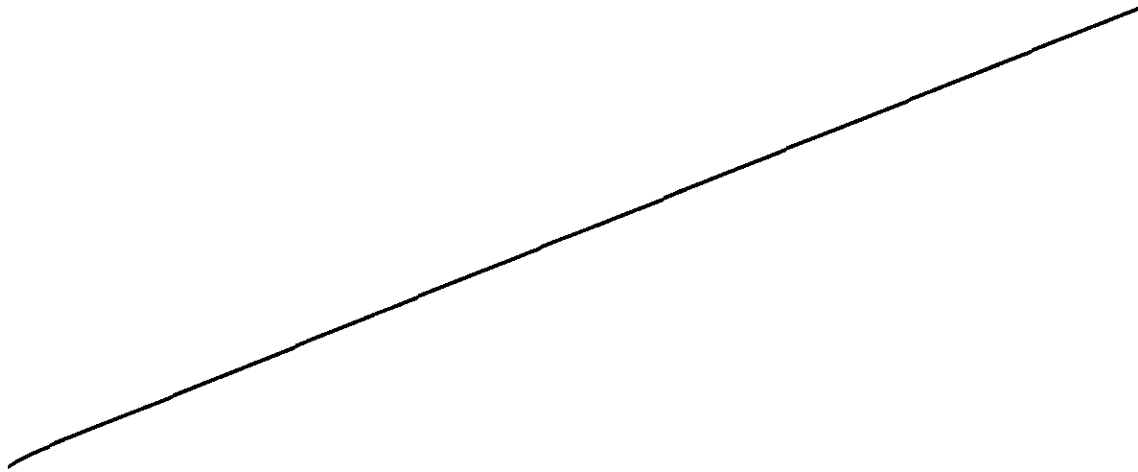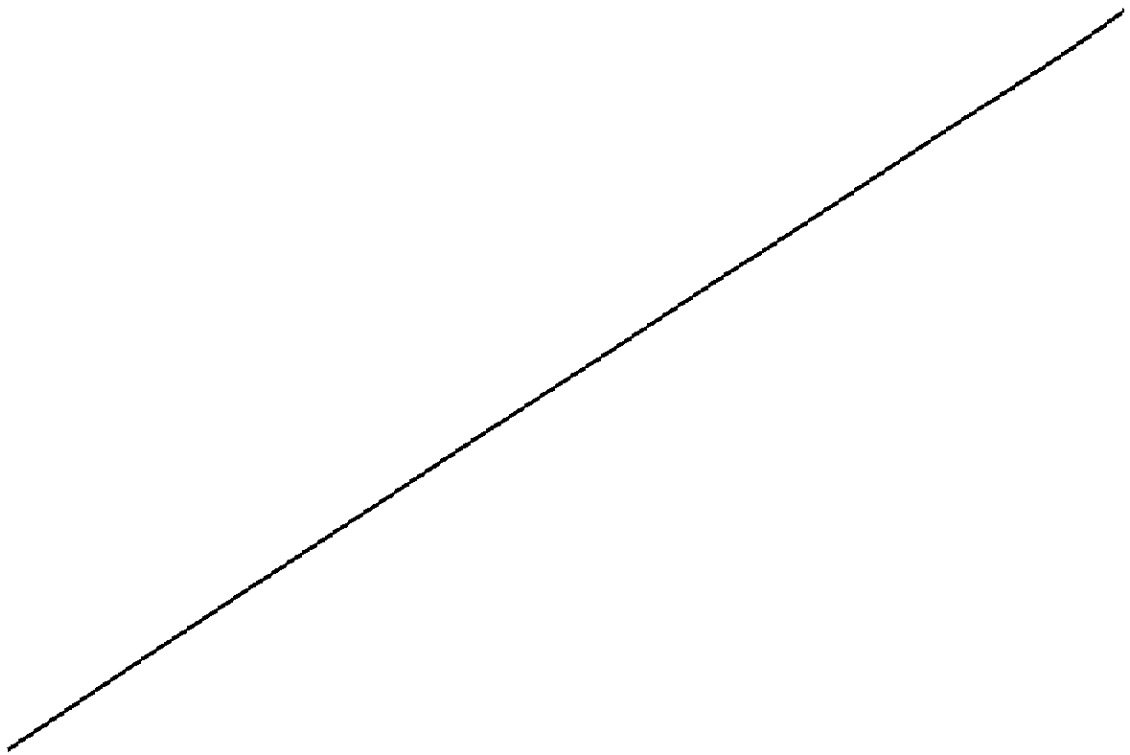Reorientate,
Eccentricate,
Speculate,
Fictionalize,
Geometricize,
Commonize,
Abstractify:

Seven Prescriptions for Accelerationism

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1. REORIENTATE

In an era characterized by the injunction to self-brand, it should come as no surprise that manifestos now come pre-hashtagged, forecasting their own viral uptake. The surging popularity of #Accelerate (in both positive and negative senses) would not have functioned under a more accurately modest label of #redesigninfrastructureinstitutions technologyideologytowardsotherends—an approach which in fact, paradoxically, seems more deeply attached to the Gramscian 'long institutional march' of politics than to a model of political thinking bound to speed or to the revolutionary event. When the currency of attention reigns supreme, terms that play upon our fascination with the excitingly counterintuitive will always win out (in this case: If the speed of things beyond our cognitive grasp is a problem, how can it also be the solution?). The question is: How long can this attention last, can it endure the long march? When the tactics of popularisation abide by contemporary modes of value-extraction based on rapid trending (attention value), does such a brand deployment not risk falling into the same (unfortunate) disposable class as the consumer gadget? Whether intentionally or not, #Accelerate, the brand, has merged pages from both advertising basics (generate buzz) and from Žižek's public intellectual playbook (poking salt-soaked fingers into our socio-ideological lesions to stir up reaction). And indeed, reactions have been hasty and plentiful. Yet commentary that either blindly champions #Accelerate (often by no other means than repetition of the tag), or condemns it as a neo-futurist-fascist travesty, rarely grasps the potential at stake, caught up in the buzz of a name that, unfortunately, obfuscates its content.

The necessity and power of the name is not to be underestimated, especially when faced with the righteous call of the Manifesto to rescue the future from a paradigm of debt capture or cataclysmic climate change. This alter-future is, of course, inexistent (it belongs not to the category of the *it is*, but to that of the *could be*—or, as some

would have it, the *ought to b*e), and although the Manifesto is spiked with a dose of necessary pragmatism, the impulse it seeks to unleash must find shelter in an adequate term itself as the name of an idea towards which anticipation can incline (or even be accelerated at all). It is first of all through the name (or an ethics of naming) that a thought can be opened up beyond what is,[1] as a cognitive site where imagination can begin to de/restructure the existent. With a nod to Reza Negarestani's call for an inhuman ethics of revisionism,[2] let us first apply this to the revising of the name itself, for although language is not the 'real' issue at hand, it is of ontic importance for we humans. Firstly, it must be a verb (for all politics is a doing of thought); secondly, the productive impetus driving this ill-named #Accelerate has little to do with novelty: it rather connotes an immanent 're' (indeed it is practically reformist—since I'm not French, this is not, in essence, a politically pejorative term); and thirdly, it is about directing existing energies in (as yet) inexistent directions; so in the spirit of anticipation open to further revisions, let me suggest the slightly less tantalising, but more honest: Reorientate.

2. ECCENTRICATE

While the name #Accelerate deserves such scrutiny, there are attributes of this term inherent to the Manifesto that are worth preserving. Acceleration already drives apparatuses of violent value-extraction: from the experiential level of our working lives and the exploitation of increased production,[3] to the algorithms that decidedly wager

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1. S. Lazarus, *Anthropologie du nom* (Paris: Seuil, 1996), 52.

2. R. Negarestani, 'A View of Man from the Space of Reasons', paper presented at the Accelerationism Symposium, Berlin, December 14, 2013. See also 'The Labor of the Inhuman', this volume.

3. If 'the artist' has become a paradigmatic figure of contemporary labour, with no separation between life and work, then Joseph Beuys's clairvoyance has proven perversely accurate: we are all now indeed artists.

on value with a velocity far surpassing the speed of human intellection. To suggest that an intensification of this process (including its contradictions) will disrupt and overcome such a machine is to believe that this machine thrives on stability. Such a thesis has been fatally discounted by the successful amplification of the neoliberal motor precisely during moments of turbulence, as evidenced by the response to the 2008 economic crisis. Yet in this ever-swirling apparatus that gains sustenance from its own failures, there is a kernel of normative stasis anchoring energies centrifugally. Like a spinning amusement park ride, with our bodies immovably glued to the edge, we may be whirling nauseatingly fast, but we haven't really moved an inch. It is precisely here, on this kernel of stasis, that the call to accelerate needs to take hold, dislodging stagnant conceptual orientations in favor of the creation of eccentric, out-of-centre attractors, where we may discover trajectories of a vectorial (and not rotational or circulatory) sort. The creation of eccentric attractors is equal to the creation of new coordinations through which the fallibility or contingency of existing normative points are demonstrated. A constructive work, creating eccentric attractors that both emit and absorb affectivity, generates impetus by magnetizing new norms of practice, the mutability of which is subject to endless reengineering. Shifting from sheer 'critique' (a pointing to the point, an unveiling of the point as a point), which has, more often than not, morphed into a self-satisfied gesture of knowing better in attitude alone,[4] the acceleration of eccentricity is simultaneously intellectual and

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4. See Walter Benjamin's 'The Author as Producer' (1934), where he makes a distinction between a critical attitude (a mere mimicry of historical apparatuses of production) and critical production (a transformation by way of technique, or technology of those apparatuses, in a process of reengineering). His distinction casts a disparaging gap between being an activist in 'critical' attitude only (content), and not in production (form); and it is the former 'critical attitude' that immobilizes most of critique today.

practical, cognizant of the recursive interplay between the two. Such an active restructuring of points of orientation inheres to the spirit of acceleration—which is, by definition, not speed, but a measure of the rate of change. To accelerate requires displacement between points; and to render eccentric is precisely to decalcify those very trajectories of known orientation, bifurcating them into new (temporarily) stable coordinations of 'attractive' norms.[5]

3. SPECULATE

Commitment to an eccentric future untethered from the existent axial pull of socio-economic or climactic apocalypse cannot be nostalgic, nor based solely on the dread of impending doom. To depart, as the Manifesto does, from a fearful threat of cataclysm (albeit by no means unfounded) is to deploy the same techniques as religious scripture—and, as Ray Brassier has noted, fear is precisely what must be overcome first in any emancipatory project.[6] The admirable futural will that drives the Manifesto seems peculiarly tentative towards the future. It feels locked in the past on several points, looking backwards over its shoulder to recount exemplary precedents (largely failed cybernetic ones), self-assured in its nostalgic distance and unwilling to take that speculative leap towards the unknown. While correctly identifying a certain paralysis that comes over the left when faced with the forecasting of alternatives, the Manifesto seems bound to its own lamenting diagnosis, unable to prognosticate beyond vague assertions. This is not to discount the necessary labour and prowess typical of the Left in generating exacting critique (duly recognized in the Manifesto), yet it is to highlight the continued

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5. M. Delanda, *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy* (New York: Continuum, 2002), 56.

6. R. Brassier, 'Wandering Abstraction', http://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/wandering-abstraction.

lack or void in fertilizing any sense of the becoming possible of the impossible, the articulation of the outside, and the production of desire itself. Commitment to an eccentric future entails a thinking/ doing matrix beyond pure diagnostics or historical exemplification; the latter are necessary in eliciting an attitude of negation (what we don't want) or precedent, but wither in the face of producing what we do want (especially on a macro, extra-local level). Remaining in the temporality of what is (or what was) clouds the very futurity that could or ought to be uncancelled—the future is prognostic, and its tense must evolve towards the anticipatory. As an inde-terminate entity, the future (today foreclosed by casino finance) entails a risk, as it surges from analysis (epistemology) to what could be (speculation). To speculate is to articulate and enable the contingencies of the given, armed only with the certainty that what is, is always incomplete; to speculate is to play with the demonstra-tion of this innately porous, nontotalisable set of givens. Extricating 'speculation' from its current bedfellow of finance entails a fidelity to an incalculable future divorced from the reductive apparatus of the wager, wherein all possibilities are conflated with probabilities. Probability is but a mode of liberal openness responding to the set of known affordances within a given condition (a mode of being over-determined by what is known), foreclosing on the *potential* of epistemic fallibility. To speculate, on the other hand, is to mobilize the capacity of epistemic fallibility; to deploy this fallibility as an engine in the never-ending effort for socio-politico-technological (not to mention ethical) redefinition, implying a thinking of time adjacent to the present, since to remain in the present is to refuse the inexistent.[7] Speculation is an ethos of non-presentness, in which the bounding

7. M. Delanda, *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy* (New York: Continuum, 2002), 107.

of a determinate, definitive project is continually undermined by an experimental responsiveness to epistemic, ontological and systemic variation. Such foundational work requires a commitment to the force of imagination of what could be or ought to be, prior to pragmatism and logistics, for it is the affective ground upon which the inexistent may be noetically instantiated and gain catalytic impetus. Laying the bedrock for a political condition of speculation is necessary in order to overcome the alternativeless future that Accelerationism rightly militates against; yet these possible futures can only attain traction when the distribution of affect is embraced in equal partnership with calls for operational, technological and epistemic restructuration—there cannot be one without the other.

4. FICTIONALIZE

The pragmatic tone of the Manifesto cannot gainsay the role of belief within sociopolitical reorientation. The resurgence of ratio-centric discourse is a natural (and welcome) response to the rise of irrational nationalistic and religious fundamentalism worldwide. Yet to embrace a central tenet of the Manifesto that suggests we build upon the 'success of the enemy' entails not just the establishment of counter-think-tanks or the redirection of algorithmic-economic pro-duction towards other ends, but also a learning from the successes of the theological itself, intertwined as it is with any project directed toward the inexistent. This is not to suggest that the future is a de jure transcendental entity (a claim refuted by the immanentalist, jujitsu modus operandi of the Manifesto that seeks to point existing infrastructural energies in inexistent directions), yet it is to acknowl-edge the power of belief that is necessary for the construction of speculative futures. Endemic even to the quasi-'science' of finance economics is a recursive quality of futurity (positive feedback) to be seized upon, epitomized by the question: What sort of future do we

want to see performed? Donald MacKenzie reached such an open conclusion in the last pages of his sociological analysis of the uptake of the Black-Scholes-Merton model within the futures market, point-ing to a potential site of ideological/practical intervention.[8] In an era determined by 'the economy' as a hyperobject that has been incorporated within a totalized and autonomous domain since the mid-twentieth century,[9] this seems to be the quintessential site upon which to exercise the detotalizing capacity of speculative imagina-tion. The Manifesto asks of us not to cower in the face of complex model-making (nor to reduce the economy to concrete, localized or phenomenological immediacy), yet it remains trapped in the diag-nostic register when it comes to the sort of future we want to see enacted, citing only the need for strategic plans. This begs the bigger question, no doubt deliberately left aside in the Manifesto: Can any project directed towards the future do without belief or idealism as such? A question of this nature is tied to imaginative experimentation and its unprovable belief in something other. And if this will is to take on a generic (extra-local) force, it can only do so through the *sense* that conditions for speculation are possible (in the face of alternative impossibility). Speculative possibility is effectuated through fiction, a fiction that maps vectors of the future upon the present. A type of

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8. In Donald MacKenzie's study on the financial turn of economics, he highlights the role of the self-fulfilling prophecy (positive feedback) of mathematical models upon reality, through the example of the Black-Scholes-Merton model. At first the correspondence between the model and actual prices was fairly inaccurate (the model did not reflect reality), yet as traders began to rely on the model— taking up its mathematical claims of legitimacy, directly using its projections in their practice through the dissemination of purchased pricing charts—the model began to create reality, it became a tool of the trade—what MacKenzie calls 'an engine, not a camera', a (once inaccurate) model (now) driving reality. See D. MacKenzie, *An Engine, Not A Camera: How Financial Models Shape Markets* (Cambridge. MA: MIT Press, 2008).

9. T. Mitchell, 'Fixing the Economy', in *Cultural Studies* 12:1 (1998), 82–101.

fiction unleashed upon ossified norms (including the very privileging of an exclusively 'human' power at work in politics, to the neglect of non-human agents), modes of being, and forms of use, projected through that delicate sliver between affect and effect; a medium yoking the dialectics of sensibility and practice. This is a fiction driven by anticipation (the unknown); a fiction that lacerates and opens the subject towards what awaits on the periphery of epistemic certainty. It is in this image that Accelerationism must embrace the fictional task of fabulating a generic will with a commitment equal to that which it makes to technological innovation. Fiction is a vehicle for the introduction of a constituent *demos* (something that is troublingly absent in the Manifesto), and helps tackle the self-evident question facing Accelerationism, namely: Who or what does the accelerating? Without reducing the demos or 'democracy' (which is not a proper structure, but a force of the people) to parliamentary regimes of democratic materialism,[10] accelerationist politics must take up the challenge of motivation and popular will if it is to cast off its shadows of techno-dictatorial prescription. This is not in the least to advocate absolute horizontality, or representational mechanisms; it is to excavate a discursive space for the soul or will of collective passions. Rousseau's timelessly crucial 'artificial soul',[11] as that which breathes collective life into a political project unbound by the axioms of the existent, requires fabulation. Indeed, as he asserts, the artistry of politics is bound to this labour of an artificial or fictional soul animating the demos,[12] and it is through such a labour that new connections,

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10. 'The infinite of worlds is what saves us from every finite dis-grace. Finitude, the constant harping on our mortal being, in brief, the fear of death is the only passion—these are the bitter ingredients of democratic materialism.' A. Badiou, *Logics of Worlds*, tr. A. Toscano (London: Bloomsbury, 2009), 514.

11. S. Critchley, *The Faith of the Faithless: Experiments in Political Theology* (London: Verso, 2012), 81.

12. Ibid., 33.

modes of collectivity and systems of relationality are sculpted within, alongside and for a world.

5. GEOMETRICIZE

With the almost universal consensus that we inhabit a period of Earth's history classified as the 'anthropocene', the infrastructure enforcing (anthropocentric) democratic materialism, namely four to five-year popular voting cycles, is dramatically at odds with geological temporality,[13] producing a rift in what it means to commit to humanity—is it the humanity of the now, or humanity as a species? The anthropocentric temporality of idealised parliamentary procedures (ones based on finitude, and the timescale of the individual human) yield myopic and therefore limited responses to life-sustaining processes that evolve at a scale of temporality evading human perception. How such 'nested' temporalities between human life and geologic necessity (the environment and atmosphere that afford our existence) are to be negotiated comparatively and phenomenologically, should be a key concern for Accelerationism if humans are to survive into the post-anthropocene.

To be clear, this is not to advocate a prioritizing dictatorship of geological time; it is to acknowledge a radical asymmetry of temporal scaling that calls for mediation. Grand scales of time resist our phenomenological grasp (we can never experience millions of years, or the preconscious universe), yet if humans are to have a chance in the post-anthropocene, we need cognitive and affective openings to be perceptually engineered. Assuming a spacetime dynamism, unlike the static capture of objects in linear perspective, this new perspectival orientation must adopt a geometry that augments our

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13. I am grateful for Deborah Ligorio bringing this temporal scale to my attention in a private conversation.

phenomenological constraints; a nested spacetime complexity that could render near that which, in the linear-visual world, vanishes at the illusion of a horizon. The nature of affect, of empathy (and mirror-neurons), of recursive behaviour associated with a new geometry of perceiving nested spacetime is experimental at best, but affords the quality of atotality since objects can no longer be perceived in analytic isolation, and time cannot be reduced to a specific metric unit. Objects, in this fashion, resist capture, embedded as they are in an 'unstable milieu of multiple communicating forces and influences'.[14] Since politics has largely been historically connected to the 'sphere of appearances', the framework of perceptibility (how the world and all of its inhabitants appear to us in spacetime) is a quintessential arena within which to accelerate our geometric imaginations.

6. COMMONIZE

The Promethean scale endemic to the Accelerationist Manifesto has undergone a rather predictable round of scathing attacks, given the outright mistrust for grand projects on all sides of the political spectrum. There are several aspects of the Manifesto to debate, confront, refute, argue and so forth; but to deny the possibility for a politics of such a scale tout court (a scale we seem to have no trouble swallowing in the context of the omnipotence of the global neoliberal economy) is as totalising and absolutist as the claims made against the projected scale of Accelerationism. Between geopolitics and the economy, we already inhabit a delicately interconnected, Promethean sphere, where even the delineation of once mighty nation-states seems impotent in the face of global problems that transcend isolated territorialisation. Accelerationism recognises that retreating solely

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14. S. Kwinter, *Architectures of Time: Towards a Theory of the Event in Modernist Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 13.

into concrete localisation, or exploding in periodic blips of negation will not suffice, for neither can endure, nor fabricate the processual (and affirmative) nature of grand systemic reengineering necessary in reorienting our course and modes of life.

Nevertheless, the undertones of a revised Modernism peppering the Manifesto are of deep concern: they leave the violence and injustices inherent to the universalist repercussions of the Modernist project untouched. This tendency is also mirrored in the (almost entirely) white-Euro-male origins from which the discourse springs— to remain strictly entrenched within this exclusive demographic would be a step of ironic brutality. While the Manifesto admirably takes on the full scale of global reality, a more nuanced version of universality (not to mention questions of global justice) needs to take root if the ideas driving Accelerationism are to contain the seeds of an ethics that embrace non-totality and the constant struggle for inhuman (epistemic) revisionism. Can the Promethean operate in a nontotalizing fashion, or is it forever doomed to regimes of determination and commandment? This is where the medium of thought becomes crucial to recognize, before the infrastructural and pragmatic realms of object-centred practice, if we are to avoid a totalising (and therefore finite) quagmire brought on by claims of universal scope.[15] In 'situated universality' there is no perfect form, nor any specific procedure: it is about a doing that effectuates a thought. In this regard, the choreography or articulation of a thought may take on manifold forms responsive to localisation[16]—the kind of adaption afforded by a dynamic spacetime geometric perspective. Accelerationism must orient itself towards the production of generic thought even when

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15. A. Badiou. 'Huit thèses sur l'universel'. http://www.ciepfc.fr/spip.php?article69.

16. A. Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism,* trans. R. Brassier (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003).

advocating a high dosage of pragmatism, if it is to escape the trap-pings of finitude (or worse, another mode of colonization). Equality, as a generic instance of thought (urged by many thinkers preceding Accelerationism) is not effectuated in laws said to protect the 'sanctity' of human life equally—for they only serve to privilege biological life whilst ignoring the necessity of extra-biological capacities inherent to humanity. If some effectuation of generic equality is to take shape, its site and materials are the commons—that is, a Promethean project affirming other modes of production beyond the imperative to maximize surplus (fiscal) value (along with the labour relations that subtend this logic). As noted in the Manifesto,[17] several modes of contemporary production are even hindered by such a relationship predicated on competition and the centralization of profits, resulting in acute limitations to possible innovation. The generic quality of the commons lies in a broadening of political economy's emphasis on 'scarce' consumables such as water, air, nature, etc. reduced to cat-egories of use/exchange value, towards a commons that emphasizes the necessity of immeasurable value(s) such as language, knowledge, beauty, science, etc., that buttress all modes of social (re)production. Maurizio Lazzarato defines such a commons, qualified as infinite and inconsumable, as a 'co-operation between minds',[18] where 'success' is dependent not on propriety, but on imitation, assimilation, and shareability. The infinitude of such a commons is precisely the type of Promethean project that resists totalization: there is no proper site, nor uniform procedure; it is a generic thought of value creation that formally morphs under localised, material modes of practice.

17. A. Williams and N. Srnicek, '#Accelerate: Manifesto for an Accelerationist Politics', this volume, Section 3.3.

18. M. Lazzarato, 'From Capital-Labour to Capital-Life', trans: V. Fournier, A. Virtanen and J. Vähämäkip, in *ephemera: theory & politics in organization* 4(3) (2004), 187–208.

7. ABSTRACTIFY

Alongside the denunciation of Prometheanism, the Manifesto's proposition to accelerate abstraction has been equally cast in doubt (if not castigated outright). There is no doubt that abstract processes of value-extraction, such as the increased financialization of the economy, coupled with the division of labour across the entirety of society,[19] have permeated our everyday lives with furious (and exhausting) force. The simplistic reaction—to return to tangible and concrete modes of life/production—does nothing more than insinuate a Fordist regression to monotonous labour, a disavowal of development that would amount to the same as suggesting the restoration of a purely Euclidean universe. To denounce abstraction as a malevolent force in itself is to deny the necessary role played by the power of abstraction in shaping new modes of existence, for as Brassier reminds us, practical (concrete) incapacities reflect theoretical (abstract) incapacities.[20] Furthermore, to denounce abstraction is to also deny any possibility of forging a 'we' or collective body beyond what remains immediately perceptible—in other words, a *demos*. The 'we' is always an abstraction, it cannot be reduced to the counting of populations (all bodies cannot be concretely experienced); moreover, if this 'we' is to take into account non-human actors, abstraction must be accelerated so as to accommodate new ontological positions. The issue is not one of obliterating abstractions, since there is no concrete essential kernel of humanity to return to; the issue, rather, concerns how to deploy the power of abstraction towards alternative modes of life, distributions of exchange, production, and consumption. As Matteo Pasquinelli has shown, this power of abstraction is an inherent

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19. M. Pasquinelli, 'The Power of Abstraction and its Antagonism'. Paper presented at The Psychopathologies of Cognitive Capitalism II Conference, Berlin, March 8, 2013.

20. Brassier, 'Wandering Abstraction'.

capacity of the organism (including the human brain) to invent new norms in relation to dynamic surroundings,[21] recalling that a norm is not law, but a conception of law.[22] In this sense, the stagnant, alternativeless polis can be diagnosed as pathological, since it refuses to adapt to changing epistemic conditions. Before 'abstraction' signifies the abstruse and the incomprehensible, it indicates a drawing away, a diversion and detachment. First and foremost, abstraction is a separation from what *is* towards what *could be*. In this regard, it is a gesture of violence, an affirmative violence in exiting the as-it-is condition and moving towards the generation of new connections to and with a world. The power of abstraction to experiment and revise relations to each other, to production, to value creation and to the world, is a capacity that needs to be reclaimed beyond its colonization by finance capital and labour relations. The power of abstraction to detach from existent conditions and invent new modes of cohabitation is a force urgently in need of acceleration.

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21. M. Pasquinelli, 'The Power of Abstraction and its Antagonism'.

22. R. Negarestani, 'The Labor of the Inhuman'.