout this book. Wilderson talks about this by talking about the difference between word and deed. This is not the hypocrisy of the system. It IS the logic of the system. So Europeans tried to resolve the lack of labor power by passing laws that reduced homeless white people to the status of slaves. In the end, however, they never really enforced these laws. Wilderson quotes David Eltis, an economic historian, who says that the costs of settling the "new world" would have been significantly reduced if Europeans has simply enslaved other Europeans. But, Wilderson points out, "what Whites would have gained in economic value, they would have lost in symbolic value; and it is the [symbolic value] which structures the libidinal economy of civil society." In other words, the symbolic costs of Europeans enslaving other Europeans would have been too great. Instead, they went to Africa for their slaves, even though the financial cost of doing so was much, much greater. The radical left doesn't make this distinction. Cornel West and Tavis Smiley say they want to organize a new Poor People's Campaign, but they won't be able to explain why this is a failed project from the start. This is because they won't think about the aspects of coalition building that have nothing to do with money or the lack of money. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the so-called "Reagan Democrats" were poor and working-class white people, many of them in unions, who voted overwhelmingly for Reagan against their own economic interest. The white left mistakenly thinks about the Reagan Democrats as people who were duped. They view them as an example of what Marx called "false consciousness" and they see it as their duty to inform the white poor and working class of why they should vote left. But there were all kinds of signs that white poor and working-class folks simply hated black people and didn't want to live anywhere that there was a large community of black people, even if those black people are of the same or higher socioeconomic status. The Reagan Democrats were excited by Reagan's antiblack rhetoric of law and order, a rhetoric that was in response against the activities of the Black Liberation Army, Weather Underground, Black Panthers, and Black Guerilla Family. Marxists think a person is in a state of false consciousness if her political or social interests go another way than her material or financial interests. If you adopt this view, then you probably think that the Reagan Democrats just need to be educated correctly about what they have in common with the black poor and working class. You have to think that their hatred of black people is somehow "false" simply because it runs counter to their financial interests. But this would be to ignore their interest in maintaining white supremacy and antiblack racism. One of the things white men would lose would be access to black bodies for sexual pleasure and amusement. These examples are not just isolated cases of false consciousness, ignorance, media manipulation, or some mystical thing called "prejudice." They are all of those things, but they are also something much, much greater that any student of struggle needs to be aware of. These examples reveal the contours of an economy of desires that is not primarily concerned with money. It's not that the political economy isn't also antiblack. In fact, both economies are antiblack.

#### Social death is phenomenologically, psychoanalytically, and structurally crystallized as the paradigmatic positionality of black existence—their statistics are a unique link.

Mubimurusoke, 22—Intercollegiate Department of Africana Studies, Claremont McKenna College (Mukasa, “Extra-ordinary Black Vulnerability,” *Black Hospitality*, 33-73, SpringerLink, dml)

To say the intervention of afropessimism has been contentious, for both black studies and the general public, would be an understatement. The reviews of Frank Wilderson’s latest work alone express a kind of resentment that is so sharp it’s hard not to believe that these writers did not interpret Wilderson’s work as a hand sealed personal condemnation of their livelihood (McCarthy 2020) (Cunningham 2020). These reviews are often written with a semi-performative defiance of Wilderson’s contention about their ‘social death’, but what cannot go overlooked in these types of responses is that even in their avowed defiance these reviewers cannot escape the political ontology that locates them on the other side, as opposed to the other end, of humanity. These reviews are written from an experience the reviewers often feel can approximate the experience of their apparent fellows, but Wilderson is concerned with the metanarrative of structural positionalities and not the performative capacities perceived in everyday existential experiences or personal expression. Wilderson is not challenging how they may feel from day to day, but what they are, or are not, in the grand scheme of things that exceeds performative political gestures through an extra-ordinary vulnerability.4

The distinction between the performance of blackness and its ontological status that motivates Wilderson builds primarily from the term social death, originally attributed to Orlando Patterson. The term has been adopted and deployed by many to describe the depraved or degraded status of persons under conditions of oppression. Wilderson adopts the definitional components of naked (gratuitous) violence, natal alienation, and dishonor from Patterson, but interprets them beyond certain ontic conditions—where, for instance, for Patterson anyone may become a slave—to a specifically black ontological paradigm that is crystallized phenomenologically and psychoanalytically in the work of Frantz Fanon and the interpretations of his work by David Marriott. Wilderson also takes up Hortense Spillers psychoanalytic framing and vocabulary of a foundational grammar of suffering that reoccurs indefinitely through a violation of the flesh over against a grammar of freedom of the body. Additionally, he builds off Saidiya Hartman—who also has Spillers, Patterson, and Fanon in mind—by replacing the terms of human degradation with logics of the object of commodification, whereby black social death is better conceived in terms of fungibility and accumulation instead of exploitation and alienation. Wilderson conceives the continuity and coalition of these black theorists—and others—to paint the picture of a black existence that demands an entire reimagining of the political through the lens of extra-ordinary vulnerability in three registers that will be explicated in the rest of this chapter: discursively, materially, and psychically.

Beginning at the discursive level, Wilderson’s discussions of black social death offers his readers a number of different perspectives and occasions to recognize the fundamental nature of this paradigmatic condition: from movies and theater, from political to social movements, from domestic to international understandings of blackness. In all these arenas, he remains steadfast in his analysis of the terms of social death as excessive to the limits of their restrictive economies. To reach the level of paradigmatic political positionality, he stresses the separation of the identity formations and performative gestures we may attribute to black people uniquely, or that they may even share with other groups, from the ontological or paradigmatic that overdetermines their stature as fungible, accumulative, and abject. In the essay “End of Redemption,” he states it bluntly:

Blackness is social death, which is to say that there was never a proper meta-moment of plentitude, never a moment of equilibrium, never a moment of social life. Blackness as a paradigmatic position (rather than as an ensemble of identities, cultural practices, or anthropological accoutrement), cannot be disimbricated from slavery. The narrative arc of the slave who is Black (unlike Orlando Patterson’s generic slave who may be of any race) is not an arc at all, but a flat line, what Hortense Spillers calls ‘historical stillness”: a flat line that ‘moves’ from disequilibrium to a moment in the narrative of faux equilibrium, to disequilibrium restored and/or rearticulated. (Wilderson III, Afro-Pessimism and the End of Redemption 2016)

There are two things to note. First, his contention that blackness is a paradigmatic position often is overlooked or misrepresented. Here he is insisting that the qualities we attribute to the performance of blackness, the unique ‘cultural practices’ or ‘anthropological accoutrement’ that one may recognize as contributing to what it means to be black—for example, black music or other cultural performances—are not definitive of the ontological or paradigmatic position of blackness. This is not to say they are completely distinct, but they are not essential and also cannot be separated, or ‘disimbricated’, from the structural foundation of white civil society as its negation. This is to say blackness cannot be separated from the structural position of ‘the Slave’. Of course, this does not mean blacks in contemporary society are subject to or the object of the same types of violence of chattel slavery, but their metaphysical role in the formation of the political world remains the same. Just as the proletariat who is not forced to work 80 hours or who attains healthcare and vacation days, is still the laborer and not the capitalist, the black sharecropper, prisoner, or CEO (or President!) is still in the metaphysical position of ‘the Slave’ and as such is discursively illegible at the level of political ontology, falling rather into the general economy of white supremacy.

We need only to recall the insistent fashion in which President Obama and his wife Michelle Obama—despite or perhaps in light of his office—had been hailed in terms of abject blackness through images of primates, to realize how their political agency was rendered illegitimate or simply illegible despite his properly America political behavior of, for instance, ordering drone strikes in the Middle East and being scornful of ‘absentee’ black fathers. We can describe this illegibility as extra-ordinary insofar as it exceeds the general level of discourse of an accepted humanism, while at the same time appearing banal, as an everyday regular preoccupation with the affective assertion of white supremacy. In other words, these images and the language of dehumanization supersede the discourse of the human and appeal to the paradigmatic black abjectness as cursed existence, regardless of President Obama’s performance (queue ‘Amazing Grace’) as the highest political agent in the land.

The second thing to note in Wilderson’s passage is that this ‘flat line’ or ‘historical stillness’ in the ‘narrative arc’ of ‘the Slave’ serves as another axis in the description of social death. For some the diachronic narrative arc of black life, particularly in America, projects a trajectory of increasing freedom. This would entail some initial point of coherence or equilibrium that is forgotten through violence and displacement only to be returned to, perhaps in a new light. This may be the narrative of Pan-Africanism, a return to the motherland with a newfound unity, or black liberalism, a return to foundations of American equality and fraternity; that is, ‘the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.’ However, these are false narratives, since with the creation of blackness any original equilibrium was eliminated. ‘Africa’ did not exist prior to European invasion and there is no ‘Africa’ or land of the free (for black people) to return to. With no place to retreat, the contours of a legible vulnerability are imagined with Pan-Africanism, but they are ultimately destroyed, since underneath these restricted conversations, there is no place or time that does not fall victim to the extra-ordinary vulnerability of its destruction by white supremacist disregard and/as destruction.

Instead, what we witness with different black political ‘movements’—the implication of motion can only be metaphorical at the paradigmatic level—is a historical stillness. Imagined equilibrium with moments like emancipation, the civil rights legislation, or decolonization only unveil the persistence of disequilibrium. There is no actual movement, or arc, in this historical narrative; no point of reference to imagine a newness as long as black people remain in the paradigmatic, ontological position of ‘the Slave’. How else does one come to understand the practically rote action and reactions to spectacular violence against black people—death, protests, deceptive or limited legislation,Footnote5 and repeat—if not the historical stillness of the black story; where history instead appears to be an eerily persistent and placid backdrop that exceeds all narrative possibilities? Sexton’s rubric of the general and restricted economies is translated into historiographical terms, whereby non-black political movements participate in restricted economies that contribute and participate in the story of the redemptive human; meanwhile, black narratives have no stable foundation against which to project such a narrative; instead, they are overwhelmed by the excesses of force of the white supremacist general economy that destroys narrative capacities. To further elaborate, the uniqueness of black social death via Orlando Patterson’s concepts, Wilderson explains on the next page:

Patterson’s three constituent elements of slavery—naked (or gratuitous) violence, general dishonor, and natal alienation—make the temporal and spatial logic of the entity and of setting untenable, impossible to conceive (as in birth) and/or conceive of (as in assume any coherence). The violence of slavery is not precipitated as a result of any transgression that can be turned into an event (which is why I have argued that this violence is gratuitous, not contingent); dishonor embodied by the slave is not a function of an event either; his or her dishonor is general, as Patterson writes, or as David Marriott has argued, it is best understood as abjection rather than degradation (the latter implies transition); and since a slave is natally alienated, s/he is never an entity in the meta-narrative genealogy. (Wilderson III 2016)

With Wilderson’s elaborations of Patterson’s elements of slavery in these terms of narrative and event we arrive at a clearer sense of what they entail: these elements are not based on any contingent relationship to the violation of the human story, instead they mark the permanent stature outside of it. In other words, ‘historical stillness’ is maintained because the elements of slavery are not predicated on any form of recognition that justifies their position. There are no events or substantive qualities that circumscribe black identity outside of being black, which must be insistently enforced. Antiblack violence comes from nowhere, everywhere, all the time; their lack of honor not only is an abjection they were born into, but has no origin story, no history—the proverbial Middle Passage and the very real forced miscegenation, territoralization, and one-drop rule obliterated them—and that’s why they cannot be placed in any formal genealogy that can be recognized as such, for Wilderson. Here again we are brought to terms with the extra-ordinary: these three registers of natal alienation, general dishonor, and gratuitous violence explicate the ways in which blackness necessarily exceeds the normal components of forced labor that are horrific but still imply relationality. Blackness emerges from, or recedes into, an ever-present general economy of reproductive material for consumption by white civil society, instead of having the quality of a legible human story with recognizable relations and heritage that confer a sense of origin.

Through these articulations of social death and slavery, we can also see how there is a difference between black social death and the amorphous ‘terrorist’ explored by Butler in Precarious Life. Butler is thorough in her explication of how the designation of people of Middle Eastern descent as ‘dangerous’ (Butler 2004, 76) set them in a precarious position within relation to the law. With the help of classic neo-cons Donald Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney, and John Yoo, this identity was imposed by indefinitely (to this day) suspending standard judicial procedures which entail the horrifying acts of torture and total disregard of civilian life that facilitate the economic control and exploitation of the Middle East. The rendering of Middle Easterners outside of the juridical norms of the United States— that is, as always already criminal and never escaping the status of enemy combatant even after capture and detention—seemingly locates them totally outside of the political and, in a manner, analogous to social death (Butler 2004, 76–79). The tragedy of America and the West’s policy toward the Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Middle Eastern post 9/11 are contemptible; nevertheless, they do not occupy the same condition of black social death.Footnote6 A threat to the American nation is ontologically distinct from a threat to the white political order.

To understand this distinction, we cannot only look at the practices of the state or the devastating reality of the current condition of people terrorized by the state. The question and narrative of national security is set in a different key than “the Negro question” and the security of whiteness. The existence and maintenance of Guantanamo Bay does not address or contest ontological and paradigmatic concerns which Wilderson identifies in the first above quoted passage through the idea of a ‘meta-moment of plentitude’ and in the second one as an ‘event’. The crucial difference is that there is a time and/or place imagined for the ‘terrorist’ in Guantanamo or the immigrant or the European American to return to that indicates a cultural, historical, and positional integrity of humanity, that is, a meta-moment of plenitude, that had been violated in their narrative of subjection as human, an identity that had been upset and that, furthermore, may be returned to and where ‘equilibrium’ can be found again. Such a place or time does not exist for the extra-ordinary condition of black people who exist as “a fatal way of being alive” (Marriott 2000, 15).

The economic exploitation and deathly violence against Middle Easterners belong to a narrative arc where a transgression took place, that is, 9/11 or denial of natural resources and land access, that precipitated their stature as ‘dangerous’. In this narrative arc there is a place that still exists, even if physically under siege now, and time that did and, in the future, may exist from where their heritage may be retrieved and/or flourish. An equilibrium can be returned to after the dehumanizing practices of post- or even pre-9/11 destruction and occupation. Such an equilibrium for the positionality of ‘the Slave’ is not conceivable. In “Gramsci’s Black Marx: Whither the Slave in Civil Society” Wilderson uses the work of J. M. Coetzee to describe an anthropological and historical schema used by Europeans to map the integrity of humanness or proper political subjectivity. In this schema, black data is missing from either the anthropological or the historical axis, which if existent would secure this stature of humanness at the discursive level, but since it is absent, this leads to a crisis or a scandal of being uninterpretable. Other groupings may rely on anthropological categories such as clothing and work or historical categories such as entitlements, sovereignty, or immigration (Wilderson III 2003, 234–237). Black people in America, and across the diaspora, are interpreted as missing signifiers in this discourse and thus are illegible within the human narrative. It is in this sense that black vulnerability is not simply pathogenic by the standards described above and sharable with Middle Easterners, rather their vulnerability is illegible, abject—that is, they have no honor or relationality—and normalizing; thus it is extra-ordinary. The constellations of human agency are not diverted or deferred and there’s not simply a ‘sense of powerlessness’ that may be corrected or reoriented. The Slave does and must occupy a structural position without any imaginable recursion to political agency in order for the human identity to live on in strength or peril. Adjacent to the sun of Bataille’s general economic cosmology, blackness emerges from the black hole of white supremacy, which is imperceptible and ultimately unknowable, but nevertheless fuels the cosmological order of the human universe.Footnote7

Now it may also be prudent to emphasize how Wilderson makes a strategic departure from Patterson to identify a crucial distinction in terms of slavery. While Patterson innovatively recognizes that slavery is not reducible to forced labor—the labor you may find also as an indentured servant or even as a contractor in sports—but is structural, he also understands the position of slavery as social death to be applicable to anyone who may, for instance, become a prisoner of war—for example, the prisoners of Guantanamo Bay—even though the slave as prisoner of war may return physically and/or psychically to a prior plentitude, that is, a legible cultural home. For Wilderson, non-blacks may indeed experience slavery, but it is not a constitutive event for their identity or for their narrative. They have the advantage of the capacity to conjure a reason for the violence perpetrated against them that led to their oppression, servitude, or even slavery as the reaction to a performative transgression of normative expectations, even if this transgression is outside of their own cognitive and practical cultural formation.Footnote8 The conditions of black social death prohibit such a coherent formation in as much as it remains in its structural antagonism with the human or white civil society as incoherent, illegible, abject and thus always under the thumb of white civil society by prohibiting any sort of imaginative coherence or semblance of freedom.Footnote9

These examples illustrate the underlying extra-ordinary affective investment by white civil society in its libidinal economy and they can save one from being led too far astray by relying upon another red herring: the tragically true but ultimately misleading accumulation of facts and stats of black abject life. Inasmuch as the facts and corresponding events of black life are discursively approximated—for example, police violence, prison statistics, homelessness rates, the wage gap, and the performative gestures of blacks in responses, for example, public mourning and protest—they do not necessarily get to the excessive affective economy and, therefore, Wilderson maintains that the problem is beyond the expression of language or as he professes in another essay, and just as poignantly, “taxonomy can itemize atrocities but cannot bear witness to suffering.” The ‘grammar of suffering’ that organizes black social death remains opaque at a discursive level, that is, the semiotics of the human, but it subtends the positionality of the black slave, or the ‘position of the unthought.’ Many people may want to compare the quantitative overlap of black tragic facts with those of the poor, and indeed there is overlap, but the coincidence of these facts and atrocities does not get to the fundamental level of black vulnerability that exceeds restrictive articulations. The lists of atrocities, while undeniable and horrific, rely on numbers and data that confuse this violence for a violation of the human that does not extend to black people and thus they divert attention from the affective comfort and security that antiblackness calls forth in a way that literally vitalizes white civil society even if it cannot be spoken of coherently and exceeds rationality.

The transatlantic slave trade, the Maafa, the Berlin Conference, the State of the Unions, had and continue work in the transformation of ‘Africans into blacks’ over against the human and as such forbid narratives of return to a political ‘home’—even the memory of a home—that has not been transmogrified by the shadow of blackness.Footnote10 Under these conditions, how can black vulnerability be legible in any political terms? With no humanity to return to, black people are extra-ordinarily vulnerable and open to violation from a general economy; they have no sanctuary literal or imagined, just a black hole. Experiencing a ‘sense of powerlessness’ or lack of autonomy makes sense only in terms of degradation, not in terms of complete illegibility and abjection. It is literal open season, and not simply for death, but in as much as blackness plays a constitutive role, black people’s vulnerability also becomes the non-discursive backdrop for which white civil society can write their own story and, therefore, complete annihilation would be undesirable. Whether it be a trip to the Heart of Darkness or the Caribbean and New Orleans, c.f. Faulkner’s Absalom, Absalom!, or to the largest protests in American history, blackness is the framework for white civil society’s coming of age; forever illegible because it comes from the illogical general economy of vulnerability found in the excessive resources of the libidinal economy.11

#### The Loy evidence proves this. It claims Buddhist embracement of impermanence can craft solutions to overcome the psyche but that is always already a failed project.

Loy 08 (David R., former Besl Professor of Ethics/Religion and Society at Xavier University, teacher in Sanbo Kyodan Buddhism, Money, Sex, War, Karma: Notes for a Buddhist Revolution, 2008, p. 145-149)

Impermanence and Emptiness. These two Buddhist principles have special implications for social transformation. Nothing has any substantiality of its own, because everything is related to everything else and changes as they change. Impermanence means that no problem is intractable since it is part of larger processes that are constantly evolving, whether or not we notice. My generation grew up during a Cold War that would never end, until suddenly it did. Apartheid in South Africa seemed inflexible and implacable, but below the surface tectonic plates were gradually shifting and one day that political [END PAGE 145] system collapsed. These characteristics are not always encouraging: things can slowly worsen too, and solutions as well as problems are impermanent. It depends on us to understand how things are changing and how to respond to those changes.

That highlights two other principles connected with impermanence and nonsubstantiality: non-dogmatism and upaya, “skillful means.” Shakyamuni Buddha's own flexibility and Buddhism's lack of dependence upon any fixed ideology implies the pragmatism of praxis. We build whatever raft will work to ferry us to the other shore, and once there we don't carry it around on our backs. Nonattachment allows for the openness and receptivity which awaken upaya: imaginative solutions that leap outside the ruts our minds usually circle in.

Everything up to this point has been about means rather than ends: what Buddhism implies about how to engage rather than what to engage with. What should socially engaged Buddhists focus on? There are so many problems that we don't know where to start.

Whenever we try to address one, we soon realize that it is only one aspect of a larger set of issues. The absurdity of drug ads on television and in magazines ("Ask your doctor to prescribe ... ") is connected with other distortions introduced into medical practice by pharmaceutical companies, which in turn cannot be understood apart from the outrageous price of many medications, which contributes to the ridiculous cost of medical care, which is in large part a consequence of our disgraceful lack of a national health care system, which is certainly related to the lobbying power of insurance and pharmaceutical companies, which is one example of the more general problem of corporate influence on government, and so forth. Another obvious chain or constellation that comes to mind includes poor public transport, addiction to oil, global warming, weapon manufacturers, military aggression leading to more hatred [END PAGE 146] and more terrorism, unprecedented federal deficits that affect all other funding, etc. A constellation that starts with consumerism could cover many pages.

All these relationships can be discouraging, insofar as they reinforce each other. However, not all linkages are equal and some factors are more important than others, which encourages us to look for the heart of the problem. The heart is a relatively small organ, but if it stops beating then what the rest of the body does makes no difference. To unpack the point of this analogy, I offer a cautionary tale from the mystic East.

I taught in a Japanese university for many years and, despite some fine colleagues, it taught me to loathe Japan's educational system. It's better described as an examination system, for that is the sole concern of the whole process. The main thing students learn from it is to hate studying, which mostly involves memorizing for multiple- choice questions; the exams do not usually include an essay, which means that students do not need to bother learning how to write, which also means that they do not learn how to think. By the time they get to university many of them are exhausted, if not functionally brain-dead, and university is generally accepted as a time to relax and enjoy oneself, rather than an opportunity to stretch and develop oneself in new ways. Academic standards are quite low and it is difficult to flunk out, because that would reflect back negatively on the university itself.

The consequences of this unfortunate system for many millions of bright young people, and for Japanese society as a whole, are tragic. Nevertheless, it would be easy to change. The focus is entirely on university entrance exams, and each university sets its own. There is also a strict hierarchy accepted by everyone: Tokyo University is the most prestigious, followed by Kyoto University, and so on in a recognized order. This means that if a dozen of the best universities reformed their admissions policies, other universities would soon [END PAGE 147] feel compelled to follow their example, and Japan's whole educational system would re-structure to meet the new criteria. Why hasn't this happened? Despite a few gestures in that direction, the politicians and bureaucrats who supervise this system are more or less comfortable with it, and juku cram schools find it quite profitable. While some grumble, the basic problem with changing it is that most people now take it for granted.

The point of this story is the importance of locating the heart of a problem-which may be something we have learned to take for granted-and focusing on that. Is there something comparable for socially engaged Buddhists in the West to focus on? Is there a "black hole" at the core of the constellations mentioned above? I conclude with a reflection that also amounts to a suggestion.

Of course, the most important issue of all, and the context for all others, is ecological: global climate-change along with many less obvious human impacts on the biosphere that sustains us. We must do whatever we can, in alliance with others, but I suspect that Buddhism has little distinctive to offer in the short run, except for emphasizing less dualistic ways of thinking as an alternative to the worldviews that got us into this mess. We are now collectively at the point where everyone knows the direction we need to move in. The question is whether there is the political and economic will to do so.

Because of the widespread and palpable suffering it involves, and all its other deplorable repercussions, it is also essential that those of us living in the United States find ways to challenge American militarism in general and our Middle East foreign policy in particular. Since the political system has become so corrupt, perhaps the best place to direct our energies is military personnel themselves, to inform them about Buddhism and nonviolence, including non-cooperation with the war machine. We also need to challenge recruitment practices, especially in schools. Such programs would draw on our strength: education, reflection, perhaps instruction in meditation for those who [END PAGE 148] ask for it. Members of the military—especially those in the lower ranks—already know a lot about the first noble truth. During the Vietnam War draft resistance and other forms of nonviolent but illegal protest played an important role in eventually ending the war. Similar actions may again become appropriate, or necessary.

Despite the importance of confronting militarism and ecological breakdown, however, I wonder if it would be better for socially engaged Buddhism to place top priority on something else, which would indirectly address those other two issues as well.

According to Buddhist teachings the solution to dukkha involves liberating one's awareness from the places it gets stuck. If the same is true socially—if our collective dukkha is due to our collective attachments—Buddhism may have a distinctive role to play in emphasizing the places where our collective awareness has become trapped, and showing how to liberate our awareness from those traps. To say it again, any such liberation calls for personal spiritual practice as well, but we also need to recognize and confront the institutionalized ways in which collective awareness traps have taken on a life of their own.