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#### The affirmative’s performative semiotic understanding of capitalism and embrace of affectual gestures of resistance diffuses the revolutionary potential needed to challenge capitalism.

[Dean, Jodi. "Communist desire."The Ends of History. Routledge, 2013. 14-31.] WWEY

An emphasis on the drive dimension of melancholia, on Freud’s attention to the way sadism in melancholia is “turned round upon the subject’s own self,” leads to an interpretation of the general contours shaping the left that differs from Brown’s. Instead of a left attached to an unacknowledged orthodoxy, we have one that has given way on the desire for communism, betrayed its historical commitment to the proletariat, and sublimated revolutionary energies into restorationist practices that strengthen the hold of the capitalism. This left has replaced commitments to the emancipatory, egalitarian struggles of working people against capitalism, commitments thatwere never fully orthodox, but always ruptured, conflicted, and contested, with incessant activity (not unlike the mania Freud also associates with melancholia) and so now satisfies itself with criticism and interpretation, small projects and local actions, particular issues and legislative victories, art,technology, procedures, and process. It sublimates revolutionary desire to democratic drive, to the repetitious practices offered up as democracy (whether representative, deliberative, or radical), having already conceded to the inevitably of capitalism, “noticeably abandoning any striking power against the big bourgeoisie,” to return to Benjamin’s language. For such a left enjoyment comes from its withdrawal from power and responsibility, its sublimation of goals and responsibilities into the branching, fragmented practices of micro-politics, self-care, and issue awareness. Perpetually slighted, harmed, and undone, this left remains stuck in repetition, unable to break out of the circuits of drive in which it is caught, unable because it enjoys. Might this not explain why the left confuses discipline with domination, why it forfeits collectivity in the name of an illusory, individualist freedom that continuously seeks to fragment and disrupt any assertion of a common? The watchwords of critique within this structure of left desire are moralism, dogmatism, authoritarianism, and utopianism, watchwords enacting a perpetual self-surveillance: has an argument, position, or view inadvertently risked one of these errors? Even some of its militants reject party and state, division and decision, securing in advance an inefficacy sure to guarantee it the nuggets of satisfaction drive provides. If this left is rightly described as melancholic, and I agree with Brown that it is, then its melancholia derives from the real existing compromises and betrayals inextricable from its history, its accommodations with reality, whether of nationalist war, capitalist encirclement , or so-called market demands. Lacan teaches that, like Kant’s categorical imperative, super-ego refuses to accept reality as an explanation for failure. Impossible is no excuse—desire is always impossible to satisfy. So it’s not surprising that a wide spectrum of the contemporary left have either accommodated themselves, in one way or another, to an inevitable capitalism or taken the practical failures of Marxism-Leninism to require a certain abandonment of antagonism, class, and revolutionary commitment to overturning capitalist arrangements of property and production. Melancholic fantasy—the communist Master, authoritarian and obscene—as well as sublimated, melancholic practices—there was no alternative—shield them, us, from confrontation with guilt over this betrayal as they capture us in activities that feel productive, important, radical. Perhaps I should use the past tense here and say “shielded” because it is starting to seem, more and more, that the left has worked or is working through its melancholia. While acknowledging the incompleteness of psychoanalysis’s understanding of melancholia, Freud notes nonetheless that the unconscious work of melancholia comes to an end: “Just as mourning impels the ego to give up the object by declaring the object to be dead and offering the ego the inducement of continuing to live, so does each single struggle of ambivalence loosen the fixation of the libido to the object by disparaging, denigrating it, and even as it were killing it. It is possible for the process in the Ucs. [unconscious] to come to an end, either after the fury has spent itself or after the object has been abandoned as useless” (255). Freud’s reference to “each single struggle of ambivalence” suggests that the repetitive activities I’ve associated with drive and sublimation might be understood more dialectically, that is, not merely as the form of accommodation but also as substantive practices of dis- and reattachment, unmaking and making. Zizek in particular emphasizes this destructive dimension of the drive, the way its repetitions result in a clearing away of the old so as to make a space for the new. Accordingly, in a setting marked by a general acceptance of the end of communism and of particular political-theoretical pursuits in ethics, affect, culture, and ontology, it seems less accurate to describe the left in terms of a structure of desire than to point to the fragmentation or even non-existence of a left as such. Brown’s essay might be thought of as a moment in and contribution to the working through and dismantling of left melancholia. In its place, there are a multiple practices and patterns which circulate within the larger academic-theoretical enterprise (theorized by Lacan in terms of the discourse of the university) which has itself already been subsumed within communicative capitalism. Some of the watchwords of anti-dogmatism remain, but their charge is diminished, replaced by more energetic attachment to new objects of inquiry and interest. The drive shaping melancholia, in other words, is a force of loss as it turns round, fragments, and branches. Over time, as its process, its failure to hit its goal, is repeated, satisfaction attains to this repetition and the prior object, the lost object of desire, is abandoned, useless. So, for example, some theorists today find the analytic category of subject theoretically uninteresting, essentially useless; thus, they’ve turned instead to objects, finding in them new kinds of agency, creativity, vitality, and even politics. The recent reactivation of communism bears witness to some of the most direct statements of the end of melancholia as a structure of left desire. Describing the massive outpouring of enthusiasm for the 2009 London conference on the idea of communism, Costas Douzinas and Slavoj Zizek, note that even the question and answer sessions were “good-humored and non-sectarian,” a clear indication “that the period of guilt is over.”i Similarly, in his own contribution to the communist turn, Bruno Bosteels glosses the idea of the communist horizon as invoked by Alvaro Garcia Linera. The communist horizon effects “a complete shift in perspective, or a radical ideological turnabout, as a result of which capitalism no longer appears as the only game in town and we no longer have to be ashamed to set our expecting and desiring eyes on a different organization of social relationships.”

#### Ontology is an aesthetic model that removes a material focus and makes possibility for material action impossible. It makes agents immovable and creates an affective economy feeding computation.

Beller 21

Beller, J. (January 22, 2021). The World Computer: Derivative Conditions of Racial Capitalism. United States: Duke University Press. Pages 49 to 51. // js69 --- Ask me for the PDF!

But are fascists really people? We demand the right to won der if anyone is left in there after being fully colonized by computational racial capital’s AI. Capital’s realization and generalization of simulation by digital logic—as, for example, with spectacle in **the aesthetic register**, or by means **of statistical modeling** **in** the computational register, and with multiple grids of intelligibility and evaluation (**algorithmic governance**) in vari ous other academic and social disciplines— **allows for the machine**-(re)thinking **of ontologies** **in** general in terms of the effects of **pro cesses of** instrumental inscription and **codification. Metaphysics itself is under siege**. Is there any remainder in the fascist? Thus, when considering the recent interest in ontology, Fredric Jameson’s “Always historicize!” comes to mind (1981: 9). **Machine- thinking**, which is one with execution, **entails a reconfiguration of ontologies.** As Alex Galloway (2012) taught us, **the medium of computing**, which instantiates its objects via programming, **is metaphysics**. And as Allen Feldman (2015) brilliantly demonstrates in analy sis ranging from South Africa to Guantánamo to drone warfare, **metaphysics is a medium of war**. However, in a classic disappearing act of the medium, this fact of the instantiation of executable **ontologies by computation**, as well as their ascription to physical forms, most often goes unremarked— despite the fact that the reformatting is “the message.” **The question is whether or not** **it is possible to critique** this computational, cap i talist ordination of phenomena and thought— and the stakes here are far higher than what is generally meant by “academic.” **Ontological claims**, such as “x is y,” always have an addressee. **The ontological layer**, what something is, **is an artifact of data visualization**—in short, an inscription, an act of writing, and a speech- act— and never a neutral endeavor. Simulation deconstructs objects into distribution patterns; **it makes us skeptical about** who or **what is pre sent**, both objectively (as we regard the perceptible) and subjectively (**in ourselves** as consciousness). It ordains “a tremendous shattering of tradition” (Benjamin: 236). Fake news! Data teaches us that we, as subjects, may not be the privileged addressee. The reign of simulation is everywhere imposed as antecedent forms of subjectivity are garbled, shattered, reformatted, and placed on a continuum with informatic throughput. **Through an inversion of** the **priority between world and data** visualization, the digital simulation of the world by concepts **encoded in apparatuses** at once **reveals the stakes of** intervention in **the protocol layer of computation** and raises the pointed and possibly still politi cal question of what may remain of so- called humanity beyond the purview of a now fully financialized knowing that is a kind of doing— and here again, we glimpse the remainder. It does so **by posing the** question of the **possibility of** a “**beyond**” to (con temporary) simulation, particularly **in a world**— and in keeping with current physics, a cosmos—in which simulation has overtaken the place of truth as ground, and has done so in a way that both implies and corroborates the insight that number, deeper than matter or energy, is the fundamental component of All. I’m not sure, but it seems that some of us have an awareness of remaindered life and its pos si ble alternative futures, and others not at all. It is no won der the oppressed called Pinochet’s brutal fascist supporters “mummies.” **This appeal**, in the face of foreclosure, to alternate strategies of account—**to ontology**, other wise— would be the place to reflect for a moment on the fact that a marginal strand of thought, namely, deconstruction, **has** today **become** **the dominant mode of state power**, practiced on a massive scale by what Feldman (2017) calls “the deconstructive state.” Ironic that this intervention in the protocol layer of language function was introduced by phi los o phers, but then again, none of us really know whose thinking we are doing. The incredible grammatical and conceptual innovation that Derrida used to dramatize differánce was first developed and utilized to intervene in the axiology of the extant colonial, imperial, and patriarchal epistemes. **These knowledge formations support**ed the **hegemony of** vari ous **Western regimes**, sustaining a broadband governance that functioned by producing and mobilizing a contiguous, per sis tent, dominant real ity, along with its attendant objects and subjects. Derrida’s technique of shattering these state- supported knowledge formations ostensibly grounded on axiology with a kind of accuracy that combined the skills of diamond cutter and watchmaker, disassembled seemingly— inviolable metaphysical first princi ples such as the superiority of Western civilization, or of men over women, and other forms of “truth” like “God” or “Man” or Truth. At the time deconstruction was a highly specialized strategy and toolkit developed by certain forms of feminist and postcolonial theory: Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray, Judith Butler, Gayatri Spivak, and Homi Bhabha, to name only a few. The appropriation and inversion of these strategies of deconstruction for the disruption of ontology by hegemonic actors who now deploy it tactically, if without subtlety or study ( there is an analogy to be made with a hatchet somewhere), to scramble marginal ontologies is shocking, yet it must be seen as another example of the right- wing appropriation of left political techniques. **Deconstruction has been financialized**— it’s a volatility inducing accumulation strategy. When the United States and Israel defend freedom of speech and democracy, when pinkwashing enables embarking on the repre sen ta tional and practical deconstruction of the individuals, families, homes, organ izations, and nations which are their targets and victims, we must observe that there has been a sea change in both the calculus of dominant repre sen ta tion and the status of its objects. The discursive overturning of local real ity now occurs by means of an executable language backed by media platforms and military power, by a formalization and calculus of what, almost twenty years ago, Sarah Ahmed (2004) **called “affective economies**.” By a strange inversion, “real ity” has gone from an in de pen dent variable to a dependent variable. It has become **dependent upon the information that produces it** and that allows stakeholders to bet on its outcomes. It is information itself that is now the in de pen dent fact and has the status previously held by “real ity.” It, information, is now the necessary condition, ground and medium for any wager on the future. Google’s and Facebook’s recent forays as defenders of privacy against the state’s encroachments on our information is a similar result illustrating the priority of information over any specific real ity: it is not a defense of “us” but only a proprietary strategy, a narrative and datalogical exploit for control over the means of production of on- demand realities. The organ ization of affect driven by the profit motive, depends upon the deconstruction and recomposition of read- write ontologies.

#### The assumption that signifiers are the primary mode of exchange only glorifies consumption at the expense of understanding how labor orders society – that viewpoint can only be taken by intellectuals already divorced from need.

Zavarzadeh ‘95

[Mas’ud, prolific writer and expert on class ideology. 1995. “Post-Ality: Marxism and Postmodernism.” <https://catalog.princeton.edu/catalog/1074637>] rc/Pat

This noninstrumental "consumption" is a semiotic act; "a system of com­munication" (Selected Writings 46), a mode of forming and disseminating "mean­ings" above and beyond the functionality of consumption. "A washing machine serves as equipment and plays as an element of comfort, or of prestige, etc. It is the field of play that is specifically the field of consumption" (Selected Writings 44; emphasis added). When one buys a pair of "designer" jeans, one does not simply respond to a "need" (to keep warm, for instance) but acts on the pulsation of "desire": to express oneself and in doing so become involved in a purposeless practice that is essentially an aesthetic act ("play")., post-ality is the articulation of this mode of consumption: early capitalism is marked by functional consumption which perpetuates production while post-al capitalism ("consumer society") is a break from this functionalism. Consumption, in post-al capitalism becomes an end in itself, an "excessive play: a sheer "waste"—a carnival, a re­gime of festivities and prodigalities. Consumption in Baudrillard's theory, then, is not determined by such classical Marxist concepts as "use-value" and "exchange" value but by "sign value." The signs and meanings produced through prodigal expenditure are signs that cannot be easily absorbed back into the established system of codes that now controls all significations. Consumption is both anti-production and anti-regulatory: it is a process of excessive signification that cannot be contained by the dominant mode of signification. "Conspicuous consumption" for Baudrillard is then essentially a resistant semiotic act—an act of intervention in the order of established meanings and rep­resentations legitimated by capitalism. Prodigal "consumption" is, according to him, a radical negation of capitalism. The act of consumption therefore is not ex­hausted by its instrumentality and usefulness (it is, in terms of his later writings, a mode of "seduction" a form of opposition to production and procreation); it is the signifier of an irradicable negative (that cannot be assimilated in a Marxist dialecti­cal synthesis) and constitutes the principle of post-al mutation. The form of capital­ism that could be analyzed in Marxist terms of political economy, Baudrillard maintains, has ended and, an entirely new analytics that he calls, the "political economy of the sign" (Mirror 121) is needed to make sense of post-al capitalism. However, Baudrillard's understanding of the Marxist concept of "produc­tion" as a "mirror" is not simply a misrecognition but is also ideological in the sense that the logic of its misrecognition is a class logic: it legitimates the (economic) interests of the ruling class. The Marxist theory of "production," contrary to Baudrillard, Habermas, Butler, Cornel West and other critics of the "production paradigm," does not reduce all human activities to "labor"; rather it is a theory of the emancipation of humans from necessity and the freedom from the capitalist form of labor. Baudrillard's notion of "symbolic exchange" is simply a post-al colo­nial nostalgia for "primitive" society; a transhistorical utopia for the North Atlantic elite who has freed itself from necessity—at the cost of the labor of the other—and now regards the main question of humanity to be not "production" but destructive "consumption." For this class, life is lived ludically: the playfulness that erases the use-value of the objects of necessity in order to turn them into moments of the aesthetic sublime. Post-al theories, in general, proclaim to "deconstruct" the metaphysics of labor. Consumptionist theories after Baudrillard, however, have used the deconstruction of "production" as their foundation for proving the autonomy of capital from labor and consumption from class/production. One of the main signs of post-al society, according to Stuart Hall, is that "there is a leading role for con­sumption, reflected in such things as greater emphasis on choice and product dif­ferentiation, on marketing, packaging and design, on 'targeting' of consumers by life-style, taste and culture rather than by the Registrar General's categories of so­cial class" ("The Meaning of New Times" 118). One of the un-saids of the displace­ment of production by consumption is the notion that capitalism is a response not to profit but to the "free choice" (desire) of individuals: it is the consumption and desire for difference that drives capital, and, as such, capitalism is not only not antagonistic to human needs but is in fact a direct response to them. "The private control of the sovereign consumer" is portrayed in these reactionary theories as "real, visible and tangible" (Mulgan, "The Power of the Weak" 358). Consumption in post-al theory has become the trope of the indeterminacy of production. In its privileging of "consumption," post-al theory privileges individual "choice" over human "needs": it is, in short, a class theory. Thus, even though the displacement of production is a move made in the name of epistemological neces­sity—to provide a more accurate knowledge of capitalism now—it is, in practice, an ideological alibi for what Hall's statement clearly marks: the removal of "class struggle" from the scene of the social in the interest of increasing the freedom of choice for the upper middle classes within the existing socio-economic structures. These critics announce the end of socialism and with it the outdatedness of the praxis of abolishing private property (that is, congealed alienated labor) in the post­al moment. Instead of abolishing private property, they envision an enlightened radical democracy to supplant socialism (as Laclau, Fukuyama, Mouffe, Cornell West, Aronowitz, Butler and others have advised) and make property holders of each citizen. This, needless to say, is the Thatcherist notion of property-owning democracy represented as a radical differential socialism. For theorists of radical democracy, it is only by means of conspicuous and prodigal "owning" (which en­ables consumption to become transfunctional and symbolic) that one can be resituated outside the system of exchange and be set free from the repressive utili­tarianism of capitalism. The "sign" (constructed through conspicuous consump­tion) and not "labor" is the formative force in post-al capitalism, and, therefore, it is the "control of the code" (Mirror 122) and not seizing of the means of produc­tion that is the urgent question for political struggle in the post-al moment. The post-al question, to be clear, is no longer the end of exploitation in the form of putting an end to the extraction of surplus labor (communism) but a more equi­table distribution ("consumption") among people, regardless of their race, gender, sexualities, nationalities, of the surplus value produced by the exploitation of the proleteriat. The proliferation of post-al "social movements" (feminism, anti-racism, environmentalism, queer theory, postnationalism) are part of this abandoning the project of the emancipation of humanity from labor under capitalism (exploitation) and instead instituting in its place the libertarian goal of freedom of consump­tion. The project of emancipation is seen in post-al theories as a universalizing and totalitarian undertaking (Butler, "Poststructuralism") that disregards the difference/ differance—what Drucilla Cornell calls, "each of us in her singularity" (113). Cornell is, of course, annotating here what Derrida (quoting Levinas) calls "the equitable honoring of faces" ("Forces of Law" 959) of each consumer. In restoring differ­ence/differance, post-al theories, in Bell's word, "uncouple" production from con­sumption. The emergence of theories of consumption, these theorists argue, is the proof that the "political" (the freedom of the subject) is what, in the post-al mo­ment, determines the economic. However, the popularity of consumptionist theo­ries has very little to do with the political or the freedom of the subject: it is a not so subtle device for reducing overproduction. Far from asserting the autonomy of the subject, it, in fact, demonstrates how the freedom of the subject under capitalism is always the freedom that enhances the economic interests of the owners of the means of production.

#### The alternative is embracing party politics. This means building a radical coalition that unifies all marginalized by different forms of oppression to challenge capitalism and imperialism. Black Panther Party proves concrete action outside of the state is possible and successful.

[Curry Stephenson Malott. “In Defense of Communism Against Critical Pedagogy, Capitalism, and Trump.” Critical Education 8, no. 1 (2017).] WWEY

In her discussion of the International Section of the Black Panther Party Kathleen Cleaver (1998), echoing Harry Haywood, notes that the Party understood that, “Black self-determination was not feasible under American imperialist domination” (p. 212). Cleaver (1998) notes that while the BPP’s membership was exclusively Black, their message and practice was geared more toward the communist ethic of power to the people and the unification of all anti-imperialist movements and workers’ states rather than on the more isolationist practice of Black nationalism and Black Power. Regarding the revolution in Algeria, which the CIA was concerned would pave the way for rise to power of communists through the National Liberation Front (NLF) (Blum, 2004), Cleaver (1998) notes that, “the Panthers admired the Algerian revolution and considered its victory a powerful example of the ability of oppressed people to attain power over their destiny” (p. 213). Black Panther Party members would be represented at the Organization of African Unity conferences hosted in Algeria and had visited and established relationships with workers’ statesas Cuba and the DPRK. The BPP therefore struggled to extend the communist movement in the U.S. which was difficult given the limitations of the CP-USA and the SWP as demonstrated by Marcy (1976). Huey P. Newton was not only the BPP’s co-founder, but he was also its revolutionary theoretician, and, as such, was continuously engaged in the process of developing the Party’s tendency, the influences of which were wide-ranging, including Marxist-Leninism. Newton (1995) would eventually come to adopt what is obviously Lenin’s (1917/2015) framework outlined in The State and Revolution. For example, Newton (1995), in a creative twist on Lenin, would argue that U.S. imperialism had negated the conditions for states to exist such as economic and territorial sovereignty. Newton (1995) therefore argued that the world consisted not of states or nations, but of imperialists, on one hand, and dominated or colonized oppressed communities on the other. From this point of view Cuba, China, the Soviet Union, and the DPRK were examples of liberated communities. Oppressed communities within the U.S. such as the Black community, from this perspective, should follow the example of liberated communities adopting their revolutionary goals adapted for the American context. The Panthers therefore argued for a unified struggle of all oppressed communities the world over aimed at destroying imperialism and the capitalist system in general and replacing it with communism. Under communism, in accordance with Lenin’s model, Newton was adamant that oppressed communities would retain their right to self-determination, realized under the protection of democratic centralism dedicated to fighting the counterrevolutionaries of the capitalist class. Newton also understood that racism and all manner of bigotry would also have to be eradicated through education in order for the proletarian state to be able to wither away and for communism to be able to flourish freely. The BPP’s first campaign was the establishment of a regularized armed patrol targeting the state’s Oakland Police Department due to their history of terrorizing and murdering members of the Black community, the vast majority of which represented some of the highest concentrations of unskilled, super-exploited workers. The BPP understood that the role of the police was to employ deadly force to create an intimidation-based consent to extreme exploitation. Huey Newton, who has been described as a youth of rare brilliance, at the height of his popularity, commanded the respect and commitment of the African American community across the country, leading to the establishment of BPP chapters from coast to coast. A fundamental component of why Newton was so dangerous in the eyes of the U.S. bourgeoisie was because he understood that the global proletariat was a great chain, and each conglomeration of workers around the world can be thought of as links in the great chain. What happens to workers in England affects workers and the price of their labor in the U.S. Lenin applied this insight to unions and the role of the strike. When one shop strikes and wins victories, they affect the average price of labor within the whole branch of industry, and can also inspire workers in the same region to take similar actions, thereby affecting other branches of industry. Newton, familiar with the work and tradition of Harry Haywood, employed this concept in the U.S. to understand how racism was used to push down the price of labor amongst Black and Brown workers, and in turn, their communities, and because all workers are links in the same chain, the overall price of labor within the whole country is suppressed. From this view it makes little sense to hold on to colonial structures and pressure more privileged white workers to paternalistically support more oppressed and exploited workers as a moral act because it is far more revolutionary for more privileged workers and less privileged workers to dissolve their class differences through revolutionary struggle as comrades. This requires an engagement with racial differences within the labor market rather than pretending they do not exist. The anti-communism of the American Left is so deep-seated that it is uncommon in retrospective discussions of the BPP to acknowledge that they were a Party in the communist sense that stood in solidarity with workers’ states. For example, as a political prisoner in the U.S., BPP leader George Jackson found inspiration in the political writings of imprisoned Palestinians in Israel (Pierce, 2015). The BPP not only was a descendant of Malcolm X, but they were also following in the communist footsteps of Harry Haywood, adopting much of his analysis and practice. They regularly sent delegations to workers’ states, and routinely distributed Maoist literature at their rallies. Perhaps the internal contradictions of the BPP were too great to overcome, as some commentators suggest. However great their errors were, however, the evidence seems to suggest that the FBI’s COINTELPRO (Counter Intelligence Programs) operations played the most decisive role in the destruction and elimination of the BPP. The same can be said of the SWP and the CP-USA who had been subjected to COINTELPRO operations since the 1940s (Churchill & Vander Wall, 1990). The goal of COINTELPRO was to disrupt, discredit, and neutralize communism and the political Left in general. Churchill and Vander Wall (1990) describe this war as secret because it was. The FBI, for example, would employ agent provocateurs who would infiltrate the ranks of the BPP in order to foment internal dissent within the organization as well as provide authorities with critical intelligence that could be used against the radicals. For example, the FBI would employ convicts as undercover agents to infiltrate groups like the BPP. William O’Neal was such a character who joined the BPP as an undercover FBI agent. O’Neal would eventually work his way up the ranks of the BPP and become Fred Hampton’s personal security guard. Hampton was of interest to the FBI because he was the Chairman of the Chicago chapter of the BPP and a dynamic, influential revolutionary leader who had made great strides in fostering working class solidarity across racial lines. O’Neal seems to have drugged Hampton and provided the FBI and Chicago PD with a floor plan of Hampton’s apartment making it much easier to execute his assassination, which was carried out in1969 on December 4that approximately 4:30 AM (Churchill & Vander Wall, 1990). Among the tactics employed by COINTELPRO operatives to neutralize the BPP nationwide included eavesdropping, sending bogus mail, “black propaganda” operations, disinformation or “gray propaganda,” harassment arrests, infiltrators and agent provocateurs, “pseudo gangs,” bad-jacketing, fabrication of evidence, and assassinations (Churchill & Vander Wall, 1990). While most of these tactics require explanations and examples to develop a full understanding, suffice it to say that the FBI’s efforts to destroy the communist movement within America’s Black working class was only limited by the creative deviancy of COINTELPRO agents. At the first Black Radical Tradition conference at Temple University in early January 2016, Mumia Abu-Jamal, phoning in from prison to deliver a keynote presentation, argued that the FBI’s secret war to exterminate and neutralize the BPP was designed to not only obliterate them, but to replace them. That is, the goal was to remove the Black community’s organic leadership and replace it with a puppet leadership no different than the way the imperialist U.S. military has instituted regime changes across the globe, such as in Iraq and Afghanistan and as is the current goal for Syria. The Black bourgeois leadership class that has emerged in the U.S. might be understood as serving this purpose. Globally, the Soviet Union, and the communist movement more generally, have suffered the same fate at the hands of the imperialist counterrevolutionaries. Whether operating within the U.S. through federal and state police agencies or outside the U.S. through the military and the CIA the physical bourgeois assault on the communist horizon has been fundamental. This imperialist thread is also another link in the chain of the global class war. The coalescing of the revolutionary center of gravity with that of the economic center will be the great turning point in...history. The first truly revolutionary outburst on the social soil of the American continent will light the flames of a new revolutionary conflagration which is sure to envelop the entire globe. It will graphically demonstrate how "East meets west” not by the construction of new and more tortuous artificial, boundaries, but by the revolutionary destruction of all of them. It will be the supreme and ultimate alliance of the great truly progressive classes of the East and West in a final effort to accomplish their own dissolution. This in turn will terminate the first great cycle of man’s development from sub-man—man—to Communist Man, and set him on the path to new and higher syntheses.(Marcy, 1950, p. 41)What Marcy describes here began to take place in 1966 with the birth of the Black Panther Party. Rather than realizing its global revolutionary vision, its leaders were murdered, imprisoned and demonized. Despite this and other setbacks, the ultimate unification of the world’s proletarian masses, united around a shared vision of communism, remains the unrealized potential of the present, capitalist moment. However, even though it is changing, the communist vision is still stigmatized as incomplete, outdated, or hopelessly Eurocentric. That is, this communist coming-to-be should not be interpreted as the violent imposition of a European conception of being forced onto non-European and indigenous subjectivities. Rather, communism offers a global economic structure where indigenous subjectivities can be reformulated after centuries of physical, biological and cultural genocide. The communist traditions ‘conception of Oppressed Nations offers a more complete picture of how the sovereignty of the world’s indigenous peoples would be an integral component of a socialist future. Marx’s notion of each according to her ability and each according to her need offers a more philosophical approach to understanding the inclusiveness of a communist ethic. Marcy’s work is crucial because he is absolutely clear that the threat of US imperialism situated in a world forever at war, makes all states dedicate such a large portion of their national productive capacity on the military to render serious efforts for socialist planning nearly impossible. For this reason, Marcy (1950) argues that the center of global capitalist economic power, which is the U.S., must develop into the center of global revolutionary gravity. Marcy therefore suggests that only through the defeat of U.S. imperialism can the unification of the global proletarian class camp be realized. This, perhaps, remains true today. Each day then, Lenin (1917/2015) grows more relevant and more urgent. Ironically enough there is a strong tendency within the U.S. Left, and the educational Left in particular, that argues that the actual communists, communists in China, the former Soviet Union, and the DPRK, are not the real communists, but state capitalists betraying the spirit and intent of Marx. The arrogance of such positions is absurd, even taking into consideration the imperfections of real existing communism. Given the anti-communist nature of U.S. society, I believe that other potential communists, people like myself who had been involved in Marxism and/or critical pedagogy for decades, might struggle with the necessary solidarity with the aforementioned communist states. This is important because members of communist parties cannot pick and choose which aspects of the Party’s platform to support and defend. Party members, correctly in my view, must support and defend the entireplatform. To clarify whata communist Party program entails I will briefly turn to the PSL as an example. The purpose here is not to provide a complete overview, but to spark the reader’s interest.

#### The role of the ballot is consistency with the politics of comradery. This results in a clean break in capitalism that allows us to reimagine political work and transcend capital’s limitations on what is possible and feasible. Absent this framing, all movements and coalitions inevitably collapse under the strain of competing interests and the lack of connection.

Jodi Dean 19 () “Comrade - An Essay on Political Belonging” Verso, 10-01-2019, http://library.lol/main/429C9EC2E2F0AA8DCC33FE2CC178B11D. Accessed 6-27-2021, WWEY

The comrade relation remakes the place from which one sees, what it is possible to see, and what possibilities can appear. It enables the revaluation of work and time, what one does, and for whom one does it. Is one’s work done for the people or for the bosses? Is it voluntary or done because one has to work? Does one work for personal provisions or for a collective good? We should recall Marx’s lyrical description of communism in which work becomes “life’s prime want.” We get a glimpse of that in comradeship: one wants to do political work. You don’t want to let down your comrades; you see the value of your work through their eyes, your new collective eyes. Work, determined not by markets but by shared commitments, becomes fulfilling. French communist philosopher and militant Bernard Aspe discusses the problem of contemporary capitalism as a loss of “common time”; that is, the loss of an experience of time generated and enjoyed through our collective being-together.10 From holidays, to meals, to breaks, whatever common time we have is synchronized and enclosed in forms for capitalist appropriation. Communicative capitalism’s apps and trackers amplify this process such that the time of consumption can be measured in much the same way that Taylorism measured the time of production: How long did a viewer spend on a particular web page? Did a person watch a whole ad or click off of it after five seconds? In contrast, the common action that is the actuality of communist movement induces a collective change in capacities. Breaking from capitalism’s 24-7 injunctions to produce and consume for the bosses and owners, the discipline of common struggle expands possibilities for action and intensifies the sense of its necessity. The comrade is a figure for the relation through which this transformation of work and time occurs. How do we imagine political work? Under conditions where political change seems completely out of reach, we might imagine political work asself-transformation. At the very least, we can work on ourselves. In the intensely mediated networks of communicative capitalism, we might see our social media engagements as a kind of activism where Twitter and Facebook function as important sites of struggle. Perhaps we understand writing as important political work and hammer out opinion pieces, letters to the editors, and manifestoes. When we imagine political work, we often take electoral politics as our frame of reference, focusing on voting, lawn signs, bumper stickers, and campaign buttons. Or we think of activists as those who arrange phone banks, canvass door-to-door, and set up rallies. In yet another political imaginary, we might envision political work as study, whether done alone or with others. We might imagine political work as cultural production, the building of new communities, spaces, and ways of seeing. Our imaginary might have a militant, or even militarist, inflection: political work is carried out through marches, occupations, strikes, and blockades; through civil disobedience, direct action, and covert operations. Even with the recognition of the wide array of political activities, the ways people use them to respond to specific situations and capacities, and how they combine to enhance each other, we might still imagine radical political work as punching a Nazi in the face. Throughout these various actions and activities, how are the relations among those fighting on the same side imagined? How do the activists and organizers, militants and revolutionaries relate to one another? During the weeks and months when the Occupy movement was at its peak, relations with others were often infused with a joyous sense of being together, with an enthusiasm for the collective co-creation of new patterns of action and ways of living.11 But the feeling didn’t last. The pressures of organizing diverse people and politics under conditions of police repression and real material need wore down even the most committed activists. Since then, on social media and across the broader left, relations among the politically engaged have again become tense and conflicted, often along lines of race and gender. Dispersed and disorganized, we’re uncertain of whom to trust and what to expect. We encounter contradictory injunctions to self-care and call out. Suspicion undermines support. Exhaustion displaces enthusiasm. Attention to comradeship, to the ways that shared expectations make political work not just possible but also gratifying, may help redirect our energies back to our common struggle. As former CPUSA member David Ross explained to Gornick:

#### Here in the debate space, an activity uniquely situated in its discussion of social issues and current events, the judge has a unique obligation as an educator to challenge the neoliberalism that pervades pedagogical and policymaking spaces.

Ball 17 Stephen J. Ball (Distinguished Service Professor of Sociology of Education at the University College London, Institute of Education. He was elected Fellow of the British Academy in 2006; and is also Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences; and Society of Educational Studies, and a Laureate of Kappa Delta Phi; he has honorary doctorates from the Universities of Turku (Finland), and Leicester. He is co-founder and Managing Editor of the Journal of Education Policy), 2017, “Laboring to Relate: Neoliberalism, Embodied Policy, and Network Dynamics,” Peabody Journal of Education, 92:1, 29-41, DOI: 10.1080/0161956X.2016.1264802, this part is pgs. 37-39

**Within Ramya Venkataraman’s writing and presentations, there is the deployment and reiteration of a particular discursive ensemble, a set of tightly interrelated and interdependent concepts, ideas, and arguments addressed to educational reform (see Table 3). The ensemble joins up a set of arguments, assertions, and assumptions, in relation to the state and its alternative, that serve as a rationale for the processes of reform of education.** The elements of this ensemble are both local and specific as well as generic and global. **They are reiterated at almost all of the nodes in the global policy network—almost every website or network event rehearses and deploys them**. Although they are articulated and recombined in different ways and given different degrees of emphasis, they have a coherence which underpins network membership. As Marsh and Smith (2000, p. 6) put it, “networks involve the institutionalization of beliefs, values, cultures and particular forms of behaviour.” **These are made up not simply of pragmatic relations, but also constitute moral and epistemic communities.** The ensemble takes as its starting point the failures of the state, and a state of crisis in education (A)—the assertion that the government schools are ineffective and unfair. This starting point is the basis for a set of linked arguments: the replacement of bureaucracy by enterprise, through PPPs (I) and/or forms of private provision (H/G); and the need for assessment (as a way of measuring and managing the system) (B); the deployment of IT, that is, assessment software and big databases (C); at the institutional level the strategic role of leadership skills and sensibilities in driving change and raising quality (D) and to leverage for change from outside agencies, in particular from strategic philanthropy (E). The private sector is given a privileged role in all of this as agents of change and of innovation (F) through direct forms of private provision (H). Leadership, partnerships and assessment are offered as practices that “work”—for which there is evidence or stories of success in other places (J). **The state then reappears in a different form (K) as a competition state (Jessop, 2002), which facilitates, contracts, sets targets, and monitors—that makes and regulates markets. Embedded and represented in these arguments is a version of neoliberal rationality and its “state phobia” as Foucault (2010) calls it, in relation to the “old” state.** Over and against this, the competition state is imagined as lean and frugal. **Bureaucracy is displaced, innovation and creativity are “released” through the participation of business and civil society actors, and interrelated opportunities are created for reform and for profit and for “worldmaking.” The elements of a new policy ecosystem are outlined here—practices, organizations, infrastructure, and incentives that enable a market in state work. All of this is a reworking, or perhaps even an erasure, of the boundaries of state, economy, and civil society**. This rationality and its mobilization and advocacy are also realized and demonstrated in socio-material practices, which are enacted in and through network relationships. Public–private partnerships are excellent examples because they are a kind of assemblage of actors, organizations, and techniques that create and activate relationships. Ramya Venkataraman and McKinsey (India) have been active participants and partners in a variety of PPP initiatives. For example, they have participated in both the Mumbai School Excellence Programme (with Akanksha, MSDF, UNICEF, and the Mumbai Corporation) and in the South Delhi School Excellence Programme (with ARK, Bharti, Centre for Civil Society, Central Square Foundation, The Tech Mahindra Foundation, South Delhi Municipal Corporation). Both of these PPPs involve nonstate actors who take over state schools, loosely modeled on and directly informed by the U.S. charter school and English Academies programs. The work that ARK is doing in the UK is very similar to what we want to do down the road…. We now have 18 academies, with 24 en route; it’ll be 50 by 2015. And the concept of privately running— education that is publicly funded is something that ARK believes it can deliver [inaudible] it’s looking to India, we’re also seeking a similar model in South Africa and Uganda. (Amitav Virmani, Head of ARK [India] now CEO, The Education Alliance) In Mumbai we’ve been involved from end to end in the implementation. There are also other cities and states, which we are currently in discussion with for similar programs …. the state government has taken our help to craft the program …. (Ramya Venkataraman) Although these practices and the forms, stories, and ideas that underpin them are instantiated in a particular way in India in these examples, it is also possible to trace their movement through the global education policy community beyond India. One can follow them through a set of relations clustered around other reform efforts, using the same ingredients in the United States and in England. DISCUSSION This paper focuses on some of the network and discursive labor of one “traveling technocat.” Ramya Venkataraman travels across and beyond India as well as across the business, state, and third sectors, and between local, national, and international institutions. She carries with her a story made up of ideas, practices, and sensibilities that address the reform of Indian education and the Indian state, and articulates new opportunities for business and philanthropy as agents and beneficiaries of reform. **She is embedded in an apparatus of relations, finance, practices, and discourse (plots and stories), “comprising variously entangled scaled agents (of different geographical reaches)” (Cook & Ward, 2012, p. 7), which moves, changes, and develops but which coheres around a neoliberal project of reform and of creative destruction.** We are able to glimpse through these relations some of the work of assembling political rationalities, spatial imaginaries, calculative practices, and subjectivities that are “both the cause and the effect of wider transformative processes” (Cook & Ward, 2012, p. 140). Artifacts, schemes, propositions, and “programmatic” ideas move through these network relations, gaining credibility, support, and funding as they do so. These global forms are phenomena that are distinguished by their “capacity for decontextualization and recontextualization, abstractability and movement, across diverse social and cultural situations and spheres of life” (Ong & Collier, 2005, p. 7). Ramya Venkataraman’s engagements in the reform movement are diffuse, tangled, and contingent, she is a speaker at many sites and events that contribute to a reform assemblage that brings together various “things” and bodies, utterances, modes of expression, and regimes of signs. Such assemblages “stand in a dependent but contingent relationship to the grander problematizations …. They are a distinctive type of experimental matrix of heterogeneous elements, techniques and concepts” (Rabinow, 2003, p. 17). **Here the grand problematization is neoliberalism**. What is evident in Ramya’s activities is the labor involved in animating the assemblage, the efforts of articulation, persuasion, exemplification, legitimation, and problematization. Concomitantly, there is the emergence of an infrastructure of organizations, a sort of shadow state (Wolch, 1990), that can incubate, disseminate, and exchange ideas—teacher certification and training, school leadership, assessment, managing and running schools—over and against the language of more traditional forms of government and support, facilitate and legitimate the activities of non-state actors. **The mix of state, business, and third-sector actors and organizations within policy and governance is changed, not once and for all, but as part of a slow and steady movement from government to governance**. At the same time, new kinds of careers, identities, and mobilities are forged within the processes of reform and the work of networks.

## Case

#### debate solves over communication

Turner 4 – Bryan S. Turner, Dean of Social Sciences at Deakin University, Australia, “Baudrillard for Sociologists,” in Forget Baudrillard?, 2004 edition, p. 80-83

While, as far as one can tell, Baudrillard was not influenced by Bell’s vision of the role of technology and the media in shaping postindustrialism, he was influenced by Marshall McLuhan’s analysis (Gane 1991b:48) of the impact of new media on the transformation of modern culture, especially in The Gutenberg Galaxy (McLuhan 1967). McLuhan was particularly sensitive to the idea that we live in a processed social world where human beings live in a complete technostructure. This technological environment is carried with us as extensions of our own bodies, but McLuhan did not adopt a pessimistic view of the age of anxiety, because his ‘technological humanism’ (Kroker et al. 1984) and Catholic values committed him to the idea of the immanence of reason and the hope of an escape from the labyrinth. Indeed, a global technological system could become the basis of a universalistic culture. Although he was fully aware of the sensory deprivation which he associated with the impact of the mass media, he none the less remained committed to the hope that these negative effects were not fatal. Baudrillard, who as we have noted was deeply influenced by McLuhan’s idea that the content of messages was relatively unimportant in relation to their form, has embraced a very nihilistic position with respect to our processed environment.¶ Baudrillard’s pessimistic view of the fissure in the historical development of the modern is based on his view of the masses. Baudrillard’s analysis of the masses is a product of the Situationist responses to the May events of 1968, when it became increasingly obvious that the critical social movements of modern society would not be dominated by Marxist theory or directed by a vanguard of the working class. The crisis of May 1968 had not been predicted by Marxism or by mainstream sociology, but they did validate the claims of Situationists like Guy Debord in the journal Internationale Situationiste. However, if the crisis had been unanticipated by conventional political analysis, then the sudden collapse of the students’ and workers’ movements of 1968 found no easy explanation in the framework of mainstream social sciences.¶ Baudrillard’s concept of the inexplicable nature of the mass depend a great deal on the unusual circumstances surrounding the May events. By 1973 with the publication of The Mirror of Production (Baudrillard 1975), Baudrillard was already moving away from an orthodox Marxist view of production, arguing that Marxism, far from being an external critique of capitalism, was merely a reflection or mirror of the principal economistic values of capitalism. Instead of engaging in the production of meaning, a subversive, oppositional movement would have to challenge the system from the point of view of meaninglessness. Subversion would have to rob the social system of significance. In taking this stand, Baudrillard followed the Situationist claim that whatever can be represented can be controlled (Plant 1992:137). The mass events of 1968 offered a promise of the nonrepresentational moment, the pure event of authenticity, which could not be explained, and therefore could not be manipulated. Baudrillard, in dismissing Marxist theory as a means of representing events, sought to replace the idea of a mode of production with a mode of disappearance.¶ In taking this attitude towards modern social movements, Baudrillard’s argument also rests on the various meanings of the word ‘mass’. Baudrillard is thus able to make allusions to the idea of physical substance, matter, the majority and the electrical meaning of earth. The translator’s note to In the Shadow of the Silent Majority points out that faire masse can mean to form a majority and to form an earth. Baudrillard argues by allusion that the mass absorbs the electrical charges of social and political movements; the mass thus neutralizes the electrical charge of society. This use of allusion, parody and irony is typical of Baudrillard’s mode of analysis, which is a type of sociological poetics, a style which is likely to make sociologists feel uncomfortable (Gane 199la:193). There is here also a continuity with the style of Dada and the Situationists. The poetic and striking character of Baudrillard’s style has no counterpart in professional social science, least of all in the British context.¶ Baudrillard’s ‘sociological fictions’ (1990a:15) are striking and challenging, but they are not ultimately convincing. Arguments which depend on allusion, allegory and similar rhetorical devices are decorative but they are not necessarily powerful. The notion of ‘mass society’ already has a clearly worked out sociological critique. The idea of ‘mass society’ might have been relevant in describing the new markets which were created in the post-war period with the advent of innovative technologies, which had the immediate effect of lowering prices and making commodities available to a mass audience. However, the trend of sociological analysis in the last two decades has been to assert that mass audiences have been broken down into more selectively constructed niches for more individualized products. It is controversial to argue that industrialization necessarily produces a mass society, characterized by a common culture, uniform sentiments or an integrated outlook. The idea of a mass society was often associated with the notion that the decline of individualism would produce a directionless mass as the modern equivalent of the eighteenthcentury mob. Critical theorists like Adorno and Marcuse associated the massification of society with authoritarianism and a potential for fascism. Of course, Baudrillard’s version of mass society is based on a particular view of the mass media creating a hyperreality in which the real has been absorbed by the hyperreal; meaning has imploded on itself. Although Baudrillard’s analysis of hyperreality is postcritical (Chen 1987), he does adopt in practice a critical position towards American civilization, which is the extreme example of massification. Rather like critical theorists, Baudrillard believes that the (bourgeois) individual has been sucked into the negative electrical mass of the media age. However, sociological research on mass audiences shows that there is no ground for believing that media messages are received, consumed or used in any standardized manner, and the majority of social scientists working on culture have attempted to argue that cultural objects in the age of the mass media are appropriated, transformed and consumed in diverse forms and according to various practices (de Certeau 1984). In fact, sociologists, largely inspired by the Situationists, have argued that everyday life is resistant to massification and that the concrete reality of everyday life-situations is the principal arena within which opposition to massification can be expected. Everyday life was regarded by both Guy Debord and Henri Lefebvre (1991) as the foundation of authenticity. Baudrillard, by arguing that criticism belongs to the period of modernism and not to the age of hyperreality, has ruled out opposition to the system, at least at the level of public debate and formal politics.

#### Perfcon, your spreading is bad, discourages listening to your position, and only reinforces biopolitical power. Outweighs bc there’s many different axes of oppression we could interrogate, so I couldn’t have known what you were going to focus on, but you went into the round knowing that your practice is bad.

Bifo 09

Berardi, Franco. [Italian philosopher who’s quite cool.] “Precarious Rhapsody.” *AK Press.* 2009. //WHS-AL

In ‘Learner based listening and technological authenticity,’ Richard Robin, a researcher from George Washington University, studies the effect of the acceleration of speech on listening comprehension. Robin’s research is based on a calculation of the number of syllables spoken each second. A faster rate, and more syllables per second decrease the level of the listener’s comprehension of meaning: the faster the flow of syllables per second, the less the time for the listener to critically process the message. The speed of emission and the amount of semiotic impulses sent in a given time unit are functional to the time available to a conscious processing. Fast speech intimidates listeners. Evidence suggests that globalization has produced faster speech emission rates in areas of the world where the Western mode of transmission of signs has come to replace traditional and authoritarian ones. For instance, in the ex-Soviet Union the speed of transmission measured in syllables per second has almost doubled since the fall of the communist regime: from three to almost six syllables per second; similar findings reached the same conclusions in the Middle East and China (1991: 403). The implications of Robin’s study are extremely interesting for our understanding of the transition from a form of authoritarian biopolitical power that is persuasive (like the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century) to a form of biopolitical power that is pervasive (like contemporary infocracy). Persuasive power is founded on consensus: citizens must understand the reasons of the President, General, Secretary or Duce. Only one source of information is authorized. Dissident voices are subjected to censorship. Instead, the infocratic regime of semio-capital grounds its power on overload, the acceleration of semiotic flows and the proliferation of sources of information to the point of the producing the white noise of indistinctiveness, irrelevance and indecipherability. Twentieth century art was conceived as flows of desire and liberating expressions; Surrealism celebrated the expressive power of the subconscious as liberating social and psychic energies. Today, art is also the flow of therapy for mind ecology. Art has replaced the police in the universal dispositif of mind control, but at the same time it looks for inroads into therapy.

#### Bifo cherry picks examples and ignores broader social progress occurring in the status quo – dooms his analysis.

Sayarer 15 [Julian, “Cheer up ‘Bifo’—history hasn’t ended yet”]

Indeed, were it not that Berardi’s logic were so selective and its perspective so narrow, the book would be all the more disheartening. Fortunately, also conspicuous is an author who is himself struggling with the present, soothing his concerns with an easy, leftist lament that envisages no greater role for humans than that of the happy worker. He raises objections to algorithms (rather than—more helpfully—arguing that these tools might serve human ends), and wishes for a time when humans made ‘real objects.’ The book also advances an elementary critique of monetary systems that rightly illustrates the economy of faith that is currency, but seems only to conclude that some finite resource (such as gold and the gold standard it once underpinned) might in some way be an improvement. All of this is profoundly unfortunate, for few would deny that modern work patterns must be made fairer and more human. Early on, Berardi writes: “History has been replaced by the endless flowing recombination of fragmentary images… frantic precarious activity has taken the place of political awareness and strategy.” The ironic missed opportunity of Heroes is that in it, the author has produced only one further recombination: a pastiche of graphic events, mass shootings and assorted corporate abuses that fall victim to the same shallow lust for spectacle that Berardi devotes such worthy efforts to decry. Anders Breivik, Virginia Tech, the Aurora Killings, Japanese suicide patterns and much else besides—modern capitalism has had an enormously detrimental effect on the lives of billions, and yet a statistically irrelevant number of these sorrows and grievances culminate in either mass shootings or suicides. Berardi identifies the existence of an iceberg, and yet contents himself with describing only its very tip. He eschews the banal and the human to focus on the fast-sell of the sensational, prophesising some coming end rather than taking on the more trying but rewarding task of explaining how things persist when so much suggests they might fall apart. He explains exceptions delightfully, while seldom troubling himself with the rule itself, or the norm he condemns. It is this very tendency that must be redressed, as Berardi probably would agree. He affords no attention to peer to-peer lending, fossil fuel divestment, credit unions, ethical banking growth, worker co-ops, fair tax certification, communication expansion through cell phones and the internet, or innovations in mobile currency. All of these changes are potentially problematic developments that are of course vulnerable to the replication of old injustices. No less certainly, however, they offer evidence that the status quo Berardi describes is neither static nor condemned only to change the world for the worse.

#### Bifo’s apolitical understanding of semiocap ensures the continued existence of capitalism – material engagement via the alt is key

Lear 12 [Ben Lear is an underemployed researcher living in Manchester, UK. He recently co-authored an article in Occupy Everything! Reflections on Why it's Kicking off Everywhere, and is a member of Plan C. “Lifeboat Communism – A Review of Franco “Bifo” Berardi’s After the Future”]

What does the end of the future mean for radical politics? It is at this point that Bifo’s argument becomes problematic. In an argument that intersects with groups such as Tiqqun, Bifo argues that we must see “Communism as a necessity in the collapse of capital.” Distant from the voluntarism of previous forms of Communist politics, this “post-growth Communism” will be best understood as a necessary response to capital’s refusal of labour. Cut adrift from the “opportunity” to work, with welfare systems dismantled, Bifo argues that we will witness the proliferation of zones of autonomy responding to the needs of an increasingly precarious and superfluous social body. Communist politics will emerge from an exodus, both voluntary and compulsory, from a stagnating and increasingly predatory state-capital nexus. This exodus is both social, in the development of an alternative infrastructure, and personal, in the withdrawal from the hyper-stimulation of the semiotic economy. Bifo abandons hope in collective contestation at the level of the political. Bifo’s politics could be described as a kind of “lifeboat communism.” As the crisis ripples, mutates, and deepens, Bifo sees the role of communism as the creation of spaces of solidarity to blunt the worst effects of the crisis of social reproduction. Gone is the demand for a better world for all, the liberation of our collective social wealth, or the unlocking of the social potentials of technology. Rather, Bifo’s politics are based around insulating a necessarily small portion of society from the dictates of capital. By withdrawing from the political sphere, we accept the likelihood of losing the final scraps of the welfare state and concede the terrain of the political to zombie politics and predatory capital. Rather than seeking new forms of organization to re-enter the political stage, Bifo seems to suggest that we seek shelter beneath it as best we can. This shying away from the political stage is the weakness at the heart of the book. Recent eruptions of political struggle have captured the collectiveimagination because they demonstrate that political contestation is still possible today, in spite of the obstacles Bifo has described. The Occupy movement and the uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa have resonated with all those who still have hope in collective struggle. Although these movements have encountered varying problems, to which we must develop solutions, they dispel the idea of an unchangeable present. The current blockages to successful organising have been shown to be strategic and tactical, not terminal. Misdiagnosing the current inertia of post-political public life as a terminal condition leads the left towards an evacuation of the political, while we should instead reassert its primacy. If we abandon any hope of fighting in, against, and beyond the existing architecture of the state and capital, and instead seek refuge in small communes, and go-slow practices, we abandon all real hope of a generalized, or generalizable, emancipatory politics. Although Bifo’s analysis of the difficulties of collective action resonates with all of us who have attempted to organize struggles in the past few decades, the proposal for a simple withdrawal from capitalism is a bleak politics indeed – which, at its most optimistic, calls for an orderly default by portions of the proletariat. The horizons of communist politics appear much narrower when capitalism is no longer seen as the repository of a vast store of social wealth awaiting collective redistribution, but rather redefined as an unassailable site of universal and permanent austerity combined with widening social redundancy. It is hard to imagine a network of self-organized projects and systems supporting the majority of the population in the context of an increasingly predatory capitalism. Emerging from the and isolated leftist scenes, this lifeboat communism will by its very nature have a limited carrying capacity, as the anarchist experience in post-Katrina New Orleans attests. The lifeboats that Bifo calls for will undoubtedly be too small and makeshift to harbor us all. The crisis is twofold. It is a crisis of capitalist profitability, and of an increasingly precarious and surplus global proletariat whose reproduction (as both labour and body) is under threat. It is unlikely that the proliferation of communes, squats, food co-ops, file sharers, urban gardeners, and voluntary health services will bring forth a new, better world. But while the current seemingly post-political situation throws up massive obstacles to organizing, there is still a potential for collective contestation. The capitalist state, racked by its own legitimacy crisis and weekly political scandals, is more vulnerable than it appears. We need only recall the period of unexpected hope built by students in Britain, occupiers in Oakland, and vast swathes of North Africa and the Middle East during the past two years. These movements were mobilised through the betrayal of a vision of the future – but alongside their rage, they put forth a hope which can guide our politics. The task at hand is to unlearn old behaviour and to forge new tactical and organisational weapons for struggle. Bifo’s contribution is a timely and challenging one, but it ultimately leads us back towards a DIY culture and “outreach” politics. As our movements come to terms with these limits, we must also hold onto the belief that luxury for all is possible. The social potential of unfilled blocks of flats, emerging technologies like 3D-printing, and the desires of the millions of underemployed, should remind us of this. This will not be possible without a collective struggle against the state and the demands of capital, one which simultaneously defends what we have and attempts to move beyond it. A retreat to lifeboat politics is both premature and a self-fulfilling prophecy. While Bifo correctly analyses the current conjuncture – clearly identifying the post-political state, the weakness of the Left, the crisis of profitability and new forms of labour, and their impact on the subject – his political prescriptions lead us in the wrong direction. Just as Bifo does, we place the struggle against work at the center; but we can also seek to liberate social wealth, rather than insulate a lucky few from the ravages of capital. Rather than “No Future,” we must raise a different banner: “The future’s here, it just needs reorganizing.”