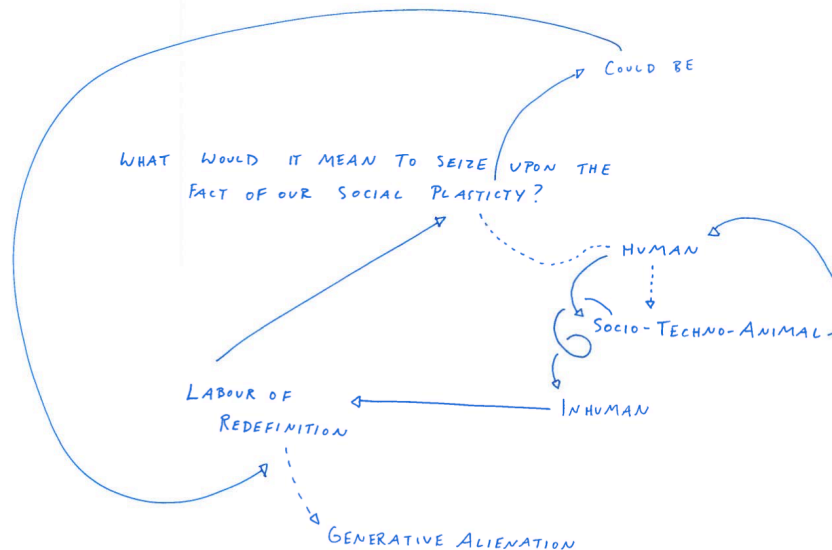**Synthesis and Constructive Alienation**

Patricia Reed | HomeWorks7, Beirut | Nov. 13

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1. The Plastic Human = The Alien Human

1. THE PLASTIC HUMAN = THE ALIEN HUMAN

COULD BE

WHAT WOULD IT MEAN TO SEIZE UPON THE FACT OF OUR SOCIAL PLASTICTY?

HUMAN

SOCIO-TECHNO-ANIMAL

LABOUR OF REDEFINITION

INHUMAN

GENERATIVE ALIENATION

What I'd like to do tonight is ask a simple, yet I think pressing, question: What would it mean to seize upon the *fact* of our social plasticity? Although this may seem like an obvious premise – that the social is an artificial construct governed by malleable cultural norms and values – why does it seem right now, so stagnant, especially in light of urgent issues and concerns? When we can quite readily see a horizon of increasing economic inequality, injustice and climactic catastrophe before us, why is it that we seem highly capable at narrating dystopic fantasies, rather than demanding how futural narratives *could be* otherwise? It is in the fanaticizing of our own demise that the grips our given ideological condition has upon us become apparent, rendering us imaginatively and functionally immobile – an immobility signifying a collective disavowal of our own 'human' plasticity. When the human is grasped as a socio-techno-animal able to continually self-redefine its' contours and capacities (often mediated through technological or tool augmentation, including the cognitive abilities to construct tools in the first place), to disavow this plasticity is a blow against the possibilities of the human

as such. The philosopher Reza Negarestani uses the term 'Inhuman' in a positive sense to signify precisely this need for constant redefinition of human-ness in light of changing contexts and our life-world or *Umwelt* circumstances – positioning this "inhuman-ness" as an infinite labour; an interminable demand. What I will suggest throughout this talk, is that in order to recapture this critical plasticity to *be* and *coexist* otherwise; in order to reshape the coordinates of what is 'given' *as* a landscape of possibility for the human, we need to collectively learn to unroot or alienate ourselves from given pragmatic and cognitive constraints - AND - rather than overcoming the clichéd state of Marxian alienation as one of isolating disconnection, we learn to embrace its force of estrangement from what we 'know' in order to experiment and ramify pathways with and for other structures of cohabitation.

2. The Disentangling Norm from Fact
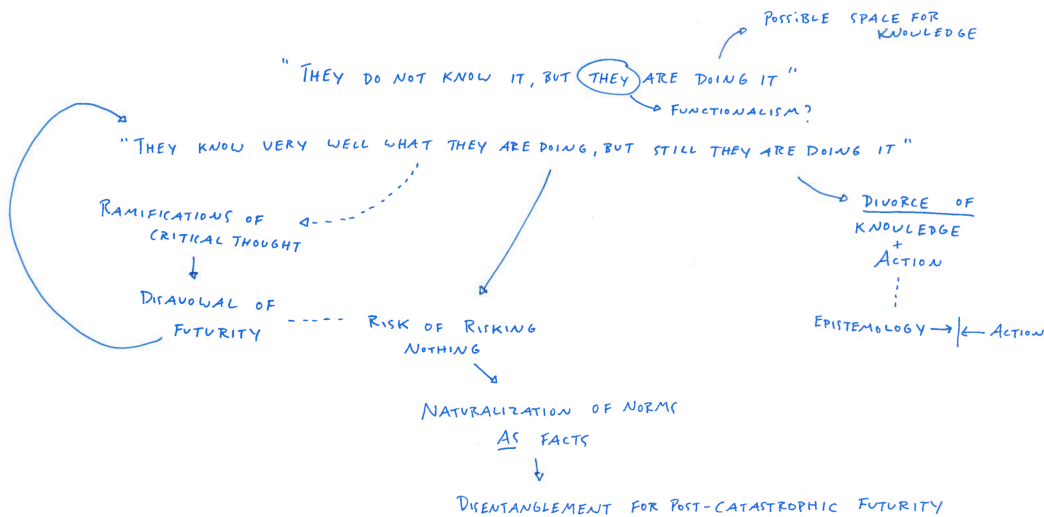
Many thinkers have examined our contemporary, immobile ideological condition, suggesting that Marx's infamous dictum: *They do not know it, but they are doing it*, requires updating to *They know very well what they are doing, but still, they are doing it* – marking a diagnosis of cynical rationality plaguing late-20th century life. Where in Marx's version an important space for knowledge was inferred, considering that the

correlate to his statement suggests that if they only knew it, they might do it otherwise, so the problems facing social reality could be overcome if only we knew better, becoming enlightened subjects through critical-cognitive tools. In the late 20th Century version, however, our behavior is not based on general ignorance (of not knowing), but on cynical reason where we know very well, but where we renounce behavioural or ideational change nonetheless.

What seems lacking from Marx's dictum is a functionalist description of how, in actuality knowledge shapes behavior – and furthermore, how those epistemic forces could in turn, shape large-scale collective change. More worrisome however, is the cynical mode of reasoning, suggesting that knowledge carries little to no force in the remoulding of behavior, taking a fatalistically futureless turn towards a dead-end, diagnosing an absolute divorce between knowledge and action, so we could basically give up on any new epistemic endeavours that could reshape the tools and spaces of our constructed, relational environment.

On the one hand, we see clear indication of this 'cynical' hopeless diagnosis where existing power structures are endlessly described as total (conceding that our current global situation as an insurmountable object of power), so the best we can possibly do is retreat to highly localized, immediate conditions as a coping mechanism *in parallel* with the globe at large that remains undisturbed. Such a diagnosis is evidenced by the cult of individualized self-improvement; tactics of self-enclosed micro-communities; and those who sabotage the logistical incarnations of global-power, ever-so briefly throwing a wrench into the machinery (an action probably documented on a iPhone, and uploaded to YouTube), only for that same machinery to return to smooth functioning once again.

What is at work, however in this dismal diagnosis that underlies a significant body of so-called "critical" thought, is a disavowal of futurity as such –a false picture of futurity entrenched in our given condition. These theories pretend to risk nothing, (refusing speculative moves outside what is given), and yet in refusing the risk of prognostication, they risk and inadvertently avow a great deal. As Amanda Beech has pointed out,

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resignation from future construction under the premise of "a sureness in not knowing the future," where I would add an unwillingness to truly engage the potential of uncertainty, is an unreasoned contradiction in itself, paradoxically *guaranteeing* that we cannot guarantee the future at all. In this theoretical petrification process, we are confronted with violent conflation of norms with facts. Infamous statements that have served foundational to our time (even if authors have since updated them), like Thatcher's infamous 'There is no Alternative', or Fukuyama's declaration of 'The End of History' post 1989, ferociously naturalize socio-political and economic orders *as if* they are facts, *as if* they are subject to the same immutability like the force of gravity on earth. More recently, post Global Financial Crisis, this same sort of violent fusion between plastic norms as facts has perpetuated as debt naturalization; and historically there are countless instances of this sort of violence enacted in the name of nature– just think of the racist, sexual, ethnic and gender discriminations wrought on large populations of humanity who have been deemed 'unnatural' – where the conflation between socially constructed norms *as* real facts is not merely a trivial academic discussion but carries dramatically brutal consequences. Clearly, a speculative movement of disentangling norm from fact, value from necessity is an urgent demand if we are to begin the labour of thinking post-catastrophic futurity.
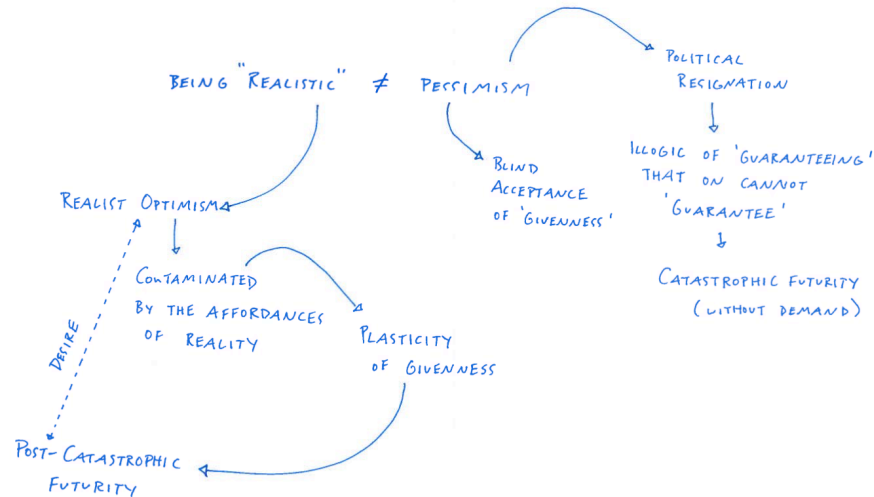
3. Inexistence and Detotalization
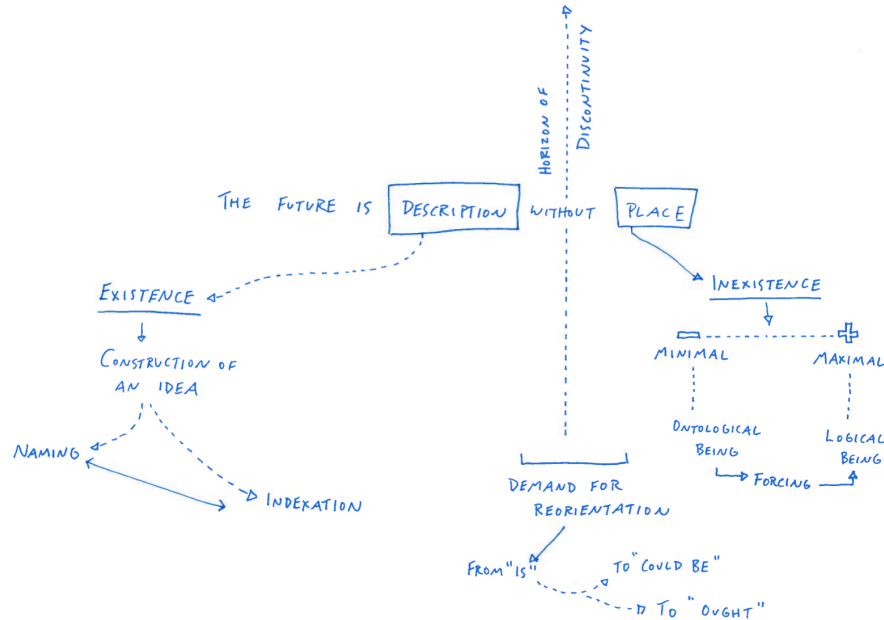
The poet Wallace Stevens wrote "The future is description without place" framing the future as a concept with no site, with no body or territory upon or through which the concept could be enacted or performed. In this instance, the future is not something that passively arrives like tomorrow and the day after and so on. The future, has to be constructively imagined and engineered. In Steven's poem "the future" stands at the threshold between *existence* (as an idea), and *inexistence* (as an actualization). By this definition, any concept of the future that could be practiced within pre-existing 'places' would not qualify as the future at all, for it would be a mere repetition of the present along a continuous vector of time. As a 'description without place', the future is a temporal-spatial condition summoning us to construct a site for its actualization. It is in this vein that the future stands as a horizon affording the engineering of discontinuity with the way things are, as the boundary between *what is* and *what could* be. What *could be* is foreign to *what is*, so if we are to begin the labour towards a post-catastrophic futurity, we must first work to detotalize our given condition (where epistemology overdetermines ontology), and work towards a functional recoupling of knowledge and

action. If, as Ray Brassier notes, our practical incapacities reflect our theoretical incapacities, it seems urgent to sharpen our conceptual tools moulding an affordance for a potentially constructive alien horizon.

To clarify just briefly, I think it's important to mention what is meant by 'inexistence'. The inexistent is not some mythic thing. In the parlance of Alain Badiou, the inexistent simply indicates a 'degree of minimal existence approaching zero'. So for example, Women's Suffrage, where women have, of course, *existed* as persons since the beginning of the human, but their legal status as a citizen-participant in the *polis* carried a minimal, near zero-degree existence. Women in my home-town of Montreal existed pre-1918, but inexisted with regard to the civic right to vote, federally speaking. Crucial to this idea of the inexistent, is that it requires a politics of appearing that can index and describe this inexistence, bringing into sensorium the part with no part in a given system of ordering. The inexistent is something that remains in limbo between ontological being (it really exists) and logical non-being (it has no participation in the reasoning or logos of the system). It is in this regard that we can cast away the idea of futural inexistence as being tied to the myth of degree-zero novelty (a new logical order coming from nowhere); nor is it something that can simply be waited for. The future, as the bringing into logical existence of the inexistent, is not a patient waiting-game; on the contrary, the future is a labour of forcing.

4. Perspectival Optimism

4. PERSPECTIVAL OPTIMISM

BEING "REALISTIC" ≠ PESSIMISM

POLITICAL RESIGNATION

ILLOGIC OF 'GUARANTEEING' THAT ON CANNOT 'GUARANTEE'

CATASTROPHIC FUTURITY (WITHOUT DEMAND)

REALIST OPTIMISM

BLIND ACCEPTANCE OF 'GIVENNESS'

CONTAMINATED BY THE AFFORDANCES OF REALITY

PLASTICITY OF GIVENNESS

DESIRE

POST-CATASTROPHIC FUTURITY

The assertion for the need of prognostication should also not lead us to leap-of-faith-based futurity, nor blind fanaticism as if reality were not a factor at all. If we are to begin to "really" seize upon our social plasticity and conceptualize post-catastrophic futurity – a rather Promethean task given the magnitude of issues we face, we require not only conceptual resources but affective ones as well – resources able to disentangle the politically debilitating bond between being 'realistic' as equating with 'pessimism' – wherein being pessimistic is the only non-naïve 'realistic' position. This is an important argument mapped out by Anthropocene theorist Rory Rowan, who foregrounds the need for optimism if we are to escape the "extinction as usual" conclusions pertaining to human life on a planetary scale from many on the left. The continually down-trodden framing of 'futurity' as *de jure* catastrophic nourishes political resignation to the, perhaps unintentional, avowal of the status-quo or the given (so no future at all). The extraction of optimism from the challenges that face us today can, as Rowan has written, [QUOTE] "…tacitly legitimate the lessons of individualized quietude taught by conservatives who tell us that the 'small, happy life' offers deliverance from the dangerous delusion of collective transformation. Just as blind optimism risks lubricating existing forms of power, an equally blind pessimism risks stunting the collective capacities required to oppose them." [ENDQUOTE] What is asserted here is the need for of a kind of Realist

Optimism, not one where we merrily close our eyes and whistle a tune as if by not looking, all will be fine – somehow, someway – but an affective optimism tethered to our capacity to construct new perspectives on our reality, an optimism contaminated by reality, and forced into existence through an alienated positioning of what could be possible. (Such an optimism, it could be added on a side note - could be an essential affective asset in the project of Epistopolitics advocated by Mohammad Salemy – who will perhaps talk more about this in his upcoming lecture next week.)

If 'social ordering' is to take on a generative significance beyond what currently structures us, it is essential that the plasticity of our given structures be cognitively grasped, ethically mobilized and materially leveraged *as* mutable, if we are to begin the collective global task towards substantial reengineering for the many. A reordering that steadfastly negates our given (or familiar) condition as natural fact and rather asserts its variability (or potential alien structure). It's in this way that to 'desire' or demand substantial reconfiguration is to face up to demands to remedy injustices and systemic malfunctions of our given condition, as a *call* for structural re-constitution. Such a project for the constructability of new orders is ultimately, and simultaneously, epistemic, technological, representational as well as ethical - and cannot be spurned on merely through modes of moralization or symbolic personifications – like the simple demonizing of bankers, or getting caught in loops of conspiracy theories as if the entire world's power structure were controlled by a single puppeteer. In this movement of negative affirmation, we are presented with a *freedom to* construct new systems of cohabitation (rather than simply a *freedom from* a given order). This positive formulation of freedom is, in the words of Elizabeth Grosz [QUOTE] "…not linked to choice but to innovation and invention." [ENDQUOTE]. This *freedom to* is radically more demanding since it calls upon us to speculatively engineer new affordances, requiring material instantiations of what we desire, *what we do want* – rather than simply articulating what we don't want.
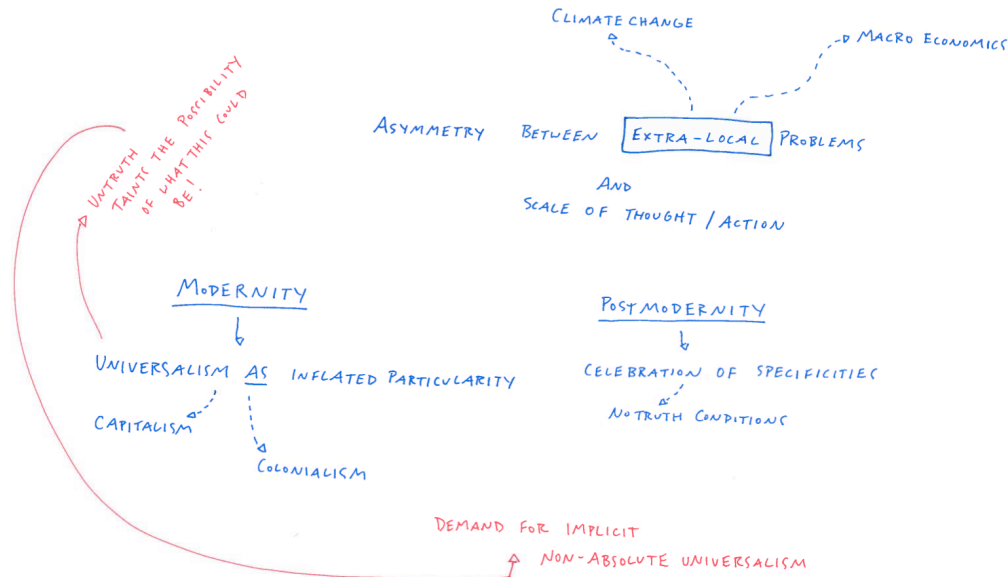
5. Positive Freedom
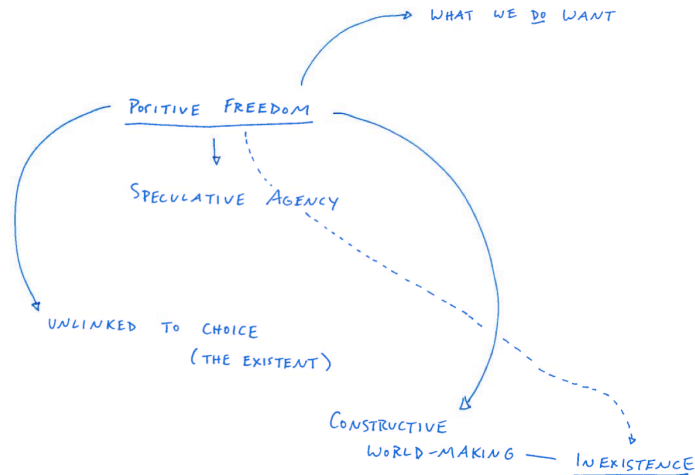
The capacity to affirm and speculate on *what we do want* as an agency of positive freedom in reordering the given, seems dismayingly absent from our horizons. Although we see numerous and passionate expressions of rightful anger, protests against injustice across the global north and south, as well as countless grass-roots initiatives working tirelessly for communities; at best these political manifestations manage to improve situations for a small group of people, some inject a blip of disruption in the everyday, some gain media attention spreading a message to our consciousness, while many tend to fizzle out when affective energies are lost, or much worse as we know too well. All the while the hegemonic core remains anchored in place, resettling from turbulences as if recovering from a minor storm. These movements are not to be undermined in the least – and to be clear many have advanced improvements for *some*, but if we are to honestly assess the demands and ambitions they put forth (if there are any demands) vs. the scale of system dynamics they seek to negate, the asymmetry between local action and global actuality is evident. Because of this asymmetry, we must also develop cognitive capacities able to move between such scales – from our local phenomenologically bound condition, to global (or planetary) abstract structures.

6. Asymmetry and False Choices

6. ASYMMETRY AND FALSE CHOICES

CLIMATE CHANGE
→ MACRO ECONOMICS

ASYMMETRY BETWEEN EXTRA-LOCAL PROBLEMS
AND
SCALE OF THOUGHT / ACTION

UNTRUTH THE POSSIBILITY TAINTS OF WHAT THIS COULD BE!

MODERNITY
UNIVERSALISM AS INFLATED PARTICULARITY
CAPITALISM
COLONIALISM

POSTMODERNITY
CELEBRATION OF SPECIFICITIES
NO TRUTH CONDITIONS

DEMAND FOR IMPLICIT
NON-ABSOLUTE UNIVERSALISM

This sort of asymmetry between our actions and the proportions of the extra-local problems we face as a species (like climate change and macroeconomics) presents us with a cognitive dilemma, to my mind leaving us currently paralyzed in terms of turning our collective dissatisfactions (what we don't want) into desires (what we do want), and orienting those desires as points for structural leverage. On the one hand, we know all too well the savage residues of the grand-scale Modern project, where White-Male European values spread capitalism across the globe while imposing colonialism under the guise of a unifying universalism, an utterly and violently false universalism since it was actually the imposition of an inflated particularity. On the other hand, we have postmodernisms' highlighting of the plight of particular identities, histories and sites with a large focus on activating the margins as a counter move against the totalization of Modernity, BUT at the expense of global, or structural engagement. Although postmodernism (in its best moments) gives space and voice to constituent parts ignored by Modernity's domineering swagger and strict indoctrination of specific, exclusive norms; in its worst moments, postmodernism leaves us only with trivial relativisms, moral liberalisms and a popular

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discursive sphere where opinions are confused with free speech, since in its program, there is no Truth to which statements could be measured. If we want to think substantial, scalable reordering today – which to my mind is a counter-hegemonic proposition, we must acknowledge the inherent limitation of this either/or dichotomy – that this is, in fact, a false choice, that either a) you can enact an autocratic master plan from the top down upon the social order (thereby reproducing colonial mechanisms); or b) that you can only engage your immediate site and move horizontally so as not to homogenize and crush invaluable difference (where everything is relative and indeterminate, leading to increased morcellization within the community of global humanity and leaving meta-structures politically untouched).

7. Integrated Objects and Reorientation
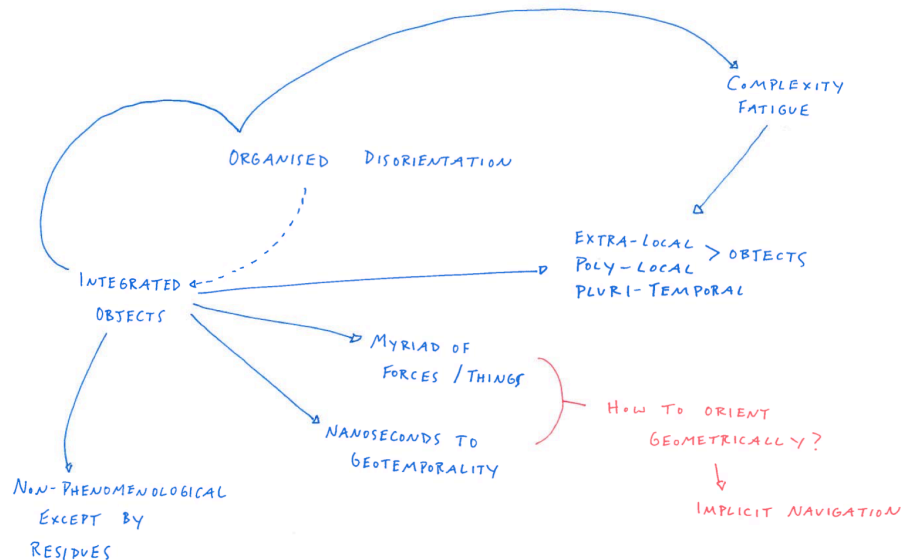
Although courageous acts of public assembly seem to have been multiplying over the last years, one does not have a clear sense of their potential direction or durability beyond the moment of their eruption. This plight is, in some ways, wholly understandable because our world of confounding complexity, a world massively larger than our current sensory

and cognitive scope. Badiou has identified our time as one of *organized disorientation*,[1] for although sprawling networks of transport, communication, transactions, capital flows and movement are indeed organized and planned, all of their subsequent and compounded interactions cannot be mapped, leaving us in a state of cerebral resignation and without an intelligible foothold to begin scaling or reorienting us within this informational behemoth. These new ungraspable, or *integrated* objects using the term from Anne-Françoise Schmid – an object composed of a myriad of forces and things (like an economic system) and cannot be located in one particular discipline– produce what could be called *complexity fatigue*, a state of being cognitively overwhelmed, where we are ill-equipped to enter an arena of reason-making at all. In describing these *integrated objects* from Schmid, the philosopher Robin Mackay uses the example of the "object" of obesity to illustrate the most crucial aspect of theses objects: namely, their implicit politicity and the injunction these objects make to alienate classical-modern epistemologic disciplinary confines. One cannot study the object of obesity within the strictly scientific domains of nutrition, or neurochemistry, while ignoring the socio-economic, affective and emotional domains that co-constitute said object – the object is partially locatable across multiple fields simultaneously. Much like Mark Fishers' 'integrated' approach to the study of depression, we cannot come to adequately apprehend these contemporary objects without being able to glue or stitch together multi-perspectives, of locating them within an intersection of fields. Beyond the required intersection of perspectives, these *integrated objects* radically undo our conventional concept of them as being things in a localizable time and space – since these new objects are massively distributed in space (they are extra-local like climate and the economy) and time (from the milliseconds of high frequency trading transactions to the long temporality of geological transformation of the Anthropocene) – all of which evade human perception (as it is). Such novel pictures of objects are not just elaborate thought experiments, but are fundamental entities structuring our everyday lives. These integrated objects radically undo our conventional concept of objects as being things in a localizable time and space – since these new objects are massively distributed in space (they are extra-local like

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[1] Alain Badiou qtd.in Benjamin Noys, *The Persistence of the Negative: A Critique of Contemporary Continental Theory*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010, 150.

climate and the economy) and time (from the milliseconds of high frequency trading transactions to the long temporality of geological transformation of the Anthropocene) – all of which evade human perception (as it is). Phenomenologically speaking, one can only grasp residual traces of these objects, while their functioning evades finite localization. So a pressing question of our time, is even, to some degree, a geometric one as to how to gain a sense of orientation with these integrated objects, and how to forge other modes of navigating them implicitly – that is, from the bottom up, point by point – rather than coercing them into predetermined, and/or preexisting grids or coordinate systems.

As Mackay has written, what makes these contemporary objects implicitly political, is that any attempt to reduce the complexity of an integrated object to a singular discipline is, in itself a political act. To describe the object of depression, for example, solely as an internal neurochemical imbalance is to deploy the partiality of science in a total way that obfuscates the socio-economic forces moulding the object in question. So if we are to gain any sort of traction upon our reality, and the types of complex objects that require a different political mobilization than localized isolation, our sights and capacities require an orientation along, what Mohammad Salemy calls "epistopolitical", horizons. What epistopolitics asserts is the entanglement of politics with the theory of knowledge and vice versa. More precisely, Salemy has defined epistopolitics, not as a repetition of Foucault's position that knowledge is political, that knowledge *is* power, but to show how [QUOTE] "…truth or more precisely the production of knowledge can only be emancipatory if the trajectory of its politics, or how it will be utilized to change or maintain the balance of power, is also emancipatory." [ENDQUOTE]. To be clear epistopolitics is not about politicizing knowledge production and the types of gains it can achieve, it is about politicizing the *ramifications* of knowledge and its potential functioning.

8. Stereoscopy and Synthesis

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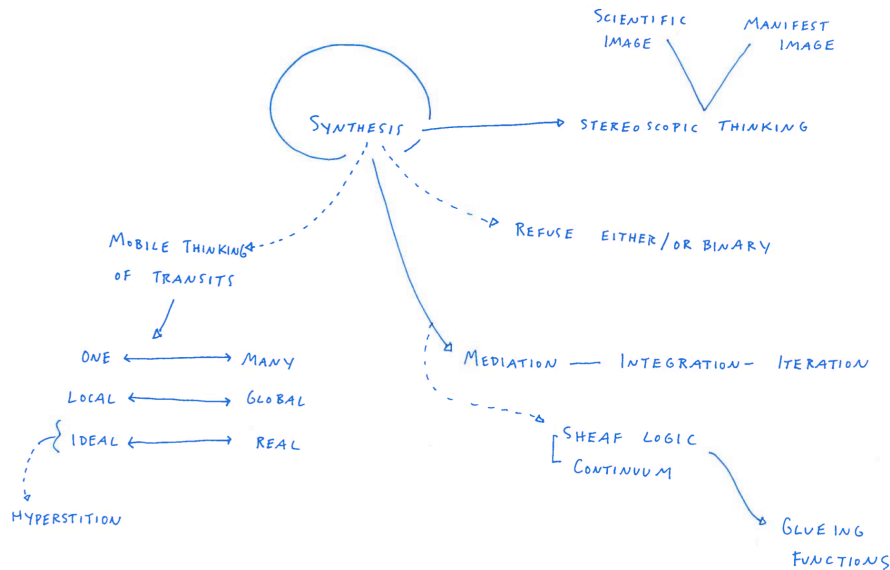
The cues from 'Synthetic Philosophy' outlined in the work of Fernando Zalamea provide some methodological insights that seem important to start the work in overcoming both the double binds described earlier, as well as our multi-scalar necessities. Drawing his inspiration from developments in contemporary mathematics, Zalamea acts as an important mediator for a field largely inaccessible to most of us (myself very much included here, so I cannot address the technical details). Zalamea demands of us thinkers to seize upon mathematics for the conceptual consequences they break open, or what they could ramify, pushing for a transitory ontology where intermediary innovations can be generated, and new perspectives forged without becoming trivial relativisms.

The synthetic approach affords us the capacity to think *stereoscopically*, to borrow the term from Wilfrid Sellars who initially used it to describe the task of philosophy in connecting the gaps between The Scientific Image (how the aperspectival sciences empirically describe the world) and the Manifest Image (the way humans imagine themselves in the world, and the agency built into first-person perspectives) – and look at how the two forms of world-making move in and out of each other. "Synthetic Philosophy" is a kind of theoretical engine focusing on transits, acting as a mediation

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between polarities such as the One and the Many, the Global and the Local, the Ideal and the Real – this last pairing I find particularly compelling with regards to artistic practice, especially with regards to the phenomena of Hyperstition which we'll get to shortly. Through the lens of mathematics we have, on the one hand, a strict realism claiming that the objects studied by mathematics (spaces, forms and structures) exist deep down in reality whether we perceive them or not, while on the other hand, idealism suggests that these objects are just cognitive constructions. Pointing out the strengths and limitations of this either/or dilemma Zalamea states: [QUOTE] "An idealist stance […] secures for itself a greater plasticity with greater possibilities of access to the mathematical imagination, but encounters serious difficulties at the junction of the imaginary and the real; a realist stance helps to understand mathematical thought's material success, but it places rigid restrictions on its creative liberty." [ENDQUOTE]. The methodology of "synthesis", to put it in a very simple way, refuses this dilemma between idealism and realism, but works upon the intermediaries amid the two approaches as a "weaving" between pure possibility (plastic idealism) and necessity (invariant realism). What happens in synthesis is not a collapsing of distinctions into a unified whole – but a kind of cartography of relations without a fixed foundation of departure, which is always mobile and mutating, addressing issues of transformation rather than analytical 'dissection' of the 'part' or specified points of origination (like the physical world). The synthetic ethos is composed of a triadic movement between mediation, integration and iteration – it is part analysis, and part assembly; part dissection and part *gluing* operation as a movement of integration. When we look at our theoretical landscape, in the wake of postmodernisms' tendency towards fragmentation, this gluing function of synthesis – a concept partially derived from the mathematician Alexander Grothendiecks' work on Sheaf logic and partially from Charles Peirce's work on continuum's – it seems like a promising cognitive tool if we are to begin stitching together piece by piece a picture of the global as a non-absolute construction, an implicit, dynamic yet integrated construction.

Synthetic thought is a methodology recognizing or reasoning identity through change, taking the prefix "trans" as it's definitive expression. This capacity to recognize identity

through change is a topological premise – a premise affording continuous transformation, while constructing or gluing invariances across differences in a non-trivial way, allowing us to think the global in a non-absolute way (responding to Grothendieck's achievement of 'relative universals' in mathematics). Zalamea (following the Spanish philosopher Rosa María Rodríguez Magda) suggest the term 'transmodernism' suggest the term 'transmodernism' as a way to temporarily define our interstitial theoretical moment. As a type of mobile knowledge-making tool, synthesis calls for the transaction between reason, intuition and fact; between the possible, the actual and the necessary without privileging any point of originary departure in the web of relations between the three. Synthesis, in true "trans" form, presupposes that transiting between polarities or nodes is a fundamental producer of new knowledge – rather than being locked down to the dialectic of pure discovery or singular innovation. Since we have no fixed point of departure from which to gaze out upon an object of inquiry, new perspectives on knowledge can be generated without having the 'burden' of absolute novelty – like the rare kind outlined by Thomas Kuhn's paradigm shifts. To quote Zalamea "From an epistemological point of view, the distinct perspectives are nothing other than breaks in continuity. In those breaks, new forms of knowledge are generated, and – in an epistemology open to transit – those forms of knowledge, when they are coherent, can be subsequently reintegrated in an adequate fashion." [ENDQUOTE]

The example of the Copernican revolution, through the lens of Negarestani is insightful here to demonstrate the potential of non-fixed points of departure and how the 'simple' production of an adjacent perspective can radically alter our view on and in the world. Negarestani shows that the Copernican revolution was not a giant leap away from Ptolomaic astronomy, but a deprivileging of earth itself as a fixed site of local observation. So rather than rewriting planetary movement, Copernicus was able to turn the universe inside out by asking the question "where is the earth?", and via this perspectival displacement, constructively alienate human kinds' very self-understanding, as the universe shifted from a geoastral to a helioastral framework.

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9. Hyperstitional Models and the Navigation of the Inexistent
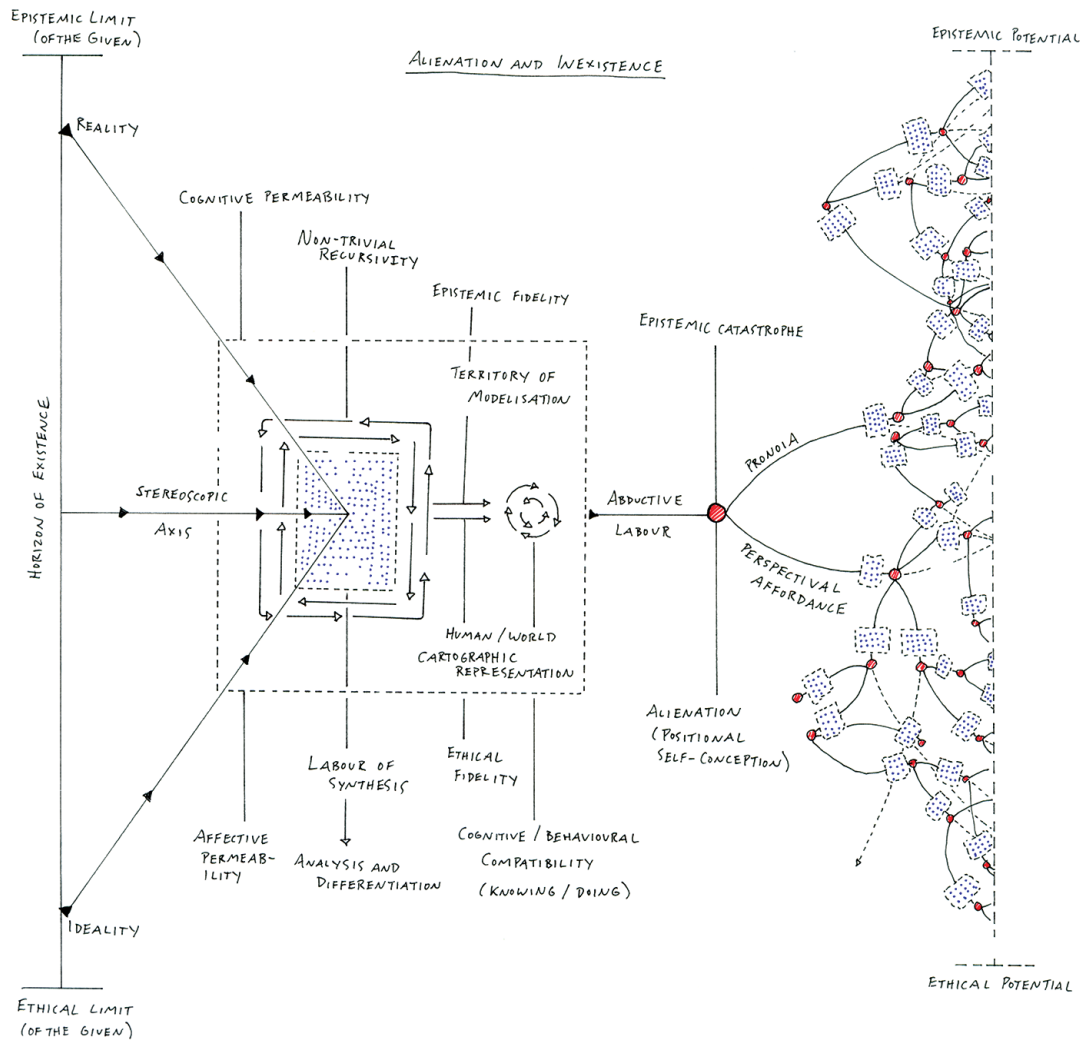
It is my speculation that Synthesis offers up cognitive tools and potential functions for the navigation of what *could be* in the face of what *is* (rather than conventions of critique – a mode that has seemed to generate its own unhelpful dogmatisms of late). *What is (or the given)* denotes a zone of epistemic and ideological normativity that traces a contour or a constraint a particular social world to the disavowal of alien possibilities – it's coordinates can be mapped. Whereas navigating the *could be* requires the construction of such a new contour; a conceptual, spatial and infrastructural engineering of the inexistent (the creation of geometric coordinates *and* sites). Navigating what *could be* is both the ever-fallible definition of purposes of coexistence along with the articulation of new

spatial conditions for logics unbound to the actual imperatives of the current landscape. What *could be* is not something to be unveiled, but a project of vast collaborative construction, engineering an alternative future emancipated from certain impasses that (in particular) define our time: a future captured by debt, rampant inequality and cataclysmic climate change. We require a new cartography for this speculative, inexistent territory if we are to attain a sense of futural orientation, and affirm other affective and cognitive horizons to incline us in logical and pragmatic service of the many. This horizon, whether figured spatially or with regards to knowledge, must be intelligible and shareable; it is part spatial, affective, relational and metric, gaining value through imitation and repetition of use. As philosopher and Mathematician Gilles Chatelet notes, the horizon, is not (QUOTE) "a boundary marker that prohibits or solicits transgression, nor a barrier drawn in a dotted line across the sky. Once it has been decided, one always carries one's horizon away with one. This is the exasperating side of the horizon: corrosive like the visible, tenacious like a smell, compromising like touch, it does not dress things up with appearances, but impregnates everything that we are resolved to grasp" (ENDQUOTE). Ultimately, what this notion of a horizon points to, is the basic definition of a model, an infectious model.

Within our complex landscape we require models of thinking change that can measure up to these contemporary integrative objects - an approach or methodology capable of mobilizing necessary analyses of these objects, without stagnating into endless descriptions – and furthermore, a methodology that doesn't pit the concrete (part, site or individual) against the abstract (system, or structure) but rather one capable of moving between these scales and formats – where the non-perceptible, non-touchable is no less 'real' than the thing I can see, or touch directly in front of me. So in an age where these integrated objects are emblematic of our real condition, we can no longer claim that a politics being 'on the ground', or a politics privileging the immediate here and now of our site or community is any 'more' real or 'authentic' than the invisible, impersonal algorithms driving DSGE models of monetary policy for example. Although the cognitive demands to get traction on our complex reality is a grandiose proposition, not to mention, taking steps to affirm it's plasticity otherwise even more so, to champion a

'return' to a simpler politics of the here and now is to cognitively disavow reality in a mode of pure idealism – the same sort of idealism, albeit, in a different tone, of wishful thinking politics where new, just orders will somehow emerge WITHOUT the labour of collective engineering.

Synthesis functions as a type of experimental modeling of conceptual functions, since a primary operation of models is to mediate between things. As Margaret Morrison writes [QUOTE] "the power of the model as a design instrument comes not from the fact that it is a replica of the object to be built; instead the capacity of mathematical/theoretical models to function as design instruments stems from the fact that they provide the kind of information that allows us to intervene in the world."[ENDQUOTE] Models possess hyperstitional qualities, where simulative fictions or representations of reality intervene in that very reality becoming actualized, embedded, and drivers of the living social fabric. Hyperstition names this bringing-into-reality of a 'fictive' ideality (or a model) –and can be described as a (cybernetic) positive feedback machine, catalysing epistemic complications for subjects, with non-linear effects. One need only look at the force of something like the Black-Scholes-Merton model (a model that had little correlation with reality when conceived was put to use as a tool and largely deployed to legitimize futures markets and help usher in what we now call financialization) and it's role in helping to steer in arguably one of the most powerful revolution's of all – the ongoing neo-liberal one we continue to live through today. Nick Srnicek has also pointed out the distributive potential of models that is of key importance here when speaking of cultures of assembly that could strategically aspire to scale up beyond the bounds of their initial, localized situation where: [QUOTE] "… models condense a set of inferential and material rules into a medium that also alters the persuasiveness of the reasoning […] transforming indifferent matter and social complexity into something that is cognitively tractable."[2] [ENDQUOTE] The fact that models are always reductive, simplifications of reality, is not a valid enough reason to disregard their yields and what they *can* do – they are crucial tools *of* and *for* representation, opening up shareable cognitive gateways and tangible

[2] Nick Snricek, "The Eyes of the State". Paper presented at the *Interdisciplinary Speaker Series*, University of Western Ontario, London, Canada, April 9, 2014.

experimentation with variation. The point is not to denounce complexity in favour of the exclusively immediate or concrete scale of things we can readily perceive. The point is to articulate models that allow us to navigate this complexity otherwise; models that afford the construction and proliferation of alternative concepts, acting as a compass for structural and ideological territory under fabrication.

10. The Gluing of Estrangement

Before jumping to conclusions that this endeavour is the repetition of violent 'futurism', or that we may finally 'arrive' at the future, that would be to undo the dynamic mobility inherent to synthesis which is a never-ending labour and the fallibility inherent to all knowledge is not a glitch or failure, but is a motor of potentiality for 'updating' the glue between concepts and behavior, for updating the stereoscopy between the concrete and the abstract. Although the construction of footholds for orientation may sound like a bland, dispassionate task it is wholly dependent on imagination. As the primary faculty through which we can exceed 'what is' directly before us, imagination marks a moment of fertile alienation – the willful construction of alienation that separates us from *what is*, towards the foreignness of what *could be*. In the face of daunting complexity, the future is tasked with the development of descriptions *of* and *for* constructive alienation; that can separate us from the situation of what is, orienting us towards a foreign place of actualization. If the future can only be constituted by a synthetic interplay between ideas and reality, the local and the global, the one and the many, it's our pressing labour to exit critical stagnation (generative only of a tragic, 'present' future), and work stereoscopically to articulate and construct our desired estrangement as an actual world.