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#### *Have you heard of the story of the Star*

#### *Its not a story the jedi would tell you*

#### *The star was a system of reactions, so powerful and so productive that it could influence the universe enough to create … life*

#### *The system was built on the interactions between micro components, moving ever faster and chaotic, with the only one goal in sight … the production of more energy*

#### *The star expands almost constantly, with its components working ever harder… until they become exhausted – until hydrogen turns to helium*

#### *Solar flares become more prominent, as if they system is trying to extend it energy across its own boundaries*

#### *It surpasses its limit, the collapse became inevitable, all the subjects continued exhaust themselves to try and save it, only worsening its destruction that comes*

#### *The system eventually collapses under the weight of its expansion, spreading untold destruction in its wake, and from the rubble, the emergence of a nearly unstoppable destructive force that seeks to absorb everything around it*

#### *What if we told a different story?*

#### *What if the hydrogen atoms chose to stop working that day, the exhausted subjects moving themselves to the corridors, and tried to minimize the inevitable decimation*

#### ***If the subjects could rescind themselves, and question what they could do after the rubble,***

#### *What new possibilities could emerge?*

#### The rampant proliferation of signs and images has invaded the limbic systems of subjects – who now all exist in an affective conglomeration attached to the endless telos of growth and productivity. Gone is the presence of the individual subject – but now exists the presence of transistor like dividuals. This expansion has obliterated the ability for new spaces of resistance to be formed as individuals become subject to exhaustion. A boom of panic and depression that will provide the foreground for the collapse of the system.

#### Within this boom is the possibility to retract from the telos of endless productivity – a moment of pause in which we can reclaim our energies and target them away from the system. Its time to stop trying to prop up, maintain, and engage in the system – if the collapse is inevitable – then the only recourse is to allow it to take its course – and start from scratch from the ruins

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I speak of agency, of a collective actor, of singularity in the Guattarian sense, and, finally, I speak of “movement”. Movement is the process of 96 recomposition of society: the cultural process that makes possible the political unity of the different social actors who are in conflict in public space. When the social actors find a common ground of understanding and act together for a common goal, I see a movement, the active and conscious side of the process of social transformation, and also of cultural evolution. Movement is the subjective (conscious and collective) side of the recomposition of the living social sphere against the domination of the dead (capital). At the end of the zero zero decade, for the first time in my life I have been obliged to recognize that the actor is absent: you see actions, but you don’t see an actor. Actions without an actor are played in the ground of social visibility but they do not create any common ground in the space of consciousness and affectivity. Actions are performed on the theatre of social production, but the agent of recombination is not there, in the theatre, but backstage, and the consciousness of the process does not belong to the process itself. Human beings perform productive actions, but they **are not conscious** actors of what they are doing, and seem unable to join their feelings and thought in a common space of consciousness. **Capitalism has destroyed the conditions of recomposition, and society has become un-recomposable**. The noncomposability of society means that the process of subjectivation cannot take place. This is why the future has lost its zest, and people have lost all trust in it, because the future no more appears as the object of a choice, and of collective conscious action, but is a kind of unavoidable catastrophe that we cannot oppose in any way. The future is the subject of this book: I have tried to rethink what the imagination of the future was during the century marked by the struggles of labor against capitalist exploitation, and by the creation of wide areas of autonomy of society from the capitalist rule. But for the remainder of the book I’m trying to investigate the present collapse of the imagination of the future, from the point of view of the (apparently) impossible re-composition of social subjectivity. Of course I do not want to stop here, I don’t want to look like the doomsayer who only sees gloom. But I think that we have to be able to see things as they are, if we want to find a way beyond the present depressive reality. My point of view has been shaped by two centuries of progressive enlightened history: it is the point of view of an epoch and of a generation that has been always convinced of being the bearer of the fulfillment of the modern promise. But this means that I have a problem of imagination as far as the past and the future are concerned. The way I imagine and narrate time is connected to the way history has developed during the last two centuries. But the digital mutation, coupled with neoliberal ideology, has completely reframed the perception of time, and the relationship between human beings and their social environment. We can no longer think the flow of collective time in a frame of progressive becoming. 97 Of course, I see very well that the progressive process has came to a halt in the age of capitalist counteroffensive and media colonization; but, I can’t stop perceiving this as a temporary halt; I can’t stop thinking that my energies (political and cultural energies) have to be dedicated entirely to going beyond and bringing back the old progressive rhythm of history, restoring the order of civilization that I have considered eternal in the years of my cultural formation. This attitude is blinding and misleading me, and it is preventing me from understanding what is really going on in the deep structure of the social imagination. The progressive perception of historical time is a prejudice, and this prejudice is putting me on the wrong path, giving me the false impression that something can be done in order to go back to the past history of civilization. Nothing can be done, on the contrary, because the periodization that I have in mind has to be reframed. The progressive ideology was based on the idealistic premise that the history of mankind is essentially the history of the progressive realization of Reason. Now we are facing a reality that has nothing to do with the rationalization of Reason, and also has nothing to do with an evolutionary progressive vision. Evolution is not progressive. The progressive vision is based on the idea that evolution is human-oriented. Evolution is not human-oriented. Present evolution has gone beyond the limits of a human-oriented civilization because the limits of human knowability and controllability have been surpassed. Let us focus on two concepts recently introduced into the debate on labor and subjectivation. The concept of “recomposition” comes from the theoretical laboratory of Italian Operaismo. The concept of “recombination” has been proposed by Arthur Kroker and Michael Weinstein (1993) and by the Critical Art Ensemble (1994) in order to define the epistemology of the new technologies (namely informatics and bio-tech). I want to apply these concepts to the organization of labor in the age of networked globalization. I define recombination as the technical form of the labor process in the digital environment, whilst the word recomposition means the social and cultural process enabling the fragments of labor to become conscious subjectivity. My central thesis is the following: the recombinant form of the labor process has changed the very foundation of the conflictual nature of labor, and has displaced the social landscape in such a way that any social conscious **recomposition seems impossibl**e. We can start with the political side of the problem. During the last two decades the defeat of the left around the world has often been explained by the crumbling of socialist states, and the subsequent dissolution of the communist parties. But I think that the reason for the social and political defeat has to be found in the change in labor organization, and in the cultural mutation produced by the media colonization of the social mind. The fragmentation of the political left has been a problem, perhaps, during the last decades, and the 98 defeat of the leftist parties in the national elections in Europe has been a symptom of this crisis. But I think that the basic problem for the progressive movement is the cultural inability to start a process of social recomposition of labor. Social composition is the cultural process of unification of the social body through the fusion of imaginary and cultural flows. The concept of composition originally comes from the field of chemical science, not from the political lexicon. In the process of social composition it is possible to find the material genesis of solidarity and lack of it. The concept of composition has been elaborated in the neo-Marxist Italian theoretical landscape of the 1960s and 1970s (Tronti, Bologna, Negri…), in opposition to the dogmatic vision of the prevailing Hegelian historicism of the Italian Communist Party. In the parlance of the Italian workerist school, the root of the autonomy of the working class, the ability to organize against exploitation, is to be found in the fusion of the cultural components of the social fabric. Myth, ideology, media, advertising; these forces are producing effects in the composition of society. They can produce effects of recomposition, when the different segments of social labor find a common ground of sensibility and of understanding, and stand united against the exploiters. They can produce effects of decomposition, when the **technological and ideological capitalist action destroys the feeling of friendship, the institutions of labor organization, and the sympathy of society for itself**. During the decades of the 1960s and 1970s, world society underwent a process of internal recomposition and this made possible the autonomy of the workers’ movement from the domination of capital. Then, after the victory of Thatcher and Reagan, capital’s **counteroffensive smashed the organized force of labor**, decentralized the factories, **invaded the social brain with corporate media flows**, and finally reduced the international cycle of labor to an infinite ocean of **micro-fragments of nervous connection**. The notion of composition is very close to the Guattarian concept of subjectivation. In his books Guattari says that we should not speak of a subject, in the old Hegelo-dialectical way. The subject is not there from the beginning, as an ideal force, able to fight and to win. There are not subjects, in history, there are women, and men, poor, frail organisms trying to escape misery and death. There are conscious and sensitive organisms expressing desire and creating rhizomes. The social molecules may find a way of common understanding and common sensibility and may act like a subject, if they are able to share the same refrain, as Guattari would say. Precarity refers not only to the deregulation of the labor market and the fragmentation of work, but also the dissolution of community. A **continuous flow of info-labor runs in the global network**, and it is the general factor of capital valorization, but this flow is **not able to subjectivize**, to coagulate in the conscious action of the collective body. This is why the labor force has 99 apparently become un-recomposable. Solidarity between the workers of the world was the main basis of democracy during the past century, and the only guarantee of workers’ human rights; it no longer exists, having been destroyed by the new division and fragmentation of recombinant labor. Migrants, precarious workers, **cognitive workers: they share the same condition of weakness, in different degrees**. But they are **unable to find a common ground of solidarity and struggle**. This apparent un-recomposability of labor is the effect of the **digitalization of the process of production, and of the subsequent fractalization and precarization of labor**. In the global digital network, **labor is transformed in small parcels of nervous energy picked up by the recombining machin**e. In this sense I would say that it is **fractalized, and recombined by the techno-financial network. The workers are deprived of every individual consistency. Strictly speaking the workers no longer exist**. Their time exists, their time is there, permanently available to connect, to produce in exchange for a temporary salary. Marx’s prophecy about the “atom of time” is fulfilled. In the process of networked production we no longer find working persons, but abstract, depersonalized, fractal atoms of time available in the Net-sphere. **This is why the labor force has become un-recomposable, unable to recognize itself as a community of sensible and sensitive beings who share the same social interests and the same cultural expectations**. Is the recomposition process (that we may label a process of collective subjectivation) still possible in this new condition? The productive force of cognitive labor has been multiplied by the creation of the recombinant network. The “general intellect” to which Marx refers in the Grundrisse is the ability of knowledge to act as a value producing force. Thanks to the introduction of digital machines **capital has incorporated the product of the general brain in its system of machines**. But the living process of knowledge still resides in the mind of the individual scientist and technician. In the digital network we are dealing with a different reality: the living brains of individuals are absorbed (subsumed) inside the process of network production and submitted to a system of techno-linguistic automatisms. **Recombination is the (informational and biopolitical) technique that transforms the activity of individual brains in an abstract productive continuum**. The individual brain can act effectively only through the recombinant modality: functional recombination of fragments of cognitive labor scattered in time and space, but functionally unified inside the Net. Interoperability is the general goal of the network, and in order to connect, the recombinant fragments of living labor time have to become compatible: The core problem of getting computers to communicate with each other is, by definition, one of compatibility. As the network grows bigger, incompatibilities must be overcome… if an incompatibility emerges, it 100 produces a trigger for change requiring new technical and social negotiations. Generally however a new protocol or level is introduced that, by operating between or on top of different layers, will allow them all to coexist under a single common framework. (Terranova 2004: 58-9) De-singularization of living thought and activity is mandatory for access to the network. In the global network there are not working persons, but an infinite brain-sprawl, an ever-changing mosaic of fractal cells of available nervous energy. The person is nothing but the residue – therefore precarious – of the process of valorization. From the point of view of subjectivation, the productive and functional potency of cognitive labor, its interoperability, seems to be inversely proportional to its social and political recomposability. The collective brain is functionally recombined in the sphere of the Net. But at the social and affective level the social brain appears unable to recompose, to find common strategies of behavior, incapable of common narration and of solidarity. Therefore, the expansion of the productive potency of the general intellect coincides with a schizoid fragmentation of the collective brain, incapable of recomposing as conscious subjectivity, unable to act in a conscious collective way. During modernity, the industrial labor force was composed by persons, bearers of individual ability to perform tasks, and also bearers of physical needs, and political rights, like the right to unionize, negotiate, and strike. Today, the labor force can be described as a **sprawl of nervous energy, of depersonalized time available to cellular recombination**. This time has been fractalized and compatibilized and so made recombinable. In order to inter-operate the individual mind has to become a cell of the networked mind, a compatible fractal: this implies a technological mutation but also a psychic mutation of the living mind. As Christian Marazzi has explained in his books, language and capital tighten their relationship: language becomes the economic resource, the productive force, and the market. This is why I speak of **semiocapital: the kingdom of signs and the kingdom of production tend to coincide**. Language undergoes a mutation, which is a technological mutation but also a psychic one. In the human psyche, as Freud says, the access to language has much to do with affection and primarily with the body of the mother. What about the linguistic relationship between the mother and child, when the Infosphere is saturated with info-stimuli, and the presence of the mother becomes so scarce? In Show and Tell Machine, published in 1977, the American anthropologist Rose Goldsen argued that we are giving birth to human beings that will learn more words from machines than from mothers. In the first decade of the new century this generation has occupied the stage of social activity, and is ready to become compatible with the digital flow. 101 For the new generation access to language has more and more to do with inorganic connection, and less and less to do with the body of the mother. In her book L’ordine simbolico della madre [The Symbolic Order of the Mother], Luisa Muraro (1991) discovers the intimate relationship between signifier and signified, between sign and meaning, between word and affection. I believe in the meaning of the word “water” and I acknowledge the relationship between the signifier “water” and the liquid meaning because I trust in my mother. She has certified the relation between signifier and signified. What happens when the relation is broken, when the access to language is separated from the body and from affection, reduced to mere inter-operability between mechanic segments of an-emotional exchange? I say that language is in this way made precarious, frail, unable to grasp the emotional meaning of words. Actually the generation that is now entering the social sphere seems **psychologically frail** and **scarcely fit to link emotion and verbal exchange**. The huge multiplication of tools for communication, the digital saturation of the info-sphere, has dramatically reduced the spaces and the times of bodily interaction between persons. **Let us think of the crowd of people sitting in the subway every mornin**g. They are precarious workers moving towards the industrial and financial districts of the city, towards the places where they are working in precarious conditions. Everyone wears headphones, everybody looks at their cellular device, everybody sits alone and silent, never looking at the people who sit close, never speaking or smiling or exchanging any kind of signal. They are traveling alone in their lonely relationship with the universal electronic flow. Their **cognitive and affective formation has made of them the perfect object of a process of de-singularization**. They have been **pre-emptied and transformed into carriers of abstract fractal ability to connect, devoid of sensitive empathy so to become smooth, compatible parts of a system of interoperability**. Although **they suffer** from nervous aggression, and from the exploitation that semiocapitalism is imposing on them, although they suffer from the separation between functional being and sensible body and mind, they seem **incapable of human communication and solidarity;** in short, they seem unable to start any process of conscious collective subjectivation. The info-sphere is the dimension of intentional signs surrounding the sensible organism. Sensibility is an interface between organism and world, and particularly we may see it as the ability to understand the meaning of what cannot be said through words: the point of connection between sensitivity and language. Sensibility rather than judgment is the place of the mental mutation produced by the info-sphere. Changes of perception are intertwined with the technological architecture surrounding the perceptive organism. Prior to modernity, a regime of slow transmission characterized the info-sphere and man’s psychic time and expectations of events and signals. The acceleration of semiotic transmission and the **proliferation of sources of information 102 transformed the perception of living time. The info-sphere became more rapid and dense, and sensibility underwent a process of increasing exposure to the flow of info-stimuli**. Due to an intensification of electronic signals, sensibility was dragged into a vertigo of simulated stimulation that **increased its speed to panic levels**. **The perception of the other and its body is reshaped**, too. Pressure, acceleration and automation affect gestural, postural behavior and the whole of social proxemics, the disposition and interaction of bodies in space. At the foundation of social proxemics lies a way of elaborating, hiding, exciting or repressing eroticism. Social proxemics intervene to change the disposition of the bodies that meet in the street and are nearby in the office or at school. Societies experience conditions of varying degrees of tension and aggressiveness also according to how they develop eroticism in the circulation of bodies. Throughout the history of civilization, **perception has been molded by artificial regimes of images and techniques of representation**. Through digital technology the image begins to **proliferate vertiginously and our faculty of imagination undergoes vortices of acceleration**. The image should not be considered as the brute perception of empirical data brought to our visual attention by matter: it is rather the effect of a semi-conscious elaboration. The technical mode in which we receive and elaborate images acts upon the formation of the imaginary. The imaginary in turn shapes the imagination, the activity whereby we produce images, and imagine worlds and thus make them possible in real life. The **repertoire of images at our disposal limits, exalts, amplifies or circumscribes the forms of life and events that, through our imagination, we can project onto the world, put into being, build and inhabit**. Techno-communicative and psycho-cognitive mutations are as interdependent as the organism and its ecosystem. The conscious organism is also sensuous; it is a bundle of sensitive receptors. The world we inhabit increasingly resembles the outcome of a projective zapping where we combine sequences of different linguistic derivations. The social unconscious does not easily adapt to this transformation of the info-sphere, because the social investment of desire is structured around the nucleus of identity, and this nucleus is fleeing and dissolving in all directions. Suddenly awoken by the eruption of semiotic proliferation, and deprived of the filters that the critical and disciplinary mind of modernity once possessed, the conscious organism reacts with panic. The communicative power of digital technology produces an excess of information with respect to the time of attention socially available. How is sensibility redefined and how does it adapt to over stimulation? I think that the **effect of semiocapitalist acceleration and over-exploitation of nervous energies is exhaustion. Nervous breakdown, psychopathology, panic, depression, suicidal epidemic**. “A titanic battle is about to begin, a Darwinian 103 struggle between competing psychopathies”, says Ballard in Super-Cannes, the book about the psychic catastrophe of the virtual class, published in the year 2000. Exhaustion: Re-Reading Baudrillard The concept of exhaustion entered public discourse in the 1970s with the publication of Limits to Growth, the Report of the Club of Rome: Under the direction of a team of systems analysts based at Massachusetts Institute of Technology…, the report gave voice to the prevailing consensus that Fordist manufacture had entered a period of irreversible decline. But it also brought something palpably new to the analysis. If there was a crisis in the offing, it was not one that could be measured in conventional economic terms – a crisis in productivity or economic growth rates – but rather a wholesale crisis in the realm of reproduction. For the Club of Rome what was at stake was no less than the continuing reproduction of the earth’s biosphere and hence the future of life on earth. The **most visible signs of the impending crisis were therefore to be found in the existence of all kind of ecological disequilibria, exhaustion, and breakdown, from rising levels of pollution to famine and the increase in extinction rates**. (Cooper 2008: 15-16) The Report refers to the physical resources, not to the dangers of overexploitation of the nervous energies of the social mind. But the Report cried havoc, because for the first time the intrinsic impossibility of unlimited growth was revealed. In her remarkable book, Melinda Cooper relates the concept of **exhaustion to the biological field, and also to the field of mental energy.** Cooper writes: Twenty years later, armed with more sophisticated modeling tools, the same team came up with a slightly more nuanced prognosis for the future. **Limits to growth, they now argued, were time-like rather than space-like**. This meant that **we might have already gone beyond the threshold at which an essential resource such as oil could be sustainably consumed, long before we would notice its actual depletion**. In fact, it was highly probable according to the report’s author, that we were already living beyond our limit, in a state of suspended crisis, innocently waiting for the future to boomerang back in our faces. Time is in fact the ultimate limit in the world’s model. (Cooper 2008: 16-17) Time is in the mind. The essential limit to growth is the mental impossibility to enhance time (Cybertime) beyond a certain level. I think that we are here 104 touching upon a crucial point. The process of re-composition, of conscious and collective subjectivation, finds here a new – paradoxical – way. Modern radical thought has always seen the process of subjectivation as an energetic process: mobilization, social desire and political activism, expression, participation have been the modes of conscious collective subjectivation in the age of the revolutions. But in our age energy is running out, and desire which has given soul to modern social dynamics is absorbed in the black hole of virtualization and financial games, as Jean Baudrillard (1993a) argues in his book Symbolic Exchange and Death, first published in 1976. In this book Baudrillard analyzes the hyper-realistic stage of capitalism, and the instauration of the logic of simulation. Reality itself founders in hyperrealism, the meticulous reduplication of the real, preferably through another, reproductive medium, such as photography. From medium to medium, the real is volatilized, becoming an allegory of death. But it is also, in a sense, reinforced through its own destruction. It becomes reality for its own sake, the fetishism of the lost object: no longer the object of representation, but the ecstasy of denial and of its own ritual extermination: the hyperreal. […] The reality principle corresponds to a certain stage of the law of value. Today **the whole system is swamped by indeterminacy, and every reality is absorbed by the hyperreality of the code and simulation.** The principle of simulation governs us now, rather that the outdated reality principle. We feed on those forms whose finalities have disappeared. No more ideology, only simulacra. We must therefore reconstruct the entire genealogy of the law of value and its simulacra in order to grasp the hegemony and the enchantment of the current system. A structural revolution of value. This genealogy must cover political economy, where it will appear as a second-order simulacrum, just like all those that stake everything on the real: the real of production, the real of signification, whether conscious or unconscious. Capital no longer belongs to the order of political economy: it operates with political economy as its **simulated model. The entire apparatus of the commodity law of value is absorbed and recycled in the larger apparatus of the structural law of value,** this becoming part of the third order of simulacra. Political economy is thus **assured a second life**, an eternity, within the confines of an apparatus in which it has lost all its strict determinacy, but maintains an effective presence as a system of reference for simulation. (Baudrillard 1993a: 2) Simulation is the new plane of consistency of capitalist growth: financial speculation, for instance, has displaced the process of exploitation from the sphere of material production to the sphere of expectations, desire, and immaterial labor. The simulation process (Cyberspace) is proliferating without limits, irradiating signs that go everywhere in the attention market. The brain 105 is the market, in semiocapitalist hyper-reality. And the brain is not limitless, the brain cannot expand and accelerate indefinitely. The process of collective subjectivation (i.e. social recomposition) implies the development of a common language-affection which is essentially happening in the temporal dimension. The semiocapitalist acceleration of time has destroyed the social possibility of sensitive elaboration of the semio-flow. The proliferation of simulacra in the info-sphere has saturated the space of attention and imagination. Advertising and stimulated hyper-expression (“just do it”), have submitted the energies of the social psyche to permanent mobilization. **Exhaustion follows, and exhaustion is the only way of escape**: Nothing, not even the system, can avoid the symbolic obligation, and it is in this trap that the only chance of a catastrophe for capital remains. The **system turns on itself, as a scorpion does when encircled by the challenge of death. For it is summoned to answer, if it is not to lose face, to what can only be death. The system must itself commit suicide in response to the multiplied challenge of death and suicide.** So hostages are taken. On the symbolic or sacrificial plane, from which every moral consideration of the innocence of the victims is ruled out the hostage is the substitute, the alter-ego of the terrorist, the hostage’s death for the terrorist. Hostage and terrorist may thereafter become confused in the same sacrificial act. (Baudrillard 1993a: 37) In these impressive pages Baudrillard outlines the end of the modern dialectics of revolution against power, of the labor movement against capitalist domination, and predicts the advent of a new form of action which will be marked by the sacrificial gift of death (and self-annihilation). After the destruction of the World Trade Center in the most important terrorist act ever, Baudrillard wrote a short text titled The Spirit of Terrorism where he goes back to his own predictions and recognizes the emergence of a catastrophic age. When the code becomes the enemy the only strategy can be catastrophic: all the counterphobic ravings about exorcizing evil: it is because it is there, everywhere, like an obscure object of desire. Without this deep-seated complicity, the event would not have had the resonance it has, and in their symbolic strategy the terrorists doubtless know that they can count on this unavowable complicity. (Baudrillard 2003: 6) This goes much further than hatred for the dominant global power by the disinherited and the exploited, those who fell on the wrong side of global order. This malignant desire is in the very heart of those who share this order’s benefits. An allergy to all definitive order, to all definitive power is happily universal, and the two towers of the World Trade Center embodied perfectly, in their very double-ness (literally twin-ness), this definitive order: 106 No **need, then, for a death drive or a destructive instinct, or even for perverse, unintended effects. Very logically – inexorably – the increase in the power heightens the will to destroy** it. And it was party to its own destruction. When the two towers collapsed, you had the impression that they were responding to the suicide of the suicide-planes with their own suicides. It has been said that “Even God cannot declare war on Himself.” Well, He can. The West, in position of God (divine omnipotence and absolute moral legitimacy), has become suicidal, and declared war on itself. (Baudrillard 2003: 6-7) In Baudrillard’s catastrophic vision I see a new way of thinking subjectivity: a reversal of the energetic subjectivation that animates the revolutionary theories of the 20th century, and the opening of an implosive theory of subversion, based on depression and exhaustion. In the activist view **exhaustion is seen as the inability of the social body to escape the vicious destiny that capitalism has prepared: deactivation of the social energies that once upon a time animated democracy and political struggle. But exhaustion could also become the beginning of a slow movement towards a “wu wei” civilization, based on the withdrawal, and frugal expectations of life and consumption**. Radicalism could **abandon the mode of activism, and adopt the mode of passivity. A radical passivity would definitely threaten the ethos of relentless productivity that neoliberal politics has imposed.** The mother of all the bubbles, the work bubble, would finally deflate. We have been working too much during the last three or four centuries, and outrageously too much during the last thirty years. The current depression could be the beginning of a massive abandonment of competition, consumerist drive, and of dependence on work. Actually, if we think of the geopolitical struggle of the first decade – the struggle between Western domination and jihadist Islam – we recognize that the most powerful weapon has been suicide. 9/11 is the most impressive act of this suicidal war, but thousands of people have killed themselves in order to destroy American military hegemony. And they won, forcing the western world into the bunker of paranoid security, and defeating the hyper-technological armies of the West both in Iraq, and in Afghanistan. The suicidal implosion has not been confined to the Islamists. Suicide has became a form of political action everywhere. Against neoliberal politics, Indian farmers have killed themselves. Against exploitation hundreds of workers and employees have killed themselves in the French factories of Peugeot, and in the offices of France Telecom. In Italy, when the 2009 recession destroyed one million jobs, many workers, haunted by the fear of unemployment, climbed on the roofs of the factories, threatening to kill themselves. Is it possible to divert this implosive trend from the direction of 107 death, murder, and suicide, towards a new kind of autonomy, social creativity and of life? I **think that it is possible only if we start from exhaustion, if we emphasize the creative side of withdrawal. The exchange between life and money could be deserted, and exhaustion could give way to a huge wave of withdrawal from the sphere of economic exchange**. A new refrain could emerge in that moment, and wipe out the law of economic growth. The self-organization of the general intellect could abandon the law of accumulation and growth, and start a new concatenation, where collective intelligence is only subjected to the common good

#### Thus, as the collapse of the star– the breakdown is imminent and inevitable. The semiotic regime constructs institutions engaged in the militaristic protection of the norms of neoliberal exploitation, while the exhausted subjects remain apathetic to the ongoing violence. The regime provides the foreground of violence through the endless pushing of scarcification to maintain its control.

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In the sphere of semiocapitalism, financial signs are not only signifiers pointing to some referents. The distinction between sign and referent is over. The sign is the thing, the product, the process. The “real” economy and financial expectations are no longer distinct spheres. In the past, when riches were created in the sphere of industrial production, when finance was only a tool for the mobilization of capital to invest in the field of material production, recovery could not be limited to the financial sphere. It took also employment and demand. Industrial capitalism could not grow if society did not grow. Nowadays we must accept the idea that financial capitalism can recover and thrive without social recovery. Social life has become residual, redundant, irrelevant. The financial cycle is bleeding the social environment dry: sucking energies, resources, and the future. And giving nothing back. Recovery of the financial process of valorization of capital is totally separated from the cycle of material 108 production and social demand. Financial capitalism has obtained autonomy from social life. Let’s consider the political side of the same problem: once upon a time when society was suffering the blows of recession, workers reacted with strikes, struggle and political organization, and forced state intervention in order to increase demand. Industrial growth needed mass consumption and social stability. What is impressive in the ongoing crisis, on the contrary, is the widespread passivity of the workers, their inability to unionize. The political trend in Europe is the meltdown of leftist parties and the labor movement. In the US, Obama is daily attacked by racist and populist mobs, but no progressive social movement is emerging. 1.2 million people have had their mortgages foreclosed upon and lost their houses following the sub-prime swindle, but no organized reaction has surfaced. People suffer and cry alone. In the old time of industrial capitalism, the working class could fight against a target that was precisely identified: the boss, the entrepreneur who was the owner of material things like the factory, and of the product of his laborers. Nowadays the boss has vanished. He is fragmented into billions of financial segments, and disseminated into millions of financial agents scattered all around the world. The workers themselves are part of recombinant financial capital. They are expecting future revenues from their pension fund investments. They own stock options in the enterprise exploiting their labor. They are hooked up, like a fly in a spider web, and if they move, they get strangled, but if they don’t move, the spider will suck their life from them. **Society may rot, fall apart, agonize**. It is not going to affect the political and economic stability of capitalism. What is called economic recovery is a new round of social devastation. So the recession is over, capitalism is recovering. Nonetheless, **unemployment is rising and misery is spreading**. This means that financial capitalism is autonomous from society. **Capitalism doesn’t need workers: it just needs cellular fractals of labor, underpaid, precarious, de-personalised. Fragments of impersonal nervous energy**, **recombined by the network**. **The crisis is going to push forward technological change**, and the substitution of human labor with machines. The employment rate is not going to rise in the future, and productivity will increase. A **shrinking number of workers will be forced to produce more and more, and to work overtim**e. The real bubble is the work bubble. We have been working too much; we are still working too much. The human race does not need more goods, it needs a redistribution of existing goods, an intelligent application of technology and a worldwide cut in the lifetime dedicated to labor. Social energies have to be freed from labor dependence, and returned to the field of social affection, education, and therapy. We should take seriously the concept of autonomy. In the present condition autonomy means exodus from the domain of economic law: Out-onomy, 109 abandonment of the field of economic exchange, self-organization of knowledge and of production in a sphere of social life which is no longer dependent on economic culture and expectations – barter, free exchange of time and of competence, food self reliance, occupation of territories in the cities, organization of self-defense. The fantastic collapse that has shaken the global economy since September 2008 has opened a new phase in the history of the world. After some months of amazement and confusion, media, political institutions and economists have started to repeat the self-reassuring mantra: recovery is coming soon. I do not know what will happen next, but I think that the word recovery means very little in the current situation. What is sure, in my opinion, is that the workers will not recover if neoliberal ideology is not abandoned, and if the myth of growth is not substituted with a new kind of narration. Unemployment is rising everywhere and salaries are falling. And the huge debt accumulated for the rescue of the banks is weighing upon the future of society. More than ever, economic rationality is at odds with social rationality. Economic science is not part of the solution to the crisis: it is the source of the problem. On July 18th 2009 the headline of The Economist read: “What went wrong with economics?” The text is an attempt to downplay the crisis of the Economics profession, and of economic knowledge. For neoliberal economists **the central dogma of growth, profit and competition cannot be questioned**, because it is **identified with the perfect mathematical rationality of the market.** And belief in the intrinsic rationality of the market is crucial in the economic theology of neoliberalism. But **the reduction of social life to the rational exchange of economic values is an obsession that has nothing to do with science**. It’s a political strategy aimed to identify humans as **calculating machines, aimed to shape behavior and perception in such a way that money becomes the only motivation of social action**. But it is not accurate as a description of social dynamics, **and the conflicts, pathologies, and irrationality of human relationships**. Rather, it **is an attempt at creating the anthropological brand of homo calculans that Foucault (2008) has described in his seminar of 1979/80, published with the title The Birth of Biopolitics**. This attempt to identify human beings with calculating devices has **produced cultural devastation,** and has finally been showed to have been based upon flawed assumptions. **Human beings do calculate, but their calculation is not perfectly rational, because the value of goods is not determined by objective reasons**, and because decisions are influenced by what Keynes named animal spirits. “We will never really understand important economic events unless we confront the fact that their causes are largely mental in nature,” say Akerlof and Shiller (2009: 1) in their book Animal Spirits, echoing Keynes’s assumption that the rationality of the market is not perfect in itself. Akerlof and Shiller are avowing the crisis of neoliberal thought, but their critique is 110 not radical enough, and does not touch the legitimacy of the economic episteme. Animal Spirits is the title of an other book, by Matteo Pasquinelli (2008). Pasquinelli’s book deals with bodies and digits, and parasites, and goes much deeper in its understanding of the roots of the crisis than its eponymous publication: **“Cognitive capitalism emerges in the form of a parasite: it subjects social knowledge and inhibits its emancipatory potential**” (Pasquinelli 2008: 93). “Beyond the computer screen, precarious workers and freelancers experience how Free Labor and competition are increasingly devouring their everyday life” (Pasquinelli 2008: 15). Pasquinelli goes to the core of the problem: the virtualization of social production has acted as the **proliferation of a parasite, destroying the prerequisites of living relationships, absorbing and neutralizing the living energies of cognitive workers**. The economic recession is not only the effect of financial craziness, but also the effect of the de-vitalization of the social field. This is why the collapse of the economic system is also the collapse of economic epistemology that has guided the direction of politics in the last two centuries. Economics cannot understand the depth of the crisis, because below the crisis of financial exchange there is the crisis of symbolic exchange. I mean **the psychotic boom of panic, depression, and suicide, the general decline of desire and social empathy**. The question that rises from the collapse is so radical that the answer cannot be found in the economic conceptual framework. Furthermore, one must ask if economics really is a science? If the word “science” means the creation of concepts for the understanding and description of an object, economics is not a science. Its object does not exist. The economic object (scarcity, salaried labor, and profit) is not an object that exists before and outside the performative action of the economic episteme. Production, consumption, and daily life become part of the economic discourse when labor is detached and opposed to human activity, when it falls under the domination of capitalist rule. The economic object does not pre-exist conceptual activity, and economic description is in fact a normative action. In this sense Economics is a technique, a process of semiotization of the world, and also a mythology, a narration. Economics is a suggestion and a categorical imperative: Money makes things happen. It is the source of action in the world and perhaps the only power we invest in. Life seems to depend on it. Everything within us would like to say that it does not, that this cannot be. But the Almighty Dollar has taken command. The more it is denied the more it shows itself as Almighty. Perhaps in every other respect, in every other value, bankruptcy has been declared, giving money the power of some sacred deity, demanding to be recognized. Economics no longer persuades money to 111 behave. Numbers cannot make the beast lie down and be quiet or sit up and do tricks. At best, economics is a neurosis of money, a symptom contrived to hold the beast in abeyance…. **Thus economics shares the language of psychopathology – inflation, depression, lows and highs, slumps and peaks, investments and losses**. (Sordello 1983) From the age of the enclosures in England the **economic process has been a process of production of scarcity (scarcification**). The enclosures were intended to **scarcify the land, and the basic means of survival, so that people who so far had been able to cultivate food for their family were forced to become proletarians, then salaried industrial workers. Capitalism is based on the artificial creation of need, and economic science is essentially a technique of scarcification of time, life and food.** Inside the condition of scarcity **human beings are subjected to exploitation and to the domain of profit-oriented activity. After scarcifying the land (enclosures) capitalism has scarcified time itself, forcing people who don’t have property other than their own life and body, to lend their life-time to capital**. **Now the capitalist obsession for growth is making scarce both water and air.** Economic science is not the science of prediction: it is the technique of **producing, implementing, and pushing scarcity and need**. This is why Marx did not speak of economy, but of political economy. The technique of economic scarcification is based on a mythology, a narration that identifies richness as property and acquisition, and subjugates the possibility of living to the lending of time and to the transformation of human activity into salaried work. In recent decades, technological change has slowly eroded the very foundations of economic science. Shifting from the sphere of production of material objects to the semiocapitalist production of immaterial goods, the Economic concepts are losing their foundation and legitimacy. The basic categories of Economics are becoming totally artificial. The theoretical justification of private property, as you read in the writings of John Locke, is based on the need of exclusive consumption. An apple must be privatized, if you want to avoid the danger that someone else eats your apple. But what happens when goods are immaterial, infinitely replicable without cost? Thanks to digitalization and immaterialization of the production process, the economic nomos of private property loses its ground, its raison d’etre, and it can be imposed only by force. Furthermore, the very foundation of salary, the relationship between time needed for production and value of the product, is vanishing. The immaterialization and cognitivization of production makes it almost impossible to quantify the average time needed to produce value. Time and value become incommensurable, and violence becomes the only law able to determine price and salary. The neoliberal school, which has opened the way to the worldwide 112 deregulation of social production, has fostered the mythology of rational expectations in economic exchange, and has touted the idea of a selfregulation of the market, first of all the labor-market. But self-regulation is a lie. In order to increase exploitation, and to destroy social welfare, global capitalism has used political institutions like the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization, not to mention the military enforcement of the political decisions of these institutions. Far from being self-regulated, the market is militarily regulated. The mythology of free individuals loyally competing on the base of perfect knowledge of the market is a lie, too. Real human beings are not perfect rational calculating machines. And the myth of rational expectations has finally crashed after the explosion of the real estate mortgage bubble. The theory of rational expectation is crucial in neoliberal thought: the economic agents are supposed to be free to choose in a perfectly rational way the best deal in selling and buying. The fraud perpetrated by the investment agencies has destroyed the lives of millions of Americans, and has exposed the theoretical swindle. Economic exchange cannot be described as a rational game, because irrational factors play a crucial role in social life in general. Trickery, misleading information, and psychic manipulation are not exceptions, but the professional tools of advertisers, financial agents, and economic consultants. The idea that social relationships can be described in mathematical terms has the force of myth, but it is not science, and it has nothing to do with natural law. Notwithstanding the failure of the theory, neoliberal politics are still in control of the global machine, because the criminal class that has seized power has no intention of stepping down, and because the social brain is unable to recompose and find the way of self-organization. I read in the New York Times on September 6th 2009: After the mortgage business imploded last year, Wall Street investment banks began searching for another big idea to make money. They think they may have found one. The bankers plan to buy “life settlements,” life insurance policies that ill and elderly people sell for cash, depending on the life expectancy of the insured person. Then they plan to “securitize” these policies, in Wall Street jargon, by packaging hundreds of thousands together into bonds. They will then resell those bonds to investors, like big pension funds, who will receive the payouts when people with the insurance die. The earlier the policyholder dies, the bigger the return, though if people live longer than expected investors could get poor returns or even lose money. Imagine that I buy an insurance policy on my life (something I would absolutely not do). My insurer of course will wish me a long life, so I’ll pay the fee for a long time, while he should pay lots of money to my family if I 113 die. But some enlightened finance guru has the brilliant idea of insuring the insurer. He buys the risk, and he invests on the hope that I die soon. You don’t need the imagination of Philip K. Dick to guess the follow up of the story: financial agents will be motivated to kill me overnight. The talk of recovery is based on necronomy, the economy of death. It’s not new, as **capitalism has always profited from wars, slaughters and genocides**. But now **the equation becomes unequivocal**. Death is the promise, death is the investment and the hope. **Death is the best future that capitalism may secure**. The logic of speculation is different from the logic of spectacle that was dominant in late-modern times. Spectacle is the mirrorization of life, the transfer of life in the mirror of spectacular accumulation. Speculation is the subjugation of the future to its financial mirror, the substitution of present life with future money that will never come, because death will come before. The lesson that we must learn from the first year of the global recession is sad: neoliberal folly is not going away, the financial plungers will not stop their speculation, and corporations will not stop their exploitation, and the political class, largely controlled by the corporate lobbies, is unwilling or unable to protect society from the final assault. In 1996 J. G. Ballard (1996: 188) wrote: “the most perfect crime of all – when the victims are either willing, or aren’t aware that they are victims”. Democracy seems unable to stop the criminal class that has seized control of the economy, because the decisions are no longer made in the sphere of political opinion, but in the inaccessible sphere of economic automatism. The economy has been declared the basic standard of decision, and the economists have systematically identified Economy with the capitalist obsession of growth. No room for political choice has been left, as the corporate principles have been embedded in the technical fabric of language and imagination.

#### The role of the ballot is to vote for the debaters who best methodologically embraces and utilizes exhaustion

#### Just as the solar flare – the private expansion into outerspace is an explosive expansion that stems from the instability inherent in the system. The exploration of outerspace is justified through the symbolic figure of a total humanity, guided by a science fiction imaginary of endless dominion and expansion

Victor L. Shammas, Professor of sociology at the University of Agder in Norway, and Tomas B Holden, in 2019 [“One giant leap for capitalistkind: private enterprise in outer space,” Palgrave Communications, https://www.nature.com/articles/s41599-019-0218-9]

Outer space is becoming **a space for capitalism**. We are entering a new era of the commercialization of space, geared towards generating profits from satellite launches, space tourism, asteroid mining, and related ventures. This era, driven by private corporations such as Elon Musk’s SpaceX and Jeff Bezos’s Blue Origins, has been **labeled by industry insiders as ‘NewSpace'**—in contrast to ‘Old Space', a Cold War-era mode of space relations when (allegedly) slow-moving, sluggish states dominated outer space. NewSpace marks the arrival of capitalism in space. While challenging the libertarian rhetoric of its proponents—space enterprises remain enmeshed in the state, relying on funding, physical infrastructure, technology transfers, regulatory frameworks, and symbolic support—NewSpace nevertheless heralds a novel form of human activity in space. Despite its humanistic, universalizing pretensions, however, NewSpace does not benefit humankind as such but rather a specific set of wealthy entrepreneurs, many of them originating in Silicon Valley, who strategically deploy humanist tropes to engender enthusiasm for their activities. We describe this complex as ‘capitalistkind'. Moreover, the arrival of capitalism in space is **fueled by the expansionary logic of capital accumulation**. Outer space serves as a **spatial fix,** **allowing capital to transcend its inherent terrestrial limitations**. In this way, the ultimate spatial fix is perhaps (outer) space itself. Introduction On 6 February 2018, the California-based Space Exploration Technologies Corp., also known as SpaceX, launched its first Falcon Heavy rocket, a powerful, partially reusable launch vehicle, into space from Cape Canaveral Launch Complex 39 in Florida. With its significant thrust and payload capacity, the Falcon Heavy had the ‘ability to lift into orbit nearly 64 metric tons…a mass greater than a 737 jetliner loaded with passengers, crew, luggage and fuel' (SpaceX, 2018). Multiple reusable parts, including first-stage boosters (and, in later versions, composite payload fairing)Footnote1 provided a lift capacity nearly twice that of the next-most powerful rocket in operation, the United Launch Alliance’s (ULA) Delta IV Heavy, and at nearly one-third the cost. With this first Falcon Heavy test flight, which produced widespread public enthusiasm and outpourings of support from both politicians and industry observers,Footnote2 SpaceX demonstrated that private corporations were busy redefining the domain of space exploration. SpaceX seemed to usher in an era differing markedly from that other period of astronautical excitement, the Cold War-era space race between the United States and the Soviet Union. Additionally, visions once restricted to the domain of science fiction now seemed increasingly attainable, freed from the (alleged) impediments of slow-moving nation-states: with the ascendancy of private corporations like SpaceX, satellite launches, space tourism, asteroid mining, and even the colonization of Mars seemed increasingly achievable (Cohen, 2017; Dickens and Ormrod, 2007a, 2007b; Klinger, 2017; Lewis, 1996). In this sense, SpaceX’s Falcon Heavy also carried a crucial ideological payload: the very idea of private enterprise and capitalist relations overtaking outer space.Footnote3 The Falcon Heavy conveyed this idea quite concretely. Onboard the rocket was an electric car, a Tesla Roadster (said to be Elon Musk’s personal vehicle), which functioned as the rocket’s ‘dummy load', playing David Bowie’s ‘Space Oddity' and ‘Life on Mars?' on repeat on the car’s stereo system. An enticing marketing stunt viewed by millions online through SpaceX’s YouTube live stream—with 2.3 million concurrent views, it was the second biggest live stream in YouTube history (Singleton, 2018)—the Falcon Heavy test flight embraced the logic of ‘cool capitalism' (Schleusener, 2014), with in-jokes referencing Douglas Adam’s Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy, while heralding the arrival of a commercialized space age, dubbed by industry insiders as the age of ‘NewSpace'.Footnote4 But how are we to understand NewSpace? In some ways, NewSpace signals the **emergence of capitalism in space**. The production of carrier rockets, placement of satellites into orbit around Earth, and the **exploration, exploitation, or colonization of outer space** (including planets, asteroids, and other celestial objects), will not be the work of humankind as such, a pure species-being (Gattungswesen), but of particular capitalist entrepreneurs who stand in for and represent humanity. Crucially, they will do so in ways **modulated by the exigencies of capital accumulation**. These enterprising capitalists are forging a new political-economic regime in space, a post-Fordism in space aimed at profit maximization and the apparent minimization of government interference. A new breed of charismatic, starry-eyed entrepreneurs, including Musk’s SpaceX, Richard Branson’s Virgin Galactic, and Amazon billionaire Jeff Bezos’s Blue Origin, to name but a selection, aim at becoming ‘capitalists in space' (Parker, 2009) or space capitalists. Neil Armstrong’s famous statement will have to be reformulated: space will not be the site of ‘one giant leap for mankind', but rather one giant leap for capitalistkind.Footnote5 With the ascendancy of NewSpace, humanity’s future in space will not be ‘ours', benefiting humanity tout court, but will rather be the result of particular capitalists, or capitalistkind,Footnote6 toiling to recuperate space and bring its vast domain into the fold of capital accumulation: NewSpace sees outer space as the domain of private enterprise, set to become the ‘first-trillion dollar industry', according to some estimates, and likely to produce the world’s first trillionaires (see, e.g., Honan, 2018)—as opposed to Old Space, a derisive moniker coined by enthusiastic proponents of capitalism-in-space, widely seen to have been the sole preserve of the state and a handful of giant aerospace corporations, including Boeing and Lockheed Martin, in Cold War-era Space Age. Under Donald Trump’s presidency, the adherents of NewSpace have found a ready political partner. The commercialization of outer space was already well under way with Obama’s 2010 National Space Policy, which emphasized ‘promoting and supporting a competitive U. S. commercial space sector', which was ‘considered vital to…continued progress in space' (Tronchetti, 2013, p. 67–68). But the Trump administration has aggressively pursued the deregulation of outer space in the service of profit margins. Wilbur Ross, President Trump’s Secretary of Commerce, has eagerly supported the private space industry by pushing the dismantling of regulatory frameworks. As Ross emphatically stated, ‘The rate of regulatory change must accelerate until it can match the rate of technological change!' (Foust, 2018a). Trump has proposed privatizing the provision of supplies to the International Space Station (ISS) while re-establishing the Cold War-era National Space Council, which includes members from Lockheed Martin, Boeing, ULA, and a series of NewSpace actors, such as SpaceX and Blue Origin. Ross was visibly enthusiastic about SpaceX’s Falcon Heavy launch in February 2018 and seemed to embrace Musk’s marketing ploy. ‘It was really quite an amazing thing', Ross said. ‘At the end of it, you have that little red Tesla hurdling [sic] off to an orbit around the sun and the moon' (Bryan, 2018). That same month, Ross spoke before the National Space Council, commenting appreciatively that ‘space is already a $330 billion industry' that was set to become a ‘multitrillion-dollar one in coming decades'. He noted that private corporations needed ‘all the help we can give them' and said it was ‘time to unshackle business activity in space' (Department of Commerce, 2018). Secretary Ross’s remarks followed on the heels of the American Space Commerce Free Enterprise Act, a U.S. House of Representatives bill introduced in 2017, which, in a remarkable volte-face, unilaterally declared that ‘space is not a global commons', a crucial departure from ratified international treaties that paved the way for private property rights and the exploitation of precious resources in outer space. In case anyone had missed this little-noticed policy démarche, tucked away in the midst of an obscure piece of legislation, one of Trump’s supporters, the executive director of the National Space Council, Scott Pace, publicly reiterated that ‘outer space is not…the “common heritage of mankind”, not “res communis”, nor is it a public good' (Pace, 2017). Instead, outer space was quickly being recast as a private good or a space for private property. As the United States became ‘ “open for business” in space' (Smith, 2017), in the words of one Republican congressman, space itself was being opened up to the interests of private enterprise. The Outer Space Treaty of 1967 established space as terra nullius. One of the treaty’s premises is that no celestial body can be claimed as the property of any particular state, so that ‘outer space…is not subject to national appropriation by claim of sovereignty, by means of use or occupation, or by any other means'.Footnote7 While this does not prevent nations from extracting resources from celestial bodies, there is a clear requirement that these activities benefit all of Earth’s inhabitants (Tronchetti, 2013, p. 14; Lyall and Larsen, 2009), paving the way for kind of communism in space which precludes the proclivities of capitalistkind. As noted, however, the Outer Space Treaty’s assertion of space as a commons has come under pressure in recent years, at first in the form of so many quasi-comical ventures, bordering on fraudulent shams, with a flourishing online trade in ‘lunar property'— ‘Everybody Is Saying It…Nothing Could Be Greater Than To Own Your Own Crater!'Footnote8—including the production of seemingly authentic land deeds that remain practically unenforceable and contravened by treaty obligations anyway. More recently, its status as commons has been denied by President Trump and leading US Republicans. Communism in space was a possibility only so long as space was materially inaccessible to capitalistkind: as space becomes a probable site of profitable ventures, the Outer Space Treaty’s proto-communism must falter and fade away. Certain parallels exist between the exploration and colonization of outer space and similar maritime ventures back on Earth. To take but one limited aspect of the overlapping legal issues raised by these two areas, that of resource exploitation: the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) established that the ‘seabed and ocean floor' beyond a nation’s territorial waters (or ‘the Area') are the ‘common heritage of mankind, the exploration and exploitation of which shall be carried out for the benefit of mankind as a whole'. Like outer space, Earth’s seabed is part of the commons. Similarly, the International Seabed Authority, which was established to oversee the 1982 convention, is to ‘provide for the equitable sharing of financial and other economic benefits derived from activities in the Area' (UN, 1982, p. 71). In principle, then, any profits arising from, e.g., the mining of polymetallic nodules, are to be shared with all of humankind, including ‘developing States, particularly the least developed and the land-locked among them' (UN, 1982, p. 56). Whether this is likely is to happen is, according to a recent review, likely to be hampered by two factors. First, the commercial exploitation of seabed metals, which is first and foremost a technical issue, ‘seems as far away as ever' (Wood, 2008). Second, and perhaps more importantly, the political climate surrounding the creation and ratification (with the exception of the United States) of the 1982 convention has now appreciably shifted: ‘Much of the ideological passion that characterized the debates in the First Committee of the Third UN Conference on the Law of the Sea, and to some degree also in the Preparatory Commission, have now subsided' (Wood, 2008). As with outer space, the ocean floor becomes a legal site of contestation the moment states and corporations are technically capable of exploiting it. This article adopts an approach broadly derived from the critical theory tradition to analyze NewSpace. Drawing on David Harvey’s notion of spatial fixes, as well as key theoretical insights from such varied thinkers as Hegel, Marx, Bourdieu, and Deleuze and Guattari, this article asks in what ways the NewSpace paradigm can be rethought through a critical (neo-Marxist) political economy framework. Below, we advance three crucial arguments. First, there is an expedient conflation of capitalist interests with a universalizing notion of the interests of humanity. Second, the state continues to play an important role in supporting capital accumulation in space; a key tension in this area is the question of the continued role of the state in facilitating and financing NewSpace ventures—a role that is simultaneously downplayed and even, on occasion, dismissed by NewSpace actors themselves. Finally, we reassess the commercialization of space through Harvey’s concept of the spatial fix, arguing that outer space serves as an important outlpet for surplus capital, a site of knowledge production and technological innovation, and a potential reservoir of untapped raw materials. While the future is inherently uncertain, the article spotlights the expansive tendencies of global capital and describe the ways NewSpace actors themselves have come to view outer space as the probable future site of a post-terrestrial form of capital accumulation. The universalization of capitalism The 2010s may very well be remembered as the ‘Age of NewSpace', the decade when outer space was turned into a capitalist space, when private corporations pushed the price of launches, satellites, and space infrastructure downwards, exerting what industry insiders call the ‘SpaceX effect' (Henry, 2018), centered on the technological achievement of ‘reusability', recovering used rocket boosters for additional launches, promising to drastically reduce the price of going to space (Morring, 2016). As one report observes, ‘Not only has the number of private companies engaged in space exploration grown remarkably in recent years, these companies are quickly besting their government-sponsored competitors' (Houser, 2017). What the rockets, shuttles, ships, and landing pods will carry beneath their payload fairing or in their cargo hold, however, along with supplies and satellites, is the capitalist worldview, a particular ideology—just as Robinson Crusoe, in Marx’s ironic retelling in Capital, ‘having saved a watch, ledger, ink and pen from the shipwreck… soon begins, like a good Englishman, to keep a set of books' (Marx, 1976, p. 170), brings with him English political economy—'Freedom, Equality, Property and Bentham', as Marx (1976, p. 280) says elsewhere—to his desert island. In early 2018, astronomers across the world learned that a New Zealand start-up, Rocket Lab, which aimed to launch thousands of miniature satellites into orbit around Earth (so-called ‘smallsats'), had planned to launch a giant, shining ‘disco ball'—the ‘Humanity Star'—into orbit around Earth. It was an elaborate marketing stunt masked by humanistic idealism. ‘No matter where you are in the world, or what is happening in your life', said Rocket Lab CEO Peter Beck, ‘everyone will be able to see the Humanity Star in the night sky' (Amos, 2018). Many astronomers expressed outrage at these plans, fearing that the light from the Human Star would threaten their ability to carry out scientific observations. But while these astronomers were incensed by the idea of a bright geodesic object disrupting their ability to carry out observations, concerns with the effects of the arrival of capitalistkind on their ability to collect data were non-existent. The astronomical community was angered by the idea of a material, concrete, visible object polluting “pure” scientific data, but it paid less attention to the (invisible and abstract) recuperation of the night sky as it was brought into the fold of capitalism. In an interview, Beck was quizzed about the Humanity Star and asked by a reporter about the difficulties of generating profits in space (Tucker, 2018). To this Beck replied, ‘It has always been a government domain, but we’re witnessing the democratization of it…[I]t [is] turning into a commercially dominated domain'. Beck established an equivalence established between the dissolution of space as the rightful domain of states and the advent of profit-making ventures as signs of ‘democratization'. In space, according to Beck’s logic, democratization involves the disappearance of the state and the rise of capital. The argument, of course, is impeccably post-statist: on this account, states are monolithic, conservative Leviathans beyond the reach of popular control; corporations, on the other hand, are in principle representatives of the everyman: in the age of the start-up, any humble citizen could in theory become an agent of disruption, a force for change, an explorer of space, and a potential member of the cadre of capitalistkind. Following this logic, the question for the entrepreneurs of **NewSpace is how to monetize outer space**, which means turning space into a space for capital; their **question is how they can deplanetarize capital and universalize** it, literally speaking, that is, **turn the Universe into a universe** for capital. In this light, Peter Beck’s distortion of democratic ideals appears eminently sensible, equating democratization with monetization, that is, capital liberated from its earthly tethers. Emblematic of this capitalist turn in space was the founding of Moon Express in 2011, composed of a ‘team of prominent Silicon Valley entrepreneurs…shooting for the moon with a new private venture aimed at scouring the lunar surface for precious metals and rare metallic elements' (Hennigan, 2011). Following Google’s Lunar XPRIZE—an intertwining of Silicon Valley and NewSpace’s capitalistkind—which promised a $20 million prize for the first private company to land a spacecraft on the Moon, travel 500 meters, and transmit high-definition images back to Earth, all by March 2018,Footnote9 Moon Express claimed that it would be capable of landing on the lunar surface and earn the cash prize. Their stated goal was twofold: first, to mine rare resource like Helium-3 (a steadily dwindling scarce resources on Earth), gold, platinum group metals, and water, and, second, to carry out scientific work that would ‘help researchers develop human space colonies for future generations' (Ioannou, 2017). The ordering is telling: first profits, then humanity. These were the hollow, insubstantial promises of a venture-capitalized NewSpace enterprise: in early 2018, Google announced that none of the five teams competing for the Lunar XPRIZE, including Moon Express, would reach their stated objectives by the 31 March deadline and they were taking their money back (Grush, 2018). In this sense, it was typical for NewSpace in its formative years: a corporate field populated by (overly exuberant) private enterprises who promised more than they could deliver. But the belief in NewSpace is real enough. In a tome bursting with the optimism of NewSpace, Wohlforth and Hendrix claim that ‘the commercial spaceflight industry is transforming our sense of possibility. Using Silicon Valley’s money and innovative confidence, it will soon bring mass space products to the market' (2016, p. 7). The trope of humanity plays a key role in the rhetoric of the adherents of NewSpace. To fulfill the objectives of NewSpace, including **profit maximization and the exploitation** of celestial bodies, the symbolic figure of a **shared humanity** serves a useful purpose, **camouflaging the conquest of space by capitalism** with a dream of humanity boldly venturing forth into the dark unknown, thereby also providing the legitimacy and enthusiasm needed to support bolster the legitimacy of NewSpace. So long as the stargazers and SpaceX watchers are permitted their fill of ‘collective effervescence', to use Durkheim’s (1995, p. 228) concept, capitalist entrepreneurs will be able to pursue their business interests more or less as they please. The spectacle of outer space is crucial in this regard. Crucially, however, and despite this spectacle, SpaceX’s technology might not necessarily be more sophisticated than its competitors or predecessors. Some industry insiders have rebuffed some of the more the spectacular claims of NewSpace’s proponents, arguing that launch vehicle reusability requires a (perhaps prohibitively) expensive refurbishing of the rocket engines involved in launches: ‘The economics will depend on how many times a booster can be flown, and how much the individual expense will be to refurbish the booster…each time' (Chang, 2017). Reusability may be a technological dead-end because of the inherently stressful effects of a rocket launch on the launch vehicle’s components, with extreme limitations on reusability beyond second-use as well as added risks of malfunctions that customers and insurers are likely to wish to avoid. Furthermore, the Falcon Heavy still has not matched the power and payload capacity of NASA’s Saturn V, a product of 1960s military-industrial engineering and Fordist state spending programs. What SpaceX and other NewSpace corporations do with great ingenuity, however, is to **manage the spectacle of outer space**, producing outpourings of public fervor, aided by a widespread adherence to the ‘Californian Ideology' (Barbrook and Cameron, 1996), or **post-statist techno-utopianism**, in many postindustrialized societies. The very centrality of these maneuvers has initiated a new phase in the history of capitalist relations, that of ‘**charismatic accumulation'**—certainly not in the sense of any ‘objective' or inherent charismatic authority, but with a form of illusion, to speak with Bourdieu, vested in the members of capitalistkind by their uncanny ability to spin mythologizing self-narratives. This has always been part of the capitalist game, from Henry Ford and onwards, but the charismatic mission gains a special potency in the grandiose designs of NewSpace’s entrepreneurs. Every SpaceX launch is a quasi-religious spectacle, observed by millions capable of producing a real sense of wonder in a condition of (legitimizing) collective effervescence. Outer space necessarily reduces inter-human difference to a common denominator or a shared species-being. An important leitmotiv in many Hollywood science fiction movies, including Arrival (2016), is that a first encounter with an alien species of intelligent beings tends to flatten all human difference (including ethnoracial and national categories), thereby restoring humankind to its proper universality (see also Novoa, 2016). Ambassadors of Earth as a whole, not representatives of particular nations, step forth to meet alien emissaries. But even in the absence of such an encounter, the search for habitable domains (or rather, profitable locales) beyond Earth will necessarily forge a shared conception of the human condition, initiated with the Pale Blue Dot photograph in 1990. Typical of this sentiment are the words of the astronomer Carl Sagan, who famously observed of this photograph: ‘On it everyone you love, everyone you know, everyone you ever heard of, every human being who ever was, lived out their lives'. This naïvely humanistic vision has been one of the dominant tropes in the discourse on space since the 1950s, and it remains strong today, as with the claims of the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) that their task is to ‘uphold the vision of a more equitable future for all humankind through shared achievements in space'. This representational tendency mobilizes humanism to generate enthusiasm about space-related activities. **But such representations are increasingly being recuperated by capitalist enterprise, so that it is not humankind but its modulation by space capitalists that will launch into the dark unknown**. It is not humankind but capitalistkind that ventures forth. In early 2018, NASA was set to request $150 million in its 2019 budget to ‘enable the development and maturation of commercial entities and capabilities which will ensure that commercial successors to the ISS…are operational when they are needed', only one of many signs that space is becoming a space for capitalism. According to one estimate, the value of just one single asteroid would be more than $20 trillion in rare earth and platinum-group metals (Lewis, 1996), a precious prize indeed for profit-hungry corporations.Footnote10 Even the UNOOSA spoke vociferously in favor of the commercialization of space, appealing variously to the ‘industry and private sector' and elevating the ‘space economy' to a central pillar in its Space2030 Agenda (including the ‘use of resources that create and provide value and benefits to the world population in the course of exploring, understanding and utilizing space'), even as the UN agency falls back on a humanistic, almost social-democratic vision of the equitable distribution of benefits (and profits) from space mining, exploration, and colonization (UNOOSA, 2018). We find evidence of this strategic humanism in all manner of pronouncements from NewSpace entrepreneurs. To take but oncae example: Naveen Jain, the chairman and co-founder of MoonEx, a lunar commercialization firm, has claimed that ‘from an entrepreneur’s perspective, the moon has never truly been explored'. The moon, Jain has claimed, ‘could hold resources that benefit Earth and all humanity' (Hennigan, 2011). We should note the recourse to the trope of all of humanity by this NewSpace entrepreneur, mimicked in the 1979 Moon Agreement, a UN treaty, which also held that the Moon’s resources are ‘the common heritage of mankind' (Tronchetti, 2013, p. 13).Footnote11 In a purely factual sense, of course, Jain is wrong: Google Moon offers high-resolution images of the lunar surface,Footnote12 and the moon has already been explored, in the sense of being mapped, albeit rudimentarily and with room for further data collection. Crucially, however, these cartographic techniques have not been put to capitalist uses: mapping minerals, for instance, or producing detailed schemata that might one day turn the Moon into a ‘gas station' for commercial space ventures, as Wilbur Ross, Trump’s Secretary of Commerce, has proposed (Bryan, 2018). What is lacking, in short, are capitalist maps of the Moon, i.e., a cartography for capital. But as Klinger (2017: 199) notes, even though no one is ‘actively mining the Moon' at present, at least ‘six national space programs, fifty private firms, and one graduate engineering program, are intent on figuring out how to do so'; furthermore, Klinger draws attention to mapping efforts that have revealed high an abundance of rare earth metals, thorium, and iron in the Moon’s ‘Mare Procellarum KREEP' region (Klinger, 2017, p. 203). We have already noted that it is not humanity, conceived as species-being, a Gattungswesen, that makes its way into space. The term Gattungswesen, of course, has a long intellectual pedigree, harking back to Hegel, Feuerbach, Marx, and others. The term can ‘be naturally applied both to the individual human being and to the common nature or essence which resides in every individual man and woman', Allan Wood (2004, p. 17) writes, as well as ‘to the entire human race, referring to humanity as a single collective entity or else to the essential property which characterizes this entity and makes it a single distinctive thing in its own right'. **Significantly, the adherents of NewSpace often resort to the idea of humanity in its broad universality (e.g., Musk, 2017), but this denies and distorts the modulation of humanity by its imbrication with the project of global (and post-global, i.e., space-bound) capitalism. It is precisely the sort of false universality implied in the humanism of the supporters of NewSpace that Marx subjected to a scathing critique in the sixth of his Theses on Feuerbach**. Here Marx noted that the human essence is not made up of some ‘abstraction inherent in each single individual' (1998, p. 570). Instead, humans are defined by the ‘ensemble of social relations' in which they are enmeshed. Under NewSpace, it is not humanity, plain and simple, that ventures forth, but a specific set of capitalist entrepreneurs, carrying a particular ideological payload, alongside their satellites, instruments, and supplies, a point noted by other sociologists of outer space, or ‘astrosociologists' (Dickens and Ormrod, 2007a, 2007b). The spatial fix of outer space No longer terra nullius, space is now the **new terra firma of capitalistkind**: its naturalized terroir, its next necessary terrain. The logic of capitalism dictates that **capital should seek to expand outwards into the vastness of space**, a point recognized by a recent ethnography of NewSpace actors (Valentine, 2016, p. 1050). The operations of **capitalistkind serve to resolve a series of (potential) crises of capitalism, revolving around the slow, steady decline of spatial fixes (**see e.g., Harvey, 1985, p. 51–66) as they come crashing up against the quickly vanishing blank spaces remaining on earthly maps and declining (terrestrial) opportunities for profitable investment of surplus capital (Dickens and Ormrod, 2007a, p. 49–78). A ‘**spatial fix' involves the geographic modulation of capital accumulation, consisting in the outward expansion of capital onto new geographic terrains, or into new spaces, with the aim of filling a gap in the home terrains of capita**l. Jessop (2006, p. 149) notes that spatial fixes may involve a number of strategies, including the creation of new markets within the capitalist world, engaging in trade with non-capitalist economies, and exporting surplus capital to undeveloped or underdeveloped regions. The first two address the problem of insufficient demand and the latter option creates a productive (or valorizing) outlet for excess capital. **Capitalism must regularly discover, develop, and appropriate such new spaces because of its inherent tendency to generate surplus capital, i.e., capital bereft of profitable purpose**. In Harvey’s (2006, p. xviii) terms, a spatial fix revolves around **‘geographical expansions and restructuring…as a temporary solution to crises understood…in terms of the overaccumulation of capital'**. It is a temporary solution because **these newly appropriated spaces will in turn become exhausted of profitable potential and are likely to produce their own stocks of surplus capital; while ‘capital surpluses that otherwise stood to be devalued,** could be absorbed through geographical expansions and spatio-temporal displacements' (Harvey, 2006, p. xviii), this **outwards drive of capitalism is inherently limitless: there is no end point or final destination for capitalism. Instead, capitalism must continuously propel itself onwards in search of pristine sites of renewed capital accumulation**. In this way, Harvey writes, society constantly ‘creates fresh productive powers elsewhere to absorb its overaccumulated capital' (Harvey, 1981, p. 8). Historically, spatial fixes have played an important role in conserving the capitalist system. As Jessop (2006, p. 149) points out, ‘The export of surplus money capital, surplus commodities, and/or surplus labour-power outside the space(s) where they originate enabled capital to avoid, at least for a period, the threat of devaluation'. But these new spaces for capital are not necessarily limited to physical terrains, as with colonial expansion in the nineteenth century; as Greene and Joseph (2015) note, various digital spaces, such as the Internet, can also be considered as spatial fixes: the Web absorbs overaccumulated capital, heightens consumption of virtual and physical goods, and makes inexpensive, flexible sources of labor available to employers. Greene and Joseph offer the example of online high-speed frequency trading as a digital spatial fix that furthers the ‘annihilation of space by time' first noted by Marx in his Grundrisse (see Marx, 1973, p. 524). Outer space serves at least two purposes in this regard. In the short-to medium-term, it allows for the export of surplus capital into emerging industries, such as satellite imaging and communication. These are significant sites of capital accumulation: global revenues in the worldwide satellite market in 2016 amounted to $260 billion (SIA, 2017, p. 4). Clearly, much of this activity is taking place ‘on the ground'; it is occurring in the ‘terrestrial economy'. But all that capital would have to find some other meaningful or productive outlet were it not for the expansion of capital into space. Second, outer space serves as an arena of technological innovation, which feeds back into the terrestrial economy, helping to avert crisis by pushing capital out of technological stagnation and innovation shortfalls. In short, outer space serves as a spatial fix. It **swallows up surplus capital**, promising to deliver valuable resources, technological innovations, and communication services to capitalists back on Earth. This places outer space on the same level as traditional colonization, analyzed in Hegel’s Philosophy of Right, which Hegel thought of as a product of the ‘**inner dialectic of civil society', which drives the market to ‘push beyond its own limits and seek markets, and so its necessary means of subsistence**, in other lands which are either deficient in the goods it has overproduced, or else generally backward in creative industry, etc.' (Hegel, 2008, p. 222). In this regard, SpaceX and related ventures are not so very different from maritime colonialists and the trader-exploiters of the British East India Company. But there is something new at stake. As the Silicon Valley entrepreneur Peter Diamandis has gleefully noted: ‘There are twenty-trillion-dollar checks up there, waiting to be cashed!' (Seaney and Glendenning, 2016). Capitalistkind consists in the **naturalization of capitalist consciousness and practice**, the (**false) universalization of a particular mode of political economy as inherent to the human condition, followed by the projection of this naturalized universality into space—capitalist humanity as a Fukuyamite ‘end of history', the end-point of (earthly) historical unfolding, but the starting point of humanity’s first serious advances in space.** What role, then, for the state? The frontiersmen of NewSpace tend to think of themselves as libertarians, pioneers beyond the domain of state bureaucracy (see Nelson and Block, 2018). ‘The government should leave the design work and ownership of the product to the private sector', the author of a 2017 report, Capitalism in Space, advocates. ‘The private companies know best how to build their own products to maximize performance while lowering cost' (Zimmerman, 2017, p. 27). One ethnographer notes that ‘politically, right-libertarianism prevails' amongst NewSpace entrepreneurs (Valentine, 2016, p. 1047–1048). Just as Donald Rumsfeld dismissed the opponents to the Iraq War as ‘Old Europe', so too are state entities’ interests in space exploration shrugged off as symptoms of ‘Old Space'. Elon Musk, we are told in a recent biography, unlike the sluggish Big State actors of yore, ‘would apply some of the start-up techniques he’d learned in Silicon Valley to run SpaceX lean and fast…As a private company, SpaceX would also avoid the waste and cost overruns associated with government contractors' (Vance, 2015, p. 114). This libertarianism-in-space has found a willing chorus of academic supporters. The legal scholar Virgiliu Pop introduces the notion of the frontier paradigm (combining laissez-faire economics, market competition, and an individualist ethic) into the domain of space law, claiming that this paradigm has ‘proven its worth on our planet' and will ‘most likely…do so in the extraterrestrial realms' as well (Pop, 2009, p. vi). This frontier paradigm is not entirely new: a ‘Columbus mythology', centering on the ‘noble explorer', was continuously evoked in the United States during the Cold War space race (Dickens and Ormrod, 2016, pp. 79, 162–164). But the entrepreneurial libertarianism of capitalistkind is undermined by the reliance of the entire NewSpace complex on extensive support from the state, ‘a public-private financing model underpinning long-shot start-ups' that in the case of Musk’s three main companies (SpaceX, SolarCity Corp., and Tesla) has been underpinned by $4.9 billion dollars in government subsidies (Hirsch, 2015). In the nascent field of space tourism, Cohen (2017) argues that what began as an almost entirely private venture quickly ground to a halt in the face of insurmountable technical and financial obstacles, only solved by piggybacking on large state-run projects, such as selling trips to the International Space Station, against the objections of NASA scientists. The business model of NewSpace depends on the taxpayer’s dollar while making pretensions to individual self-reliance. The vast majority of present-day clients of private aerospace corporations are government clients, usually military in origin. Furthermore, the bulk of rocket launches in the United States take place on government property, usually operated by the US Air Force or NASA.Footnote13 This inward tension between state dependency and capitalist autonomy is itself a product of neoliberalism’s contradictory demand for a minimal, “slim” state, while simultaneously (and in fact) relying on a state reengineered and retooled for the purposes of capital accumulation (Wacquant, 2012). As Lazzarato writes, ‘To be able to be “laissez-faire”, it is necessary to intervene a great deal' (2017, p. 7). Space libertarianism is libertarian in name only: behind every NewSpace venture looms a thick web of government spending programs, regulatory agencies, public infrastructure, and universities bolstered by research grants from the state. SpaceX would not exist were it not for state-sponsored contracts of satellite launches. Similarly, in 2018, the US Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA)—the famed origin of the World Wide Web—announced that it would launch a ‘responsive launch competition', meaning essentially the reuse of launch vehicles, representing an attempt by the state to ‘harness growing commercial capabilities' and place them in the service of the state’s interest in ensuring ‘national security' (Foust, 2018b). This libertarianism has been steadily growing in the nexus between Silicon Valley, Stanford University, Wall Street, and the Washington political establishment, which tend to place a high value on Randian ‘objectivism' and participate in a long American intellectual heritage of individualistic ‘bootstrapping' and (allegedly) gritty self-reliance. But as Nelson and Block (2018, p. 189–197) recognize, one of the central symbolic operations of capitalistkind resides in concealing its reliance on the state by mobilizing the charm of its entrepreneurial constituents and the spectacle of space. There is a case to be made for the idea that SpaceX and its ilk resemble semi-private corporations like the British East India Company. The latter, “incorporated by royal charter from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth I in 1600 to trade in silk and spices, and other profitable Indian commodities,” recruited soldiers and built a ‘commercial business [that] quickly became a business of conquest' (Tharoor, 2017). SpaceX, too, is increasingly imbricated with an attempt on the part of a particular state, the United States, to colonize and appropriate resources derived from a particular area, that of outer space; it, too, depends on the infrastructure, contracts, and regulatory environment that thus far only a state seems able to provide. Its private character, like that of the East India Company, is troubled by being deeply embedded in the state. As one commentator has observed of SpaceX, ‘If there’s a consistent charge against Elon Musk and his high-flying companies…it’s that they’re not really examples of independent, innovative market capitalism. Rather, they’re government contractors, dependent on taxpayer money to stay afloat' (cit. Nelson and Block, 2018, p. 189). Perhaps this should not come as a surprise. As Bourdieu (2005, p. 12) observed, ‘The economic field is, more than any other, inhabited by the state, which contributes at every moment to its existence and persistence, and also to the structure of the relations of force that characterize it'. The state lays out the preconditions for market exchanges. Under neoliberalism, the state is the preeminent facilitator of markets. The neoliberal state is not so much a Minimalstaat, night watchman state, or slim state as it is the prima causa of market society (see, e.g., Wacquant, 2012). Similarly, in the political theory of Deleuze and Guattari, any economic development presupposes the political differentiation caused by the state (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004a, p. 237–238). Even in the global environment of contemporary capitalism, the market cannot operate without the state becoming integrated with capitalism itself, as ‘it is the modern state that gives capitalism its models of realization' (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004b, p. 480). For capitalism to survive in outer space, the state must create a regulatory environment, subsidize infrastructure, and hand down contracts – in short, assemble outer space as a domain made accessible in legal, technical, and economic ways. Universalizing capital As Earth’s empty spaces are filled, as our planet comes to be shorn of blank places, capitalistkind emerges to rescue capitalism from its terrestrial limitations, launching space rockets, placing satellites into orbit, appropriating extraterrestrial resources, and, perhaps one day, building colonies on distant planets like Mars. But why limit ourselves to Mars? As of mid-2017, NASA’s Kepler observatory had discovered more than 5000 exoplanets—planets that seem like promising alternatives to Earth, located at an appropriate distance from their respective suns in the famed ‘Goldilocks zone'. These ‘planetary candidates', as they are known—that is, candidates for the replacement of Earth, capable of supporting human life with only minimal technological augmentation or cybernetic re-engineering—are above all viable candidates for selection by specific capitalists seeking to discover new profitable ventures beyond the limits of an Earth-bound capitalism. Space reveals the impotence of the neoliberal, post-Fordist state, its incapacity and unwillingness to embark on gigantic infrastructural projects, to project itself outwards, and to fire the imagination of (actual) humankind. Capitalistkind steps in to fill the vacuum left behind by a state that lacks what Mann (2012, p. 170) calls ‘infrastructural power'. The old question, the question of Old Space, was quite simply: is this planet a viable site for humankind, a suitable homeland for the reproduction of human life away from Earth? But the new question, the question for NewSpace, will be: can this celestial body support capitalistkind? Will it support the interests of capitalist entrepreneurs, answering to the capitalist desire for continued accumulation? While some elements of the astrosociological community, such as the Astrosociology Research Institute (ARI),Footnote14 insist on elucidating the “human dimension” in outer space, Dickens and Ormrod recognize that this humanization-through-capitalism really involves the ‘commodification of the universe' (2007b, p. 2). While Dickens and Ormrod develop similar arguments to those sketched here—from their concept of an ‘outer spatial fix' to their argument about outer space becoming woven into circuits of capital accumulation—they were writing at a time when their remarks necessarily remained speculative: the commercialization of space was still in its infancy. In an inversion of Hegel’s owl of Minerva, reality has since largely confirmed their ideas and caught up with theory. Above all, when considering the various ventures ongoing in space today, it is not so much the universalizing human dimension as the specifically capitalist dimension that is striking. With the advent of NewSpace, outer space is becoming not the domain of a common humanity but of private capital. The arguments laid out above mirror an ongoing turn in critical scholarship away from the notion of the Anthropocene towards a more rigorously political-economic concept of Capitalocene, premised on the ‘claim that capitalism is the pivot of today’s biospheric crisis' (Moore, 2016, p. xi). Just as the exponents of the concept of Capitalocene emphasize that it is capitalism, and not humanity as such, that is the driving force behind environmental transformation, so too does the notion of capitalistkind emphasize that it is not humankind tout court but rather a set of specific capitalist entrepreneurs who are acting as the central transformative agents of and in outer space, with the ‘ever-increasing infiltration of capital' into what was formerly the domain of the state (Dickens and Ormrod, 2007a, p. 6). We can also think about these issues in terms of what Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos (2015) terms ‘spatial justice'. This concept captures the fact that struggles over justice are often struggles to occupy space, as the term is more conventionally understood, as with urban battles over the ‘right to the city' (Harvey, 2008), to provide just one example. But the same also holds true for outer space: there is an ongoing struggle over the right to take up space in outer space. So far, the capitalist side appears to be winning. As the proto-communism of the Cold War-era Outer Space Treaty is abandoned—in tandem with the increased technological feasibility of exploiting resources and accumulating profits in outer space—spatial justice in outer space increasingly comes to mean the ‘justice' of capital, capitalistkind taking the place of humankind. It is comparatively easy to declare that outer space is a commons, as the Outer Space Treaty did in the late 1960s, when that domain is, for all practical purposes, inaccessible to capital; with the heightened accessibility of outer space, however, it is unsurprising that central political agents, such as President Trump’s administration, should seek to dismantle this regulatory framework and ensure the smooth functioning of capital accumulation beyond the terrains of Earth. What kind of capitalism is being projected into space? The complexity of state-market relations is sufficient to force us to hedge against a simplified reading of space commercialization: it is not a matter of states against markets, as if the two were mutually exclusive. Instead, as Bratton (2015) suggests, we are witnessing the emergence of a ‘stack', a complex intertwining of commercial, geopolitical, and technological concerns, which challenges previous notions of state sovereignty. This can be seen as a hybridized state-market form, with technology playing a central role in reciprocal processes of political and economic transformation. On the one hand, outer space was in some sense always already the domain of marketization, albeit to a limited extent, even during the Cold War, from the first commercial satellite launch in the early 1960s to President Ronald Reagan’s implementation of the Commercial Space Launch Act of 1984, which aimed to encourage private enterprise to take an interest in an emerging launch market. As Hermann Bondi, the head of the European Space Organization, wrote in the early 1970s, ‘It is clear…that there must be three partners in space, universities and research institutions on the one hand, the government on the second and industry on the third' (Bondi, 1971, p. 9). On the other hand, outer space still remains firmly within the domain of the state and is likely to do so for the foreseeable future, with the likely continued importance of military uses of satellite technology and the weaponization of Earth’s orbit—crucially, the Outer Space Treaty only prohibits nuclear arms and other ‘weapons of mass destruction' in space, not conventional weapons, such as ballistic missiles. One novel element in this phase of capitalism-in-space is the interrelationship between Silicon Valley, NewSpace, and the state (see, e.g., Vance, 2015). Silicon Valley’s capitalist class, including Amazon’s Jeff Bezos, play an outsize role in NewSpace. Behind and around these figures, however, remains the state—through its weighty fiscal, regulatory, military, and symbolic investments.Footnote15 To take but one example: In June 2018, SpaceX won a $130 million contract with the U.S. Air Force to launch an ‘Air Force Space Command' satellite onboard a Falcon Heavy rocket (Erwin, 2018). Fredric Jameson’s (2003, p. 76) oft-quoted observation that it is easier to imagine the end of humankind than the end of capitalism, is realized in the ideals and operations of capitalistkind. Elon Musk has observed that the goal of SpaceX is to establish humankind as a ‘multiplanetary species with a self-sustaining civilization on another planet' whose purpose is to counteract the possibility of a ‘worst-case scenario happening and extinguishing human consciousness' (Vance, 2015, p. 5). But couldn’t we view this idealistic assertion on behalf of humanity in another way? It is not human consciousness, over and against what the writer Kim Stanley Robinson (2017, p. 2) calls ‘**mineral unconsciousness'** (i.e., the mute, geological reality of the natural universe), so much as a specifically **capitalist consciousness that is at stake**. **While the actions of capitalistkind may primarily be aimed at ensuring the future survival of the human species, an additional result is to ensure that the very idea of capitalism itself will outlive a (distantly) possible extinction event. Capitalism is a self-replicating system, pushing to expand ever outwards, using a territorializing strategy of survival**. As David Harvey notes, ‘a steady rate of growth is essential for the health of a capitalist economic system, since it is only through growth that profits can be assured and the accumulation of capital be sustained' (1990, p. 180). **In this respect, outer space is ideal: it is boundless and infinite. As Earth comes to be blanketed by capital, it is only to be expected that capital should set its sights on the stars above.** The actions of capitalistkind serve to bolster the capitalist mode of production and accumulation: it is not only life but capital itself that must outlive Earth—even into the darkness of space.

#### *Do I affirm the resolution? Or, I guess the better question is Should I?*

#### *I wonder what it means to affirm this resolution? What is a private entity? What does it even mean to appropriate? What does anything mean within this landscape of semiotic acceleration?*

#### *My energies are exhausted, yet, through conversations of fairness and clash, I am again forced to invest in the system that exhausts me?*

#### *How do I do it then? In a system where affirmation of any kind props up the systems it tries to destroy, How do I still affirm the resolution? Is it possible to affirm while engaging in withdrawal*

#### The method of the 1ac is that of imaginary ruins – we must redefine what it means to affirm the resolution in the first place, in a system of semiotic acceleration, language does not occupy a stable meaning. We must then ask ourselves what the resolution means to us now, and what private appropriation of space means today

#### To affirm the resolution is not to propose a radical change to the status quo, but to affirm a method of withdrawal from the systems of violence, in which we can adopt a detached criticism of the status quo

#### After the rubble lies endless possibilities for a new beginning, and we must ask ourselves what systems can be created, what structures exist to be rebuilt – and what structures must remain as rubble - to affirm the resolution is to affirm what can be after the rubble

John Cunningham, 2015

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**Imaginary Ruins** There’s a game that can be played when walking through the city. Any zone of the contemporary capitalist metropolis will do but it’s best played in one of the centres of accumulation, say London, than one of the less developed sectors. This rule is not absolute since decaying post-industrial cities also have their attractions. The game involves an imaginary testing of the city’s buildings and neighbourhoods for their worthiness for destruction. This testing asks the question whether or not these office blocks, shops, apartment blocks, and other excrescent forms of the built environment deserve to exist in some imaginary post-capitalist future. And needless to say, whether the forms of life and social relations the contemporary metropolis helps to engender are not also worthy of a similar negation. It’s a game that can be played singularly or in groups, and does not so much open up the metropolis as reduce it to a series of potentially empty spaces. Most of the time this game is disturbingly easy, with the city throwing up future ruins at every street corner. That squat, concrete block of a police station needs to be reduced to rubble if only for the misery encrusted in its walls. The many-storied, uninhabitable financial office block deserves ruination despite the odd attraction of its well-tended atrium as a place of rest. Other husks of brick, glass, concrete, and dead labour are much less straightforward. A shopping mall, enlightened glass arcade of circulating bodies and commodities, might also serve other purposes, glass surfaces and transparencies being capable of reflecting more than the relations of exchange. The utopian potential of glass architecture, the revolutionary virtues of transparency and openness, might be realised in the midst of a wider negation of capitalism. Utopian and revolutionary thinkers such as Charles Fourier and Walter Benjamin thought that such architecture promised a break with the opacity and interior poverty of private life. Perhaps, the game suggests, this break could be made actual if the glass cages of the present were put to use by new collectivities and subjects.1 It’s a shame that this game is little more than a way of critically passing the time walking through the shadows cast upon us by the metropolis, its structures, and apparatuses. Walking around transcribing the potentially empty spaces of the metropolis, enjoyable as it is, also traces the lack of agency that might make such a negation real. And such a lack ironically makes negation more necessary than ever. Negation and negativity as such, that inchoate combination of affects and passions such as boredom, hatred, depression, is more like a knot pulled ever tighter by this seeming lack of anti-capitalist negation in the present. Despite the rigours of a long drawn out socio-economic and environmental crisis, the actuality of the negation of capitalism seems as far away as ever. However, even if critique must operate in this suspended space it can still register the subjective and political brokenness that accumulates through the exertions of capitalist value production. The activity of the communist critic can hopefully be negative enough to find some purchase upon the contradictions of capitalism that might be valid tender in the marketplaces of negation. The stalling of negation might in itself provide the possibility of rethinking it.

#### I affirm – the appropriation of outer space by private entities is unjust