# Circuit Debater – Third Circle – Semiocapitalism

## Links

### Link – Recognizability

#### The affirmative’s pressure for rendering everything recognizable and situated within collective categories of difference is the origin producing homogenizing project of fascism. The postmodern world is constituted by a destabilized culture constantly exploding into unrecognizable fragments of identity that resist to be organized, and fascism manifests itself as a force towards a false sense of communal understanding and rendering oneself identifiable through the illusions of translation and comprehension.

Franco Bifo Berardi, 2009

“Precarious Rhapsody – Semiocapitalism and the pathologies of the post-alpha generation,” Minor Compositions

Fascism is a shapeless word. For a long time I strove to find a concept able to define the different (and contradictory) forms of authoritarianism, of nationalistic or ethnic aggression and so on, but without success. In his article “Il fascismo eterno,” Umberto Eco recognizes that “the characteristics cannot be marshaled into a system, many are mutually contradictory and are typical of other forms of despotism and fanaticism. But it is sufficient for one to be present for a fascist nebula to coagulate.” There follows a list of Ur-fascism’s characteristics: the cult of tradition, the refusal of modernism, action for action’s sake, the fear of difference, and so on. But, as interesting and pertinent as these characteristics are, Eco himself recognizes that the effort of definition seems ultimately to end in frustration because its object continues to escape. For example, **after having said that fascism is contrary to modernism, it must be recognized that historic fascism played a role in the modernization of society in both Italy and Germany**. In the absence, then, of a satisfactory and comprehensive definition, **we run the risk of defining fascism as everything that disgusts us, and of** identifying fascism**, simply, as the party of imbecility and violence:** as **the party of** evil**.** And this, naturally, **doesn’t work, it** doesn’t define anything**.** The problem is **that to which we are referring by using this word fascism** which is imprecise and historically far too dated, **is an extremely vast field of forms of life, behaviors, ideologies and prejudices that have, in the last analysis, a single element in common: the obsession with definition. The obsession to define is**, in the last analysis, **the characteristic common to the field of phenomena that we define as fascism. This is why this object is so difficult to define. Fascism, in its maximum conceptual extension** (encompassing nationalism and religious fundamentalism, political authoritarianism, sexual aggression and so on) **can be brought back to a fundamental obsession: the obsession with identity, the obsession with belonging, with origin, with recognizability. This obsession has grown, extended itself, exploded over the course of our century, precisely because our century is a century of deterritorialization, of cultural contamination and de-identification. The pressure that seems to fundamentally guide those behaviors which fall within the ambit of fascism is the pressure to recognize ourselves as identical, identifiable, and therefore belonging to a community** (of language, faith, race**) based upon origin**. **Only origin bears witness to belonging, and as we know, origin is an illusion, a legend, an attribute that is more or less shared, but unfounded. Ethnic identity does not exist any more than linguistic identity. While each of us comes from a history of crossbreeding and contaminations that can neither be attested nor authenticated, there are illusions of ethnic belonging; while each of us speaks our own dialect that can never be fundamentally translatable by another speaker, there are illusions of linguistic comprehension. Living together is premised on these. The more the field of ethnic identifiability, of comprehensibility, of origin, are perturbed, the more acute becomes the need to identify, to the point of obsession**.

### Link – Feminist Erasure

#### The affirmative is feminist erasure - an expansion of the postfeminist culture that has become a battleground of ideologies, with second wave feminists reclaiming the sexualized body as a site of empowerment and third wave feminists denying such a stance as oppressive towards the feminine body. This marks the creation of an infinite amount of divergences drawing contradictory stakes in the name of feminism, which allow the moniker of feminism to be plastered on to anything, making both everything and nothing feminist because of the oversaturation of feminist labels that deprives it’s radicalism of any value.

Kim Toffoletti, 2014

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With its emphasis on celebrating real female bodies, boosting women’s confidence, and encouraging individuals to make the most of what they have, How to Look Good Naked positions itself against popular media representations accused of depicting unrealistic feminine beauty ideals, thereby seemingly aligning itself with a pro-woman agenda. In effect, the social change impetus grounding a feminist politic is recast as a narrative of individual female transformation. In particular, the rhetoric of self-love and finding one’s authentic self (sexually and socially) that typifies How to Look Good Naked echoes feminist consciousness-raising efforts of the second wave that opposed "false" male-determined standards of female attractiveness (Genz 2011: 123). Yet many of the features that characterize the program, such as the sexualization of the subject, an emphasis on heteronormative femininity, and a focus on appearances, are the subject of ongoing feminist interrogation and critique. How to Look Good Naked thus demonstrates a key feature of a postfeminist sensibility, described by Gill as emphasizing "the contradictory nature of postfeminist discourses and the entanglement of both feminist and anti-feminist themes within them" (2007: 149). In **this statement** Gill **alludes to the difficulty of judging which images might count as feminist** (**and** accordingly which fall into the **antifeminist** camp) **within a postfeminist** media **landscape**. The issue at stake, it would appear, hinges on whether it is possible to clearly delineate between a "feminist" and an "antifeminist" theme, image, or action. How might feminist media studies scholars approach a program like How to Look Good Naked, which does not label itself as feminist but replicates the promotion of feminist values such as bodily autonomy and self-determined sexual subjectivity? In observing that actions considered by some feminists to be oppressive to women (like gratuitous displays of the naked female body) become celebrated as signs of women’s agency, I’m not suggesting that the media construct an "illusion" of women’s empowerment that masks a quantifiable or absolute "truth" about gender inequality. Taking this stance would be to misunderstand the present cultural condition as described by Baudrillard where signs hide nothing but become our reality. This comes about, he argues, when signs can no longer be distinguished from the reality they are supposed to represent (Baudrillard 1994: 6). Liberated from [End Page 109] material referents, signs can only reference themselves, resulting in "the absorption of one pole into another, the short circuit between poles of every differential system of meaning, the effacement of terms and of distinct oppositions, and thus that of the medium and the real" (Baudrillard 2007: 104). In a world that is increasingly virtualized, it is the play of signs that influences the nature of social experience, including gender relations, over and above the reality once understood to precede representation. This insight is central to contemplating the current predicament of feminist theory and activism—how to speak about feminist agendas or values when "the effacement of terms and of distinct oppositions" leads to anything being potentially labeled feminist? In a postfeminist media climate where sexual objectification is recast as a form of female agency and the "right to choose" (regardless of whether this choice is breast-feeding or breast implants) equates to women’s empowerment, differentiating with any confidence between feminist and antifeminist themes becomes increasingly difficult, if not impossible. Baudrillard (2005a: 18) has spoken about art in this way, observing that contemporary art references past styles and other aesthetic forms to the point where it has come to look like everything else, making it impossible to determine what art is. Mass-culture texts like graffiti, advertising, and comic strips are now part of the art canon. Everyday objects like cars and beds, even urinals (as per Marcel Duchamp), have been labeled "art." Cows in formaldehyde, garbage bags full of waste, people snoring—all are examples of art that destabilizes the system of value through which to discern the art object from the biological organism, consumer detritus, or daily life. When art becomes indistinguishable from the world it inhabits, Baudrillard claims, it ceases to be art in the way we once knew it. While art, it seems, is everywhere and anything potentially can be art, at the same time its liberation from a narrow field of meaning fosters its erasure. We might extend this proposition to say that feminism, too, has become ubiquitous to the point where it is both everywhere and nowhere. When anything can be considered feminist, the term becomes emptied of meaning and, accordingly, disappears. That is, feminism evades being neatly defined or classified according to traditional political, economic, or cultural categorizations. Let me be clear that feminism "disappears" not because people don’t believe in it (certainly, there are many people who do, myself included), or because gender equality has been achieved, but because its excessive proliferation under postfeminism results in there being too much of it. Or more specifically, the fundamental feminist principle of female emancipation, as articulated through discourses of gender rights, freedoms, and choices, has become the overarching rhetoric of postfeminist culture: it contaminates all images, actions, signs, and discourses. In making this observation, I am in no way asserting that there is no need for feminist theorizing and politics or that it is redundant. Rather, the erasure I am talking about, following Baudrillard, refers to our collective inability to coherently define or confidently determine the parameters of feminism within a political and cultural economy that has become virtualized.

### Link – Lawful Criminality

#### The affirmative is a proliferation of the Bourgeois-Protestant understanding of crime and law as being inverse, with crime and the object of the handgun being the marks of deviancy and law as being the heuristic to uphold a sacred community through banning such deviancy. In truth, in the post-Fordist economy of semiocapitalism values have become randomized in a schizo-cultural spasm caused by the movement from the consumption of raw human labor to focus groups and knowledge production. Crime and law are ruled by the Neobaroque rendition of the law as a subservient tool of crime and an extended branch of austerity. This is exerted by the semiocapitalist regime through the reclamation of evil in the form of institutionalized crime that is propagated as the tools of an effective semiocapitalist, marking all those who are guilty of being unable to use crime as a tool of bloodthirsty competitiveness as subject to victim blaming and disciplinary control from the law.

Franco Bifo Berardi, 2015

Berardi was a member of the Italian Communist Youth Federation and was expelled for factionalism, was/is involved in the political movement of Autonomia, has contributed to Semiotexte, Chimerees, Metropli, and Felix, currently collaborating on the magazine Derive Approdi, and teaches social history of communication at Accademia de belle Arti in Milan. “Heroes – Mass Murder and Suicide”

**Crime used to be a secret act**. In the age of repression and industriousness, when the morality of the bourgeoisie was reigning, **crime wanted to be secret. Law aimed at preventing crime, and it encouraged investigations of criminals in order to punish them.** **This order of things has irrevocably changed in the last turn of time, especially since the advent of the semiocapitalist regime. Semiocapitalim occupies** the sphere of randomness of value, as well as **the sphere of randomness of law and of moral judgement. The entire strategy of the system lies in this hyper-reality of floating values.** It is the same for money and theory as for the unconscious. **Value rules according to an ungraspable order: the generation of models, the indefinite chaining of simulation. Cybernetic operationality, the genetic code, the random order of mutations, the principle of uncertainty, and so on: all of these replace a determinist and objectivist science, a dialectical vision of history and consciousness.**1 Baudrillard is talking of value in economic terms. **In the post-Fordist transition, the relation between work-time and value is jeopardized, as immaterial production and cognitive work are difficult to properly gauge.** But the random effect is not limited to the sphere of the economy, as **it spreads both to the sphere of social relations and to that of ethics.** **The** current, **generalized perception of widespread corruption is neither a superficial impression, nor the effect of a deterioration of the moral character of people. It is a systemic effect of the randomization of value.** When **value can no longer be determined by the precise relation to work-time, its determinant factors become deception, swindle, violence.** Mafi a ceases to be a marginal phenomenon of lawlessness, instead becoming the prevailing force of emerging capitalist economies like Russia and Mexico. At the same time, **fraud is legalized and organized in the global financial market as a systemic feature**. **As it becomes** increasingly **institutionalized, crime loses its secrecy and demands access to the spectacle. The visibility of crime becomes part of the effectiveness and persuasiveness of power. Competition is all about subduing, cheating, predating.** **Blaming the victims is part of the game: you are guilty of your inability to subdue, to cheat and to plunder, therefore you will be submitted to the blackmail of debt and to the tyranny of austerity**. Nazism already enacted spectacular crime as a means to secure absolute power, but **the criminal acts conducted in the name of the ‘Final Solution’ were secretly organized and performed away from the public eye. Evil was proclaimed and simultaneously denied in the name of the superior values of family, homeland and God. On the contrary, reclaiming evil has become commonplace in today’s financial markets, as the old ethics of bourgeois Protestantism is progressively cancelled by the neobaroque, post-bourgeois ethics of the deterritorialized financial class.**

### Link – Fungible Materiality

#### The affirmative is ignorant of the fungibility of materiality - the duality between the material and digital has collapsed under the weight of technological advancements that blur the line between reality and fiction. 3D printing and the digital age have given rise to the designing of any weapon imaginable with the possibility of their production - giving entire societies the viewing the world as if they have a weapon in their hands. The gun has become independent of the object and dependent on the image that makes the actual production of handguns irrelevant and only the hyperreal potential weapon meaningful.

* Question of using culture to change symbols vs evacuating them

David A. Banks, 2012

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You can also get blue prints for knives, “brass” knuckles, and nun-chucks. Since there are very few regulations on any of these weapons, I don’t really see the introduction of 3D printers as a major change in humans’ ability and capacity to hurt each other using pre-existing technology. What is dangerous, and what none of these articles seems to notice, is that 3D printing gives millions of people the ability to prototype, test, and reproduce totally new kinds of deadly devices. And as Dr. Evan Selinger wrote last week in the Atlantic: …the perceptual affordances offered by gun possession and the transformative consequences of yielding to these affordances. To someone with a gun, the world readily takes on a distinct shape. It not only offers people, animals, and things to interact with, but also potential targets. Furthermore, gun possession makes it easy to be bold, even hotheaded. Physically weak, emotionally passive, and psychologically introverted people will all be inclined to experience shifts in demeanor. The danger isn’t in the ability to shoot people with home made guns, it is the kind of “transformative consequences” of 3D printer possession that lets us think of totally new ways of harming each other. Selinger (and indeed, most of the philosophy of technology) is concerned with the intent of and external influences on the technology’s designer and producer. Guns don’t make good hammers because the gun manufacturer is trying to make an excellent gun, not an excellent gun that is also good at one exceptional use (unless, of course, a sufficient market for hammering things right after you shoot them is found or developed). **A 3D printer lets us customize our physical surroundings. One can imagine police departments, vigilantes, and militaries customizing guns for very specific “nonlethal” applications which have the underreported effect of actually increasing the use of force. People who really want lots of guns, don’t seem to be having a hard time getting them. We don’t need to worry about 3D printers making more guns, we need to worry about the new affordances they give those people that look to inflict violence.**The transformative consequences of 3D printers has a recursive element to it. In other words **the sociotechnical relationship between designers, manufacturers, objects, supply chains, and end users start feeding back in new, much more immediate, ways. I can customize an object based on my specific needs. That capacity for customization leads to much more tailored tools and physical artefacts.** This capacity is logically extended to the 3D printer itself, **allowing the individual to fully** (in theory) **customize and specialize the construction process.** Indeed, there is a thriving open source project for 3D printers made out of 3D printed parts called the RepRap Project. For about $400, a dedicated individual can build their own 3D printer and then use it to build most of the parts for future printers. The RepRap project has already produced over a hundred and fifty separate kinds of printers. As these machines gain in precision and function, they are capable of building better machines with even more precision and function. Most of the discussions surrounding “atoms and bits” refer to social action and bodily co-presence. That is because our biggest technological advances have been in information exchange and not automated construction. Today’s 3D printers give us the opportunity to transmit physical objects as readily as we digitally transmitted images in the 70s. The first digital camera weighted 8 pounds and took 23 seconds to create a single black and white image. If (and I think its a big “if”) we were to develop the 3D printer as fast as we did the digital camera, we would be able to effortlessly transmit any physical object across time and space by the year 2050. I have no reason to believe that this is technically possible, or that human civilization will possess access to enough cheap fossil fuels to make tons and tons of plastic stuff. The point I want to make here however, has less to do with pragmatic feasibility, and more to do with how we treat the boundaries between the online and the offline. My initial comparison of digital photography to 3D printing ignores the existence of the Internet and advances in digital data storage (the first digital camera relied on a casette tape). Consider the following thought experiment in which digital photography is stuck in 1970s but all other technologies are (more or less) up to 2012 standards. Given the possibility that both 70s-era quality digital photos and 2012 3D printing is possible, would we say that the black and white photo on the screen and the digital blueprint for a monochrome plastic toy horse are more or less real than a black and white film photo or a toy horse made in a conventional toy factory? Some would say yes. But if we transmit these bits across two computers and print out the black and white photo, and we extrude the plastic horse, these are incontestably “real” things. As the technology gets better (2012 digital photography, 2050 3D printing) the objects look better, but they do not become more “real.” Baudrillard reminds us that we are surrounded by objects that refer to nonexistent entities. My Ikea furniture will never really give me the hip, urban mod lifestyle, the idea of which, was so necessary in the production of its value. Nuclear bombs are used as a deterrent, but only work as such as long as they effectively refer to a nonexistant world of nuclear winter. This is what Baudrillard called the simulacra. Objects that refer to nonexistent referents produce their own meaning through the very promise of the yet-to-be-realized future. But in a world where I can make my own object, where does reality come from? Are 3D printers extruding meaning and material agency along with ABS plastic? Are 3D printers ontological white holes that produce reality from their printer heads? This is the logical conclusion of digital dualism. That the online and offline are in a zero-sum competition with one-another. That they aren’t deeply connected or even inseparable. Modeling a bird house in software and then building it on a 3D printer is phenomenologically identical to sketching out a bird house on a piece of paper, and then build it with a saw, hammer, and nails. Just like the dangers of weapons production, the categorically different aspect of a 3D printer is my ability to produce a physical object that is identical to the virtual one (the only difference is one is made out of atoms, the other out of bits) and alter it to my own exacting specifications. Our digitally augmented hyperreality precludes our ability to differentiate between reality and proxy, atoms and bits, or the real and the virtual. Indeed, the obsession over the differences between social action online and offline has blinded us to not only how alike they truly are, but how fungible the online and offline can be. I say “can be” because 3D printers represent a promise, not a reality. But it is that promise, when critically considered, that demands a symmetry across online and offline action. We cannot make a priori assumptions about what is more “real” or “meaningful” unless we are willing to rewrite entire theories of semiotics, value, and meaning.

## Shell

#### [Insert Link]

#### Our minds have become mutated and attached to the semio-flow of accelerating and proliferating symbols in the affective economy. This obliterates the ability for human empathy and connection and produces the other within predefined categories that forecloses the possibility of other forms of life.

Franco Bifo Berardi, 2011

Berardi was a member of the Italian Communist Youth Federation and was expelled for factionalism, was/is involved in the political movement of Autonomia, has contributed to Semiotexte, Chimerees, Metropli, and Felix, currently collaborating on the magazine Derive Approdi, and teaches social history of communication at Accademia de belle Arti in Milan. “After the Future”

Let us think of the crowd of people sitting in the subway every morning. They are precarious workers moving towards the industrial and financial districts of the city, towards the places where they are working in precarious conditions. Everyone wears headphones, everybody looks at their cellular device, everybody sits alone and silent, never looking at the people who sit close, never speaking or smiling or exchanging any kind of signal. They are traveling alone in their lonely relationship with the universal electronic flow. Their cognitive and affective formation has made of them the perfect object of a process of de-singularization. They have been pre-emptied and transformed into carriers of abstract fractal ability to connect, devoid of sensitive empathy so to become smooth, compatible parts of a system of interoperability. Although they suffer from nervous aggression, and from the exploitation that semiocapitalism is imposing on them, although they suffer from the separation between functional being and sensible body and mind, they seem incapable of human communication and solidarity; in short, they seem unable to start any process of conscious collective subjectivation. The info-sphere is the dimension of intentional signs surrounding the sensible organism. Sensibility is an interface between organism and world, and particularly we may see it as the ability to understand the meaning of what cannot be said through words: the point of connection between sensitivity and language. Sensibility rather than judgment is the place of the mental mutation produced by the info-sphere. Changes of perception are intertwined with the technological architecture surrounding the perceptive organism. Prior to modernity, a regime of slow transmission characterized the info-sphere and man’s psychic time and expectations of events and signals. The acceleration of semiotic transmission and the proliferation of sources of information transformed the perception of living time. The info-sphere became more rapid and dense, and sensibility underwent a process of increasing exposure to the flow of info-stimuli. Due to an intensification of electronic signals, sensibility was dragged into a vertigo of simulated stimulation that increased its speed to panic levels. The perception of the other and its body is reshaped, too. Pressure, acceleration and automation affect gestural, postural behavior and the whole of social proxemics, the disposition and interaction of bodies in space. At the foundation of social proxemics lies a way of elaborating, hiding, exciting or repressing eroticism. Social proxemics intervene to change the disposition of the bodies that meet in the street and are nearby in the office or at school. Societies experience conditions of varying degrees of tension and aggressiveness also according to how they develop eroticism in the circulation of bodies. Throughout the history of civilization, perception has been molded by artificial regimes of images and techniques of representation. Through digital technology the image begins to proliferate vertiginously and our faculty of imagination undergoes vortices of acceleration. The image should not be considered as the brute perception of empirical data brought to our visual attention by matter: it is rather the effect of a semi-conscious elaboration. The technical mode in which we receive and elaborate images acts upon the formation of the imaginary. The imaginary in turn shapes the imagination, the activity whereby we produce images, and imagine worlds and thus make them possible in real life. The repertoire of images at our disposal limits, exalts, amplifies or circumscribes the forms of life and events that, through our imagination, we can project onto the world, put into being, build and inhabit. Techno-communicative and psycho-cognitive mutations are as interdependent as the organism and its ecosystem. The conscious organism is also sensuous; it is a bundle of sensitive receptors. The world we inhabit increasingly resembles the outcome of a projective zapping where we combine sequences of different linguistic derivations. The social unconscious does not easily adapt to this transformation of the info-sphere, because the social investment of desire is structured around the nucleus of identity, and this nucleus is fleeing and dissolving in all directions. Suddenly awoken by the eruption of semiotic proliferation, and deprived of the filters that the critical and disciplinary mind of modernity once possessed, the conscious organism reacts with panic. The communicative power of digital technology produces an excess of information with respect to the time of attention socially available. How is sensibility redefined and how does it adapt to over stimulation?

#### The alternative is exhaustion. The constant affective stimulation of the post-Fordist subject obligates an eventual affective response of exhaustion in which society’s object of desire becomes exposed as passivity, emptiness, and catastrophe – the desire of evil and withdrawal. The exhaustive relationship exposes the dualistic relationship between production/excess and good/evil in which both possesses each other and are forms of the same matter. Within this schizoaffective duality, values become randomized and open spaces of reclaiming an evil and exhausted subject whose drive towards destruction becomes an empting out of subjectivity to revitalize the possibility of an unforeseen new subjecthood.

Franco Bifo Berardi, 2011

Berardi was a member of the Italian Communist Youth Federation and was expelled for factionalism, was/is involved in the political movement of Autonomia, has contributed to Semiotexte, Chimerees, Metropli, and Felix, currently collaborating on the magazine Derive Approdi, and teaches social history of communication at Accademia de belle Arti in Milan. “After the Future”

The process of collective subjectivation (i.e. social recomposition) implies the development of a common language-affection which is essentially happening in the temporal dimension. The semiocapitalist acceleration of time has destroyed the social possibility of sensitive elaboration of the semio-flow. The proliferation of simulacra in the info-sphere has saturated the space of attention and imagination. Advertising and stimulated hyper-expression (“just do it”), have submitted the energies of the social psyche to permanent mobilization. **Exhaustion follows, and exhaustion is the only way of escape: Nothing**, not even the system, **can avoid the symbolic obligation, and it is in this trap that the only chance of a catastrophe for capital remains. The system turns on itself**, as a scorpion does when encircled by the challenge of death**. For it is summoned to answer**, if it is not to lose face, to what can only be death. The system must itself commit suicide in response to the multiplied challenge of death and suicide. So hostages are taken. On the symbolic or sacrificial plane, from which every moral consideration of the innocence of the victims is ruled out the hostage is the substitute, the alter-ego of the terrorist, the hostage’s death for the terrorist. **Hostage and terrorist may thereafter become confused in the same sacrificial act**. (Baudrillard 1993a: 37) In these impressive pages Baudrillard outlines the end of the modern dialectics of revolution against power, of the labor movement against capitalist domination, and predicts the advent of a new form of action which will be marked by the sacrificial gift of death (and self-annihilation). After the destruction of the World Trade Center in the most important terrorist act ever, Baudrillard wrote a short text titled The Spirit of Terrorism where he goes back to his own predictions and recognizes the emergence of a catastrophic age. When the code becomes the enemy the only strategy can be catastrophic: all the counterphobic ravings about exorcizing evil: it is because it is there, everywhere, like an obscure object of desire. Without this deep-seated complicity, the event would not have had the resonance it has, and in their symbolic strategy the terrorists doubtless know that they can count on this unavowable complicity. (Baudrillard 2003: 6) This goes much further than hatred for the dominant global power by the disinherited and the exploited, those who fell on the wrong side of global order. This malignant desire is in the very heart of those who share this order’s benefits. An allergy to all definitive order, to all definitive power is happily universal, and the two towers of the World Trade Center embodied perfectly, in their very double-ness (literally twin-ness), this definitive order: No need, then, for a death drive or a destructive instinct, or even for perverse, unintended effects. Very logically – inexorably – the increase in the power heightens the will to destroy it. And **it was party to its own destruction.** When the two towers collapsed, you had the impression that they were responding to the suicide of the suicide-planes with their own suicides. It has been said that “Even God cannot declare war on Himself.” Well, He can. The West, in position of God (divine omnipotence and absolute moral legitimacy), has become suicidal, and declared war on itself. (Baudrillard 2003: 6-7) In Baudrillard’s catastrophic vision I see a new way of thinking subjectivity: a reversal of the energetic subjectivation that animates the revolutionary theories of the 20th century, and the opening of an implosive theory of subversion, based on depression and exhaustion. In the activist view exhaustion is seen as the inability of the social body to escape the vicious destiny that capitalism has prepared: deactivation of the social energies that once upon a time animated democracy and political struggle. But exhaustion could also become the beginning of a slow movement towards a “wu wei” civilization, based on the withdrawal, and frugal expectations of life and consumption. Radicalism could abandon the mode of activism, and adopt the mode of passivity. A radical passivity would definitely threaten the ethos of relentless productivity that neoliberal politics has imposed. The mother of all the bubbles, the work bubble, would finally deflate. We have been working too much during the last three or four centuries, and outrageously too much during the last thirty years. The current depression could be the beginning of a massive abandonment of competition, consumerist drive, and of dependence on work. Actually, if we think of the geopolitical struggle of the first decade – the struggle between Western domination and jihadist Islam – we recognize that the most powerful weapon has been suicide. 9/11 is the most impressive act of this suicidal war, but thousands of people have killed themselves in order to destroy American military hegemony. And they won, forcing the western world into the bunker of paranoid security, and defeating the hyper-technological armies of the West both in Iraq, and in Afghanistan. The suicidal implosion has not been confined to the Islamists. Suicide has became a form of political action everywhere. Against neoliberal politics, Indian farmers have killed themselves. Against exploitation hundreds of workers and employees have killed themselves in the French factories of Peugeot, and in the offices of France Telecom. In Italy, when the 2009 recession destroyed one million jobs, many workers, haunted by the fear of unemployment, climbed on the roofs of the factories, threatening to kill themselves. **Is it possible to divert this implosive trend from the direction of death, murder, and suicide, towards a new kind of autonomy, social creativity and of life? I think that it is possible only if we start from exhaustion, if we emphasize the creative side of withdrawal. The exchange between life and money could be deserted, and exhaustion could give way to a huge wave of withdrawal from the sphere of economic exchange. A new refrain could emerge in that moment, and wipe out the law of economic growth. The self-organization of the general intellect could abandon the law of accumulation and growth, and start a new concatenation, where collective intelligence is only subjected to the common good.**

#### The role of the ballot is to vote for who best engages in semiotic subversion.

#### Do not mistake our pessimism for fatality – quite the opposite. Our ignorance and inability as a singularity to be all knowing requires a constant resistance for the chance of ideological possibility in a seemingly empty future. In a world of catastrophe, we must act out of a chaotic self-love founded on the basis of our ignorance and convivial affect that never forecloses the possibility of founding a new subjectivity.

Franco Bifo Berardi, 2011

Berardi was a member of the Italian Communist Youth Federation and was expelled for factionalism, was/is involved in the political movement of Autonomia, has contributed to Semiotexte, Chimerees, Metropli, and Felix, currently collaborating on the magazine Derive Approdi, and teaches social history of communication at Accademia de belle Arti in Milan. “After the Future”

The event is not predictable because it is not the development of what we presently know. The event is a creative gesture creating a new refrain. So, I answer the question: why resist, why persist in seeking autonomy from power? Where is the hope? The hope is in the limits of my knowledge and understanding. My knowledge and understanding do not show the possibility of any development of the present catastrophe in agreement with social wellbeing. But the catastrophe is exactly (in the etymology of kata and strophein) the point where a new landscape is going to be revealed. I do not see that landscape because my knowledge and my understanding are limited, and the limits of my language are the limits of my world. My knowledge and understanding are missing the event, the singularity. So I must act “as if”. As if the forces of labor and knowledge may overcome the forces of greed and of proprietary obsession. As if the cognitive workers may overcome the fractalization of their life and intelligence, and give birth to a process of the self-organization of collective knowledge. I must resist simply because I cannot know what will happen after the future, and I must preserve 127 the consciousness and sensibility of social solidarity, of human empathy, of gratuitous activity, of freedom, equality and fraternity. Just in case, right? **Just** because we don’t know what is going to happening next, in the empty space that comes after the future of modernity**.** I must resist because this is the only way to be in peace with my self. **In the name of self-love, we must resist. And self-love is the basic ethical rule that an anarchist prizes.** The present ignorance has to be seen as the space of a possibility. We have to start from the ignorance of the general intellect. The force of the collective intelligence is boundless. Theoretically. But it lacks any consciousness of itself. Intelligence without self-consciousness. I am talking of the self-consciousness of the general intellect, millions and millions of people worldwide producing the info-flow that makes the planet go around. **Creating a form of self-consciousness of the general intellect is the political task of the future. And it is not only political, but philosophical, epistemological, and in the end therapeutic**. Poetry and therapy (thera-poetry) will be the forces leading to the creation of a cognitarian self-consciousness: not a political party, not the organization of interests, but **the reactivation of the cognitarian sensibility**. **The ignorance of the general intellect is the starting point, after the future**. Why are the cognitariat weak, and disunited, and unable to assert their right as laborers, and their knowledge as researchers? Because they live in a dimidiated form, because their brain is detached from their body, because their communication communicates less and less, more and more freezing sensitive life. **The new space of activism is here, in the connection of poetry, therapy, and paradigmatic creation.**