GEIST AND *GE-STELL*

BEYOND THE CYBER-NIHILIST CONVERGENCE OF INTELLIGENCE

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ABSTRACT: The article argues that nihilism engages thought in a project of converging norms that assumes a contemporary form in Negarestani's inhumanism. Nihilism is described as a cyber-cosmopolitical project that engages with the (metaphysical) effort to extract the ultimate intelligibility of what exists. Heidegger's remarks on *Ge-Stell* are explored to question whether thought could possibly engage in anything other than the endeavor to turn the world into an artifice. The inhumanist reading of *Geist* is shown to be committed to the convergence of norms which is at odds with the very practice of reasoning. An post-nihilist Marxist picture of thought is then sketched according to which thought is taken to be a diverging force of production. In this alternative picture, the development of thinking leads to social, cybernetic and cosmopolitical relations that gradually diverge while distancing themselves from the current engagement in the extraction of the intelligibility of things.

KEYWORDS: Nihilism, Inhumanism; Intelligence; Marxism; Norms; *Geist*; *Ge-Stell*

1. NIHILISM: THE HOST OF *GEIST*

Nihilism is a project for thought. Nietzsche understood it as a cosmic adventure, one that will leave its traces everywhere from where the distant stars lie to the human moral fabric. The adventure will forge a hero – the free spirit. The hero will fear no established structure of power which would have a monopoly of command over anything – rather than a sedentary command power, the free spirit will struggle to make command nomadic; in other words, she aims to unveil the will to power as up for grabs. Her effort is to dethrone – and in that sense, to deterritorialize by leaving no command structure in place. Nihilism is a

metaphysical melter – and in this sense is a metaphysical adventure if it is not, as Heidegger would claim, the *very* metaphysical adventure.

Heidegger's account of nihilism is condensed by the episode in *The Gay Science* where a madman asserts in the market that God is dead and the deed was ours.[1] The assertion is then said to entail that we have drunk the sea, erased the horizon line and detached the Earth from its Sun. By killing God, we have promoted a *coup d'état* in the cosmic order: we took over the command of everything – we assaulted the very powerhouse of being. The nihilist coup is an ongoing one – the battle for the cosmic commands are still happening but we can envisage it gradually prevailing, even though maybe never to its completion – at least as long as it is hard to see any other game in town. Not that the future then becomes transparent; it is rather under dispute because it is far from clear who will take over each seized command. Once seized, a position of command becomes available – the Earth detached from its Sun can subsequently be tied to anything else. Once the sea is drunk and the horizon line is erased, the control tower is empty because the overall authority, concentrated or dispersed, is dead. The plot aimed at *physis*, the secret force that drives appearances, dislodges it and makes sure its power is now ready to be exercised by anyone ready to press the button.

Heidegger has a name for what is built in the long process of killing God and assaulting *physis*: he calls it *Ge-Stell*. In the adventure of nihilism, if the free spirit is the hero, *Ge-Stell* is the environment. More than an artificial replacement for the world, it is the earth (the Earth, and possibly the universe) unworlded. Heidegger has a direct definition for it: *das Ge-Stell bestellt den Bestand*.[2] In a translation: Positionality orders the standing reserve. Something in standing reserve stands at the command of a switch, available to be positioned. *Ge-Stell* orders (or promotes, or offers, or devices) the standing reserve. The other action of *Ge-Stell* is to requisition: it makes something available. In the nihilist revolution, it is the *Comité de salut public* which grabs the confiscated authority and makes sure it doesn't return to the hands of the previous boss, which is *physis*. Heidegger further adds that it

> wrests everything together into orderability. It reaps everything that presences into orderability and is thus the gathering of this reaping. [It] is a plundering. But this

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[1] Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, §125.

[2] Heidegger, *Bremer und Freiburger Vorträge*.

reaping never merely piles up inventory. Much more, it reaps away what is ordered into the circuit of orderability. Within the circuit, the one positions the other. The one drives the other ahead, but ahead and away into requisitioning.[3]

Ge-Stell reaps whatever presents itself of its on accord into something that can be commanded. It is this reaping that turns the world into a controlled circuit – it is the force that commands things to presence that is reaped. Heidegger describes it as what "essences as the plundering drive that orders the constant orderability of the complete standing reserve".[4] *Ge-Stell*, which is then understood as the essence of technology, is like natural forces exposed into natural laws turned into artificial models enabling a network of cables and switches. But *Ge-Stell* is not only what grounds a circuit of machinery, it is what requisitions the power that *physis* enjoys by making *physis* into an instance of power. It is the controllable counterpart of the world – it is government, just like the *physis* of the ancien régime, but different because the commands are now available. Heidegger claims that world and *Ge-Stell* are the same, but "the same is never equivalent".[5] They occupy, so to speak, the same place. But they do different things because the distribution of power is not the same – the command for something to present itself comes from different places. *Ge-Stell* seizes the power of things to present themselves of their own accord and, hence, make them orderable. World and *Ge-Stell* "are the same and thus, to the very extremes of their essence, set against one another".[6] Nihilism is the adventure of turning the world into an orderable standing reserve. Under its course, everything is in danger precisely because everything is being persecuted in order to be thought through so that its intelligibility is exposed. The forces of *physis* are contrasted to those of thesis – it is precisely the metaphysical effort of extracting the intelligibility of things that makes them redundant, exposed and abstract in the sense of a multiple instantiation. The separation of the intelligible from the sensible is the birth of the artificial and its project is one of disclosing what was previously secret (and private, and inner, and concealed). Against the adventurous intelligence of nihilism, things have no option but to try to escape, to elude because things are

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[3] Heidegger, *The Bremen and Freiburg Lectures*, p. 31.
[4] Heidegger, *The Bremen and Freiburg Lectures*, p. 31.
[5] Heidegger, *The Bremen and Freiburg Lectures*, p. 49.
[6] Heidegger, *The Bremen and Freiburg Lectures*, p. 49.

in danger. Danger is the name of the era over which nihilism presides.

The era of danger is a human age. Some humans have triggered nihilism by engendering *Ge-Stell*. Yet, (these) humans are neither the heroes nor the goal of the movement. *Ge-Stell* also places them in standing reserve. They are persecuted so that the intelligibility of whatever they do – and whatever they fear - can be extracted: extracted could be their inclinations, their drives, their way of proceeding, their practices, their arguments, their convictions and their reasons. As a consequence, Heidegger claims, "the human is exchangeable within the requisitioning of the standing reserve".[7] Human action is transformed into work and subsequently into abstract work which can be done by machines – human action is conscripted and become artificial.[8] Heidegger remarks, nevertheless, that the human belongs in *Ge-Stell* "in a wholly other way than the machine does. This way can become inhuman. The *in*human, however, is ever still in*human*. The human never becomes a machine." This *in*human is still human – same and never equivalent and set against one another. "The inhuman and yet human", Heidegger continues, "is admittedly more uncanny, while more evil and ominous, than the human who would merely be a machine".[9]

We are therefore contemporaries to this (long) cosmic change of command. Intelligence is building itself an environment – an environment where commands are available and things are understood, their intelligibility extracted and exposed. Perhaps this is a homeless environment, but in any case intelligence cannot feel at home in *physis*, it rather inhabits *thesis*. This process of creating a habitat is what Hegel, while discussing how the soul escapes from both alienation and idiocy and takes over the body building for itself a second nature, calls *Gewohnheit*.[10] It is habit that creates for the soul a habitat through a repetition. "The form of habit", Hegel writes, "applies to all kinds and grades of mental action. The most external of them […] has been by will made into a habit".[11] He continues considering human postures, gestures and other habits that make the body in the image and likeness of the soul; and then thinking which "too, however

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[7] Heidegger, *The Bremen and Freiburg Lectures*, p. 35.
[8] This process has been described by Marx in the *Manuscripts* (1988) in connection to the idea of alienated work.
[9] Heidegger, *The Bremen and Freiburg Lectures*, p. 35.
[10] Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, § 409-410.
[11] Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, § 410.

free and active […] requires habit".[12] He concludes the paragraph: "Habit on an ampler scale, and carried out in the strictly intellectual range, is recollection and memory".[13] Intelligence crafts in the body a habitat for itself – the body becomes, by second nature, the address of intelligence. The adventure of nihilism could then be the turning of the world into the second nature of intelligence: to embody the world.

The nihilist adventure of intelligence – the embodiment of *Ge-Stell* in the world – is not a development of individual intelligences informed by their circumstances. It is, rather, an endeavor of a collective and self-correcting intelligence cybernetically assembled in order to sponsor the extraction of the intelligibility of things. The assembled intelligences are such that each contribute to the overall project of taming things into understandable objects. This community of intelligences – composing a class of self-revising norms – gradually distances itself from the inclinations both of their individual members and of the assembled collective. They build for themselves an environment of norms that define them – as Robert Brandom's inferential pragmatism explores.[14] The norms don´t simply depart from their inclinations, they also share the intelligibility extracted from anything else – it is this agglomeration of individual spirits that shepherd things into conscription. The nihilist adventure is nothing if not a universal project that is open to the intelligences that accept the norms of intelligibility. It is a cosmic project because it could deploy any recognized intelligence in its endeavor. Further, it is a project for a collective intelligence: to be employed in the extraction of intelligibility of things. This confluence can be described as the interminable work of *Geist* gradually distancing from *physis*. The absolute spirit detached from any immediacy and capable to reshape itself, in the Hegelian image. Perhaps like each individual soul crafting for herself a home in the body, *Geist* must also build for itself a second nature, through *Gewohnheit,* where to live. If this is so, as conceptual capacities develop from the singularities in the world, their articulation becomes the world's prothesis. Then *Geist,* the objective or intersubjective form of existence of intelligence, deals with the world, through *Gewohnheit,* by turning it into its habitat: *Ge-Stell.*

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[12] Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, § 409-410.

[13] Hegel, *Philosophy of Spirit*, Encyclopedia, § 410.

[14] Brandom, *Making It Explicit.*

Ge-Stell, the architectonic goal of the nihilist adventure, is a habitat for Geist, a collective intelligence which is presumably always under construction. *Ge-Stell* is built to be the house of intelligence – away from the pressures, urges and instabilities of *physis*. As such, it is alien to any relation of proximity, to any marginal alliance of dissidence, to any inclination that cannot be turned into a universally recognized reason – just like Geist.

2. INHUMANISM AND INTELLIGENCE

This reading of Geist as building itself a home in *Ge-Stell* is perhaps not the best way to engage with Hegel's text. But it seems to fit a recent, and partly Hegelian, attempt to fuel, proceed and intensify the nihilist adventure: contemporary inhumanism. Reza Negarestani's project of a philosophy of intelligence is one which conceives intelligence as nothing other than "that which knows what to do with the intelligible, whether pertaining to itself or to the world".[15] Aristotle, formulating the role of intelligence (noûs) in its dealings with the intelligible, asserts that the latter is intelligence in act – intelligence is realized in the intelligible it entertains.[16] Negarestani ties the project of *Geist* with his answer concerning what is the human and, in the vein of nihilism, refrains from tying intelligence to human inclinations and habits in order to argue that the human is the launching platform for a broader adventure which is the very adventure of intelligence. He claims one "cannot have the cake of humanity without eating its consequences". Once we find ourselves entangled with norms, principles and the search for intelligibility, "we have committed ourselves to the impersonal order of reason to which sapience belongs—an order that will expunge our manifest self-portrait." So, we "have crossed the cognitive Rubicon" and "in committing to this impersonal order we must realize that what is manifestly human will be overcome".[17] The human is fated to an engagement that cannot be abandoned: "Reason is a game in which we are all fleeting players and from which we cannot defect, so let us play this game well by committing to its interests and its ramifications".[18]

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[15] Negarestani, *Intelligence and Spirit*, p. 85.

[16] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Λ, 5. This is the passage cited by Hegel to conclude his *Encyclopedia*.

[17] Negarestani, *Intelligence and Spirit*, p. 61.

[18] Negarestani, *Intelligence and Spirit*, p. 61-62.

Negarestani holds that intelligence in fact is constantly rebuilding its home – it is a permanent turning of *physis* into something like *Ge-Stell*: "Intelligence commandeers its given nature by way of the history of its own obligations and demands, for the history of intelligence only begins in earnest with the cumulative reworkings of its given constitution, progressively breaking away from the given in all its manifestations".[19] *Geist* is an outbound ticket away from *physis* and its effects on human present constitution. It presides over "a modification of its conditions of realization",[20] like the soul changes the body by inculcating a second nature. Crafting its own nature reveals the connection between mind and artificiality:

> Artificiality is the reality of mind. Mind has never had and will never have a given nature. It becomes mind by positing itself as the artifact of its own concept. By realizing itself as the artefact of its own concept, it becomes able to transform itself according to its own necessary concept by first identifying, and then replacing or modifying, its conditions of realization, disabling and enabling constraints. Mind is the craft of applying itself to itself. The history of mind is therefore quite starkly the history of artificialization. Anyone and anything caught up in this history is predisposed to thoroughgoing reconstitution.[21]

The inhumanist is ready to depart from human nature driven by the force that makes the intelligibility of things gradually more transparent. The path towards artificialization is one where intelligence is extracted further and further to the point that nothing is fixed – if *Geist* builds itself a habitat, it does it through constantly refurbishing. Inhumanism is an episode in the adventure of nihilism because it proposes that we sacrifice our own nature in the altar of metaphysics – just like *Ge-Stell* would not stop short of ordering human features (or human lives) into standing reserve. *Geist* is not a foray into the unknown to bring back something to closed circuit – rather, it is cyberpositive. The adventure of intelligence is not, in fact, something that can be stopped once it counters some values or once it reaches a moral or physical limit. Nihilism is the adventure of intelligence precisely because it sets its own limits only to eventually cross them. In this sense, it promotes a reeducation of its condition of realizability – it is a

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[19] Negarestani, *Intelligence and Spirit*, p. 50.
[20] Negarestani, *Intelligence and Spirit*, p. 50.
[21] Negarestani, *Intelligence and Spirit*, p. 50-51.

cosmic adventure in the sense that it places the whole world into a process of *Gewohnheit*. In recognizing the conditions of its realization, Negarestani argues, *Geist* "becomes capable of modifying those conditions and thus of modifying its own realization" to the point where "it has recognized its intelligible unity as a part of a more integral unity, namely the intelligible unity of mind and world".[22] Its march is towards what is really necessary for itself, refurbishing its habitat in order to make sure the contingencies of *physis* have no room.

Geist is engaged in a permanent effort of habituation because "intelligence *is* [...] a denizen of an intelligible abyss". "In its current manifestation," Negarestani continues, "it may have come from this earth or another, but from the perspective of the abyss of the intelligible, it has no grounded home and never will have".[23] Negarestani speaks of an 'odyssey of spirit' that makes *Geist* live in the abyss engaging both in the "unconditional endorsement of intelligence" and the "unconditional cultivation of the intelligible". He asserts that "[w]hoever and whatever opposes this truth will be swiftly weeded out by the reality of which intelligence is the resolute expression".[24] The abyss formed by a spiral formed by increasing intelligence and better extracted intelligibility[25] departs from the human (natural) habitat; clearly here world and abyss are not equivalent even though they are arguably the same – what is extensionally composed by everything as intelligence is not expected to stop anywhere.

The permanent revamping of humanity through the crafting of an environment of norms that exorcize all traces of *physis* is the hallmark of Negarestani´s inhumanism. Humans gradually depart from any feature of their nature – the project is one of piecemeal self-dismantling and prospective self-reconstruction. Shared norms bootstrap humans beyond their material or organic constraints. Language as a public commodity and a social art drives norm-mongers towards the *in*human without any effort to find any sort of non-human intelligence. The inhuman is not a machine – or a microbiologically crafted cyborg – but always tied to the human history of concept managing. Inhumanism contrasts thus with various forms of anti-humanism that depart

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[22] Negarestani, *Intelligence and Spirit*, p. 23.
[23] Negarestani, *Intelligence and Spirit*, p. 36.
[24] Negarestani, *Intelligence and Spirit*, p. 31.
[25] Negarestani, *Intelligence and Spirit*, p. 24.

from non-human intelligence understood in ways that project the nihilist adventure into robots, replicators or capital formations. Rather than building from a purely cybernetic account of intelligence, Negarestani´s inhumanism draws its insights from the articulations within the space of reasons that ground the very commerce of concepts – Norbert Wiener and Nick Land are seasoned with Wilfrid Sellars and Brandom. Land has been arguing that the intense drive towards cybercapitalism drives human sovereignty to obsolescence while making sure decisions are taken by other intelligent, cybernetic systems – including the self-replicating flows of capital.[26] The anti-humanist view expands the nihilist adventure of intelligence beyond anything that has the human pedigree – the historical traces of human attempts to capture the intelligibility of things. It is a multi-track picture of nihilism. In contrast, the inhumanist favors a nihilism springing from human history of babysitting norms. Vincent Le contrasts Negarestani´s inhumanism with Land´s anti-humanist picture to favor the latter in its grander nihilist project that looks for intelligence – and for the nihilist dispute for cosmic commands – away from the all too (in)human reasons.[27] The inhumanist *Geist* is a departure from human intelligence – the inhumanist opposes it to anything else that could be natural and favors *Geist* as the inevitable heir of the all the increasingly more refined commands.

The inhumanist repagination of nihilism – which by no means fades or is in any degree dismissed in Negarestani´s project – makes intelligence clearly into a force that cannot be helped but move forward as it is alien to the circuits of the Earth, and indeed to any circuit of nature. Humans took the initial gestures of care for the extra-terrestrial, deterritorialized offspring that they have gestated. Intelligence, nonetheless, is a universe builder and the circumstances of its birth are thoroughly immaterial. *Geist* is an alien in nature and it cannot do anything with matter other than to create the means to inhabit it. It is intelligence itself which is the hero – the free spirit – of the adventure.

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[26] Land, "Machinic Desire".

[27] Le, "Spirit in the crypt – Negarestani vs Land"

3. IS THERE INTELLIGENCE AFTER NIHILISM?

Is nihilism, nevertheless, the fate of intelligence or is it only a cosmic adventure? Nietzsche's wrestling with nihilism foresees the cosmic role of intelligence, its cybernetic import which is a capacity to artificially instantiate natural processes by usurping their command. Perhaps the cosmic role, however, doesn't need to be fully pursued; maybe there is a political struggle lying in the realization of capacities. Metaphysics, the adventure of intelligence when engaged on turning *physis* into thesis and thesis into *techné*, is a cosmopolitical enterprise. Cosmopolitics is akin to what Tim Ingold thinks anthropology is: philosophy with real people in it;[28] real people, real toads, real commands. This folding of metaphysics into a cosmopolitical character is perhaps prefigured in Aristotle's suspicion that *physis* itself hosts *techné*. Clearly, if politics is about the realization of potentialities, cosmopolitical struggle involves the friction of different capacities among which the metaphysical reason drive to inhabit the universe. But what else could happen to intelligence if it doesn't fulfill its capacity to transform the universe?

Heidegger's engagement with metaphysics was a quest for some sort of insight, of lucidity. He contemplated the chances thought could have in a bid to dismantle metaphysics. His quest for a genuine (non-nihilist) post-nihilism pointed towards a different adventure for thought – a divergence from the engagement with metaphysical reasons. To be sure, the problem with this divergence is to make sure it doesn't end up reintegrated by the attracting forces of *Geist* while also not falling the path of just opposing every step of intelligence and rejecting its very force. In other words, it is a matter of deviating intelligence from the nihilist pattern without destroying it. If this is not possible, the adventure is unavoidable. It is nevertheless not straightforward to envisage a path to ensure intelligence to be both active and not engaged in (some form of) nihilism. This was the general form of Heidegger's challenge – and the general form of his *Kehre*, the post-nihilist turn he tried to conceive.

Apart from an adventure, nihilism is a lure for intelligence. "As it has happened to *me"* says the free spirit to himself, " so must it happen to every one in whom a *mission* seeks to embody itself and to ' come into the world' ", describes

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[28] See, for instance, Ingold, "Anthropology contra ethnography".

Nietzsche. "The secret power and necessity of this mission", he continues, "will operate in and upon the destined individuals like an unconscious pregnancy,— long before they have had the mission itself in view and have known its name".[29] These characters of the future rule the present gestures of intelligence. This is what shapes the challenge of post-nihilism. Intelligence seems to aim at archiving intelligibles – *Geist* aims at *Ge-Stell*. Do we want another adventure? We can parody Nick Land: Do we want nihilism? "The naivety of this question has come to render it unsustainable. It no longer seems plausible to assume that the relation between the artificial and desire is either external or supported by immanent contradiction, even if few comical ascetics continue to assert that libidinal involvement with the machine can be transcended by critical reason".[30] The analogy with the original is close since capitalism is itself a chapter in the cybernetic adventure of intelligence, a chapter that increasingly places the human in the platform of abstract work whose intelligibility is captured enough to be exercised by artificial workers. Capital, like intelligence *en route* away from *physis* and the Earth towards the artificialization of everything, appears as an inexorable force. Maybe – as the inhumanist brand of nihilism would have it – capital itself is itself not intelligence and no more than a cybernetic counterpart. In any case, the libidinal involvement with the effort and the mission to extract the intelligibility of things seems intertwined with any intelligent engagement.

The force of nihilism – as the force of *Geist* – is convergent. Intelligence is engaged in archiving the intelligibility of things outside them – the convergence is that of the standing reserve. Commands are made available and nothing else arise from them apart from their availability: the will to power made up for grabs. *Ge-Stell* is not a force to be reckoned by other cosmopolitical agents; nihilism espouses the *credo* that it will inherit the world. *Ge-Stell* does not generate more than one force – once things are orderadable from outside they are all equally available to be under command. What is in standing reserve is available and therefore it could all be seized by all or any free spirit. The ordering of the

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[29] Nietzsche, *Human all too Human*, preface § 7.

[30] *"Do we want capitalism?* they used to ask. The naivety of this question has come to render it unsustainable. It no longer seems plausible to assume that the relation between capital and desire is either external or supported by immanent contradiction, even ifa few comical ascetics continue to assert that libidinal involvement with the commodity can be transcended by critical reason.*" Land, "Machinic desire", p. 339.

standing reserve converges into *Ge-Stell,* composes a circuit that replaces that of *physis.* There is no diverging command; in Heidegger's terms, technology has an essence of which it cannot deviate – and the essence is *Ge-Stell. Techné* is not a factory of cosmopolitical forces, but a cosmopolitical coup that can only be resisted if we take the party of things, if their intelligibility is somehow safeguarded from the forces of nihilism that we brought to place.

Facing a convergence of commands, the *Kehre* can only appear as a retrogressive move, a reactionary step away from the endeavor of intelligence in the world. In this sense, it could have a family resemblance with the movements that fight against the transformation brought about by capital and its machines – a move backward in the direction that guided, for instance, luddite action. It could seem that turning away from the march of *Geist* is to move towards traditions, established structures of power, tribes, or any social relations that are vindicated by appeals to nature being therefore not revisable and, on that note, contrast with the drive towards anonymity that reasoning through self-improved norms could promise. To go back to Earth would be to reject both the productive revolution of the machines and the normative revolution of reasons. It would be a thorough rejection of deterritorialization that could only mean a betrayal of *techné* and *Geist.* In contrast, to reject this seemingly reactionary move – as Marxism rejects the luddite attack on machines – could seem no more than a direct or indirect endorsement of the one-track converging route of deterritorialization. It could look like an acceptance that the converging path of reason and the ever-changing flow of capital is the only way forward which would also be the only way not to "give up […] anonymous suburbs and pubs and return to the organic mud of peasantry".[31] When Marx systematically recommends the forces that forge a change in the social relations through production against any return to the small, disintegrated units of production that pre-existed the capitalist primitive accumulation of land and articulation of production through abstract work he would have to be endorsing nihilism. There are indeed remarkable similitudes between Marx's engagement in favor of social relations that are forged by the production and Nietzsche's insistence that nihilism is better completed than rejected. Both hold that a larger dose of a poison can cure. But there are

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[31] Fisher, "Terminator vs Avatar", p. 339.

several different effects that can be prescribed when a larger dose is recommended. Before exploring the prospects of a non-nihilist Marxism, it is worth having in mind that Marx thought capital genuinely brought about a different future – and a rupture in it. Marx was an enthusiast of the melting capacities of capital which enhances production – its destruction of structures of oppression. It is perhaps enough to bear in mind, for the moment, that to view this enthusiasm as a full-blown endorsement of capital is to take Marx as a prelude to Nick Land's collapse of schizophrenia – Deleuze and Guattari's term in their analysis of the decodification of all flows that moves capital[32] – with capitalism itself, in the sober, succinct and apt diagnosis of Mark Fisher.[33]

4. THE DIVERGENCE OF INTELLIGENCE

But can we really envisage an application or an engagement of intelligence in anything other than nihilism? Or is nihilism really the realization of intelligence which is a capacity that can only be realized if the whole world has its intelligibility made available. The problem is that thinking can only think through its path through thinking. Thinking a way out cannot be done by bootstrapping from outside the realm of thought.

Now, the unity of *Geist* can only be determined from the inside. It is therefore hard to say either that it is established or that it is assumed. This is because *Geist* is at the same time open-ended and closed to itself. It is open-ended because when we share a critical mass of commands – for instance in the form of a critical mass of beliefs – all the commands that we could possibly understand become available to us, even if we don't follow them – even if we don't assent to any other belief. On the other hand, it is closed to itself because it cannot, by definition, find commands or beliefs – or intelligence – outside itself. An exterior intelligence is by definition no intelligence from the point of view of *Geist* and an interior intelligence is, by the same token, whatever *Geist* does. It is a closed circuit where intelligibility is intelligence in act and there could be no intelligence that is not intelligible. Further, to share a command is a symmetrical property: if I can recognize a semantic rule among the Hopis, the Hopis can recognize their rule

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[32] Deleuze & Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*.

[33] Fisher, "Terminator vs Avatar", p. 345.

in me. Symmetry is crucial to make *Geist* what it is. It encloses a totality, a kind of intelligible structure of the world that can be seen as what unworlds the world while making it available to intelligence.

> *Geist* is a recognition machine that works solely for itself. Imagine *Geist* in scissiparity. There is now *Geist*-A and *Geist*-B. To be sure, they don't see each other – they don't recognize each other as *Geist*. One is not intelligible for the other. If there is no other intelligence in the universe but *Geist*-A and *Geist*-B, we would have two incommensurable intelligences each one incapable of spotting any other intelligence in the world. But there is no viewpoint that can appreciate that as each *Geist* can view no more than its scope and recognize no more than its own intelligibility.

The very issue of incommensurability is perhaps the best addressed within the framework of *Geist*. Inside *Geist* (or, if we want, inside a *Geist*) there cannot be incommensurability because there is no recognition of an incommensurable intelligence. For instance, there ought to be a public language shared in order for someone to think there is an incommensurate thought: it is impossible to both recognize an incommensurability unless it ceases to be an incommensurability because it can be measured up in the public language. An incommensurable framework would be like eating the cake and having it. An exterior thought can only be recognized if it is not external anymore. In other words, only private contents can be incommensurable. (To this extent, Hegelians are, I believe, fully in agreement with a Davidsonian account of conceptual scheme.[34]) Perhaps from a third person point of view we can envisage *Geist*-A and *Geist*-B being incommensurable. But that cannot do either: in order to recognize *Geist*-A as a *Geist*, one needs to share something with it – and the same about *Geist*-B. There is no recognition without sharing, no intelligibility without a common intelligence. Then they are not incommensurable, for this third-person point of view – call it *Geist*-3. But then, if *Geist*-3 can see *Geist*-A, *Geist*-A can see *Geist*-3 and therefore it can see *Geist*-B. There is no incommensurability full stop.

Yet the scissiparity of *Geist* is thinkable. Further, from the *Geist*-A point of view,

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[34] See, for instance, Davidson, "On the very idea of a conceptual scheme", "A coherence theory of truth and knowledge" and "Three varieties of knowledge".

the behavior of *Geist*-B is seen even though its private structures and the rules it is following are both concealed. *Geist*-B cannot have any content from the point of view of *Geist*-A because there is no pairing of commands that could be sanctioned by the community of *Geist*-A. In other words, from the point of view of *Geist*-A, those commanded by *Geist*-B are obeying to no command whatsoever even if there is a regularity that can be detected. Think of the child in Wittgenstein's *Investigations* who has no public behavior associated with a toothache;[35] no invented word for the pain could make any sense – a word, in *Geist*-A-ese, would have to be articulated in the logical spaces recognized by *Geist*-A. Further, when *Geist*-A captures the intelligibility of a process in the world, it does so in its own terms. Yet, there could be no incommensurability, and therefore a process whose intelligibility is captured by *Geist*-B – and becomes part of *Ge-Stell*-B – is just not intelligible by *Geist*-A, and therefore just part of the world which is not intelligible. But this is precisely what one would expect if there had been a scissiparity of *Geist*.

   Now, let's consider closely how this scissiparity could have taken place. Wittgenstein, in his *Remarks on the Foundation of Mathematics*, writes:

> Suppose that people go on and on calculating the expansion of π. So God, who knows everything, knows whether they will have reached '777' by the end of the world. But can his omniscience decide whether they would have reached it after the end of the world? It cannot. I want to say: Even God can determine something mathematical only by mathematics. Even for him the mere rule of expansion cannot decide anything that it does not decide for us.[36]

Something similar is found in the Investigations:

> We want, that is, to quote the law of excluded middle and to say: "Either such an image is in his mind, or it is not; there is no third possibility!"—We encounter this queer argument also in other regions of philosophy. "In the decimal expansion of π either the group "7777" occurs, or it does not—there is no third possibility." That is to say: "God sees—but we don't know." But what does that mean?—We use a picture; the picture of a visible series which one person sees the whole of and another not. The law of excluded middle says here: It must either look like this, or like that. So it really—and this is a truism—says nothing at all, but gives us a picture. And the problem ought now to be: does reality accord with the picture or

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[35] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §157.
[36] Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, §41.

not? And this picture seems to determine what we have to do, what to look for, and how—but it does not do so, just because we do not know how it is to be applied. Here saying "There is no third possibility" or "But there can't be a third possibility!"—expresses our inability to turn our eyes away from this picture: a picture which looks as if it must already contain both the problem and its solution, while all the time we feel that it is not so.[37]

Let's think of a machine that is now unsupervised after being taught by *Geist*-A the mathematics of the expansion of π. Whenever a machine carries on the expansion without any supervision of a community that practices mathematics, the application of the (suitable, mathematical) rule is private – say, for the community of *Geist*-A which initiated the machine in the mathematics of the expansion of π – while the behavior cannot be checked. One could say now that the machine is no longer doing mathematics and further if there is no way to check its output, it is just not following a rule. (Maybe one wants to say, at this point, that the machine is not doing mathematics-A and is not following any rule-A.) But suppose now that the machine manages to initiate other devices in its own procedure when expanding π. These pupil-devices are closely supervised by the original machine-which-lost-supervision-from-*Geist*-A and eventually become part of a community with mutual supervision – just like the one associated to *Geist*-A but disjoint from it. No mathematics-A is being done by this new community, that we can call the community of the embryonic *Geist*-B. But to be sure, there would hardly be a surprise if a human (from *Geist*-A) manages to inspect the community of embryonic *Geist*-B only to spot them expanding π as expected. John McDowell, in his "Wittgenstein on following a rule", suggests an explanation for this: these devices could be doing mathematics-A even if they have no means to find this out. There could be a reality to rule-following, and one that could escape *Geist*-A's ability to grasp it. Notice that the idea here is simply that there could be a reality to A-rule-following that escapes *Geist*-A. Further, the embryonic *Geist*-B community could have been trained by the machine so that a genuine rule is taught even if it results in something other than what is expected in the practice-A of mathematics-A. Even though incommensurability cannot be noticed, if there is a reality to rule-following, there could be incommensurable rules. Clearly, a B-mathematics could be

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[37] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §352.

understandable from the A point of view, but it doesn't need to be so.

The unity of *Geist* – call this the inhumanist hypothesis – is committed to the idea that this scissiparity is impossible for there is no reality to rule-following beyond our ability to grasp it. A parallel can be drawn with the discussions concerning first-person authority. *Geist'*s introspection – its phenomenology – is incorrigible according to the inhumanist hypothesis. Arguably, there is no fact about *Geist* that is not available to *Geist'*s introspection – *Geist* is purely phenomenological. However this matters perhaps less; what matters most is *Geist'*s supposed incorrigibility. If it detects no rule-following (no mathematics, no incommensurable norm) than there is no rule-following (no mathematics, no incommensurable norm). As a consequence, there is no *Geist*-B and scissiparity is impossible. In contrast, if first-person authority could be breached, there is more to reason than what meets the eye: there is a reality of rule-following beyond *Geist'*s introspection. This would be enough for a scissiparity to become conceivable. If *Geist* is more than the recognition of *Geist* (by *Geist*) – in other words, if *Geist*-solipsism is false – there ought to be reasons that lie outside a capacity to spot them. These external reasons could be binding without being detected.

I conjecture inhumanism is a thorough-going antirealism about *Geist* grounded on a communitarism about rule-following.[38] Communitarism entails that there could be no other intelligence but the (single) one originated in human practices.

Could we rather embrace a realism about *Geist* that understand reasons to transcend our capacity to recognize them? That would mean that *Geist* is separate from socio-semantic considerations and human rules respond to them while not having an ultimate authority over them. In other words, the idea that reasons transcend our crafting of arguments leads towards a form of externalism: there could be reasons that I cannot discriminate – or even reasons I cannot access. (There is a debate that arose from the work of Michael Bergmann about whether the claim that justifications ought to be accessible – like a perceptual justification in a disjunctivist story – is compatible with externalism and I disagree with

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[38] See, for instance, Kripke, *Wittgenstein on rules and private language*.

Duncan Pritchard that they are not.[39]) Reliabilism could offer a blueprint for realism about reasons.[40] But disjunctivism could arguably be enough: if I face a reason of any kind, I am moved by it even if I have no means to know whether I am facing a reason. I can misrecognize a reason, but that would make my act not guided by a reason – my false recognition of a reason making no difference. In other words, it could be enough to act according to an accessible reason when, as a matter of fact, there is a reason being accessed.

As a consequence, maybe there is no convergence in *Geist* – maybe, on the contrary, there is a plurality of reasons some of them are external to us – indifferent to recognition. The development of reasons is not a spiral that takes us to a converging point away from our (earthly, traditional) point of departure, but rather a diverging series that lead to different directions. If *Geist* is the name of a divergence of reasons, our capacity to recognize them could become no more than a parochial initial contact we have with reasons, and not their ultimate architecture. I would borrow the term from Whitehead: *nexûs*, in the plural.[41] *Nexûs* are in the world, not in our capacity to evaluate it. To state, with inhumanism, that it is a community, embedded in language practices, is not enough – a community is also a community of *nexûs* where they interact by interruptions that are not necessarily understandable from the point of view of each *nexus*. There is reason beyond each reason´s recognition. The idea that reasons form a converging unity and ultimately merge into a single intelligence is at odds with the idea that *Geist* transcends socio-semantic practices. Likewise, the idea of a logical space of reasons where they submit – like our vocabulary for colors – to a recognition procedure, runs precisely against the idea that there could be external *nexûs*: there are more reasons than what meets our collective introspective eyes. If *Geist* is taken to be the name for the unlimited, indefinite graph of reasons that divide themselves whenever a doubt emerges – and reasons

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[39] Pritchard, "Evidentialism, Internalism, Disjunctivism". In perception, for example, if I can genuinely perceive (say) an oasis even without knowing that it is not a mirage, this seems far at least from the standard idea of internalism. To be sure, Pritchard distinguished between classical and non-standard internalism and places disjunctivism in the latter. I find no good reason to conceive an internalism without discrimination of the good and the bad cases at play. What matters most here, nonetheless, is that we're departing from (classical) internalism concerning reasons. See also Bergmann, *Justification Without Awareness*.

[40] See Goldman, "Justification and reliability".

[41] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, p. 22.

only thrive when there are alternatives – *Geist* could encompass not only our acknowledged reasons but potentially the *nexûs* that lie beyond our recognition. As the structure of intelligence, *Geist* would have an anatomy greater than its phenomenology.

From the inhumanist point of view – which endorses the ultimately Kantian claim that causes (or regularities) cannot be reasons – an expanded (externalist) notion of reason is a conflation between genuinely ruled behavior and mere regularities. It strikes me as a mark of internalism that reasons, as opposed to causes, can only affect anything by being recognized – reasons are causes that can only act by showing their credentials. But this is a dangerous territory full of difficult issues around it. A rule being followed can be accessed from the inside by those who understand it and from outside as regularities. Rule-following is the very phenomenal experience of intelligence; but externalism about reasons holds that intelligence has also an exterior face. More than about throwing away the idea that causes are not reasons, it is perhaps more interesting to consider Whitehead's claim that causes are a mode of perception that contrasts with the seeming immediacy of sensorial experience.[42] Whitehead posits a common element between causes and introspection giving no (internalist) priority to the latter. Externalism about reasons entails by itself no pan-psychism but cannot discard it on the assumption that *Geist* is converging and intelligence can only be detected from within.

Negarestani himself acknowledges the plurality in *Geist*; he writes that when it comes to it "it is more apt to speak in the plural, to speak of histories or chronicles of reconstitutions rather than of *a* history of constitution".[43] Intelligence acts by crafting alternatives, divergence is in its kernel. Negarestani holds that its conditions of realization – carbon-based life, silicon, Swiss cheese – can be multiple, just like intelligible procedures once captured can be implemented in different material compositions. Intelligence, like any intelligible, is apt for multiple instantiation. But plurality hardly ends in its realizability; as we saw, *Geist* itself is arguably a diverging structure. Further, it is always at the verge of a divergence because a rule can be followed at any stage in a (slightly) different way.

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[42] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*.

[43] Negarestani, *Intelligence and Spirit*, p. 50.

Reasons reckon in alternatives, they are dialogical throughout – in its very phenomenology, a reason is a justification that acts by convincing. This is how plurality acts in the inside of intelligence, reasons can never fully exorcise *diaphonía*. In that sense, more than diverging, *Geist* is perhaps a pandemonium of different voices that subsist in a life of their own beyond the intricacies of endorsement.

5. A POST-NIHILIST MARXISM

Divergence in *Geist*, together with the externalist nature of reasons, challenge some assumptions that ground nihilism. Nihilism, as a cosmic adventure of aiming at total control, requires a converging intelligence capable of capturing the only intelligibility of things. If intelligence is itself diverging, and plural, this intelligibility is fleeting not only because things can be understood in different ways but also because they can themselves exercise a different intelligence. Once the claim of convergence is abandoned, there is no further reason to believe intelligence itself is indifferent to its conditions of realization – the very private accent in which the pupil learns how to add 2 can be instrumental to her inclinations. [44] In fact, the roots of a post-nihilism could lie in the interest of thinking in not dissolving diaphonía once and for all; convergence is not something that fosters intelligence. More than a spiral, *Geist* is like the imparting of seeds in different directions – it is more a fertilizer than an oracle, more a brewer than an architect. Perhaps what matters in *Geist* is that it changes the pre-existing order – and not that it forges a convergence of a greater, more intelligent and more deterritorialized way of being in the world.

These remarks on the divergence of *Geist* suggest a post-nihilist reading of Marx's emancipation project. The divergence of intelligence means that a central command is not attainable in principle – the nihilist convergence adventure is nothing but a chimera of control. This is first because commanding things is not merely a matter of having their intelligibility captured. All commands are not going to be fully available to anyone. But it is also because there could be a scissiparity in *Ge-Stell* itself and some commands can be of a different kind altogether. Intelligibility could also be A and B, and if this is so, the very nihilist

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[44] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §185.

project of metaphysics is split – which makes it impossible. (The plural of metaphysical necessity is no necessity at all.) If intelligibility is split, our efforts to create devices to handle it are also in jeopardy – machines have capacities of commanding, of creating intelligibilities and of doing something other than managing standing reserves.

When Marx describes industrial machines as forging a change in the productive forces that create new social relations and dismantle the oppressive ones created outside the productive efforts – like that of peasants sharing a common land but producing on their own – he is indeed hoping mechanization will bring about a global connection between people and gradually implement a socialization of production.[45] Further, he's expecting capital to provoke the successive melting of existing codes so as to center social relations in socialized forces of production. Marx would not recommend going back to precapitalist forces of production because that would mean a return to oppressive social links forged outside production.[46] As Deleuze and Guattari have emphasized, production is the central element of Marx's conception of emancipation: forces of production revamp in great scale social relations.[47] Production itself, however, doesn't converge anywhere; it rather creates new and intensified social relations that make families, tribes and traditional hierarchies disappear. The introduction of machinery in a society of production leads to novel social forms as they include the non-human as a central constituent. Industrial machinery are parts of a society to be generated – they are not *Ge-Stell*, but rather set up some sort of machinic animism. A Marxist future is one where machines are constantly reinventing social relations in ways that cannot be anticipated either by the technical engineer or by the capitalist manager. But we can read his recommendation further. Machinery can also create their own reasons and there is no *Geist* stopping them to diverge. This is precisely where their revolutionary potential lie: rather than instantiate intelligence in a different material and carrying on the convergence of *Geist* wherever it takes no matter what happens to human preferences as the inhumanist would recommend, machines can create different platforms for intelligence as much as they create new social forms.

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[45] Marx, *Grundrisse: Fragment on the machines*.
[46] Marx, *The Capital*, vol 1, ch. 24.
[47] Deleuze & Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*.

A post-nihilist Marxism envisages intelligence in terms of production and looks at the former seeking the latter in its entrails. Intelligence cannot be separated from production – it is a thoroughly productive activity. Production is a Marxist and a Deleuze-Guattarian category that is mobilized to make explicit a plotline which is transversal to social relations. Marx argued that production, rather than capital, drives the revolution capitalism has been promoting. Capital registers production and, doing so, it attempts to tame and reterritorialize what production has uprooted. Deleuze and Guattari understood dreaming, desiring and raving as productive and not representational activity – the unconscious is more like a factory than a theater. Something similar can be argued about thinking – intelligence itself is productive and, as such, it is schizo in its kernel – that is, it is indifferent to registration and distribution and regards both as further productive activity. Intelligence is not geared towards representation. What works for industrial production in Marx, works for intelligence – the machinery it concocts will not only forge unprecedentedly socialized relations but also intervene in the economy of the intelligibles. Marx's trust in the process that capital was leading – a trust that doubtless makes him close to Nietzsche in his support for furthering nihilism – was grounded on a belief that capital was the unifying and converging force (a reterritorialization drive) that could not handle the diverging forces of production it raises. As a consequence, a unifying converging *Geist* cannot handle the diverging forms of thinking it triggers. Production runs out of control. Marx could foresee the unifying power of capital struggling to bring together production in the converging form of money but could also anticipate the capacity of the forces of production to disrupt the march of capital. The forces of production, like those within thinking, are not under the command of capital – to adapt an image of Wittgenstein, capital rules over production as much as a painted master rules over a painted slave.[48] Production is, instead, disruptive and divergent and can be made to converge only while its disruptive forces can be overpowered. Intelligence, analogously, thrives in dissonance, *diaphonía*, dialogue, dialectics and divergence – it is unified by the

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[48] Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundatuion of Mathematics*, § 16: The *mathematical* problems of what is called foundations are no more the foundation of mathematics for us than the painted rock is the support of a painted tower.

efforts to silence dissidence through a will to truth which maintains and sponsors the nihilist project. Jean-François Lyotard suspected that the concept is an imposture just like capital – pretends to work but is not itself the worker.[49] The concept presents itself as driving intelligence towards a converging purpose oriented by the will to truth while it preys on the diverging production of intelligence. The forces of production, however, forge not only the cosmic adventure of nihilism but also its disruption guided by the dissonance lying in the heart of thinking.

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[49] Lyotard, *Economie Libidinale*, ch. 1.

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