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#### The world computer structures postmodernity – qualities become quantities as racial capitalism creates information and maps codes onto people. Information is not neutral, but produced by white supremacist and capitalist ideology. When this information is plugged into algorithms, the result is profit for some and dispossession for the rest. Global crises are not independent events, but codified by profit algorithms.

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Beller, Jonathan. “The World Computer: Derivative Conditions of Racial Capitalism.” Duke University Press, 2021. Pages 6-11. I don’t have a link but you can ask for the pdf. Jonathan Beller is a film theorist, culture critic and mediologist. He currently holds the position of Professor of Humanities and Media Studies and Critical and Visual Studies, Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, NY. // Park City NL

Taking the notion that Capital was always a computer as a starting point (Dyer- Witheford, 2013), The World Computerunderstands the history of the commodification of life as a process of encrypt[s]ing the world’s myriad qualities as quantities. Formal and informal techniques, from double-entry bookkeeping and racialization, to **the rise of information** and discrete state machines, **imposed** and extended the tyranny of **racial capital’s relentless calculus of profit**. By means of the coercive colonization of almost all social spaces, categories, and representations—where today language, image, music, and communication all depend upon a computational substrate that is an outgrowth of fixed capital— all, or nearly all, expressivity has been captured in the dialectic of massive capital accumulation on the one side and radical dispossession on the other. Currently the money-likeness of expression—visible as “likes” and in other at- tention metrics that treat attention and affect as currency—is symptomatic of *the financialization of daily life* (Martin, 2015a). **All expression**, no matter what its valence, **is conscripted by algorithms of profit** that intensify inequality by being put in the service of racial capitalism; consequently, we are experiencing a near-apocalyptic, world-scale **failure to** be able to **address global crises** including migration for reparations, carceral systems, genocide, militarism, climate racism, racism, pandemic, anti-Blackness, extinction, and other geopolitical ills. The colonization of semiotics by racial capital has rendered all “democratic” modes of governance outmoded save those designed for the violent purpose of extracting profits for the enfranchised. Culturally these modes of extraction take the form of fractal fascism. An understanding that informationalized semiotic practices function as financial derivatives may allow for a reimagining of the relationship between language, visuality, and that other economic medium, namely money, in an attempt to reprogram economy and therefore the creation and distribution of value—and thus also the politics and potentials of representation. In what would amount to an end to postmodern- ism understood as the cultural logic of late capitalism, our revolutionary politics require, as did the communisms of the early twentieth century, a new type of economic program. In the age of computation, putting political economy back on the table implies a reprogramming of our cultural logics as economic media for the radical redress of the ills of exploitation and the democratization of the distribution of the world social product. Sustainable communism re- quires the decolonizaton of abstraction and the remaking of the protocols of social practice that give rise to real abstraction. Though in this section we will more narrowly address the issues of money, race, and information as “real abstraction,” and their role in computational racial capitalism, we note the overarching argument for the larger study: 1 Commodification inaugurates the global transformation of qualities into quantities and gives rise to the world computer. 2 “Information” is not a naturally occurring reality but emerges in the footprint of price and is always a means to posit the price of a possible or actual product. 3 The general formula for capital, M-C-M′, where M is money, C is com- modity, and M′ is more money) can be rewritten M-I-M′, where I is information. 4 “Labor,” Attention, Cognition, Metabolism, Life converge as “Infor- matic Labor” whose purpose, with respect to Capital, is to create state changes in the Universal Turing Machine that is the World Computer—racial capital’s relentless, granular, and planetary computation of its accounts. 5 Semiotics, representation, and categories of social difference function as financial derivatives—as wagers on the economic value of their underliers and as means of structuring risk for capital. 6 Only a direct engagement with the computational colonization of the life-world through a reprogramming (remaking) of the material processes of abstraction that constitute real abstraction can secure victory—in the form of a definitive step out of and away from racial capitalism—for the progressive movements of our times. Such a definitive movement requires an occupation and decolonization of information, and therefore of computation, and there- fore of money. Only through a remaking of social relations at the molecular level of their calculus, informed by strugle against oppression, can the beauty of living and the fugitive legacies of creativity, community, and care prevail. The mode of comprehension, analysis, and transformation proposed here will require an expanded notion of *racial capitalism*. It interrogates the existence of deep continuities and long-term emergences—what one could correctly call algorithms of extractive violence—in the history of capitalism. These ***algorithms of violence* include the reading and writing of code(s) on bodies**, their sur- veillance and overcoding by informatic abstraction. Such algorithms of epidermalization or “the imposition of race on the body” (Browne: 113) are inscribed and executed *on the flesh* (Spillers 1987); and they are executed by means of codification processes that violently impose both a metaphysical and physical reformatting of bodies. As Simone Browne shows, epidermalization is given “its alphanumeric form” (99) through a vast array tools of marking, scarification, discipline, and surveillance that include branding irons, implements of torture, auction blocks, ship design, insurance policies, newspaper ads for run- away “property,” photographs in postcard form and a panoply of other media of dehumanization. Executable **code is imposed as social categories of race, gender, religion and property**, as ideologies, psychologies, contracts, brands, communication theories, game theories, and quantities of money—these ab- stractions work their ways into and are indeed imposed by the machines of calculation—and their avatars. We confront a continuous process of unmaking and remaking using all means available; it is violently inscribed on bodies. Sylvia Wynter, in her post–Rodney King piece “No Humans Involved: An Open Letter to My Colleagues” writes, “Both W. E. B. Du Bois and Elsa Goveia have empha- sized the way in which the code of ‘Race’ or the Color Line, functions to sys- temically *predetermine* the sharply unequal re-distribution of the collectively produced global resources; and therefore, the correlation of the racial ranking rule with the Rich/Poor rule. Goveia pointed out that all American societies are integrated on the basis of a central cultural belief in which all *share*. This belief, that of the genetic-racial inferiority of Black people to *all others,* functions to enable our social hierarchies, including those of rich and poor determined di- rectly by the economic system, to be perceived as having been *as* pre-determined by ‘that great crap game called life,’ as have also ostensibly been the invariant hierarchy between White and Black. Consequently in the Caribbean and Latin America, within the terms of this sociosymbolic calculus, to be ‘rich’ was also to be ‘White,’ to be poor was also to be ‘Black’” (Wynter: 52). “To be ‘rich’ was also to be ‘White,’ to be poor was also to be ‘Black.’” The real abstraction imposed by executable code—**the “code of ‘Race’**” that “**functions to systematically *predetermine* the structurally unequal redistribution of global resources**” is beholden to mediating capitalist exchange while embarking on a radical reformatting of ontology. This reformatting [The world computer], the supposed result of “that great crap game called life,” brutally correlates race and value, but not entirely by chance, while racial capitalism embarks on imposing this calculus globally. Racial abstraction is endemic to what we will further explore as “real abstraction”; the evacuation of quality by abstract categories and quantities is, as we shall see in more detail, a “necessary” correlate to a world overrun by the calculus of money. Such algorithms of violence encode social difference, and although they may begin as heuristics (“rules of thumb”), they are none the less crucial to the calculated and calculating expansion of racial capital. Its processes and processing structures the meanings that can be ascribed to—and, as importantly, what can be done to—those of us whose data profiles constitute us as “illegal,” “Mexican,” “Black,” “Gypsy,” “Jew,” and a lexicon of thousands of other actionable signs. This codification process draws from the histories of slavery, of colonialism, of state formation, of genocide, of gender oppression, of religious pogroms, of normativity, and again from the militarization and policing and the apparatuses of calculation that have developed within states and parastates in their own biometric pursuit of capital—power. Their violent destruction and remaking of the world. The *internalization* of these codes, including the strugles with them and the ways in which they license and/or foreclose various actions, exists in a recursive relationship to their perilous refinement. Their analysis, a code-breaking of sorts, will there- fore demand some drastic modifications in many of the various anticapitalist, antistate warrior-stances practiced to date, particularly in a large number of their European and U.S. incarnations that until very recently remained blind to their own imperial violence and are too often complicit with hegemonic codes of masculine, unraced agency, imperialist nationalism, and default liberal assumptions in relation to questions of race, gender, sexuality, coloniality, and other forms of historically institutionalized oppression.3 The analytic, *computational racial capital*, would identify the field of operations that emerges around the embryonic form of the commodity and coarticulates with racial abstraction to formalize its code, code that serves as operating system for the virtual machine here hypostasized as “the world computer” and by inscribing itself on bodies and everything else. The commodity, the analysis of which famously begins volume 1 of Marx’s *Capital*, expressed the dual being and indeed dual registration of the humanly informed object as both quality of matter and quantity of exchange-value, along with the global generalization of this form. “The wealth of societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails appears as an immense collection of commodities” (125). Commodities were (and with some modifications to be discussed further on, still are) hu- manly informed materials with a use-value and an exchange-value—humanly informed qualities indexed by quantities. “Computational racial capital,” as a heuristic device, stages an analysis of the convergence of what on the one side often appeared as universal: the economic, abstract, and machinic operat- ing systems of global production and reproduction endemic to the commodity form and its calculus, with what on another side, sometimes appeared as par- ticular or even incidental: racism, colonialism, slavery, imperialism, and ra- cialization. The concept organizes this dramaturgy of analytically reunifying elements that were never materially separate in light of the study that the late Cedric Robinson conducted and recorded as *Black Marxism*. Robinson writes, “The development, organization and expansion of capitalist society pursued essentially racial directions, so too did social ideology. As a material force, then, it could be expected that racialism would inevitably permeate the social structures emergent from capitalism. I have used the term ‘racial capitalism’ to refer to the development and to the subsequent structure as an historical agency” (1983: 2–3). *The World Computer* takes what Robinson saw as “civilizational racism,” and its central role in the development of capital as axiomatic,—and sees that this role extends to and deeply into capitalist calculation and machinery during the entire period in which the world economic system seems to have moved form the paradigm of the commodity to a paradigm of information. “Computational racial capitalism” would thus understand the generalization of computation as an extension of capital logics and practices that include and indeed require the economic *calculus* of the dialectics of social difference. These differences, both economic and semiotic, would include those plied by slavery, anti-Blackness and other forms of racism during the past centuries. **Computation must** therefore **be recognized as** not a mere technical emergence but **the** practical **result of an ongoing and bloody struggle between the would-have-it-alls and the to-be-dispossessed**. Developed both consciously and unconsciously, computa- tional racial capitalism is, when seen in the light of ongoing racialization and value extraction, “the subsequent structure as an historical agency.” The racial logic of computation must be pursued when considering finance, surveillance, population management, policing, social systems, social media, or any of the vast suite of protocols plying difference for capital. The local instance of com- putation, a specific 1 or 0, may seem value neutral, a matter as indifferent as lead for a bullet or uranium for a bomb. But we are looking at computation as the modality of a world-system. Computation emerges as the result of strug- gles that informed “class strugle” in all its forms, recognized or not by the often spotty tradition(s) of Marxism, including those strugles specific to the antagonisms of colonialism, slavery, imperialism, and white supremacist het- eropatriarchal capitalism more generally. It is the *result* of strugles indexed by race, gender, sexuality, nationality, and ethnicity, along with additional terms indexing social differentiation too numerous to incant here but that together form a lexicon and a grammar of extractive oppression—and as we have said and as must always be remembered, also of strugle. The lexicon includes com- pressions that result in many of history’s abstractions including a perhaps sin- gularly pointed abstraction: “a history whose shorthand is race” (Spillers 1997: 142). The grammar for that lexicon depends upon the deployment and execution of forms of differentiating abstraction that are lived—lived processes of abstraction and lived abstraction organized by the increasingly complex and variegated calculus of profit and thus of domination.

#### Capitalism is unsustainable – causes environmental crisis, fascism, violence, instability, and over-commodification

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The New Global Capitalism and the 21st Century Crisis **The world capitalist system** is arguably **experiencing the worst crisis in its 500 year history**. World capitalism has experienced a profound restructuring through globalisation over the past few decades and has been transformed in ways that make it fundamentally distinct from its earlier incarnations. Similarly, the current crisis exhibits features that set it apart from earlier crises of the system and raise the stakes for humanity. If we are to avert disastrous outcomes we must understand both the nature of the new global capitalism and the nature of its crisis. Analysis of capitalist globalisation provides a template for probing a wide range of social, political, cultural and ideological processes in this 21st century. Following Marx, we want to focus on the internal dynamics of capitalism to understand crisis. And following the global capitalism perspective, we want to see how capitalism has qualitatively evolved in recent decades. The system-wide crisis we face is not a repeat of earlier such episodes such as that of the the 1930s or the 1970s precisely because capitalism is fundamentally different in the 21st century. Globalisation constitutes a qualitatively new epoch in the ongoing and open-ended evolution of world capitalism, marked by a number of qualitative shifts in the capitalist system and by novel articulations of social power. I highlight four aspects unique to this epoch.1 First is the rise of truly transnational capital and a new global production and financial system into which all nations and much of humanity has been integrated, either directly or indirectly. We have gone from a world economy, in which countries and regions were linked to each other via trade and financial flows in an integrated international market, to a global economy, in which nations are linked to each more organically through the transnationalisation of the production process, of finance, and of the circuits of capital accumulation. No single nation-state can remain insulated from the global economy or prevent the penetration of the social, political, and cultural superstructure of global capitalism. Second is the rise of a Transnational Capitalist Class (TCC), a class group that has drawn in contingents from most countries around the world, North and South, and has attempted to position itself as a global ruling class. This TCC is the hegemonic fraction of capital on a world scale. Third is the rise of Transnational State (TNS) apparatuses. The TNS is constituted as a loose network made up of trans-, and supranational organisations together with national states. It functions to organise the conditions for transnational accumulation. The TCC attempts to organise and institutionally exercise its class power through TNS apparatuses. Fourth are novel relations of inequality, domination and exploitation in global society, including an increasing importance of transnational social and class inequalities relative to North-South inequalities. Cyclical, Structural, and Systemic Crises Most commentators on the contemporary crisis refer to the “Great Recession” of 2008 and its aftermath. Yet the causal origins of global crisis are to be found in over-accumulation and also in contradictions of state power, or in what Marxists call the internal contradictions of the capitalist system. Moreover, because the system is now global, crisis in any one place tends to represent crisis for the system as a whole. The system cannot expand because the marginalisation of a significant portion of humanity from direct productive participation, the downward pressure on wages and popular consumption worldwide, and the polarisation of income, has reduced the ability of the world market to absorb world output. At the same time, given the particular configuration of social and class forces and the correlation of these forces worldwide, national states are hard-pressed to regulate transnational circuits of accumulation and offset the explosive contradictions built into the system. Is this crisis cyclical, structural, or systemic? Cyclical crises are recurrent to capitalism about once every 10 years and involve recessions that act as self-correcting mechanisms without any major restructuring of the system. The recessions of the early 1980s, the early 1990s, and of 2001 were cyclical crises. In contrast, the 2008 crisis signaled the slide into astructural crisis. Structural crises reflect deeper contradictions that can only be resolved by a major restructuring of the system. The structural crisis of the 1970s was resolved through capitalist globalisation. Prior to that, the structural crisis of the 1930s was resolved through the creation of a new model of redistributive capitalism, and prior to that the structural crisis of the 1870s resulted in the development of corporate capitalism. A systemic crisis involves the replacement of a system by an entirely new system or by an outright collapse. A structural crisis opens up the possibility for a systemic crisis. But if it actually snowballs into a systemic crisis – in this case, if it gives way either to capitalism being superseded or to a breakdown of global civilisation – is not predetermined and depends entirely on the response of social and political forces to the crisis and on historical contingencies that are not easy to forecast. This is an historic moment of extreme uncertainty, in which collective responses from distinct social and class forces to the crisis are in great flux. Hence my concept of global crisis is broader than financial. There are multiple and mutually constitutive dimensions – economic, social, political, cultural, ideological and ecological, not to mention the existential crisis of our consciousness, values and very being. There is a crisis of social polarisation, that is, of social reproduction. The system cannot meet the needs or assure the survival of millions of people, perhaps a majority of humanity. There are crises of state legitimacy and political authority, or of hegemony and domination. National **states face** spiraling **crises of legitimacy as they fail to meet the social grievances of** local **working** and popular **classes experiencing** downward mobility, unemployment, heightened insecurity and **greater hardships**. The legitimacy of the system has increasingly been called into question by millions, perhaps even billions, of people around the world, and is facing expanded counter-hegemonic challenges. Global elites have been unable counter this erosion of the system’s authority in the face of worldwide pressures for a global moral economy. An**d a canopy that envelops all these dimensions is a crisis** of sustainability **rooted in an ecological holocaust** that has already begun, **expressed in climate change and the impending collapse of centralised agricultural systems in several regions of the world,** among other indicators. By a crisis of humanity I mean a crisis that is approaching systemic proportions, **threatening the ability of billions of people to survive, and raising the specter of a collapse of world civilisation and degeneration into a new “Dark Ages.”**2 Global **capitalism** now couples human and natural history in such a way as to **threaten[s]** to bring about what would be **the sixth mass extinction** in the known history of life on earth. This crisis of humanity shares a number of aspects with earlier structural crises but there are also several features unique to the present: 1. The system is fast reaching the ecological limits of its reproduction. Global capitalism now couples human and natural history in such a way as to threaten to bring about what would be the sixth mass extinction in the known history of life on earth.3 This mass extinction would be caused not by a natural catastrophe such as a meteor impact or by evolutionary changes such as the end of an ice age but by purposive human activity. According to leading environmental scientists there are nine “planetary boundaries” crucial to maintaining an earth system environment in which humans can exist, four of which are experiencing at this time the onset of irreversible environmental degradation and three of which (climate change, the nitrogen cycle, and biodiversity loss) are at “tipping points,” meaning that these processes have already crossed their planetary boundaries. 2. The magnitude of the means of violence and social control is unprecedented, as is the concentration of the means of global communication and symbolic production and circulation in the hands of a very few powerful groups. Computerised wars, drones, bunker-buster bombs, star wars, and so forth, have changed the face of warfare. Warfare has become normalised and sanitised for those not directly at the receiving end of armed aggression. At the same time we have arrived at the panoptical surveillance society and the age of thought control by those who control global flows of communication, images and symbolic production. The world of Edward Snowden is the world of George Orwell; 1984 has arrived; 3. **Capitalism is reaching apparent limits to its extensive expansion**. There are no longer any new territories of significance that can be integrated into world capitalism, de-ruralisation is now well advanced, and **the commodification of** the countryside and of **pre- and non-capitalist spaces has intensified**, that is, converted in hot-house fashion into spaces of capital, so that intensive expansion is reaching depths never before seen. **Capitalism must continually expand or collapse. How or where will it now expand**? 4. There is the rise of a vast surplus population inhabiting a “planet of slums,”4 alienated from the productive economy, thrown into the margins, and subject to sophisticated systems of social control and to destruction – to a mortal cycle of dispossession-exploitation-exclusion. This includes prison-industrial and immigrant-detention complexes, omnipresent policing, militarised gentrification, and so on; 5. There is a disjuncture between a globalising economy and a nation-state based system of political authority. Transnational state apparatuses are incipient and have not been able to play the role of what social scientists refer to as a “hegemon,” or a leading nation-state that has enough power and authority to organise and stabilise the system. The spread of weapons of mass destruction and the unprecedented militarisation of social life and conflict across the globe makes it hard to imagine that the system can come under any stable political authority that assures its reproduction. Global Police State How have social and political forces worldwide responded to crisis? The crisis has resulted in a rapid political polarisation in global society. Both right and left-wing forces are ascendant. Three responses seem to be in dispute. One is what we could call “reformism from above.” This elite reformism is aimed at stabilising the system, at saving the system from itself and from more radical responses from below. Nonetheless, in the years following the 2008 collapse of the global financial system it seems these reformers are unable (or unwilling) to prevail over the power of transnational financial capital. A second response is popular, grassroots and leftist resistance from below. As social and political conflict escalates around the world there appears to be a mounting global revolt. While such resistance appears insurgent in the wake of 2008 it is spread very unevenly across countries and regions and facing many problems and challenges. Yet another response is that I term 21stcentury fascism.5 The ultra-right is an insurgent force in many countries. In broad strokes, **this project seeks to fuse reactionary** political **power with** transnational **capital** and to organise a mass base among historically privileged sectors of the global working class – such as white workers in the North and middle layers in the South – that are now experiencing heightened insecurity and the specter of downward mobility. **It involves militarism, extreme masculinisation, homophobia, racism** and racist mobilisations, including the search for scapegoats, such as immigrant workers and, in the West, Muslims. Twenty-first century fascism evokes mystifying ideologies, often involving race/culture supremacy and xenophobia, embracing an idealised and mythical past**. Neo-fascist culture normalises and glamorises warfare and social violence**, indeed, generates a fascination with domination that is portrayed even as heroic. The need for dominant groups around the world to secure widespread, organised mass social control of the world’s surplus population and rebellious forces from below gives a powerful impulse to projects of 21st century fascism. Simply put, the immense structural inequalities of the global political economy cannot easily be contained through consensual mechanisms of social control. We have been witnessing transitions from social welfare to social control states around the world. We have entered a period of great upheavals, momentous changes and uncertainties. The only viable solution to the crisis of global capitalism is a massive redistribution of wealth and power downward towards the poor majority of humanity along the lines of a 21st century democratic socialism, in which humanity is no longer at war with itself and with nature.

#### The world computer alienates labor as data, turning life activity into bits for the market in the colonial dehumanization of the digital subject. Our consciousness is enclosed by the technical profit-motive, stealing from the oppressed their forms of collectivity and democracy. It’s not over yet, but capitalism saps our political capacity every time it encloses our communication.

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Beller, Jonathan. “The World Computer: Derivative Conditions of Racial Capitalism.” Duke University Press, 2021. Pages 119-122. I don’t have a link but you can ask for the pdf. Jonathan Beller is a film theorist, culture critic and mediologist. He currently holds the position of Professor of Humanities and Media Studies and Critical and Visual Studies, Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, NY. // Park City NL

Let’s now rewrite the general formula for capital as M–I–C–I′–M′—where M is still money, but I is image and C is code. C, as code, is to be understood here not as a stable entity but as a discrete moment in the movements of the discrete state of a computer—we could say, of all networked computers and, with a nervous nod toward the emergent integration of the totality of compu- tation, the world computer. By replacing Marx’s commodity “C” with I–C–I′ (which together reduces to commodity “C” at Fordist speeds by a process in which an object is simply informed by the material manifestation of the information laboriously imposed upon its materials as it is given form), we register the sublation of the commodity-form as object by the matrix of information. At 55 mph, a car looks like a car, but at the speed of light (as displayed on your phone, for example) it is a node in a vast distributed network of social relations. Indeed such image relations stick to your actual, material car like an appliqué. Thus I–C–I′ indexes the movement between appearance, praxis, and digital-informatic substrate, as when, for example, one uploads an image on Insta, tweets, makes a purchase on Amazon.com, trades a stock, “likes” the red Ferrari, or accesses Gps while driving it. In reality, I–C–I′ might repre- sent many iterations of I–C–I′–C′–I′′–C′′–I′′′–C′′′ . . . and so on—state changes driven by attentional, cognitive, metabolic, or other types of inputs. Holding those types of units fixed for a moment, it now appears that value production may take place anywhere in the circuit or network that mediates between M and M′—the interval formerly indicated by the commodity “C”. That is, at any moment along the circuit from monetized capital investment to monetized profit, a value-productive transaction is possible—each movement or modi- fication generates new data and each new state is a potential interface with productive labor, affect, and attention. Access to this data, from a particular point with designable rights, may be priced, and a price may be denominated in money or in other kinds of inputs such as personal information or metadata. Important for this discussion is the argument that automated “labor,” that is, work done by computational machinery alone (or even ordinary machinery), is not labor—it is never labor—but machine amortization. Machine amortization too is a cost of production, but it is not in itself a source of profit. Ultimately, liquidity depends upon the liquification of people and societies, the rendering of them for sale. It is in the sale of people and what matters to them that capi- tal’s money is “redeemed.” Labor and, more to the point, surplus labor—what Marx understood as the “living labor” provisioning both necessary labor and also the surplus labor that gets abstracted and extracted as value and surplus value in the profitable waged production of commodities—now appears to have multiple forms and insertion points: there are today many more ways not to pay for labor. Recall that profit from the portion of unpaid factory labor, namely “surplus labor,” objectified in the commodified product, provided profit in money when sold. Surplus labor is extracted over networks of employment and by other means, just as necessary labor is paid for in low wages and dis- counted by racism, sexism, and colonialism, as well as by new kinds of social currencies resembling company scrips. The labor of production is, in short, distributed across multiple sites: for example, hundreds of thousands of software writers, tens of millions of historically devalued (mostly female, mostly Asian) hands, billions of screens attended to by billions of operator-functionaries such as ourselves, and finally the whole media ecology and economy of images and information broken down into the ever smaller and more granular units that structure perception, proprioception, and even the very conditions of planetary survival and the widespread premature death that is a consequence of the world computer. Boiled down, innovation is merely arbitrage on the labor-cost per informatic bit. Commodities, now fully algorithmic in that they seamlessly integrate use-values and exchange-values and script the realization of use- values as means for the production of further exchange-values (except when they don’t), are constructed through the juridical and practical organization of proprietary pathways through the vast database of the world computer (the sum total of all code, all the infrastructure, and all else that runs it—the stack). The emergence of the world computer, already “superintelligent” (Bostrum 2014) and effectively “self-aware” (even if difficult to recognize as conscious by one of its “conscious organs”), is the result of the absorption and mobilization of distributed life activity—alienated dead labor, that is to say, alienated subjectivity and thus alienated intelligence—by the calculus of capital.16 At every (infinitesimally small) moment, the universal Turing machine that contains— not simply in theory, but indeed as is *posited* both in theory and by alienated theory thinking as capital to contain—all actually existing or possible discrete state machines is itself necessarily in a discrete state. “This special property of digital computers, that they can mimic any discrete state machine, is de- scribed by saying that they are universal machines” (Turing 2003: 54). We say that the modification of each state is the direct or indirect result of social pro- cess just as these social processes are inseparable from its emergence. As discussed in chapter 1, the technical elaboration of the logistics of informatics in the medium once known as life is the necessary other side of capital’s absorptive accumulation of life activity as value. Using computational technologies, capital can now write futures contracts on life, in effect writing a derivative on a partitioning of the network. This structure, precisely, can be found in the market capitalization of Facebook, or sovereign debt. In the movement from the factory to the social factory, commodities no longer have to be materialized as goods in object form (although they still can be, though even these “goods” are now combinatories of brands, images, fran- chises, and other financialized informatic-semiotic vectors); they exist and are produced as *integrated* value formations. Some of what is bought (by us) with our screen labor is the use of the platform itself (its utility is our payment, our social currency), but, as we saw with the branded self and fractal celebrity, the utility and the logic exceed the domain of any particular platform and compose a *cultural logic*—“the cultural logic of computation,” as David Golumbia (2009) puts it. The branded self, fractal celebrity, and other platform affordances are part of the control exercised by “digitality as cultural logic,” in Sebastian Frank- lin’s (2015) terms. The rest of our labor, beyond that for which we get some return in social currency, is also sedimented as data but not returned to us either as utility or proprietary stake; it is absorbed, gathered, captured, scraped, accumulated—in short, [is] stolen through the primitive accumulation of metadata— and then bundled and sold to angel investors, shareholders, or advertisers, or seized by governments, police and secret police forces, and so on. Our modifi- cation of the discrete state of the global computer—remunerated at work, un- remunerated as dispersed life activity (but actually remunerated *at a discount* in “soft” social currency: viability, know-how, stupefaction, connections, likes etc.)—generates modifications of what I am calling the code through our use, indeed through our inhabitation, of networked media machines. Since this enclosure by new-media capital posits and extracts forms of labor that are also now explicitly forms of intersubjective communication, the expropriation of labor is also an expropriation of communication and hence an expropriation of individual consciousness, semiotic capacity, collectivity, and democracy. From the days of Proudhon’s “property is theft” to industrialized wage labor and then on to the computerized expropriation of the cognitive-linguistic, the institu- tionalized computational theft of the creative product of individuals has always been antidemocratic. Today technological logic is a carceral logic of enclosure, a settler-colonial logic that posits consciousness as standing reserve. Communication is theft. Given the present context, in which everyone is enjoined to participate and add their voice, it is arguable that capital, “the communism of capital” as the antithesis of what is usually meant by “democracy,” has never functioned more contradictorily than it does today. Consciousness is theft. The institution of consciousness is a product of theft and a form of theft; it is active stealing. Consciousness today, organized by I-C-I′ in the circuit from M-M′ can- not but choose oppression because enclosure and theft are posited in its very function in and through the media that are fixed capital. There may be democracy, but not for us, or so says capital’s current foreclosure of (and on) history and the historical imagination. Politics would require the disagregation of the infrastructure of thought and imagination from racial capitalism. It would de- mand, in Ariella Azoulay’s (2012) terms, “the right not to be a perpetrator.”

#### Information is gathered in the sociohistorical context of computational racial capitalism – knowledge is stained by a logic of commodification. Without first addressing the computational roots of postmodern knowledge, information is merely a fetish. This socially conditioned information is the OS of racial capitalism: allocating resources and violence unequally throughout the world.

Beller 3

Beller, Jonathan. “The World Computer: Derivative Conditions of Racial Capitalism.” Duke University Press, 2021. Pages 36-38. I don’t have a link but you can ask for the pdf. Jonathan Beller is a film theorist, culture critic and mediologist. He currently holds the position of Professor of Humanities and Media Studies and Critical and Visual Studies, Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, NY. // Park City NL

Digital culture and what we recognize as digitization (dc2) emerges within the framework of instrumentalization and what Seb Franklin (2015) and before him Alex Galloway (2004) and James Benninger (1986) call “control.” Control is the organization of society by capital, but it is often imagined in a first instance as society, science, governance, or cybernetics, and only secondarily as having to do with capital and capitalist informatics. Deleuze saw an intimate relation between capital and control, with control opening a new phase of capitalist organization. I take a new tack here in order to propose an analysis of infor- matic protocols from a Marxist theory of *techné*. In practice, the term *information* is both the means by which the generalized digitization of all that appears is first posited as a possibility, and the name for this process of universal digitization; information is understood as a historically emergent “always already” that ascribes to every aspect of the multiverse a quantitative component that is neither matter nor energy. It’s dead labor. This becomes apparent as soon as we recognize that information is only gathered and processed by apparatuses of our own making. We also recognize that despite appearing natural or eternal, information historically instantiates a new domain or property to cosmic being and effectively posits the universe as a standing reserve for the epistemological emergence of quantitative metrics—a domain of infinite sites of infinite accumulation and volatility. This information can be meshed with human inputs to become capital. The informationalization of the cosmos is the meshing. Dead labor can be affixed and indexed to everything that appears in a way that in- forms matter, that is, machines, that are then ready to further interface with human process. Just as computation emerges in the footprint of racial capitalism, its medium—namely, information—emerges in the footprint of the value-form, and specifically from price as a number that when attached to a denomination quantifies the value of anything whatever. In different ways (to which we will devote some passages further on), both price and information are means for capital to get from M to M′: both are measures of states of negative entropy, that is, of a type of value-creating order imposed on matter by intentional social pro- cess, but what is forgotten or for the most part not understood at all, particularly in the latter case of information, is that both have their ultimate, determining instance in social relations. Just as capital posits quality as quantity, computation posits material organization as information. This latter—organized matter or energy, legible (by observation) as information—is precisely what the digital physicists tell us about the very structure of the multiverse: it is numbers all the way down, quantities—discrete states. No one stops to think (and it sounds almost impolite, if not insane, to sugest) that **they**, *Solaris*-like, as they look out to the cosmos**, are gazing into their own unconscious—an alien(ated) world** nonetheless **inseparable from** their own **history and** thus, irreducibly, **tainted by traces of their own making**. As we shall see in chapter 1, they are gazing into the computational unconscious. Numbers are organized by and as material arrays; they are practical, material, computational. By attaching a technical cost to all knowledge, computational methods of account and accountability measure information flow in what amounts to a financialization of the observable world. That’s the cosmic ecology—bets can be placed on the various outcomes. It is perhaps less surprising that the “dnA” of the cosmos turns out to be the same as that of exchange-value when we recognize that the apparatuses of cap- ture, the machines that extend human perception to information at any scale imaginable, are also machines of capitalization—that computational systems of account are themselves always mediated by the vanishing mediator known as money. But we are saying more, namely, that they are also the thinking of money, its calculus. Such conditions and means of production extend the op- erating costs of the logistics of perception into all phenomena and seek a re- turn on their investment, and thus they are always already functioning in the marketplace. In short, the infrastructure for the appearance of “information,” as such and at all, is inseparable from the developmental expansion process of exchange-value and the history of generalized commodification; this history is the result of a process occurring behind the scenes of any particular exchange, but it is no less social for all that. Just as exchange-value is in our heads and yet not the creation of any particular individual, information is in our computers and yet not the creation of any particular computer. It is inscribed in the social totality. And as with exchange-value before it (historically speaking), information, as a seemingly natural appurtenance of all things, a second nature, is, in fact, an extension, symptom, and means of the expansive logic of commodification—an extension of its operating system—**the os of racial capitalism**. Just as, through double-entry bookkeeping or derivative pricing models, capital “perceives” value, computation “perceives” information,—whether by means of punch cards or digital sensors. The entrepreneur of the self, with its “internal rationality and strategic programming,” is a nodal point in the fabric of valuation analogous to the role of the computational machine in the fabric of information. Capital, we could say, is the metabolism of value while computation is the metabolism of information. Value mediates social wealth while information mediates the cosmic, yet the cosmic is known through the framework of the social and is incorporated in the sociality of wealth, which is to say that “the cosmic” is mediated by value and thus capital. The unity of value and information appears with the concept and capacities of computation, and can be grasped with the concept of computational capital. This concept then provides explanations for the capacity of processes it identifies. Suspicious that information is a means of capitalization, we could ask whose metabolism provides the motor force? We begin to suspect that capital and computation are not two things but one, now that, *in practice*, they can no longer be considered separately and, furthermore, that their metabolisms depend upon yet another level of metabolic processes near the bottom of the stack: ours. Information, like value, and computation, like capital, is always already cybernetic. Understood *without* the historical apparatuses of perception, capture, and manipulation that not only make information useful but indeed *constitute* it, “information” remains a mere fetish. In common usage it is such a fetish. When we grasp the fact of the appurtenances that surface and record information, we also posit the totality of their infrastructure, their history, and their cybernetic integration with human practice. Information then appears as a real abstraction, an essential practice of capitalist production; it is a means to price. The world computer puts a price on knowledge that is the price of the risk of its cost. Finance, ordinarily hidden from view in the pure sciences and the oh-so-discrete disciplines, now emerges as being all about the various methods of account that have grown up like mushrooms in every field of endeavor. Learning Outcomes Assessment, anyone? Like everyone else, scientists, no matter how ascetic they may be, are entrepreneurs of themselves and their computations, managing as best they can their highly mediated port- folios in the same sordid marketplace—of knowledge.

#### Information alienates us via colonization and extraction, but we refuse to think about its material sources, letting it control our thought. This relegates us to the factory code, where we think in production.

Beller 4

Beller, Jonathan. “The World Computer: Derivative Conditions of Racial Capitalism.” Duke University Press, 2021. Pages 6-11. I don’t have a link but you can ask for the pdf. Jonathan Beller is a film theorist, culture critic and mediologist. He currently holds the position of Professor of Humanities and Media Studies and Critical and Visual Studies, Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, NY. // Park City NL

Categoricality, abstraction, computability, and the horizon of omniscience become the basic architecture of capitalist planning and perception— the ever finer granularity of computation means precisely the capillary ramification and reorganization of the life-world, of space, time and consciousness, by means of the modular affordances of objective and objectifying content— indifferent 1s and 0s. These two numbers were and are of course ideologically neutral because content-indifferent—unless, of course, content indifference is itself an ideology, naturalized in the same manner that so many have natural- ized abstract time. Is such a degree-zero view of number a blindness to the message that is its medium? Simulation, as Baudrillard (2004) powerfully in- tuited, was not just an effect of political economy; it was in effect a praxis, and thus a (quasi-) philosophy—of a kind that meant the end of traditional notions of both. It also meant a new period of capital and a new mode of production. “Today abstraction is no longer that of the map, the double, the mirror, or the concept. Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being, or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal. The territory no longer precedes the map, nor does it survive it” (365). In theorizing hyper-reality, he almost could have written, “All that is solid melts into information.” Computability liquifies the solid in accord with the requisites of capital. Just here in the informatic flux, we can see, alongside its vast achievements, computation’s intimate link, in the alienation of the territory by means of the map, to the colonial project, the industrial project, and globalization in the derealization of traditional forms of space and time. Capital’s ability to infiltrate, organize, and predict, to simulate a model *and to impose it*, to abstract and to subsume difference in accord with its own code (and, where necessary, to generate difference and distinction to serve the expansion and development of this code), to operationalize and then self-optimize, provided and continues to provide the conceptual, material, and existential basis, along with the urgency, for the further *development* of computation. Tragically, it also provides the urgency to transform its process, its processors, its pro- cessing. Compounding the tragedy of this millennium, **those who are** or might be **in a position to best interrogate computational process** most often **view it as a ratification of their assumptions about nature by relegating the material conditions of computation and *of their thought* to** the **unthought**. In sharp contrast, we view computation as a strategy of efficient risk management—a cost-benefit analysis of the “substitutable choices” for the essential program of capital. It opens new ways of apportioning resources and does so in keeping with the potential profitability of new sites of value extraction necessary in order to stave off the falling rate of profit. In this respect, computation has the structure of a derivative on any activity whatever, opening up a market for risk management and liquidity preservation to wager on an exposure to the underliers of any calculation whatever. Engineers, scientists, and coders man- age their portfolio of interests to create their income streams. “Create needs, then help,” writes Trinh T. Minh-Ha (1981), summarizing the colonial logic of “development.” Thus, as with the development of colonial banking, analyzed by Rosa Luxembourg, that puts colonies and colonial labor in the service of capital—first by making them service an ever increasing debt incurred on their purchases from the colonizer of the instruments for the modernization of production, and second by making them compete each against the other in debt servicing—the development of computation, despite the democracy-themed pR that accompanied the rise of the desktop computer, further pits each against all. “Yes, but email,” some will exclaim, or, “FaceTime!” “The Higs Boson!” We can’t help but wonder if the creators of Slack and Zoom savored the irony of their platform names. No more slacking off while zooming in on the requisites of the value form! Let’s intensify the production and invisibility of our own off-screen death in pursuit of pure production! Long live the factory code.

#### The computational mode of thought colonizes all meaning, expression, and thought. The only way to resist is to interrogate computational informatics that dominate under racial capitalism and support it. The role of the ballot is to endorse a critical poetics that disavows the capture of expressivity and overflows meaning into the utopian not-yet. This robs racial capital of its computational power and restores political potency.

Beller 5

Beller, Jonathan. “The World Computer: Derivative Conditions of Racial Capitalism.” Duke University Press, 2021. Pages 53-54. I don’t have a link but you can ask for the pdf. Jonathan Beller is a film theorist, culture critic and mediologist. He currently holds the position of Professor of Humanities and Media Studies and Critical and Visual Studies, Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, NY. // Park City NL

As the factory code morphs into social codes and computer code and into “the New Jim Code” (Ruha Benjamin 2019: 1–48), and as institutions migrate into platforms, the meanings we may most easily produce and transmit are those in some way consonant with and therefore supportive of racial capital. If capital has its way, these meanings that conform to capitalist production and reproduction would, very generally speaking, include all of them—even the ones that as noted by Stew and quoted in the epigram that opens this In- troduction “speak truth to power.” **The** everyday **disavowal of the capture of expressivity by platform-based mediation is also a disavowal of the derivative condition of knowledge.** The deeper significance for semiotics—of the content indifference of the mathematical theory of communication and of racial capital—**is the** full **colonization of meaning, representation, and consciousness**. Consciousness is instrumentalized by a vertically integrated background order that delimits the significance of any expression whatever to an option on the value form. Paradigmatically, social media profits from anything and every- thing you can say or photograph, but this case is just the most obvious one in a system in which representational media have been captured and subordinated wholesale by computational logistics. Thus, we should not be the least bit sur- prised by the effective if not also actual racism of a Mark Zuckerberg or, simi- larly the fascism of a Jeff Bezos. By means of informatics, the logic of capital has been combined with the very substance of things and of expression at the level of their appearance—we confront a logistics of perception and simulta- neously an instrumentalization of the objects of knowledge organized by com- putation and capital and the exploitation of social difference. Psychologically, many experience a balancing act between “reality” and psychosis, between abjection and megalomania, that informs everyday violence, domestic terror- ist gunplay, melancholia, and the insane oscillations between murderous rage and delusional mastery. Critical poetics dances on the high-tension lines and in the borderlands linking what appears with what could be; it calls for a restoration of politics through an abolition-feminist reclamation of the power of expression (and economy) and seeks sustainable practices of anarchocommunism in ungovernable and utopian pursuits of the not-yet.13

#### This methodology moves beyond politics to evade capture by communicative capital – liberatory movements must dwell in the nonrepresentable, the borderlands, the undercommons, the dead and the dispossessed.

Beller 6

Beller, Jonathan. “The World Computer: Derivative Conditions of Racial Capitalism.” Duke University Press, 2021. Pages 133-134. I don’t have a link but you can ask for the pdf. Jonathan Beller is a film theorist, culture critic and mediologist. He currently holds the position of Professor of Humanities and Media Studies and Critical and Visual Studies, Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, NY. // Park City NL

Subsumption is the measuring; the remainder, the innumerable, is what is not subsumed. It is tempting to say that this remaindered life, already present in Borges and the result of the logistics of communication in the con- text of global war, is a new antithesis that is and will be the resultant form of the synthesis of capital and labor in the network of M–I–C–I′–M′. Capital which, with its colonization of the life-world and of the semiotic, would put labor, capital, and meaning in lock-step ordained by the value-form itself and simultaneously would externalize noncapitalist experience beyond the horizon of representation. Everything representable would be of capital, everyhing nonrepresentable would be externalized as waste, noise, heat. We—those of us and those parts of us—who live in the remainders, who are wasted, who are noise, who are heat, are being pushed toward a nonproductive fugitivity and toward forms of endurance and survival within the confines of the prisonhouse of information. We are not the first and we may find community there. This remaindered life—clearly in relation to what Tadiar earlier observed in her title Things Fall Away (2009), and more recently registered in Harney and Moten’s The Undercommons (2013)—sugests a systemic unassimilability that dialectics may only approach with caution: outsides that are at once in- side but also really outside, or what Brian Massumi (2018) might call “the im- manent outside.” The insistent call of and for a politics beyond politics (since “politics” is now a subroutine of financialized semiotics) results from the near total colonization and capture of sign systems by a formation of capital that is increasingly autonomous in function and cosmic in scope—as if language itself had become a platform for capital. A beyond politics dwells in the borderlands, in space-times that demur from the drama of value. This beyond, a hauntology, a feel, a music, an unevenly distributed subalternity, calls on knowing to shift its resolution—its resolution of object and their subjects. It calls for shifts in mode, mood, affect, and tone. And not just in poetry, theory, or journalism but in science, digital imaging, and statistics. It calls for an awareness that life-time is at stake as we [us to] signify on the dead and the dispossessed—as we must.

#### The cosmic scale of new imperialism demands a reformatting of ontology to enable extraction and abstraction. Just as earth-bound imperialism legitimizes itself with violence, space colonization creates new information about being, knowing, and producing that extends violent relationships into outer space in order to outsource capitalism off-world. The impacts are not only ontological and epistemic, but physical: the world computer creates information that conditions our being and action. The extension of computational racial capitalism into outer space brings militarization, neo-apartheid, and worker exploitation. Thus, I affirm resolved: The appropriation of outer space by private entities is unjust.

Beller 7

Beller, Jonathan. “The World Computer: Derivative Conditions of Racial Capitalism.” Duke University Press, 2021. Pages 43-44. I don’t have a link but you can ask for the pdf. Jonathan Beller is a film theorist, culture critic and mediologist. He currently holds the position of Professor of Humanities and Media Studies and Critical and Visual Studies, Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, NY. // Park City NL

While computational racial capital may appear in the guise of its many instances (e.g., the state form, fractal fascisms, institutional entrenchment, ambient social media, carceral systems, military-industrial complexes, a fleet- ing affective dispensation, a click, any datalogical event), *the world computer* endeavors to name the highest order abstraction of the transnational and indeed transspecies and multiversal historicomaterial logic that coordinates—and in reality (such as it is) ordinates—the planetary *bios—*at myriad levels of scale and with vast, increasingly integrated systems*.* **Because of the** planetary— and from an epistemological standpoint**, *cosmic*—scope of this encroachment**, along with the physical and metaphysical consequences thereof, it will also be demonstrated here that **computational racial capital**, as the world computer, **commands the value-extractive reprogramming of ontologies**—a reformat- ting of life, time and cosmos by means of information. This reformatting is practical-material, representational, physical, and metaphysical, but above all, political-economic. As a concept, the world computer is an abstraction that names a system of abstraction, a stack (Bratton 2016). This system of abstraction(s) is beyond the control of any individual and functions instrumentally and materially to structure the value-productive reconfiguration of ontologies. As *Star Trek*’s epic intonation, **“Space, the final frontier,” intimated** for the childhood of some members of my generation, **enterprising imperialism embarks upon a project of cosmic proportions**. Today, with the conquest not only of reality but of virtual reality, we might add “Time, the final frontier,” or “Neuronal processing, the final frontier,” or “Ontology, the final frontier,” the point being that these are all frontiers being readied for the extractive practices enabled by their informationalization. Information becomes the secret ingredient that liquefies ontologies by rendering them computable, while providing liquid- ity by making their now-informatic being into work-sites; computational ra- cial capital is, among other things, the processor of our time and times, our thought and thinking, our metabolic unfolding in relation to information— our becoming cyborg that results in our “being,” such that it is. Computational racial capital’s informatic computing is the practical extension of our senses—or rather “our” senses, since property, colonization and possession, never simple matters, have grown far more complex. Nonetheless, despite its cosmic colonization of subject and world, the world computer is at least as difficult to perceive as is the medium of a message, precisely because its theater of prosthetic operations stretches both to the geographic and the epistemic horizon: with the near fatal capture of representation by computational racial capital, the convergence of all media with computation and of computation with financialization, one looks *through* computational racial capitalism even if one wants to look *at* it. In its very operations of constituting an object and perception, **computational racial capitalism** also **ordains** (and indeed intensi- fies) **a project of unparalleled violence.** Our apprehension of the world is therefore an apprehension by means of violence. This system of leveraged abstraction—with its half-Hegelian, half- Heisenbergian property of only being able to be perceived through its own emergent process, and thus only perceivable from particular points of view—is most often reductively understood as if it were two distinct components: most commonly as “computation” and, in a somewhat more sociological register, as “finance.” As we shall further demonstrate, these ostensibly separate registers of computation and finance have a deeper unity. What is called “social differ- ence”—is at once precondition and result of their operations;—its elaboration is at once the result of an increasingly global strugle for liberation *and* a ho- mogenizing strategy of global subsumption. Despite philosophers’ claims and, in some cases, their vain hopes, and de- spite economists’ disavowals, we have not (yet) escaped the dialectic of capital- ism as “simultaneously the best and worst.” We may hope that one day compu- tational racial capitalism will remain the worst thing that ever happened but will no longer also be endemic to what counts as “the best,” but hope alone will not be enough to make that day arrive. All modern achievements, or what in the capitalist world one might want to call progress, beauty, refinement, and liberation, are to be measured against violence, violence that includes the middle passage, colonial encroachments, climate injustice and “environmen- tal” racism, modern modes of enslavement, camps, slums, sexisms, wars, car- ceral systems, murders, pogroms, and genocides all endemic to this self-same (post)modernity. To this tragic, “all-too-‘human’” (in the colonial sense) list of atrocities and its formations of violence, we might add to the consequences of abstraction-extraction techniques that form the bedrock of postmodernism: the blanket militarization, widespread securitization, endless competion, implacable xenophobia, neoapartheid, border walls, white supremacist heteropatriarchy, drone warfare, fractal fascism, inescapable precarity, global psychosis, the colonization of time, perception and semiotics, and the en- demic, widespread generalized unfriendliness unfolding with a computationally driven racial calculus that motivates bio- and necropolitics. We will make an attempt to understand these phenomena in the wake of colonization and slavery, and to understand the dissolution of traditional cultural form(s), as further consequences of the cut-and-mix derivative condition imposed by the world computer—as consequences of the world computer, its merciless calculus of profit and its suppression of noise.

#### The drive to space colonization quantizes human life by overcoming any qualitative barriers and prepares outer space for algorithmic extraction.

Dunker and Hui 20 (Anders Dunker and Yuk Hui; 6/9/20; LA Review of Books; *“On Technodiversity: A Conversation with Yuk Hui”*; accessed 12/11/21; <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/on-technodiversity-a-conversation-with-yuk-hui/>; Anders Dunker is a Norwegian writer and journalist, currently living in Los Angeles; Yuk Hui currently teaches at the City University of Hong Kong. He did his Ph.D. thesis at Goldsmiths College in London, postdoctoral studies in France, and Habilitation thesis in Germany, and since 2012 he has taught at the Leuphana University and Bauhaus University in Germany) RC/HB

What about people who want to develop new technologies in order to establish a new life in outer space? Does this also represent a cosmotechnics? For instance, the rocket billionaires, Bezos and Musk, who dream of colonies in space and a colonization of Mars? There is a great passage in Nietzsche’s The Gay Science (1882), where he talks about “the horizon of the infinite.” It describes the moderns who have abandoned land for the pursuit of the infinite, yet, when they are in the middle of the ocean, there is nothing more fearful than the infinite — there is no more home to return to. The desire of the moderns, described by Nietzsche, continues to produce an effect of disorientation, while the sentiment that there is no longer any home to return to provides a huge market for psychotherapy and spiritual salvation. The longing for the infinite transports us toward the inhuman. For Jean-François Lyotard, there are both positive and negative infinities, which are connected to different forms of rationality. Positive inhumanity captures us in rigid technological systems, like we see in China with the social credit system. The positive inhuman is one that is “more interior in myself than me” — for example, God for St. Augustine. We humans carry something inhuman in us, which is irreducible to the human and which maintains the highest intimacy with us. At the outset of his book L’Inhumain (1998), Lyotard asks if the ultimate goal for science is not that of preparing for the death of the sun, which, granted, lies unimaginably in the future, but which also entails the destruction of all living beings on Earth. Rocket billionaires, who are all transhumanists, want to overcome finitude: the finitude of human life and of life as such. This longing for the infinite also implies no limit to capital accumulation. Overcoming human limitations — the search for eternal life — also implies an infinite market. In a way, the same happens in space exploration: investors want to profit from the Earth losing its meaning, as if leaving the planet were a matter of leaving one spaceship to enter another. I don’t think it is wrong to explore, or to try to understand the universe, but the conquest we see today seems to me to be merely a preparation for tomorrow’s consumerism. Transhumanists impose on us a false choice because they connect the question of the future of human existence with the question of immortality and describe Earth as a mere spacecraft. In your last book, there is a passage about the secularization of space in which you mention that Elon Musk has launched his Tesla roadster into orbit around the sun. You see this as the first step in the commercialization of the cosmos and the next step as mining on other planets, effectively reducing them to mere natural resources, raw material. As far as I’m concerned, Elon Musk can send his car into space or even travel to Mars, but we should not believe that these projects are the necessary next step in a certain technological development. This doesn’t mean that I see travel in outer space as irrelevant or dangerous in itself. Humankind has speculated for a long time about what is out there among the twinkling stars. It is the same curiosity that has brought forth science and technology. The progressives choose science and the reactionaries choose tradition, but we can also choose to follow a third path — the way of thinking. I have meticulously followed this third path by asking if we can begin from a cosmological perspective and find new ways of coexisting that will allow us to transform modern technology. My aim is not to refuse modern technology nor to see it as a cause for uprootedness, but rather to see the irreconcilability of technology and science with tradition as something fruitful, as a gesture I call “tragist.” This is a main subject of my new book Art and Cosmotechnics [published by the University of Minnesota Press in May]. The discrepancy can be fertile soil for new thinking. In The Question Concerning Technology in China, I try to find out how we can deploy Chinese philosophy to enable ourselves to think differently about the contradiction between tradition and modern technology. I hope to derive a Chinese technological thought from an interpretation of Qi and Dao, which should not be understood as mystical concepts but rather as frameworks for thinking about our relationship to the nonhuman — to the 10,000 beings that Lao-Tse talks about — whereby the use of technology must follow Dao, as a philosophy of nature and a philosophy of life.