## 1NC --- Kritik

### Kritik

#### 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 black people. 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?

#### They explain their aff as “creative act,” a “resistance,” a “rupture”--- this cultivation of agency does nothing but fuel their ability to advance as fully human within civil society —celebrating details and the ability to find fissures or ruptures in the fabric of a fundamentally bankrupt society is not subversive—it is complicit—the 1AC only displaces the organized violence of captivity

Sexton 8 (Jared Sexton, Director of African American Studies at UC Irvine, 2008, “Amalgamation Schemes: Antiblackness and the Critique of Multiracialism”, pages 111-114)

FYI: Randall Kennedy is “one of the first black scholars in this generation to pen a sustained argument advocating what he terms ‘a cosmopolitan ethos that welcomes the prospect of genuine, loving interracial intimacy’ ” (page 107-108)

In response to the last question, we examine several comments from Kennedy’s opening chapter, “In the Age of Slavery.” As noted, Kennedy is at pains to counter the claims of a certain black feminist history regarding the “extremity of power” exercised by the slaveholder and “the absolute submission required of the slave” (Hartman, quoted in Kennedy 2003, 532fn11). He is, in other words, attempting to demonstrate, or at least to speculate upon, the limits of the slave system’s power of domination. Beyond this limit—whose locus proves frustratingly obscure—the agency of the slave herself was, we are told, able to affect significantly the conditions of captivity to alternate ends. Kennedy, in other words, proffers a narrative in which evidence of agency (evidence, that is, confirming an assumption of agency), however circumscribed or practically ineffective, is taken as a sign of resistance. More properly, this is a narrative of resistant affection, an insistence that the dehumanizing social order of racial slavery was unable to achieve its ultimate goal—“the absolute submission of the slave”—because it could not overcome the irresistible force of affection between men and women, “regardless of color.” done, a human is still a human, as it were, and the family romance of normative heterosexuality persists “even within” hierarchies that preclude for the captive all of the recognizable (social, political, economic, cultural, legal) trappings of “human being” in the modern sense. Here is Kennedy: The slave system failed, however, to perfect the domination that [ Judge Thomas] Ruffin envisioned. It failed to bind the slaves so tightly as to deprive them of all room to maneuver. It failed to wring from them all prohibited yearnings. Slavery was, to be sure, a horribly oppressive system that severely restricted the ambit within which its victims could make decisions. But slavery did not extinguish altogether the possibility of choice. (43) We might ask, what is the minimum ambit of decision making? What sort of system, if not slavery, would bind one so tightly as to deprive one of all “room to maneuver”? Need a system of domination be “perfect” in order for it to be legally binding or socially effective or politically determinant? Need the captive body be deprived of all room to maneuver for the situation to be considered one of extremity? Need the yearnings of slaves be wrung entirely from them for their prohibition to be considered a constitutive element of life? At what point does the quantitative measure of the slave’s bondage become difference of a qualitative sort? What precisely is the “choice” available under slavery, and is it one worthy of belaboring, one whose sphere of influence is to be considered newsworthy? To put a finer point on it, why is the categorical discrepancy refused between the free and the enslaved, or more specifically, between the slave and the slaveholder? Is such refusal not tantamount to denying the very existence of slavery as a system that produced slaves rather than free people whose freedom was simply “severely restricted” or whose power was simply “severely limited” or who simply faced “difficult situations”? Kennedy continues: Bondage severely limited the power—including the sexual power—of slaves. But it did not wholly erase their capacity to attract and shape affectionate, erotic attachments of all sorts, including interracial ones. In a hard-to-quantify but substantial number of cases, feelings of affection and attachment between white male masters and their black female slaves somehow survived slavery’s deadening influence. The great difficulty, in any particular instance, lies in determining whether sex between a male master and a female slave was an expression of sexual autonomy or an act of unwanted sex. The truth is that most often we cannot know for sure, since there exists little direct testimony from those involved, especially the enslaved women. (44) The inability to quantify the “number of cases” or, indeed, to “know for sure” anything about them does not prevent the author from considering them nonetheless “substantial,” and the paucity of direct testimony,6 “especially [from] the enslaved women,” does not stop the author from extrapolating wildly about said “feelings of affection and attachment” between them and their “white male masters.” In fact, it is the void in its place—the great historic silence—that enables both the reiteration of longstanding alibis for white male sexual violence—what Hartman (1997) discusses skillfully as the “ruses of seduction”—and the projection of this newfangled, though no less menacing, story about a maverick interracial intimacy that, almost undetectably, undermines the injunctions of white supremacy, serving not only as a sign of agency for enslaved women but a moment of their resistance as well. Their “sexual power” is expressed as the “capacity to attract”—and “somehow” to manipulate—the erotic attachments of white male slaveholders. There is here an unsubtle shift in terms: agency is not in itself subversive; indeed, the entire slave system derives, in large part, from the agency of the enslaved (its capture, manipulation, redeployment, etc.) (Chandler 2000). Agency may be resistant or complicit or both, and it may or may not have practical effects in the world; all of this can only be determined contextually. Much more troubling than Kennedy’s imprecision here, however, is his entirely uncritical suggestion about the “sexual power” of slaves. Is not one of the principal conceits of power to suggest that though the dominant may monopolize power political, economic, and social, the dominated nonetheless enjoy a wily aptitude for “getting their way” by other means, namely, the ars erotica of seduction? Is not one of the most pernicious elements of the proslavery discourse that the “attractiveness” of enslaved black women presents a threat of corruption to civilized white manhood and/or an internal guarantee against the excesses of state-sanctioned violence reserved for white slaveholders? The same quality that served as temptation was also, or alternately, taken to be that which would forestall the descent of slaveholding into unrestrained brutality, an essential rationalization for the upholding of white (male) impunity toward blacks, whether enslaved or nominally “free” (Hartman 1997).7 Finally, was not the suggestion that enslaved black men might have the power to seduce white women (whether free or, in earlier periods, indentured) one of the prime alibis for the construction of regulatory or prohibitory statutes around interracial marriage and sexual relations from the seventeenth century onward (Bardaglio 1999)? In each case, the focus on the “sexual power” of slaves was undoubtedly a displacement of the organized violence consistently required of captivity and, further, a dissimulation of the institutionalized sexual power of slaveholders in particular (whose authority not only foreclosed the possibility of prosecution and militated against the extralegal reprisals but also contributed immeasurably to their “capacity to attract and shape affectionate, erotic attachments of all kinds.” The asymmetry here approaches the incommensurable—how, after all, would a slave go on to “court” a master? How would such an exercise in self-objectification, supplementing structural availability with an affirmation of “willingness,” rightly be called power?). This is no less the case simply because for Kennedy the “sexual power” of slaves is something to honor or celebrate rather than to fear.

#### Their assertion in ANON 18 that biopolitics is the organizing logic of contemporary violence is based off of a Eurocentric Foucaultian analysis that masks the racialized torture of incarceration.

Rodriguez 2006 [Dylan, Professor and Chair of the Department of Ethnic Studies at UC Riverside, *Forced Passages* pages 170-171]

The prison regime’s twinned technologies of immobilization and bodily disintegration depart drastically from the virtual and technically disembodied disciplinary technologies of Bentham’s Panopticon or Foucault’s biopolitical carceral, whose Eurocentric regimes pivot on the relative absence or infrequent physical application of direct bodily coercion and punishment. The technology of the current punitive carceral entails a constant, state-structured application of physical and psychological violence, a vectoring of coercion that generally exceeds conventional notions of torture, encompassing a profoundly sophisticated form of subjection that constantly reshapes the imprisoned body’s form, content, and context. Political prisoner Janet Hollaway Africa, imprisoned since 1978 as one of the MOVE Nine, elaborates how the bodily passage into this relation of direct violence melts away the juridical formality of “the prison,” establishing the political premises for an abolitionist or antisystemic practice.

#### Their conception of power and discipline places erasure on non-white individuals and communities by universalizing operations of power on white bodies as some sort of all incorporating narrative of experience, rendering invisible entire histories of white supremacist slaughter.

Joy James 1996 [Resisting State Violence p. 24-25]

Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* offers a body politics of state punishment and prosecution that is considered by some postmodernists to be a master narrative competent to critique contemporary state policing. Yet this particular work contributes to the erasure of racist violence. In respect to U.S. policing and punishment, the metanarrative of *Discipline and Punish* vanquishes historical and contemporary racialized terror, punishments, and control in the United States; it therefore distorts and obscures violence in America in general. By examining erasure in body politics, lynching, and policing; penal executions and torture; and terror in U.S. foreign policy— issues that Foucault overlooks in his discussion of the history of policing in the United States—we find visceral spectacles of state abuse. *Erasure in Body Politics* Writing about the "disappearance of torture as a public spectacle"—with no reference to its continuity in European and American colonies where it was inflicted on indigenous peoples in Africa and the Americas—Foucault weaves a historical perspective that eventually presents the contemporary ("Western") state as a nonpractitioner of torture.*1* His text illustrates how easy it is to erase the specificity of the body and violence while centering discourse on them. Losing sight of the violence practiced by and in the name of the sovereign, who at times was manifested as part of a dominant race, Foucault universalizes the body of the white, propertied male. Much of *Discipline and Punish* depicts the body with no specificity tied to racialized or sexualized punishment. The resulting veneer of bourgeois respectability painted over state repression elides racist violence against black and brown and red bodies. Foucault states that the "historical moment of the disciplines was the moment when an art of the human body was born" (137). Failing to concretize this "art of the human body," he leaves unaddressed these questions: which body serves as prototype? Who bore this representative model or type? Ostensibly talking about the body while ignoring its uniqueness, Foucault explores issues of policing that are restricted to behavior. If one asserts that the "introduction of the 'biographical' is important in the history of penalty. . . . Because it establishes the 'criminal' as existing before the crime and even outside it" (252), one might also note that the biographical is intricately tied to the biological—that is, the "criminal" is identified not only by his or her act but also by his or her appearance.2 Consider how Foucault's discussion of nonconformity as offense masks the body: What is specific to the disciplinary penalty is non-observance, that which does not measure up to the rule, that departs from it. The whole indefinite domain of the non-conforming is punishable: the soldier commits an "offence" whenever he does not reach the level required; a pupil's "offence" is not only a minor infraction, but also an inability to carry out his tasks. (178-79) Nonobservance and nonconformity are often understood as biologically determined, given that the departure from the norm shows up not only in behavior but visually in terms of physical characteristics that are racialized. Foucault's exclusive focus on actions suggests undifferentiated bodies. Physical appearance, however, can be considered an expression of either conformity or rebellion. Because some bodies fail to conform physiologically, different bodies are expected and are therefore required to behave differently under state or police gaze. Greater obedience is demanded from those whose physical difference marks them as aberrational, offensive, or threatening. Conversely, some bodies appear more docile than others because of their conformity in appearance to idealized models of class, color, and sex; their bodies are allowed greater leeway to be self-policed or policed without physical force. To illustrate: a white male executive in an Armani suit is considered more docile, civilized, and in need of less invasive, coercive policing than a black male youth in a hooded sweatshirt and off-the-hip baggy jeans. (In contrast, white youths who racially cross-dress— with baseball caps turned backwards, "X" t-shirts, low-riding pants—are generally not aggressively targeted by police who distinguish between fashion consumerism and racial membership.) Noting how physique is constructed as a marker for deviancy and criminality, Frantz Fanon writes in "The Negro and Psychopathology" that the "Negro symbolizes the biological danger. . . . To suffer from a phobia of Negroes is to be afraid of the biological." 3 To fear the black is to fear the body; conversely, to revere the black is to idealize the body. Foucault writes of social fear and policing that are reflected in "binary division and branding," which produces the polarized social entities of the "mad/sane; dangerous/harmless; normal/abnormal"; this "coercive assignment" of labeling, categorizing, and identifying places the individual under "constant surveillance" (199). Foucault, however, makes no mention of sexual and racial binary oppositions to designate social inferiority and deviancy as biologically inscribed on the bodies of nonmales or nonwhites. Therefore, when he reports in *Discipline and Punish* that "the mechanisms of power" are organized "around the abnormal individual, to brand him and to alter him," racial and sexual issues are evaded (199-200). To write that these mechanisms of dominance rely on the panopticism produced by the disciplinary and exclusionary practices for the "arrest of the plague" and the "exile of the leper" (which for Foucault respectively represent the dreams of a "disciplined society" and a "pure community") without considering the role of race in the formation of that disciplined society and pure community is to see the United States through blinders (198). In racialized societies such as the United States, the plague of criminality, deviancy, immorality, and corruption is embodied in the black because both sexual and social pathology are branded by skin color (as well as by gender and sexual orientation). Where the plague and the leper are codified in the black, for instance, the dreams and desires of a society and state will be centered on the control of the black body. Binary oppositions and panopticism will thereby be racialized. In binary opposition, antiblack racism has played a critical, historical role in rationalizing (and inverting) hierarchies of oppressor and oppressed: crazy/sane, dangerous/harmless, and normal/deviant. Foucault ignores this phenomenon, while other theorists such as Frantz Fanon and Sander Gilman explore it. Panopticism and the policing gaze are also informed by racial and sexual bias; the tools for observation and examination that Foucault delineates are constructed within worldviews influenced by racial and sexual mythologies and political ideologies that guide carceral testing. Foucault's *carceral* refers to a network of regimentation and discipline, a prison without walls in turn made up of social networks for surveillance.

#### Only the alternative’s unflinching interrogation into the continual enslavement of blackness can overcome the failures of past, present, and future systems of reform that describe enslavement as a contingent event and not a flat lined existence.

Wilderson 20 [Frank B. Wilderson, professor of Drama and African American studies at the University of California, Irvine, “Afropessimism”, page 100-104, JMH]

When in Dr. Zhou’s office, Stella had said, “What’s the matter, Frank? Are you afraid we’ll tarnish your father’s reputation?” she had put her finger on the pulse of a desire to be special that beat inside my heart. In my unconscious I wanted to latch on to an element of Whiteness, or Humanness (since Dr. Zhou wasn’t White), that would set me apart from other Blacks. But this desire was deeper than Stella or I suspected at the time. An unconscious wish for my father’s prestige (which was as faux as the prestige Solomon thought he had accrued from his skills as an engineer and his talents as a musician) to seep into my being by osmosis. I had dropped his name to get us the appointment. I would drop his name in the weeks and months to come to open other doors as well. This kind of reasoning is universal. But what is not universal, what belongs to Black people and Black people alone, is a deeper desire sparked by a deeper structure of oppression**. When you intuit for the first time in your life that you live in a soup of violence that is prelogical,** a kind of violence that is as legitimate if it’s wielded by “ordinary” citizens, such as Josephine, as it is if wielded by sanctioned enforcers of the law, and that your father’s position and prestige are no more the keys to a sanctuary than the position and prestige of someone who is Black and orphaned, **you are faced with two choices: stare unflinchingly at the abyss as it stares unflinchingly at you, or take it out on the Black person near you who won’t leave you to your fantasy of being truly alive.** Anything to not have to face the fact that your sense of presence is no more than “borrowed institutionality.”\* This dynamic, this intra-Black imbroglio, is harder to discern in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, for the simple fact that the personas of the master class are no longer solidified in evil White men and evil White women who wield real whips on a real plantation. The master has been dispersed across the entire racial spectrum of people who are not Black. Dr. Zhou is as much a master as Edwin and Mary Epps, the antagonists in *12 Years a Slave*. In fact, the twentieth century shot the Eppses through a prism—they are not just people, they are ideas. They are ideas and personas that a young middle-class Black man like me had consciously fought against to the point of being kicked out of college, while deep in my unconscious I was a loyal supplicant who cared more about not simply the master’s feelings, but the stability of the master’s world, than I did about my own suffering and the suffering of Stella. It is hard to be a slave and feel that you are worthy, truly worthy, of your suffering as a slave. One hundred twenty-seven years before Josephine, before Cody, before Urban Risers, and before Dr. Zhou, the riff between Stella and me would have been clearer to see. We wouldn’t have walked home in symptomatic silence; our discord would have been played out in the open. At times, Stella would throw her sense of herself as a being from a special, quasi-Black dimension at me the way I threw my father’s status and my Dartmouth pedigree at her. She would let me know of the competence exhibited by the White men she had been with and the Jew she had married; she held them up as object lessons that I could never be or learn. That’s how most Black couples fight and argue, by firing White and non-Black people at each other. No, it’s more subtle than that. The bullets aren’t the White or non-Black people themselves but the ambience of recognition and incorporation in a world beyond the plantation. **We load our guns with deadly intangibles and shoot straight for the heart. Anyone who thinks nineteenth century slave narratives are reports on the past isn’t paying attention.** **Such a person will experience the analysis of Afropessimism as though they are being mugged, rather than enlightened; that is because they can’t imagine a plantation in the here and now.** But Afropessimism is premised on a comprehensive and iconoclastic claim: **that Blackness is coterminous with Slaveness: Blackness is social death**: which is to say that **there was never a prior metamoment of plenitude, never equilibrium: never a moment of social life**. Blackness, as a paradigmatic position (rather than as a set of cultural practices, anthropological accoutrements**) is elaborated through 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.** This kind of change, the transformative promise of a narrative arc, belongs to White men and their junior partners in civil society (non-Black immigrants, White and non-Black people who are queer, and non-Black women) but only in relation to each other. By transformative capacity I mean that, through struggle, non-citizens (in the legal and libidinal sense of the word—legal being Latinx undocumented immigrants, for example, and libidinal being anyone from a documented immigrant of color to a gay person to a nonBlack woman) can become citizens, because they are still Human; they are simply oppressed and therefore not so fully vested. But their transformative capacity stems not from their positive attributes but from the fact that they are not Black, they are not slaves. These fully vested citizens and not-so-fully vested citizens live through intra-communal narrative arcs of transformation; but where the Black is concerned, their collective unconscious calls upon Blacks as props, which they harness as necessary implements to help bring about their psychic and social transformation, and to vouchsafe the coherence of their own Human subjectivity. Nevertheless, the slave is a sentient being. Therefore, an existence void of transformative promise, which narrative holds out to human subjects, is a painful lesson for the slave to learn, much less accept. **I am not suggesting that Black people should resign themselves to the inevitability of social death—it is inevitable, in the sense that one is born into social death just as one is born into a gender or a class; but it is also constructed by the violence and imagination of other sentient beings**. Thus, like class and gender, which are also constructs, not divine designations, **social death can be destroyed. But the first step toward the destruction is to assume one’s position** (assume, not celebrate or disavow), and **then burn the ship or the plantation, in its past and present incarnations, from the inside out**. However, as Black people we are often psychically unable and unwilling to assume this position. This is as understandable as it is impossible. I was a lot like that when I met Stella. Stella was skeptical about the willingness of the FBI to help us unravel the skeins of aggression that were coming our way (from Josephine and Cody’s violence to the violence of whoever did not want Stella to bring her evidence against Urban Risers to court). Looking back, I realize that I believed that my father had standing in the community, that his position on multiple boards and his vice presidency at the university had somehow imbued us both with Human capacity, the capacity to be recognized and incorporated as something other than Black. I had no idea that the FBI had tracked me for four years, that there was a file on me; nor did it dawn on me that Stella’s social-change activism, especially her civil disobedience against the war and her plethora of counterculture and revolutionary friends, would militate against our being helped. But those aren’t even the fundamental reasons why I should have been skeptical: If the FBI has been tracking Black creative writers since 1919, if the FBI has been constantly updating and revising its list of Black writers earmarked for preventative detention (concentration camps**?),\* if the FBI, like every law enforcement agency in the United States, is organically anti-Black, then where is the line between prison and home?**

## 1NC --- Case

### Presumption—1NC

#### Vote neg on presumption:

#### Inherency. Communist solidarities and desires exist in the status quo, the 1AC already happened and created more, a neg ballot doesn’t snuff them out.

#### Solvency. They don’t disrupt the datafication of debate or education broadly, they’re trying to communicate that communication is impossible, and voting for them definitionally can’t be failure-as-protest because it says they’ve succeeded!

### Cognitive Strike FAils

#### Cognitive strikes are utopian, empirically impotent, and get cracked down on.

Nowak and Gallas, 14—PhD in political science AND Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science, University of Kassel (Jörg and Alexander, “Mass Strikes Against Austerity in Western Europe – A Strategic Assessment,” Global Labour Journal, Vol. 5, No. 3, dml)

The frequency of general strikes during the crisis years surpasses anything seen post-1980: the number of general strikes in the EU-15 plus Norway was 18 between 1980 and 1989, 26 from 1990 to 1999 and 27 between 2000 and 2009 (Hamann et al., 2013). In contrast, there were 38 general strikes in the period between 2010 and May 2014 (own count). The focus of this strike wave is in the five countries with the highest incidence of general strikes since 1980, which are all severely affected by the Eurozone crisis: 19 of these 38 strikes were in Greece, six in Italy, five in Portugal, four in Spain and three in France. In Belgium, there was one general strike in January 2012, the first one since 1984 (ibid.).

But this increase in the incidence of general strikes is no reason for optimism on the side of labour: The context of the wave of general strikes is a long-term decline of the relevance of economic strikes in the same countries. While the average number of strike days per year had been 16.6 per 10,000 employees in 1980-2 for the EU-15 plus Norway, it fell continuously to 1.1 in 2004-6 (Hamann et al., 2013). The strike activity also fell if we consider the share of workers (out of 1,000) on strike: In Western Europe, it plunged from 97 in the 1970s to 67 in the 1980s and 29 in the 1990s (Scheuer, 2006: 148f). In the 2000s, the number went down again, this time to 21 (European Commission, 2011: 46; Vandaele, 2011: 29). In other words, unions were increasingly unable to organise sectoral strikes, which can be explained with the restructuring of work and labour relations in the neoliberal era and its results: the overall decline of industries with a strong union presence; a secular decline of union density; and the fact that many trade unions focussed their strategies on (industrial) core workers, whose numbers also decreased (Vandaele, 2011: 32f.).

The upsurge of general strikes is a consequence of the fact national governments increasingly adopted neoliberal and austerity agendas: welfare state retrenchment moved the terrain of struggle to the political level. Governments curtailed social rights and workers rights, as well as cutting public expenditure. This development gained traction in the course of the global financial and economic crisis when governments started to impose draconian austerity agendas in an authoritarian fashion. This suggests that the increasing popularity of political strikes and general strikes is due to the fact that governments on the whole refused to negotiate with unions when they adopted the politics of austerity.

While the participation in general and political strikes since 2008 was spectacular, they were on the whole unsuccessful. There is not a single case of a government offering substantial concessions after one of the general strikes since 2008. Similarly, there were minor concessions only in one case, the general strike in Belgium in January 2012. This in stark contrast to the period before 2008: Between 1980 and 2011, there were government concessions in 27 of 68 cases (40 per cent; substantial: 8, minor: 19) and no concessions in 41 of 68 cases (60 per cent) (Hamann et al., 2013). Post-2008, one and two day general strikes (and even the fighting strike in France in 2010) were ineffective regarding material concessions. In other words, the class relations of forces in the crisis were unfavourable to labour.

The Limits of Quantitative Analyses

Interpretations of the strike wave since 2008 diverge considerably. Stefan Schmalz and Nico Weinmann argue that there is a trend towards more irregular conflicts and more incoherence between countries compared with the wave of mass strikes from 1968 to 1973 (Schmalz and Weinmann, 2013). Kurt Vandaele contends that there is an increasing convergence between European countries, both in terms of the long term decline of economic strikes (Vandaele, 2011) and the growing significance of political mass strikes (Vandaele, 2013). Gregor Gall also sees a trend towards convergence, which consists in the growing significance of political mass strikes and the emergence of the public sector as the centre of trade union activities (Gall, 2012).

Both Vandaele and Gall highlight that there are limits to quantitative analyses as they have been conducted in the past 30 years, thus questioning to some extent their own approaches. Vandaele implies that if strike action takes place in the public sector, it is not primarily at decreasing profits, but at disrupting everyday life through the suspension of public services. In this context, the number of days not worked, or of workers participating, are not the best indicators for the strength of a stoppage because it is possible to block a service with a small number of workers (Vandaele, 2011: 33). It follows that analyses of labour activism should take on board qualitative factors in order to grasp the full picture. Gall highlights other aspects when he discusses the limits of quantitative approaches: Many political strikes in the public sector and many general strikes are not counted in the official statistics – despite the fact that they have been a dominant form of industrial action in Europe at least since the 2000s (Gall, 2012: 14f). For Gall the decrease of strike activity is exaggerated if one operates on the grounds of these numbers.

The limits of quantitative approaches are visible in Schmalz and Weinmann’s analysis, which draws its political conclusions almost entirely from an evaluation of quantitative data about ‘nonnormative conflicts’. They state that trade unions exercise less control over mobilizations than they did between 1968 and 1973 (Schmalz and Weinmann, 2013). It disappears from the picture that many of the big trade union-led stoppages in the 1970s drew their momentum from wildcat strikes (Birke, 2007: 218f, 274f.; Gallas and Nowak, 2013), which is not the case for the current European strike wave, where union federations predominantly instigate the action.1 Hamann et al. (2013) also work with a quantitative approach, trying to detect patterns that explain under which circumstances general strikes yield successful results. Since the current strike wave is marked by the general absence of concessions, this methodology is difficult to apply. In contrast, Gall’s analysis considers the political context of the European strike wave, explaining its novelty by highlighting that unions are either excluded ‘from the process of political exchange’ (Gall, 2012: 2) or that political negotiations increasingly yield poor results for workers. Following him, there has been an erosion of corporatism, which means that the political strike became the primary means of struggle in France, Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal. According to Gall, this form of strike has strength to it because it entails big political mobilizations as ‘expression of collective discontent against and contestation of neoliberal policies’ (Gall, 2012: 20).

A Luxemburgian Typology

In this section, we propose a qualitative account of mass strikes inspired by Rosa Luxemburg. With regard to the recent wave of mass strikes, we can show what type of industrial action we are examining, and where its strategic limits lie. For this purpose, we develop a typology of strikes based on a qualitative description with four axes.

LUXEMBURG’S UNDERSTANDING OF MASS STRIKES

While scholars tend to reflect on the political context of political mass strikes and its strategic implications, they tend to neglect two aspects: The strikes are defensive strikes, and they are, to a large extent, without success, -- despite the unprecedented size of the mobilizations. Before we elaborate on these aspects, we will discuss the concept of the ‘mass strike’, which is used by Gall and Vandaele without providing a proper definition. We believe that Rosa Luxemburg’s work provides some insightful observations on mass strikes, which can be used to determine the concept. These can be found in her text The Mass Strike, the Political Parties and the Trade Unions, written in 1906, after the strike wave that led up to the (failed) Russian revolution in 1905. Obviously, there is no revolutionary situation in contemporary Europe (quite the contrary), but we believe that we can gain some general insights from Luxemburg by isolating her observations from their historical context.

She does not confine the concept of ‘mass strike’ to political strikes and highlights that purely economic strikes sometimes very quickly get a political dimension. One of her examples is a stoppage in the railway repair workshops in Kiev in July 1903. The strike movement grew after the police arrested two delegates of the railway workers. The subsequent blockade of the local railway station led to a police massacre with more than 30 dead workers. On the next day, a general strike started in all parts of Kiev. Inspired by these events, there was a general strike in Jekaterinoslaw in early August 1903 (Luxemburg, 1906/2008: 125). The famous strike in Petersburg in January 1905 exhibits a similar dynamic: Two workers were dismissed because of their membership in a legal official workers’ association. About one week later, 200,000 workers attended a march to the castle of the Tsar in order to submit a petition. A bloodbath followed, leaving between 200 and 1,000 workers dead. This in turn paved the way for a wave of mass strikes that lasted until the summer of that year, which led to the introduction of the 8-hour day in many sectors of the Russian economy (12 to 14 hours were the standard before the events) and to wage increases of around 15 per cent all over the country (Luxemburg, 1906/2008: 127f).

But Luxemburg underlines differences as well: While the strikes in 1903 started as sectoral, economic strikes and became political conflicts in their final phase, the mass strikes in 1905 reversed the pattern: they started with a unified political programme and led to many partial and independently organized economic strikes all over Russia. This distinction is not just of historical importance, but pertains to a central feature of Luxemburg’s understanding of mass strikes: The mass strike does not exhibit a unified pattern and cannot be identified ahead of its unfolding in a concrete struggle: ‘Its adaptability, its efficiency, the factors of its origin are constantly changing’ (Luxemburg, 1906/2008: 140). It is only possible ex post to chart mass strikes in a given conjuncture. But there are some defining features, which we can extract from Luxemburg’s account of the events in Russia: First of all, they disrupt political life, affect public discourse and provoke massive responses from governments or other state bodies (Luxemburg, 1906/2008: 140f). A second central aspect is the mobilizing character of mass strikes for the working class: Workers experience the power that goes along with collective action, gain experience in political struggles and see the need for organization. Importantly, these are qualitative features: the mass strike is not defined on the grounds of simple numbers (be they absolute numbers of participants or working days lost or relative numbers compared to the size of the population), but in terms of its effects, both on the political scene and the working class. In this sense, the 1984-5 Miners’ Strike in Britain can be seen as a mass strike (even though it was confined to one industry); in contrast, the public sector strikes in Germany in 1992 and 2006 involving hundreds of thousands of workers are not necessarily mass strikes, because they did not have persistent effects on the political scene and their mobilizing character for the German working class was limited.

Importantly and contrary to some readings of her work, Luxemburg does not glorify the mass strike. She underlines that there are limits to its effectiveness in the Russian context: While the first general strike in January 1905 led to a national wave of economic strikes, and a second national strike in October ended with political concessions of the Tsar, the third general strike in December resulted in defeat: An armed uprising of workers in response to state repression against the strike in Moscow was crushed by the military, and efforts by the social democrats to organize a fourth national strike in 1906 were not successful (Luxemburg, 1906/2008: 139f.). Luxemburg concludes the chapter with the following words: ‘The role of the political mass strike alone is exhausted, but, at the same time, the transition of the mass strike into a general popular rising is not yet accomplished. (…) The stage remains empty for the time being.’ (Luxemburg, 1906/2008: 140). This suggests that calls for mass strikes are only useful in specific conjunctures, and that other forms of political and social action prevail in other periods.

FOUR ANALYTICAL DISTINCTIONS

Against this backdrop, we propose a typology of the mass strike inspired by Luxemburg’s analysis (cf. Gallas and Nowak, 2012: 25f.). We use four distinctions to describe the different types of the mass strike. These distinctions are inspired by Luxemburg, who operated in a similar way without providing a systematic conceptual elaboration. They are analytical in character. Of course, the reality of a particular strike is always messy and sometimes produces grey zones that complicate or even defy categorization. But it is impossible to understand the causes, dynamics and effects of strikes without the use of analytical distinctions.

1. The first distinction concerns the aims of strikes. It runs between economic strikes that relate predominantly to the workplace, and political strikes that address extra-economic issues. Economic strikes address issues such as wages, layoffs and working conditions. One example for a political strike is the fight for universal suffrage: the labour movements in Belgium, Britain and Germany in the 19th and early 20th century demanded the vote not just through demonstrations, but also by going on strike. Luxemburg emphasizes that political and economic strikes constantly blend into each other (Luxemburg, 1906/2008: 144).

2. The second distinction relates to the extension of strikes: there are ‘partial’ strikes that affect just one sector of the economy (sectoral strikes) or one particular region or city (local or regional strikes), and general strikes that cut across sectors and are held at the national level (for Luxemburg’s use of the term ‘partial’, see 1906/2008: 142).

3. The third distinction is about the direction of a strike movement: Offensive strikes aim to reach a goal set by the strikers themselves (that is, wage increases or the recognition of independent unions by the state and employers), while defensive strikes try to block measures proposed by the government or employers (that is, layoffs or cutbacks of pensions) or are intended to defend rights such as universal suffrage or freedom of the press (Luxemburg, 1906/2008: 119).

4. The fourth distinctions reflects the form of strike: Demonstrative strikes voice the opinion of workers and are limited to one or two days, while fighting strikes are about striking until the goal of the stoppage or a compromise has been reached, or until the workers decide to give in (Luxemburg, 1906/2008: 143).

The vast majority of the mass strikes in Western Europe since 2008, on the grounds of our typology, are political strikes because they are directed against plans of the government to restrict rights and cut social expenditure. Furthermore, they are defensive and general strikes. Finally, they are usually demonstrative strikes limited to one or two days.2 In a nutshell, the type of strike dominating the Western European wave of mass strikes is the political, general, defensive and demonstrative strike.

COUNTRY-SPECIFIC PATTERNS

Vandaele stresses that there are regional patterns of strike activity, and he is grouping European countries into five categories according to their different industrial relations regimes (Vandaele, 2011). For a group of ‘Southern’ European countries – France, Italy, Greece, Spain and Portugal – he describes a common pattern characterized by ‘long-lasting employer hostility towards union recognition’ (Vandaele, 2011: 16) and a weak institutionalization of collective bargaining. Similarly, Gall argues that the political mass strike became the main strike method in the same countries since the late 1990s, reflecting the fact that the ties between social democratic parties and the union movement have not been very close in these countries, given the huge weight of communist trade unions (Gall, 2012: 20ff).

What is noteworthy is that the countries in question are also those where the vast majority of political strikes against austerity happened after 2008. So one could see this as a case of path dependency rather than a new political dynamic. But there is still a much higher frequency of these strikes since 2009. This suggests that two factors come together: First, the countries already had an established tradition of the political strike, which emerged in the late 1990s; and, second, the countries are worst hit by the Eurozone crisis (with the exception of France). Besides, there is a genuinely new development in that the strike wave reaches countries that do not belong to this first group: there were political strikes against austerity in the UK (which, according to Vandaele, belong to a Western European group) and in Belgium (which belongs to a Western-central European group). In the UK, the strikes have so far been confined to the public sector, but there are debates among the unions about the possibility of a genuine general strike (Gallas and Nowak, 2012: 70ff) – something that has not taken place in the country since 1926.

Political Strikes Against Austerity as a Reflection of the Conjuncture

The type of strike that is prevailing in the Eurozone Crisis, the defensive political strike, is both a reflection of a specific political conjuncture and of class relations of forces unfavourable to labour. Two aspects of this situation are important for debates on strategies: the fact that the strikes have been unsuccessful to a large extent and the fact that they are facing ‘physical limits’ in the form of violent state repression.

Against this backdrop, it appears that many of the big trade unions in the countries that are affected heavily by the crisis are halfway stuck between organizing protests against austerity and attempts to keep channels of negotiations open. This is changing slowly in some of the countries, for example in Britain, Spain and in Portugal, where unions are beginning to take a more confrontational stance vis-à-vis governments. To illustrate the two aspects, we will take a closer look at the strike against the pension cuts in France in October 2010, given that they were most advanced form of protest against austerity: it went against the dominant pattern insofar as the strike was not a demonstrative strike limited to one or two days; in fact, it lasted for about three weeks.

THE FRENCH STRIKE AGAINST PENSION CUTS

In spring 2010, the French government announced pension cuts. As a reaction, a three-week general strike against pension cuts erupted in October 2010, the main issue being the increase of the retirement age from 60 to 62. Similar mobilizations in 1995 and 2006 had brought substantial concessions (Lindvall, 2011). The strongholds of the 2010 strike were the refineries.

The strike was unsuccessful despite the fact that there was a broad consensus among the main trade unions behind the strike and public opinion was in favour: According to opinion polls, 60 to 70 percent of the population supported it. Furthermore, participation in demonstrations was high – much higher than in 1968 and comparable to 1995 (1968: 500,000; in 2010, 2.5-3 millions on various occasions). However, in 2010, the number of workers on strike was comparably low: estimates run between 500,000 and 1,000,000. In 1968, nine million workers were on strike, and in 1995, it was considerably more than one million workers. (During the 2006 protest movement, there were no mass strikes) (Gallas and Nowak, 2012: 56ff; USS, 2010).

In 2010, participation rates among important groups like railway workers and students were low because these groups had just been defeated in drawn-out conflicts that had taken place only a few months before the strike. The main bases of the strike were the oil refineries, the ports, and the public sector in the region of Marseille. Outside these main bases, the strikers were very much dispersed across sectors and workplaces, so that demonstrations became the focal points of the mobilization. Obviously, these demonstrations did not have much of an impact on the economy or the public infrastructure. The strikes in the refineries, which led to a shortage of fuel, had not been organized properly by the unions. As soon as the police and military arrived at the scene, the strikers gave up blockading (Gallas and Nowak, 2012: 59ff).

Arguments between the main unions (CFDT - Confédération française démocratique du travail and CGT - Confédération générale du travail) resulted in a moderate strategy: When the fuel shortages led to problems in the productive sector, the main unions distanced themselves from blockading refineries and fuel stores. The main unions were not prepared to start a proper confrontation with the Sarkozy government, because they believed that the Socialist Party (PS) was not ready for a change of government: The PS was divided on the issue of pensions and quarreled about the party leadership. Sarkozy’s strategy to refrain from offering negotiations or concessions surprised the unions. It was a new pattern of class politics in France.

The conditions of struggle throughout Europe had changed considerably with the onset of the financial crisis, but the main unions in France used the same old political strategies (Gallas and Nowak, 2012: 59ff): they wanted to change public opinion. Furthermore, they banked on the PS gaining the presidency in 2012 and repealing the restructuring of the pensions system. Hollande was carried to office by the strike movement but did not deliver on the demands of the strikers that he had included in his agenda. His attempt to restore the status quo ante in the area of pensions was half-hearted: the return to a lower pension age (60) will only affect 110,000 people. The focus of the unions on a change of government turned out to be a strategic mistake.

DEADLOCK

The French example reveals the deadlock that trade unions in many European countries face in the crisis. The old strategies of working with threats and blockades as well as hoping for negotiations and changes of government do not appear to work any longer. The political strikes against austerity conform mostly to what Beverly Silver (2003: 20) calls ‘Polanyi-type of labor unrest’: they are struggles predominantly based in sectors where layoffs, privatisations and restrictions of workers’ rights pose a threat to the existing labour force. This constellation of struggle produces specific challenges and dilemmas for labour, which mean that winning is difficult: If public sector workers, who were crucial for most of the mobilisations in Europe, go on strike, the state saves money. The strikers can make up for this by interrupting the economic and social infrastructure, for example by blockading public transport and roads, but this is difficult to sustain and creates tensions with the infrastructure users. Furthermore, if workers are indeed blockading key sites of the infrastructure or of production, there is a real danger that the repressive state apparatuses break strikes with force: this happened when air traffic controllers struck in Spain in 2010, and also in France in 2010 at the refineries.

Surely, the political strikes against austerity had a mobilizing character. But the fact that unions in the crisis countries on the whole did not gain any concessions – neither through negotiations nor through attempts to exert ‘influence from without’ (Gall, 2012) – reveals that the working classes in these countries generally lacked any sort of political leverage, which goes further than just saying that we are witnessing the ‘end of social democracy as a credible political force’ (ibid.). And in those cases where workers were able to mount effective resistance and put pressure on governments, repressive state apparatuses intervened on their behalf. How is it possible to overcome this impasse? There are three possible ways: (1) blockades are so widespread and massive that there are not enough repressive forces available to effectively break them; (2) political pressure is strong enough that the government withdraws from violent intervention; or (3) labour activists develop new tactics that deal with violence in one way or another. The first option of an all-out blockade seems utopian, and it is difficult to build effective political pressure. But the labour movements across Europe cannot evade the question of how to build up effective pressure when faced with governments unprepared to make concessions, but ready to break strikes with violent means. If organized labour is not able to address this question, ‘the stage will remain empty’ for the time being.

Strategic Lessons

Unions are faced with a dilemma in the European crisis. They find themselves in a situation of weakness where it would be better to lay low and gain strength first, but they are not controlling the conditions under which they operate. They are under attack and cannot afford to lose because this would have devastating consequences: unemployment and impoverishment for the working people in the crisis countries and a seriously constrained room for manoeuvre for labour. In this situation, they tend to resort to staging symbolic political strikes, which thus become the terrain for the reconstitution for working class movements across Europe. The strikes are supposed to represent shows of strength, but their results in terms of concessions are meagre. In other words, governments across the Eurozone have called the bluff of the trade unions by choosing not to move in response to the strikes.

In this situation, unions have to rethink their strategies. But it is not enough to simply call for a radicalization of trade unionism. There are reasons why unions resort to the rather moderate means of the symbolic political strike. Thanks to the crisis, their members are faced with the serious economic hardship caused by wage cuts. Furthermore, they are under the threat of being laid off, and finding a new job is very difficult under conditions of a deep economic crisis. The ‘silent compulsion of economic relations’ (Marx, 1867: 899) is further amplified through cuts in the welfare system, which make it even harder to cope with unemployment. Finally, it is difficult to call for a radicalization when people have already been defeated at various occasions, which has a demoralizing effect. In this situation, simplistic calls for militant action have a ring of radical posturing. As a result, the starting point of any debate on union strategy should be on the existing pattern of struggle, and how its elements can be recomposed to lead to a more forceful result.

### Thesis—1NC

#### Cybernetics haven’t taken over human systems.

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As established in the first section of this article, proponents of what I have heuristically defined as the “transformation thesis” have emphasised the revolutionary ruptures wrought by digital connectivity and datafication. Some of these proponents illustrate these changes using field specific case studies, as with Duffield’s (2018) suggestion that the transition to a “cybernetic episteme” is reflected in humanitarian practice. Other authors have taken a more abstract view, including Chandler’s (2018) discussion of new modes of governance in the digital era, or the post-humanist drive to reconceptualise “humanity” under conditions of technological entwinement (Cudworth and Hobden 2013). These assertions of macro-level transformation are also supported by network sociology, led principally by Manuel Castells (2010) analysis of how revolutions in information technology, economic globalisation and an emergent “space of flows” interact to produce a new kind of “network society”. This linkage of societal transformation to economic forces is also characteristic of more critical anti-capitalist perspectives, as with the Marxist critique of “cognitive capitalism” (Moulier-Boutang 2012; Zukerfeld 2017). Although these approaches differ in their conceptual frameworks, they are united in their ambition to highlight universal epistemic transformations brought about by technological change.

One of the pitfalls of these totalising perspectives is the neglect of the particular in favour of the universal. For instance, networked thinking encourages assumptions about lateral transformation across socio-political fields that are connected to the digital universe. But not all spheres of social or political activity move at the same pace when they are exposed to technological innovation. Datafication and digitalisation are processes that have uneven impacts on different social and political fields. For example, the testimony of Facebook’s CEO Mark Zuckerberg to the Senate Judiciary and Commerce Committees in April 2018, where US lawmakers appeared confused by the social media giant’s basic business model, is a stark illustration of the gap that still exists between the world of Big Tech and the operating logics of mainstream democratic politics (Stewart 2018). Bigo and Bonelli (2019, 115) have found that even in the field of transnational intelligence, a sphere that could have much to gain from algorithmic techniques, technological expertise tends to be contracted out to third parties while traditional, human-sourced intelligence approaches remain dominant. Therefore, grasping for totalising processes risks ignoring the empirical specificity of divergent social microcosms.

To remedy this blind side in transformationalist thinking, I assert the utility of applying Pierre Bourdieu’s field theory when conceptualising how certain spheres of social or political activity—including the field of global human rights advocacy discussed in the previous section—mediate pressures for epistemic transformation and potentially isolate technological changes and agents to the margins. Employing field theory, Ole Jacob Sending (2015, 11) sees global governance as divided into separate fields, where “actors compete with each other to be recognised as authorities on what is to be governed, how, and why”. Examples of such fields include international development, security, peacebuilding, humanitarianism, and human rights advocacy. However, each field varies in terms of its specific “rules of the game” (Bourdieu and Waquant 1992, 99). Fields are bounded, game-like social structures that are constituted by a unique constellation of actors. These actors struggle for authority according to the field’s principles of legitimation (Bourdieu 1989, 17). These principles of legitimation, which define a field’s cultural capital, are durable to the extent that dominant actors remain invested in their reproduction. Actors’ prolonged immersion in these fields subsequently shapes their own practical sensibilities, so that the field’s logics are internalised as common sense within the habitus (Bourdieu 1990, 53). It is the embedment of the field’s doxa (common sense) within the habitus of invested actors that makes fields durable and resistant to radical transformations. As seen in the previous section, the rules governing the human rights field are associated with its logic of political influence, persuasion, and moral authority.

Critics of Bourdieusian field theory have argued that it is overly structuralist, reproductive, and cannot grasp “the ever-shifting constellations of actors, institutions, data and forms of expression that make up the expertise” (Waever and Leander 2018, 2). However, alternative approaches such as actor-network theory or assemblage-based theories fail to centralise the importance of social and political struggles between agents which are key in defining the trajectory of digitalisation and datafication. As Ruppert, Isin, and Bigo (2017, 3), “[d]ata does not happen through unstructured social practices but through structured and structuring fields in and through which various agents and their interests generate forms of expertise, interpretation, concepts, and methods that collectively function as fields of power and knowledge”. Similarly, “data is not an already given artefact that exists (which then needs to be mined, analysed, brokered) but an object of investment (in the broadest sense) that is produced by the competitive struggles of professionals who claim stakes in its meaning and functioning” (Bigo, Isin, and Ruppert 2019, 11). Technological change can influence the trajectory of different global political fields by enabling the entry of new types of actors (such as data consultants in the case of human rights advocacy), as well as by producing emergent sources of cultural capital and associated epistemic practices (such as expertise in geospatial imaging).

As Bigo and Bonelli (2019, 120) have observed in the case of the transnational intelligence field, technological change can be accompanied by the growing influence of private companies who “have played a substantial role in the recruitment of IT specialists, network engineers, data analysts, integration platform software designers, language and coding specialists, cryptologists, and mathematicians tasked with creating or combining algorithms”. Such entryism can have a revolutionary effect if those new actors are able redefine a field’s organising logic, cultural capital, and principles of legitimation. For example, looking at the case of Sudan in the 1990s as an antecedent to the transformation of humanitarianism, Duffield (2018, 85) traces how donor governments asserted greater control over NGOs, who subsequently “seamlessly morphed into the ‘implementing partners’ of donor governments”. Alongside growing private sector partnerships, these developments stimulated the neoliberal re-alignment of the humanitarian field away from Third World solidarity and the progressive support for autonomous change and towards the governance of precarity. This exposed the field to an epistemic transformation that privileged datafication based on a “surveillance logic of command and control” (ibid., 168).

However, not all global political fields are so structurally conducive to this kind of radical transformation. The example of the human rights advocacy field illustrates how a strong autonomous organising logic—a logic of persuasion—generates entrenched forms of field-specific cultural capital—qualitative and humanistic accounts of raw suffering that establish clear legal responsibilities. Actors can mobilise digital or data infrastructures to diversify the range of tools and media at their disposal, as illustrated by the (limited) use of geospatial technology, data visualisations in human rights reporting, and a growing reliance on social media platforms to engage audiences. However, they do not necessarily threaten the epistemic practices that are at the centre of human rights advocacy. This is because the transformative potential of new technologies and methods depends on their epistemic, political, social, or moral value in the eyes of the fields’ dominant actors. The integration of data-based approaches has been one of slow adaptation, not revolution, and technological specialists—often employed as third-party consultants rather than as full-time human rights professionals—remain at the margins. The Bourdieusian concept of habitus is also helpful in illuminating how fields with strong professional structures and specific educational and career trajectories can endow members with enduring dispositions that favour both the reproduction of existing epistemic practices and resistance to new ones. The habitus of human rights professionals is still primarily defined by legal, journalistic, and liberal-cosmopolitan moral/political dispositions, rather than technological expertise. So long as processes of doxic reproduction remain stable, the potential for epistemic transformation through datafication remains limited.

Conclusion

This article has cautioned against the analytical trend towards treating datafication as a general process acting to radically transform the epistemic and governance practices across global political fields. Because different social and political fields are unique social microcosms that contain divergent organising principles, readers should be wary of post-humanist analyses making totalising claims about alleged transformations in the human condition. The polemical teleology of transformationalism, an approach that is in vogue among Silicon Valley hype merchants like Elon Musk, public intellectuals, and a growing number of social scientists, is certainly attention grabbing, but it does not measure up against the actual way in which technological and methodological innovations are instituted within different fields of practice. International relations and global governance scholars working on the interstitial cross-roads between technology and various political or social lifeworlds need to be attentive to how digital and data transformations are mediated at the meso level of global politics. This article has demonstrated how epistemic transformation can be resisted at the meso level through observing changes and continuities among elite human rights organisations. Bourdieusian field theory, with its emphasis on legitimacy, social reproduction, and the durability of practical dispositions, offers a suitable framework for conceptualising the absence of epistemic rupture within the field of human rights advocacy. However, because digitalisation and datafication processes are mediated through the specific logics of a given field, more work needs to be done on examining how different organising principles shape the potentialities for epistemic transformation. Thus, in the future, more comparative empirical research will be needed to observe technological changes across different areas of global governance.

### Solvency—1NC

#### Cybernetic communism is a sham.

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The notoriety of Project Cybersyn in Left‐accelerationist circles and beyond is perhaps not entirely surprising insofar it is the best‐known example of consciously deploying cybernetic principles for what were felt to be emancipatory ends, rather than the augmentation of state or corporate power.3 Due to circumstances very much beyond its control, the system was never brought fully online, and of course we will never know the directions in which it might have developed. However, thanks to Medina's detailed and exacting research, we have been made aware of the sometimes yawning gap between Beer's vision and how it aligned politically with the undeniably admirable goals of Chilean socialism, and the actual nature of Cybersyn's attempted implementation. For instance, worker participation was token at best, and not an integral part of system design; engineers and factory managers didn't really overcome their professional and class bias; and gender inequities with regard to design and organizational management were barely acknowledged, never mind meaningfully addressed (see also Espejo, 2009, p. 79). However, we are less concerned here with the historical realities of Cybersyn or the specific features of Chilean socialism than more general cybernetic principles and how they might lend support to any viable postcapitalist transition. Put differently, to indulge in a spot of “immanent critique,” do the claims of Left‐accelerationist cybernetics regarding enhanced possibilities for human freedom, solidarity, and autonomous self‐actualization match the reality (or potential reality)? What is crucial vis‐à‐vis any such discussion is the (often implicit) suggestion, outlined in the previous section, as to the qualitative differences between first‐ and second‐order cybernetics, together with the idea that Left criticisms typically, and illegitimately, conflate the two. Rather than the use of negative feedback oriented to the maintenance of order by inhibiting counteraction, so the argument goes, second‐order cybernetics is concerned with positive feedback, working through amplification and enhancement of the original signal, whereby the presence of complexity and chaotic states demonstrates the non‐linearity of systems and their capacity for unpredictable change in the pursuit of open‐ended (but self‐correcting) goal attainment. And yet, a careful examination of writings by the likes of Tiqqun or Châtelet demonstrate that they were generally aware of different currents in cybernetic thinking, but nevertheless argue that, whatever its ostensible methods and goals, second‐order cybernetics promulgates a new regime of power and control that dovetails in many respects with the requirements of today's supercharged technocapitalism. Going further, they intimate that even some version of “cybernetic socialism,” with presumably novel human‐machine assemblages, might not necessarily escape this morass.

Arguments concerning this shift to a new regime of power often make reference to one of Deleuze's late essays, or at least show its influence: the brief but tantalizing “Postscript on Societies of Control.” In nuce, Deleuze's position is that the type of “disciplinary” society theorized by Foucault, marked by various enclosures (schools, factories, military barracks, bureaucracies) wherein social behaviors were scrutinized and minutely organized in space‐time so as to enhance their productive efficacy during an era of industrial capitalism, has been superseded by a quite different system of ruling more relevant to the present situation of powerful global corporations and the centrality of the “knowledge economy.” That is, whereas disciplinary societies concern themselves with a process of homogenizing subjectification largely through panoptical means, by which compliant individuals are integrated seamlessly into the mass, control societies are post‐panoptical, and rely instead on “ultrarapid forms of free‐floating control” (Deleuze, 1992, p. 4). Crucial with regard to the latter is the continuous accumulation of statistical information via the elicitation of communicative exchange across the entire social field. The focus ceases to be the atomized individual, but rather a numerically‐based assessment of the “dividual,” by which Deleuze means a generically average subject made comprehensible through opinion surveys, sampling techniques, and market research. Control is now exercised, not through hierarchical, top‐down management, much less by fostering techniques of hermeneutical self‐examination, but the pattern analysis of myriad electronic traces and the subtle shaping (or “nudging”) of micro‐behaviors via what Deleuze calls “universal modulation.” The key is that these environments are not segmented and closed, but fluid and open, and that social actors participate in and maintain the system dynamically through their own seemingly voluntaristic choices and actions, à la Lefebvre's “splendid impression of spontaneity and harmony.”4

The relevance of Deleuze's “Postscript” to our concerns should be fairly obvious. First‐order cybernetics is in lockstep with the nature and demands of what we might call late‐disciplinary societies. Second‐order cybernetics, by contrast, appears more compatible with progressive, even liberatory aims. An indication of this latter orientation is that many of the key figures in British cybernetics situated themselves on the Left of the political spectrum, and cultivated non‐conformist and often explicitly anti‐authoritarian interests, even if Beer himself was something of a “champagne socialist.” Yet, in embracing complexity, contingency, and openness, second‐order cybernetics is not wholly immune to the mentality of control and governance. Indeed, the types of non‐linear self‐organization as discussed by Deleuze are necessarily premised on disequilibrium and chaos: the multiplication of horizontal, autonomously‐structured communicative networks is the new mode of control, not any sort of emancipation from prevailing systems of power. Control societies depend precisely on the constant elicitation of affects and desires, as opposed to their repression or curtailment, provided they can be channeled into forms of communicative action subject to ongoing surveillance and statistical quantification. In second‐order cybernetics, as Maroš Krivý (2018, p. 18) usefully puts it, “power relations reproduce through proliferating indeterminacy, nonlinearity and complexity, rather than by curbing these into determinate, linear and unidirectional forms.”

Writing from the perspective of the French context of the 1990s, but hardly irrelevant to our own era of “nudge theory,” smart cities, and the like, Châtelet (2014, p. 23) suggests that the mania for incorporating concepts of “chaos” and “self‐organization” into what he regards as pseudo‐liberationist thinking was part and parcel of the intellectuals’ post‐1968 capitulation to “market democracy.” The latter is foursquare in favor of the “right to difference,” calling for an end to heavy‐handed state interference and concomitantly eulogizing social mobility and permanent “nomadism.” But that's only because the neoliberal market itself loves fluidity, movement, and constant acceleration, seeking to capture the “creative power of chaos” through a “cyberpolitics” that generates order out of the disorder of self‐regulation. Authoritarianism of the obvious variety is replaced by the covert injunction to produce and consume information, to subscribe enthusiastically to a universal “will to communicate.” Yet the encouragement to speak in the context of today's “social (or “global”) factory,” to cooperate, to express one's “authentic” thoughts and feelings, is ultimately a coerced and deadening gesture. For Châtelet, the “chaos of opinions and microdecisions” relies on a rhetoric of freedom via auto‐emergence, but there is always an apparatus of control working discretely behind the scenes, and hence a crucial distinction to be made between powerful designers and operators and those being operated on. Since the conventional state apparatus is now too slow and clumsy to respond effectively to the demands of the new fluid social ontology, scientific management of political sovereignty is rendered much more palatable when presented in the guise of refined “pressures exerted by an anonymous and nonlocalized entity” (p. 33). This constitutes a “ventriloquism” of power‐effects operating through such ubiquities as globalized market forces, intermeshed communicative networks, and the relentless organization of “public opinion.” Any particular social atom, the locus classicus of disciplinary societies, is irrelevant here; echoing Deleuze, for Châtelet what's important is the modulation of network fluidity via “hydro‐cybernetics,” and the effectuation of valuational equivalences across numerous domains through a universal system of inputs and outputs. Whereas the Young Turks of the new cybernetic order (the children of Lefebvre's cybernanthropoi?) conflate horizontality with enhanced democracy, Châtelet is adamant that the former does not in any way necessarily vouchsafe the latter. Indeed, horizontal formations concentrate power in vital nodal points, and are more effective for being anonymous and unseen, everywhere and nowhere at once, in contrast with “overly visible verticalities” that might precipitate resentment and opposition. The result is the “well‐mannered anarchism” of the market, which, unlike the “romantic” anarchism of old, threatens no societal upheavals ‐ first, because geared towards optimal management of a coolly technocratic nature, but also insofar as there is no worker “downtime” in an age of 24/7 networked production/consumption, and hence little opportunity to foment dreams of revolt.

From the vantage‐point of the early 2000s, in The Cybernetic Hypothesis Tiqqun takes some of these arguments further. Although Cybersyn isn't referenced directly here, they hone in on the technophile Left's contemporaneous fascination with cybernetic possibilities, anticipating later positions advanced by the Left‐accelerationists and “fully automated luxury communists.” According to Tiqqun, the period of upheaval around 1968 could be interpreted as the last reverberation of a cycle of struggles that dominated Western societies over the two previous decades. Facing the manifold shocks of rising worker militancy, the energy crisis, and precipitously‐declining rates of profit, global capitalism required full‐scale reconstruction, and, as discussed above, cybernetics fit the bill very well. However, the logic of cybernetics appealed to certain technologically‐oriented critics of capitalism as well, such as those advocating an “ecosocialism” premised on equilibrium and a steady‐state economy through decentralization and differentiation, especially in light of the Club of Rome's famous 1972 document “Limits to Growth.” For Tiqqun (2020b, p. 98), however, this represents a kind of “social capitalism” seeking change through the democratization or socialization of the “decisions of production,” as if a full‐blown post‐Fordist society could emerge spontaneously from a dispersed, popular “collective intelligence.” As an example, a “new social contract” like universal basic income adopts the logic of the current system's emphasis on “human capital” and the metaphysics of production. It is not incompatible with money, commodity exchange, or markets, and would only free up more disposable income so as to accelerate the circulation of goods and information at the behest of processes of value‐capture (see also Beech, 2019, p. 93). Ultimately, for Tiqqun this would make the labor force itself more, rather than less pliable. If the “new spirit of capitalism” is cybernetic to the core, so are “Left” solutions to the present crisis that rely extensively on repurposing existing infrastructures, neoliberal subjective dispositions, and logistics, so as to end up with a “communism of capital.” Or, to put it differently, any approach advocating the “framing of the world in terms of problems” is not a genuine communist project, but in reality another path to capitalism (Tiqqun, 2020b, p. 109; also Culp, 2018, p. 167). In this way, cybernetic capitalism has absorbed its ostensible opponents into an overarching paradigm of social regulation governed by a managerial reason, disposed to what The Invisible Committee (2015, p. 124) terms the “cult of the engineer,” that can serve the political objectives of “Left” just as well as “Right.” Even Pickering (2010, p. 273) admits that Cybersyn could have been re‐engineered by technicians and state functionaries of the Pinochet regime, and deployed to more nefarious ends than Beer would probably have imagined, which is likely not the kind of “repurposing” Left‐accelerationists have in mind.

It is noteworthy that Alex Williams has written independently about the relationship between Deleuze's theory of control societies and cybernetics, and it is therefore important to consider his arguments here. Rather than contrast the US and UK developments, and primarily associate “first‐order” cybernetics with the former and “second‐order” with the latter (a convention we have followed here), Williams advances a different set of distinctions. That is, he reserves the term first‐order for 20th‐century cybernetics in general, whatever the differences between, say, Weiner or Beer (odd in light of his admiration for Cybersyn, which gets only passing mention here), and suggests second‐order is a phrase better‐suited to the networked “platform” systems of the 21st‐century, such as Airbnb, Facebook, or Uber. First‐order cybernetics, by Williams’ reckoning, follows the domineering control logic as characterized above: it aims to modulate action via recourse to homeostatic equilibrium so as to realize pre‐set goals. In contrast, “platforms” are design architectures that work primarily not through constraint, but by enabling actions through positive feedback circuits that cannot be prefigured in advance. Platforms, writes Williams (2015, p. 223), are “materialised transcendentals – they act as conditions of possibility for other processes and entities to exist.” As “entrenched” infrastructures they do restrain in certain ways (for example, Microsoft owns the vast majority of home computer operating systems and forces users to conform to its licensing arrangements and surreptitious forms of data collection), but they also provide the ground for unpredictably contingent or “generative” outcomes, and hence contain hitherto‐untapped potentialities for autonomous self‐organization outside the aegis of state and capital. Yet, Williams is notably vague on what forms of such self‐organization might be possible here, or what exactly is being “enhanced” through the utilization of such platforms in ways that might be considered “emancipatory,” assuming this doesn't bolster the hegemonic power and virtual ubiquity of existing platforms. As argued earlier, control systems work precisely through such “enhancements,” via the solicitation, reinforcement, and augmentation of myriad desires and affects, so long as they can be successfully captured and “put to use.” “Platform capitalism” emerged after the 2008 crisis, argues Sebastian Olma (2016, p. 171), because of capital's need to both create and exploit a situation of permanent entrepreneurialism and precariousness in an era of falling profits, disinvestment, and declines in manufacturing productivity. In other words, the harnessing of auto‐exploitation is integral to these systems’ very design, whereby “platform proletariats” are pauperized both materially (participants in the “gig economy,” once time, expenses, and insurance are factored in, earn much less than even the minimum wage) and in terms of a relentless degradation of skill and knowledge. As such, it's difficult to see the liberatory potential here, insofar as such platforms are essentially about extending market logic into any and all domains of human life. In this context, Beer's algedonic meters, however crude or well‐intentioned, seem to anticipate today's omnipresent data capture and the vast amounts of unpaid digital labor it exploits (Amazon user reviews, Facebook “likes,” etcetera), which are all forms of “soft” coercion encouraging the formation of certain subjective dispositions in line with the demands of hyper‐productivity and acquisitive consumption. Towards the end of the article, Williams belatedly suggests that alternative platforms could be constructed in the service of non‐capitalistic ends. Yet, it's far from clear how these “socialized” systems could ever be designed and implemented, never mind constitute any sort of threat to the monopolistic, privately‐owned platforms dominating Western societies today, and even if they were, such a scheme remains vulnerable to the objections of Tiqqun et al. as to the foibles of “social capitalism.”

## 2NC --- Kritik

### Ontology

#### Technology does not structure contemporary politics---contra biopolitical and cybernetic readings, political and libidinal investments in black flesh are the root cause of technoscientific domination

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In her seminal essay, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book,” Spillers (2003) presents a concept of flesh as the material-semiotic inheritance of Africans in the diaspora, and of black women specifically. She “make[s] a distinction in this case between ‘body’ and ‘flesh’ and impose[s] that distinction as the central one between captive and liberated subject-positions...before the ‘body’ there is the ‘flesh,’ that zero degree of social conceptualization that does not escape concealment under the brush of discourse, or the reflexes of iconography” (p.206). Unlike the socially legible and historically-given “body,” the material conditions of captive and ungendered “flesh” cannot be altered by either the symbolic—“the brush of discourse”—or the imaginary—“the reflexes of iconography.” Flesh instead serves as a structuring dynamic for the coherence of both registers, and as such, must be eternally reproduced. This repetition-without-a-difference may appear through “various symbolic substitutions,” but in effect, these substitutions “repeat the initiating moments” that mark the captive body as flesh (p. 207).

As a scene of negation, black flesh is also available for pornotroping as a first order process of racialization, where “race is constituted by a repeated sadistic white pleasure in black female suffering” (Nash, 2014, p. 52). During their incarceration, Acorn community members are fitted with electronic devices called “slave collars” that deliver painful shocks or “lashes” to the nervous system. After she is collared, Lauren discovers that her hyperempathy subjects her to both the pain of her fellow captives and the pornotropic pleasure of her captors; she writes, “there are a few men…who lash until they have orgasms. Our screams and convulsions and pleas and sobs are what these men need to feel sexually satisfied. I know of three who seem to need to lash someone to get sexual pleasure. Most often, they lash a woman, then rape her” (Butler, 1998, p. 233). In these scenes, the relationships between consent, pleasure, and sentiment collapse as Lauren is forced to reenact the crisis of will and desire that characterize the female slave’s existence.14

While all hyperempaths, regardless of race, would experience a similar crisis under these conditions, black women are assured neither a restoration of their will and desire nor a discernible “end” to the crisis. Lauren needs neither the condition of hyperempathy nor the slave collar to bear the “marks of the cultural text” of slavery (Spillers, 2003, p. 207). Despite the episodic nature of hyperempathy, black women’s fleshly existence remains a structural vulnerability to violence, a condition that is also a “grammar”—an unconscious system of rules—that marks black women as the “zero degree of social conceptualization” (Spillers, 2003, p. 206). As such, black female flesh is the quintessentially productive site of modernity’s symbolic order, where the value and meaning of our conceptual categories are both challenged or renewed. Lauren performs this function in the novels, as her unavoidable reductions to flesh guide Earthseed’s development into a global movement. In this context, Lauren’s black life, or the blackness of her life, matters, but only in its ambivalent capacity to make all lives matter.

The Movement for Black Lives

The approach to life promoted under Earthseed’s banner responds to our desires for new modes of existence appropriate for the Anthropocene. For Lauren, embracing change enables notions of self and community capable of navigating complex socioeconomic forces and their differential embodiment. In Earthseed, “god is a process or a combination of processes, not an entity. It is not conscious at all…. God can be directed, focused, speeded, slowed, shaped. All things change, but all things need not change in all ways” (Butler, 1998, p. 46). Moreover, change is not driven simply or only by the dialectics of historical progress. The chapters in both Sower and Talents open with epigraphs from Earthseed’s doctrinal text, The Book of the Living. Modeled after the aphoristic style of the Tao, these epigraphs acknowledge the potential of political, economic, and social structures to affect and be affected by all matter: “We have lived before/We will live again/We will be silk,/Stone,/Mind,/Star,/We will be scattered,/Gathered,/ Molded,/Probed./We will live,/And we will serve Life” (Butler, 1998, p. 60). The confluence of silk, stone, mind, and star rejects the idea that the active properties of “life” are confined to the human or organic, constituting what Weheliye calls a “radically different political imaginary,” where “suffering appears as utopian erudition” that “[summons] forms of human emancipation that can be imagined but not (yet) described” (Butler, 1998, pp. 126-127). The destiny of Earthseed to “take root amongst the stars” is precisely this imagined yet indescribable emancipation (Butler, 1998, p. 46). Once the starships leave Earth at the end of Talents, humanity becomes Earth-seed, open to possibilities that we cannot predict or control as we spread to worlds unknown.

Visions like these suggest, among other things, that oppressive conditions do not exhaust the variabilities of life, and that the transvaluation of the organic body and human being can encourage comprehensive ethical bearings. Then again, perceiving hyperempathy and Earthseed as means to “liberate...assemblages of life, thought, and politics from the tradition of the oppressed” requires us to detach pornotroping from the sexually violent production of racial difference (Weheliye, 2014, p. 137). The celebrated material body thus betrays a desire to harness the radical potential of black flesh without paying the social and historical costs of being black. In the new materialist formulation, pornotroping is revised as a radical interruption in the order of things, one that produces a material body without race.

Certainly, in black women’s “absence from a subject position,” Spillers does locate the potential for a sui generis naming that claims the “insurgent ground” outside of “dominant symbolic activity” (p. 229). The difficulty here is that the monstrous female “with the potential to ‘name’” emerges out of the specific histories of black women (Spillers, 2003, p. 209). This is not to say that a capacity for life does not exist in other conditions of oppression, or that pornotroping is a structural totality from which nothing escapes. However, in order to confront effectively the consequences of the Anthropocene, we first need to reckon with our political and libidinal investments in black flesh. This would require us to address how the entanglements of blackness, matter, and the human make only certain forms of matter both legible and desirable. To be clear, my objective is not to reject wholesale the new materialisms. Their attempts to offer a broader theorization of matter and being are appropriate and necessary for our techno-scientific age. Indeed, a planetary crisis requires a more expansive philosophy. What I am suggesting instead is that challenges to human exceptionalism should proceed through a critique of race, or we risk reorganizing old privileges (“All Lives”) under new standards of being (“Matter”).

### Libidinal economy

#### The libidinal economy shapes technology, not the other way around.

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Just as Stiegler gives us a technological reading of political economy, so he also gives a technological reading of libidinal economy. (They are obviously one and the same reading given his synthesis of both to describe the specificity of cognitive capitalism; I have broken them down here for analytical purposes.) Since the 1990s Stiegler re-thinks the Freudian problematic through technics (see Stiegler 1996b). Technics constitutes the condition of sexuality qua desire. This critique of Freud inscribes the whole of the psychical apparatus within the technical history of epiphylogenesis. It is clear that human sexuality has both evolved and is altered through technical developments. Stiegler is right to insist, with the paleontologist Leroi-Gourhan and Gilles Simondon, that hominization is a technical process of evolution and psychic and collective individuation. That said, sexuality is not reducible to technics. Human sexuality, together with the problematic of desire that it underpins, both transcends technological determination and is itself dependent on many variables. There are depth psychological constants (for example, the Oedipus complex) that determine the transgenerational legacy of the id beyond technical evolution. To argue otherwise (as Stiegler does; see 1996b) is not to engage with the autonomy of the depth psychological. What with the neurosciences' penetration into the mind–body complex, we are probably only now beginning to under stand this autonomy and multi-causality.

Stiegler is therefore correct, following Herbert Marcuse, to place technics within the evolution of sexuality and the vagaries of desire. There would be no Oedipus complex, specific to human animals, without the technological evolution of the human. But he goes too far when he makes the relation between technics and desire one of unilateral determination. The above argument that the “psychotechnologies” are attempting “to control the id,” if not “the psychical apparatus in general” (2009: 31), is one consequence of this unilateral determination. This is another technologically determinist judgment. It makes a background condition (technology) into a radical determination of the psychic apparatus as a whole. Such determinism tempts Stiegler into arguing for a general “crisis of spirit” at the moment of cognitive capitalism.

### Link

#### The Emmelhainz card proves this on two things- 1) the card argues that truth itself has been eradicated which ignores the ontological truth of the slave economy. 2) it goes to say that data is the current drive of the world which is an incorrect characterization of anti-black violence as the technology.

Emmelhainz 21, visiting scholar @ Vermont College of Fine Arts (Irmgard, “Authoritarianism and the Cybernetic Episteme, or the Progressive Disappearance of Everything on Earth”, e-flux journal, issue 122 November 21. <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/122/430488/authoritarianism-and-the-cybernetic-episteme-or-the-progressive-disappearance-of-everything-on-earth/>)--js

Life and society worldwide have been transformed by digital technology, including the fabrics of emotional relationships. Many believed the internet would be the largest ungoverned space in the world with unlimited emancipatory potential, and trusted Big Tech to make the world a better­ place. Yet power and capitalism filled that space with surveillance systems, the production of private capital, the monetization of data, and the control of human lives. Social media now shape daily life and many have lost faith in the possibility of a shared consensus reality. We are living in a scenario similar to one imagined by Black Mirror: our belief in digital communication and social media creates narcissistic personalities, selves dissociated and dislocated from their reflections online. Digital communication offers an opaque mirror that delivers egos without bodies, eliding alterity.

The collapse of reality, however, is not an unintended consequence of advancements in, for instance, artificial intelligence: it was the long-term objective of many technologists, who sought to create machines capable of transforming human consciousness (like drugs do). Communication has become a site for the extraction of surplus value, and images operate as both commodities and dispositives for this extraction. Moreover, data mediates our cognition, that is to say, the way in which we exist and perceive the world and others. The image—and the unlimited communication promised by constant imagery—have ceased to have emancipatory potential. Images place a veil over a world in which the isolated living dead, thirsty for stimulation and dopamine, give and collect likes on social media. Platform users exist according to the Silicon Valley utopian ideal of life’s complete virtualization.

The internet, moreover, has radically changed the political communications game and must be considered a complex propaganda apparatus. Although a single Tweet can destroy someone’s career, and fake news can start a real news cycle, meaning is subordinate to the circulation of vacuous content. The capitalist capture of data for profit does not rely on policing content; the production of capital only relies on the constant exchange and circulation of information. We don’t yet know the full extent of the manipulation of companies such as Facebook, Google, and Amazon in the last two elections in the US or in other elections around the world. But it is undeniable that digital platforms are actively censoring content in the interests of particular political actors. For instance: in October 2020, Zoom canceled a meeting hosting Palestinian human rights activist Leila Khaled; a month before, Facebook and Twitter censored information detrimental to Joseph Biden’s presidential campaign. The same two companies intervened and shut down pro-Trump accounts in 2020, even Donald Trump’s own Facebook and Twitter accounts.

After the attempted coup at the US capitol on January 6, 2020, Facebook’s recently instituted oversight board ruled that Trump had created “an environment where a serious risk of violence was possible.” In this light, it seems likely that he will continue to be banned from the platform. According to journalist Shoshana Zuboff, however, this is insufficient, given that the oversight board’s decision (whose work is supported by a $130 million endowment from Facebook) follows years of inaction by CEO Mark Zuckerberg, who indulged and appeased Trump while entrenching what Zuboff calls “surveillance capitalism.” A liberal might think that shutting up Trump and helping Biden is not bad, as they are actions that seemingly advance the interests of the Democratic Party. What is at stake here, however, is not whether the platforms take a “good” or “bad” stance on a particular issue; the problem is that they have immense unchecked power and can act as they please. Platforms are allowed to secretly extract behavioral data from users, whether or not users are aware, transforming the information into targeted ads, destroying privacy, changing human experience into data, altering elections, and reshaping human civilization. This structure can be termed the “cybernetic episteme,” and the new form of control, which goes beyond the previous regime of biopower, can be termed “neuropower.”

According to its Greek etymology, an “episteme” is a system of understanding. In The Order of Things, Michel Foucault uses the term “épistemè” to mean the nontemporal or a priori knowledge that grounds what is taken as truth in a given moment. Several epistemes coexist at a given time, as they constitute parts of various systems of power and knowledge. The cybernetic episteme, as defined by the collective Tiqqun some twenty years ago, describes our relationship to technology and machines (which are inseparable from the workings of capitalism). The cybernetic episteme is based on the modern tenet of progress and human-led transcendence achieved through science and technology.

Under neuropower, the sensible gives way to cognitive pathologies. These pathologies depend on the consumption of content rather than the sharing of meaning. As Thomas Metzinger explains, the internet has become an integral part of how we model ourselves, as we use it for external memory storage, as a cognitive prosthesis, and for emotional self-regulation. This has radically changed the structure of conscious experience, creating a new form of waking consciousness that resembles “a mixture of dreaming, dementia, intoxication, and infantilization.” Other effects of neuropower are humans’ growing invisibility to each other and a paroxysmal racism that infiltrates power, technology, culture, language, and work. For Franco “Bifo” Berardi, racism has become a “virus” that exacerbates fear—above all, the fear of extinction, which seems to have become one of the motors behind white supremacy in the world. Dissociated from our environment, alienated from each other, we are oblivious to the challenges that are being posed to humanity by the Capitalocene.

1.

Under lockdown, internet-based technology became embedded in everyday life more than ever before. Zoom and other platforms became the matrix of a production model that exacerbates the power of technology over society. A new lockdown economy has emerged in this disembodied communication space, where knowledge is subsumed under the rules of capital accumulation. The pandemic has led to extreme alienation, to the point that privilege is defined as depending on invisible laborers to sustain forms of life. This means that a new “virtual working class” has emerged that can take basics like food, water, and electricity for granted, knowing that they do not have to risk their bodies to have these comforts.

Until 2016, digital technology promised access to all human knowledge, unlimited exchange, self-expression, democratization, participation, opportunities to make money, the acceleration of bureaucratic processes, and the means for grassroots and popular power to challenge governments and corporations. The peak of this alluring cyber-utopia came around 2010–11, when social media played a crucial role in the Occupy and Arab Spring movements. But in 2016, when Cambridge Analytica was revealed to have intervened in the US elections that brought Donald Trump to power, the public’s belief in such technologies to change power structures began to shift. We witnessed the worldwide rise of right-wing governments and populist movements supported by wealth. Maurizzio Ferraris has called this the era of “post-truth,” when the deconstruction of a stable truth became an important political tool. In online public space, discourse has been shattered, truth has become indiscernible, and relativism has become the norm. The public sphere—the bastion of established and emerging democracies, bolstered by mass media—began to shatter.

Leaders such as Benjamin Netanyahu, Donald Trump, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, Jair Bolsonaro, and Narendra Modi have used digital communications to construct charismatic identities and disseminate populist messages, causing deep social and political polarization. Politics has profoundly mutated: while minorities and people at the margins have found ways to validate their speech by expressing their perspectives, individualized propaganda has become the order of the day. Algorithms feed users the information they search for, resulting in personalized information bubbles designed to engage preexisting biases. Much of the news media now functions by monetizing user engagement through this type of targeting, which has led to new forms of intensified racism and other types of prejudice. Author Andrey Mir has termed this “postjournalism.” He explains that, since mass media outlets have lost publicity revenue, they need to monetize engagement on the internet and do so by generating anger and hatred, usually directed at some specific group of people. For many, the news is the way to access the world, and rage has become currency: platforms drive and monetize anger as a mode of engagement.

A complex form of authoritarianism is emerging, linked to digital platforms owned by the powerful CEOs who make up the notorious “Silicon Six.” Under the new authoritarianism, populations are no longer commanded: they are asked to participate, and in this simulation of involvement, the “ideology of connection” replaces the idea of social relations, neutralizing democratic demands from users to have control over their own lives, rights, and data. In this way, people are made passive. Cédric Durand explains the difference between the original conception of the World Wide Web and the subsequent development of closed platforms. The WWW began as a decentralized architecture in which a generic transaction protocol (http) and a uniform identification format (URI/URL) generated a space of flat content. In this space, human and nonhuman agents could have access to information without any third-party mediation. In contrast, closed platforms use application programming interfaces, or APIs, to mediate interaction, giving way to data loops in which interactions are more dense. The technical object that sustains this hierarchical architecture is the API, each of which is owned by a platform. On the one hand, big platforms, by way of APIs, offer apps that incorporate basic and indispensable data for users. On the other, platforms have access to the additional information generated by the API, such as user activity and buying habits. As the ecosystem grows in complexity, the platform is able to accumulate more and more data. We become more densely connected with each other and with the platforms every day, as our lives get more and more tied to the cloud. Our dependency on platforms provides the ground for technofeudalism. Historically, feudalism was characterized by a fundamental inequality that enabled the direct exploitation of peasants by lords. The lord was both the manager and master not only of the process of production, but of the entire process of social life. In today’s technofeudalism, platform owners are the digital lords and users are the serfs. Rather than commodity production, these platforms are geared towards accumulation through rent, debt, and the privatization of the basic infrastructure that sustains our lives. What is at stake is no longer “true” or “fake” information but the cybernetic episteme upon which our lives and subjectivities have been built.

The cybernetic episteme is premised upon modernity’s enclosure of experience. In modern epistemology, which is the precondition of the cybernetic episteme, the self is externalized and experienced at a remove from the body. Perception is centered on the brain and eyes instead of the whole body, separating sensation from reason. The self’s relationship with the world is mediated through mirrors, camera lenses, the canvas, the microscope, and mathematical models. The cybernetic episteme, moreover, is inextricable from colonialism, which entails dispossession, dislocation, dissociation, and appropriation. Ariella Azoulay has called the logic underpinning these processes “the shutter”; this logic is materialized in photographic technology that separates humans from objects, self from the world, and people from their lands. The shutter is the principle of imperialism by which campaigns of plunder have left people both worldless and objectless. For Azoulay, the logic of the shutter was invented centuries before photography gave it a technological apparatus, and it enabled the dispossession of non-Western peoples in tandem with the accumulation of visual and material wealth in archives and museums in the West.

The cybernetic episteme is likewise conceptually constituted by this shutter, since it relies on capturing, naming, moving, and archiving subjects—as does imperialism. In this regard, the cybernetic episteme naturalizes the mediation of the self; it creates not only the condition of detachment from the world, but allows the appropriation of the cultures of others, as well as the dissolution of collective being. The shutter is akin to Heidegger’s Gestell or “representation,” which goes hand in hand with Eurocentrism and Anthropocentrism. The Gestell and the shutter both imply that the world and experience have become representation, through an aesthetic order in which what is produced as artifice becomes the reality of experience.

In a 2017 Facebook promo video for a new virtual reality technology, Mark Zuckerberg and his colleague Rachel Frank tele-transported themselves to Puerto Rico after a devastating flood. They intended to showcase the potential of the new technology, but instead revealed its inherent violence. The ability to transport oneself to faraway places “as if” one’s body were present gives the illusion that one we can make a difference in the world through technology. Another example, in a different register of colonial modernity is that way Western museums allow visitors to "transport" themselves by observing objects looted from elsewhere, like the Pergamon Museum in Berlin where museumgoers can roam around the Ishtar Gate, which has been on display in the museum since 1930. In a section of Ariella Azoulay’s video Undocumented: Unlearning Imperial Plunder (2020), she films actual visitors to the Pergamon while noting that dislocation is the essence of (imperial) modernity. The VR museum visitor is at the center of a world, but they are not really there (an effect similar to the dispositive of perspective in painting). For globalized Western culture, the ground for vision, enlightenment, culture, and even social change is the dislocation and disappearance of bodies.

Disembodiment and dislocation are also fundamental epistemological premises of transhumanist Silicon Valley ideology. In this ideology, the teleology of secular modern individualism culminates in the uploading of a person’s mind to a new biological, artificial, or biological-artificial body. The utopian goal of expanding and preserving human consciousness is physically and spiritually achieved. Transhumanism is the dream of enhancing the human body through technology, and ultimately escaping human suffering by transcending the “errors” of death and aging.

Posthumanism takes things a step further: its goal is to immortalize consciousness by uploading it to a robotic or synthetic body. Posthumanism does away with the biological dimension of the self, fundamentally altering what it means to be “human.” In both trans- and posthumanism, technology promises to give us the divine attributes of omnipresence, omnipotence, and omniscience, making humans into “pure consciousness,” achieving a kind of individual and secular transcendence. In the first episode of the British TV series Years and Years (2019), Bethany, an adolescent whose face is hidden behind a 3D emoji mask, announces to her parents that she is “transhuman.” She declares: “I don’t want to be flesh. I want to escape this thing and become digital, I want to live forever as information.” Eventually Bethany becomes a hero with transhuman superpowers: her mechanized eyes and brain, which are connected to all the data in the world, allow her to make visible the horrors that the British government have perpetrated in a refugee camp. This techno-utopian narrative implies a democratic ideology, insofar as one political goal of democracy is to make visible the ordeals of oppressed minorities—in this case through virtual disembodiment.

In contrast to this techno-utopian narrative, science fiction—especially cyberpunk literature— generally portrays transhumanism as a nightmarish apocalyptic scenario of social control and individual subjection. Several episodes of Black Mirror do this, for example. But what Black Mirror and Years and Years have in common is that technological advances and the increasing symbiosis between humans and machines are associated with political, economic, and social instability. In reality, “mind uploading” has attracted millions of dollars of investment from the billionaires of Silicon Valley and beyond. In a mixture of engineering and enlightenment, consciousness is now being hacked through biofeedback techniques, meditation practices, and microdosing drugs. Many critics have observed that the utopian ideology of transhumanism underpins the Valley’s culture of “move fast, break things, and make as much money as possible.” Technologies aiming to expand human consciousness are rooted in purely extractivist, capitalist values. In this sense, cybernetics is a political project on a planetary scale. As described by Tiqqun, cybernetics is a gigantic “abstract machine” made up of binary machines deployed by empire, and a form of political sovereignty that has merged with the capitalist extractivist project.

2.

In the pre-cybernetic era—that is to say, before the 1940s—machines were intended to emulate humans; their actions resembled human behavior, but ostensibly without intent or emotions. This is why Donna Haraway describes pre-cybernetic machines as “haunted.” They seemed animated by ghosts, reminiscent of Walter Benjamin’s automaton that was inhabited by a hunchbacked dwarf. Machines were not self-moving, self-designing, or autonomous. They could not achieve human dreams, only mock them. In turn, humans related to machines by using or acting upon them: switching them on or off, using them as tools to achieve an end. Today, the relationship between human and machine is based on internal, mutual communication in a feedback loop. Early machines were led; today, machines lead us. This does not mean that machines have simply become humanized through the proliferation of androids. Rather, humans have surrendered consciousness to AI, becoming obedient and predictable. In the twenty-first century, machines have blurred the distinction between the artificial and human mind, not only because machines can imitate human functions, but because humans have become increasingly passive, since we are now subject to neuropower.

Within the cybernetic episteme, it is no longer enough to talk about a “control society”; we must talk instead about a composite of interlinked forms of oppression (exploitation, alienation, and domination), in tandem with extreme securitarianism. Another way to see the cybernetic episteme is as the reconceptualization of social worlds into information-processing systems. Practices of computation are used to produce new organizational and infrastructural apparatuses, which in turn create value and profit by exploiting and disposing of human life. Social worlds are subsumed into technologies through techniques such as statistical forecasting and data modeling.

The cybernetic episteme stems from a world brought into being by Europeans; this world began with the discovery of the “new world” and the creation of empires and colonies (which coincided with the scientific revolution). In this sense, the cybernetic episteme is inseparable from the Western civilizing project for the whole world, which connected disparate places through technologies like the telegraph and steam shipping, often powered by the extraction of fossil fuels like coal. This project has culminated in globalization as the deregulation and financialization of world economies.

The Western civilization project, based on Enlightenment values including equality, peaceful public life, access to modern science, the rule of law, democracy, and technological progress, involved the creation of infrastructure to unify nations and the world. We can call this infrastructure the “technosphere.” The technosphere comprises not only digital technology but all machines, factories, computers, cars, buildings, railways, and mobility infrastructure, as well as systems of food production, resource extraction, and energy distribution. Today, the infrastructure of the world—the technosphere—is shaped by information, which means that the world we inhabit is designed by data.

The technosphere is a supplement humans have created to help overcome the limits of “human nature” insofar as humans cannot live independently from structures geared towards sustaining life. The technosphere has promised to enable us to increase production and reproduction with less human effort. Moreover, the technosphere is also regarded as the main tool humans have to fight decay, entropy, and death, since it comprises all the structures humans have built to keep themselves alive on the planet. The total mass of the technosphere amounts to fifty kilos for every square meter of earth’s surface—a total of thirty trillion tons, which coexists with the diminishing hydrosphere (water, the frozen polar regions) and the biosphere (all of earth’s living organisms). The ultimate price of the technosphere is global warming and environmental devastation. Like humans, the technosphere needs external energy input, which is not sustainable as long as it comes from fossil fuels that will eventually be depleted.

From this standpoint, the cybernetic episteme represents the gradual merging of human activity into the activity of what we have built and surrounded ourselves with. Much of this built environment is invisible. Infrastructure and data are partially occult because we are alienated from them, even as we are produced and managed by them. The invisible infrastructure that sustains our lives is what matters politically right now. And insofar as the technosphere is cybernetic, it is inextricable from capitalism and politics.

3.

Human communication is at the center of the cybernetic global order. The neural system of globalized networked society is digital communication. In a 1975 film called Comment ça va?, Anne-Marie Miéville and Jean-Luc Godard discuss the “illness” of information. They begin with an image of the Carnation Revolution in Portugal, published in the leftist newspaper Libération. At the time, photojournalistic images had begun to proliferate as a form of information, and Godard and Miéville critique Libération (the most left-wing newspaper in Europe in those days) for failing to include the reader in the creation and dissemination of information. They ask: “How is it that things enter and exit the machine?” (Comment ça va de l’entrée à la sortie de la machine?). This question is about how ideas, words, discourses, human interaction, and images become information and then reach readers and viewers.

In Comment ça va?, mass media represents an illness that has killed communication and language. Last year, Godard updated his critique of the media in an interview posted to Instagram. He stated: “Plato’s cave has been fixed on paper/screen.” For Godard, the consequence of the becoming-information of communication and language is the loss of ambiguity in communication. Digital technology has infiltrated every aspect of existence, and the margin of error between the transmission and the reception of a message has been eliminated by mediatization and digitization. For Godard, digital communication denies the force of the image or the word because it eliminates redundancy, misunderstanding, the possibility of reading between the lines, and the possibility of alterity.

In a more recent film of his—Adieu au language from 2014—Godard suggests that digital media have destroyed face-to-face communication. He asks: What kind of self could emerge in a time when objects and bodies are disfigurable and refigurable through virtual manipulation? Godard posits that the origins of today’s totalitarianism can be traced to the interruption of interior experience by the spectacle. In the film, Godard features a lengthy quote from Philippe Sollers explaining that the spectacle “cuts off” the subject from its interior life—a process that is, paradoxically, highly seductive. Furthermore, for Godard digital communication creates a new form of isolated solitude where people lack ties to others. In this light, technology has not become an extension of man, as Marshall McLuhan predicted, but has instead attained autonomy from man, since digital media can communicate amongst themselves without human mediation. For Godard, this means that the “face-to-face” encounter—a basic form of human relation that is the foundation of ethics—is no longer possible.

Sherry Turkle, a clinical psychologist and sociologist, comes to similar conclusions: daily conversations no longer involve eye contact, and face-to-face discussion has been replaced by words on a screen. According to Turkle, texts, tweets, Facebook posts, Instagram messages, and Snapchats split our attention and diminish our capacity for empathy. They have created new codes of etiquette; no longer do we feel restrained from reaching for our phones in the presence of other people. This new etiquette entrenches a culture of individualism and isolation from each other. This isolation cultivates the perfect ground for fascism.

The digitization of communication not only has political and communal consequences. It also affects the neuroplastic potential of the living brain. The cybernetic episteme reshapes our working memory by rearranging its contents. As Warren Neidich writes, the new focus of power is not only the false reproduction of the past (the manipulation of the archive), but the manipulation of our working memory—the type of memory that influences our decision-making. Authoritarian neuropower wants nothing less than to shape our future memory, argues Neidich.

If the nervous system of cybernetics is digital communication, at the center of digital communication is desire. Mark Fisher devoted his last lectures at Goldsmiths in 2017 to this subject. During one lecture, he played for his students a famous Apple TV commercial from 1984, directed by Ridley Scott and originally broadcast during the Superbowl. In an overt reference to George Orwell’s novel 1984, the commercial depicts a dreary, repressive control society. This society is seemingly liberated when a buxom blonde woman tosses a sledgehammer at a large screen broadcasting the image of an authoritarian figure, causing the screen to explode. The commercial ends with these lines crawling across the screen: “On January 24, Apple Computer will introduce Macintosh. And you’ll see why 1984 won’t be like 1984.” Fisher observes that the video counterposes top-down bureaucratic control to upstart entrepreneurialism. The dreary control society depicted in the commercial is an allusion to not only the Soviet Union, but also IBM, the dominant computer maker at the time. Apple posits itself as the dynamic, colorful new company that will liberate society from dreary IBM, ushering in a new, more vibrant world order. This new world order will fulfill our (capitalist) desires in a way that the communist world cannot. As Fisher suggests, we now live in that world of libidinal capitalism.

Elsewhere Fisher writes that what drives the circulation of information is the user’s desire to make one more connection, to leave one more reply, to keep on clicking. Capitalism persists because cyberspace is already under our skin, writes Fisher; to retreat from it would be like trying to retreat into some nonexistent precapitalist imaginary. In his view, we believe we have as much a chance of escaping capitalism as we do of crawling back inside our mother’s womb.

5.

By means of the cybernetic episteme, Silicon Valley has shaped the world we all live in. As we are poisoned equally by microplastics and fake news, losing our grasp of a shared reality, the “Silicon Six”—as Sacha Baron Cohen called the titans of Silicon Valley in a 2019 speech—propagate algorithm-fueled fear, propaganda, lies, and hate in the name of profit. As Baron Cohen pointed out, the major online platforms largely avoid the kind of regulation and accountability that other media companies are subject to. “This is ideological imperialism,” he said. “Six unelected individuals in Silicon Valley impos[e] their vision on the rest of the world, unaccountable to any government, and acting as if they are above the law.” He called digital platforms the greatest propaganda machine in history.

Democratic institutions have failed to reign in the information chaos and the destruction of the public sphere. As Shoshana Zuboff argues, we inhabit a communications sphere that is no longer a public sphere. She describes this situation as an “epistemic coup” that has taken place in four stages: First, by way of companies gathering personal data about us and then claiming it as their own private property. Second, through data inequality, which means that companies know more than we do. Third, through the epistemic chaos created by algorithms. And fourth, through the institutionalization of this new episteme and the erosion of democratic governance.

Baron Cohen observes that people can take a stand against platforms by recognizing our power to boycott them. (One example is the mass defection from WhatsApp to Telegram when the former announced that would share its user data with Facebook.) But we also need to defend the existence of facts and a shared reality, understanding the world not as something we see but as something we inhabit—treating life not as something we have, but as something we live. Anti-platform strategies might be accused of Luddism, but they are not necessarily opposed to technology—only to certain uses of technology.

It is also crucial that we regard the cybernetic episteme as inextricable from a broader malaise: humanity’s relationship to life and the planet is a toxic one. The very technologies that supposedly enable us to read, think, flourish, and desire are destroying the world we inhabit.

People continue to yearn for commonality, mutuality, and something to share. But the culture we currently share is largely mediated by repressive, profit-driven digital platforms. This is why we need to flee from the invasion of images, to distinguish between image and reality, and to affirm the opacity of the world and the ambiguity of language. We need to resist platform monopoly through presence, embodiment, immediacy, and human memory. We need to find ways to create life as opposed to turning it into data, combine emotional and intellectual knowledge, and regard visceral gut feelings as a form of human consciousness. We need to learn to exist in symbiosis with others and with the environment, not dislocated, uprooted, and detached.

## 1NR --- Case

### 1NR – Presumption

#### Every reason they give that they should succeed doesn’t prove they resolve the double turn, it proves they link even harder! Literal negation, refusal to even evaluate a debate, solves the aff better than they ever could!

Pellizzoni, 20—professor in Sociology of the environment and territory at the University of Pisa (Luigi, “Prefiguration, subtraction and emancipation,” Social Movement Studies, April 15, 2020, dml)

Prefigurative politics pursues what Erik Olin Wright (2010) calls ‘interstitial transformation’, circumventing, rather than challenging, existing relations of domination. By no means new, its recent upsurge, variedly connected with the effects of neoliberal globalization and its protracted crisis, has elicited growing debates. Students usually link the transformative potential of mobilizations to their affirmative element, or put differently: to what they envisage, demand and aim to bring about. However, as Foucault and governmentality studies have argued at length, late modern forms of domination build to a crucial extent on eliciting and influencing desires and behaviours, rather than on commanding and prohibiting. This raises questions about the emancipatory import of affirmativeness and suggests that such import might rather be located in the subtractive element of prefiguration, or put differently: in what prefigurative politics rejects, refuses and seeks to leave behind.

The aim of this article is to elaborate on this ambiguity, and thereby add to the theoretical tools for inquiring into the transformative potential of prefigurative practices. I start by noting the importance of the relationship between subtraction and affirmation, as testified by scholars’ frequent use of the trope of prolepsis. Yet, to what extent subtraction or withdrawal – to reject and disengage from something – is in itself sufficient, remains an open question, also when considering anarchist and autonomist outlooks. Moreover, both positive and critical assessments of prefiguration focus on the dimension of affirmativeness, thus neglecting Foucauldian insights into power in the age of biopolitics. Such neglect can be related to the dominance of what I call ‘affirmative thinking’, a theoretical standpoint of growing hold whereby emancipation stems from the unbridled expression of vital forces. The unwarrantedness of such claim, I argue, becomes fully visible when one considers the flaws of the post-workerist thesis about the emancipatory import of cognitive labour (as extended also to nonhuman labour) and of recent theorizations of degrowth as unproductive waste of surplus energy.

For an alternative route I turn to Adorno and Agamben. The former makes a case against the modern self-affirming subjectivity, elaborating on the emancipatory force of negation; the latter translates this argument into a case for inoperativity. This notion does not mean passivity but activity building on the capacity to not being or not doing something, that is, to leave potentials unused, unrealised and in a non-actualized state, and thus to resist the lure of endless (self-)valorization. Borrowing from Benjamin’s account of revolution, the transformative potential of prefigurative politics may reside, I argue, more in doing things differently than in doing different things. Expressions of subtraction in the empirical realm provide significant clues in this regard.

#### This is offense. Symbolic affirmation absent material resistance strengthens power.

Rigakos and Law, 9—Assistant Professor of Law at Carleton University AND PhD, Legal Studies, Carleton University (George and Alexandra “Risk, Realism and the Politics of Resistance,” Critical Sociology 35(1) 79-103, dml)

McCann and March (1996: 244) next set out the ‘justification for treating everyday practices as significant’ suggested by the above literature. First, the works studied are concerned with proving people are not ‘duped’ by their surroundings. At the level of consciousness, subjects ‘are ironic, critical, realistic, even sophisticated’ (1996: 225). But McCann and March remind us that earlier radical or Left theorists have made similar arguments without resorting to stories of everyday resistance in order to do so. Second, everyday resistance on a discursive level is said to reaffirm the subject’s dignity. But this too causes a problem for the authors because they:

query why subversive ‘assertions of self’ should bring dignity and psychological empowerment when they produce no greater material benefits or changes in relational power … By standards of ‘realism’, … subjects given to avoidance and ‘lumping it’ may be the most sophisticated of all. (1996: 227)

Thus, their criticism boils down to two main points. First, everyday resistance fails to tell us any more about so-called false consciousness than was already known among earlier Left theorists; and second, that a focus on discursive resistance ignores the role of material conditions in helping to shape identity.

Indeed, absent a broader political struggle or chance at effective resistance it would seem to the authors that ‘powerlessness is learned out of the accumulated experiences of futility and entrapment’ (1996: 228). A lamentable prospect, but nonetheless a source of closure for the governmentality theorist. In his own meta-analysis of studies on resistance, Rubin (1996: 242) finds that ‘discursive practices that neither alter material conditions nor directly challenge broad structures are nevertheless’ considered by the authors he examined ‘the stuff out of which power is made and remade’. If this sounds familiar, it is because the authors studied by McCann, March and Rubin found their claims about everyday resistance on the same understanding of power and government employed by postmodern theorists of risk. Arguing against celebrating forms of resistance that fail to alter broader power relations or material conditions is, in part, recognizing the continued ‘real’ existence of identifiable, powerful groups (classes). In downplaying the worth of everyday forms of resistance (arguing that these acts are not as worthy of the label as those acts which bring about lasting social change), Rubin appears to be taking issue with a locally focused vision of power and identity that denies the possibility of opposing domination at the level of ‘constructs’ such as class.

Rubin (1996: 242) makes another argument about celebratory accounts of everyday resistance that bears consideration:

[T]hese authors generally do not differentiate between practices that reproduce power and those that alter power. [The former] might involve pressing that power to become more adept at domination or to dominate differently, or it might mean precluding alternative acts that would more successfully challenge power. … [I]t is necessary to do more than show that such discursive acts speak to, or engage with, power. It must also be demonstrated that such acts add up to or engender broader changes.

In other words, some of the acts of everyday resistance may in the real world, through their absorption into mechanisms of power, reinforce the localized domination that they supposedly oppose. The implications of this argument can be further clarified when we study the way ‘resistance’ is dealt with in a risk society.

Risk theorists already understand that every administrative system has holes which can be exploited by those who learn about them. That is what makes governmentality work: the supposed governor is in turn governed – in part through the noncompliance of subjects (Foucault, 1991a; Rose and Miller, 1992). For example, where employees demonstrate unwillingness to embrace technological changes in the workplace, management consultants can create:

a point of entry, but also a ‘problem’ that their ‘packages’ are designed to resolve. … In short, consultants readily constitute certain forms of conduct as ‘resistance to technology’ as this gives them some purchase on its reform by identifying a space in which expertise can be brought to bear in the exercise of power. Resistance consequently plays the role of continuously provoking extensions, revisions and refinements of those same practices which it confronts. (Knights and Vurdubakis, 1994: 80)

This appears to be a very different kind of resistance from that contemplated by Rubin, but perhaps not so different from that of the authors whom he and McCann and March critique: those whose analysis ends at the discursive production of noncompliance. Instead, the above account is of a resistance that almost invariably helps power to work better. A conclusion in the present day that ominously foreshadows the futuristic, dystopic risk assemblage described by Bogard (1996).

Another example of the ‘resolution’ of resistance proposed above is the institution of a tool library described by Shearing (2001: 204–5). In this parable, a business deals with the issue of tool theft on the part of workers by installing a ‘lending library’ of tools instead of engaging in vigorous prosecution and jeopardizing worker morale. While the parable is meant to indicate a difference between actuarial and more traditional (moral) forms of justice, it also demonstrates how an act that may be considered ‘resistant’ is incorporated without conflict into the workplace loss-prevention scheme – an eminently preferable, ‘forward-looking’ solution within the logic of risk management. The same is possible in the case of more discursive forms of resistance. If I do not see myself as a Guinness man, for example, market researchers will do their best to adapt Guinness to the way I do see myself (Miller and Rose, 1997). The end result, of course, is that I purchase the beer. As manifested in a form of justice (Shearing and Johnston, 2005), it always consolidates, tempers emotions, cools the analysis, reconciles factions, and always relentlessly moves forward, assimilating as it grows. In this sense, therefore, Bogard’s ‘social science fiction’ actually pre-supposes and logically extends Shearing’s (2001) rather cheery and benevolent rendering of risk thinking. In this context of governmentality theory – as self-described and lauded for its political non-prescription by its own pundits – the acts or attitudes described as resistant are, in the end, absorbed by those who govern. Resistance as an oppositional force – that pushes against or has the potential to take power – is theoretically and politically neutralized. In the neutralization process, power is reproduced.

So, along with McCann and March’s observations that everyday resistance adds little to our understanding of false consciousness and that it denies the role of material factors in shaping identity, we can add Rubin’s two main criticisms of everyday resistance: it relies on an inaccurate understanding of power, and acts of resistance which supposedly emancipate actually may reinforce domination. All four of these criticisms demand the same thing: to know what is really going on, to get an adequate grasp of the social.

### 1NR – Cognitive Strike Fails

#### It results in, at best, demoralizing failure

**Cooper 17** [Marc Cooper, American journalist, author, journalism professor and blogger, Feb 12, 2017, “General Strike Generally Stupid,” https://www.laprogressive.com/general-strike/]

In all of American history I do not believe there has ever been one national general strike. In the early 20th century there were a handful of successful LOCAL general strikes… I’m thinking of Seattle in 1919 when somewhere around 65,000 workers went out for five days. There were also some statewide longshoremen strikes in the days of Harry Bridges.

Strikes, generally speaking, require that little detail known as UNIONS. The percentage of American workers currently unionized in the private sector is at an all time low of 6 percent. Unionized government workers are somewhere around 32 percent if you count cops and firefighters (unlikely strikers).

A general strike in the U.S. would mean the country is on the precipice of regime change and revolution. We are not. Further, we live in a country that, among Western democracies, provides the least amount of worker protection. Suggesting that non union workers strike for a day is irresponsible as nobody is prepared toto support them when fired. Most unionized workers labor under contracts that have a “no strike” clause in them anyway.

Any successful strike, even in ONE targeted industry or shop takes months and months of very very hard organizing. There is no preparation or organizing nor infrastructure to make this February 17 action anything more than science fiction.

It also suggests a recurring flaw in thinking among America’s “progressive” community. It is what Prof. Adolph Reed derides as the “spark theory”—that some EVENT like the occupation of the Wisconsin capitol 6 years ago or this coming “strike” is going to magically and overnight trigger a real social movement for change. Nope.

Social movements have to be built, painstakingly, by activists, organizers, leaders and rank and file. Engaging people in fizzled events like this ill-conceived nationals strike only demoralizes participants who sense the failure.

### 1NR – Solvency

#### 2 – It makes it impossible to scale up communist solidarities.

Moreno-Casas, et al, 22—Department of Applied Economics I, History and Economic Institutions and Moral Philosophy, Social and Legal Sciences Faculty, Rey Juan Carlos University (Vicente, with Victor Espinosa and William Wang, “The political economy of complexity: the case of Cyber-Communism,” https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\_id=4012265, dml)

Cyber-communism is based on computational complexity while advocating the control of the economy. Cockshott and Cottrell are explicit about the goal of controlling the economy throughout all their works. That is to say, the dominant theme in cyber-communism political economy is control, attributing a strong role to the government (table 2). This may challenge the complexity political economy we previously presented, which energetically rejects control and supports cultivation. However, as we showed in the previous sub-section, cyber-communism faces fundamental problems in abstract terms even from a computational complexity view, e.g., self-reference, rendering central planning unfeasible. From this automatically follows that control is likewise impossible, which disarticulates the core of the cyber-communist political economy. Nevertheless, there is still a risk that, from any complexity grounded perspective similar to cybercommunism, one can think that the economy can dispense with elementary institutions such as money or private property rights. Due to this risk, we will elaborate here the fundamental problem of cyber-communism in light of a complexity political economy.

As it can already been inferred, the main issue with cyber-communism is its disregard for institutions. It outlines a socialist system in which private ownership of the means of production and money are abolished, and the state becomes the owner of the means of production while labor certificates perform the role of money for consumer goods. The same happens to the figure of the entrepreneur, which Cottrell and Cockshott want to replace by a combination of expert opinion and democratic methods. They propose this alternative social organization without barely analyzing the relevance of these institutions and the possible consequences of substituting them. They assume that their designed institutions will work even more efficiently than current market institutions. The reason for this disregard for institutions is their skepticism about the evolutionary view of the economy. Cottrell and Cockshott (1997a) criticize Hayek for marking superficial analogies and metaphors in economics from biology. They assert that, while there can be some parallelisms, evolution in biology and evolution in economics differ because the economy acts as a single processor, while this is not the case in biology due to the variety of species. Along the same lines, the authors then conclude that one cannot affirm that the capitalist system results from evolution. They make clear that evolution is not the same as history, and that capitalism is a historical result, not an evolutionary outcome. This is because an authentic evolutionary process, they contend, will require a considerable number of simultaneous economic systems to compete, and, in history, we only had two systems that competed for a short period of time, which is not a statistically valid sample.

Contrary to Cockshott and Cottrell, there is a vast literature on the economy as an evolutionary process, which precisely forms complexity economics. Many authors have shown the advantages of taking metaphors from biological process rather than mechanical process to address economic issues (Hodgson, 1995). One can apply the biological concept of diversity of species as diversity of products in economics to explain, for instance, the cause of wealth (Koppl et al., 2015). Moreover, this evolutionary perspective has usually gone hand in hand with institutionalism. Both combined allow to understand how change takes place in the economy through the evolution of its institutions, conceived as transpersonal coordination mechanisms. These are two perspectives integrating complexity economics and have helped to overcome the restrictive and unrealistic assumptions of neoclassical economics and traditional political economy.

Property rights, money, and entrepreneurship are institutions emerged through a long evolutionary process. As such, they all embody a great amount of factual and tacit knowledge, which means that these institutions have not been consciously created, but spontaneously emerged from the interaction of millions of individuals (Hayek, 1973). They allow transpersonal coordination in complex system notably populated, in the same way that language does (Horwitz, 1996). Consciously removing them or other relevant institutions from the economy, as cybercommunism aims to do, can create harmful effects on coordination among agents, which can impair the emergent process and algorithmic working of the economy.

From this discussion, it has to be clear that any political economy claiming to be based on complexity theory, as cyber-communism does, should take institutions as central, and then cultivation as the dominant theme. It is contradictory to represent a complexity approach and not accounting for institutions in the field of political economy.

5. Conclusion

The introduction of complexity theory into economics can result in paradigmatic shifts. This article has dealt with the main implications of complexity theory for political economy from the two most widespread definitions of complexity in economics: dynamic and computational. In this way, we have elaborated a complexity political economy focused on cultivating the economic system rather than controlling it.

Complexity theory shows that central planning of the economy is impossible, due to the nonequilibrium, nonlinear, or even chaotic dynamics present in the economy. Ultimately, global controlling finds that: (1) optimal parameters cannot be computable due to the problem of selfreference, and (2) the emergent processes feeding economic dynamics are, by definition, not planned or controlled, but spontaneous or self-organized. These findings clash with neoclassical political economy, which beliefs in effective control of the economy due to its equilibrium and mechanistic approach to economic science. Consequently, complexity political economy moves away from mainstream political economy, from its focus on the control of variables, and puts the spotlight on the cultivation of an environment, of institutions and transpersonal mechanisms, which allow the algorithmic operation of the economy and the emergence of new processes. Cultivation, as the central concept for a complexity political economy, warns us that the economy is not a perfect mechanism that can be effectively manipulated without causing harmful consequences, drawing our attention to take care of economic institutions such as private property rights or money.

From this complexity political economy, we have analyzed the political economy of cybercommunism. As shown, despite relying on technological advances in computation and simulation and even sharing a computational complexity view of the economy, cyber-communism advocates 23 the control of the economy. In believing in global optimizations and computation, cybercommunist theory does not realize the noncomputability of optimal outcomes, the problem of self-reference parallel to Gödel’s incompleteness theorems, and the emergent, self-organized processes of the economy. At the same time, it does not recognize the importance of institutions such as private property rights or money and tries to manipulate them without accounting for the dire consequences their control may have for the operation of the economic system. Thus, cybercommunism appears closer to the mainstream, traditional political economy of control than to a complexity political economy of cultivation. Ultimately, complexity theory and complexity political economy show that any implementation of the cyber-communist ideal is doomed to failure.

This work also responds to a more general question: can advances in computer technology ease central planning? As shown, central planning or global optimizations of the economy are not possible in light of complexity theory, not due to a technological or practical issue, but due to ontological and epistemological reasons related to the nature of complex systems and the cognitive limitations of the human mind. In this sense, this article may prompt those who seek to control or model the economy through technology and computation from alternative perspectives to cyber-communism to consider the noncomputability of optimal parameters and the emergent dynamics of the economy, which cannot be fully anticipated. Additionally, the complexity political economy outlined here, emphasizing the notion of cultivation, can be used in future works on political economy aiming to consistently follow the principles of complexity economics. It can also support a great deal of research on the role of institutions as transpersonal mechanisms in the economy, such as agent-based models.